



# Seduced by the Shingle Style

A new cottage makes the most of a narrow lakeside lot with charming details outside and comfy nooks within **BY ARLETA CHANG**

**W**hen the Whalens bought lakefront property in Wisconsin, they didn't intend to build a new house but to remodel the small, simple cottage that occupied the site. Part of the planned remodel was nuts and bolts: fixing a moisture problem and strengthening some inadequate framing. The kitchen needed an overhaul, too, but the rest of the remodel would have been an effort to make the place cozier with trim details, paneling, and some built-ins here and there.

Before long, however, builder Rick Mueller uncovered a widespread mold problem that would require rebuilding much of the structure. At Rick's suggestion, the homeowners agreed that the old cottage wasn't worth saving, and we went back to the drawing board with a

new shingle-style house in mind. The Whalens' choice of the shingle style fit the lakeside location perfectly. Born from Queen Anne Victorians, the shingle style is dramatic and bold on the outside, comfy and casual within. It's a designer's dream.

Of course, this project wasn't without challenges. For one thing, the shingle style originated in New England, and I work in the Bay Area, a stone's throw from the Whalens' full-time residence. This cottage was built in between, in Madison, Wis., on a narrow lot (photo above taken at A on floor plan). The first question people always ask is "What was it like to design a house from so far away?" Although the cottage is filled with exacting details, the construction process was remarkably smooth (sidebar p. 81). In fact, it might



**Designed for lakeside living.** To keep a low profile from the street, the house consumes the full buildable width of the lot. A raised terrace offers a place to relax outside, and lots of windows reel in lake views. Photo taken at B on floor plan.

be the only project our firm has completed that is exactly like the working drawings.

### Maintaining the view for everyone

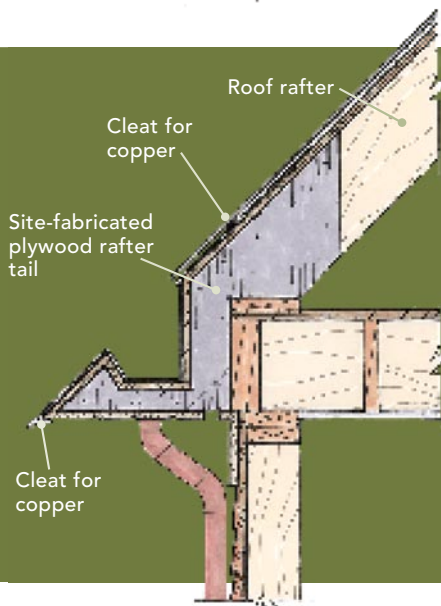
Lake Mendota Drive is an established neighborhood tightly packed with a mix of permanent residences and vacation homes. The houses vary from early-20th-century bungalows to contemporary mansions along a street popular with walkers, runners, and cyclists. Although the shingle style captured the spirit of the neighborhood, we still needed to find the right size, scale, and location for the house.

Lakefront setbacks required that the new house be sited even with neighboring homes, pulling it farther away from the lake than the original house. Although a location right on the water can be exciting, pulling back the house gave us the opportunity to add a large stone terrace with a great lake view. The terrace offers an outdoor space close to the kitchen and is only a short walk to the dock.

Luckily, the homeowners didn't want a large house. The site is small and particularly narrow. Because it sits above the lake, we didn't need to use height to capture views. Instead, we used the full 36-ft. buildable width of the lot. This approach saved plenty of space for gardens and landscaping, and the house's low walls and roof massing allow passersby on the street to enjoy a lake view across the property.

### Simple shapes with curvy accents

A descendant of Queen Anne Victorians, the shingle style also borrows details from a few early-American architectural styles. Shingle-style houses frequently share an asymmetrical exterior with a blend of strong, crisp geometric shapes contrasted against playfully exaggerated curved details. The Lake Mendota cottage has all these elements on the street-front elevation, where a single, dominant gable springs from walls that curve outward as they meet the ground. The big arched window is echoed by an eyebrow dormer in the roof, and



## BUILT-IN GUTTERS MAINTAIN A RAZOR-SHARP EAVE

The rain gutters are built in to the roof, eliminating the need for a fascia and keeping the eave line sharp. To execute this detail, the builder terminated the rafters with a plumb cut in line with the sidewall and fashioned a rafter tail from four pieces of glued-up  $\frac{3}{4}$ -in. plywood. The outside pieces of plywood extend up the rafter and are glued and nailed for strength. A trough cut into the plywood rafter tail is sheathed with ACX plywood and covered with a peel-and-stick roofing membrane. A seamless copper sheet lines the gutter and extends to the eave edge.



# There's more to the shingle style than just shingles

In the late 1800s, formal, colorful Queen Anne Victorians were all the rage. While the shingle style might be the Queen Anne's casual cousin, don't be fooled by the modesty that cedar shingles create. This house has its own set of intricate, charming details.



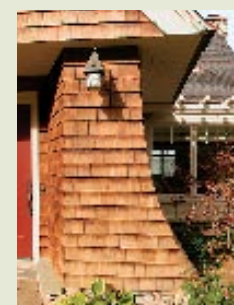
**Arched buttresses** support a large second-story overhang. The rear entry beyond is bumped out from the wall and is cloaked with windows to gather light and lake views.



**Eye-brow dormers** always are charming, but their shape goes particularly well with a shingle-style house. Notice the contrast between the dormer's sweeping curve and the crisp eave lines.



**Rolling shingled corners** at a recessed second-story window keep the shingles flowing with a soft transition from wall to window.



**Sweeping buttresses** accentuate the corners of the first-floor sidewalls. Below, a fieldstone foundation grounds the house to the site.

## FineHomebuilding.com

Go to the Web to see more cozy interior spaces and dynamic exterior details from this timeless shingle-style home.

the sidewall shingles curve inward to meet the vertical jambs of the upstairs window. Built-in gutters maintain unobstructed triangular eaves (sidebar left).

Unlike the front entry, which is inset, the back entry projects outward and is wrapped with sidelites and transom windows, topped by a double-gable dormer that overlooks the lake. The texture of the cottage's weathered wood shingles has a quiet and natural effect, while the stone terrace, chimney, and foundation walls ground the house to its sloping site.

### Multiple levels of cozy spaces

Varied ceiling heights often are used to create a sense of both intimacy and expansiveness in a house. On a sloped site like this one, varied

floor levels are a natural alternative. Keeping the mudroom and the landing inside the front entrance at grade level with a low ceiling creates a dramatic effect as you step down into the living areas. Not only are the lake views brought to life with the appearance of the horizon, but suddenly, the small house also feels open and spacious.

To support a modern lifestyle, the kitchen and the dining and living rooms are open to one another (floor plans p. 81). Instead of creating one open room, though, we defined each space with large cased openings. Box-beam ceilings in the living and dining rooms further distinguish these more-formal spaces (photo p. 81).

Each room in the house has its own personality, defined with color, built-ins, and detailed trim. Different nooks and alcoves create layers of intimate spaces within each room. The living room, for instance,



steps up to a sunny inglenook lined with built-in daybeds, which in turn steps up to a window bay. A built-in bench near the front door makes a window seat in the mudroom; recessed bookshelves create yet another alcove nearby.

Because the rafters spring from the first-floor walls, the second-story bedrooms and bathrooms are tucked under the roof. Dormers bring sunlight and views to the second floor and create charming nooks for desks, closets, and more built-ins.

Although a vacation home can offer some luxury in design, that wasn't a conscious part of this project. Charming details and cozy spaces are inherent to the shingle style, and I think a family would be happy to live full-time in this compact home. □

Arleta Chang, AIA, is an architect at Jarvis Architects ([www.jarvisarchitects.com](http://www.jarvisarchitects.com)) in Oakland, Calif. Photos by Brian Pontolilo, except where noted.

## from comfy to cozy to intimate

Open floor plans are great for keeping people connected, but when the time comes to curl up with a good book or retreat with your thoughts, there's nothing like a comfortable, private space. This house has it all, with a kitchen, a dining room, and a living room that are open to one another, and no shortage of more-intimate areas (floor plans, facing page). Upstairs, dormers gain headroom so that three bedrooms, two baths, and a large laundry closet all fit under the cottage's roof.

**An inviting inglenook awaits.** Curved brackets shape the opening to a raised alcove bordered with built-in daybeds and finished with a sunlit bay-window seat. Photo taken at C on floor plan.



**A striking view of the gardens.** A large, arching window has a dramatic effect on the sunroom. The window captures southern exposure and frames a picturesque view of the gardens. Photo taken at D on floor plan.



**Sunny sanctuary in the master bedroom.** A built-in dresser, tall wainscot, narrow closet doors, and distinctive windows add character to a small master suite tucked beneath the roof. Photo taken at E on floor plan.





## SPECS

**Bedrooms:** 3

**Bathrooms:** 3

**Size:** 2190 sq. ft.

**Cost:** N/A

**Completed:** 2004

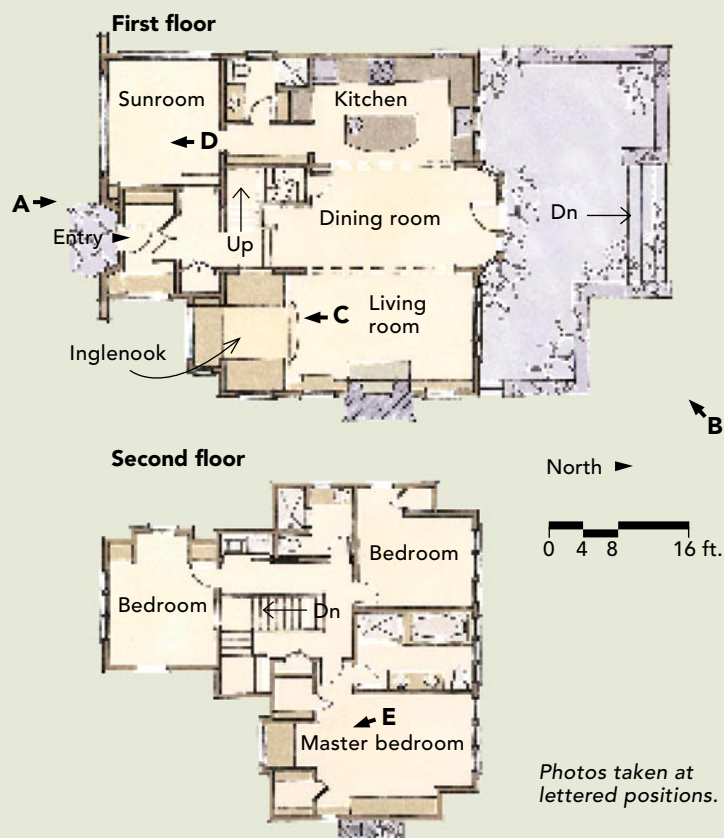
**Location:** Madison, Wis.

**Architect:** Jarvis Architects

**Builder:** Rick Mueller

**Structural design and architectural consultant:**  
Arlan Kay

**Landscape design:** Thomas  
B. Mohoney & Associates



## Feedback

# Communication is the key to a healthy long-distance relationship between architect, builder, and homeowner

Architects frequently work on long-distance projects, but they can present challenges. We traveled to this site only once before the project began, when we still intended to remodel an existing cottage.

Knowing that we wouldn't be on site to answer questions for the builder, Rick Mueller, we took extra care with the working drawings:

We carefully dimensioned each plan and section drawing; we tried to predict questions and placed notes where they would be found easily on the plans; and we illustrated all the fussy areas with large-scale details. The roof was a big challenge because a deviation of 1 in. in plan meant a deviation of 1 in. in height; a small error could cause a second-story

bathroom to miss code minimums. So we included written guidelines that described the framing sequence for each roof section.

To keep communication open and easy, Rick's son set up a Web site to host construction and material photos. Nothing could be clearer for architects, builders, and clients thousands of miles apart than immediate

access to photos of the work in progress, followed by conference-call discussions.

You could say this was one of our most-accessible job sites; the computer is next to the drawing board and never shuts down. I visited the site for the second time after construction was completed. The house is as close to how we drew it as any other project I've worked on.