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theWrightTouch

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"If you foolishly ignore beauty, you will soon find yourself without it. Your life will be impoverished. But if you invest in beauty, it will remain with you all the days of your life."

~ Frank Lloyd Wright

This article, "The Wright Touch," pages 91-95 plus mag. cover is from the spring 2011 issue of Northern Indiana Lakes Magazine, 1415 W Coliseum Blvd, Fort Wayne, IN 46808, 260-484-0546, www.niLakes.com, article by Trish Anderson-Boerger; original photos by Rob Borel, various photos updated by Mark Wyatt.

The Kubacki home has just the Wright touch.



LEFT: Stained glass lamps, light oak wood, vivid art and comfortable leather furniture make the lower level inviting.

TOP LEFT: An unusual T-shaped dual staircase on the main floor leads to the lower level.

TOP RIGHT: The walk-in wine cellar is useful for entertaining.



"FORM FOLLOWS FUNCTION"

THAT PHRASE, THE CREDO OF THE PRAIRIE SCHOOL OF DESIGN, was coined by Louis Sullivan. The distinguished Chicago architect inspired and promoted the idea that design should reflect the use and purpose of space rather than follow classical ideals of shape.

But it was Sullivan's apprentice, Frank Lloyd Wright, whose genius at interpreting and expressing the tenets of Prairie design made his name synonymous with it. Wright masterfully showed how to build with nature and landscape in mind, using natural materials as aesthetic elements rather than concealing them under paint or wallpaper, and creating open, integrated interior spaces as opposed to boxy rooms.

When Mike and Rebecca Kubacki were first exposed to Wright's home designs in Oak Park, they were a struggling young married couple, living in Chicago while Mike attended graduate school at the University of Chicago. Their love affair with Wright simmered for 25 years, as Mike's banking career took them from Chicago to California and back to Indiana, where both grew up. There, their passion found expression in their dream house on Syracuse Lake.

The timing of the couple's return to northeast Indiana in 1999, was a case of the right offer at the right time. After 25 years with Northern Trust Corporation and serving as a past member on the Board of the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago, Mike accepted the challenge of helming Lake

City Bank and Lakeland Financial Corporation, headquartered in Warsaw. With their son, Matthew, and daughter, Katherine, nearing adulthood, Rebecca continued working tirelessly volunteering and raising money for countless charities.

It was important to the Kubackis that their house be not just a living space that accommodated their busy lifestyles and reflected their aesthetic tastes and personal interests, but also a lifestyle space for hosting gatherings of their large extended family and for business entertaining.

With those needs in mind, they entrusted their vision to Warsaw architect Mark Wyatt and T.L. Jackson Construction to make it a reality.

The finished 8,000-square-foot, tri-level home of brick and stucco bears all the hallmarks of the Prairie design—broad, masonry piers firmly anchoring it to the ground, horizontal lines created by ribbons or bands of windows, and wide overhanging eaves that make the structure appear as an outgrowth of the natural landscape. On the lakeside of the house, sweeping expanses of balcony off the main level and terrace off the lower level integrate outdoor spaces as extensions of the interior living space.

The home's many windows in strong, geometric shapes are an important design element that floods the interior with natural light, while making the barrier of walls between the interior and exterior landscape seem to vanish. The front door, surrounded by leaded art glass in the wide



sidelights and transom, sets the tone.

Visible upon entry, across the entire open expanse of the main floor, is a stunning lake vista. From the entry's vantage point, the most striking impression of the home's open interior floor plan is the warmth of rich, oak woodwork and gleaming hardwood floors, accented by the muted colors of beautiful oriental area rugs.

Though the heart of a Prairie house is usually a tiled hearth, the centerpiece of this house is the airy, three-story atrium at its core. Visible from the main level looking below is a T-shaped split staircase, descending to the lower level, and looking up, the gallery around the upper level—all beneath an eight-foot-square stained glass skylight in the upper level ceiling.

At the right of the foyer, a stairway winds to the upper level, where there's a comfortable family lounge for casual relaxing. Arrayed around the gallery are three bedrooms and baths and a laundry room.

To the left of the entry on the main level are a breakfast room, which overlooks the front lawn, a massive kitchen with granite counters and oak cabinets, an office for Rebecca and a formal dining area that seats 12 with a fine view of the lake. On the opposite side to the right, there's a cozy living room area with a tiled fireplace, and beyond the beveled glass pocket door, a study that's Mike's office.

Considered the only truly American style of architectural design, the

Prairie school is viewed by some as the Midwestern response to the Arts and Crafts Movement in late 19th century England. Identified with philosopher/designer William Morris, adherents believed the Industrial Revolution was undermining traditional craftsmanship and eroding the quality of life. The simplicity of clean lines and functionality were the backlash against the excessive ornamentation of Victorian style.

Prairie style (or Mission or Craftsman style as it's called on the West Coast) also emphasizes the utility of built-in storage, pocket doors or the elimination of doors completely so that one space flows seamlessly into the adjacent one.

The Kubackis enthusiastically embraced the concept of using local craftsmen and artisans. A Shipshewana company made the cabinets and built-ins. They were happy to discover Schwartzendruber Hardwood Creations in Goshen, which specializes in finely crafted custom furniture hewn from quarter-sawn oak and finished by hand-rubbing. Each of the approximately 25 pieces commissioned by the Kubackis—sofas, chairs, tables, benches—stands on its own as a functional work of art.

Though unabashed Wright admirers, Rebecca says she and her husband share an eclectic taste in art. Statuary and other decorative pieces show a diversity of Asian and other ethnic influences.

Throughout the house, the walls provide a neutral canvas for an extensive display of original art. Many of the paintings depict the rural

ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN



Hoosier landscapes and subjects the Kubackis missed in their years away from Indiana. However, one painting of workers picking cotton in a field is Rebecca's most-prized piece.

"It's very personal to me because it reminds me where I came from," she says. Rebecca, one of seven children, came to Indiana from Texas. Her parents were migrant workers, hired to pick tomatoes on an Oswego farm. She still recalls falling asleep on a sack of cotton in the field where her father had let her nap.

"But my parents insisted we learn English and the value of education. They taught us that it doesn't matter where you start out in life if you're willing to work hard and have determination," she says.

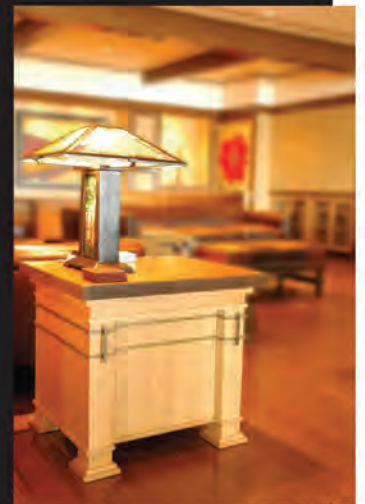
Rebecca and Mike fell in love as schoolmates at Pierceton High School. They've been married for 37 years and raised two children. Son Matthew lives in Chicago and attends law school. Daughter Katherine lives in Warsaw with her children Isabella and Roman.

In 2010, Rebecca successfully campaigned and was elected as a State Representative from the 22nd District. Between her work in the State House and Mike's as Chairman, President and CEO of Lake City Bank, time relaxing together and with their family is precious. Still, the Kubackis enjoy hosting holiday celebrations for the 35-40 members of their extended family. The Syracuse Lake home they love is just the Wright setting. 🏡

LEFT: T-crossed muntins in the high clerestory windows and kitchen cabinet doors are Prairie design hallmarks.

CENTER: The straight lines of the custom-crafted dining chairs make them functional works of art.

RIGHT: "Sprite," a reproduction Wright sculpture, adds a decorative note to the terrace. The home's outdoor spaces integrate seamlessly with the interior.



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