

The Adams lakehouse hosts
extended family for holidays,
football season and special events

BOLD

Elegance

An architect's family gathers
at a Willow's End showpiece on Lake Martin

STORY BY BETSY ILER & PHOTOS BY KENNETH BOONE

When Tom Adams designed and built a 9,000-square-foot home on 500 feet of lakefront at Willow's End in 2013 for his wife Paula's parents, he envisioned a space that wouldn't look at all like the traditional lake cabin. At the same time, he recognized the need for a space that would accommodate a growing extended family, as well as viewing parties for football games and holiday gatherings.

"My in-laws had a ranch in Montana at the time, so they didn't want anything cabin-y or really lake-y," Adams explained. "The exterior is more of an upper East Coast style – almost a Cape Cod – but the interior is more transitional and contemporary."

With degrees in architecture and interior architecture from Auburn University, Adams was a partner in Adams Gerndt Design Group of Birmingham when the home was built, and he recently established Defining Home Design Group. The company provides complete design, construction and décor services and has several Lake Martin projects under way most of the time.

Design work began on his in-laws' house in 2012 with the intent of showcasing the lake in a departure from the typical Lake Martin abode.

The result is a work of art that breathes not only style and elegance but also comfort and intimacy.

Outside, traditional multi-pane windows, turned chunky balusters and Shaker shingles – with just a touch of weathering – convey a sense of historic charm and establish a relationship with the water. Stone walls at the driveway entrance of the Willow Point home enclose a courtyard of diamond-shaped pavers separated by 12-inch strips of manicured lawn in a lattice pattern that adds elegance to the modest front stoop and its single half-round oak door.

But inside, the elements that connect the interior to the exterior are subtle and secondary to the cool, sophisticated beauty of the design and décor. Peacock Pavers on outdoor patios are repeated in selected interior rooms, and half-round interior doors mirror the exterior entrances. Attention to open air, light and lake views in every room whisper a suggestion of the New England salt-and-sea exterior, beautifully blending exterior details with the bold elegance of

the home's spacious interior.

The unassuming front door opens to the smart, white, polished grace of the great room and kitchen against an awe-inspiring Lake Martin view. Under a 20-foot ceiling coffered in raw oak beams, the grand great room features four distinct gathering areas, each spacious and well appointed in white and glass with accents of soft blues and vibrant spring greens.

"When we begin the interior phase of a project, we start with a piece of fabric, and the design flows from there," Adams said.

A long, formal dining table commands the floor-to-ceiling view at the base of Cape Cod-styled windows in a bank of three rows. Set into the lakeside bay window, the setting almost floats onto the wide lakeside patio, crossing the boundary between inside and outside and providing the room's focal statement. Full-length draperies flank the view with a touch of mid-century elegance while dining chairs upholstered in white and trimmed with nail heads anchor the space. Automated shades help to control the light and offer privacy.

French doors on both sides of the dining bay provide access to more than 2,500 square feet of lakeside patio in hand-crafted Peacock Pavers.

Centered on a chateau concrete fireplace, an arrangement of sofas, chairs and low tables creates an intimate gathering space for conversation and television viewing. The image of a

painting above the fireplace scrolls up at the push of a button, revealing the television screen behind it.

Another, smaller conversation corner is situated near one set of double pocket doors into the kitchen. This charming setting offers more privacy than the larger sitting area at the fireplace but remains very much in the mix of the room's activity.

Near the front door, a glass-topped table offers quiet, more intimate dining in a smaller frontside window bay. After dinner, it's the perfect size for a hand of Bridge under the shadow of the floating second floor hallway above it and the stairs that provide second floor access.

"We didn't want any columns or posts to interrupt the



Banquette seating creates a living area in the kitchen

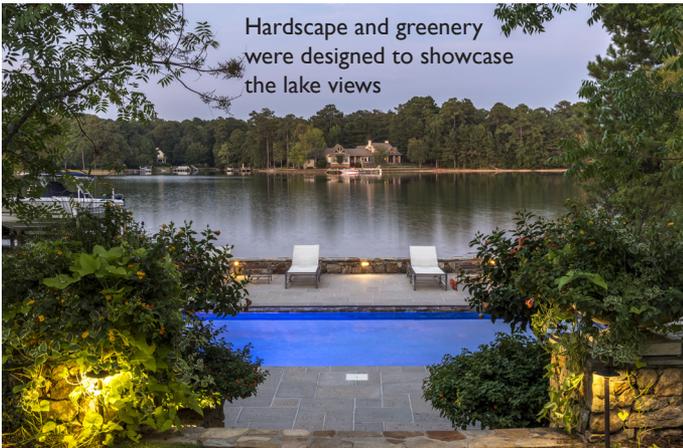




A coffered oak ceiling and wide-plank floors frame the showcase lake view in a 20-foot tall bay dining window



The courtyard became a dance floor when Adams' daughter married in 2016



Hardscape and greenery were designed to showcase the lake views



The stairs from first floor to second float over a glass table in the entry



Furniture arrangements become art in a transitional space to the master suite



The children's loft includes a dorm room for cousins' sleepovers



Designed with the Upper East Coast in mind, the home is a deliberate departure from the traditional lake cabin style

view from the front door to the lake, so instead of supporting the loft hallway from the floor up, we suspended it from the ceiling,” Adams said.

Metal rods are anchored in the massive raw oak beams that coffer the great room ceiling. Reclaimed from an old Georgia warehouse, the beams also create the foundation for the hallway platform that hangs above the front entrance. Floating stairs from the great room floor to the hall platform preserve sight lines and provide access to three upstairs bedrooms.

In an alcove between two double door openings to the kitchen, a full bar services the downstairs entertainment and living space.

In the kitchen, a 12-foot marble island is as much showpiece as it is functional workspace. The soft stone catches and reflects light from a large window above a stainless split farmhouse sink, and that light is reflected back down by the 20-foot vaulted and beamed ceiling. Wolff appliances behind the island and other appliances in the base, including a wine refrigerator, make the space as easy to use as it beautiful.

Adams and company chose a unique seating arrangement at the island, one that turns the focus to an outdoor entertainment venue that was inspired by the lodge at Cheaha State Park.

Instead of crowding bar stools around the island and placing guests with their backs to the screened porch, the designer nestled a custom white oak oval table and a half-round banquette into the curvature of the island edge. Cushioned in white with pops of green, this stylish treatment offers more comfortable long-term football-watching seating than bar stools would allow.

The glass wall between the porch and the kitchen recesses completely and disappears, creating one large space for game day gatherings, in addition to the great room.

To the left of the front entrance, a half bath and study are tucked into the courtyard side of a wide hall, and beyond lies a sanctuary that is the master suite.

“It was my in-laws’ lifestyle to stay in their suite until late morning before coming out to join the family, so this really is a private living space,” Adams explained. “Then, about 4 o’clock, they would come back to their suite to dress for dinner.”

In addition to a spacious bedroom with French door

access to the lakeside patio, the suite includes a lovely sunroom, furnished in white wicker with sweet lavender and green accents. The master bath, in white marble and mirrors, features vanities separated by a luxurious soaking tub in a light-filled alcove.

Upstairs, three bedrooms offer respite in very unique but stately designs, each with a lake view and a private bath. The first lakeside room features French balconies, chocolate walls and a fabulous gilded four-poster bed. The next bedroom is more whimsical, with white chandeliers and strings of pearls on warm blue wallpaper. This room offers the flexibility of twin beds. The third guestroom plays the dancing light with taupe bed dressings and draperies in self-fringing lattice-worked fabric strips.

And that’s the adult side of the house. The grandchildren share another suite that respects the privacy of adults but also allows space for kid-oriented activities.

Down a wide hall off the kitchen, with a large laundry room on the left and the garage straight ahead, a staircase on the right leads to an apartment designed for children’s play. At the top of the stairs, a cozy room sports overstuffed, super comfy furnishings for lounging in front of the television, and an open floor space easily accommodates the spread of toys. An adjacent dorm room, with a crib room beyond, and large bath provide accommoda-

tions for the grandchildren’s slumber parties with cousins. The space also adapts easily to quiet activities, such as reading, as well as more boisterous undertakings, such as group games.

The Lake Martin retreat also includes an in-ground pool



Each upstairs bedroom offers warm comfort, lake views and a private bath



The dining bay makes a statement outdoors as well as inside



The master suite features a luxurious soaking tub bay

and docking for four or more boats just inside a quiet slough off Big Kowaliga Creek.

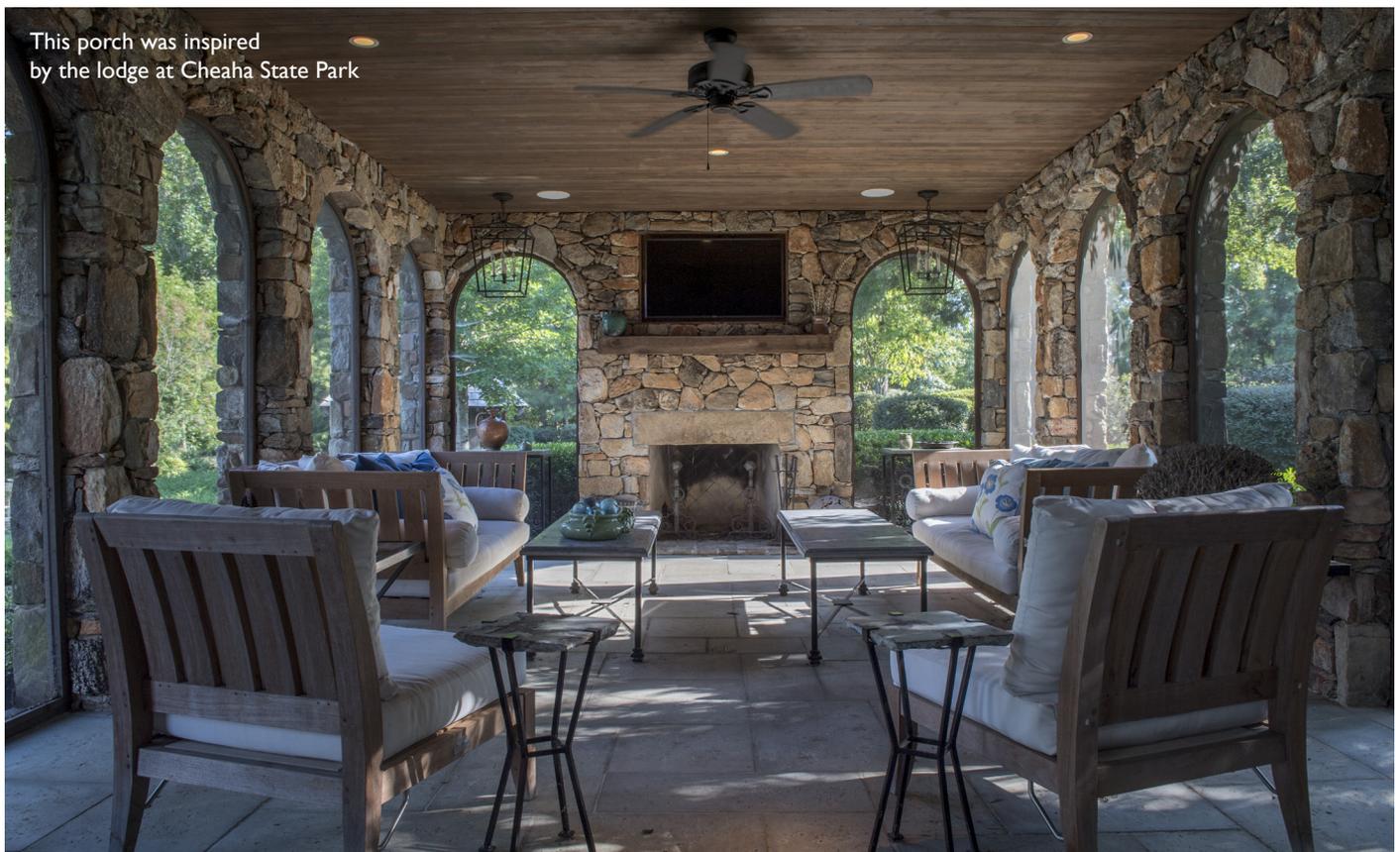
This northwestern section of Lake Martin is familiar territory for Adams, whose family has maintained a presence at the lake since before his birth. Paula grew up frequently visiting the Parker Creek area where her family owned a home before spending several years away from Lake Martin exploring other adventures, including boating in the Florida Keys and horseback riding and fly fishing in Montana.

The pull of Lake Martin was strong and eventually drove them to seek Adams' help in creating a new space on the lake that would accommodate their growing family.

Another beauty of their Willow Point home is its versatility. When extended family and friends on both sides of the family descended upon the lake for the Adams' daughter's wedding at the Church in the Pines in 2017, the reception was held at the house. The courtyard became a dance floor, and guests mingled on the spacious patios and in the showpiece great room.

Though Adams' father-in-law has recently passed away, the house remains the primary gathering space for extended family. The flexibility of the design flows gracefully from well defined intimate and cozy pockets to large-scale events, all while maintaining a strong connection to the lake in a showpiece home that still holds making memories as its most important function.

"In the end, it's all about being together at the lake," Adams said.



This porch was inspired by the lodge at Cheaha State Park