

THE BUILDER'S JOURNAL TM

Inside Story



Adelaine Construction Is Rooted in the Past, Ready for the Future

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By Stephanie Kadel-Taras

When Steve Adelaine and his son, Steve Jr., began building homes together in Harbor Springs more than thirty years ago, they had no idea the legacy they were creating. The family loved running businesses and already had a clothing store and restaurant when they decided to take their love of home building to a more professional level. “They enjoyed working with their hands to build homes,” says Steve Jr.’s daughter, Melissa Adelaine. “And they enjoyed creating a home where nothing was before. I like that too.”

Melissa is the third generation of Adelaines to pursue a career in residential home construction, and now her younger brother, Noah, has joined the family business, too. Steve Sr. has since passed away, but his son and grandchildren continue to bring honor to the Adelaine name with the quality of their work.

The business takes pride in noting that Steve Jr. still spends every day on the job site. While he might not always be swinging a hammer, he has, over the years, done every part of the job, from digging foundations to framing, trim, siding, roofing, and the rest. “No one can pull the wool over his eyes about quality,” says Melissa.

The small size of the company allows such hands-on involvement in each project and daily contact with the homeowner. But smaller doesn’t mean less professional, especially with Melissa coordinating each project. After completing a degree at Northern Michigan University in business management,



This stunning home designed by the owner/architect and constructed by Adelaine Construction Company incorporates many unique design and energy saving features. Photo by Dave Speckman, Speckman Photography ©.

marketing, and accounting, she spent the next four years working on her dad’s jobs. “My first day, I unloaded a semi of plywood,” Melissa remembers, laughing. From there she learned drywalling, insu-

lation, laying cultured stone, roofing, and much more.

“I know what it takes to build a house, physically and materially,” says Melissa. She puts this knowledge to use now that she is doing



Adelaine Construction was contacted when this historic family cottage in Harbor Springs needed an addition and some updating. The original size nearly doubled when a new kitchen, dining room, back entrance and bedroom was added to the existing structure. Photo by Dave Speckman, Speckman Photography ©.

sales, design, estimating, budgeting, scheduling, and communication between clients and the project foreman, her brother Noah. He just completed his college degree in construction management and has worked on Adelaine homes since he was a young teen. Says Melissa, “Noah is a huge asset to our company and fills an important roll in facilitating projects.”

Steve, Melissa, and Noah are all owners of Adelaine Construction and its sister company, Adelaine Development. They have eight additional

employees, including an office manager (whose work, Melissa says, is “almost as important as nailing 2x4s”) and seven craftsmen. While Adelaine subcontracts for plumbing, heating, and electrical, they do the rest of the construction—including custom trim, cabinetry, tile work, and hardwood floors—with their own, tight-knit team. “We want our work to meet our standards and to be done *when* we want it done,” says Melissa. “We buy our own equipment and train our craftsmen to our approach.”

That approach includes not only

custom homes in the million-dollar range, custom and package log homes, extensive remodeling, and even light commercial work, but also the more affordable panel system houses of Wausau Homes (headquartered in Wausau, Wisconsin). In the late 1990s Steve noticed a change in the market that needed a response: People want quality homes, but many want them fast. He researched the options for component construction, where the wall panels, floor panels, and roof trusses are built in a factory and assembled on the job site. Wausau was the only company that provided all they were looking for.

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A superb example of a Wausau Home by Adelaine Development. Photo by Dave Speckman, Speckman Photography ©.

That includes over 250 home designs that can be further customized. Melissa is able to download plans on her computer and manipulate them with her clients as they talk about their needs and desires. She can also send any custom plan from an architect to Wausau, and they will build it into panels.

Melissa tries to get out of the office and over to the job site on days when a Wausau Home is delivered to a customer. From there, the Adelaine team completes exterior and interior details. The approach is more efficient than an on-site, stick-built custom home. "Instead of two months for rough construction," says Melissa, "it takes seven days." Quality control is also improved, since a

house can be weathered in so quickly it might not see a drop of rain. A Wausau Home can be move-in ready in as little as two months.

Seven years ago, the Adelaine family created a separate business entity for their Wausau Homes division, called Adelaine Development. In its first three years in business, Adelaine Development exceeded Adelaine Construction in sales. Steve had figured the market right. In fact, Steve and Melissa both own and live in Wausau homes. "I weighed the stress, time, and money factors, and I am extremely happy I chose a panelized system," says Melissa.

Most of Adelaine's clients, whether building custom homes or Wausau Homes, have come to Adelaine for

a vacation home in northern Michigan. However, says Melissa, "They are surprised to discover they use it much more than they thought they would." For Melissa, that is the reward of this business: "There's nothing like starting with a piece of land and turning it into a house that holds a family and their memories."

After all, family memories have shaped Adelaine Construction. In his later life, Steve Sr., would still come to the construction sites in his wheelchair, just to see the projects that were his legacy. "It made him feel good to see what he had started years ago," Melissa remembers. "He'd be proud to know it has remained a family business."