



BY WILLIAM SHELLEY // PHOTOGRAPHY BY SANDY MACKAY



CUSTOM HOLM

Holmdale Farm near Walkerton is a place where tradition meets contemporary. Todd and Sarah Holm's Holstein dairy operation boasts a state-of-the-art Lely robotic milking system and a free-stall barn with waterbeds to keep the cows comfortable. The farm has been in Todd's family since 1874.

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ABOVE & RIGHT: The transitional design of the kitchen is striking. A long traditional island with a quartz countertop from the Old Barn is flanked by glass display cabinets and brilliantly contrasted by contemporary wall cabinets. Island stools, along with other pieces throughout the home, were sourced through Heather Smillie Designs. **TOP RIGHT:** Set for a springtime feast, the elegant, yet casual dining area also combines traditional and contemporary styles. **FAR RIGHT:** A large entryway/mudroom sets the tone for the home, offering a first glimpse at the exposed brick, recycled from the family's previous farmhouse.



ABOVE: It may be new, but the Holms' residence is filled with character. A variety of ceiling angles keep it architecturally interesting while natural elements, such as repurposed barn beams, give it historical significance. **LEFT:** The Holm family from left to right: Todd, Grace, Sarah, Keaton and Chapman. **OPPOSITE, TOP LEFT:** The lower level offers a great bar area for entertaining friends and family. **TOP RIGHT:** A glimpse into the children's quarters downstairs. **BOTTOM:** The smartly-designed laundry room, as well as many other rooms, features a family photo stretched over canvas by Holm Graphics.

A blend of old and new also informs the Holms' custom-designed house, recently built by **Lang's General Contracting Inc.** with the help of **Dave and Larry Huber** of Mildmay and **Ray Ernewein Framing Ltd.**, in the middle of a field not far from the farm buildings. The original farmhouse had become more or less unlivable for the family of five, as Sarah explains: "Nobody had any closets, we were never able to get rid of the mice, and the house was slowly sinking." The yellow brick was worth saving, however, and the Holms used it in the new house for interior and exterior detailing.

A trained designer and owner of **Design With Sarah**, Sarah drew up the original plans, then had them finalized by **Murawsky Design & Drafting**. "I looked at every square foot and customized it to how we truly live," she says. This functionality – combined with a flair for texture, blending and accents – is apparent from the basement up.

The basement is anything but dark. "I wanted the basement to be

like a main floor," Sarah explains. "With 42 inches from the floor to the bottom of the windows, it feels like you're on a main level." Like the master bedroom upstairs, each of the children's rooms faces west. "I wanted them to get that soft afternoon sunlight; I had that in my room as a kid and I loved it," she says.

In addition to lots of natural light, the Holms' middle child, Chapman, has a tree in his bedroom. A favourite place for the family is the bush on the farm's back 40, where Sarah noticed an elm tree, dead but still standing, and asked a farm employee to cut it down. Todd then attached the tree to the floor joist above and made a plate and spike for its base. The elm is so rock-solid that Chapman can climb it and then jump down onto his bed. "He's always on the go," says Sarah. "He's an outdoors kid and I needed his room to be calming for him, so when he came in, it would help bring him down to sleeping mode."



Each of the children's bedrooms reflects the child's personality, while the centrally placed bathroom contains a separate shower room for privacy. The basement also contains a large den and home theatre complete with movie seating (**Smitty's Fine Furniture**) and a bar. The stone and tile floors (**Saugeen Valley Carpet & Tile** and **Grey Bruce Interiors**) contain radiant in-floor heating powered by the geothermal system (**South Bruce Geothermal**) that also serves the farm buildings, backed up by propane. The basement is accessible by stairs from the main floor, or via the three-car garage. Sarah's functional design is especially evident here, as Todd will come in this way after a day in the barn or in the fields, shed work gear in a boot room equipped with hangers and a ventilation system, then proceed past the laundry room and into the bathroom and shower. He can then emerge refreshed – "in dirty, out clean," as Sarah says – into the den/bar area. *Continued on page 30*

feature



LEFT: The staircase is where the repurposed brick makes its biggest statement, stretching the full two storeys of the home. **BELOW:** Grace just loves her room, which is equipped with a mini stage for individual performances and a unique closet space with handy built-ins. **BOTTOM:** An actual elm tree stands in the corner of Chapman's room - perfect for such an energetic boy.



Also located in the basement is Todd's fireproofed office, the utility room with the geothermal pumps, Sarah's office, and a guest bedroom.

Upstairs is a majestic open-concept kitchen/dining/living area, with 13.7-foot cathedral ceilings and as many large windows as structurally feasible. In this bright open area, contrasting ceilings serve to visually divide the large space, with the high cathedral ceiling of the living room contrasting the coffered dining room and kitchen ceilings.

A focal point of the main floor is the electric fireplace made of engineered stone with old brick accents (**Paisley Brick & Tile Co. Ltd.**). Created by mason **Fred Burrell** with Sarah's input, the brickwork is one of the defining motifs of the house. "To get a building permit we had to take down the old house and it seemed a shame to lose all of that," says Sarah, who helped scrape the mortar off the bricks by hand. "Not a very enjoyable job," she adds, "but the outcome we absolutely love. It's part of the old house brought into the new." Brick walls and accents make striking statements in the fireplace, front foyer, the main staircase landing, the master bedroom, and elsewhere including the exterior entryway. The rich yellow of the century-old brick is full of texture and shading, and expertly mortared into numerous creative patterns. *Continued on page 32*

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"All of this means something personal to us," Sarah says. "It came from a part of our life that relates old and new together." Reclaimed barn posts and beams upstairs and downstairs complete this idea. The rough-hewn look, full of original axe cuts, can't be imitated. With structural posts as well as beams used as accents, this barn wood lends a rustic feel complemented by the dark trim and walnut floors from **South Bruce Flooring**.

A long quartz island (**The Old Barn**) separates the kitchen from the living room, the quartz favoured by Sarah for its sparkling qualities in the rays of the setting sun. The Mennonite-built cabinets with old-fashioned centre stiles provide yet another historical accent.

The exterior veneer stone lends a vintage fieldstone look, and blends well with the yellow brick, the board-and-batten vertical siding, and the dark-stained beam work. The crowning accent is above the front entryway: a large wooden "H," symbolizing the proud Holm heritage that has defined this property since 1874. **OH**

SOURCE GUIDE

Dave Huber, Dave Metcalfe, Dave Spitzig Construction, Davishill Nursery, Desboro Doors, Desco Plumbing/Heating Supply, Design With Sarah, Gary Voisin, Grey Bruce Interiors, Hanover Home Hardware Building Centre, Heather Smillie Designs, Holm Graphics, Lang's General Contracting Inc., Larry Huber, Let Them Eat Cake, Luxury Woodworking, Matcrete Contracting, Modern Appliances & Electronics, Murawsky Design & Drafting, Paisley Brick & Tile Co. Ltd., Rob Miller, Rona Hanover Building Centre, Saugeen Valley Carpet & Tile, Smitty's Fine Furniture, South Bruce Flooring, South Bruce Geothermal, The Old Barn



Nothing short of a personal oasis, the master en suite is a welcomed getaway for both Sarah and Todd. The large, open shower even has two different showerheads to suit individual preferences.



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