

THE EXCHANGE

STUDY IN DESIGN
LAKE EFFECT

The first hotel from development firm Brooklyn Home Company brings its founders back to their roots in New York's Finger Lakes.

BY SARAH MEDFORD PHOTOGRAPHY BY KYLE KNODELL

THE EARLY 1970S were a boom time for Rochester, New York, thanks to the combined good fortunes of Eastman Kodak Company, Xerox and Bausch & Lomb, all headquartered in the lakefront city. (Today only Kodak is still based there.) "When we were kids, I remember the buzz would go around that it was bonus week for Kodak—and kids would come to school in new winter coats," says Bill Caleo, 44, who grew up in the Rochester suburb of Pittsford.

Though Bill and his sister, Lyndsay Caleo Karol, 42, weren't Kodak kids—their stepfather was CEO of Constellation Brands, a beverage and spirits company—they spent childhood summers on Canandaigua Lake (Algonquin for "the chosen spot"), where Rochester family compounds spread like pin-cushion moss around the water's edge. Tourists had only a few options, including the Inn on the Lake, a bare-bones motor lodge with 25 rooms on the water and another 105 facing an asphalt parking lot.

In 1994, the family bought the ailing motel out of foreclosure and refurbished it—an act born of a combination of duty, sentiment and good old-fashioned capitalism that registered deeply with Bill, who was 18 at the time. A few years out of college, he started buying, renovating and flipping prewar apartments and townhouses in Brooklyn, New York, partnering with his sister, her husband, Fitzhugh Karol, and contractor Pete Gerolimatos to found the Brooklyn Home Company in 2007.

"Lehman Brothers went under the week we opened," Bill recalls. "I thought my career was going to be over before I started." They took things slowly, stretching talent and resources until they reached the moments when it made sense to expand. Today the business has grown to roughly 50 employees, including several members of the Caleos' extended family, and in 2018 it opened a satellite company in Jackson, Wyoming. Now the residential developer is giving hospitality a try with the debut this summer of the Lake House on Canandaigua, a 125-room hotel

on the site of the former family motor lodge, which was torn down in the fall of 2018 to make room for a new take on Finger Lakes hospitality. Despite the pandemic, plans are still in place for the waterfront bar to open for the summer season, while the rooms should be available in late August.

The Lake House may be the siblings' first from-scratch hotel venture, but it won't be the first to incorporate the nostalgia-tinged ethos of the Finger Lakes, which has informed their business model from the start. The Brooklyn Home Company is known for

who shared their emotional investment in the region. As a first step, they all agreed it would be critical to rethink the hotel's orientation to the lake. A new site plan, developed by Brooklyn design and branding firm Studio Tack, called for six distinct buildings, three of them containing guest rooms, ensuring that the majority would have waterfront views. The structures' sizes and wood siding would be varied to evoke the feeling of a family compound that had accreted accidentally over time, in conversant, but not cookie-cutter, architectural styles. Between the structures, meandering paths skirt a pool, some of Fitzhugh's large-scale sculptures and a few strategically placed fire pits. The most innovative additions may be the ones 500 feet below ground, where there are geothermal wells with the capacity to run the heating and cooling systems at the Lake House through all four seasons. Within 12 years, Bill estimates, they'll produce and store enough energy to power the systems for free.

An ambitious brief for the interiors, including a lakefront bar and restaurant, library, spa and event spaces, began to seem even more so as Lyndsay and Fitzhugh balanced work life with parenting two small children. To stay on schedule, they continued to collaborate with Studio Tack, which has its office just down the street from their own in Brooklyn's Gowanus neighborhood.

"We saw an obvious alignment," Studio Tack partner Ruben Caldwell says of the opportunity. "Brooklyn Home has a particular aesthetic—a clean, modern look, but incorporating natural pieces. We think it's important for people to have a sense that a hotel could be their home." With over a dozen hotel renovations to its credit, many of them in New York State (Scribner's Catskill Lodge, Brentwood in Saratoga, Sound View Greenport on Long Island), Studio Tack was familiar with resort-town rescue missions. "A lot of our work is renovation, repositioning weird, distressed assets," Caldwell says. "For us, new construction was exciting."

its sensitive approach to urban development, from wood-frame construction methods to custom-built furniture and a reliance on classic materials like marble, steel and brass.

Each project is invariably spare, with beamed ceilings, rolling library ladders, built-in shelves for earth-toned ceramics and books, factory-style metal-framed windows and, most dependably, handcrafted wood details. It's all the vision of Lyndsay, a Rhode Island School of Design graduate who oversees the firm's eight-person visual team. For every project, she commissions a few chunky hero pieces—a sliding door made from reclaimed staircase treads, a hulking console table—from her husband, an artist she met at RISD. The couple live in Park Slope, a few blocks away from Bill and his family.

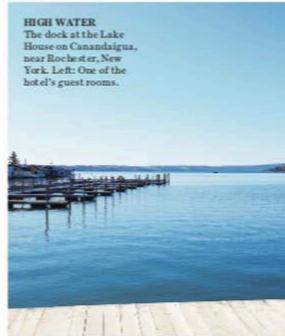
Canandaigua Lake is a six-hour drive from Brooklyn, not the easiest commute but one that became unavoidable once they decided to fast-track the hotel to open 18 months from its groundbreaking in the fall of 2018. Fortunately for the siblings, they found a Rochester-based development partner in their cousin Doug Bennett, a software entrepreneur



In consultation with Annette Gallo of creative consultancy Gallo Atelier, the team invented a narrative for the Lake House that incorporated the family's backstory, like reinterpreting the old motor-lodge's divey Sand Bar, a lakefront institution named after Bill and Lyndsay's grandparents, Marvin and Marilyn "Mickey" Sands. Guests can order pitchers of locally brewed beer and watch water-skiers from dockside tables.

For all its localisms, the Lake House is a reflection of a family that has changed over time, particularly thanks to the younger generation's move downstate. The partners hired chef Scott Riesenberger, who has worked in New York City under internationally renowned names like David Bouley and Alain Ducasse; Riesenberger will prepare seasonal meals, sourcing herbs from the garden in the summer months, and a seaplane landing regularly at the end of the hotel dock will discharge guests who choose to arrive via the hour-long flight from New York's East River. A spa from London-based skin-care designer Alexandra Soveral will offer footbaths brewed from botanicals foraged from the hotel garden and surrounding woods. "No toxins, no make-believe machines," says Soveral. "Either we do it properly or not at all." Soveral has been pleasantly surprised to find like-minded partners in the Caleos, whom she characterizes as "good, honest people. They represent the best of America. It's a family-run business, with immense integrity."

The siblings hope guests are able to slow down and respond to the Finger Lakes vibe of the place. The 125 guest rooms and suites have been designed accordingly. Bespoke furnishings, some of them fabricated by Fitzhugh at Grand Wood, a carpentry shop on the lake, have been based on examples Lyndsay remembers from her childhood: director's chairs, foldaway cots, French cocktail tables and campaign desks. "The palette is timeless—white and wood," she says. "That's our culture at Brooklyn Home Company: The less you see, the more you feel." •



HIGH WATER
The dock at the Lake House on Canandaigua, near Rochester, New York. Left: One of the hotel's guest rooms.



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COZY UP Clockwise from above: A 1954 wooden motorboat hangs in the Sand Bar; the bar's libations on display; a bathroom in one of the guest rooms.