

## Historic Minneapolis Home's Hardscape is a Winner with Willow Creek Paving Stones

An award-winning hardscape for a stately home on "Cream of Wheat Row" in Minneapolis helped solve several landscaping challenges unique to this historic property.

Built by a Cream of Wheat company co-founder in 1902, the home is along a Minneapolis street near Lake of the Isles where many executives of the cereal company had built their homes in the previous century. Locals have nicknamed the street "Cream of Wheat Row" in honor of the stately old mansions.

This home had an original, poured concrete driveway and portico that were meant for horse and buggy. Modern vehicles could not easily pass through the portico over the crumbling concrete surface because of a limestone slab step that was used originally for people disembarking from horses and carriages. In addition, the hardscape design needed to reflect the home's character while enhancing vehicle and pedestrian accessibility. Because the home was on a city lot, space constraints also created challenges.

"You could barely tell that the driveway was concrete as it was broken down from over a century of Minnesota winters," said Kelly O'Donahue, a landscape designer with Villa Landscapes of St. Paul, Minn. "Demolition was a challenge due to the space constraints as well as the stone step. We had to excavate down nine inches to remove what remained of the concrete and curbing so as not to cause more problems. With the stone step being difficult if not impossible to remove, we ended up lifting the elevation of the new driveway surface so you could not see the step."

For the driveway and sidewalks, O'Donahue selected Willow Creek™ Paving Stones' Cobblestone pavers for their old-world, classic appearance, which recalls the paving stone streetscapes of the past. In addition, the unique properties and benefits of Willow Creek's interlocking concrete pavers make them ideal for environments with frequent freeze-thaw cycles, such as in Minnesota. The homeowner also wanted the paver surfaces to complement the home's exterior limestone, cream-colored stucco, reddish-orange porch tile and blue-gray window trim. O'Donahue carefully combined three colors in the Cobblestone paver family -- Charcoal Blend, Harvest Blend and Prairie Tan -- to create a palette that accentuates the colors of the home. Sailor and soldier courses of Cobblestone in Prairie Tan and Charcoal Blend were added for the border design.

Because the slope along the driveway had been grass-covered, drainage problems often created slippery spots on both the sidewalk and driveway in the winter. To transition the slope along the driveway, O'Donahue chose the VERSA-LOK Harmony retaining wall system, which combines VERSA-LOK Standard and Cobble wall units for its ability to create a tight radius, guiding vehicles to safely navigate the curve of the driveway. Changing the pitch of the sidewalk and installing an underground drain pipe also helped alleviated the drainage issues. VERSA-LOK step units were used in the sidewalk for their natural stone appearance as well.

O'Donahue and Willow Creek Paving Stones received recognition at the 2019 Hardscape North America Awards, produced by the Interlocking Concrete Pavement Institute (ICPI), under the vintage installation category.



**LOCATION:**  
Minneapolis, MN

**OWNER:**  
Private residence

**DESIGNER/INSTALLER:**  
Villa Landscapes, St. Paul, MN

**MANUFACTURER:**  
Willow Creek Paving Stones,  
Faribault, MN

**SOLUTION:**  
Willow Creek Paving Stones  
Cobblestone in Charcoal Blend  
and Harvest Blend with Prairie  
Tan and Charcoal Blend  
borders

