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DESIGN

NEW ENGLAND



TIME TRAVEL

RENOVATIONS THAT REVISIT THE CENTURIES



FAMILY SEQUEL

Past and future memories of childhood summers by a Vermont lake prompt a sensitive renovation of a 1900s fishing cabin into a fun and functional retreat

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ARCHITECTURAL DESIGNER
Milford Cushman and his
associate, Kelley Osgood,
transformed an early 1900s
fishing cabin into a spacious,
serene setting for family fun.



Her grandfather's 1850s lakeside farmhouse in northern Vermont was more than a fun place to visit in the 1970s and '80s. As a child, this now mother of three spent entire summers, swimming, exploring the nooks and crannies of the house and its hay barn full of "cool old boats," and just having "good clean fun" with friends also summering in the area. That social acceptance and outdoor adventure so grounded her with a deep sense of peace and security that she wanted to give her children the same experience.

So, with her grandfather's place now owned by an uncle and some

cousins, she and her husband set out on a years-long quest for property on the lake where they could escape with their three boys, now ages 12, 9, and 7, from their home base in a suburb outside New York City.

Finally, in 2011, they found a fishing cabin built in the early 1900s about 25 feet from the shoreline. The interior was dark, the windows small, and two wings added on in the 1970s were poorly built. But the site — a point of land with water and hillside views on three sides — was

 ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN CUSHMAN DESIGN GROUP

THE ROUGH-TEXTURED finish on the granite fireplace was created by simultaneously applying a high-temperature flame, which fractures the crystals, and cool water, which prevents the stone from splitting. All interior wood, including floors, walls, ceilings, and trim in the dining area (FACING PAGE), came from a local lumber mill.





perfect. “We took one look and could instantly picture ourselves here,” says her husband.

First, however, a renovation was needed. The couple turned to Milford Cushman of Cushman Design Group in Stowe, Vermont, partly because the spirit of the place resonated with him. “The idea was to hit the refresh button and transform the building for a new generation in a way that was respectful of the original structure,” Cushman says. “My client wanted the new camp to include elements she’d loved about her grandfather’s house.” Concepts such as secret spaces, discovery, togetherness, and life on the water informed its reshaping. Working with builders Travis Cutler and Donald P. Blake Jr. of Donald P. Blake Jr. Inc. in Morrisville, Vermont, Cushman kept the essential footprint of the 1,556-square-foot structure as required by building codes but rebuilt the two wings from the ground up, adding a full second story for an additional 1,246 square feet.

This allowed for four bedrooms, but rather than give each of the boys his own room, their mother suggested two guest rooms and a bunk room under the eaves, reminiscent of the “dormitory” above what had been a woodshed in her grandfather’s house, where she and her three brothers slept. “Our kids prefer sleeping in the same room,” she says, “and if they want to, they can pull up the ladder and no one would know they’re up there.”

The feeling of having escaped to a hide-out is not unlike what the wife, a writer and former marketing consultant, wanted for herself in the main living area. The vaulted space was dramatically enhanced by knocking out the walls of the fishing cabin’s small, dark living room, relocating the fireplace, and adding windows to open the house to its expansive water views. Instead of having an open-concept layout, she wanted to keep this space separate from the working part of the house and requested a pocket door

DESIGN DECISION *Suite Success*

The master suite presented a design challenge, as the client had her heart set on a private upstairs porch off the bedroom as well as a full master bath with separate tub and shower. Space was tight, and Milford Cushman, working with Kelley Osgood, the Cushman Design Group designer he assigned to the project, tried several layouts. In the end, the problem was solved by creating a long (14 feet, 6 inches) and relatively narrow (4 feet, 4 inches) space. They placed the tub, which has windows on two sides, and the double vanity along the long wall. Then, in a separate alcove, Cushman and Osgood extended the 4-foot-4-inch wall to 6 feet, 6 inches to create space for a shower and toilet. An 8-foot-long custom-designed built-in armoire for clothes storage takes the place of traditional, less-efficient closets and bureaus in the bedroom. The master suite is harmonious and handsome, and the client is delighted with the porch off the bedroom, where an outdoor bed, elegantly draped with mosquito netting, awaits a summer dreamer.



THE MASTER BEDROOM, with its quiet location and expansive views of the lake (ABOVE), is a favorite place to read. The private balcony was one of the owners' must-haves. The staircase and catwalk (BELOW RIGHT) have a cable railing. The new wood walls and ceiling are whitewashed, giving them a soft, glowing finish. The master bathroom (BELOW LEFT) is long and narrow, with the tub tucked into a corner with windows on two sides and a double vanity along one wall. The couple's three sons, ages 12, 9, and 7, share the bunk room (FACING PAGE), which features a cozy loft under the eaves, accessed by a ladder.





between the kitchen and the combined living-dining area. “Everything that represents work” such as pots and pans, the vacuum cleaner, and various to-do lists, is, she says, on one side of the door, and everything that represents fun and relaxation, such as the lake, the outdoor sunset platform, the porch, and the uncluttered living room, is on the other side. “When I walk into this room and close the door behind me,” she says, “I’m on vacation.”

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Standing between the U-shaped couch and a wall of glass overlooking the water, the sound of tiny waves lapping the shore in the background, her husband, a financial executive, sweeps an arm across the scene and says with a smile, “Check out our flat-screen TV. ... The lake is always in your field of vision.”

“He has a high-stress job, and we live hectic lives at home,” says his wife, “so coming up here is a lifeline. It’s a place to center yourself as a person and as a family.”

The project was completed in June 2012 and the family moved in

for the summer a week later. “Large numbers of my extended family still summer here,” says the wife. “There were 55 people — first, second, third cousins — at our last family picnic.” Snug with good insulation and heating, the house also gets used for fall and spring getaways and holiday gatherings.

Tied to the white pine trees that tower over the camp, multicolored silk prayer flags, which the family brought home from a trip to Tibet just weeks before purchasing this property, flutter in the breeze. “The idea is, the wind carries our prayers up to heaven,” says the wife. But it looks as if heaven is right here. ■

WITHIN EARSHOT OF small waves lapping against the lakeshore, a wrap-around porch extends the dining area (ABOVE) with decking of local tamarack, a fast-growing softwood once used in shipbuilding because of its natural resistance to rot. The columns are whole trunks of local white cedar trees. The renovation added second-story spaces (FACING PAGE, TOP) while maintaining the cabin-in-the-woods essence of the original structure. A typical summer scene is captured on the front porch (FACING PAGE, BOTTOM).



MAIN LEVEL

- 1 LIVING AREA
- 2 POWDER ROOM/LAUNDRY
- 3 MUDROOM
- 4 KITCHEN
- 5 DINING AREA
- 6 PORCH

BUILDER **Donald P. Blake Jr. Inc.**

