



Story by Jordan Werner
Photos by Carolyn Bates

VERMONT HOMES AND GARDENS

Un-insulated Innovation

*A lakefront camp that makes the most of the summertime
in the tradition of the good old days.*



IT IS OFTEN A MISTAKE to make camps year-round [in terms of use],” states Patrick Kane. Patrick, an architect for Kane Architecture of East Hardwick, Vermont, wanted to avoid that mistake while he was designing this lakefront camp in the Northeast Kingdom. He set out to design a building that would be completely seasonal, connected to the outdoors, and essentially a balance between a classic-style building and one with a modern, innovative de-

sign. The camp’s owners had grown up spending their summers near this property and on the same lake. They were hoping to build a house that would remind them of their childhood visits and give their children a place to enjoy the same experiences in a rustic, inviting setting. Because they had grown up spending only the summertime in Vermont, the owners agreed with Patrick—they had no plans to spend time at the house in the winter, and it would seem strange

and unnecessary to build the house with any notion of four-season use in mind.

Patrick asked the owners to generate some ideas, aspects of living on the lake they recalled from their childhood. Their input, along with inspiration from their other travels around the world, led Patrick to his ultimate design. The camp is cedar shingled, just like other buildings nearby that are much older, but its architecture is strikingly more modern. The property the camp sits on was a



Inside the camp, the strategic placement of the building's windows (three, each of a different style and configuration, are used in just the kitchen-dining area alone) optimizes the use of outside light and affords the best views of the lake in the process. Outside, generous roof and balcony overhangs provide shade when the weather is hot and sunny, and protection that allows the owners some quality deck time, even on days when it is raining. Inside and out, the tones of the wood used in construction lend an air of classic elegance and simplicity to the home's modern design.

great find, since a pre-existing structure on the site allowed the new house to be "grandfathered in" and built much closer to the lake than regulations otherwise would have allowed.

The inspiration that Patrick drew on most for the appearance of the house was an unlikely one: he pictured the camp as if it were a carved music box made of wood with a lid on top. But once opened, he wanted the inside to be what really played tunes to the heart's delight of its owners. One of them is a photographer, and the other thought the idea of designing the house from the inside out and using natural light in the process was exciting. Thus, Patrick planned the house with a focus on the use of light that would enhance its connection to the outside world. And, on the outside, the "music box" even "grew" balconies to make the most of outdoor space and proximity to the lake. To protect the balconies and dining areas, the roof has an unusually deep overhang that adds dramatic style and keeps the house cool in the hottest part of the summer.

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No sheetrock or other drywall construction is used in the camp because it is designed to weather severe changes in temperature, which cause expansion and contraction of materials throughout all four seasons, especially during the wintertime when the building does not see use.



The windows aren't symmetrically arranged, but their design and efficient placement is planned to optimize the lake view and to let as much light as possible through to the inside. As a result, Patrick says, "It feels like you're part of the lake when you're in the house." When called for, shade comes from wooden window blinds that cleverly retract into recesses in the floor when they are not in use. The interior of the house is in tune with that of the historic wooden interiors of the buildings nearby: there is no sheetrock. "Most old-style, existing camps are wood interiors because it just feels right," comments Patrick. Also typical of camp construc-

tion of 50 or more years ago, the house is un-insulated. While it is a nod to tradition, this is a practical measure for a house that sees only summertime use, as wood does a much better job expanding and contracting as seasons change (the camp is not heated in the winter).

The decision to leave the house un-insulated was an easy one for Patrick and the owners, and it has really given a powerful, seasonal meaning to the home. The camp is associated with a certain time of year and all the things that the summertime brings—watching the sun rise from one of the balconies, spending the day swimming in the lake, having dinner on the porch, and tak-

ing the edge off the nighttime chill by firing up the woodstove in the living room. The sense of seasonality is a bonus for the camp's sustainability, too. In addition to LED light fixtures and high-efficiency appliances, "the biggest environmental savings comes from the simple fact that you're just not using it year-round!" Patrick explains.

Beyond planning for savings realized by limited usage, the house was designed with sustainability in mind. Much of the wood that lines the inside is local, and it was all coated with PolyWhey, a product from Vermont Natural Coatings in Hardwick. PolyWhey is a byproduct of the cheesemaking process,

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Be it fair weather or foul, whether it is spring, summer, or fall, the camp is a great place to enjoy, and its traditional shingled exterior helps it to blend in with the much older camps and buildings in the neighborhood.

and it is an alternative to petroleum-based floor coatings. "Using the whey coating from Vermont Natural Coatings is consistent with the theme of how I work," says Patrick, "because the material is ecologically sound and supports the local economy."

This whole project is a great example of the way Patrick practices his design processes in Vermont. He is interested in the state's tradition of innovation, with a view that there are plenty of historic models to learn from, but there is a strong spirit of taking what already exists and building on it, especially in architecture. Patrick tries to honor the traditional function of buildings while giving them new life by making the design modern and original. This camp, as it both fits in with but also stands out from its historic neighbors, is a perfect illustration of that philosophy. **T**

Jordan Werner lives and writes in Burlington, VT.

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