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# Dirt to Done

BY LAURIE LAMOUNTAIN • PHOTOS BY LORRAINE BLAIS

The concept of “camp” used to be a one-season abode, occupied by humans in summer and mice during the remainder of the year. Opened up in late spring and shut down in early fall, it required nothing more than a small woodstove to chase the chill on a late summer evening—insulation, double-glazed windows and basement were not just unnecessary, they were superfluous.

One such camp on Kezar Lake, built in the late 1930s and added on to in the ‘50s and ‘60s, became a six-month project for Blais Interiors this past year. The owners, who live in Connecticut but love Maine too much to make it a one-season destination, are avid skiers and spend as many weekends and winter vacations on the slopes as possible. Their camp on Kezar was 1,100 square feet of poorly insulated and unheated space, until they contacted friend and contractor Lorraine Blais to turn it into a four-season vacation home.

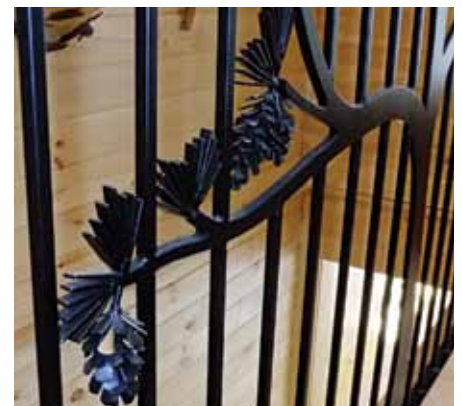
In addition to converting the camp for year-round use, the owners wanted to expand the space to accommodate their growing family and visiting friends. Lorraine contracted a local excavator to jack the building up 12’ and pour an 8’ daylight basement that faces the lake and essentially doubles the living space. When they got the camp up in the air, however, they discovered that mice weren’t the only critters who had set up housekeeping. Runoff from above the property had been coursing under the house for decades, and the cinder blocks and granite fieldstone propping it up were no match for the legions of carpenter ants that had slowly but surely wreaked havoc

with the sills. It quickly became clear that the best and ultimately most cost-effective course of action was to strip the camp down to its studs and replace the rotted joists, stringers and sills.

There’s something to be said for starting over. Stripping the camp down to bare bones made it possible to apply 21st-century building technology and upgrade the performance of the camp for year-round use. To eliminate any future problems with moisture, the foundation was wrapped with an impervious rubber membrane and then encased in rigid foam insulation. High-performance windows were custom made to match the design and layout of the single-glazed windows they replaced. Mainely Foam applied closed-cell foam insulation throughout the walls and roof system. Radiant heat lines were run through the cement floor and a propane-fired boiler was installed. The original 100 amp knob and tube wiring was replaced with new 200 amp wiring. The result is a super-insulated, energy-efficient vacation home that the owners don’t have to worry about when they’re not there, and is ready to receive them whenever they choose.

The one thing that didn’t change was the footprint. Both the owners and Lorraine felt that if anything besides the daylight basement was added it would no longer have that “camp” feeling. They did, however, raise the height of the kitchen by adding a gable peak of Douglas fir beams above it. This relatively small change had the dual advantage of bringing a lot more natural light in and making the camp seem more spacious.

What was saved by not expanding the





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footprint was lavished on details, such as the wrought iron railing with pine cones and tassels made for the stairwell by Mike Ridlon of Casco. In the master bedroom suite, three panels of leaded stained antique glass that Lorraine found in a local second-hand shop were set in the wall separating the bedroom and bath. Not only do they extend natural light from one room to the other, it turns out they also improve cell phone reception!

In the downstairs bunkroom, Lorraine designed colored lights along the bottoms of the lower bunks to serve as night lights. A locker room adjacent to the bunkroom provides each member of the household a locker with their name on it. In all cases the details are functional as well as ornamental.

Other details are strictly aesthetic, such as the mural in the downstairs bathroom painted by local artist Sheree Kendrick.

Instead of all-wooden doors for the custom kitchen cabinets, Lorraine chose amber stained glass inserts to mimic the granite countertops.

Jesse Hersey, a Yarmouth-based builder, was lead carpenter on the job and Lorraine credits his craftsmanship and professionalism with the fact that they were able to maintain quality while sticking to a strict deadline. Hancock Lumber supplied most of the building materials.

Lorraine was given a budget that included furnishing and stocking the house to the extent that the owners merely had to turn a key upon arrival. It’s why she fondly refers to projects like this as “Dirt to Done,” and, when the owners put all their trust in her ability to design/build, as they did in this case, it’s the kind of job where her expertise shines throughout. 🌱



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