



Traditionally, Mainers have a fierce loyalty and love of our state's natural beauty. Why wouldn't we? With 5,785 lakes an acre or larger in size, rivers, mountains, and 3,478 miles of coastline, what's not to love? Unfortunately, most of us don't live here for the economic dividends, and it's not uncommon for outside interests with more economic where-with-all to scoop up the best bits with an eye toward increasing their means. Anyone following Seattle-based Plum Creek's plans for development on Moosehead Lake can see where short-sightedness and greed can lead.

Once proclaimed by National Geographic magazine as one of "the three most beautiful lakes in the world," Kezar Lake in Lovell possesses the kind of unspoiled beauty that draws people to it. Surrounded by mountains and largely hidden from civilization, Kezar Lake has beckoned bathers, boaters and beholders for centuries. Come summer, Massachusetts and New York license plates far outnumber Maine plates on

the roads of Lovell. It's an annual rite of passage residents tolerate because they know it is temporary and because they depend on the money it brings them. Besides, Kezar Lake has been luring seasonal residents for more than a century, one of the more famous being Rudy Vallee, who was so taken with the lake when he first visited that he promptly purchased 300 acres on it.

More recently, an anonymous appreciator of Kezar Lake purchased four acres including one of the first cabins built on the lake. Just over a hundred years old, the cabin has had only two previous owners. Records indicate that the granite slab foundation of the cabin was brought by oxen from atop Baldface Mountain. This most current owner has made it his mission to restore the cabin and preserve and protect not only the beauty of the cabin but all that surrounds it. When he got wind that a developer was interested in subdividing property adjacent to his, he entered negotiations to purchase the land, including a large estate

lodge that was under construction at the time. In 2005, he succeeded in procuring forty-six acres from the developer and an additional twelve acres from a private party, thus safeguarding a total of sixty-two acres. So committed is he to protecting the land he now owns, that he has taken measures to insure even his heirs cannot subdivide it.

When he purchased the property, the 3,500 square-foot estate lodge needed to be finished and furnished, and Blais Interiors was hired as project manager for the job. An earlier issue of *Lake Living* featured the lodge in an article on design and decor. Ironically, the owner prefers to spend his visits to Maine with his seven-year-old daughter, Liz, in the 1,200 square-foot cabin, now that Blais Interiors has also restored and renovated it. One important aspect of the cabin, however, will remain unchanged. On a wall in the living room the initials and heights of all the children who have lived there over the years are neatly noted in pencil. Among them now is Liz.



Cabin Fever

Preserving a Piece of Kezar Lake's Past

BY LAURIE LAMOUNTAIN

It's human nature to react only when circumstances become dire. Usually, it's only when the future of that which we value is threatened that we're compelled to protect it. Fortunately, there are those among us who don't require a situation to become extreme and irreversible before they act. The writing on the wall is more visible to them than to those of us whose vision may be clouded by apathy, ignorance, or inability.



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Restoring the Cabin

The exterior of the cabin was in remarkably good shape when the current owner purchased it in 2002, but it still required a substantial amount of work. Tom Dekutoski, who has worked with Blais Interiors for three years, completed all the carpentry and repairs. First, he applied architectural asphalt shingles to the roof that matched the pattern dating back to the advent of architectural shingles at the turn of the 20th century. He then custom fabricated lead-lined gutters from his own design. So well do the gutters blend with the roof line, they are barely noticeable.

All the cedar logs used to build the cabin came from the land around it. When Tom was cleaning and treating the logs, he noticed they needed re-chinking. Additionally, several windows required re-glazing and the original beveled leaded-glass windows on the second floor needed repair.

The interior of the cabin required much more work to both restore and make it functional by 21st century standards. The existing kitchen was virtually unworkable. Cabinets were not even the necessary 12" deep to allow plates to be stacked horizontally. Beyond the cabinets, there was no storage space at all, nor was there any counter space. To prepare a meal in the kitchen was nearly impossible. The owner asked Lorraine Blais if she could design a new, functional kitchen in keeping with the style of the cabin, to which she responded, "Of course. Absolutely!"

Tom constructed new cabinets from salvaged hemlock boards from the Bear Mountain Inn in Waterford that were over 100 years old. The boards, all of random widths, were brought to Windham, where they were milled and planed. About 20% of the lumber was lost during milling due to the age of the wood, and of the 80% that remained there was no room for error. In the end, Tom had less than 2% waste. Some of the boards were wide enough to be one full face, and Tom routed into the face of them



to give a raised-panel look. Each cabinet had to be custom-made to allow for how the cabin had settled.

Lorraine sourced antique hammered glass for two of the cabinet doors to give "a rustic kitchen feel." She found hardware, including the H hinges, at Decorum in Portland, Maine. A farmer's skirted soapstone sink was ordered through Village Kitchen & Bath in Bridgton, who supplied an additional custom slab for the faucets, including the copper feed for the spring water. Ever since

there has been electricity at the cabin, there has been a switch to draw water from the spring on the property. Tom incorporated leftover strips of soapstone into the trim around the sink for accent. Lorraine chose double pendant lights for over the sink that would complete the "cabin look."

The kitchen ceiling was replaced with tongue and groove pine that was custom milled by Home Grown Lumber of Center Conway, New Hampshire, to match the ceilings in the rest of the cabin.

When it came time to install countertop, Lorraine was temporarily at a loss. "I couldn't put Corian or even granite. I wanted something with tremendous movement in it, but I didn't know what. I'd seen wood from Premium Specialty Hardwoods at the Fryeburg Fair, and went to the mill in Rumford, Maine, to see what they had there. When I saw this diseased bird's eye maple, I knew it was the wood that would tie the kitchen together."

Because the kitchen is small and counter space minimal, Lorraine designed a collapsing table top with the bird's eye maple wood. When not in use, the table can be neatly collapsed against the wall.

The bathroom was nearly as non-functional as the kitchen. A 40-gallon hot water tank took up one whole corner of it, leaving room for a shower the size of a small travel trailer shower. Again there was no storage space. In order to stay within the original inside footprint, a corner of the living room space was stolen to enlarge the bathroom. Additionally, relocating the hot water heater to the woodshed on the other side of the bathroom wall allowed enough room for an antique claw foot tub with shower, a pedestal sink, toilet and plenty of storage.

The rest of the cabin required little more than cosmetic changes, which were mostly accomplished with furniture and lighting. Lorraine chose Arts & Craft style lighting fixtures, comfortable stuffed couches and chairs, and rustic wooden bed frames and tables. There is nothing that overpowers or takes away from the cabin's original charm and features, such as the leaded glass windows and unpeeled birch roof rafters.

A Maine native, Lorraine Blais has been offering complete home design services to residents of western Maine for more than 20 years. Visit www.blaisinteriors.com or call 890-9198.

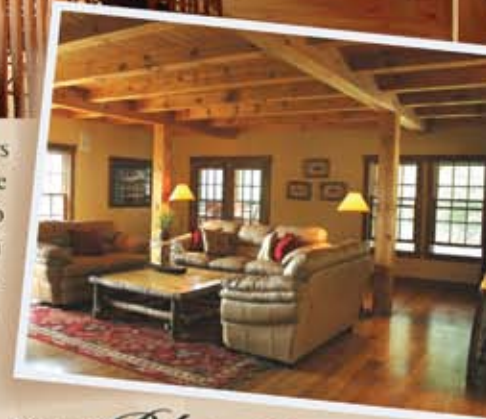
A finish carpenter who takes pride in the distinctive craftsmanship of his products, Tom Dekutoski brings his unique ideas to the design process. Carpentry is not just building to Tom—it's an art.



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