

The Family Cabin

Inspiration for Camps, Cottages, and Cabins

DALE MULFINGER author of *The Cabin* and *Back to the Cabin*





An ensemble of shed roofs lifts to the tree canopies, as multiple small structures come together to weave their way through the trees.

MAINE ARCHITECT Will Winkelman explains that it's a great start to the design process when clients really know their property. That was the case with this island project on a small lake in central

A Maine Island Camp

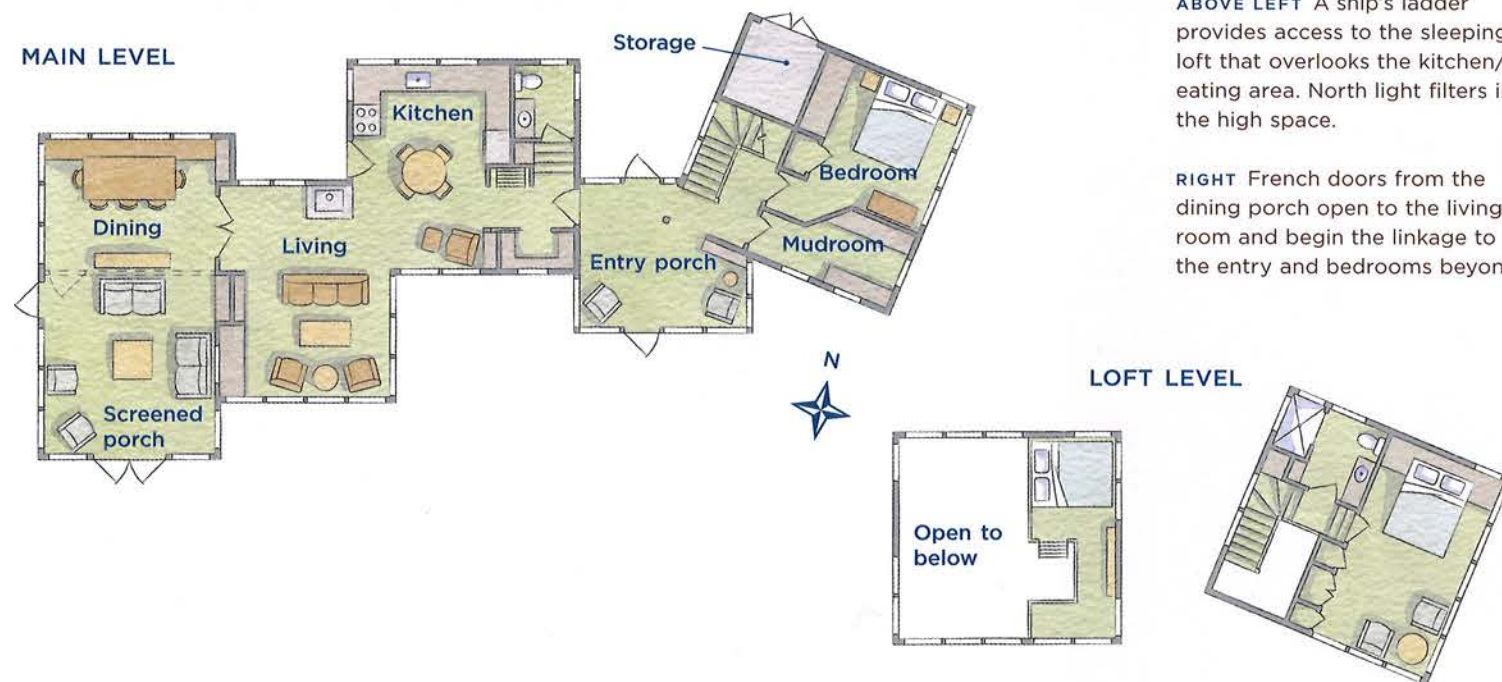
Maine for two Portland attorneys. One of them had attended a camp on the same lake in his youth, and the other had enjoyed a similar camp lake experience elsewhere. After buying the land, the couple built a tent platform and camped there with their two children for several summers. As the years passed, they began to understand the diurnal and seasonal changes the property goes through, and they came



to appreciate the value of the sheltering canopy of pines and oaks that covered the island.

In early meetings with Will and his associate, Melissa Andrews, the couple expressed concern for saving trees and building a cabin that would blend in with the surroundings. They would be removing a modest existing cabin on the island and utilizing its clearing 60 ft. from the water for the site of their new structure. Its location on the southern point of the three-acre island would allow them to capture sweeping panoramic views.

Will and Melissa's design idea for the cabin was to break the structure down into three separate parts (or "pods"), with connected porch links so they could more easily weave the building through the trees. Zoning rules required them to keep the cabin to a maximum footprint of 1,500 sq. ft. and a height limit of 20 ft. They explored alternative roof schemes, comparing vernacular gables versus more contemporary sheds and flat roofs on the porches (see the sidebar on the facing page).



ABOVE LEFT A ship's ladder provides access to the sleeping loft that overlooks the kitchen/eating area. North light filters into the high space.

RIGHT French doors from the dining porch open to the living room and begin the linkage to the entry and bedrooms beyond.



Design Options

Architects typically begin the design process after a thorough site analysis and upon gleaning the owners' goals, aspirations, and budget. Many architects then present alternative solutions to the owners as a way to further understand how their clients make decisions and how they respond to aesthetics.

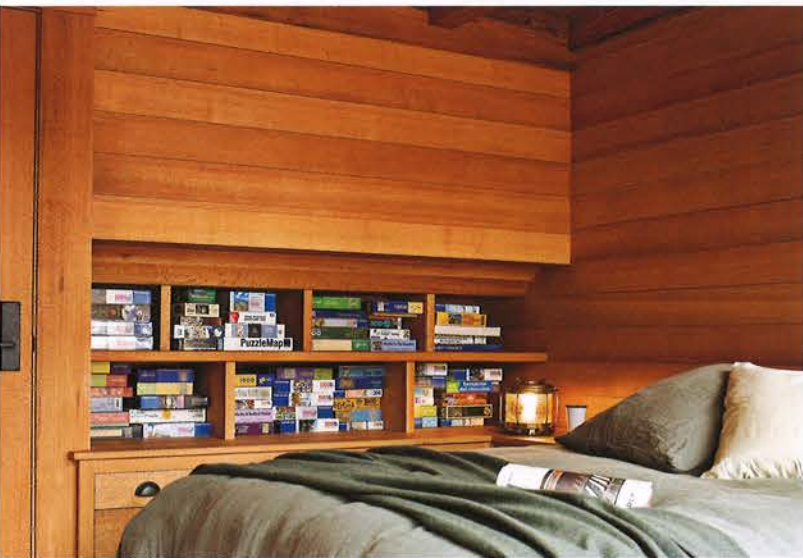
Will Winkelman and his associate, Melissa Andrews, developed two schemes for their island clients, with similar plans but with different roof forms. Melissa's sketches highlighted the difference between an assembly of gable forms versus a series of sheds. The owners immediately opted for the shed-roof scheme, preferring its outward thrust to the understory of the pine trees and the way it would filter light deep into each space.



A one-and-a-half-story pod flanks the east end of the camp and deftly contains two levels of sleeping within its 20-ft. height. This pod is joined by an entry porch to the kitchen/dining/living pod. The high ceiling in the kitchen lifts to an open sleeping loft, which is reached by a ship's ladder. At the west end, a summer living porch offers broad views to the water. Folded glass panels can be used to close off half the porch on cooler days.

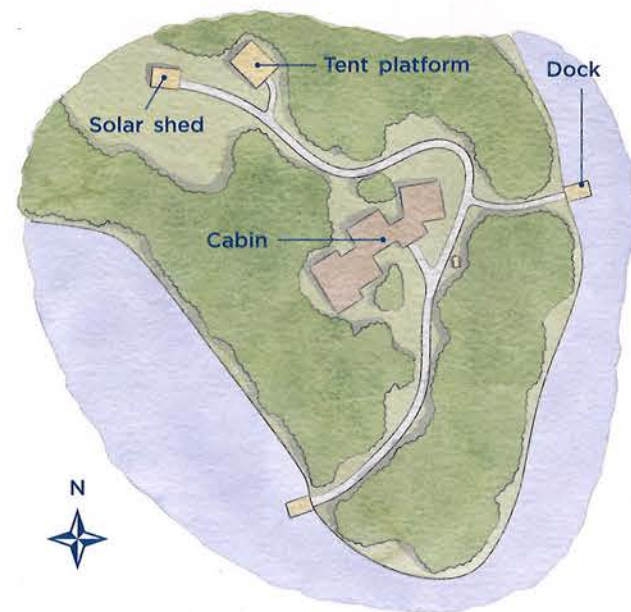
Building on the island was a challenge because all materials and laborers had to be transported there by boat. Builder Henry Banks fabricated his own unique barge for the occasion. As winter set in and ice formed, Henry's crewmembers were able to walk to the island pulling sleds. With thicker ice, snowmobiles and eventually pick-up trucks could be used.

A few oak trees had to be cut down to make room for the camp and the solar shed nearby. The felled trees were milled on site with a portable sawmill for later use as interior finishes and furniture. Henry was also able to use his local connections to reclaim some Southern yellow pine from a Maine paper



TOP Morning light filters into the east wing second-level bedroom.

ABOVE The lower bedroom in the east wing has a supply of puzzles and bedside reading.



The dining area of the screened porch can be closed with windows that drop on the west wall and accordion over on the north wall.



ABOVE The loft bedroom has built-in storage created with reclaimed heart pine from a dismantled Maine paper mill.



ABOVE The living room has a corner exposure to the lake and is warmed by the soapstone-clad woodstove.

mill. "It was the best load of wood I had ever purchased," Henry is said to have exclaimed. This cache was milled to size for exposed roof-framing members and some of the woodwork. The exterior is clad in hand-split cedar shakes, which have a textural quality similar to the surrounding tree bark. A charcoal gray penetrating stain helped achieve a similar color to the bark.

Solar panels mounted atop a shed on higher ground north of the camp generate the modest amount of energy needed. Propane is used as backup to fire a generator and for cooking. Although the camp was begun as a seasonal structure, the owners have winterized the center living pod and can cocoon there for short winter stays.

The owner is full of praise for the amazing team of designers and builders of his camp. "It's the most incredible craftsmanship, just like a fine piece of furniture," he states. "The design is understated, simple, and dramatically uplifting. It's photogenic, but living in it is even better than the photographs."

RIGHT Because the cabin is on a small island, workmen and construction materials all had to arrive by boat from a mainland dock.



RIGHT A stair with fir treads leads down from the upper bedroom in the east wing of the cabin.

