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Overlooking the lake through a screen of trees, the camp kept its original prow-like facade.

Lakeside Poetry

A funky camp gets a sleek upgrade

BY REGINA COLE

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JONATHAN REECE

DANIEL AND MICHELLE Scott love to tell how architect Rob Whitten transformed their ugly duckling camp into the swan of Great Pond.

“He took our prose and turned it into poetry!” enthused Daniel Scott as he and his wife recalled how they fell for the Belgrade Lakes area when their son was attending Colby College.

“We wanted a rental for football season, found this place, and fell in love with the site,” Michelle said. “The camp, however, left a lot to be desired.”

“There was not a right angle in the entire place, and the windows did not close,” her husband chimed in. “The wind just blew right through.”

While the Scotts fell in love with the lake and its surrounding woods and hills, they wanted a four-season home that would shelter them after a day of skiing at Sugarloaf just as well as after a day of canoeing on the lake. They decided to renovate and winterize the house, and looked for an architect. Their search brought them to Rob Whitten, founder and principal of Portland’s Whitten Architects.



Wraparound porches and decks built of red cedar surround the cabin and garage.

A live-edge counter separates the kitchen from the living room. The open floor plan guarantees wonderful views of the lake, even from the kitchen sink.



LEFT: The fireplace was moved and rebuilt as a double-sided one that also opens to the new screened porch, a favorite all-season sitting area.

The camp had a preferred location 75 feet from Great Pond with a dock and swim float, it was sited on a double lot, and it was at the quiet end of a nice country road.

“But the camp was in rough shape,” said Whitten. “No footings or foundation, minimal insulation, failing roof and wall systems, old doors and windows, bad site drainage, and a questionable septic system.”

The Scotts directed Whitten to make the house modern, functional, and efficient.

The architect connected the couple with Linwood Doble Custom Home Builders, located in Carrabassett Valley. Linwood Doble and his crew began building in the fall, and worked through a frigid winter. The Scotts had one burning desire: to be able to celebrate July 4th with their family in the newly renovated lake house.

“And we did!” they said.

Whitten designed the new structure around the original, aware that it was closer to the lake than would be allowed now. Today’s building codes do not permit new construction within 100 feet of the water; but old structures that are closer than that are grandfathered.

“We built a new foundation within the footprint of the original cabin,” Whitten said.

The Scotts’ newly improved cabin is woody and warm, with wide board pine flooring and an open floor plan in the main downstairs room. The living room, dining room, and kitchen flow into each other; the new mudroom enters at the kitchen end. Downstairs also houses the master bedroom. Upstairs are two more bedrooms that, until this renovation, were dark and felt small. To introduce natural light and to make the rooms appear larger, Whitten designed dormers for the two rooms.

“It was very dark in those rooms, and

because they are on the side of the house that is over 100 feet from the lake, we were permitted to add the dormers. Now those rooms feel much more bright and spacious,” he said.

Whitten worked on the Great Pond house with Will Fellis, a Maine native and fellow architect at Whitten Architects. Fellis pointed out that the new house, which measures 2,200 square feet, is only 250 square feet larger than the old cabin. In addition to a new entry and mudroom, rebuilt kitchen and screened porch, the architects effected an enormous change when they moved the fireplace to the opposite, north wall of the house.

“It opened up the view of the lake, and now they get the morning sun,” said Fellis. “While, at the same time, it meant that we could build two back-to-back fireplaces, one in the living room, and another in the screened porch.”

The architects consulted with structural engineer Albert Putnam of Brunswick. Upon his recommendation,

The Scotts’ newly improved cabin is woodsy and warm, with wide board pine flooring and an open floor plan in the main downstairs room.

Doble’s crew installed a laminated weight-bearing beam that supports the open space of the great room.

The project also included a garage, which is outfitted with guest quarters above, and connects to the house via a wraparound porch and a covered breezeway. The approach to the house leads downhill to an arched entry that frames an enticing view of the lake.

“The breezeway welcomes you as you come from the driveway,” said Daniel Scott. “It feels like coming into a courtyard.”

The bunkroom above the garage has a deck overlooking the house and the lake. The basement below the main

house is home to the furnace; storage for canoes, kayaks, and a sailboat; and a foosball table.

“It gives me confidence to know that now the house is on a solid foundation,” Daniel Scott said. “And we love having a basement!”

Rough-sawn pine with live-edge boards, interspersed with cedar shingles, make up the house’s siding. The decks are built of red cedar, and the trim is painted a rich color known as “Rangeley Green.” The standing-seam metal roof is a lighter shade of green.

“When you look at the shore from the lake, the house disappears,” Michelle Scott said. “But at night, it glows through the trees.”

She knew what she wanted for the design of her new kitchen, specifying Sub Zero and Wolf appliances, simple Shaker-style cabinets painted gray, and, on the counters, honed black and white veined granite. A lighter colored polished granite covers the trapezoidal central island.



The kitchen is open, functional and low-maintenance, with tiled floors, granite counters, painted Shaker-style cabinets and top-of-the-line appliances.



New dormers turned formerly dark spaces into bright bedrooms with woody views.

“Rob wanted to put butcher block on the island,” Michelle recalled. “But we said no: for one thing, there is already so much wood on the walls and ceilings. But also, we don’t want the maintenance of butcher block. When we are here, we want to be outside, not inside cleaning.”

Michelle Scott, who is a teacher,

spends the whole summer here, and she and her husband plan to retire here.

“They wanted a warm and dry four-season home,” said Whitten. “I think we did that without making it too formal or fancy.”

Michelle enthusiastically agrees with Whitten’s assessment.

“We preserved some of the funk,” she added happily.

She loves the fact that now her kitchen has a stellar view of the lake. She and her husband are especially fond of the new screened porch, complete with the fireplace.

“One of the best things about this renovation is how now we have such great indoor/outdoor spaces,” Michelle Scott said. “I love hanging on the porch, watching the lake. In the evening it is so beautiful.”

The couple use the deck even in the winter.

“We like to sit out there, with blankets over our knees and the fire going,” Daniel Scott said. “We can be here all day without once hearing a human sound.”

A getaway, indeed. ☆

Regina Cole is a freelance writer who lives in Gloucester, Massachusetts. She writes about architecture, interior design, and the history of the American decorative arts for many national and regional magazines.