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The site makes use of existing exposed ledge, such as this rock near the water's edge. Generations of Eldridges have looked for starfish on the nearby beach.

Generations Joined

THE EDGY AND TRADITIONAL MERGE AT A BELOVED FAMILY RETREAT

by Debra Spark | Photography Rachel Sieben

I associate dilapidated bungalows with wooded back roads that lead to the waterfront. There might be nothing particularly pretty about the homes, but they speak of summer pleasures: blueberry picking, eating lunch in a damp bathing suit, and hiking through the woods. The Eldridge family had one of those kinds of places. In fact, they had one of those kinds of places for 100 years. The home sat on a narrow peninsula at the confluence of the Sheepscot and Cross rivers in Edgecomb. The eaves were so low that you had to stoop to look out the windows. You could enjoy wildlife both inside and outside the home; red squirrels eventually took up residence. Even so, the place was beloved. It wasn't for living in, anyway, but for sleeping. Life at the bungalow was oriented to the supremely peaceful outdoors.

By 2003, when ownership transferred to Mark and Kathie Eldridge of Massachusetts, part of the house was sagging and pulling away from the rest of the structure. The septic system had problems. So did the plumbing. The windows wouldn't open and close. When the two looked into propping up the sagging part of the house, they learned that the effort would negatively impact the rest of the structure. Reluctantly they realized it was time to make a change.

Since the bungalow was built into a 75-foot setback, Mark and Kathie could rebuild in the existing footprint, or they could build a larger house farther from the water. Neither option seemed quite appealing. Building in the existing footprint would get them a house big enough for themselves and their two teenage children, but it wouldn't allow them to invite the extended family for a stay. Building farther back meant losing the immediate proximity to the water. Besides, a house that met their entertaining desires might be too big, out of scale with the forested spit of land. "For us, the beauty of the place isn't just about the water," says Mark. "The wildlife and woods are part of the magic. We didn't want something that screamed 'new house.' We wanted something that blended in."

Design/build firm Knickerbocker Group of Portland and Boothbay came up with a solution. The Eldridges could build two modest-sized structures: a cottage in the existing footprint that would house the immediate family and a bunkhouse beyond the setback for overflow guests. A slab granite terrace with a grill and fieldstone fire pit could bridge the expanse between the two buildings. As designed by Knickerbocker architect Sue Mendleson, all the spaces, indoors and out, would have views east and west to both rivers. There would be rooms where people could gather,



A second kitchen sink (left) is used for washing mussels and clams. The piping for the faucet has been engineered into the stone slab chimney around which the kitchen is positioned. Floating mahogany shelves are above the counter, and a beverage refrigerator and natural cherry cabinet are below.

The bunkhouse and cottage (opposite) are linked by a stone terrace with a fire pit, custom Adirondack chairs, and a grill in a custom stone framework. Black Meadow Farm of Damariscotta is responsible for excavating the site as well as landscaping with plantings natural to the area, adding spruce trees and balsam fir, as well as flower beds with daylilies, black-eyed Susans, astilbe, and hostas.

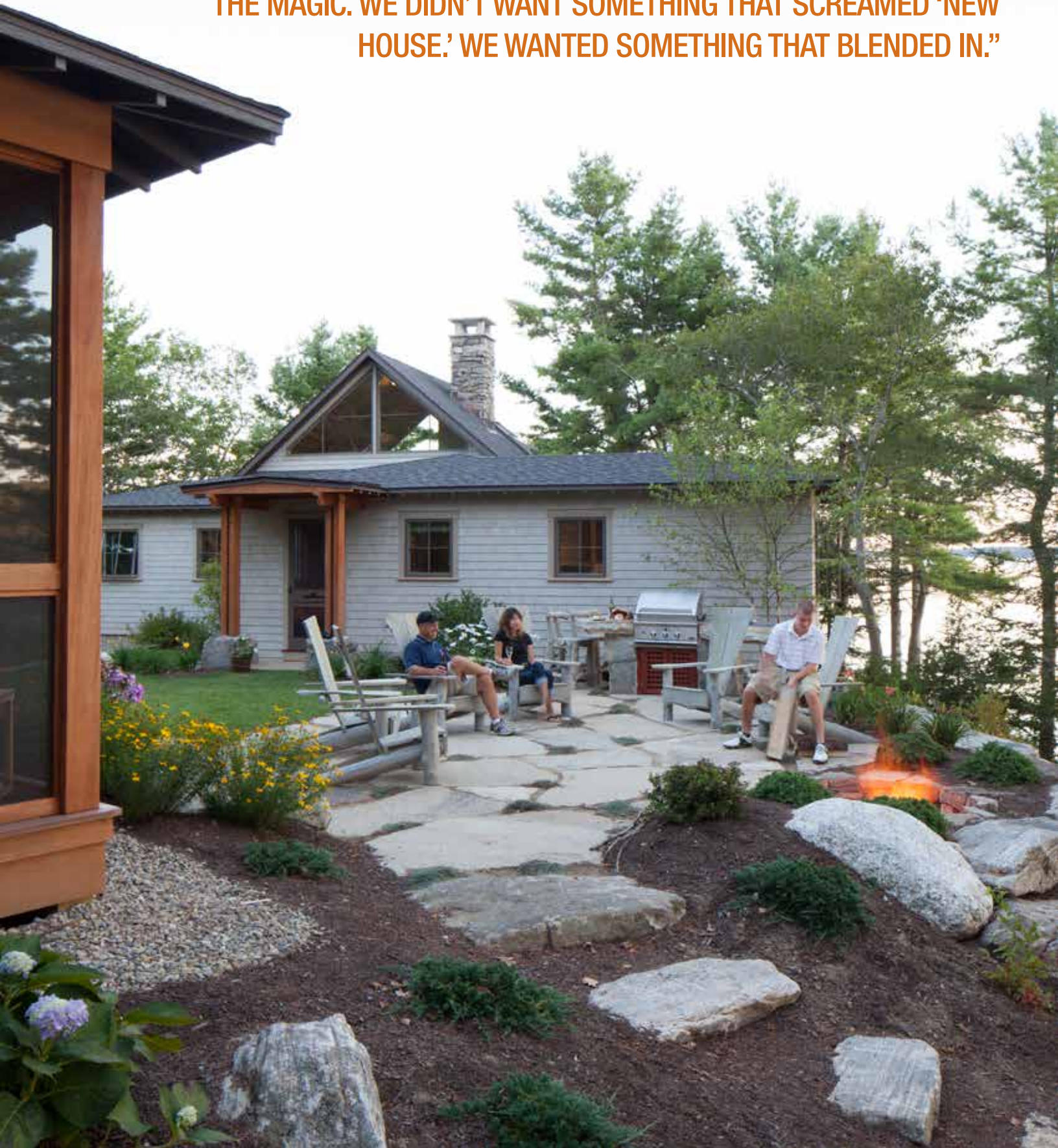
but also nooks with window seats and private spots with Adirondack chairs, where one could sneak away to be alone. “We wanted to create a jewel box that would speak to an era gone by but still have a twenty-first-century edgy feel,” says Knickerbocker Group’s owner and CEO, Steve Malcom.

To do this, Mendleson designed the cottage to have an open-plan ground floor with an owners’ bedroom and an upstairs loft reached by a ladder stair. For the bunkhouse, she designed a downstairs gathering room and owners’ bedroom and an upstairs bunkroom with four single beds. Both structures have features that harken back to the traditional waterside cottage, like screened porches with beadboard ceilings and exteriors of shingle, board and batten, and wood paneling. The cottage has an outdoor shower, nickel-gap interior walls, fir post-and-beam elements, an oak floor treated to look like reclaimed wood, and sloping ceilings made of a richly patinaed wood that comes from mushroom farms. The variety and types of wood in the cottage are not traditional, of course, but the decision to use wood was driven by the Eldridges’ fondness for the knotty-pine paneling of the original home.

Other aspects of the house seem decidedly contemporary but of a piece with a waterside home, such as a large powder room mirror framed with rope and a nautical Restoration Hardware dining room chandelier that also makes use of rope. The living room furniture is Crate and Barrel with fabric that Kathie chose because its pattern reminded her of sea creatures.

The edginess enters into the home with a number of one-of-a-kind design decisions. For instance, instead of there being small windows in the cottage loft’s gable roof, the gable walls are entirely glass, forming a large second-floor glass triangle that one can see into as one walks toward the house. Although it is open-plan, the cottage’s ground floor has a stone chimney that divides the space. A living room fireplace is on one side of the chimney. A kitchen wraps around two of the other sides, so the kitchen’s stove wall is actually made of large slabs of granite. Knickerbocker fixed a range hood, as well as floating mahogany shelves, into the chimney stone, and fit in a faucet for a second kitchen sink where the Eldridges wash clams, lobsters, and the mussels they pick from the rocks just outside their door. Other unusual custom

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ROCKS 42

The living room of the post-and-beam cottage has a slab stone fireplace and a ladder that fits into the mass of the chimney and leads to a loft with two beds. Kathie Eldridge picked the dark blue fabric on the chairs because the pattern reminded her of sea creatures. The tables in front of the fireplace have bluestone tops.

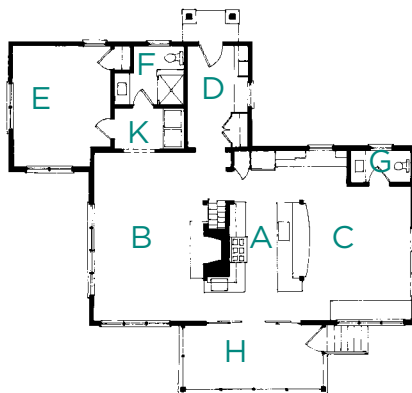




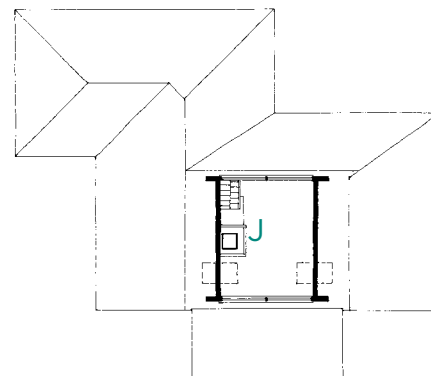
The dining room (above) with a rustic table and chairs from Arhaus, nickel-gap walls, ceiling boards from mushroom farms, and applied fir rafters. A custom cedar-lined trunk on the far wall hides away puzzles and toys (and is built wide enough for naps). The chandelier is from Restoration Hardware and suits Kathie Eldridge's desire for "something nautical" in the room.

COTTAGE

FIRST FLOOR



SECOND FLOOR





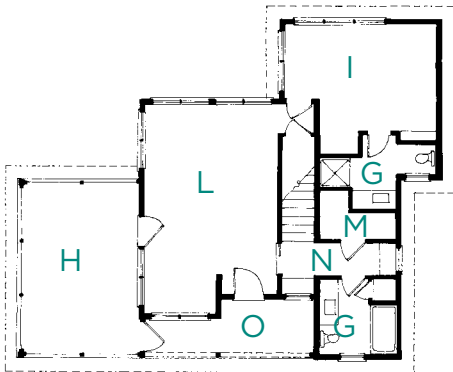
(Clockwise from top left) Once the house was framed, the builders looked out the windows to figure out how best to prune the trees to frame the view, which is of the confluence of the Sheepscot and Cross rivers in Edgecomb.

Stone is used abundantly throughout the house, such as these stacked stone pillars that support the screened porch. Kayak storage is underneath.

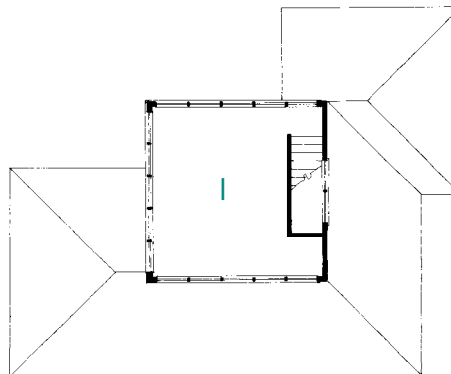
While the cottage's colors are subdued, the bunkhouse's are ebullient. The FLOR carpet squares determined the colors for the Tommy Hilfiger bedding in this second-floor children's bedroom with clerestory windows all around and a lightly whitewashed pine ceiling.

BUNKHOUSE

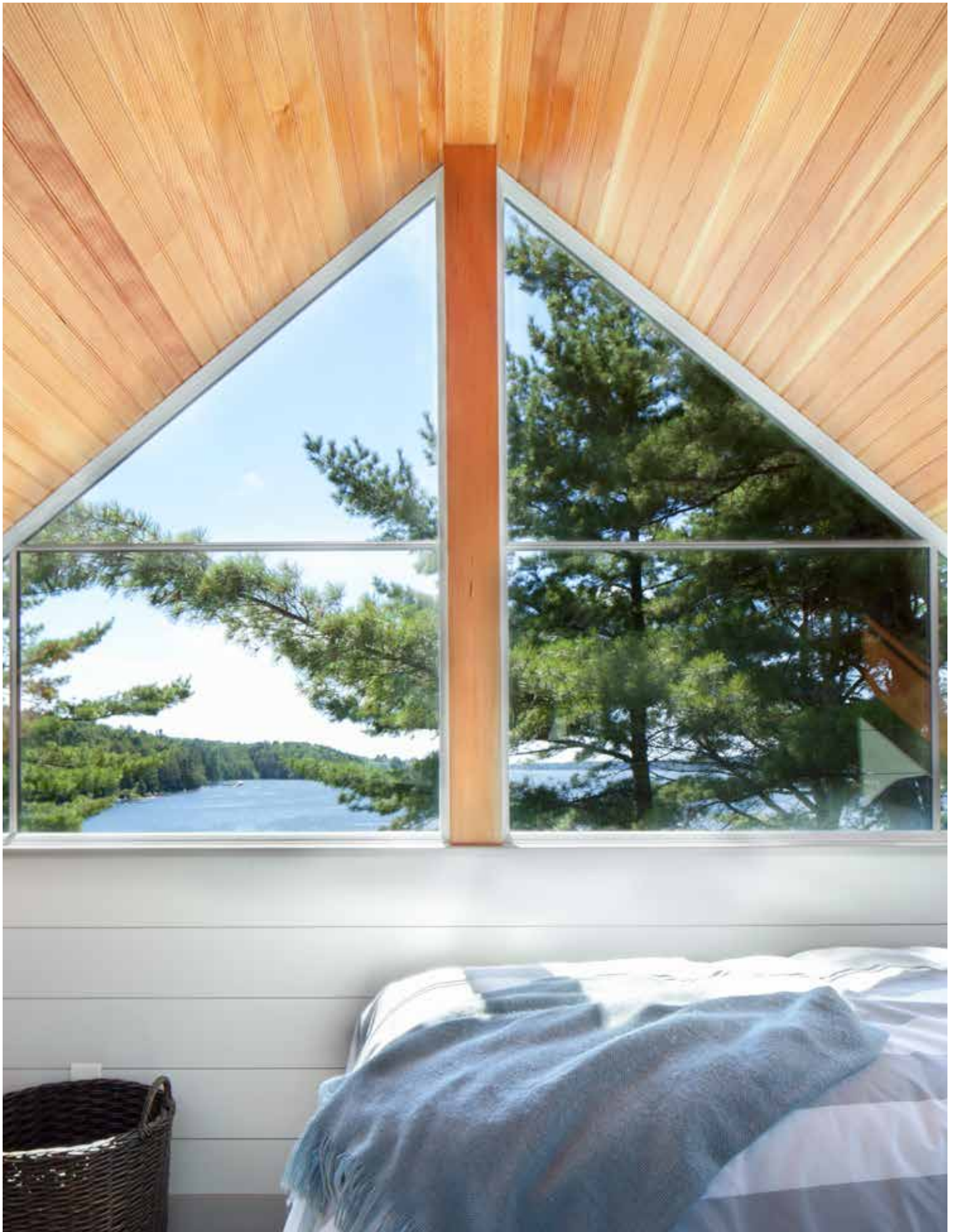
FIRST FLOOR



SECOND FLOOR



- A Kitchen
- B Living Room
- C Dining Room
- D Mudroom
- E Owners' Bedroom
- F Owners' Bathroom
- G Bathrooms
- H Screened Porches
- I Bedrooms
- J Loft Bedroom
- K Laundry Hall
- L Common Room
- M Mechanical Room
- N Hall
- O Entry Porch





The interior of the cottage's glass gable is a room with two single beds and a bird's-eye view of the lake (opposite). The walls are nickel-gap and the ceiling is fir.

The approach to the Eldridge property (above) with a cottage to the left and a bunkhouse to the right. The cottage's glass gable allows one to look through the house to the sky beyond. In season, the grounds fill with lady's slippers.



The owners' bedroom (above) with nickel-gap walls, an Ethan Allen dresser, and linens from Pottery Barn. The cottage's color scheme is blue and neutral to complement what's outside the window.

Mark Eldridge's grandmother painted this wicker chair (left). Kathie and Mark kept it and a few other old chairs from the original bungalow.

The bunkhouse (opposite) has a large screened porch for gatherings and a square tower with clerestory windows.





A view from the dining room (above, left), across the breakfast bar's mahogany top and a kitchen island to a wall made of slab granite. The oven hood and floating mahogany shelves are fitted into the stone, the backside of which is a fireplace for the living room. The bar chairs are from Arhaus.

A Craftsman-style entry (above, right) with stone boulders and slim fir columns. The exterior of the bunkhouse and cottage is a combination of shingle, board and batten, and wood paneling.

details include a Craftsman-style fir portico with slim columns perched atop two granite boulders and a dark-tile front entry floor with a compass rose. Outside, the stone terrace has custom Adirondack chairs made from branches and stained pine, and a grill is fitted into a stone framework with a single curved piece of granite serving as countertop.

Kathie opted for a blue and neutral color scheme for the cottage. The palette has a subtle richness, especially when juxtaposed against the cottage's wood and stone elements and against the darker colors of the kitchen, which incorporates natural cherry cabinets, a distressed, black-painted cherry island, honed black granite countertops, and a mahogany breakfast bar. Knickerbocker's Elaine Murdoch, a certified master kitchen and bath designer, assisted in the decisions here and in the bathrooms. Kathie was considerably bolder with color in the bunkhouse. She found carpeting that comes in tile form for the bunkroom floor. Its various colors inspired the room's blue comforters, orange dust ruffles, bright yellow bureau, and lime green, pill-shaped end table.

"For me," says architect Mendleson, "everything about this project is about transitions." She is talking about how the

road leads you into the property, how the wall finishes help you move inside, how the views open up as you move around the property, how the double triangles of the loft's roof open up a sky view, and how each interior space offers a different exterior view. Both Steve Malcom and Elaine Murdoch observe that another transition is from past to present.

In summer, Mark's great-grandmother used to take a swim in the cove every day. Now his children get into the water and immediately want to get out. The water's really too cold for swimming. Still, the Eldridges boat and kayak. They hang out on the screened porches and wander in the woods. They observe the seals that come to sit on a rock by their house at low tide. When the original cottage came down, the Eldridges' eldest daughter was frankly "emotional," says Kathie. "You're tearing down my memories!" the girl protested. Now she loves the new home. As for the Eldridges' son, he told his sister before she saw the new house for the first time, "It's like somewhere you'd dream about." **MH+D**

For more information, see Resources on page 124.



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