

BUILT FROM MEMORY

Architect John Battle's mission was to design a house that captured the nostalgia of magical boyhood summers.

By Doreen Iudica Vigue

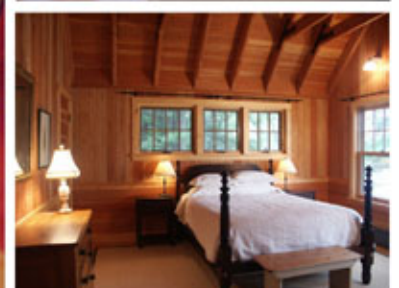
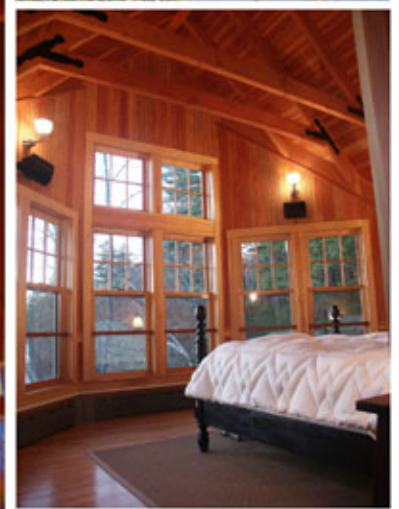
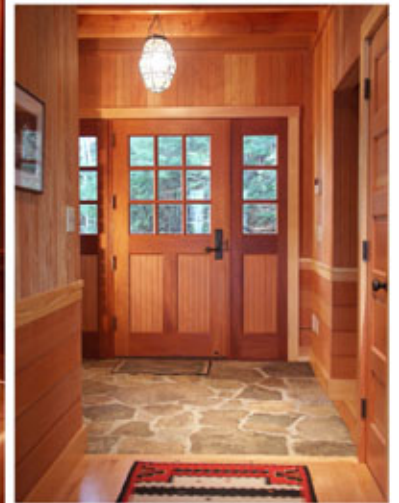
When architect John Battle's client first brought him to the New Hampshire lake where he planned to build a vacation home, he took Battle on a canoe ride. From the water, he pointed out the various cottages he had known as a boy, when he spent his summers in this idyllic piney setting with his family. What he wanted, he explained, was for his own place to echo their simple designs and capture their nostalgia.

"I always loved the faces of the houses on the lake," he says. "I wanted to show John that whatever we built had to have a graceful bowing to the lake, if you will. I didn't want a house that was out of context or that stuck out. I wanted a house with character that would last 100 years."

So Battle lifted features from those faces -- grand porches, rustic facades -- when he designed the four-bedroom stone-and-wood home for the family of five, taking into consideration that the owners also wanted a space where 100 people could gather for a party, where their three young sons could romp in summer or winter, and where comfort and relaxation were always in full supply.

"I wanted a house where great memo-

The house that Boston architect John Battle designed pays homage to the grand porches and rustic facades of neighboring lakeside cottages. Near right: Two views of the dining area which opens to a screened porch. All interior walls and ceilings are bead board or knotty pine. Far right: (from top): Stone arches from an outdoor ground-level grotto; the entry hall has a stone floor; wide stone steps lead to the lake; in the octagonal master suite, the bed faces a wall of windows for optimum views; the



ries could be made," says the owner. "I wanted a house with things built into it that my kids would always remember, like a good spot to take their girlfriends for a kiss or a place to sneak a beer. It's all about remembrances."

Despite such personal visions, the client and his wife gave Battle free reign over every detail of the house, letting him choose everything from kitchen cabinets to landscaping, a challenge the architect says he met with great excitement.

"I didn't feel any pressure at all; I felt completely comfortable," says Battle, of Battle Associates in Boston. "I knew so well the owner's point of departure and what his dreams were that it became easy to trust my own instincts."

One decision the clients and Battle made together was how to situate the house so that it would face the head of the lake and have a front-row view of the golden summer sunsets and the white winter landscape.

Only natural materials like stone and wood were used, inside and out, giving the house an organic, timeless sensibility. The exterior was done in cedar shingles, the wood trim painted muted shades of beige and green that blend with the wooded surroundings. Inside, the walls and ceilings are bead board or knotty pine with no drywall or plaster anywhere.

"I remember waking up in my parents' house as a kid looking at the ceiling, at all the knots in the wood -- nothing was painted -- and I'd make up these stories and have images of the knots, of the pictures they made in my imagination," says the homeowner. "I said, 'We've got to have that wood in this house.'"

The floors are pine, the living room fireplace is stone, and the focal point of the home's activities is a large, octagonal screened porch whose doors to the interior fold accordion-style, so the dining area and kitchen benefit from the breezes.

The kitchen is state of the art, with a Sub-Zero refrigerator, restaurant-style range, granite countertops, and two stainless-steel sinks. The cabinets, though, are tug-at-your-heart: salvaged antiques pine with distressed glass fronts, like so many grandmothers' kitchens. There is also a large pantry, full of shelving and drawers, that opens to a side porch.

The modestly sized and simply furnished living room features expansive views of the lake through a dozen windows. Upstairs, four simple bedrooms and two full baths await the family and guests.

The octagonal master suite is understated yet dramatic. The bed faces a wall of windows for optimum views. An anteroom serves as a sitting area and office. The master bath has an antique claw-foot tub and wooden floors

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John Battle

The New Hampshire home's open floor plan allows the field stone fireplace, which is the focal point of the living room, to also provide ambiance for the dining area. A wrought-iron chandelier adds to the rustic atmosphere.

painted green. The guest bedroom across the hall also has commanding lake views, while the boys' bedrooms on the opposite side of the house are at tree level.

There are no televisions or computers in this weekend retreat. Music, the lake, a hammock, and a tire swing provide the entertainment. Well, there is a pool table in the finished stone basement, a large space that leads to an outdoor grotto made of five stone arches. Battle also built a boathouse for the family's canoes, kayaks, and Adirondack guide boat. It has two little alcoves at its entry, good spots for sneaking kisses or sipping beers.