

Maine Home

MARCH 2018

+ DESIGN



LAKE HOUSE LANGUAGE

Materials tell the story at a home on Long Lake

MARCH \$5.95



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OPEN & Airy

A family camp on Long Lake uses natural materials and thoughtful design decisions to bring the outdoors in



A large granite fireplace installed by Alvin Ridlon sets the tone for this Long Lake camp. Designed by architect Paul Attardo of Attardo Pondelis Architecture in Yarmouth and built by Mark Conforte of Conforte Builders in Lovell, the house showcases the beauty of natural materials, like warm Douglas fir ceilings, soothing white oak floors, and, of course, rustic granite masonry.



by Katy Kelleher
Photography by Jeff Roberts



“When planning a house some architects start with the entryway, imagining how guests will someday walk up the steps, ring the doorbell, and wait for their greeting. Others begin the process by dreaming of a kitchen so large that half a dozen grandchildren could rummage through the various drawers and pantries without stepping on a single toe. But when it came to building an heirloom camp on the shores of Long Lake in Harrison, the team of Attardo Pondelis Architecture led by principal Paul Attardo didn’t start with the front door, or the kitchen, or even the foundations. For this project, Attardo started with the porch.

Built by Mark Conforte of Conforte Builders in Lovell, the contemporary camp features an enormous screened porch with a 28-foot-long glass door that lifts and slides, transforming the lake-facing side of the house into one large indoor-outdoor space. “Given the proximity to the lake, we knew the porch would be the most prominent feature of the house,” says Attardo. “It was important to connect the interior space to the landscape and take full advantage of the daylighting as the sun sweeps across the site.” The homeowners had been vacationing in Maine since the late 1980s, and when they saw this 48-acre lot on the shores of Long Lake advertised in a copy of the *Boston Globe* in 2005, they

knew it would be a perfect place to bring their children and grandchildren for years to come. “When we approached Paul, we didn’t have a lot of things on our wish list,” the homeowner recalls. “But we did need a good fireplace, a big kitchen, and if we could do it, we wanted a magic door that would disappear so we could bring the outside in.”

While Attardo knew early on that his design would hinge on that door, it would take some effort to achieve a seamless merger of interior and exterior space. He approached Duratherm, a Vassalboro-based window and door company, with his specifications and had them create a two-piece custom glass door that is both light enough to move easily and thick enough to keep in the heat. When not in use, “one piece retracts between two stone fireplaces and the other rolls along the kitchen countertop,” Attardo explains. He set the door flush with the white oak floor to ensure that there would be no visual boundaries to break the space into segments. Rather than trying to shoehorn this bold design element into an explicitly Maine-themed lodge, Attardo chose to take his design cues from the materials and the natural landscape. “The driving force of the aesthetics was not the local vernacular,” he says. “The language of the building instead comes from the wood and the stones; we decided to let the materials tell the story.”

Inspired by the homeowners’ desire for a sculptural fireplace, Attardo worked with Conforte to select pieces of granite for the

“We kept the house [above] low to the ground, and the floor is pretty tight to ground level,” says Attardo. “That helped ensure that the house feels connected to the land.”

While the homeowners brought in much of their own furniture, including the oriental rug in the living room, Attardo designed some walnut accents to add visual interest, like the light fixture that hangs over the dining room table (opposite).







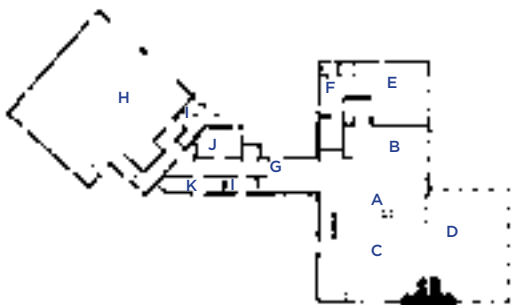
The kitchen and dining room area features granite countertops, oak cabinets, and on the left side of the image, a "working wall." Attardo installed a light monitor (the set-back skylight seen at the top of the picture) to allow southerly light to penetrate into the space.



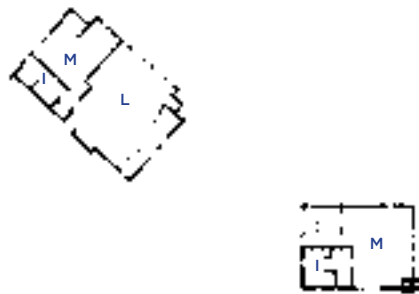
“To me, this captures the warmth of the interior,” says Attardo of this exterior view at night (above).

The porcelain tile of the entryway (opposite) flows seamlessly into the white oak flooring of the living, dining, and kitchen areas. The staircase leads to the second-story guest bedrooms and living quarters. (The homeowners’ suite is located on the first floor.)

FIRST FLOOR



SECOND FLOOR



- | | |
|--------------------|-------------|
| A Kitchen | H Garage |
| B Dining Room | I Bathrooms |
| C Living Room | J Laundry |
| D Screened Porch | K Storage |
| E Owners' Bedroom | L Studio |
| F Owners' Bathroom | M Bedrooms |
| G Entryway | |







(Opposite, clockwise from top left): Granite and mahogany mingle on the hearth of the porch fireplace. The approach to the main entryway features a gradual level change rather than a series of steps. A custom Douglas fir door with copper inlay depicts the site plan for the house. A newell features walnut and white-painted steel.

The owners' suite vanity features Douglas fir cabinets and granite countertops. Attardo notes that there are additional LED lights set back into the wood trim around the mirror that create a flattering glow.



(Clockwise from left) A seasonal bathroom is used for rinsing off after a day at the lake. The client's beloved outdoor cooking area. A shot from above showcases the crescent-shaped beach.

The owners' suite bathroom (opposite) is connected to the bedroom by a glass panel, which allows for lake views even from this tucked-away space.





living room fireplace that would harmonize with the colors of the coniferous woods and sandy beach. The homeowner also asked that the grout lines on the fireplace be “as tight as you can get them.” (As the space flows from indoors to outdoors, the grout lines on the stone work get successively wider, reflecting an overall trend toward precision indoors tempered by a slightly looser, more relaxed approach to the livable outdoor spaces.) “We sweated about those stones a lot,” says Conforte. “The devil is really in the details.” Whether he was working on the living room mantel or the outdoor patio, Conforte provided three-foot samples of each section of stone work to the homeowner for approval. The homeowner, Conforte says, likes to research every purchase he makes, and the lake house was no exception: “He’s a smart customer, and I appreciate that. When you work on a house like this, it’s no

fun watching it degrade around you as time wears on. You want it to last.”

While the stone work provided grounding elements in the lofty lakeside design, the wood helped balance out the effects of the large windows, adding coziness and warmth to the contemporary cabin. “We wanted to harken back to the kind of materials you would find in a traditional Maine camp,” Attardo says. “We decided to use wood as our base material and to play with the scale. Some of the interior boards are quite wide, while others have a pickled finish to let the grain show through, and others are painted a solid color for visual interest.” Attardo settled on white oak for the flooring; Douglas fir for the trim, cabinetry, and exposed beams; and pickled or painted pine planks for the interior walls. Although “in the old days they wouldn’t have done anything to pine,”



This hallway (above) is located between the main entryway (to the right) and the lake-facing window (to the left). In the center is a storage closet.

The porch (right) is doubtless the most striking achievement of this house. Separated from the living room by one large sliding piece of glass (a custom order from Maine window company Duratherm), the porch is where the homeowners take most of their meals, read before bed, and enjoy long hours gazing at the serene waters of the lake.

The owner's suite bedroom (below) features pickled pine walls and a large window that overlooks the lake. The homeowner calls their summer getaway "pretty near perfect."



Attardo says, he decided to counteract the wood's tendency to yellow with age by applying a beige-toned finish. To add visual interest, Attardo incorporated walnut into the neutral color palette. "Early on, the homeowners showed an interest in walnut, which is an interesting wood with so much variation in grain and tone," he says. Attardo used the rich, dark species in the handrail for the steel staircase. "The stairs themselves are very thin and light," Attardo points out. "When we added walnut accents, it gave the staircase some weight and texture." To help unify the open-concept living space, he designed light fixtures with walnut accents to illuminate the living room, dining room, kitchen, and porch. (The dining set is also made of walnut, as are the living room side tables.)

While the house feels spacious, thanks to the lack of interior walls (and the prominent glass door), it has a fairly small footprint. The owners' suite is located on the first floor and features a large bathroom with radiant floor heating, a retractable mirror (which can cover the bathroom windows for extra privacy), a tub, a shower, and a small water closet hidden behind a Douglas fir door. The second floor includes two guest bedrooms and two full bathrooms. Aside from the much-used screened porch, the kitchen is the "heart of the house," says the homeowner. "Our grandkids like to come stay with us for the summer, and the kitchen is central to all our meals and entertainment," he explains. "Paul introduced us to the concept of a working wall, which we hadn't seen before—but it turned out really well." This space-saving feature packs all the major appliances, from freezer to pantry to microwave, into one wall. To provide additional counter space, Attardo added a granite kitchen island, complete with a cooktop and prep sink, situated parallel to the working wall. Since the homeowners wanted to spend much of their time on the porch, Attardo also designed a refreshment center for the three-season room.

But on truly spectacular summer evenings, few activities are more enjoyable than manning the grill. Although they couldn't expand the house much further due to local regulations, Attardo and Conforte figured out a way to create a workable outdoor space to satisfy the homeowners' desire for an *al fresco* kitchen. Conforte installed a stone patio with a custom-built table and awning, which shelters a gas grill, smoker, and a small charcoal kettle grill. "On a good night, I'll be out there, doing my thing with a glass of wine, smoking a brisket, and watching the sun set over the lake," says the homeowner. "It's pretty near perfect." **MH+D**

For more information, see Resources on page 114.