

the makeover issue
SMALL-SPACE EDITION

little house on the lake

Sheri and Gerry Weber turned a dark and dinky
500-square-foot cabin into an airy family retreat—without
expanding the New Hampshire home's footprint.

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OPPOSITE PAGE Gerry and Sheri Weber—with daughter (from left) Janie, Ali, Jennifer, and Lucie—join golden retriever Riley on their screened porch.

THIS PAGE Adirondack chairs by Douglas Nance dot the beach in front of the cottage's storage area, which holds kayaks, canoes, and a classic Penn Yan boat.

Cooking Apple Green
Farrow & Ball



To take full advantage of their home's lakefront location, the Webers transformed the lawn into a beach. French doors, upper windows, and a screened porch were added to the back of the cabin.



LEFT Gerry, Janie, Lucie, and Jennifer portage a canoe under Riley's watch. RIGHT Sheri furnished the living area with outdoor finds that can handle wet swimsuits: a wicker sectional sofa from Restoration Hardware and a weather-resistant rug by Dash & Albert. Built-in cubbies store beach blankets and fishing gear, and the ladder leads to a sleeping loft.



A

ll they really wanted was a dock. When Sheri and Gerry Weber went in search of a place to put their boats, the two already owned an 1835 Cape-style house in the New Hampshire community of Elkins. The only problem? Their lake getaway sat a full quarter mile from Pleasant Lake. The Webers—including daughters Lucie, Janie, Ali, Jennifer, and Michelle—had to haul their kayaks and canoes every time they decided to go out on the water. “We love spending the day at the lake,” Sheri says, “but getting there always felt like a hassle.”

Still, she adds, “We had no intention of buying a house.” Until, that is, they lucked into a deal too good to pass up: a 500-square-foot cabin right on the water—one of a group of 1920s vacation rentals being sold off. “We thought, Why not park our money and the boats?” recalls Sheri. “We could tear the structure down someday to build a dream house, or use the shack for a while, then flip it later.”

Convenient though the location was, the home did have its drawbacks. Dark, dated paneling. Low ceilings. Teeny-tiny rooms. And virtually no view of the lake. Admits the Webers’ architect, Jeremy Bonin: “I couldn’t wait to open up the place.” First, he removed the interior walls to create one large living area. Down came the wood paneling and

"It's easy to forget about stuff hidden in a closet," says Sheri Weber. "Cubbies keep whatever you use most in plain sight."

Strong White
Farrow & Ball

The Webers got rid of the bedroom at right when they ripped out the interior walls in favor of one big living area. Enlarging the windows further opened the space; removing the dropped ceiling revealed the handsome rafters and allowed room for a sleeping loft (for left).



BEFORE



Since the "kitchen" is part of the main living area, it had to look good. A Kohler sink (set atop an accordion table from Arhaus Furniture) and a simple GE stove do the trick. The family upgraded the makeshift shelves with uniform rectangular units.



French Gray
Farrow & Ball

Antique duck decoys, a midcentury ad for fishing lures, and a wooden arrow sign mingle with cookware on the shelves. The "7" placard above the bathroom door is a vestige of the home's former life as a vacation rental.



dropped ceiling, bringing to light the framework's studs, as well as cathedral-style roof beams. "Without the ceiling, it was like, 'Wow!'" explains Sheri. "We capitalized on all that extra height by putting in a sleeping loft."

The once squat windows are now generous enough to take in the postcard-worthy scenery. French doors lead to an elevated screened porch off the back. The Webers also indulged in a few fantasy elements they don't have at their nearby house, like an outdoor shower—itsself equipped with a view. "You open the little shutters and see the lake," says Janie. "It's heaven."

Overdoing creature comforts was never the goal. "The place still feels like a cabin," says Sheri, who chose durable outdoor furnishings, including a wicker sofa and water-resistant rugs. She treats the newly exposed studs as shelves that showcase Gerry's collections of vintage fishing gear and license plates. "I also had cubbies built everywhere, so everything—sunscreens, towels, games, tents—is immediately accessible," Sheri explains.

A shored-up basement garage stows small watercraft, skis, and other sporting goods; now, whenever the spirit moves him, Gerry can grab a fishing pole and jump in a canoe.

ABOVE LEFT By the back door, a moose hook nabbed at a local shop hangs above a 1960s enamel clock. The vintage New Hampshire license plate is from Gerry's extensive collection.

ABOVE RIGHT The cabin's old garage doors were used to enclose the outdoor shower.

RIGHT Sheri (in an Eames chair), Gerry, and Riley unwind on the porch.





The Webers eschewed this built-in, vinyl-topped table (left) for the mobile sideboard below. Here and throughout, they pulled off the wood paneling, exposing the home's original walls with all their nooks and crannies. The pine floors received a sanding to highlight the wood's natural grain.

"Furniture on casters can roll right out of your way when you want to free up space," says Sheri.

A wheeled iron cart doubles as a portable bar and stylish storage. Both that piece and the reclaimed-elm stools are by Arhaus Furniture.



Usually, he gets at least one of the girls to come along. "We also go waterskiing, tubing, or kayaking almost every morning," says Janie. Since the house's walls remain free of sheetrock and insulation, the building is technically a three-season destination; but a 1970s woodstove makes it possible for the Webers to hang out here in the winter, too, ice-skating on the lake and playing cards by a toasty fire.

During the summer, the family falls into a happy routine. A typical afternoon finds Gerry hand-tying fishing flies. Lucie may be in the woods, practicing her archery, while Janie and Ali float in lazy circles on tubes in the cove, with Riley—the Webers' golden retriever—swimming beside them. At some point, Sheri considers gathering everyone for the walk back to their main residence. But then a breeze rolls in, she spots an eagle perched on a rock, and the decision is made: It would be so much nicer just to stay the night at the cabin. A couple of the girls stake out the sleeping loft; the others will pitch a tent on the beach. Sheri and Gerry set up an air mattress on the porch and wake to the sound of calling loons and splashing ducks. "It happens all the time," says Sheri of their accidental extra home. "We go for the day, then never want to leave." ♦



ABOVE The sleeping loft's futons wear vintage plaid wool throw pillows, plus orange-striped alpaca ones by D. Bryant Archie. The blue-striped coverlets are from Coyuchi, the chevron runner by Madeline Weinrib.

RIGHT The Webers paddle around Pleasant Lake.