



TALKING ABOUT CABIN REDOS



BY DALE MULFINGER

Our pastoral American landscapes of lakes, rivers and mountainsides are dotted with existing cabins built from the late nineteenth century and on. Although many new cabins are under construction, old ones often command the best sites and are ripe for reinvestment. As an architect working in cabin land, I'm regularly called upon for designs for cabin upgrades. The scope and scale of these projects vary widely, but they often demand respect for the nostalgic memories of generations of family life in retreat.

Is your cabin old, tired and designed for your grandpa's lifestyle ...which is not your own? Bring all cabin renewal questions, whether yours is a quaint log structure, a lakeside rambler, or an 80's prow, to the Lake Home and Cabin Show's program by the cabinologist. I'll put to use my 30 years of cabin research and design experience to address items such as:

1. Cabin Preservation. Should your cabin be on the National Register because Sigurd Olson or Justine Kerfoot once lived there?



Or you can't imagine altering Aunt Helen's fine retreat. Or it was designed by a great architect, like Edwin Lundie or Lisl Close.

2. Cabin Seasoning. No, this does not mean adding salt and pepper, but rather extending the one season you can use the place. You'd like to keep the bats out, shore up a sagging foundation, or add more light and view.

3. Cabin Remodeling. You want to retain the shell but upgrade the performance. You want to refurbish, refresh, yet refrain from adding on. Maybe zoning won't let you alter the footprint so close to the water's edge.



4. Cabin Addition. Now there can be many options and zoning rules or budgets may play a big role here. Do you like the character of the existing cabin and seek to extend it into the addition?

5. Cabin Transformation. You want it to look all new, but zoning or budgets suggest retaining the old shell. You want a new bright interior, not the old dark wood from the 30's.





6. Cabin Transposing. It was a school house but it will become your cabin. Or was it a granary, barn, caboose, or some shipping containers?

7. Cabin Accretion. Your cabin has grown incrementally and is likely to continue to do so. How do you add when you know it's not likely the last addition.

I am currently working with the Lake Home and Cabin Show staff to formulate an interactive presentation to gather input on these subjects from show participants for their February show in Minneapolis. The presentation (and forthcoming book being worked on!) will be called Cabin Redo. It will encompass a wide variety of solutions, including a few that remake thirty-year-old structures whose floor plans were inconsistent with contemporary retreat

needs. If you'd enjoy some warm up material for the show, here are a few references from my previous books to peruse and brush up on:

1. HISTORICAL PRESERVATION:

The Family Cabin "Windswept" pg 38 – 45

2. CABIN SEASONING:

(A one season cabin is rebuilt for many seasons)

3. CABIN REMODELED:

Back to the Cabin "Sing Along" pg 58 – 65

Back to the Cabin "Old Glory" pg 92 – 97

The Family Cabin "Welcoming Cabin"
pg 32 – 37

4. CABIN ADDITION:

Back to the Cabin "A Plus" pg 86 – 91

5. CABIN TRANSFORMATION:

Back to the Cabin "Subtract and Add"
pg 98 – 103

The Family Cabin "Reviving a Ghost Town"
pg 92 – 97

6. CABIN TRANSPOSING:

The Family Cabin "Peace Cabin" pg 26 – 31

7. CABIN ACCRETION:

Back to the Cabin "A Work In Progress"
pg 196 – 201

The Family Cabin "The Camp That Keeps on Growing" pg 18 – 2





I look forward to our discussions at the show! 

Dale Mulfinger was born and raised on a dairy farm in Minnesota, and the rural landscape and vernacular architecture have informed his many designs. After graduating from the University of Minnesota, he worked nationally and internationally before becoming a Founding Partner in 1983 of what is now SALA Architects, Inc. The breadth of his work at SALA includes modest remodels and additions, lakeside cabins, along with urban and rural homes from St. Paul to Buenos Aires.

*He has taught architectural studios at the University of Minnesota and other schools since 1976. He is a fellow of the American Institute of Architecture and author of five books include the *The Architecture of Edwin Lundie* and *The Cabin*. He has authored over 100 articles in regional and national magazines and his sustaining research on cabins has earned him the title, "Cabinologist".*

In 2015 he was named "Architect of Distinction" by AIA-MN and Midwest Home magazine.

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