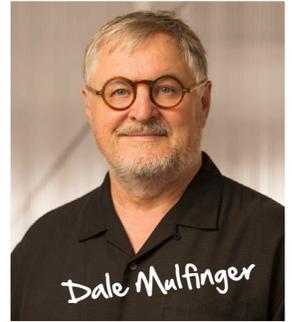


ENHANCING THE CABIN EXPERIENCE THROUGH DESIGN



BY DALE MULFINGER

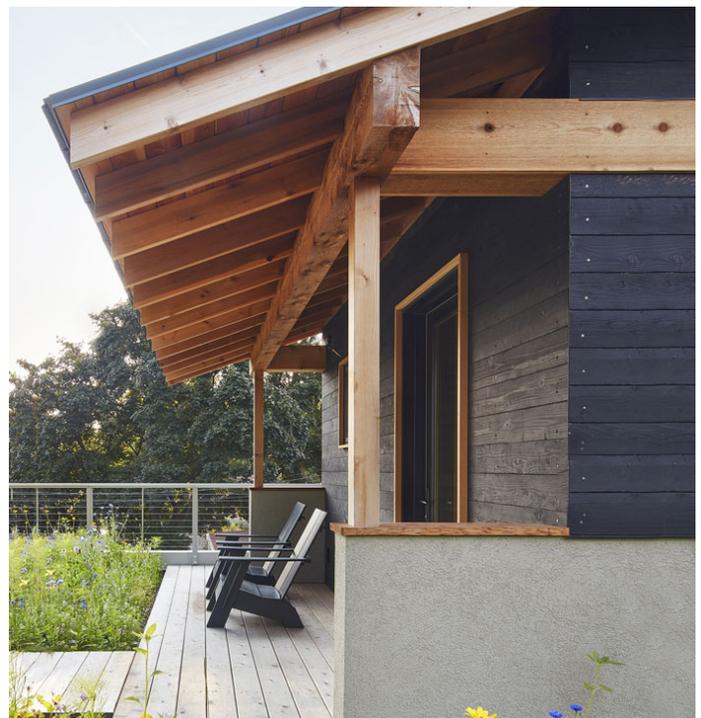
An unprecedented number of architects are providing designs for new and remodeled cabins on behalf of cabin owners. Whether rustic, cottage style or modern designs, cabins of distinctive character are now gracing lakeshores, riverbanks and mountainsides. What are architects offering these retreat owners that has brought their services into favor?

Cabin owners have great freedom as to with whom and how their cabin design is realized. Laws in most states do not mandate designs by an architect, engineer or draftsman. Your lumberyard and contractor will prefer a detailed drawing and your building permit process may mandate the same, but you are free to draw this yourself or to buy detailed drawings from a magazine.

What architects have to offer is added value and an enhancement of the cabin experience through design. By way of their unique training they synthesize the many forces, factors, and functions common to cabin projects in the creation of a tailored solution to each situation.

Such as:

- **Architects have knowledge of new, innovative and conventional building materials and technologies. They seek a blend of the tried and true with some experimentation.**



- Each site is unique with particular topography, views, vegetation, and access. Client budgets vary significantly and a design solution merges these two notable variables.



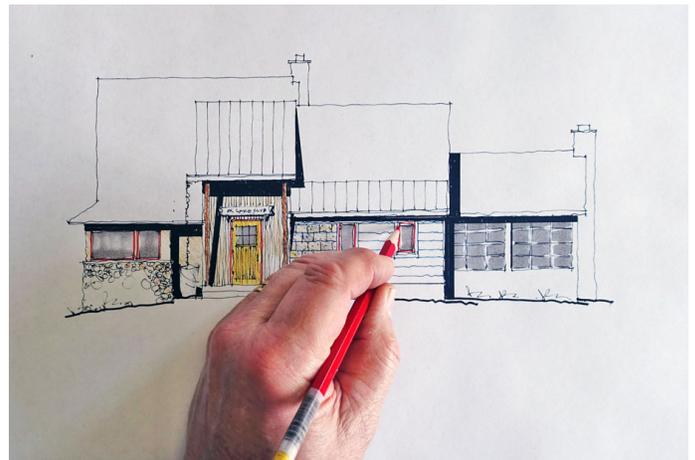
- Spatial variety is the result of an architect studying the relationship between the plan and cross sections of the structure. Roofs need to shed the rain and provide interesting forms. Ceilings shape interior space and don't always need to follow roof shapes.



- Efficient and effective space planning can lead to a design that is smaller than what a client expected. This means that more of the budget is available for character inside and out.



- Aesthetic appeal is always the goal of an architect for which they are inclined to use their “pretty pencil”. They study each face of the cabin



Attributes of cabins designed by architects should:

- Highlight the views in all directions. Whether at the water, in the mountains or in the forest, views to nature give reason for the study of window patterns.



- Bring the cabin user into nature. Window walls can extend interior living space into nature with its daily and seasonal variety.



- Create memorable places. An outcome of the design process can be the creation of unique spaces that go beyond the clients pragmatic goals.



- Enhance social bonding. Cabins first and foremost are about human experience. Thoughtful design will promote social interaction. 



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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