

UPDATED CABIN

Scale Back

A tiny, once-dilapidated fishing lodge is now a fun getaway that feels like camp. **BY BARBARA BALLINGER**

DESIGNER SUSAN DOWLING DOESN'T SHY FROM A CHALLENGE. WHEN A TINY 1926 fishing camp in the mountains of Georgia became available, she knew she had to have it, despite its 595-square-foot dimensions, dilapidated interior, and absence of electricity and plumbing. Susan (susandowlinginteriors.com) loved the camp's history, location next to friends and proximity to Lake Burton, where her husband could fish and they could hike and camp. The three-room structure, enlarged slightly through the years



LOOKING UP
Hanging artwork close to the ceiling draws the eye upward, thereby making the space appear larger.

706-SQUARE-FOOT CABIN

- **NUMBER OF RESIDENTS:** Four
- **STRUCTURE:** Fishing camp cabin
- **DECORATING STYLE:** Eclectic
- **RENOVATIONS:** Added bathroom, entrance, screened porch and side deck; remodeled interior, and installed wall in kitchen to create new bunk bedroom
- **DESIGN CHALLENGE:** Finding enough room for furniture to accommodate people comfortably
- **BIGGEST ADVANTAGE:** You don't concentrate as much on living space but more on living comfortably, since you don't have as much stuff
- **BIGGEST DISADVANTAGE:** Sometimes you feel like you're on top of each other



WHITE WORKS
A white cotton duck slip-cover might seem a crazy choice given the ages of the couple's young sons, but this one is washable, so it can be removed, thrown into the machine, even bleached, and put back on. In addition, the white expands the space.

from its original one room, also cried out to be transformed by someone with a skilled eye and whimsical spirit.

But first things first. Susan decided that the interior was too small for the couple, their young son and a baby on the way, since they planned to use it year-round. To make the house more usable yet retain its charming camp aesthetic, Susan asked builder Johnny Williams (Williams Builders, Baldwin, GA) to construct a 9' by 25' front screened porch.

"It's the same size as the living room and where we lounge and eat most meals—many by candlelight," she says. Williams also added a side deck and painted the blue/gray exterior deep chocolate brown, which Susan felt better suited the wooded locale.

Inside, she had Williams add a bathroom and air conditioning, and divide the 8' by 14' kitchen in half to gain a bunk bedroom for her children. "Though I knew it would make the kitchen tight, it could still be big enough if I planned it with the right equipment and



FIT TO SIZE
To make the kitchen work, designer Susan Dowling included only essential appliances and utensils.



GRAB & GO
Susan used cabinets of different sizes and staggered them, leaving room at the top for baskets and pottery. Not only is everything easily accessible, but the open look makes the kitchen feel more airy.



CABIN IN THE WOODS
For whimsy and to perk up the cabin's chocolate brown hue, Susan painted the doors periwinkle blue.



breakfast bar

Make the most of a half wall near your kitchen by creating an eating bar—all you need is a shelf and some decorative supports to make a family-friendly niche.



livable porch

The advantage of a screened porch is that it expands your space year-round. Outfit it with all-weather furniture and fabrics, or slipcovers that easily can be washed.





PATTERNED FOR PERSONALITY

A mix of patterns in the quilt, rug and wall samplers gives the couple's bedroom its liveliness and detracts attention from the lack of space.

✓ GET THE LOOK › Bunk Beds

Compact, efficient and fun, this charming sleeping option doubles your space.

Because fitting in **two twin beds** wouldn't work in the newly carved out 8' by 6' boys' bedroom, Susan Dowling cleverly had her builder **construct bunk beds with storage underneath and a movable ladder**. "We went wall-to-wall and had to find special mattresses, since a standard twin is 75" long and I needed 70" ones," she says. To dress up the beds, she told builder Johnny Williams to carve circles along the horizontal wood members, and she found fabric with a dog motif for curtains, so the boys gain privacy to sleep and also play. The ladder hooks onto a metal railing that it can slide along. The bedcovers came from Denyse Schmidt Quilts; the 26" by 26" pillow shams are from Pottery Barn; and the dog fabric is from Lewis Textiles in Atlanta, Georgia.



SECRET ESCAPE The bunk beds run 70" long in the newly carved out children's room, with storage found in the drawers at the base. For sleeping, and-hide and-seek, curtains can be pulled back.

storage," Susan says. "I thought it was more important to gain a children's bedroom and less to have the big kitchen we sometimes think we have to have."

Balanced With Built-Ins

For livability, Susan used a good balance of built-in storage and furniture with storage, but she made certain not to fill spaces with too much "stuff." In the revamped kitchen, open shelves above the countertop lend an airy feel, and a peninsula serves as a work surface and

eating ledge. In the living room, Susan reused a 66"-long sofa and placed end tables on either side, but, to ensure that there would be good circulation, she didn't add a coffee table. In the master bedroom, she removed a tiny closet where clothing didn't fit and replaced it with a roomy armoire. Susan's biggest space-saving idea was for the kids—custom-crafted bunk beds, since twin beds wouldn't fit.

Throughout the house, Susan painted pine floorboards pale beige/green to cover wear and tear, but she didn't sand them, so they

reflect a rough edge, which she likes. She also painted walls and ceilings in Benjamin Moore's "Designer White" in an eggshell finish, to conceal existing wood paneling and make rooms look larger and fresher.

Finding Pieces To Paint

To add more whimsical camp charm, Susan introduced affordable country antiques and contemporary pieces, found objects and remnants, all from online sources, flea markets, estates sales and her Florida home.

"I didn't want anything that was expensive so I wouldn't feel badly painting it," Susan says. One table became pink, since, as Susan notes, "This is a house full of men!" Granite remnants from a local stone yard became kitchen countertops. She also used her artistic talents to hook rugs, paint watercolors and quilt.

And though tiny camps don't usually rate a name, Susan felt this one deserved a moniker—Chocolate Moose. "It's a play on the idea that the exterior is brown like a moose, yet the house is tiny!" she says.