

VOLUME 5 ISSUE 6

NOVEMBER | DECEMBER 2015

ALABAMA



Holiday
ON ICE

\$4.95



features

november. december²⁰¹⁵



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At this lakeside retreat, six generations of family reconnect amid the warmth of their thoughtfully designed hunting lodge. **40**

The Loud, Proud Age of the American Muscle Car

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SEASONAL SANCTUARY

TEXT BY LINDSAY MOTT
PHOTOGRAPHY BY
COURTLAND WILLIAM RICHARDS

SIX GENERATIONS OF FAMILY RECONNECT AND REDISCOVER
THEIR ROOTS AT A LAKESIDE HUNTING LODGE NESTLED ON LAND THAT'S BEEN
HANDED DOWN OVER FOUR GENERATIONS.

Located off Oxbow Lake, a section of the Tombigbee River that has been cut off to make a private lake, the hunting lodge was sited on the river bottom to capture a commanding view of the lake. The location also requires the house to be elevated to protect against flooding. According to architect Lea Verneuille with Walcott Adams Verneuille Architects, this affords a perfect view of the horseshoe lake to the west and an open field with a line of dense woodlands to the east where wildlife grazes.

The house was designed as a “generational home” to be handed down to future flocks of children and grandchildren. With family members living in different places, the lodge provides an ideal spot for them to gather for holidays and other special occasions and enjoy the house’s natural setting.

In designing the lodge, Verneuille considered what the family wanted the place to be: a gathering place for the family and a retreat for active hunters, young and old. He then created a parallel design that utilized rustic and primitive materials and surprisingly com-



tage of the incredible views the house offers.

“As the architect, it was a wonderful experience to design such a unique lodge structure in which every detail represents and respects both the deep woods setting and the not-so-obvious modern necessities of a large family retreat,” Verneuille says.

The family wanted the lodge to be elegant but unpretentious. Interior decorator Anita Rankin, of Anita Rankin Interiors, was able to create a warm and inviting feel with the use of locally cut cypress paneling. Because wood and stone soak up color, Rankin says, she had to work to add warmth. To give the

portable fixtures and furnishings.

These furnishings, including the massive stone fireplace, which serves as the focal point, evoke a historic lodge that one might find in a national park. The gathering spaces are large and vaulted with wood trusses, and a long gallery serves as a foyer connecting wings accented in natural wood and stone that open out to sheltering porches. The covered outdoor eating and entertaining areas take advan-





abundance of wood some definition, she used three different stains. She also included a variety of patterns, including some that evoke hunting and animal designs, and a red sofa and dark leather chairs. The natural atmosphere of the interior is enhanced by the collection of animal heads that has been added to by family members.

Rankin used many antiques in the house to fit the scale of the large, vaulted, 24-foot ceilings and to add another layer of richness and warmth. A key piece is the large dining room table from France, which seats up to 12 and is paired with green leather chairs and tapestry chairs. Rankin also focused on light fixtures in the home, using a lot of iron and rope as well as a huge one made of horn from England. It's the only horn in the house that's not local. The many bedrooms feature plenty of color, texture, and pattern. On the porches across both sides of the house, large rocking chairs from Georgia accommodate family relaxation and fellowship.



Rankin said the project was an adventure because of having to use a boat to get elements to the house during times of flooding, but she said it was "one of my favorite jobs I've ever had the pleasure to work on."

Landscaper Paul Fontenot used natural materials such as pine, river birch, magnolias, palmettos, and river rocks, which echo the home's setting, to make the house feel like it's a part of the land and the woods around it.

The house was completed in November 2009, just in time for Thanksgiving and a new tradition of holiday gatherings at the lodge. The owner says the professionals who worked on the lodge were able to capture exactly what the family wanted in their seasonal sanctuary. "It's a place that teaches the kids to appreciate nature and conservation," says the owner. And that's sure to draw the family back to their lakeside retreat for generations to come.

