

Emulate Mother Nature In Your Architectural Designs

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The key to good architecture in Colorado could be nothing more than simply emulating what Mother Nature has already laid before us. From the state's untamed peaks to open valleys filled with wildflowers, not just any style of home can complement such a setting. As a residential designer in Colorado for more than 30 years, the challenge has always been to create a look that marries clean, modern design with simple rustic detail. Nowhere is this unique combination more evident than in the century old architecture found in the Great Camps of the Adirondacks.

After being retained by a client from New Jersey to enlarge and restore a cabin set in the foothills of Colorado near Evergreen, my wife Dianne and I ventured to New York state to experi-

ence hands-on the magnificent and timeless architecture of the Great Camps of the Adirondacks. Having studied the style for many years, this was an opportunity to not just add elements of the

Adirondack character to a new design, but to truly replicate and bring to life an almost forgotten vernacular.

A mixture of logs, native stone, and decorative rustic work of twigs and branches characterize the vernacular style of the Adirondacks. The look has



Adirondack lodge design by Ken Pieper, Golden

been mirrored in both commercial and residential architecture throughout the Pacific Cascades, the Rockies, and the Northern Great Lakes. From elaborate hotels and resorts to rustic weekend cabins, the Adirondack style has been a

model for inspiration since its 19th century creation. The style was a product of wealthy industrialists who made their way to northern New York state in search of an idealistic setting to build family vacation retreats. Much like Colorado, the mountainous region of the Adirondacks offered native timber and stone that was constructed into elaborately detailed homes offering comfort and refinement in an otherwise wild and natural setting. The unique architectural style quickly grew in popularity and was copied by everyone from local fisherman in small cottages to exquisite lodges owned by some of the country's wealthiest families - the Vanderbilts, Whitneys and Rockefellers to name drop just a little.

The lodges and camps of the Adirondacks were as unique as the individual families who owned them. Many of the popular details that are re-

emerging in current day architecture include the rustic unpeeled notched log exteriors and borrowed details from Swiss chalets like steep gabled roofs and trusses of intricate corbelling. The wide expanses of porches, massive fireplaces, shingled exteriors and timber log accents are seen in many Colorado homes today.

The resurgence of Adirondack style in Colorado may be most evident throughout the Vail valley where many developers are making a conscious effort to include the look in new communities. Both developers and individuals alike call us often asking for this latest design phenomenon of Adirondack-style. While the refined character of the Adirondack cabins is certainly making a come back, the look is far from new to Colorado. Private homes in Evergreen and other small mountain towns have Adirondack style homes

dating back to the early 1900s.

Our brief trip through the Great Camps of the Adirondacks was inspiring as we viewed ten of the camps that have been carefully restored and are once again prestigious privately owned residences. And "inspiring" is the perfect word for these magnificent homes. Each camp truly worked with its natural setting architecturally. Homes blend so well that they become almost imperceptible from a passing canoe.

We have an opportunity in Colorado to design homes that blend just as artistically with the same glassy lakes, rushing rivers and thick forests found in upstate New York. The Adirondack style has been rediscovered and I hope to see it continue to flourish as the shape of architecture continues to evolve into the next century.