

A TOUR of UNIQUE AMERICAN DWELLINGS



The New
**Cottage
Home**

JIM TOLPIN



At Home on the Forest Trail

FINDING THE RIGHT SITE for a house is probably the most important decision to be made in the design process. The owner of this cottage lived for several years in a small, temporary cabin on a corner of the property and spent much time wandering through its fields and trails looking for a building site for the permanent house. While many sites came to mind, none ever felt just right to her. Finally, nearly at the point of giving up, she realized she had “known” the spot all along: a beautiful grove of fir trees on a knoll upon which she would often come to meditate.

The diminutive cottage nestles snugly amongst the trees and straddles the original forest trail. With the entry placed directly along the path—as are the French doors to the back of the house—you get the sense that the trail leads not just to the house, but continues through it and into the forest beyond. Rather than occupying the original forest path and meditation spot, this home has, for the owner, become it.

SIZE 850 sq. ft.; **COMPLETED** 1989; **LOCATION** Whidbey Island, Washington;
DESIGNER Ross Chapin, Langley, Washington; **BUILDER** Kim Hoelting;
PHOTOGRAPHER Craig Wester

TUCKED AMONGST A STAND

of tall fir trees, a cascade of gables embraces the house, evoking the feeling of a wayside forest chapel. The first gable shelters a welcoming porch, the second gable the entry room, bathroom, and laundry, and the third gable steps up to enclose the main living space of the house, including two upstairs bedrooms and a bathroom. The high pitch and generous overhangs of the roof eaves bring them within reach, scaling down the house to comforting human proportions.





VIEWED FROM THE BACK,

the house appears to rise up out of the green-carpeted forest floor. French doors opening to porches on both floors encourage you to enter the forest, even on rainy evenings. The roof's wide side eaves and gable overhangs help keep rain water off the walls and well outside the porches.

Look closely at the tall porch posts on both floors: Vertically aligned to one another, they echo the tall, thin fir trees surrounding the cottage. Rough-hewn porch rails and balusters acknowledge the primeval forest setting.



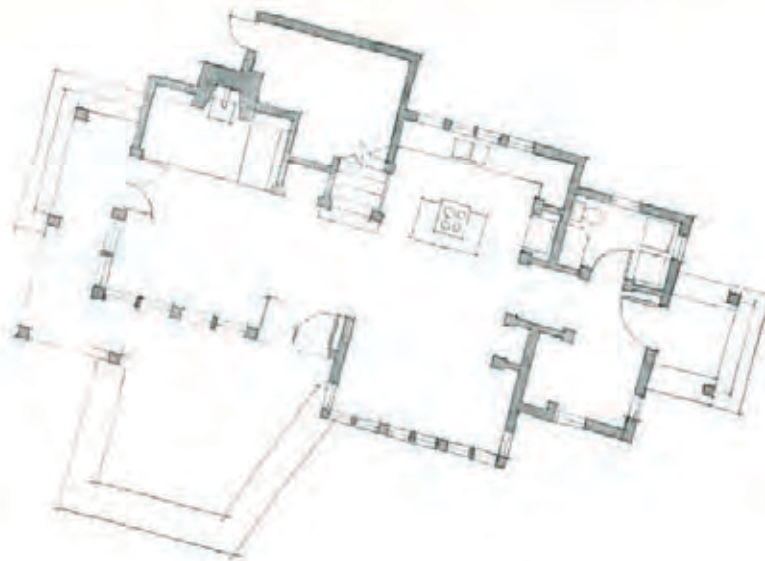
AS YOU COME INSIDE

the house, the first thing that strikes you is the variation in ceiling heights. The low ceiling at the entry gives way to a higher open-beam ceiling in the kitchen/dining room (shown at left and above), dropping again to a lower ceiling in the living room. These changes in height cause a sense of compression and release as you move through the cottage, accentuating an illusion of spaciousness in the main living space.

Overhead, a shelf supporting a line of books appears to act as a decorative header.



AN ISLAND CABINET IN THE tiny kitchen maximizes efficiency in such a small space and creates both a buffer and a serving table to the dining area. Directly over the sink counter area, skylights set into the ceiling (which extends up past the second floor) flood the counter and hanging plants atop the perimeter shelf with an abundance of morning light. The brightly painted china cabinet adds a cheerful splash of color to the predominantly wood-toned interior.



IN THE LIVING ROOM,

an inglenook raised above the wood floor on a broad brick hearth creates a warm, intimate space for reading and napping by the Rumford-style fireplace—now occupied by a more efficient wood stove. The massive chimney tapers smaller as it rises from its base, a design strategy that lends the chimney a sense of stability and grace.



IN A SMALL COTTAGE,

the clever use of space can add functional areas without creating clutter or intruding on the primary living areas. Here, a daybed set on a stairway landing makes use of an otherwise little-used space. Kids old enough to handle stairs will find this to be

an ideal playspace—out of the way yet close by the action.

With the curtains pulled, this space can provide a miniature bedroom for guests (at least those not prone to sleepwalking!). Bedding stores conveniently below the mattress platform.