

# The Revival of the Adirondack Style

By Katherine Lukaszewicz

One of the great quintessential symbols of summer, a pair of white Adirondack chairs, is appearing more frequently around the country as America experiences a revival of Adirondack furniture, architecture and lifestyle. These nostalgic chairs have roots in a style that originated in the late 1800's around the lakes and Adirondack Mountains of New York state, when people, many of them of the wealthy New York elite such as the Vanderbilts and the Whitneys, began building summer homes in this location. These residences later became known as the "Camps" or "Great Camps."

Interior designer and author of *Adirondack Style* (Clarkson Potter, 2002), Ann Stillman O'Leary, explains, "The Adirondack style is typified by the use of indigenous materials stone, log, bark, and iron from the area simply because it was virtually impossible to bring building materials to the site. The part of the tree that wasn't used in the building the actual structure was used for embellishment or furnishings for the 'camps.'" O'Leary says she was inspired to write the book, now in its second printing, after her many visits to the Adirondack area. "I had been in the Adirondacks for a number of years and sensed a renaissance of sorts, many renovations of older 'camp' properties as well as some well-done new interpretations of 'camp' and felt that this should be noted," she says.

In her book, interior design reflects the style's woody feel. O'Leary attributes the eventual demise of the Great Camp style to high maintenance costs, and says many of these woodland rustic palaces were either subdivided, sold or torn down after the Depression. O'Leary is currently working on a follow-up book titled *Rustic Revisited*, due out in the fall of 2005, which she says will be a look at what has transpired and what the camp of the future may look like.

## Las Vegas Goes Rustic

A very unlikely place for the resurfacing of the Adirondack style is the casino capital of the world, Las Vegas. Known for its glamour and opulence, Las Vegas is probably the last place one would expect to find an example of this rustic style, but that's just what visitors will see when they visit the Silverton Hotel Casino. Located three miles from the Vegas hotel strip, the Silverton Hotel is hoping to attract sportsmen and local families. "It may not fit the stereotype, but there are nature lovers and soccer moms that live in Las Vegas and their interests haven't been served until now," says David Krause, Silverton's Director of Marketing. Because of its



A whimsical twist on the traditional Adirondack chair style at the Painted Turtle Camp in California.

somewhat out of the way location and its smaller size, the Silverton does not try to compete with the more glitzy Vegas resorts.

According to hotel owner Ed Roski, Jr., the style is "not so much a theming change, but changing the décor to give it a more comfortable feeling." Krause adds, "This rustic theme is far different from any other Las Vegas resort theme and has found its own comfortable niche in the Vegas community."

An example of the Adirondack style at the hotel can be found in its Shady Grove Lounge. The interior of the lounge features an exposed ceiling with diagonally positioned birch tree trunk beams. A larger tree trunk is strategically placed in the center of the lounge's bar with flat screen television sets attached for bar patrons' enjoyment. The lounge also features a real Airstream camper with Bowlingo inside and is set against the backdrop of sunset on the prairie. The Adirondack atmosphere continues onto the Twin Creeks Steakhouse and the Sundance Grill, two of the Silverton's restaurants, both of which are decorated with a lodge-themed décor.

Currently under renovation, in November, the hotel will also unveil a Brass Pro Shops Outdoor World, what the hotel is calling "a 154,000 square foot sportsman's paradise." "The two-story store will feature massive log and rock work to frame the Grand Entrance, reminiscent of the 1800's style Adirondack hunting lodges, and a popular design theme with many Bass Pro Shops retail stores. The inside of the store will be made of rustic wooden flooring with a vaulted post and beam construction ceiling decorated with pictures and dioramas of wild game," explains Krause. Another, and perhaps the most unique attraction to come, will be the live mermaid show at the Silverton's Mermaid Bar. The bar will also feature a 40,000-gallon freshwater aquarium and a 110,000 gallon saltwater tank with over 4,000 varieties of tropical fish.

## Adirondack Style at the Painted Turtle Camp

The Adirondack style can also be seen in California, at the newly opened Painted Turtle Camp. The camp is a sixth addition to the "Hole in the Wall Gang Camps" created by Paul Newman, for seriously ill children, with other camps located in New York, Florida, North Carolina, Ireland, France, Africa, and Israel. In the summertime, the Painted Turtle, located on Lake Hughes outside of Los Angeles, will welcome 1,000 children ages seven to sixteen for week-long visits. General contractor, interior designer and President of Citizen Properties, Shannon Sheehan, chose the camp's style. Sheehan, who worked as a design consultant for the camp, has worked with celebrities such as Carol King, Kyle McLaughlin, Gary Schandling, Rebecca DeMornay and Tatiana Patitz, and has had her work featured in *Vogue*, *Marie Claire* and British *Elle Décor*, says of the camp's architectural style selection, "It's all about the children and what they would respond to, and they already love it. I researched camps throughout the United States to get a grasp on the look and feel I wanted to capture at the Painted Turtle Camp. It was imperative to me that the children would have a strong feeling of being outside in nature and at camp." She added, "I came across the famous camp of New York's Adirondack lake country. I did not want to emulate the Western theme of the first Hole in the Wall Gang Camp. I also felt that the lake was the central focal point of the camp and wanted to create a similar look and feel as the Adirondack Camps originated in the late 1800's." The camp had its Opening Gala in May with appearances by such celebrities as Jack Nicholson, who attended the ceremony with his daughter.

To learn more about the Adirondack history, you can visit the Adirondack Museum in New York or online at

[www.adkmuseum.org](http://www.adkmuseum.org). On the website, you can take a virtual tour of the museum, see online exhibits and learn about the museum's special events. ♦

Katherine Lukaszewicz is the 1997 winner of the Maryland State Arts Council's Individual Literature Award for her children's book titled *The Great Cheese Marathon*, a semi-autobiographical account of her childhood in Poland during the politically troubled Martial Law period of 1981. She is currently in the process of developing a television series called *Organic Living*.

Photo of fish Adirondack chairs at the Painted Turtle Camp by Sammi Davis, courtesy of Citizen Properties.

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