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## Places

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### Authors

Lyndon, Donlyn  
Righter, Jim

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# Spirit and Presence

Untrimmed logs transform the porch columns of Jim Righter's Bar Harbor cabin into bristling emblems of the wildness within which the cabin is lodged. They also register an intensity of spirit that refuses to be cast aside by convention. As Jim tells the story:

*We built this cabin in three-and-a-half weeks. Sandy and I, our two kids and two of their friends built the cabin, nailed it up. Every day we would get to the site at seven. We'd take a two-hour lunch break and go for a picnic, and get back to work until seven in the evening.*

*We didn't do the plumbing. We didn't do the electrical, but we did all the rest of it. So it's very simple. It would have to be. We would have friends come over and help build a wall; everybody would have a good time, and then they'd leave and we'd take the wall down and put it up again the right way, hide the nails and take out the elephant tracks and move on.*

While on the one hand the tree columns of the porch bring home the "embodied nature" within the house with spikey intensity, the overall form of the structure is so dead simple that it is iconic. Here a different kind of intensity is at work. The conventional gable-roofed form is given the strength of surprise by the way in which the porch roof tips out of the larger form in a single gesture, and the grouping of the windows in the end wall makes a determined, forth-right face to the world. This is a face that we attend to because we sense some resolute authority in its interlocked geometry. This is underscored by thick window frames that lock the geometry in place with surprising large pieces. They making a startling image of their own. Perhaps it is this sense of authority that gives it a somewhat commanding presence, like a good-natured school house.

— *Donlyn Lyndon, with Jim Righter*



Righter Cabin, Bar Harbor. Photographs by Jim Righter.