



HOME

The Sailors' Nest

They spent years getting to know their land as campers, so when it came time to build, they knew exactly what they wanted.

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BY VIRGINIA M. WRIGHT PHOTOGRAPHED BY JARED KUZIA



Gale designed the gardens with the help of Back Meadow Farm, of Damariscotta, and it was her idea to use the dormer off Charlie's office as a bunk room, furnished with beds from an unfinished furniture outlet.

Gale and Charlie Willauer wanted their new house to sit so comfortably on Edgcomb's High Head that sailors on the Cross and Back rivers would think it had been there for decades. They spent hours working with contractor Steve Malcom on the elevation drawing, nudging the building north to save the gnarled apple tree where their kids used to swing, a tad east to give the stair landing a beckoning view, then back south so the porch would end where the meadow starts its long slope to the water. "We're talking feet and inches, left and right, forward

and back," says Malcom, owner of the architectural and construction firm Knickerbocker Group. "They had lived on that property so well that they knew what was important to them." In fact, the Willauers had been thinking about that house for 25 years. They purchased 11 wooded acres above the meadow in the late '80s and spent countless weekends camping there with their three boys. Later, they graduated to a primitive cabin, modeled after those at the Hurricane Island Outward Bound School, founded by Charlie's dad. So when their neighbor offered to sell them the meadow in 2011, ensuring them an unobstructed view of the water, they took it as their cue. They traded their house in Duxbury, Massachusetts, for an apartment





Perched on a meadow above the confluence of the Back and Cross rivers, the Willaurs' house borrows from two iconic Maine architectural styles — shingle cottage and farmhouse. The property's old rock walls yielded the stones for the fireplace in the combined den/kitchen/dining room. Above the mantel is an oil painting by Charles Savage Homer Jr., Charlie Willaurs' great-great-grandfather (and Winslow Homer's brother).




in Boston, where Charlie works, and started planning their Maine home.

The Willaurs told Malcom, a lifelong sailor like themselves, about their love for classic wooden boats, like Concordia Yawls. "He understood what that meant," Gale says. Malcom and architect Rick Nelson sparingly employed sleek and sophisticated nautical references, like the entryway's curved and ribbed ceiling that evokes a boat cabin and the teak-and-holly bathroom floor reminiscent of a ship's deck. Three single beds have been snugged into a dormer with a shipbuilder's sense of efficiency; the Willaurs call it the "sail loft."

Besides the loft, the 1½ story home has two bedrooms, but there's plenty of room for guests in the original cabin, now outfitted with a bathroom, and a bunkhouse built when the kids were teens. The open kitchen/dining/family room also suits the Willaurs' gregarious nature. "The idea is you can have multiple cooks and lots of people around while a meal is being prepared," Charlie says. "The room works for three people or 20."

The Willaurs sourced several of the architectural details themselves. Gale found the ships knees that support the dining area's ceiling beam at the Old House Parts Company in Kennebunk. The newel post, which drove the stairway design, was a gift from Charlie's uncle, who rescued it 50 years ago from a demolished Prouts Neck hotel.

"They were very engaged — that's what I loved most about our time with them," Malcom says. "Very rarely do you have a homeowner who has lived on a property for so long with dreams and aspirations and so many memories." 

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