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June 2008

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A Waterfront Home Reinvented  
in Boothbay Harbor



# Revival







of the

# Fittest

How a 1915  
Boothbay Harbor  
Foursquare cottage  
was reimagined  
for family living

In the late 1800s, the American Foursquare style arrived on the architectural landscape, introducing a modern approach to family living. The name describes the design concept to a T: four square rooms in each corner positioned around a central hall. This artful arrangement of space emphasizes an economy of scale, function, and construction that imbues these homes with a contemporary feel even a century after they first appeared. Pinewold, a classic, cedar-shingled cottage that sits above Boothbay Harbor, is an ideal example of the Foursquare's charm and versatility.

For several years, a family from the Midwest with deep ties to Maine had been searching for the perfect Down East vacation home. Their search brought them to Boothbay and ultimately to Pinewold. The house, nestled into an incline that slopes toward the water, had all the qualities the family had hoped to find. The setting was quintessentially Maine, with established plantings, a deep-water dock, and a view of a working fishing wharf that spoke volumes about the unique character of coastal Maine living. The homeowners immediately began to research the history of the cottage, finding photographs and references to a rich and varied past in which the previous owners each left their mark on the house and grounds.

Along with their interior designer, Betsy Train, of Betsy McCue Train Design in Reston, Virginia, the homeowners interviewed a number of architectural firms for the project. Their search ended with Portland-based architect Rob Whitten, who has spent summers in Boothbay since his childhood. During his first visit to Pinewold, Whitten found that the unassuming beauty of the original cottage had been obscured by ill-conceived additions, dropped ceilings, vinyl siding and windows, and a

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by Candace Karu  
Photography Rob Karosis



The wrap-around porch at Pinewold is at the heart of summer's activities: reading, relaxing, dining, and great conversations all take place in its inviting shade (previous spread). Architect Rob Whitten extended the porch, creating a welcoming entrance to the house that also directs guests to enjoy the glorious water views. The green shutters with half-moon cutouts are original to the cottage.

The newly designed kitchen blends old and new to a delightful effect (above). Opening up the room to the dining room beyond takes full advantage of the views to the water. Appliances and light fixtures are unapologetically contemporary, while still respecting their surroundings. The matte black Basaltina countertops and integrated sink add a graphic accent to the painted wood cabinetry. Designer Betsy Train designed the custom-made tin exhaust hood over the range, which was fabricated by tinsmith Mike Tomaselli.

host of strictly utilitarian bath and kitchen fixtures.

"The clients retained us to revive the character and quality of the early cottage," explains Whitten. "My first move was to reorganize the site plan and the floor plan so the outside living spaces became the focus of the interior spaces." Whitten is emphatic about the project being a *revival*, rather than a restoration or preservation. "We brought back the best parts and added lots of new features and components," he says. "The kitchen is a good example. Our design is a modern, open-plan kitchen with an island, contemporary appliances, high-quality lighting, a pantry, and a water view; while it has a contemporary feel, it fits within the context of the old cottage."

Before work began, however, the site plan offered its own set of challenges. The driveway had been channeling runoff water directly under the house for many years, which had compromised the foundation. A separate building, which contained a small guest cottage and a later addition of a two-car garage, blocked water views as guests approached the house.

Whitten proposed eliminating the garage and moving the guest cottage to the west corner of the lot, revealing a previously



One of the previous owners of Pinewold was Capt. Spaulding of the U.S. navy. His bosun's mate made the rope handrail, which remains today (right). The pendant light hanging in the dining room is a family heirloom that came with the current owners. Steve Earle, project foreman, solved the problem of storing dining table leaves by creating a long, pullout drawer under the staircase.

The new brick used for the fireplace is from Morin Brick Company in Gorham (bottom). Custom brass door hinges from Decorum in Portland assure that screen doors don't slam shut, but close quietly. The red birch push bars on the screen doors were created with leftover lengths of new flooring—the perfect Yankee solution, according to Whitten. New windows throughout are two-over-one, a traditional Foursquare detail.

obscured covered porch and orienting it to take advantage of the water views. A new garage, suggestive of an old carriage house, was planned to complete the third point of the outdoor lawn space.

When it came time to choose a builder, Whitten suggested Steve Malcom of Boothbay Home Builders, with whom he had a longstanding professional relationship. It did not take long for Malcom and project manager Steve Berger to enthusiastically embrace the plan to restore Pinewold to its original beauty. "We credit the homeowners," says Berger of the end result. "They did a lot of research and really pulled it off." Boothbay Home Builders' exacting work on the house speaks to the company's respect for quality, craftsmanship, and history.

Although he was inspired and guided by the homeowners' passion for historic preservation, Whitten's design does not slavishly adhere to the conventions of a bygone era. Original features sit comfortably alongside modern elements. Where they made sense, both architect and designer preserved period details. In the original plan, the porch railing, for instance, beautifully punctuated the outdoor living area, but it was far too low for current building codes. Whitten's solution was to add a more modern cable railing with a red-cedar cap, lending a subtly contemporary element to the exterior and enhancing the structure's original lines.

The project took slightly less than a year to complete. It not only involved restoring the original house and moving the guest cottage, but it also called for building a completely new garage. Whitten's team, which included architect Kevin

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“We brought back the best parts  
and added new features.”

Rob Whitten, Architect

Designer Betsy Train chose a limited color palette that doesn't dominate the room or the décor. “The family loves green, and this one is light and airy,” she says, describing the master bedroom (above). The unstudied interior includes straightforward design solutions like plain white linens on the beds and simple pull shades on the windows. In addition to an unfussy crown molding, picture rail was installed throughout the house, punctuating its uncomplicated lines.

New fixtures with an old-fashioned appeal, like small hexagonal floor tile, a pedestal sink, and a deep clawfoot tub, make the master bath one of the couple's favorite rooms (right).

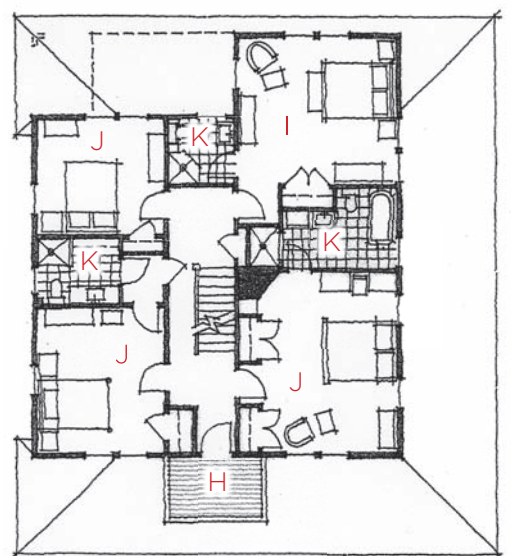
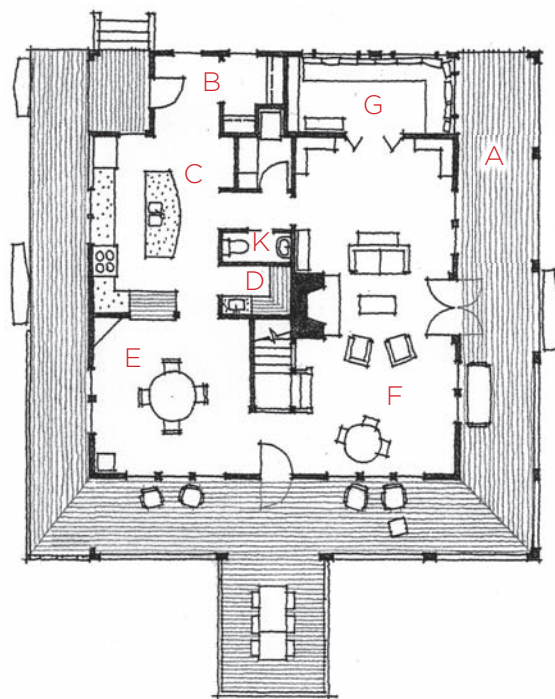
The jutting porch addition (opposite) is the perfect place for summer gatherings and meals. The vista includes a fishing wharf, lots of boat traffic, and a working swing bridge.







- A Porch
- B Mudroom
- C Kitchen
- D Butler's Pantry
- E Dining Room
- F Living Room
- G Sun Room
- H Balcony
- I Master Bedroom
- J Bedrooms
- K Bathrooms







As the day ends, Pinewold displays its abundant charms. The porch extension sits on top of a storage area for kayaks, canoes, paddles, and life jackets, with easy access to the dock. The gardens, designed to be low-maintenance, include perennial favorites like hydrangea, rosa rugosa, phlox, delphiniums, and day lilies.

Moquin, enlisted the skills of Ned Kirkland of Back Meadow Farm in Damariscotta to carry out the extensive landscaping. Given the complexity of the project, the team executed the work with remarkably little miscommunication or stress. Because the homeowners were half a continent away during the construction, electronic communication was essential. “I’m a huge fan of email,” laughs Whitten. “Decisions were often made faster electronically by sending digital pictures and meeting notes. We could get answers to questions in less than twenty minutes.”

Interior designer Betsy Train refers to the project as an “adventure in restoration.” Having known the homeowners for more than thirty years, for her the collaboration was effortless and inspired. “They wanted the house to be unstudied, even a

little quirky,” she says, “as though it evolved over generations—it was never supposed to look decorated.” Train, too, credits the serendipitous convergence of diverse professionals who all spoke the same language. “It was just a great team,” says Train.

The project was finished in 2007, just in time for the family to enjoy the last weeks of summer in their revived cottage. After they had moved in, Whitten presented them with a beautiful hardcover book documenting the process, which included a sketch of the house on a crumpled cocktail napkin, snapshots of the first extended family gatherings, and beautiful water vistas taken from the wide wrap-around porch. The book opens with the simple title *Pinewold*. For one Midwestern family, that word now means “home.”

See Resources for more information. **MH+D**



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