

# Decor Maine

ISSUE NO. 1

LIVING BEAUTIFULLY IN MAINE

6 DREAM  
KITCHENS  
TO TEMPT YOUR  
INNER CHEF

## The KITCHEN ISSUE

A STORIED  
WEST END  
HOME,  
*transformed*

1820s  
SCHOOLHOUSE  
GRADUATES  
TO THE  
21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

A LOOK INTO  
MAINE'S  
STELLAR  
CRAFT BEER  
SCENE  
&  
More!





# Urbane Renewal

In Portland's West End, a classic Colonial gets an elegant update from Knickerbocker Group

written by **ALLISON PAIGE** photographs by **ERIN LITTLE**



An antique carved rose-wood table is surrounded by mementos from the Hankowskis' many travels. **OPPOSITE:** The serene primary bedroom is reflected in a mirror from West Elm.

*Architect &  
Builder*  
**Knickerbocker Group**

*Interior Design*  
**Sarah Ettelman Designs**

*Landscape Design*  
**Sarah Witte & Great Works  
Landscaping**



**MARK HANKOWSKI GREW UP IN AMHERST**, Massachusetts, and spent lazy summers on Sebago Lake at his family's camp. He continued the tradition with his own family, booking summer rentals until 2018 when he bought a lake house in Raymond. Then the pandemic hit, and he and his wife, Corina, and teen daughters, Anya and Eva, decided to shelter there. That year of tranquil lakeside living convinced them to move to Maine full-time, and after an extensive search, Corina and Mark found the perfect refuge in Portland's historic West End.

The circa-1938, four-bedroom, three-and-a-half-bath property was in wonderful condition and close to Wayn-

flete, the K-12 private school that attracted them to the area, but it was not, in fact, love at first sight. Mark is not fond of Colonials, and the exterior, clad in lemony clapboard, did not call out to Corina. "I hate yellow," she admits, with a laugh.

"The decor was done to a very high caliber," Corina amends, "but it was terribly dated. Every drapery was Laura Ashley. We had parrots in this room, toucans in that room, and tropical peach and green upstairs. We all sort of walked in here and said, 'No, no, no, no, no.'" But beneath the dated decor were the beautiful bones of a West End classic, the last home built by John Calvin

**TOP, RIGHT:** The circa-1938 Colonial was the last home built by John Calvin Stevens and his son, for a local judge. **RIGHT:** The powder room gleams with wallpaper from Thatcher, brass hardware, and a gilt mirror. **OPPOSITE:** East meets West in the living room, where a mix of American mid-century modern and Asian antiques live in harmony.

Stevens and his son, replete with period detail and four floors of living space.

“The scope of the project kept expanding,” explains Mark. An exterior paint job and kitchen update were planned, but a crumbling kitchen foundation and old wiring were unexpected overhauls. Two gutted bathrooms and a much-desired mudroom later, “We basically went from doing a few things to doing 80% of the house,” Corina estimates.

Fortunately, the family was well acquainted with Knickerbocker Group, who renovated their lake home. This time they collaborated with architect Julien Jalbert and project manager Sam Kapala, recruiting Massachusetts connections interior designer Sarah Ettelman and cabinetmaker Jon LaValley to round out the team. They met in the kitchen the summer of 2020, masked up and ready to brainstorm. “It was a true collaboration,” says Sam. “A long project full of challenges, curveballs, and changes, but the end product speaks for itself”

After shoring up the unsteady kitchen foundation, they increased the flow of the kitchen, dining, and living areas by creating new points of entry. The original living room had only one entrance, giving the room a long, boxy feel. Egress was added and the adjacent den was converted into a dining area, with new period-correct windows from Bagala Window Works of Westbrook installed to bring in sunlight and backyard views. “We agreed that it would make sense to restore these windows to bring the house back to its original character and provide much needed natural light,” says Julien. “The same condition existed on the second floor in the primary bathroom. We reworked the design and layout of the bathroom to introduce these two windows into the plan, again for both natural light and to return the rear facade to its original glory.”

“Uncovering those openings and restoring the view to the yard and a lovely Japanese maple made for one of the best parts of the project,” Sam agrees.

Knickerbocker Group uncovered and restored the original windows in the dining room, once a dark wood-paneled den, to welcome in garden views. A custom claro walnut table from Water Street Furniture Studio is joined by a chinoiserie-style medicine cabinet and ochre wallpaper by Fayce Textiles. The light fixture is from Rejuvenation Hardware.





The kitchen island is topped with leathered granite from Stone Surface and provides extra prep space and seating (stools from Article), as well as two dishwashers and a deep farmhouse sink from Shaws of England. White and brushed brass pendants from Rejuvenation Hardware complement the gold Ager finishes. The floors are by Atlantic Hardwoods.

“Another challenge we encountered was how to elegantly rework the existing stair down to the basement and create a much-needed mudroom from the garage,” adds Julien. Not only was this pulled off with their customary panache, but the basement stairwell (which featured what Julien calls a ‘head knocker’ at the bottom) was also straightened out to allow pinball machines to be transported downstairs. (More on those later.)

Corina, the daughter of a Swiss hotelier, was brought up in Hong Kong and met Mark at Tufts University. The two traveled the world, taking at least two globe-spanning trips, and have

An expansive island is topped in leathered marble (Mark’s geology background reflects this choice) and includes two dishwashers and a deep farmhouse sink.

lived in Boston, New York City, San Francisco, and Amherst. Their home is furnished with a blend of styles and eras; inherited Asian antiques and mid-century modern live in harmony. Corina credits interior designer Sarah Ettelman for synthesizing these elements to create a space that is both functional and elegant.

“Each of our decisions tied back to some part of the Hankowskis’ life as a family,” notes Sarah, who considers their aesthetic “warm, functional, and richly curated.” “They like midcentury designers. Add to this Corina’s mother being from Hong Kong and you have a blend of Eames and intricately carved



**ABOVE:** A custom hutch (painted Farrow & Ball "Hague Blue") provides handsome storage. **BELOW:** A bar cabinet inherited from Corina's father was refinished by Herb Clarke of Chameleon Coatings, Portland, making it ever ready for cocktail hour. **OPPOSITE:** A quartz-topped coffee bar with a floating cabinet creates the perfect brewing spot.

and painted Asian heirlooms. They like a layered, meaningful mix of things.”

Corina adds, “One of the hallmarks of our relationship is that we like to fill our home with things from different places where we’ve been or experiences that we’ve shared.”

A passionate home cook, Corina craved an updated kitchen. The team took it from ’90s-era cottagecore (the former backsplash featured a rooster) to contemporary refinement. An expansive island is topped in leathered marble (Mark’s geology background reflects this choice) and includes two dishwashers and a deep farmhouse sink. Jon LaValley installed custom cabinets, a glass-front hutch, and a barista-worthy quartz-topped coffee bar replete with a slim floating cabinet of claro walnut for mugs. Both the kitchen and primary bath feature tile from Heath Ceramics of California, details that evoke the Hankowskis’ time in the Bay Area, where their daughters were born. A subtle colorway of gray and blue gives the kitchen and living room a sleek cohesion, while in the dining room a pop of ochre via grass cloth wallpaper from Fayce Textiles offers a visual surprise.

Upstairs, Eva and Anya have suite-like bedrooms and bathrooms, and Knickerbocker Group created the primary bed and bath of Corina’s dreams, with a long soaking tub and moss green Heath Ceramics tiles, framed by new windows that make it appear nestled in the treetops.

But for all the renovations, the family was equally interested in highlighting the home’s intrinsic beauty. Period windows were restored; the hearth was refinished with Carrara marble. “We felt when we bought this house that we were buying a piece of history,” Corina says. “While we wanted to modern-

Their home is furnished with a blend of styles and eras; inherited Asian antiques and midcentury modern live in harmony.



**LEFT:** Surrounded by greenery inside and out, the primary bath feels like a tree house. **BELOW:** The bathroom includes a double vanity and frameless glass shower cabin. **BOTTOM, LEFT:** Warm neutral furnishings and a sophisticated colorway of blues and grays bring the interior up to date.



ize and add certain infrastructure to make it more comfortable, we were not willing to completely obliterate the character. So, even though these dark floors are a complete pain in the butt with light-haired dogs, we’re like, “We’re going dark!” she

exclaims. The animal-loving family shares the property with a veritable menagerie: two dogs, two cats, two fish, a hamster, and six heritage breed chickens. (A horse is boarded elsewhere for their avid equestrian daughters.)

One of Mark’s favorite spots happens below-stairs in the basement den, where a playful vibe prevails. Walls painted by muralist Sagie De La Cruz resemble rolling waves, inspired by the Hankowskis’ tropical travels. “Like, it’s Maine, it’s winter—I want to be in Micronesia!” quips Mark. A selection of vintage and modern machines from Mystic Pinball, an arcade Mark once co-owned in Massachusetts, makes it a pinball wizard’s dream.

With the fullness of their aesthetic realized, the Hankowskis’ renovation resulted in a home that honors its roots, feels wholly personal, and elegantly ushers it into the future.

“I feel very much like our home and the project was an amalgamation,” Corina happily concludes. “A collection of our experiences together and what we’ve shared in our life.” ■



Reclaimed wood provides a rustic, warm backdrop for refined, modern elements like this gleaming piano. Design by Knickerbocker Group.

# GOOD WOOD: BEAUTY & SUSTAINABILITY

SEE HOW MAINE  
HOMEOWNERS, DESIGNERS,  
AND BUILDERS ARE  
INCORPORATING SUSTAINABILITY  
ONE BOARD AT A TIME

BY **PENNY GUISSINGER**

The delicacy of this 19th-century French chaise longue balances the flooring's natural look. The painting is an 1845 Clémence Fernel. Interior design by DH Design Group and The Art of Antiquing.



**T**he built spaces in which we spend our lives embody many things: warmth, memories, and family. They also embody energy—the kind of energy that affects the environment and has an impact on climate change. Incorporating reclaimed wood into projects of all sizes is an excellent way to leverage the energy embodied in existing building materials—and it's beautiful! Reclaimed wood, whether it's rescued from an old barn or pulled from a deep, cold lake, offers luminous color, patina, and scars that cannot be duplicated with virgin wood.

Maine is home to a community of producers, designers, and builders who offer reclaimed wood products, materials, furniture, and other design elements that can make homeowners feel good about the aesthetics and sustainability of their choices.

South Portland's Rousseau Reclaimed Lumber & Flooring, a custom reclaimed millwork shop, processes salvaged and reclaimed material into new, application-ready products that tell a story. "This wood," says owner John Rousseau, "has a unique look that softens spaces. It can change a modern build by providing warm, historic elements."

Nobody knows the truth of this more than Margaret Brown, whose Pemaquid home, built by Knickerbocker Group, showcases the beauty of reclaimed wood flooring sourced by John. "When people walk through the door, even though the structure is new, they often say, 'Wow, how old is this home?'" explains Margaret. "Because subconsciously the flooring is visually registering the house as an old home, and I love that!" Built on a former saltwater farm, Margaret's house features patinaed floor-



**ABOVE:** Nineteenth-century Louis XVI leather armchairs, paired with warm lighting, bookshelves, and exposed timbers, create a cozy nook.

ing John salvaged from a cotton storage facility in Tennessee. The wood's incredible color is the echo of its former life. "During the cotton era, they pushed bales of cotton across the floors of warehouses," he explains. The cotton not only polished the boards but also left behind some of its oils. "It was a rare find. I haven't come across anything comparable since."

Maine Heritage Timber has been reclaiming wood from the bottom

of a 1,000-acre lake in Millinocket for a decade. Quakish Lake, part of the Penobscot River chain of waterways, was formerly a holding area for Great Northern Paper, and logs that sank there have been preserved for more than 100 years. Tom Shafer, his partners, and employees are proud of the unique colors and beauty of the wood they bring back to life as countertops, furniture, flooring, and other products. "This reclaimed wood," says employee Sandra Burns, "has an



Repurposed timber frames this British Charles II chest and unsigned French painting. **(OPPOSITE)** **BOTTOM, LEFT:** Glass and spaciousness create a perfect setting for this French dining set.



The facade of antique boards houses a sub-zero refrigerator with storage on one side and above. Interior design by Kelly B. Cook of Orangerie Home.



**TOP, LEFT:** The pedestal table is made from the same material as the refrigerator cabinet in this Southport kitchen. **ABOVE:** The lazy Susan was built specifically to accommodate platters for large holiday meals and other gatherings.



This Westport Island home features a wet bar built by Rockport Post & Beam.



amazing color and character that you simply cannot get from new wood.” This reclaimed river wood is also available as peel-and-stick tiles under the name Timberchic for use on walls or kitchen islands.

Maine builder Bob McGrath, whose business is Rustique LLC in Arundel, has been working with reclaimed wood for almost three decades, and he approaches it as a form of art. “No two boards look alike,” he says. “I approach each of them like a canvas.” The boards Bob uses in his projects feature divots, pockmarks, and scars left behind by boots or horse hooves.

One of Bob’s projects, the Southport home of Thomas and Kristi Shannon, serves as a great example of how a commitment to sustainable building and smart, attractive design can come together. “This practice is environmentally responsible, and we love the story told by this wood,” says Thomas. “It’s important to us to hire Maine craftspeople and to sustain the trades.” Wood used in the Shannons’ home was reclaimed from the South Meetinghouse in Andover, Massachusetts. “I love to think about who might have touched these boards in that church.”

At another home, in the center of the kitchen sits a gleaming island top made of wood reclaimed from an old carriage house in Kennebunkport. The post and beam, Westport Island home was designed by Rockport Post & Beam, and the homeowners wanted something beautiful, durable, and different to tie the room together while continuing to feature the warmth of wood. The island top was built by Mike Thompson, owner of The Old House Parts Company, who also built them a coffee table from the scraps. “We love the island for its marks, grooves, and knots,” explains the client. “It reminds me of a table from my childhood that was made from an old ship.” She describes the age and history of these reclaimed pieces as “very special.”

Reducing our collective carbon footprint is everyone’s job, and the construction and building sector is no exception. According to Architecture 2030, a 20-year-old nonprofit dedicated to transforming the built environment from a major emitter of greenhouse gases into a central solution, building materials and construction account for about 13% of global carbon emissions. Further, research completed in 2010 identified that production of virgin building materials consumes 11 to 13 times as much energy and results in three to five times potential for climate change as use of reclaimed lumber and flooring. Data like that, along with the beauty and warmth reclaimed wood provides, make it a winning choice for your kitchen or any other space in your home. ■



Live-edge white pine from Monson, Maine, tops the wet bar, which was built with reclaimed boards from Rousseau Reclaimed Lumber & Flooring. (OPPOSITE) BOTTOM, LEFT: This simple, primitive bench, built by Rustique LLC, is made of 200-year-old barn floor planking.