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MAINE HOME + DESIGN

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THE INTERIOR DESIGN ISSUE

TAKE TO THE HILLS

A SKI HOUSE AT THE BASE OF MOUNT ABRAM
PUTS A MODERN TWIST ON A RUSTIC AESTHETIC



PLAID, PLEASE

WHY IT SHOULD BE YOUR GO-TO
PATTERN THIS SEASON

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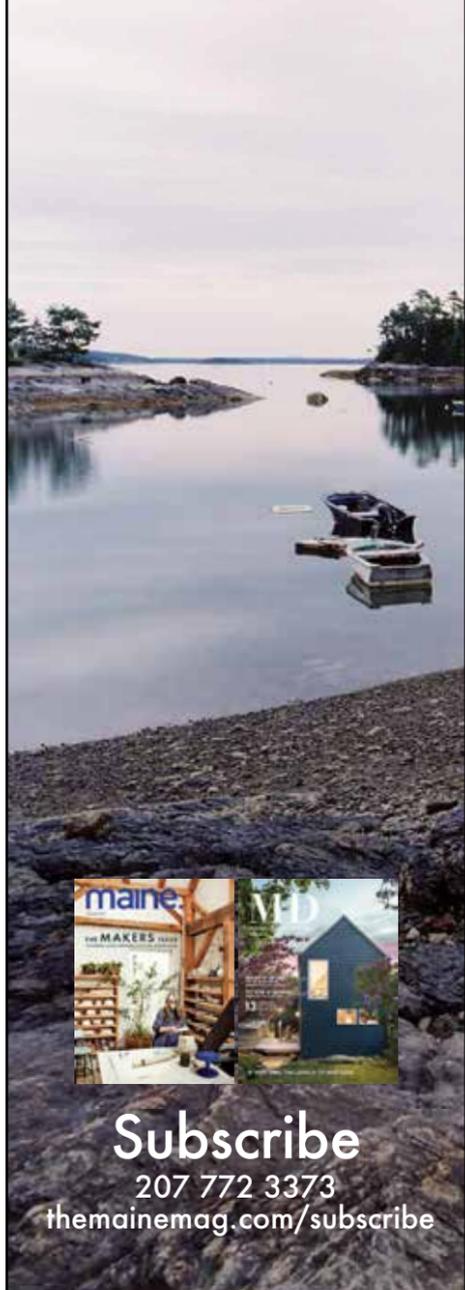
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ERIN LITTLE is a Maine native who has been photographing people and places for almost 16 years. She loves capturing the energy and soul of a space and working with interior and architectural clients to create unique and beautiful images of their work. She lives in Portland with her daughter (and too many animals). Spaces, page 52, *Rough Enough*, page 72



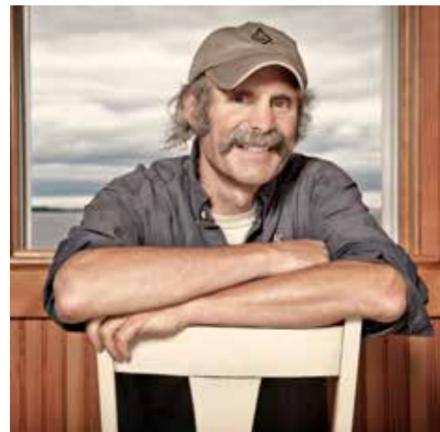
ERICA PALM feels gratitude for every opportunity to elevate the function and style of the home. Understanding how her clients live in their home enables her to create an interior design that reflects their lifestyle while improving the usability of the space. Palm is ever inspired by the simplicity of good design and the creativity of the design industry. *Rough Enough*, page 72

MARNI ELYSE KATZ is a freelance design journalist whose career started in the fashion closet of *Rolling Stone*. Today she writes for local and national publications, both in print and online. Katz lives in Boston and Truro with her husband, two sons, and a cat. Follow her work and life on Instagram @StyleCarrot. *Rough Enough*, page 72



ERIC LIST has over 18 years of building experience and is thrilled to share his construction knowledge and design ideas with clients seeking to build exquisite custom homes. He lives in West Bethel with his wife, Christine, at Morning Glory Farm, a small organic farm and orchard. His passions outside of work revolve around growing organic fruit and vegetables and making hard cider, cheese, and hot sauce. On many evenings and weekends, he also enjoys running, skiing, and biking. *Rough Enough*, page 72

STEVE MALCOM, founder of Knickerbocker Group in Boothbay and Portland, is known for his in-depth knowledge of the architecture and construction industry. Passionate about quality, he drives the company's reputation for craftsmanship and attention to detail. Malcom is actively involved on many boards and is committed to making a positive impact on Maine's communities. *Ongoing in Edgecomb*, page 58



Creative director **JOEL KUSCHKE** grew up in southern Maine and has been working in the design industry for the past 15 years. After leaving to pursue his BFA in New York, he returned to his home state and now lives in Gorham. Kuschke has the pleasure of collaborating with Maine's most talented creatives on a weekly basis. He enjoys getting outside year-round to go fishing and camping.



Jim Godbout
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The client wanted an open-concept design for their summer home, to accommodate their family of five and to entertain extended family and friends. The house was originally built in the early 1990s with a small kitchen oriented toward the back of the house that did not take advantage of the spectacular ocean views. The dated kitchen had a low ceiling and a wall dividing it from the living space. Knickerbocker Group removed the wall to allow more light to enter the home, and the new kitchen is now the heart of the space. The entertaining island is painted in Farrow and Ball's Hague Blue, and all the custom millwork and woodwork around the range and wall ovens is painted in Benjamin Moore's Simply White. The range hood has a brass flat-stock accent with exposed rivets to pick up the other nautical brass details throughout the house.

Located at the edge of the kitchen and the open living space, the custom bar can accommodate large crowds or intimate gatherings with a wine fridge, an ice maker, and fridge drawers. The cabinets with glass doors are lit internally to show off the client's collection of crystal glassware. The backsplash is an antique mirrored tile, which makes the cabinet appear more open. Like the kitchen, the bar has brass fixtures and a brass sink.

The design team updated the existing board-and-batten walls and added wallcoverings using a blue and white color palette throughout. The clients have a long history with Blue Hill and have acquired work from many local artists along with historic maps of the area, which are displayed throughout the home. Each room has a brass placard cast with the name of an area in the state that holds a special meaning to the family.

The new space fits both the clients and their families. They say they relax as soon as they walk into the house and can now comfortably entertain large groups.

The Point House

FIRM: KNICKERBOCKER GROUP

INTERIOR DESIGNERS: LEAH LIPPMANN & NANETTE TANNER

ARCHITECT: LEAH LIPPMANN, KNICKERBOCKER GROUP

BUILDER: MIKE OSBORNE GENERAL CONTRACTOR

MILLWORK: BLOCK BROTHERS CUSTOM CABINETS

PHOTOGRAPHER: DARREN SETLOW

LOCATION: BLUE HILL





ON GOING

FIRST, THERE WAS A CAMP REVAMP, THEN A BUNKHOUSE—NOW IT'S UP TO 40 ACRES PLUS AN ANTIQUE BARN AND A STONE-RAISED SPA

BY KATY KELLEHER
PHOTOGRAPHY BY DARREN SETLOW

The coastal property had been in Mark Eldridge's family for over a century, so when Mark and his wife, Kathie, purchased it in 2004, the vintage cottage was looking a little worse for wear. It had mice, for one thing, and the one-story getaway was not big enough to accommodate the growing family comfortably. Still, "everyone had a lot of feelings about us tearing it down," Kathie says. "It was very important—especially to my husband—that the new house feel like the old house. That drove our project from the very beginning."

Located on the tip of a peninsula, the new compact house (with its grandfathered-in, zoning-limited footprint) became the first of four buildings (on two properties) that Boothbay- and Portland-based design-build firm Knickerbocker Group would create for the couple. The fruitful partnership began in 2011, with the rebuilding of that waterfront cottage into a cabin. While the Eldridges had considered building one big family home, the Massachusetts couple ultimately opted to create a modernized, winterized cabin in the footprint by the water, plus a

bunkhouse located farther back for guest overflow. Even before setting foot on the property, Knickerbocker Group founder and CEO Steve Malcom was familiar with the unique, rocky spit of land and its firepit. "I live across the river from them. I would kayak around the point. I remember saying, 'Oh, this is the best place in all of Maine,'" he says. "With all the people around the fire, right by the cottage, it was just a quintessential Maine summer scene. It was special."

So Malcom understood why Kathie and Mark didn't want to move their cottage back from the water. "Lately, we've been doing more projects like that one," Malcom says. "We go for multiples and smaller, rather than one big house." It feels more in keeping with the spirit of Maine, he explains, and it allows for greater freedom in where they can build. It also limits the impact the process will have on the land; smaller buildings mean smaller foundations, less blasting of rock, fewer trees ripped out or plants disturbed. The idea was to make a mouse-free house with a contemporary style, old-fashioned roots, and outbuildings as needed.

IN EDGE

COMB



Other than those directives, Kathie and Mark gave the team at Knickerbocker Group basically free rein. "Having a client truly open to new ideas is surprisingly uncommon, so when someone like the Eldridges come along, you really get to flex your creative muscles more than usual," says Knickerbocker Group principal Rick Nelson. For architect Susan Mendleson, the 2011 build presented an opportunity to showcase her problem-solving skills. "What stands out in my mind, ten years later, is the loft," she says. To make the most of the allotted 1,400 square feet, Mendleson designed a ladder that leads up to the second-story sleeping area, with removable railings to allow the family freedom to take larger pieces of furniture up and down between the floors. "We didn't 'save space' as much as we kept spaces from feeling too small," she explains. "The original cottage had much lower window heads, forcing the view down to the ground unless you were

seated. We used large windows to further extend the spaces outside with long views." "It is a bit of a cliché these days, but the connection between the interior and exterior was really crucial," says Nelson. "Imagine sleeping in the main house's loft bedroom and literally feeling like you are in the trees." In addition to the large windows and abundance of granite, Knickerbocker Group also sourced weathered wood to lend the new structures on the property an older presence. Some of these planks came from mushroom-growing farms; others hailed from historic boats. "One of the memorable parts of the project was the wood sills used for the windows," says construction manager Derek Chapman. "On top of being the perfect type of aged wood, the boards were salvaged deck planks from the oldest commissioned warship still afloat in the United States, the USS *Constitution*. With the owners being from Massachusetts, this was, in my opinion, the icing on the cake."

Over the last two decades, Kathie and Mark Eldridge have worked with the team at Knickerbocker Group to build four separate structures, and they're thinking of adding more to their coastal property. The renovated barn overlooks a snowy scene (opening spread).

The interior of the barn (above) required a good amount of work, since the original structure had a rather thin floor that felt, according to architect Julien Jalbert, "like a trampoline." Yet the family was committed to keeping the character of this historic building. Fortified by glue laminated timber (glulam), it now sits away from the road, overlooking a lush wild meadow (restored with great care by landscape architect William Joyce).

The barn is where the family goes to play (opposite). Since the primary cottages were limited in size by their proximity to the water, the barn and spa both provide recreational opportunities that couldn't have fit on the original plot.



"The quintessential farmhouse is big house, little house, barn," says Steve Malcom of Knickerbocker Group. The updated historic barn now features large, modern windows set beneath a traditional peaked Maine roofline. "I always say that, as long as you keep a familiar roofline, you can do almost anything underneath and it still works as a Maine cottage," Malcom adds.





For the Eldridges, this build was a resounding success, stylistically and practically. The cottage and the bunkhouse felt cozy and livable, the perfect mix of contemporary and rustic. “The process was amazing,” reflects Kathie. “I enjoyed every minute of our meetings. They really listened to us.”

The Eldridges liked working with Knickerbocker Group so much that, when it came time to build something even more ambitious, they knew exactly whom to call. In 2017 they acquired a 40-acre piece of land located half a mile up the road from their base camp. For years, they had been walking up and down the road, wondering at the undeveloped stretch of forest and field. Thanks to a tip-off from a neighbor, they were able to snatch it up as soon as it went on the market. “All that was on the property was an old, dilapidated barn. The first thing we said was, ‘Wow, wouldn’t this be great to have as additional sleeping space?’” recalls Kathie. “I called Knickerbocker and said, ‘What can we do with this?’”

This time, architect Julien Jalbert took on the task. The first order of business was the barn, which needed to be moved back from the road and placed on a new foundation. “The goal from the beginning was to make this pastoral property stay pastoral,” explains landscape architect William Joyce. “The topography was challenging.” According to Malcom, the barn was a “typical Maine barn, just built on a pile of rocks. But Mark and Kathie wanted to preserve it at all costs.” Knickerbocker Group’s crew picked out a new site, poured a foundation, and set the structure back before beginning an overhaul of the interior. The shell of the barn was great, but Jalbert says the second-story floor needed work. “It was like walking on a trampoline,” he says of the springy wood. “It was 150 years old and had the skinniest floor.” Inside, they found “cool old carvings,” that likely dated back to the 1920s, when the barn was used as a function hall. “We had to reinforce it with a frame inside,” he adds. Large glass windows

The barn features large windows from Marvin and Sierra Pacific (above). A Mitsubishi heat pump keeps the spacious area warm in winter. A weathered finish helps the barn blend in with the local vernacular.

(Opposite, clockwise from top left) Kids at play in the barn. The spiral staircase leads to a cozy sleeping loft; Both the renovated, expanded barn and the Stoneview Spa were designed by architect Julien Jalbert. “I had never heard of a private family spa before,” he says. “But they wanted a place where they could relax. It wouldn’t be a house, but it would have a gym, a place to cook, prepare food, relax, and enjoy the quiet.” The interior design of the spa was largely driven by materials and a desire for simplicity. The end result is, in Malcom’s words, “more in tune with the sense of place.”





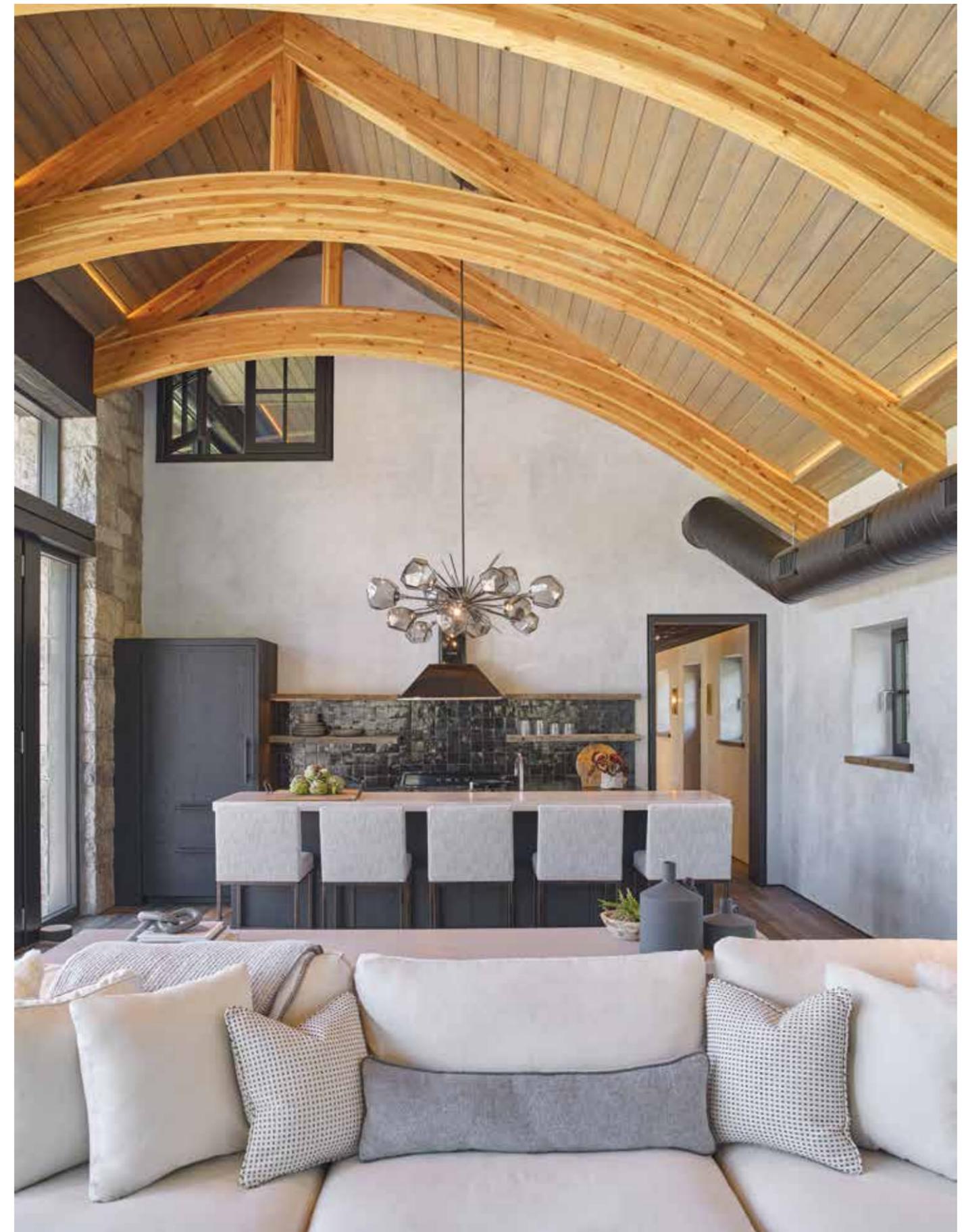
opened the backside of the barn to the water, allowing natural light to pour into the family's new recreational space.

After Knickerbocker Group's builders finished re-raising the barn, they turned their attention to creating a spa. It was going to be Mark's retreat, a place where he could go in the morning to work out, decompress in the sauna, and shower. At the time, Jalbert was new to Knickerbocker Group, and this design was his chance to take a big swing. "I put it together in a vacuum, and I showed it independently to the principals at my company," he remembers. Their feedback was encouraging, so Jalbert presented his stone-heavy, glass-walled, contemporary vision to the family. "The norm is that you put a bunch of options together and ask your clients which one," he says. "But I could present this design with the same energy and vigor I had brought to the team at Knickerbocker. I'll never forget it; Kathie Eldridge saw it and just said, 'I'm in.'"

As the build progressed, the Stoneview Spa (as the family has come to call it) grew a little in size and scope. Malcom advised the Eldridges to add a lofted sleeping area and a kitchen—he had a feeling the space was going to get a lot of use. "The site is just so spectacular," he says. "I told Kathie and Mark, 'You're going to want to sleep down here.'" Another big change to the original proposal was prompted by mason Dan Ucci. He had worked on all of the Eldridges' houses, and he knew their liking for local granite. When he saw Jalbert's sketch, which included a large stone-veneered column near the entryway, Ucci threw out the idea of using one large gray slab to anchor the house. It would be difficult to achieve from an engineering perspective, and possibly rather expensive. But to build with boulders would also be monumental. "For someone who sees it for the first time, I think it just evokes this real sense of curiosity," says Jalbert of the finished structure. "It's like Stonehenge. It feels wonderful."

In building the spa (above), the topography presented the greatest challenge for landscape architect William Joyce: "Nestling the building into the slope and getting the clients from top of slope into the building gracefully took a lot of thought and massaging of the design." Jalbert says he was inspired, in part, by "old cozy Scottish cottages tucked into the hillside."

Knickerbocker Group did the interior design for all four of the Eldridge's new builds. In the spa (opposite), the idea was to keep the space neutral, soothing, and comfortable.





A scene from inside the spa, looking out toward the meadow (opposite, top). The private wellness building includes a gym, home office, 1.5 baths, steam shower, sauna, living/kitchen/dining area, hot tub, outdoor dining area with a pizza oven, and patio.

Architect Julien Jalbert says using two masons on the Stoneview Spa really helped highlight the versatility of Maine granite (opposite, bottom). "These amazing masons worked in very different ways," he explains. "Freshwater Stone uses a system that machine-cuts the stones, assembles them off-site, labels them, and then reassembles it on-site, like a puzzle." Dan Ucci, who did the large granite boulder at the entryway, "has an artful, organic approach" to masonry. "It was a collaborative effort, and stronger for it."

The kitchen at Stoneview Spa features cabinets by Tidewater Millwork, countertops by Morningstar, and tile from Old Port Specialty Tile.





“The spa is a place that’s just beyond words,” says Kathie. “It blows me away, whenever we’re there. The views, the setting, and the expanse of the building. The whole thing. The way the stone combines with all the wood features. Everything about it was phenomenal. It took many meetings, but it turned out amazing.” In 2021 this most recent build won the People’s Choice Award from AIA Maine. “My original dream for that building was preserved,” says Jalbert. “I’m so proud of how it turned out.”

But that’s not the end of the story. In

fall 2022 the Knickerbocker Group crew returned to the Eldridges’ original property for another meeting, this time to discuss adding more sleeping space. You see, the family is anticipating new members. Their kids have grown up and begun bringing home boyfriends and girlfriends. Someday there may even be little ones. “We’re going to figure out how to turn it into the kind of multigenerational hub that they want,” says Malcom. “We were just over there last week, and it was one of those rainy, foggy days. We were amazed, again, by that property. It’s really something.” **MH+D**

In contrast to the gray tones of the spa, the main house and bunk house (opposite, top) both feature warm wood throughout (including Douglas fir beams and antique oak flooring). “One of the most memorable parts of that project was finding the right aged wood,” says builder Derek Chapman.

Rather than building one large cottage further back from the water, the family opted to do two smaller structures (opposite, bottom). The footprint of the main house was grandfathered in, which allowed it to sit on the tip of the peninsula, surrounded by water on three sides. The bunkhouse provides room for the extended family. “We’re about to embark on the next phase with them,” says Malcom excitedly.

The new cottage has a “treehouse-style” loft upstairs that overlooks the ocean (above). Designed by architect Sue Mendelson, this compact building seeks to honor the original family camp in tone and style.