



# Maine Home

## + DESIGN

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ROOTED IN HISTORY

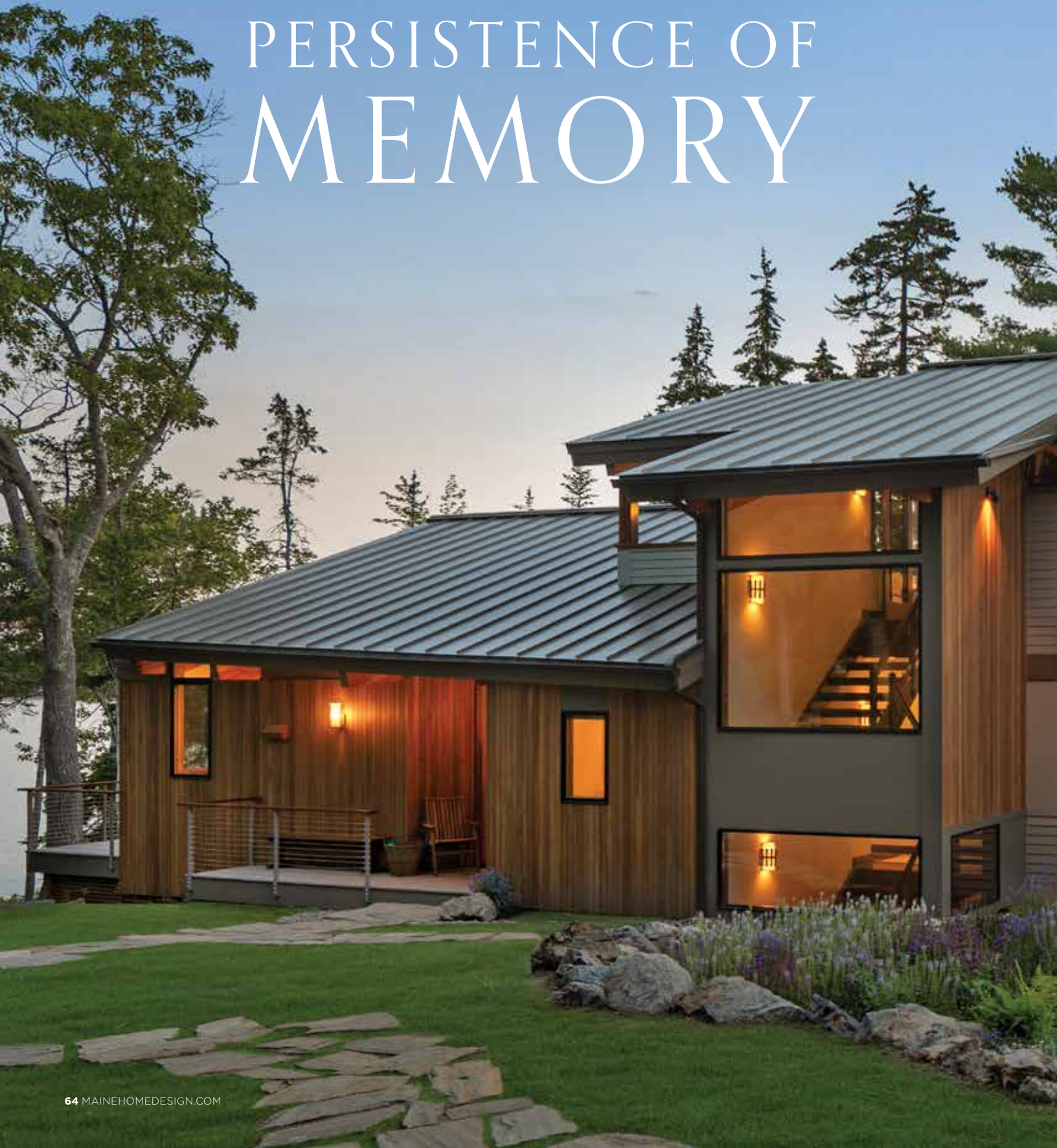
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BY JORGE S. ARANGO // PHOTOGRAPHY BY ANTHONY CRISAFULLI

# PERSISTENCE OF MEMORY



A seaside retreat in Brooksville is the latest manifestation of a family's 250-plus-year legacy in the area



# In 1767

King George III offered to grant John Billings “all the land he could walk around in one day.” Billings was a rope maker whose great-grandfather emigrated to the Massachusetts colony from England in 1640. So he traversed Eggemoggin Reach to present-day Brooksville and, by sunset, had paced out a large parcel on an idyllic peninsula and claimed it as his own.

More than two and a half centuries later, Claude Hoopes and his wife, Lyn, who descends from John, erected their vacation retreat here on the land. “We’ve been married for 43 years,” says Claude, “and in all that time the only thing my wife wanted was a home on her family homestead.” Her dream came true when they moved into the resulting 3,000-square-foot, four-bedroom residence last year. Landscaping by Brooksville-based Claire Altenhofen was recently completed. “The whole acre lies on a ledge,” explains Claude. “By the water is a tall granite outcropping that is the signature element of the site.” Hence they named this place Headland. “The house is phenomenal, but it has greater meaning because it’s been part of Lyn’s family for so many years. The true story for us is extending a downeast legacy.”

During the eighteenth century, Lyn’s antecedents farmed the property. In the winters, they cut ice blocks out of the frozen lake nearby, loading it onto schooners bound for points as far south as Florida. They also quarried granite that was transported nationwide, some of it making its way into the Brooklyn Bridge and the Bronx Courthouse. When regular steamboat service was established in the 1870s, many area residents began renting rooms to “rusticators” from New England cities who wanted to spend their summers at quiet farmhouses dotting the coastline.

Various wood species work in concert in the main room: cherry custom cabinets (by Penobscot-based Perry Astbury), walnut floors, cedar ceilings, and mahogany-framed Pella windows.









Naturally, the enterprising Billingses followed suit. The new tourist economy moved Lyn's great-great-great-grandmother Flavilla Billings and her husband, Emery Herrick, to establish an inn, Oakland House, in 1889, which they did after adding a third floor to the homestead John Billings had erected in the 1770s. The inn is still a thriving operation today, now run by a cousin of Lyn's as Oakland House Seaside Inn and Cottages. The Billingses sold off parcels of prime waterfront to families looking to build their own summer homes, but not everyone who purchased land built on it. In 2012, when a one-acre lot hit the market, the Hoopeses pounced.

When it came time to build, the couple spent two years working with an architectural firm on the West Coast to design the structure. "We were determined to have a home that spoke Maine inside and outside," says Claude. But whether because of differences in regional sensitivities or simple communi-

cation challenges, "something didn't click with the design." Before retiring from his career as a developer in Massachusetts, Claude had become familiar with the Acton-based Acorn Deck House Company, which had been designing and constructing pre-engineered, prefabricated homes for some 70 years. So he called the company, which sent out design manager and architect Michael Hawkes and project director Diane Williams to look at the site.

"First we had to earn their trust," recalls Hawkes. One of the issues with the former architects was their insistence on a shed-style roof with a single pitch. "Once we introduced a gabled roof, it felt more sheltered," says Hawkes. The design would be completely custom, but most of its components would be constructed at the company's facilities and shipped to the site for assembly. "We have a pretty predictable process, so there wouldn't be any surprises," says Stewart.

A compact Norwegian Jøtul woodstove (opposite) provides warmth with minimal distraction from the view, which takes in Eggemoggin Reach, Penobscot Bay, and the Camden Hills. The owners' bedroom (above) features a Company C rug.





A recommendation led the couple to a builder, Jeremy Stewart, founder of Stewart Construction. “He had built 86 houses over 40 years, all on Deer Isle,” says Claude. “The joke was that they never crossed the bridge to the mainland.” Which meant it would take convincing to get Stewart on board. Stewart walked the site and gazed across at Pumpkin Island, with its now inoperable lighthouse. Then, Claude remembers, “He extended his hand and said, ‘I’ll build your home.’”

It turned out that Stewart’s family had owned Pumpkin, and he had summered there throughout his childhood. “It was funny to think of this five-year-old boy looking across at this land and now I’m looking the other way.”

The Hoopeses’ home is constructed from a combination of HardiePanel, a fiber cement siding that can

withstand the locale’s challenging conditions; cedar; and large expanses of glass framed in mahogany. Obviously, the views were of primary importance in orienting the house and deciding how much glass to use. In one direction lay Penobscot Bay and its scatter of islands—Pumpkin, Pond, Great Spruce, Hog, Butter, and so on—and the “full length of the Camden Hills,” says Claude. To the other side there was Eggmoggin Reach and the Deer Isle Bridge, an iconic landmark built in 1939. “We wanted to bring all those views inside,” says Claude. “So all primary rooms face the view.”

Inside is what Stewart called “a museum to wood”—custom cherry cabinets in the kitchen, walnut floors on the main floor, rustic red birch on the lower level, cedar decking overhead, and, of course, the mahogany window trim, which Stewart

The wall separating library and great room (above) was originally designed as a glass door framed in drywall but was changed to a shoji concept that allows light flow and unobstructed views. The owners’ bedroom’s private balcony (opposite) is tucked under a gable.





convinced the Hoopeses should be wider than what was specified. Thin trim, he advised the couple, didn't do the panoramas justice. "He told us we needed to frame the view as an artist would frame it if he was painting it," recalls Claude.

"Jeremy [Stewart] was extremely helpful in making sure all the species of wood worked together," adds Diane Williams from Acorn Deck. Stewart explains, "The mahogany and the walnut are very dark, so they don't tend to clash. There are a lot of tones in the red birch that are similar to the mahogany trim, and the cherry—which is native to Maine—darkens down quickly, sometimes in a matter of months."

The granite kitchen countertops also reference the setting. The color and figuration of the stone "looks like

rocks at the bottom of a clear, fast-running stream," says Claude. But another detail is even more specific to the property's past. In 1949 gas fumes from a refueling caused an explosion and fire on the *Ethelsa*, a boat another descendant had used to cruise guests around the islands. Whatever was salvageable after raising the boat from its watery grave was stashed away. But Lyn unearthed a cabin window during construction that now graces one wall of their new home.

Given the rich family history of the interrelated Billingses, Herricks, and other families with ties to this land, it is poignantly fitting that the Hoopeses' home contains an actual relic of the many memories that infuse the site, a tribute to the memories that will continue to be made by a new generation. **MH+D**

The house is made of cedar and fiber cement panels (above, left). The interior stair (above, right) connects three floors (owners' suite upstairs, kids' area downstairs). Sunset over the distant Camden Hills (opposite).