

IT TAKES A VILLAGE

A rustic living room with a vaulted wooden ceiling, a large window, a fireplace, and a dining table. The room features exposed wooden beams, a large window with a grid pattern, a fireplace with a mirror above it, and a dining table with chairs. The lighting is warm and ambient, creating a cozy atmosphere.

by Katy Kelleher
Photography by Darren Setlow

A coastal clapboard marvel is filled with European antiques and reclaimed timbers, from herringbone floorboards to the soaring barn beams





The project started 15 years before they broke ground. For years, Tillyorn (as the Brown family home would come to be called) stood tall in Margaret Brown's mind. The only sign of the house-that-would-be were a series of stakes that dotted the field of her Pemaquid property, laying out where the living room would go, where the porch would open out toward the water. For years, she spent summers with her family in the original 1800s saltwater cape (which is still on site), tucked back from the ocean. She stared out the windows at the acres of green field and dreamt about what she would build there. There would be a barn, she knew. There would be a library. There would be old wood and new windows and a house that fits into Maine yet nods toward Europe. It would include everything she (an antique dealer) loves, all those precious pieces she couldn't bear to part with. It would take many hands to build this house, and many years, but Brown knew it would happen, someday.

The first step in constructing her ideal New England farmhouse involved finding a barn. Brown didn't want to build a brand-new barn—she wanted to pick out an old, weathered, stately barn, deconstruct it, and ship it to Maine. “One day, around six years ago, she called me up and asked, ‘Do you want to take a field trip?’” remembers architect Barry Bronfman of Bronfman Architects in Greenwich, Connecticut, who did the preliminary designs for Tillyorn, having previously worked with Brown on her Connecticut home. Brown told him they could “hop in the Suburban” and drive north for the day. It took six hours to get to Vermont, but Brown wanted Bronfman to see the barn. They met Mike Alderson of Michael Alderson Restorations at the site, and together the antique dealer, the architect, and the carpenter looked it over. Alderson climbed up to examine the beams and make sure that the wood frame was sound, and Bronfman thought about how this barn could be transformed into the centerpiece of a new home. Brown decided to buy it, and a few months later,

Opening spread: The great room of Margaret Brown's new house was made from a reclaimed wood barn that she found in Vermont, purchased, moved to Maine, and packed full of European antiques.

The old original barn (above) is visible to the far left of the shingled relocated barn, which stands in the center of the house with the smaller white library on the left and the main part of the house on the right.

A view of the breezeway (opposite) from the exterior and interior.





The kitchen (above) combines contemporary touches, like counter-to-ceiling marble, with antique accessories such as the French coat of arms over the stove and French measures. Brown and Hammond chose to visually enhance the simple coffered ceiling by using eggshell paint in the recessed portions and semi-gloss on the dividing borders.

Sunlight illuminates the painstakingly constructed oak herringbone floor pattern viewed from the second-story observation area (opposite, top).

The dining area (opposite, bottom) extends onto the deck for a panoramic view of the harbor.





Alderson returned to Vermont to take down the barn and move it to Pemaquid, where it stayed until Brown had assembled the rest of her team and was ready to begin construction.

Now the Vermont barn stands in the center of the field, flanked by a library on one side and the kitchen, dining, and living spaces on the other. From the outside, you might not realize that the barn was once a stand-alone structure, it's so well integrated into the rest of the contemporary clapboard Colonial. "The house will mellow over time," says Bronfman. "The shingles will change color, and it will soften into the landscape until it slowly begins to look like it's been here for hundreds of years." This was important to Brown. She named the house after her ancestral home in Scotland (a property that is no longer in the family). Brown grew up in Maine, and she wanted to build something here that would stand the test of time, that would feel as though it belongs on the old saltwater farm. But as an antique dealer, she also has a strong affinity for European antiques, "the older the better," she says. "One of our primary concerns was balancing Margaret's design aesthetic with the materials and the site," explains Steve Malcom, who managed the overall goals of the project for Knickerbocker Group. "When you're on the site, it's really the land that speaks

to you. It's a quintessential Maine saltwater farm, and it would have been a shame to ruin that. But Margaret paid homage to its history and legacy."

But it wasn't just Brown, and she'll be the first person to admit it. "This house, maybe more than others, was a true collaboration," she says. While Bronfman did the initial designs, Brown also worked with architect Sue Mendleson of Knickerbocker Group to tweak the plans as the project came together over the course of 18 months. (Bronfman, based in Connecticut, couldn't be on-site every day, but Mendleson could, so they worked together to solve any issues that came up during construction.) Derek Chapman was the project manager on-site, but Alderson took on special projects, like figuring out how to affix the antique coat of arms to the marble backdrop above the stove, placing the antique French shutters, and installing the reclaimed wood flooring (sourced from a cotton mill in Tennessee and installed using replica metal nails), and reconstructing the barn. Scott Libby Woodworking created replica panels for the library, and Winston Pendleton Restoration stained the new panels to match the original antique ones. David Hammond, an interior designer from Connecticut and longtime friend of the Browns, made

David Hammond suggested using nickel-gap paneling (opposite) to create a clean, contemporary backdrop for Brown's European art and antiques.

Vignettes like this bird diorama, paired with an 18th century British chest and an early carved French chair, exist throughout every visual space in the home.



One of the highlights and visual connectors of the home is the three-story window that divides the reclaimed Vermont barn from the living room staircase, allowing for wonderful structural views into this main space.

(Opposite, clockwise from top left) The bookshelves in the barn were constructed by Michael Alderson Restorations using old barn boards and beams. Brown filled them with early British and American books; The library is located off of the barn and features wood-carved paneling that Brown sourced from an old house in Boston. It was restored and installed by Scott Libby and Winston Pendelton; The open floor plan showcases a French empire chaise lounge and an 1847 painting of a female gardener by a French female artist; The guest bedroom features a Scottish carved oak bed from the 1700s sourced from Browns store.









the drive to Maine frequently to lend his expertise to the project (he drew plans for the metal trident railings on the main staircase; codesigned the moulding, wainscoting, and ceiling grid; and determined the optimal placement for fireplaces, among other things). Unlike some builds, where the architect draws the plans, the builder builds it, and the designer comes in later to add furnishings and finishes, the entire team was involved from start to finish. "The house proceeded according to plan," says Brown. "And because of everyone involved, we were able to add cool things along the way. Every meeting was great and enjoyable; I'm actually kind of sad it's over."

In keeping with the it-takes-a-village spirit, Michael Alderson Restorations' team came together on a sunny November day in 2015 to take part in an old-fashioned barn raising. "I still have pictures of that day of Michael [Alderson] standing on a beam and laughing," recalls Brown. At that point, the frame of the house had been installed, as had the roof. Alderson brought his full crew

to reassemble the walls of the barn, which they pulled into place using a crane. Then they climbed up and installed the wooden bracing and pegs. The biggest challenge of restoring the barn, he says, was finding wood that would match any pieces that were rotted. "We needed wood that had a similar pattern in how it was hewn, and a similar color to the rest of the frame," he says. "I've known John Rousseau of Rousseau Reclaimed Lumber for a long time, and he was a great resource."

This level of attention to detail is visible throughout the house. The library once belonged in an old Boston mansion, and it didn't have the exact dimensions of Brown's new library, so they moved some pieces around, putting a decorative carved wood panel from another section of the room over the doorway. "It integrates the space beautifully," says Mendleson. "You wouldn't know that it had ever been moved." You also wouldn't know that the wood panels blend seamlessly (thanks in part to Pendleton's work hand-mixing a water-based stain to

Stepping into the living room (opposite), your eye is immediately drawn to the staircase, which features external mount balusters custom created by artist Erica Moody using a trident-shaped design drawn by David Hammond. "It's a very sculptural feature," says architect Sue Mendleson. "The staircase is one of those wonderful changes that happened along the way, and it truly took a village to create."

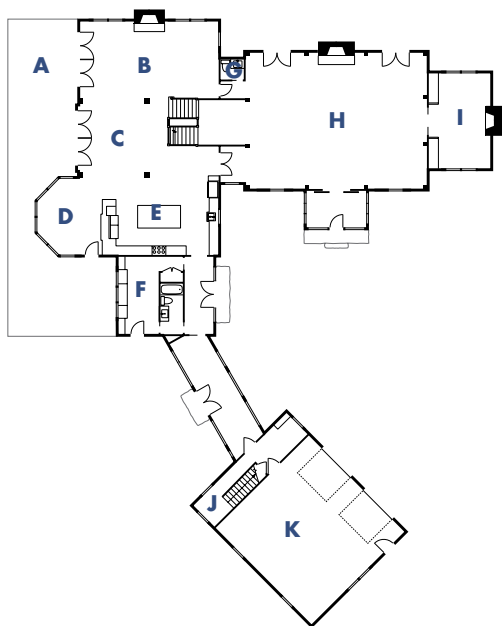
The bathroom's marble countertops and sleek tiles (above) create a soft gray backdrop for scenic views.



ARCHITECT: KNICKERBOCKER GROUP
 LOCATION: PEMAQUID

- | | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| A Deck | G Bathrooms | M Owners' Bathroom |
| B Living Room | H Barn | N Bedrooms |
| C Observation Area | I Library | O Laundry Room |
| D Dining Room | J Mudroom | P Exercise Room |
| E Kitchen | K Garage | |
| F Office | L Owners' Bedroom | |

FIRST FLOOR



SECOND FLOOR

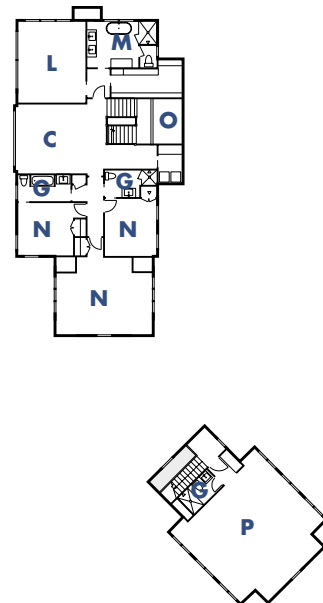


ILLUSTRATION: Tim Lohnes

The new house (left) sits on the site of the original saltwater farm, which retains the original (renovated) chicken coop. The multi-layered structure of this home was inspired by Brown's encounter with *Big House, Little House, Back House, Barn: The Connected Farm Buildings of New England* by Thomas Hubka.

The stair balusters (right) were inspired by the owner's many trips to Europe, where external mount balusters are common in old buildings. The open levels of the stairs allow views of the barn structure from different angles and heights.

tie all the wood elements together). "There are stories about every nook and cranny," Mendleson adds, from the antique French fireplace placed opposite the entryway in the barn (topped with an old mercury mirror) to the beautiful old marble lamps. "When you approach the farmhouse, you see a traditional Maine building, but when you get inside you're blown away," says Chapman. "I was with Margaret all day, every day, and she was so detail oriented, down to where the nails got placed." Brown, everyone agrees, knew exactly what she wanted the finished product to feel like. Sometimes this meant overseeing specific details, while sometimes it meant stepping back and letting her team of designers, builders, and architects take charge.

When it came to furnishings, Brown had quite a few pieces in storage she had put aside for Tillyorn. She has a Welsh oak table from the 1700s and Italian chairs from the 1600s. She has oil paintings on the walls, a set of antique French measures on her kitchen counter, and Delft vases scattered throughout the living room. "Margaret has amazing taste in the Old World realm of furniture," Hammond says. "My role was to bring in an updated perspective, and even though the house reads as traditional, I



put it in the category of updated, transitional farmhouse." Hammond brought in textiles (neutral-toned transitional rugs) and streamlined furniture that contrasts with the often-ornate antiques. Since Brown loves blue-and-white Delft porcelain, Hammond used a color palette dominated by rich navy blue, cream, ivory, and beige. "When you walk through the house, there is a sense of continuity," he says. "It takes your eye from vignette to vignette, and there's always a new visual perspective you can focus on. There isn't one uninteresting area in the home."

Brown couldn't be more pleased with her now full-time home on the shores of Maine.

Although she does take a few months off each year to travel in Europe and find more art, more antiques, and more marble lamps and carved wood panels, she loves spending time in her home state and running her nearby retail business (she owns the Art of Antiquing in Round Pond). However, she had so much fun working on the creation of Tillyorn that she occasionally wonders what it would be like to take on another project. Her collaborators, says Bronfman, would work with her again in an instant. "Margaret is rooted into every project she works on," he says. "She feels the site, and the land, and what the property has to offer. It's an amazing process to take part in." **MH+D**



CENTERLINE DESIGN & BUILD

343 Main Street Box 4B
Yarmouth, ME 04096
www.centerlinedesignme.com
207-847-3458



CONTRIBUTORS

DARREN SETLOW is a commercial and architectural photographer raising two boys with his wife on the coast of Maine. His favorite recent moments include opening up a camp in Rangeley with his sons, firing up the new motor in his race car, and developing new business in Charlottesville, Virginia. *It Takes a Village*, page 70



While her title is food and special projects editor, **SUSAN AXELROD** digs into a wide variety of topics as a regular contributor to the magazines. For this issue, she discovered how the Nathan Clifford Residences preserve an historic Portland elementary school (Preservation, page 102) and spoke with longtime Vinalhaven resident Phil Crossman about life on the island (Portrait of Place, page 56).



KATY KELLEHER is a writer, editor, and teacher who lives in a log cabin in the woods of Buxton with her two wild dogs and one bearded husband. In addition to writing about beautiful homes for *Maine Home+Design*, she also writes a column about color for *The Paris Review*. Her book, *Handcrafted Maine*, can be found wherever books are sold. *It Takes a Village*, page 70; Profile, page 44; Shop Talk, page 108





Bradford's Rug Gallery



www.BradfordsRugGallery.com
297 Forest Avenue Portland, ME
Mon - Sat 9am - 5pm | 207.772.3843



Architect **SUE MENDELESON** joined the Knickerbocker Group family in April 2004 following 15 years at firms in Seattle and Camden. She appreciated the design-build firm's collaborative craftsmanship from earlier projects she developed. Sue is a native of Cape Cod and resides in Washington with her husband and Newfoundland dogs. She has an affinity for barns, and she enjoys helping her clients' visions become reality. *It Takes a Village*, page 70



FRANÇOIS GAGNÉ is a photographer living in Maine. He takes pictures of all kinds of things, people, and places. He has a wife named Carole and two daughters named Zoé and Ève. There is also a cat and a rabbit living in his house, but they are not his. He's been at this for a long time and he still loves it. *Home by the Sea*, page 84



CHRIS BRILEY is a principal architect at Briburn, where he practices "architecture for life" specializing in sustainable design. He is a Certified Passive House Consultant. He is also cohost of the *Green Architects' Lounge* podcast, an enthusiastic participant in the Building Science Discussion Group, and a founding board member of PassivhausMAINE. *Transitions*, page 65