

THE FULLER HOUSE in Freeport, Maine, is sensitive to its site both in resonating with the vernacular aesthetic of 19th-century farmsteads and in its siting, which is off the road at the rear of the property.

# *the* Real Deal





**NEITHER KNOCKOFF NOR NEO, THIS FREEPORT, MAINE, HOME TAKES  
A MODERN-DAY APPROACH TO OLD-SCHOOL YANKEE SENSIBILITIES**

**Written by Edgar Allen Beem • Photographed by Rob Karosis**





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he house that Steve and Debbie Fuller, marketing executive and educator, respectively, built in rural Freeport, Maine, is refreshingly modest. The cedar-shingled farmhouse with detached red board-and-batten barn sits high in a field above a tidal river in a historic settlement of Federal- and Greek Revival-style houses. Respectful of its context, the dwelling is just 2,500 square feet, about the average size of a new home in the United States, a purposeful distinction for the Fullers.

“Two architects turned us down, because they said it was too small,” says Steve Fuller of his search for a designer to help him realize his vision. “But why do we need 4,000 square feet? It would just cost more to heat, take longer to clean, and require more furniture.”

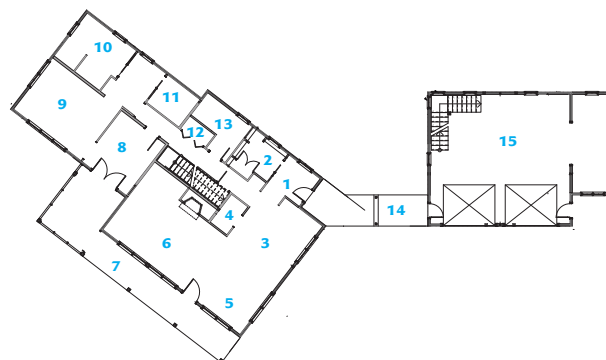
The Fullers’ less-is-more philosophy found a simpatico partner in Rob Whitten, principal at Whitten Architects in Portland, Maine. “I tell cli-







A HALLWAY LEADS leads from the public space of the kitchen (FACING PAGE, TOP) into the privacy of the bedroom and office. Most furnishings are locally sourced, such as the table and chairs in the dining room (ABOVE) from Chilton Furniture in Freeport, Maine, and the painting by Freeport artist Laurie Hadlock. The Fullers (FACING PAGE, BOTTOM) relied on L.L. Bean Home to create the understated country elegance.



#### FIRST FLOOR

- |               |                  |
|---------------|------------------|
| 1 ENTRY       | 9 MASTER BEDROOM |
| 2 MUDROOM     | 10 MASTER BATH   |
| 3 KITCHEN     | 11 CLOSET        |
| 4 PANTRY      | 12 LAUNDRY       |
| 5 DINING AREA | 13 POWDER ROOM   |
| 6 LIVING ROOM | 14 BREEZEWAY     |
| 7 PORCH       | 15 BARN/GARAGE   |
| 8 OFFICE      |                  |

BUILDER **Rousseau Builders**





ents they probably actually live in 800 square feet,” says Whitten, who served as project architect while his associate, Will Fellis, served as architectural designer, creating the detailed construction drawings.

The Fullers are empty-nest parents who raised a son and daughter in a larger house elsewhere in Freeport, and they had formulated a detailed, illustrated program for their new home.

“Primarily,” says Debbie, “we wanted morning sun in the kitchen, a house full of light, and a living area all on one floor. We wanted ease of life.”

To achieve that, Whitten designed the first floor with an open living room, dining area, and kitchen in a main block, with two guest bedrooms and a full bath upstairs. Separating public and personal space, the plan puts the master bedroom suite and office in an ell, which includes a screened porch, on the main level.

The house, expertly sited on 32 acres of field and forest that was home to a shipyard and a brickyard at different times

**CLASSIC FINISHES ELEVATE** the utilitarian kitchen (ABOVE). Traditional white cabinets are topped with birch and slate, while backsplashes are a mottled pattern of gray tile. The mudroom (LEFT) features a dog wash. Steve Fuller’s office (FACING PAGE, TOP) is also his photography studio. The drone on the desk is used for aerial shots. In the living room (FACING PAGE, BOTTOM), built-in bookcases and a fire in the hearth make for comfortable living.







in the 19th century, faces south for maximum solar gain. Whitten's placement of the structure away from the woods allows it to catch the morning sun. An up-slope perimeter drainage system keeps the basement "dry as a desert," says Steve, another item on his wish list. The driveway runs up through the wooded part of the property, leaving the field with its swales and ravines intact. In a thoughtful procession of spaces from field to yard to paved terrace, porch, screened porch, and finally house, Whitten created a sense that the building apprehends its setting.

The sunny living room features a wall of built-in bookcases and

a television hidden behind custom cabinet doors. The kitchen is appointed with slate countertops and an island finished with a red birch surface. Interior designer Krista Stokes of Kennebunkport, Maine, added an element of funkiness to the farmhouse decor with green sliding barn-style doors on the pantry, which is finished in nickel-gap boarding.

Stokes guided the Fullers through the process of selecting lighting fixtures, finishes, and a palette for flooring, tiles, and paint.

"I honestly can't imagine doing a project like this without her," says Steve.





**THE MASTER BEDROOM** commands a view of the field and woods (ABOVE) and connects to the office and screened porch. The master bath features a glassed-in shower (RIGHT TOP) and a vessel sink atop a slate counter (RIGHT BOTTOM).







Red birch floors in the living area give way to slate flooring in the mudroom, which was designed with a handy wash station for the Fullers' golden retriever, Toko. An active couple, the Fullers run, bike, garden, and ski, so they needed a house that is essentially wash-and-dry.

A short breezeway connects the house to the barn, actually a two-car garage with a fully equipped woodworking shop for Steve on the second story, where there is a hayloft view of the tidal backwater.

For ease of maintenance, the house is clad in prefinished cedar shingles that make the house glow white when seen from the road. The house, breezeway, and garage are unified with standing-seam metal roofing.

When asked to describe the house in a single sentence, Whitten replies, "It's a vernacular Maine farm-

house adapted to open-concept living with high-tech appointments." It is a humble description of a house that seems to so naturally belong in its setting and that so precisely meets the needs and wants of its owners.

"Bottom line," says Steve, "Rob delivered on what we asked — a 2,500-square-foot house that fit into a historic neighborhood, but with today's sensibilities around lifestyle and energy consumption." ■

**THE PAVED TERRACE** has an in-ground firepit (ABOVE) for year-round outdoor enjoyment. Toko, the Fullers' venerable golden retriever, welcomes visitors to the back door (FACING PAGE, TOP). The standing-seam roof and ground-level porch play into the farmhouse appeal of the house (FACING PAGE, BOTTOM), which is connected by a breezeway to the barnlike garage, complete with a second-floor woodworking shop and a hot tub out back.

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