

MaineHomes

by *DownEast*

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BREEZY ISLAND STYLE

**TINY HOME
TRIUMPH?**

**PRETTY MAINE-
MADE PILLOWS**

**ECO-TREND:
CHARRED SIDING**

PLUS
**PORTLAND'S
WALK-AND-SHOP
FURNITURE STRIP**



A former chandlery, Margaret Castleman and Barry Evans's Westport Island home features white-cedar shingles from Longfellow's Cedar Shingles & Shakes in Windsor and Marvin windows. Portland's Soren Denoird Design Studio crafted the retaining wall from granite salvaged from the old foundation. Brunswick's Albert Putnam Associates and Westbrook's Walsh Engineering Associates provided critical structural engineering and environmental permitting services.

SHIPSHAPE

An iconic chandlery-turned-summer-home for a notable midcoast family is ready for a new generation

TEXT BY JEN DEROSE PHOTOGRAPHS BY TRENT BELL







Jefferson's Pearson Construction removed, cleaned, insulated, and reinstalled the chandlery's 200-year-old floorboards; the dining area's blue shelving is also original. **RIGHT** A new rear addition, designed by Portland's Whitten Architects, rests on a foundation clad in modern, red-cedar lattice.

“

t was like a 7-Eleven for schooners,” says Margaret Castleman of the 1815 ship chandlery she and her husband, Barry Evans, recently renovated on Westport Island. Vessels would dock at a wooden deck perched on still-visible stone wharves, their masts superimposed on the pine-fringed shoreline, and dispense with sailors seeking provisions and marine supplies from the barn-like building. Around 1920, Castleman’s grandparents, Alvin — son of the former owners of the landmark Nickels-Sortwell House on Wiscasset’s Main Street — and Elise Sortwell were cruising down the Sheepscot River and spotted the forlorn structure. They

promptly scooped it up and transformed it into a modest summer cottage that Elise named “My Blue Heaven.”

Eventually, the chandlery passed on to Castleman’s mother, Cynthia Sortwell Castleman, a writer and teacher in Louisville, Kentucky. Every summer, she and her husband, Harry Castleman, piled their five children into a station wagon and drove to the island, where Cynthia wrote articles about her stays for *Down East* and other local publications in the ’70s. The place inspired Castleman, a New York-based playwright and choreographer too: Her first play, about fictional siblings deciding the fate of their summer home, was titled *Closing the Chandlery*.

She has happy childhood memories of hauling water, slish-sloshing in a bucket, from the well with her siblings and reading by gas lantern (plumbing for drinking water and a “Rube Goldberg” electrical system weren’t added until she was a teenager). But as adults committed to spending long stretches in the uninsulated building with their kids and grandkids, Castleman and Evans wanted to be “warm, dry, and comfortable,” says Rob Whitten, founder of Portland’s Whitten Architects, who spearheaded the 2016 renovation with project architect Will Fellis. “And they wanted it to last another 100 years.”







One of the biggest challenges was addressing sea-level rise. “There was seaweed and flotsam a quarter of the way underneath the house,” says Fellis, who worked with Whitten, Jefferson’s Pearson Construction, and Monmouth’s Nelson Building Moving to move it 10 feet farther back from the shoreline and raise it up three feet on a new concrete foundation partially faced in stone that references the old wharves. New rough-sawn hemlock posts and beams shore up sagging ceiling joists. “We were honest about where they were added,” Fellis says. “The new wood is bright and shiny, while the old stuff keeps its character.”

Creature comforts include rigid-foam insulation; a 300-square-foot rear addition housing a staircase to the second floor (previously reached by ladder), an entry porch, a mudroom, and a full bath; and a new kitchen centered around an original sapphire-blue peninsula that fairly sparkles amid its whitewashed and weathered wood surroundings. To usher in sun and water views, the team replaced small living room windows with massive French doors, carved a screened porch out of the room’s southern corner, and removed a portion of the second floor to create a light well (Evans’s idea) that rises — along with a soaring woodstove pipe — from the living area to the roof.

Before bringing in new elements, the couple was careful to preserve the old. During an initial design meeting, Castleman marked important pieces with colored tape. These include the chandlery’s carved-wood cash drawer, which has been built into original blue shelving in the dining area, beams emblazoned with sailors’ carvings, which now top a Parsons dining table crafted by Pearson, and a ship plaque displayed in the upstairs bath.

How would Castleman’s mother, Cynthia, who passed away in 2010, feel about her reimagined writer’s retreat? “At first, she might think, ‘Oh no, you didn’t,’” Castleman says. “But then she’d spend one night here and say, ‘Oh, thank God you did!’ It’s so much more comfortable now.” □

OPPOSITE A light well extends from the living room to a second-floor landing crowned in new and old framing. Bookending the space are bunkrooms furnished with painted wood beds Castleman’s grandmother had made.

ABOVE In the kitchen, the team matched an original peninsula with whitewashed pine walls and quartz countertops. “It’s meat and potatoes,” architect Rob Whitten says. “If we got too fancy, we felt like we were doing something wrong.”