

# Maine Homes by Down East

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## MODERN GLAMOUR

NEW LIFE FOR A STORIED HOME

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TINY  
HOUSE  
GOALS

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# HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT

Design sleight-of-hand makes a lakeside home in Rome disappear

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Poplar-bark shingles, a patinated copper roof, and flowing stone feather Jamie and Joyce O'Neil's home into the surrounding forest.





**OPPOSITE** A reading nook off the living room has a drop-down desk built into pine shelving and a window seat with Zoffany fabric-covered cushions made by Scissors & Seams in Gray; the pillows are from Crate & Barrel and the dog's crash pad is from Portland's Mougalian Rugs. **ABOVE** The kitchen features leathered Jet Mist granite from Topsham's Morningstar Stone and Tile on the countertops and backsplash, custom cabinets of old-growth eastern white pine crafted by Warren Construction Group in Freeport, and an island painted in Benjamin Moore's Alfresco that echoes the lake visible through the window over the sink.

**B**oaters cruising Great Pond may have heard that Jamie and Joyce O'Neil added a new home to their property on the western shore, but they are hard pressed to spot it. They can still see the vintage cottage the O'Neils bought from their alma mater, Colby College, back in the '90s. They may even notice the sliver of sandy beach the three O'Neil children played on every

summer after a long car ride up from Philadelphia. But the new house remains hidden just behind a veil of birch, beech, and pine.

The son of an architect, Jamie has been sketching dream houses since he was a boy growing up in Massachusetts, so when it was time to build a more livable home next to the couple's beloved but unheated cottage in Rome, he was ready. The O'Neils brought Jamie's sketch to Winkelman Architecture in Portland, along with a few requirements. The new place should comfortably accommodate their now grown children, but not feel overwhelming when it was just the two of them. It needed to fit on the lot, but not disturb the sacred family Wiffle ball field. And, it must blend seamlessly into its environment.

"My concept was a straight line and they bent it," Jamie

says. "It was genius." Project architect Joanna Shaw created a "hinge" between the common area and the bedroom wing to make the house feel more intimate and approachable. She also angled it to follow the contour of the shoreline and designed elements like windows and balconies around trees painstakingly preserved on the site. "You get a different experience in each space in the house," Shaw says.

Then came the camouflage. Like the surrounding trees, the home is clad in bark. Each shingle is a chunk of yellow tulip poplar bark harvested from lumber in North Carolina. The material has been kiln-dried, but is otherwise untreated, leaving the natural color and texture intact. First employed by Native Americans, bark siding is more common in Appalachia than Freeport, but the builders from Warren Construction Group quickly got the hang of applying it. A freeform collection of stones covers the home's foundation and, in some places, scales the walls, giving the illusion that nature is slowly reclaiming its own.

Inside, you find a polished version of the exterior, furnished in natural materials and hues with help from Emily Mattei of e4 Interior Design in Yarmouth. Peeled log supports, heart-pine floors, and plank walls radiate a warm pine glow, while large windows — including a 22-foot-tall stack in the cathedral-ceilinged living room — usher in the woody-watery view.





**TIP**  
CONSIDER WHAT  
WILL GO IN A ROOM  
BEFORE YOU BUILD. A  
POOL TABLE ON THIS  
BALCONY  
NECESSITATED AN  
EXTRA BEAM.



**OPPOSITE** A Stickley leather sofa, pair of Mission recliners from Chilton in Freeport, maple coffee table, and Ferehan carpet from Moxgalian Rugs ground the lofty living room. **THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT** A nook next to the stairs is perfectly sized for a Portland Architectural Salvage dresser. "We'd rather use the outdoor shower than the one in our bedroom," Jamie says of this hemlock enclosure. From the balcony off their bedroom, the couple can watch the sun rise and listen to frogs croak in the forest at night.



Rising along with the living room windows is a massive fireplace — a mosaic in stone and mortar created by Yarmouth's G.M. Libby & Sons Masonry. It is a collaborative piece of art. Before building, George Libby laid out his curated collection of stones, splashing water on them to reveal hidden color and texture, and Shaw and the O'Neils helped select key pieces. On the other side of the wall, a more primitive fireplace, assembled from a few hulking stone slabs, anchors a screened porch finished in bark and stone cladding like the exterior, creating the impression of a room turned inside out.

The completed home achieves the magical balance between rustic and elegant, unobstructed views and seclusion, spaciousness and intimacy, that the owners were looking for. "I find when we're here as a family, there is enough space that we can all be together and not be on top of each other," Joyce says. "But it also feels cozy."

Currently, the clan spends alternating Christmases at the lake, but the new house may change things. "The kids are starting to ask why we don't do every Christmas here," Jamie says with an eager smile that suggests a houseful of family is the best kind of magic. □

