

# Maine Home

May 2010

+DESIGN



## Stone Gables

Memoirs of a  
Cape Elizabeth manor house

An upside-down tree house  
on Portland's East End

John Day & George Kinghorn  
Maine's newest art ambassadors



# Standing Grand

The transformation of an English manor house in Cape Elizabeth

by Debra Spark  
Photography Trent Bell

Stone Gables is the name of an English Tudor-style home perched on a granite ledge in Cape Elizabeth. As perhaps befits a windswept, ocean-side property with such a name, the house has a bit of the feel of the manor and comes complete with, if not a sweeping saga, an interesting history. In the late 1920s, prominent architect John P. Thomas designed the granite home for Guy Gannett, founder of the *Portland Press Herald*, *Maine Sunday Telegram*, and other media outlets.

Gannett's granddaughter, Maddy Corson, describes the home as being "of another era," and not just because of when it was constructed. Stone Gables was clearly built for an *Upstairs, Downstairs* world, one in which prosperous families could be expected to have live-in help. The rooms intended for the Gannett family included a large space for entertaining, multiple bedrooms, and a wood-paneled library. Leaded-glass windows offered impressive views of Portland's shipping channel. A bell under the dining room table summoned the help. An upstairs closet was devoted entirely to Maddy's grandmother's fur coats.

In the back of the house, away from the views, were the servants' quarters with smaller windows and lower ceilings. The kitchen consisted of five small rooms. Downstairs, there was a canning room and staff bathroom. Upstairs were the staff bedrooms and a hall leading to a linen room, which was visited weekly by a seamstress. Outside, there was a carriage house: cars were parked below and the chauffeur lived in the apartment above.

The Gannett family owned their home

The approach to Stone Gables, a 1927 English Tudor-style home, originally designed for Guy Gannett, founder of the *Portland Press Herald* and *Maine Sunday Telegram*.



The original tile and wrought-iron railing in this front entry gives the home a Mediterranean look, according to interior designer Christine Maclin. The stair runner is a wool rug with red linen binding, meant to tie in with the red that Maclin used elsewhere in the house.



A view from the front hall through the pine-paneled dining room into the kitchen.



As part of the 2001 renovation, the original pantries and kitchen spaces (left) were converted into a single, light-filled room.

through the early 1950s. It changed hands in the subsequent decades and changed names as well. Maddy Corson's stepmother, who once lived in the carriage house, remembers the property only as Grey Rocks.

In the early 1980s, Jesus Guevara, a prominent surgeon from Mexico City, bought the main house. By then the property had been subdivided, and Harold Pachios, senior partner at Preti Flaherty Beliveau & Pachios, lived in what had once been the carriage house. Apparently, Guevara's wife, Joan, had seen Stone Gables listed in the *New York Times Magazine* and persuaded her husband to purchase it. She had always wanted to live in an English manor house. Though the couple occupied the home for a few years, Pachios says that Guevara "couldn't stand the house or Maine." Soon he was visiting only intermittently, and eventually he convinced Joan to move to Dallas, where he had bought a new home. After a while, the Guevaras neither visited nor sold their Maine property, and it remained largely empty for over a decade. The grass grew waist high, a squatter pitched a tent on the lawn, and the place fell into disrepair. Finally, the Guevaras put the home on the market. At the end of the listing period, when Joan was ill with cancer, they decided to take the place off the market and enjoy the home one last time. Only she died before they could return.

This is when Chris Lynch and his family came into the picture. Lynch is the current owner and president of Legacy Properties Sotheby's International Realty, but in 2001 he was in transition. After seventeen years on Wall Street, he had decided it was time to move on. His hours were too long. He was traveling too much. He didn't have enough time with his family. So he left his firm and spent a year considering where he wanted to go next. Where would be best for his wife and children? Australia? New Zealand? His wife's hometown of Philadelphia? All these places were possibilities. Though he had gone to Bates



The vanity in the downstairs powder room (above) was meant to replicate a long French cabinet in the front entry hall. The vanity was made by Portland's Nick Heller, who also made the matching mirror. Because the bathroom has only one window, interior designer Christine Maclin wanted a large mirror to serve as another light source. The wallpaper is from Brunswick & Fils, and the Gabbeh tribal rug was purchased from Mougalian Rugs in Scarborough.

Interior designer Christine Maclin chose red for the home's dining room (right) chairs because, she says, "Pine paneling and red are fantastic together."

College, Maine wasn't a spot he was considering until he attended a friend's wedding. While here, he decided to look at properties. He was thinking of an investment more than a residence, but he was completely taken by the views from Stone Gables. He made an offer, but the deal didn't go through. A week later, as Lynch says, "September 11 happened and Guevara was motivated to sell."

What is perhaps surprising about Lynch's purchase is that, at first, he found the house to be creepy and even "a little scary," he says. One foggy night—when he was in the empty house before his family had arrived—he phoned his wife in New Canaan and said he was going to try to open the secret door in the library's bookcase. He had heard

about the door from Guevara, but Guevara had never been able to open it himself. As far as Lynch knew, the bookcase had been sealed for twenty years, perhaps longer. Lynch started to unload the heavy sets of encyclopedias on the shelves, and when his back was turned, the door opened on its own. Behind the bookcase, Lynch found a small closet with shelves, on which sat the original blueprints for the house.

The lugubrious feel of the place might have been from its medieval outfittings—the thick wooden doors with brass studs and handles—or perhaps the lawn lamps with their giant gargoyles, which Lynch subsequently had removed. But Lynch saw the possibilities and found plenty to love. The location was a big part of it, of course, but there was



In its original incarnation, this bathroom was a sewing room, which a seamstress visited regularly to hem and mend clothes. Now it features a steam shower with three shower heads, classic subway wall tile, and half-inch-thick glass. The fixtures are from Decorum.



- A Formal Living Room
- B Entrance Foyer
- C Covered In-ground Hot Tub
- D Main Entrance
- E Library
- F Family Dining Area
- G Formal Dining Room
- H Family Room
- I Kitchen
- J Mudroom
- K Master Bedroom Suite
- L Bedrooms
- M Steam Shower Room
- N Bunk Room
- O Guest Rooms
- P Media Room
- Q Home Gym
- R Third floor landing
- S Storage
- T Bathrooms



When Lynch's (below) efforts to purchase an existing Portland-based real estate agency stalled in 2005, he was undeterred. Lynch quickly realized that the Sotheby's brand was available and that it would actually provide a better platform for starting a new, start-up real estate sales business. Legacy Properties/Sotheby's International Realty was born in 2006. Since then, Chris, along with his business partner, Bob Stevens, has led his organization to more than 50 real estate agents working from their offices in Kennebunk, Portland, Brunswick, and Camden. Legacy Properties/Sotheby's International Realty has since grown its listing volume to nearly \$250 million, including some of the most prominent properties in Maine.

