



# A Treasured Past

BUILDER DEBORAH PAINE HAS CARVED OUT A SPECIAL HOME IN AN UNLIKELY PLACE

For Deborah Paine, a life's path that led to building homes, arguably the most meaningful and important structure found in society, began on windswept Peaks Island, in Maine's Casco Bay. The principal and founder of North Truro's Deborah Paine, Inc. spent childhood years in a modest cottage that had been in her family for generations. "I grew up on an island off

the coast of Maine. The cottage we had was crafted from six lumberjack shacks, put together. It had been in the family for over 90 years. It wasn't much, but it was just as charming as it could be," she recalls.

For this crafter of fine homes and commercial buildings of distinction, the significant architecture found on the island

BY JULIE CRAVEN WAGNER . PHOTOGRAPHY BY JON MOORE

*"For where thy treasure is, there also will thy heart be." - King James Bible*

had a powerful impact on her at an early age. Particularly the shingle-style buildings created by such renown architects as John Calvin Stevens, whose work at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century came to define the grand homes found along the coast of Maine.

That love, respect and inquisitive creativity surrounding architecture that was fostered as a child has propelled her as she has built a successful building business on the Cape as well as on the mid-

coast of Maine. Most recently, she has converted a building that was originally designated to solve a conditioned storage need for her business, into an eclectic and deeply personal home for herself behind her offices in North Truro.

"I grew up always wanting to build cottages, for over 50 years. So when I get the opportunity to build a smaller home or something for myself, I tend to look at it a little bit differently," Paine explains. Where most would see an uninteresting box, or even quickly define it



In just over 1,000 square feet, Deborah Paine has carved out everything she and her best friend Trixie (above) need without compromising on style, function or comfort.



as a warehouse or shed, Paine recognized the bones and potential of a blank canvas. Embracing the existing flooring, the untouched plaster walls and ceiling, Paine saw what most would miss. "It was a beautiful shell," she says with the kind of contentment a beachcomber might exclaim as they admired what so many others had passed by.

And like an artist pulling memories from a lifetime of experiences, relationships, images and adventures, she applied her collective treasures, thus creating a tableau of her rich existence.

"I enjoyed doing it. I enjoyed putting something that was different on the lot and making it different, with the color outside as well as the interior," Paine explains.

Saturated colors, tactile textures, unique furnishings and pieces with history and stories all set the backdrop to a life-filled array of art, including photos, paintings and ephemera of a true lover of New England.

"You can only exercise your own whimsy so much with a client, so when you get the rare opportunity to do something for yourself, you jump at it," Paine says. "The older I get, the less conservative I get with things like color and traditional forms."

With a history of building and remodeling homes around the region, many of historic significance, Paine's keen eye has been able to spot items for salvage that others might have passed over.



A spacious bedroom, with a light-filled bank of windows set into a barn board paneled wall, offers a feeling of space and serenity. Plein air painting by Provincetown artist Anne MacAdam hangs above the bed.

Many of those treasures have found a newly interpreted function in Paine's new home. "I am a collector of old barn board," she says as she points out a rustic paneled section of wall in her living room. "One of my guys is very talented and he was able to pull it all together like a puzzle." The cabinet doors from Norman Mailer's estate in Provincetown are now the backboard of an oversized coat rack that serves as a charming mudroom in the otherwise mostly unpartitioned space.

"Everything I have around me speaks to me," says Paine. "Whether it is a photograph or a painting or a found object. It triggers some sort of emotional connection that then gets repeated again whenever I look at it in my surroundings... Where I used to fish, or a building on Peaks Island that burned down."

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It is easy to see how her eye lands on her own personal history, feeds her senses, and as she reminisces the memories are easily attainable as though no time had passed at all. Paine points out a photo of her beloved Maine lobster boat, *Shirley*, that she acquired, restored and repowered. A photo of Halsey Herreshoff's 40-footer hangs proudly a bit farther down the wall. And a picture of Brooklin, Maine, the famed harbor and home of *WoodenBoat* magazine is also right at home.

Perhaps most comfortable and at home is Paine's precious pup, Trixie. Described as both cute and a clown, Trixie has not only found her forever home with Paine but also seems to be the perfect companion as Paine splits her time on a regular



basis between the Cape and the coast of Maine.

It seems as though every item has a story as well as a purpose. The base of the dining table was found in a pile at a friend's building yard in Maine. The new wooden top for the unique base has begun to crack, not an activity that alarms Paine, but rather creates an interesting history for the piece.

"The fun thing about wood is that it continues to move. There didn't use to be any cracks in this tabletop, but then every crack that starts gets encouragement from me, 'Keep going!' I whisper," she confesses. The leathered granite countertop on the island in the kitchen was fashioned by Cape Cod Marble and Granite, who

Paine instructed the fabricators, "Make it feel like a beach pebble."

Paine, who has been building other people's dreams for almost 50 years, says: "I became first a carpenter and then a general contractor and business owner. I love taking things apart and putting them back together again." Now, in a non-descript 1,092-square-foot box, located behind her offices and showroom on Route 6A in the sleepy enclave of North Truro, Deborah Paine has taken the pieces of her life and built herself a very nice home.

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*Julie Craven Wagner is the editor of Cape Cod HOME.*

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