

Magic

A Victorian sea captain's home
recaptures its spirit in
Pemaquid Harbor



from Big Pink

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Photography François Gagné



In earlier times vacationers could take a ferry from Boston or Portland and land on a dock that had every convenience, including a bowling alley. The new dock, though significantly smaller than the original, serves to welcome all who come by water to visit Big Pink.

Big Pink sits like a contented grande dame on a rise overlooking Johns Bay in Pemaquid Harbor. The imposing, candy-colored Victorian home is artfully positioned in the middle of a forty-acre parcel of trees and sweeping lawns, the seriousness of its formal facade offset by the pastel hue of its clapboards.

“We’re kids of the 60s,” explains the homeowner when asked about the name of the vacation retreat. She points to a framed album cover hanging on the wall of the keeping room, a worn copy of The Band’s seminal debut album, *Music from Big Pink*. “Our daughter, who loves the same music we grew up with, was the one to name the house.”

The name was immediately adopted for general use when the family bought the home in 2005. For six generations, the husband’s family has summered in the area. He has spent at least part of every summer on this point, and the family owns a home just down the street from Big Pink. Knowing as they did that generations grow exponentially and children seem to fall irredeemably in love with the allure of Maine summers, he and his wife had been on the lookout for a home that could be used by their now-grown daughters and extended family. They were thrilled when the majestic house on the hill came on the market.

To say that the house was in disrepair would understate the work that was needed to restore its original beauty. The homeowners contemplated the changes they wanted to make for a year, and in 2006 they called upon



The new kitchen is flooded with natural light (left). Honed absolute black granite punctuates the white cabinets and pale green island.

A tiny, dated bathroom was torn out to make room for the landing library with views to the bay (opposite, right).

Two new bathrooms were created from an existing bedroom (below). White beadboard wainscoting and Clarence House wallpaper in La Mere Beige capture the look and whimsy of a seaside cottage.

Floor-to-ceiling windows throughout (opposite, left) expand the views from the first floor.





- A Foyer
- B Vestibule
- C Hall
- D Salon
- E Library
- F Dining Room
- G Kitchen
- H Keeping Room
- I Pantry
- J Workshop
- K Storage
- L Garage
- M Bedrooms
- N Bathrooms
- O Witches' Corner
- P Unrestored

Linda Banks, of Banks Design Associates in Falmouth, to execute their vision. Banks, a Connecticut native whose family has had ties to Maine for many generations, had previously worked on two other projects with the homeowners and had learned they shared a similar Yankee sensibility.

As she refined her plans, Banks introduced the homeowners to her friends at Flying Point Construction in Topsham, a company that specializes in historic restorations. Having worked with the company on previous projects, including the building of her own home, Banks had unwavering confidence in their abilities. "These guys are like my brothers," she explains. "We share many unwritten and unspoken assumptions, and the same appreciation for old details and methods."

"Big Pink was in really rugged shape," says Paul Moutal, owner of Flying Point. "We had to open up just about every wall." Since it was built in the mid-1800s, the house originally had no indoor plumbing. Tiny, oddly placed bathrooms had been added in the intervening years, but Banks knew they would have to be removed and relocated to accommodate more up-to-date fixtures. In the end, the smallest bedroom was sacrificed to create the two bathrooms in the main part of the house.

Exquisite period details, like mercury-glass doorknobs, floor-to-



Banks chose a muted color palette; in the dining room (above, right) it is echoed in the wall color, jute rug, and vintage-style scientific charts. The iron chandelier is reminiscent of an armillary sphere.

The salon is replete with exquisite period details, which were painstakingly restored during the renovation (above). The intricately carved frieze over the doorway and the Gothic arch panel in the door are among the many features that make this room a family favorite. The Anglo-Indian chairs, brass tripod ship's lamp, and one-of-a-kind accessories from Simply Home in Falmouth underscore Big Pink's nautical past.

Historic photographs of the area show almost no trees on this point overlooking Johns Bay (opposite). Today, the abundant oak, maple, and birch trees that surround Big Pink have matured along with the house, creating an environment both inviting and lush.



ceiling windows with original hand-blown panes, and intricately carved window friezes in the main salon were carefully preserved during the process of modernizing the home. The homeowners were not afraid, however, to reconfigure rooms and rework the floor plan to make the house more livable. In that spirit, Banks located the new kitchen next to the keeping room, which placed it in the heart of the traffic flow on the main floor. Her signature design sensibility is evident throughout the room, from the twin pantry cabinets flanking the oversized sink to the mirror-glazed upper cabinets that reflect light from the wide window opposite.

Banks drew inspiration from the home's seafaring past. "The vision of a sea captain we don't really know haunted me," she says of the design. To honor the history of the house and its location, she chose an earthy palette and accessorized with Audubon prints and nautical memorabilia from the homeowner's family to evoke the spirit of exploration and unbounded possibility.

The colors throughout the house are muted, and the pale blues, greens, and browns accentuate the mellow mood. In the compact library, Banks relocated shelves in order to restore a large window and painted the walls a soft pink. Not only is it a soothing color for such a contemplative space, but it also echoes the slightly darker exterior of Big Pink, making the little pink room a mirror of the outside.

Since they first saw the property, the homeowners have steadily uncovered details of Big Pink's rich history. Built by sea captain Ambrose Child sometime between 1855 and 1862, the house was sold to the Tibbets family around the turn of the century, after Child and his son were lost at sea. It was then turned into a guesthouse, as part of the Edgemere Hotel on the adjacent property. With its breathtaking views and healing mineral springs, the hotel and guesthouse attracted vacationers from around the country.

Many locals believe the ghost of Captain Child haunts Big Pink, though neither the homeowners nor the builders have had any paranormal encounters. Still, it appears that the sea captain may have built his house with the supernatural in mind. On the second floor, there is a curved wall in the hallway. The homeowners were told that this is an example of a witches' corner. It was believed that witches could trap their victims in the corners of rooms, and that a curved wall afforded protection from demons and specters.

The appeal of Big Pink is manifest in more than its abundant architectural and aesthetic charms; it is charged with the energy of the past. Family history, local lore, and a sense of place on the craggy Maine coast all inform the elegance of this blushing beauty. **MH+D**

See Resources for more information.

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