

Decor Maine

ISSUE NO. 1

LIVING BEAUTIFULLY IN MAINE

6 DREAM
KITCHENS
TO TEMPT YOUR
INNER CHEF

The KITCHEN ISSUE

A STORIED
WEST END
HOME,
transformed

1820s
SCHOOLHOUSE
GRADUATES
TO THE
21ST CENTURY

A LOOK INTO
MAINE'S
STELLAR
CRAFT BEER
SCENE
&
More!





Urbane Renewal

In Portland's West End, a classic Colonial gets an elegant update from Knickerbocker Group

written by **ALLISON PAIGE** photographs by **ERIN LITTLE**



An antique carved rose-wood table is surrounded by mementos from the Hankowskis' many travels. **OPPOSITE:** The serene primary bedroom is reflected in a mirror from West Elm.

*Architect &
Builder*
Knickerbocker Group

Interior Design
Sarah Ettelman Designs

Landscape Design
**Sarah Witte & Great Works
Landscaping**



MARK HANKOWSKI GREW UP IN AMHERST, Massachusetts, and spent lazy summers on Sebago Lake at his family's camp. He continued the tradition with his own family, booking summer rentals until 2018 when he bought a lake house in Raymond. Then the pandemic hit, and he and his wife, Corina, and teen daughters, Anya and Eva, decided to shelter there. That year of tranquil lakeside living convinced them to move to Maine full-time, and after an extensive search, Corina and Mark found the perfect refuge in Portland's historic West End.

The circa-1938, four-bedroom, three-and-a-half-bath property was in wonderful condition and close to Wayn-

flete, the K-12 private school that attracted them to the area, but it was not, in fact, love at first sight. Mark is not fond of Colonials, and the exterior, clad in lemony clapboard, did not call out to Corina. "I hate yellow," she admits, with a laugh.

"The decor was done to a very high caliber," Corina amends, "but it was terribly dated. Every drapery was Laura Ashley. We had parrots in this room, toucans in that room, and tropical peach and green upstairs. We all sort of walked in here and said, 'No, no, no, no, no.'" But beneath the dated decor were the beautiful bones of a West End classic, the last home built by John Calvin

TOP, RIGHT: The circa-1938 Colonial was the last home built by John Calvin Stevens and his son, for a local judge. **RIGHT:** The powder room gleams with wallpaper from Thatcher, brass hardware, and a gilt mirror. **OPPOSITE:** East meets West in the living room, where a mix of American mid-century modern and Asian antiques live in harmony.

Stevens and his son, replete with period detail and four floors of living space.

“The scope of the project kept expanding,” explains Mark. An exterior paint job and kitchen update were planned, but a crumbling kitchen foundation and old wiring were unexpected overhauls. Two gutted bathrooms and a much-desired mudroom later, “We basically went from doing a few things to doing 80% of the house,” Corina estimates.

Fortunately, the family was well acquainted with Knickerbocker Group, who renovated their lake home. This time they collaborated with architect Julien Jalbert and project manager Sam Kapala, recruiting Massachusetts connections interior designer Sarah Ettelman and cabinetmaker Jon LaValley to round out the team. They met in the kitchen the summer of 2020, masked up and ready to brainstorm. “It was a true collaboration,” says Sam. “A long project full of challenges, curveballs, and changes, but the end product speaks for itself”

After shoring up the unsteady kitchen foundation, they increased the flow of the kitchen, dining, and living areas by creating new points of entry. The original living room had only one entrance, giving the room a long, boxy feel. Egress was added and the adjacent den was converted into a dining area, with new period-correct windows from Bagala Window Works of Westbrook installed to bring in sunlight and backyard views. “We agreed that it would make sense to restore these windows to bring the house back to its original character and provide much needed natural light,” says Julien. “The same condition existed on the second floor in the primary bathroom. We reworked the design and layout of the bathroom to introduce these two windows into the plan, again for both natural light and to return the rear facade to its original glory.”

“Uncovering those openings and restoring the view to the yard and a lovely Japanese maple made for one of the best parts of the project,” Sam agrees.

Knickerbocker Group uncovered and restored the original windows in the dining room, once a dark wood-paneled den, to welcome in garden views. A custom claro walnut table from Water Street Furniture Studio is joined by a chinoiserie-style medicine cabinet and ochre wallpaper by Fayce Textiles. The light fixture is from Rejuvenation Hardware.





The kitchen island is topped with leathered granite from Stone Surface and provides extra prep space and seating (stools from Article), as well as two dishwashers and a deep farmhouse sink from Shaws of England. White and brushed brass pendants from Rejuvenation Hardware complement the gold Ager finishes. The floors are by Atlantic Hardwoods.

“Another challenge we encountered was how to elegantly rework the existing stair down to the basement and create a much-needed mudroom from the garage,” adds Julien. Not only was this pulled off with their customary panache, but the basement stairwell (which featured what Julien calls a ‘head knocker’ at the bottom) was also straightened out to allow pinball machines to be transported downstairs. (More on those later.)

Corina, the daughter of a Swiss hotelier, was brought up in Hong Kong and met Mark at Tufts University. The two traveled the world, taking at least two globe-spanning trips, and have

An expansive island is topped in leathered marble (Mark’s geology background reflects this choice) and includes two dishwashers and a deep farmhouse sink.

lived in Boston, New York City, San Francisco, and Amherst. Their home is furnished with a blend of styles and eras; inherited Asian antiques and mid-century modern live in harmony. Corina credits interior designer Sarah Ettelman for synthesizing these elements to create a space that is both functional and elegant.

“Each of our decisions tied back to some part of the Hankowskis’ life as a family,” notes Sarah, who considers their aesthetic “warm, functional, and richly curated.” “They like midcentury designers. Add to this Corina’s mother being from Hong Kong and you have a blend of Eames and intricately carved



ABOVE: A custom hutch (painted Farrow & Ball "Hague Blue") provides handsome storage. **BELOW:** A bar cabinet inherited from Corina's father was refinished by Herb Clarke of Chameleon Coatings, Portland, making it ever ready for cocktail hour. **OPPOSITE:** A quartz-topped coffee bar with a floating cabinet creates the perfect brewing spot.

and painted Asian heirlooms. They like a layered, meaningful mix of things.”

Corina adds, “One of the hallmarks of our relationship is that we like to fill our home with things from different places where we’ve been or experiences that we’ve shared.”

A passionate home cook, Corina craved an updated kitchen. The team took it from ’90s-era cottagecore (the former backsplash featured a rooster) to contemporary refinement. An expansive island is topped in leathered marble (Mark’s geology background reflects this choice) and includes two dishwashers and a deep farmhouse sink. Jon LaValley installed custom cabinets, a glass-front hutch, and a barista-worthy quartz-topped coffee bar replete with a slim floating cabinet of claro walnut for mugs. Both the kitchen and primary bath feature tile from Heath Ceramics of California, details that evoke the Hankowskis’ time in the Bay Area, where their daughters were born. A subtle colorway of gray and blue gives the kitchen and living room a sleek cohesion, while in the dining room a pop of ochre via grass cloth wallpaper from Fayce Textiles offers a visual surprise.

Upstairs, Eva and Anya have suite-like bedrooms and bathrooms, and Knickerbocker Group created the primary bed and bath of Corina’s dreams, with a long soaking tub and moss green Heath Ceramics tiles, framed by new windows that make it appear nestled in the treetops.

But for all the renovations, the family was equally interested in highlighting the home’s intrinsic beauty. Period windows were restored; the hearth was refinished with Carrara marble. “We felt when we bought this house that we were buying a piece of history,” Corina says. “While we wanted to modern-

Their home is furnished with a blend of styles and eras; inherited Asian antiques and midcentury modern live in harmony.



LEFT: Surrounded by greenery inside and out, the primary bath feels like a tree house. **BELOW:** The bathroom includes a double vanity and frameless glass shower cabin. **BOTTOM, LEFT:** Warm neutral furnishings and a sophisticated colorway of blues and grays bring the interior up to date.



ize and add certain infrastructure to make it more comfortable, we were not willing to completely obliterate the character. So, even though these dark floors are a complete pain in the butt with light-haired dogs, we’re like, “We’re going dark!” she

exclaims. The animal-loving family shares the property with a veritable menagerie: two dogs, two cats, two fish, a hamster, and six heritage breed chickens. (A horse is boarded elsewhere for their avid equestrian daughters.)

One of Mark’s favorite spots happens below-stairs in the basement den, where a playful vibe prevails. Walls painted by muralist Sagie De La Cruz resemble rolling waves, inspired by the Hankowskis’ tropical travels. “Like, it’s Maine, it’s winter—I want to be in Micronesia!” quips Mark. A selection of vintage and modern machines from Mystic Pinball, an arcade Mark once co-owned in Massachusetts, makes it a pinball wizard’s dream.

With the fullness of their aesthetic realized, the Hankowskis’ renovation resulted in a home that honors its roots, feels wholly personal, and elegantly ushers it into the future.

“I feel very much like our home and the project was an amalgamation,” Corina happily concludes. “A collection of our experiences together and what we’ve shared in our life.” ■

