

The
**WHITE
PINE**

SERIES OF
architectural monographs

VOLUME XXVII
NUMBER THREE

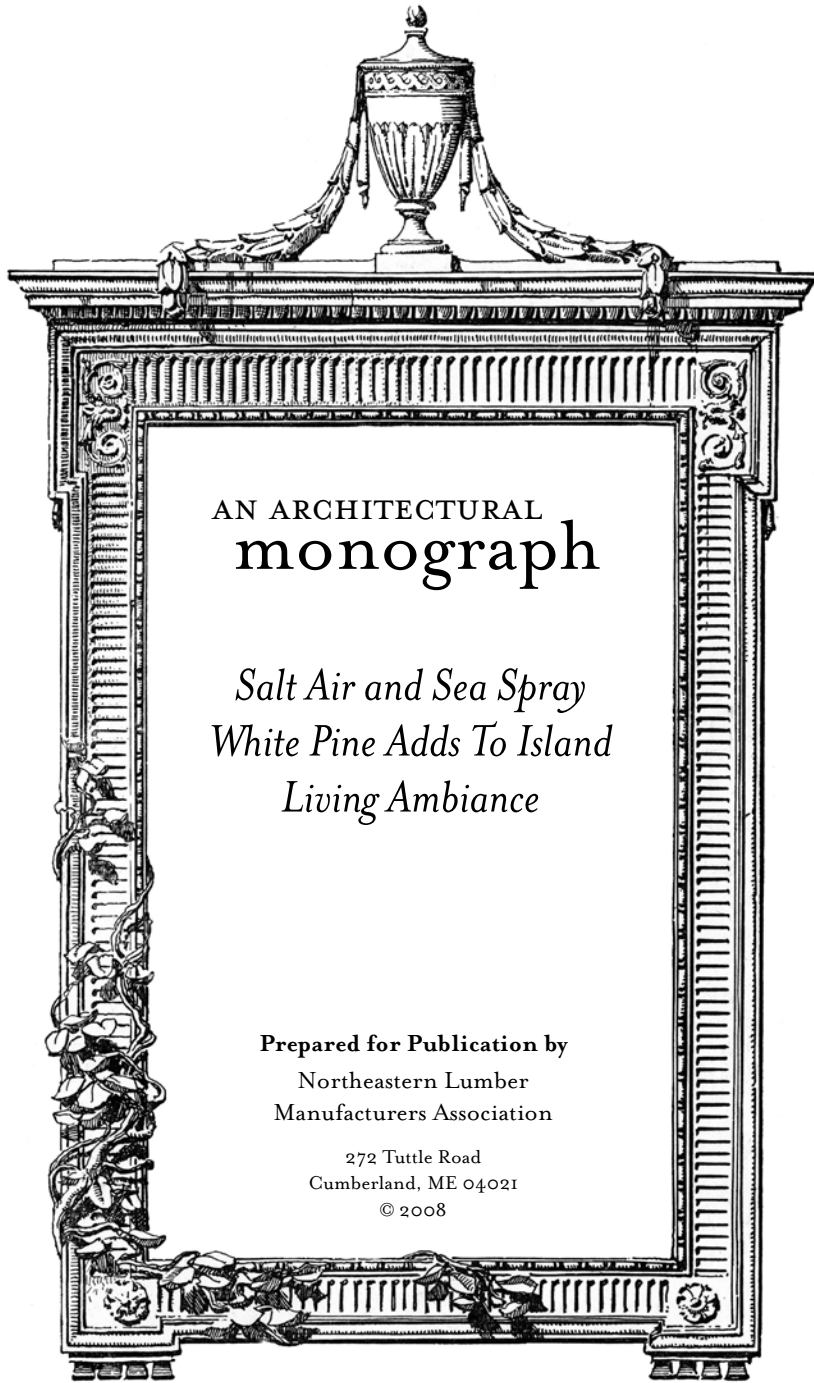
SALT AIR AND SEA SPRAY
WHITE PINE ADDS TO ISLAND LIVING AMBIANCE



- Weathering Island Living With Eastern White Pine →
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Cumberland, Maine



AN ARCHITECTURAL
monograph

*Salt Air and Sea Spray
White Pine Adds To Island
Living Ambiance*

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THE JOHNSON'S PEAKS ISLAND COTTAGE



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A PUBLICATION SUGGESTING THE ARCHITECTURAL USES OF
EASTERN WHITE PINE AND ITS AVAILABILITY TODAY.

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Weathering Island Living With Eastern White Pine

Peaks Island, Maine is the most populous of the many islands dotting Casco Bay. Part of the City of Portland, Peaks also continues to be one of the more visited. Frequenting by Casco Bay Ferry lines, there is relatively easy access to the island which makes renovating and building offshore homes that much less of a headache for contractors and suppliers alike. Harvey Johnson, year-round Peaks resident of 8 years and co-owner of Thompson Johnson Woodworks, embraces the challenge of island construction—especially when the project happens to be his own home. Working with his wife, Heather, and his mostly island-based crew, Harvey recently renovated his two-storey cottage with green-minded, local materials—most notably, Eastern White Pine.

WHILE IT SEEMS LIKE A MAJORITY OF COASTAL HOMES ARE SIDED WITH PERENNIAL FAVORITE CEDAR, HARVEY CHOSE TO USE 1X8 SHIPLAPPED WHITE PINE RUN HORIZONTALLY, TO ACHIEVE AN UNUSUAL, SMOOTH-LOOKING AESTHETIC. Applied to vertical strapping with 8-penny framing nails (set and covered with a water-based putty), each board was primed and pre-painted to sustain color in any shiplap-joint gaps resulting from board shrink-



age. Protecting the White Pine from the island elements is a gorgeous blue paint containing low VOCs (volatile organic compounds). As for the trim, a nice contrast is achieved with a color similar to granny smith apple green on window casings and corner boards, crafted out of 5/4" white pine.

The "waxy, rot resistance" of White Pine is not the sole reason for Harvey's choice in siding and trim. The high quality of well-graded pine delivered from a local supplier assured that the material would be very stable and free from cupping and warping. Straight planks are essential for siding, especially when going for a particular 'flat look' achieved by shiplap. Shiplap usually refers to rough-sawn 1" or milled 3/4" wood between 3" and 10" wide with a 3/8" to 1/2" rabbet on opposite sides. The rabbet allows the boards to overlap and often show a smooth surface.



THE JOHNSON'S PEAKS ISLAND COTTAGE:
WHITE PINE SIDING.

Case in fact, moisture is enemy number one when it comes to island-based construction. And wind is no friend either, for that matter—unless you are using a technique called 'pressure-equalized rain-screening.' As Harvey explains, establishing small air channels between the papered-sheathing and siding, and adding vents at the top and/or bottom of the siding material actually allows incoming air pressure from wind to equalize behind the building shell. This "whisks" any arrant moisture out through the vents. Not only can this prevent water from penetrating the White Pine, it promotes drying from the inside out, reducing rot and/or paint damage. Even though shiplapped seams are more or less watertight, Harvey is not about to take any chances on Peaks Island, where building costs are already about 20% more just because of the ferry ride.

The overall finished product is clearly a success and Harvey points to his choice of Eastern White Pine as being "piece of mind against the moisture of island living and the potential for stormy weather that is common in Maine." ❁





Sustaining Warmth In A New Island Home

Observing current population trends, one might assume that all of the islands in Maine's heavily traveled Casco Bay have been settled and that the potential for significant building projects has evaporated. But this is not the case. Chris Dornbach, of Portland-based Kaplan Thompson Architects (KTA), was recently involved in the design of a 'summer home' being constructed on Long Island and incorporates Eastern White Pine. The homeowner had set many interests for the project to meet, chiefly: budget, high efficiency standards (energy consumption), durability, proficient use of limited space, and a welcoming atmosphere.

WHILE MAINE'S NATURAL COASTAL BEAUTY IS WHAT ATTRACTS PEOPLE TO BUILD ISLAND GETAWAYS SUCH AS THIS, WINTER WEATHER AND THE CHANGING SEASONS OFTEN PROVIDE INCENTIVE FOR PEOPLE TO BRING THE WARMTH AND NATURAL BEAUTY OF THE OUTDOORS TO THEIR INTERIOR DESIGN. That is the case here, when homeowners incorporated the natural beauty of Eastern White Pine to their Maine island retreat in places you might not expect to see. The result has proven to be not only a smart decision financially, but this island home's use of White Pine on the inside of the home, makes living on the coast of Maine a warm atmosphere, no matter what the season or outside temperature may be.

As a dwelling that might go uninhabited at certain times throughout the year, it was also paramount that the structure sustain ultra high R-values (the effectiveness of a building's insulation properties) while relying on low energy demands. In short, the architect set out to design a compact, efficient island home that would retain its warmth and character throughout the year, even when the homeowners were off-island.

Through modern technology, the homeowner's wishes were achieved, and done so without losing their sense of space or overly impacting their wallets. A solar domestic water system heats the White Pine home when demands are low, and a small kerosene hot water system picks up the slack when abundant heating is called for. In addition, today's best insulation techniques ensure that the house maintains comfortable temperatures even during power outages, which occur more often in such remote places.

While smaller spaces are obviously easier to heat, few people want to invest in an island shack. And, certainly, no one wants to design a shack from the ground up, so the KTA team conceived a



design that started small in scale and “unfolded into grander spaces” as it went deeper into the site.

Playing with scale was an exciting exercise, according to Chris, and the end result was a “healthy mix of efficient structure and large experiences in terms of perceived space.” For instance, the radiant-heated concrete floors of the house

“healthy mix of efficient structure and large experiences in terms of perceived space.”

visually connect to a concrete porch through french doors. Thus, the home incorporates its own exterior environment, allowing it

to maintain a small heated core while providing ample space for functionality and enjoyment.

Not only is this Long Island home physically well heated, the choice of offsetting smooth gypsum (sheet rock) walls and ceiling with Eastern White Pine accents “warms up” the interior design in the living room. Chris points to a philosophy strongly rooted in Asian culture as the impetus for choosing a living material, such as White Pine, to compliment more modern building materials.



ARCHITECTURAL RENDERING CAPTURES ATTRACTIVE USE OF EASTERN WHITE PINE ON WALLS AND CEILING OF THIS ISLAND HOME.

Chris explains, “I wanted to frame or enhance the warmth and texture of the natural wood by contrasting the Eastern White Pine boards against the bright smooth surface of gyp [sic] wall boards.” Consequently, this blending of materials adds to the drama and spatial effects of the dwelling, distracting the eye from the compactness of the interior rooms. With a limited budget, White Pine goes a long way towards expanding the living space. Curiously, Chris admits that, contrary to popular opinion, the final installation costs show that White Pine is, “comparable and sometimes even cheaper than using gypsum.”

In today’s economy, it is difficult for most people to imagine buying an island home, let alone build one from scratch. However, architects like those at KTA would tell you there are ways to embrace your needs and achieve your wants by blending techniques both ancient and modern. While you may heat your house with the sun, you can still warm your home with Eastern White Pine. 🌲





LIVING ON ISLANDS EDGE WITH EASTERN WHITE PINE

If you are fortunate enough to live cliff-side, on a tiny island's ancient mountaintop in the reaches of Penobscot Bay, then you know exactly how dramatic and awe-inspiring the coast of Maine can be. Academy award winning documentary filmmakers Grady Watts and Geraldine Wurzburg are looking to double their time spent in the Penobscot Bay area to six months a year instead of just three—and they have good reason. Their newly constructed home is perched 75 feet back from shore upon a 35-foot ledge. Stretching along the rugged coastal paradise of rock, forest, and ocean; this home not only offers breathtaking views, but an impressive use of Eastern White Pine as well.

JUST DOWN THE ROAD, YEAR-ROUND RESIDENTS ELLARD TAYLOR AND KATE HOTCHKISS ARE VERY INTIMATE WITH THE VIEW WATTS AND WURZBURG ENJOY AND THEY ARE EVEN MORE FAMILIAR WITH THE HOUSE ITSELF. IN FACT, THEY BUILT IT. Ellard's company, Great Blue Heron (GBH), partnered with Bill Stevens of Stevens Sawmill and Construction to contract the project. Kate, Ellard's wife, is a carpenter, painter, and human resource manager for GBH, and both were involved in its construction from foundation to finish. Referring to the impressive location, Ellard recalls watching a Spring Nor'easter howl across the bay with 80-knot winds pushing 22-foot surf. Sea-spray blasted the 74-foot long eastern wall of the house, 50 feet of which is commercial-grade solid glass from floor to ceiling. When he boldly comments on the minimization of the interior to exterior transition, one would have to agree.

Maximizing the interior charm and beauty of the house, Ellard worked with architect Evans Woollen to "warm up" the large 50' by 20' kitchen/living room. For this they chose Eastern White Pine for a majority of the finish work. Asked why they used pine, Ellard was quick to point out that Eastern White Pine is a "long time favorite." Even after working out west for a stint and sampling various species, he appreciates Eastern White Pine for its consistency and character. The pine used in the ceiling and trim detail is native to Maine and lends a softness to the otherwise very modern-looking structure.

Robbins Lumber, a local mill in Searsmont, Maine supplied very clean, high-grade material that was expertly installed and then white-washed, or given a 'pickle finish.' The pine in the ceiling





KITCHEN

was left with its simple pickle, but the trim around the doors and windows received several coats of polyurethane for added durability. The Eastern White Pine trim between the windows is particularly dramatic in that they provide a subtle divider between the vast glass walls without obstructing the view of lobster boats, pilot whales, and myriad of waterfowl.



Currently, some islands in the Penobscot Bay area are lacking in actual White Pine stands. The dominant wood found in the island's forests is mainly scrubby spruce. Apart from White and Red Oak and some Gray Birch, the sylvan environment is fairly homogeneous. And while an island-based mill belonging to Bill Stevens is still functional, there is just not enough quality wood (read: Eastern White Pine) truly native to remain. Nevertheless, this special display of a glorious sampling of local Eastern White Pine is quite complimentary to the characteristic rugged, enduring Maine coastline. 🌲





ONE ISLAND MAN'S "LOVE FOR THE WOOD"

Up north in the diminutive maritime Canadian province of Prince Edward Island, there's no lack of heritage. And because of this, for Raeford Waite of RW Woodworking and Custom Milling, business is good. In fact, if you need any Eastern White Pine turned, lathed, or curved for, say, a 200-year-old arched doorway, Raeford and his trustworthy three-man crew are your best bet throughout the island, and perhaps most of Canada. Sure, Raeford can build you a cabinet, or just about anything else, but his true passion is milling wood stock that will be used to restore and preserve such historical landmarks as churches, quaint store fronts, and government mansions.

In Canada, the federal government releases grants ranging from \$5,000 to \$50,000, to restore heritage projects. Raeford recalls the 1970's, when that money simply wasn't around. When it came to renovating and maintaining historical landmarks, corners were cut. In some instances, even vinyl siding was used due to lack of funds. Nowadays, the government makes sure that these cover-ups are rectified and that history is restored. In the age of digital cameras, you'd better be ready to fulfill the expectations of people who appreciate real wood and authentic craftsmanship. Raeford Waite loves this challenge and is happy to be inundated with calls for milled White Pine and custom installations.

Raeford's appreciation for Eastern White Pine is telling. He can speak to the quality and composition of the stock he receives from providers all over eastern North America, looking at the density and tightness of the grain. One element that Raeford points to as a boon to today's craftsmen is the quality of wood glue. He wonders what woodworkers would have done 200 years ago if they had access to modern glue and resin chemistry. He tells of ancient, secret formulas percolating on an old carpenter's wood stove that may have incorporated horsehair, or even stranger ingredients. The fact that current glues can hold 3,500 lbs. per square inch leads him to muse whether the old windows in the heritage projects he restores wouldn't have endured another 1,000 years. Perhaps, lucky for Raeford and his crew, horsehair didn't prove worthwhile in that capacity.

From one history lesson to another, Raeford keenly expresses what is interesting about milling White Pine, and can conjure mystery and genuine excitement. Imagine a saw ripping into

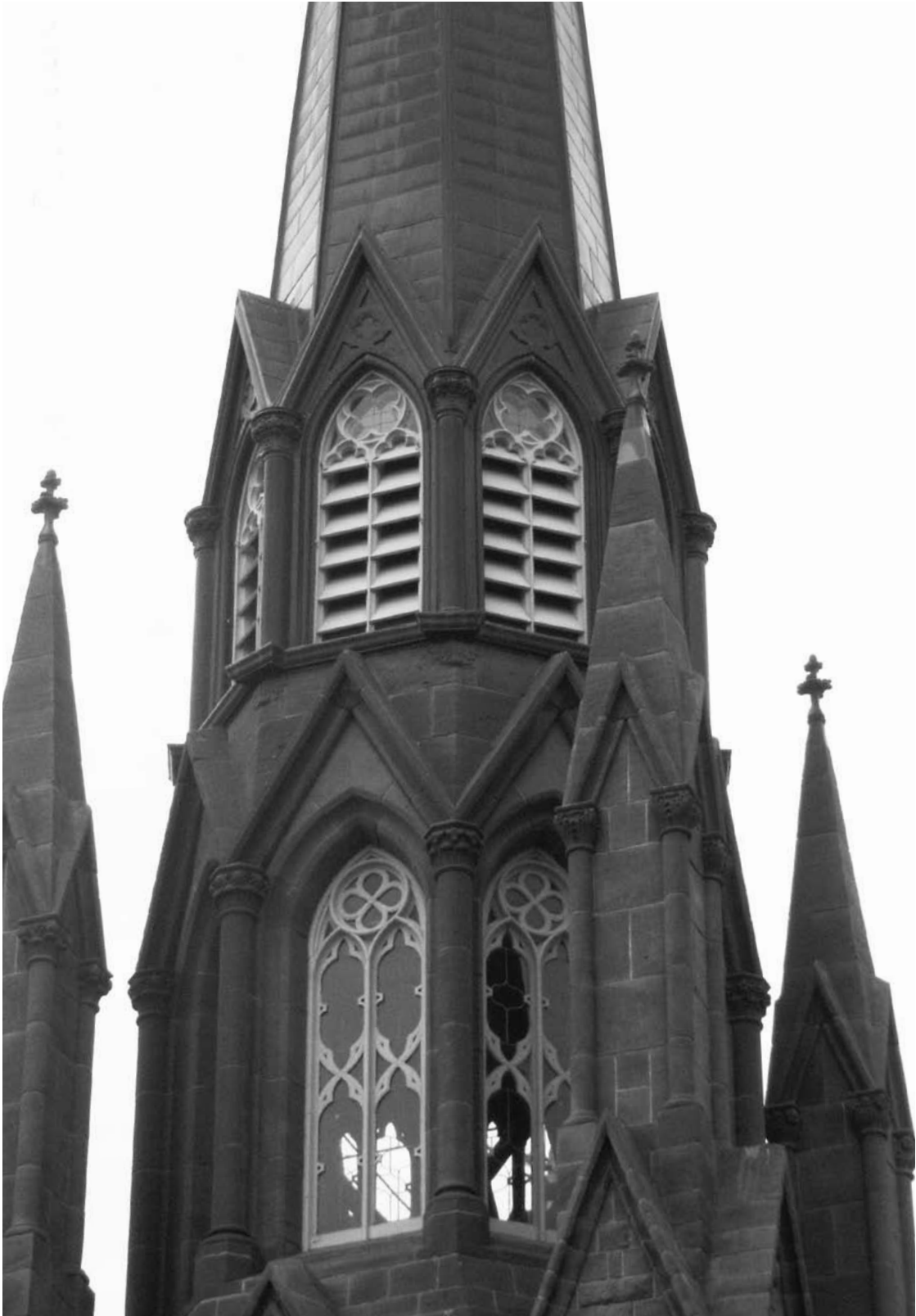


a centuries-old pine tree and making violent contact with buckshot and lead bullets from a war that no one is immediately sure how to date. Or ponder men searching abandoned properties for that perfect Eastern White Pine stand, not knowing whether an old well is waiting to swallow you up. And then again, the trees themselves have been known to, over time, digest lucky horseshoes that had been nailed to them, or clothesline pulleys. According to Raeford, you do not want to be around a saw when it strikes a horseshoe.

'Reflecting on the history of Eastern White Pine and other materials of his trade seems to come naturally to Raeford.'

Reflecting on the history of Eastern White Pine and other materials of his trade seems to come naturally to Raeford. While his voice, rich with what is reminiscent of an Irish accent, gives away the youthfulness of his 40's, what is actually said reveals a wiser, more diligent spirit. He speaks fondly of his crewmen, who he often lets decide which projects to take on so that they feel a sense of pride towards their work. He goes on to describe how his "pride before profit" credo is as much about the heart and soul of a working man as it is about the "love for the wood" he expects from his men. These are, indeed, high standards to live by—standards that he will no doubt pass on to his son, Timothy, who at age eight has already built a fleet of toy airplanes from scraps of White Pine lying around the 5,000 square foot shop. He held his first hammer when he was three. Raeford has little doubt that "Tim the Tool Man" will follow in his father's shoes. After all, he's the only son of an only son of an only son. And this, a realization one gets when speaking with Raeford about Eastern White Pine, is the true nature of heritage. 🌲





EASTERN WHITE PINE RESTORATION





CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

ARCHITECTS, DESIGNERS AND BUILDING PROFESSIONALS



The WHITE PINE

SERIES OF
architectural monographs

is looking for story ideas, articles, photos and feedback
for our next issue to be published in early 2009.

What we're looking for:

- Updates on projects or designs featured in the original White Pine Monographs →
 - Photos of modern uses of Eastern White Pine →
 - Techniques for building with Eastern White Pine →
 - Projects showcasing Eastern White Pine →
- New and old homes with classic styling of Eastern White Pine →
 - Innovative uses of New England's most historic wood →
 - Industry news pertaining to Eastern White Pine →



Submit your story ideas, photos, thoughts, expressions or well-written articles to:
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THE NORTHEASTERN LUMBER MANUFACTURERS ASSOCIATION

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