

# Maine Home

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## + DESIGN



THE SMALL SPACES ISSUE



# HEART OF STONE

BY J. MICHAEL WELTON // PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEFF ROBERTS

SMALL BUT MIGHTY, A TINY CARRIAGE  
HOUSE IN SOUTHWEST HARBOR  
PUNCHES ABOVE ITS WEIGHT

63



**S**ure, the 1,200-square-foot carriage house in Southwest Harbor is an ode to fine woodworking. Outside, its shingles are Alaskan yellow cedar from British Columbia, three-quarters of an inch thick. Inside, it's all polished Douglas fir—rafters and beams, built-ins and walls—with just a touch of drywall in the bedroom and loft.

But it's the oversized, custom masonry outside that's the showstopper here. "It's not your ordinary stone work," says Jeff Gammelin, founder of Freshwater Stone in Orland, 30 miles south. He should know. For 43 years, Gammelin's been building homes with the Hall Quarry pink granite prevalent across the region. "My wife and I built our first house in 1973 and used the stone on the land," he says. "It was an adventure to learn on our own, without old-time prejudices. We developed a unique style, and it's a great thing."

They got to know their stone intimately, from the inside out. Their selection of tools at the time was fairly primitive; they had plenty of carbide tips but nothing as tough as diamond. And it was labor-intensive work. "Everything was done by hand, including carrying the stone," he says.

Their business has evolved since. For this little two-story carriage house a short distance from yachtsman/money manager Michael Cook's main house on the water, Gammelin called in three masons, two tenders, and a boom-truck driver. And their equipment was much more sophisticated than that of 40 years ago.

Gammelin had worked before with Cook and his designer, Eric Sokol of Winkelman Architecture in Portland, as well as his builder, John Dargis. So there was an existing level of trust and confidence before the crew even got started. "Michael [Cook] was very much willing to let us do stuff others might not," Gammelin says. "We had free rein in the design to blend and harmonize the stonework to the natural setting that was there."

(Opening spread) The entire carriage house totals 1,200 square feet, including a two-car garage.

The main floor interior of a carriage house (above) designed by Eric Sokol of Winkelman Architecture in Portland and builder John Dargis is clad almost exclusively in Douglas fir, including floors, rafters, built-ins, and cabinetry.

A pine-needle path (opposite) leads from the main house on-site, around oversized granite boulders that form the foundation, to the main entry of the little structure.

The main living area, above a two-car garage, is designed as a retreat for guests at the main house, with a total of 850 square feet of living space, including the loft atop.





There was guidance from Sokol, of course. He'd met with Cook in March 2017 to discuss a program for a two-car garage with living space and loft above. Sokol developed five different 3-D images for his client, ranging from conservative to contemporary and unique. In the end, they settled on a slightly more traditional style. "I drew stonework on the building, to the extent of saying: 'I'd like this scale and size and shape,'" the architect says. "Then the mason or craftsman would pick a stone and ask, 'Like this?' And they'd do a little mock-up, two feet to four feet high."

Later, the team arrived on-site and measured the framed walls and windows. They reconstructed the building in the shop where their tools were, so the finished product matched what's on-site. "They cut it and fit it in the shop, numbered it, put it on a trailer, and brought it to the site, then put the puzzle pieces back together," Sokol says.

But, before any of that could happen, a series of blasts into the bedrock had to be made to create space for the two-car garage, which would be 24 by 28 feet. "We had to blow it up and put the footprint there," Cook says. "We blasted a big wedge for the foundation." After the blast-

ing, Freshwater Stone did all the stonework for the foundation, creating a layering of stones that appear to be growing out of the wedge. "It's a very interesting look—a random pattern of completely irregular shapes," he says. "They really nailed it."

Sokol's design called for a structure that consists of three levels but looks like two, rising 25 feet above the driveway. The risk was that it might have wound up being a tall, imposing structure that challenged, rather than complemented, the main house. So the architect overcompensated: "What I was trying to do was to push it down as far as possible, or at least give that illusion," he says. "We naturalized it by using the stone—when we put it on the building, we built the ground up a little bit, raising the grade on the high side." It was a fairly simple gesture that mitigated the height and made the carriage house seem as small as possible. "It's a tiny thing, so it's about the craft of it all—the materials and how well they were put together," he says.

Gammel and his artisans plied their trade like the professionals they are. They placed concrete and framed backing, then a waterproofing plane and another draining plane, followed by a stone

The first floor walk-in entry area (opposite) is on north, and to its right are a bench and few closets. A wooden ladder leads to the loft above.

A cozy loft (above) features windows overlooking the living area, with dormers on two sides.



veneer cut to the size and shape needed. “Some of those pieces are three to four feet away from the building,” Gammelin says. They initially used existing boulders found at an outcropping on site, then brought in stone from the quarry to match. “We only used what was there to begin with, and built on top of that,” he says. “We referenced the shape and geometry of the cracks in the bedrock.”

The boulders run five feet thick or more, with one measuring seven feet wide, supporting a column. “Some weighed 10,000 pounds,” he says. “We had to use the largest truck we have: a 30-ton boom truck with 105 feet of extensions.” The thinnest piece was 8 inches thick, at the top of the wall. All of the corner pieces were 12 inches thick and sculpted in an “L” shape to wrap around the angle.

If reaching up to the site was the biggest physical challenge for the masons, working through the design process was a close second. “Whenever we’re given freedom, you question whether you can figure it out or not, and that happens with every creative process,” he says. “You have an idea and get started, then doubt creeps in, and you have to get over it—it happens with all of these projects, but with this one it happened more than others we do.”

Their efforts paid off in spades, with an attrac-

tive, rough-and-tumble look on the outside. Approached from the main house on a pine-needle path, the first-floor entry is on the north side (the garage is below grade). Once inside, visitors will find Douglas fir finishes that look as smooth as silk. To the right are a bench and a few closets. A few steps forward reveal a living area, kitchenette, and small bedroom.

A ladder ascends to a loft with sleeping space and two small windows. “The loft is squeezed into the roof, with tiny little dormers for daylight and headroom,” Sokol says. “It’s a cozy space.” The entire 850 square feet of living space is big enough for one or two people or a small family to stay in. “Visiting guests would have their own space,” he says. “It’s not big enough for someone to live up there, but it would be good for someone socializing in the main house.”

For its minimalist program—a garage with living space above—Sokol’s design allowed the environment to shape his building. “It looks like it’s been there a long time, emerging out of the ground, rather than something big and completely unrelated to what’s around it,” he says. In boxing, that’s known as punching above your weight. And for this small but mighty carriage house built of rough-hewn stone and elegant wood, that’s the ultimate compliment. **MH+D**

The Douglas fir-paneled main bedroom (opposite) off the living area is one of the few areas finished partially with drywall.

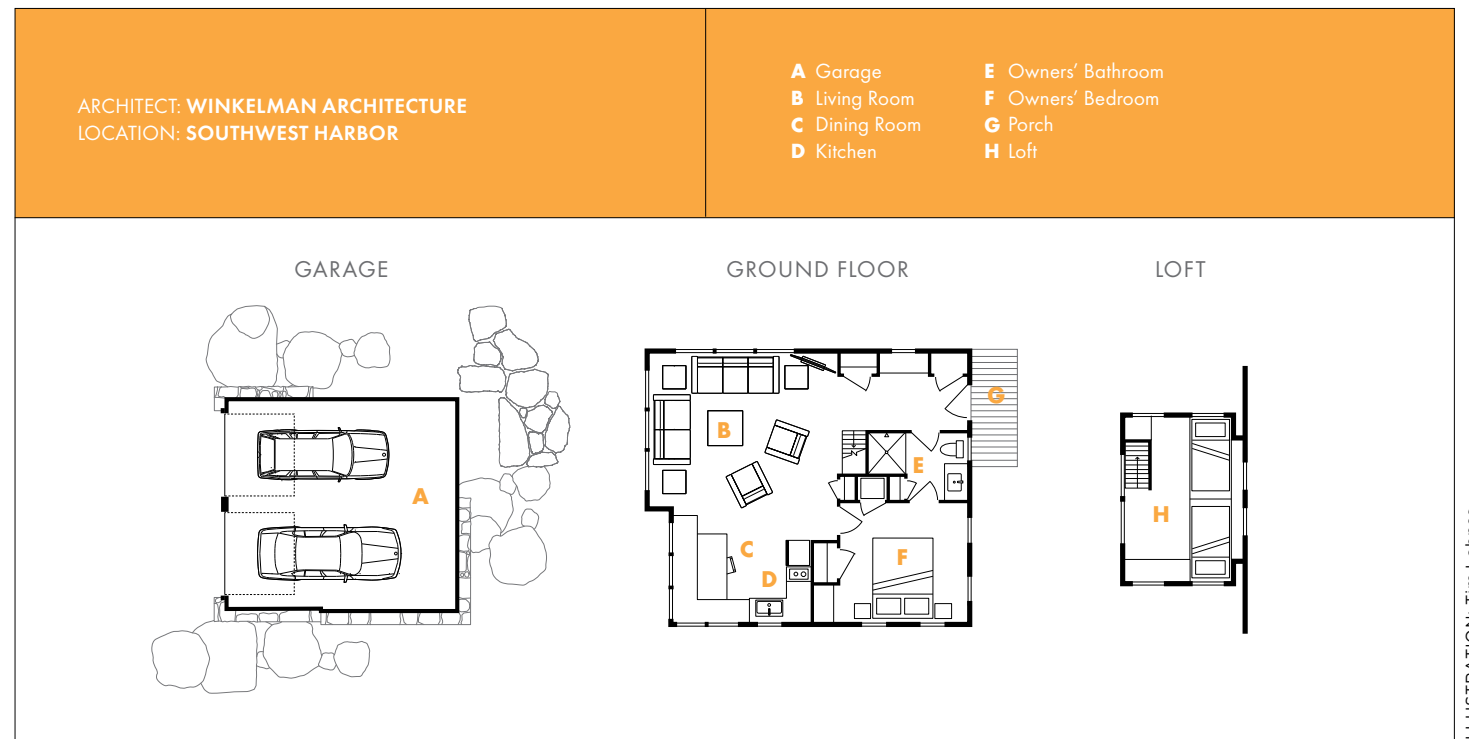


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