

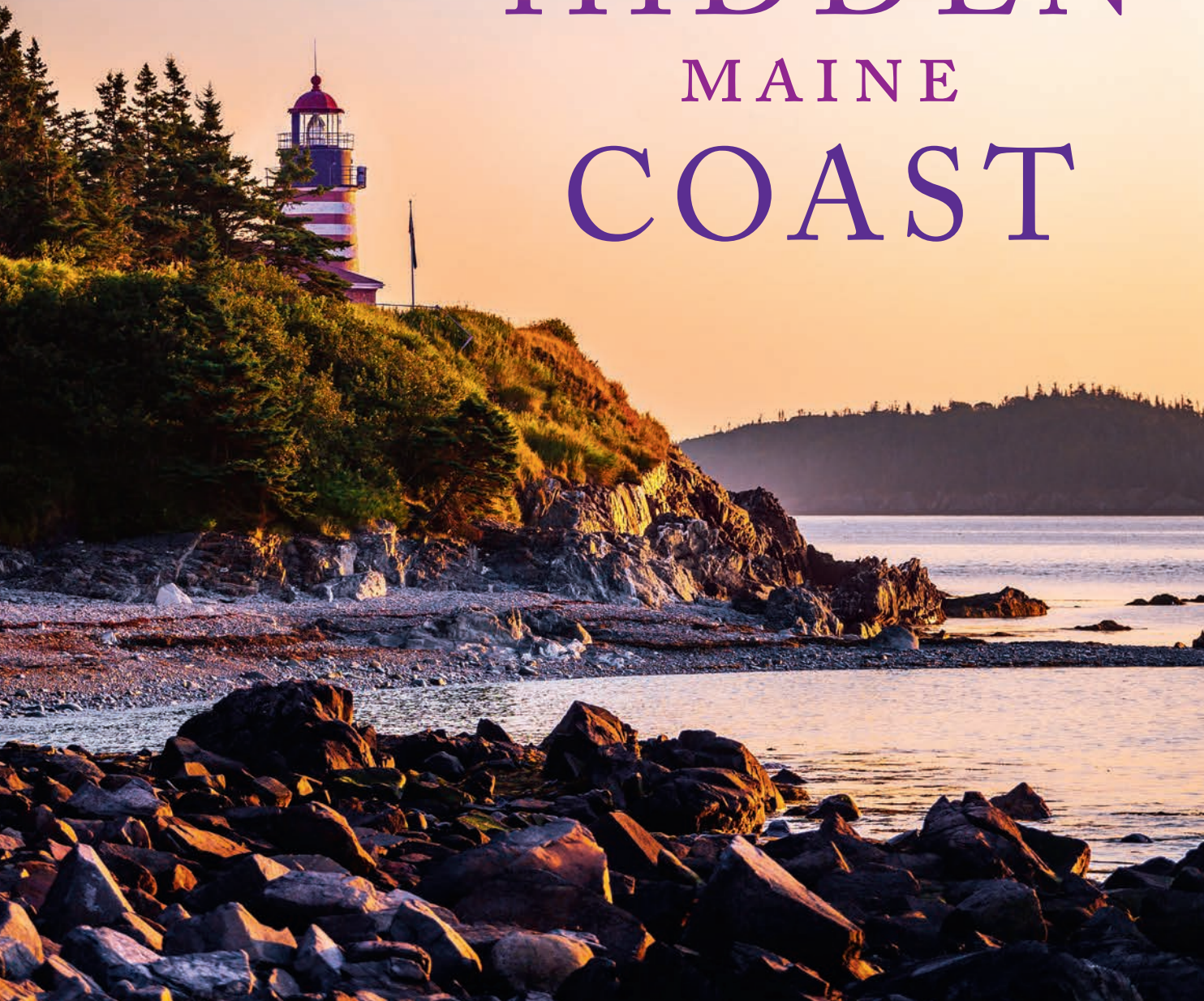
BEST BEACHES
IN EVERY STATE

MUST-TRY RECIPES
FOR TOMATO LOVERS

A RACE AGAINST TIME
ON MOUNT WASHINGTON

YANKEE

THE
HIDDEN
MAINE
COAST



THE SUMMER PLACE

How casual, stripped-down luxury made Shingle Style the go-to for New England's grand "cottages." BY BRUCE IRVING



The great Yale architectural historian Vincent Scully called the Shingle Style, which he coined in 1952, "the architecture of the American summer." No wonder this born-in-New-England building type is so well loved. Relaxed, informal, wrapped in shingles with very little decorative trim, subtly rather than showily beautiful, and with names like "Breezyside by the Sea," "Breakwater," "Wave Crest," and "Seacroft," Shingle Style manses dotted the region's rocky seacoast and its posh resort towns at the turn of the 19th century, capturing

the essence of the new leisure class and sending out a very American declaration of architectural independence.

At its heart, the style was a reaction against what *was*, a stripping away of the frippery and European-ness of the Romantic and Victorian styles that preceded it, and an embrace of this country's history. But it was a long time coming. Gothic Revival, Italianate, the French-derived Second Empire, the medieval-inspired Stick Style, and English Queen Anne—though wildly different, they shared DNA that led back to the Continent,

and they were, each in their turn over the mid- to late 1800s, wildly popular in the United States.

Two of the new style's earliest practitioners, young Portland-based architects Albert Winslow Cobb and John Calvin Stevens, published a manifesto in 1888, seeking to bury all that old stuff, "that vast agglomeration of ornateness, imitated from everything vainglorious under the sun.... In truth there is little to commend in any of the Renaissance architecture of continent Europe; architecture inspired by the admiration for tyrants for the work of



BRET MORGAN (TOP); HISTORIC NEW ENGLAND (INSET)



their archetypes in the splendid, corrupt days of ancient Rome.”

So there.

As the centennial of the American Revolution arrived, there was a sense that, compared with the simpler times of 1776, the country was moving too fast, had turned urban and hard, had itself become corrupt and overly sophisticated. Magazines published articles that praised the honesty and ease of places like Cape Cod, Nantucket and Martha’s Vineyard, Cape Ann, and Newburyport. Copious illustrations concentrated on their

colonial architecture, and writers grew nostalgic as they discovered features that had become rare.

“The halls are wide and deep,” wrote T.B. Aldrich in an 1874 *Harper’s* article titled “An Old Town by the Sea,” about houses in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, “after a gone-by fashion, with handsome staircases, set at an easy angle, and not standing nearly upright, like those ladders by which one reaches the upper chambers of a modern house.”

By the time the Centennial Exhibition opened in Philadelphia in

The 1882 Shingle Style masterpiece called Kraggyde (FAR LEFT) no longer stands in Manchester-by-the-Sea, Massachusetts—but a gorgeous modern replica (ABOVE) can be found on Swans Island, Maine.

1876, attended by 10 million visitors, the stage was set for a full-throated embrace of national roots. And make no mistake: Those roots were in New England, where hearty Englishmen—not recent immigrants from Eastern Europe or Ireland—had built their houses on the shores of a wild continent. It was the rugged simplicity of those structures, tightly shingled



Built in 1915, the landmark Stone House in Kennebunkport, Maine, can be yours for a week (starting at \$21,000).

against the elements, that architects were looking at anew. As crucial inspiration, Scully points to the 1637 Fairbanks House in Dedham, Massachusetts, believed to be the oldest surviving wooden house in North America. “Picturesque, powerful in the expression of rough masonry and weathered shingles,” it was an assembly of familiar forms: a simple peaked roof, a saltbox addition, and gambrel wings. Now *this* was American.

Fueled by the money of the rising leisure class, designers gave their clients—many of them blueblood Yankees, or aspiring bluebloods—the kind of non-ostentatious luxury they cherished. It was a deft stylistic accomplishment: As Scully writes, “An antiquarian love of colonial things has been transformed by free imagination into an original architectural synthesis.”

The Shingle Style was a resort form; though some houses were built in established towns like Brookline, Massachusetts, and New Haven, Connecticut, they were more common in eastern Long Island, Newport, Cape Cod, the

Rough stone foundations made the houses look as if they sprang naturally from the living rock, and interior layouts were open and flowing.

North Shore of Massachusetts, and the Maine coast. Driving home the point that this was hardly an everyman’s architecture, many of the most beautiful Shingle Style buildings weren’t houses at all, but secondary structures like stables, gatehouses, coachmen’s and gardeners’ cottages, icehouses, and even bowling alleys—all on larger estates, of course. There were country clubs, yacht clubs, casinos, fishing and shooting clubs, chapels, and a few exclusive hotels as well.

High-style and beautiful, it was the first truly homegrown American archi-

itecture, and its creation coincided with the formation of the country’s first real class of professional architects. Most Shingle Style buildings were built between 1880 and 1910. In the 1890s there were only nine architectural schools in the U.S.; by 1912 there were 32, with triple the enrollments. Some of the greats were Stevens, Cobb, H.H. Richardson, William Ralph Emerson, and the firms of Peabody and Stearns and McKim, Mead and White.

Their buildings were nearly free of the fretwork and flourishes of their predecessors—“innocent of ornament,” as the historian Margaret Henderson Floyd put it. Dark-stained or untreated shingles stretched over irregular massing—often with a turret or two and a saltbox or gambrel roofline—the taut skin giving a snug, unified feeling. Rough stone foundations made the houses look as if they sprang naturally from the living rock, and interior layouts were open and flowing, unlike rigid Victorians with their receiving parlors and sitting rooms. Halls were wide and deep again, the staircases

With careful edits to the original structure, architect Patrick Ahearn helped breathe new life into this 1888 Shingle Style mansion in Osterville, Massachusetts.



handsome and easy. Porches were deep-set, roomy, and cool. Often floors would rise and fall from room to room, mirroring the irregular earth below. And since these summer houses were usually unheated, the shingles were able to accommodate the expansion and contraction of the wooden frames through the changing seasons.

Perhaps because relatively few Shingle Style houses were built (high style comes at a high price), they have developed a devoted following, especially among architects—Robert A. M. Stern has made a career out of resurrecting the style for a moneyed clientele. But it's not just the pros. One of the most iconic Shingle Style houses of all, Peabody and Stearns's 1882 masterpiece "Krag-syde" in Manchester-by-the-Sea, Massachusetts, was torn down in 1929. One hundred years after its construction, a couple began building, by themselves, a replica on Swans Island in Maine, using original plans they'd discovered in the Boston Public Library. Twenty years and 6,600 square feet later, "Krag-syde

Fueled by the money of the rising leisure class, designers gave their clients the kind of non-ostentatious luxury they cherished.

II" was completed, an American original reborn.

And this year on the island of North Haven in Maine's Penobscot Bay, final touches are being put on a brand-new six-bedroom home that sits firmly in the Shingle canon. Architect John Tittmann, of the Boston firm Albert, Righter & Tittmann, cites William Faulkner's famous quotation when thinking about its design: "The past is never dead. It's not even past." "We're singing the same songs as those earlier architects," Tittmann says, "responding

to cultural and practical conditions in a similar way." The house is sited carefully, out of view from the public road, with eaves pulled down to make its two-story mass read more like one. Porches and recesses yield deep shadows, while a blanket of unpainted shingles wraps the many facets of the building in a snug embrace, keeping it weathertight as a sou'wester coat does a sailor. "The construction crew is local—they fish and build year-round. They know how to work with shingles because they use them on their own houses," he says.

A final, delightful connection to the past: It's truly a summer house, with no air-conditioning and no central heat. "The porches will keep the summer sun out of the living areas, and the sea breeze will do the rest," Tittmann reports. The architecture of the American summer indeed. 🍷

Bruce Irving is a Massachusetts-based renovation consultant and real estate agent who also served as the producer of This Old House for nearly two decades.

NEW ENGLAND ARCHITECTURE 101

SHINGLE STYLE



SIDING: Uniform, unpainted shingles, sometimes with stone on the lower level.

ROOF: Asymmetrical front facade with a multigabled roof.

WINDOWS: Plentiful and in a variety of shapes and sizes.

PORCH: Wide and expansive; often wraps around the side.

The Shingle Style home is like a Queen Anne Victorian (see below) that's outgrown its colorful gingerbread youth and softened into a relaxed, rambling "coastal grandmother." While still grand and asymmetrical with an assortment of gables and windows, its signature subdued wooden-shingle siding has

made it a natural top style for modern beach house builds.

Time Period: 1880–1900

Characteristics: Wooden-shingle siding and windows in all shapes and sizes

Famous Example: Kraggsyde, Manchester-by-the-Sea, Massachusetts

Where to Find Shingle Style Homes:

Many remain in private hands, but a respectful visitor can enjoy exterior views by visiting Maine neighborhoods such as Delano Park in Cape Elizabeth, Ocean Avenue and its back streets in Kennebunkport, and Cushing Island in Portland.

QUEEN ANNE



ROOF: Steep with cross gables or large dormers.

EXTERIOR: Asymmetrical; typically painted in three or more colors.

TOWER: A round or polygonal front corner tower with a conical or domed roof.

WINDOWS: Large, single-pane windows and frequent projecting bay windows.

PORCH: Expansive and boasting decorative "gingerbread" spindle-work wood trim.

The final "Victorian" style and contemporary with the all-American Shingle, grand Queen Anne homes are like dreamy medieval dollhouses complete with turrets, vibrant paint jobs, ornamental trim, and wide front porches.

Time Period: 1880–1910

Characteristics: Bay windows, turrets, towers, and bold multicolored exteriors

Famous Example: The "Painted Ladies"

of San Francisco, California

Where to Find Queen Annes:

Throughout New England in every size, from wee cottages to grand mansions