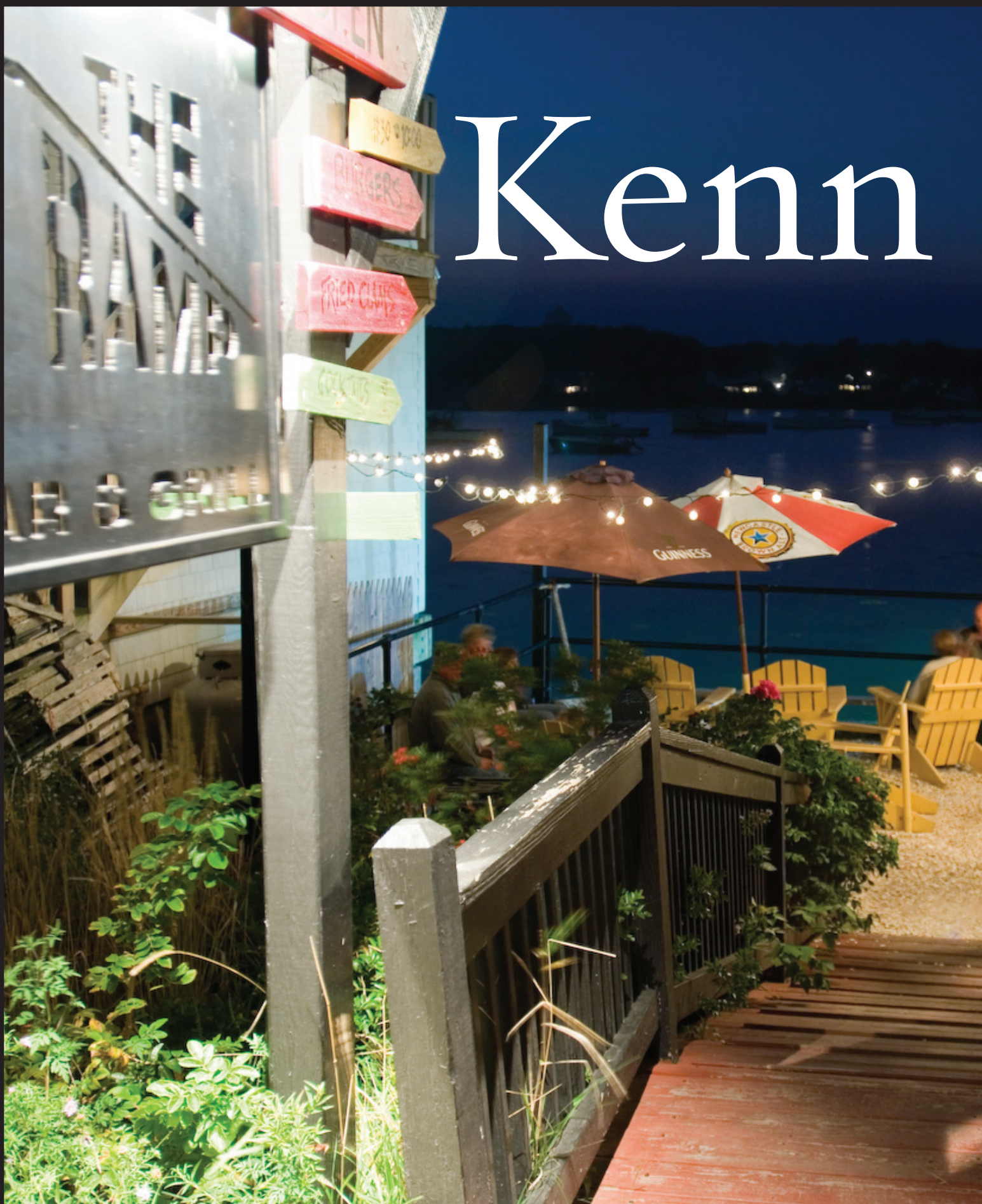


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Magic
made
manifest

CITY GUIDE

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CITY GUIDE

On summer days, the heady scent of salt air heralds your arrival. Subtle at first, the smell of the sea lifts your spirits. The last few miles of your journey require patience. Travel on any of the four roads leading into town may be slow, but as you close in on Dock Square, the air helps gauge your progress. No longer a closely guarded secret destination for generations of well-bred Easterners, Kennebunkport is now an established holiday hot spot. Thanks to the intense media coverage generated during the presidency of George Herbert Walker Bush, the Port, in all its camera-ready loveliness, was a frequent backdrop on the nightly news and quickly became a world-renowned tourist mecca.

To define this sui generis community as a mere vacation destination, however, would be to ignore its less-conspicuous charms. It has also become a thriving year-round community, home to artists and innkeepers, lobstermen and professionals, hipsters and captains of industry. Kennebunkport has evolved into something much more compelling, and more complex, than just a seaside summer colony. In the span of a generation, the local population has grown ever more nuanced and sophisticated. While the town does a splendid job of welcoming visitors from around the world and sharing its embarrassment of natural riches, it is also a place that values the importance of family and community, and that has developed a strong sense of identity.

The word “magical” resonates with Kennebunkport residents, both native and newly arrived. It enters the conversation with surprising regularity, most often when describing the experience of growing up in the Port. The magic is revealed in activities that, for most children, have been relegated to history books. Childhood lasts longer here. This is a town where kids still ride their bikes to Kennebunkport Consolidated School or into Dock Square to buy school supplies at Colonial Pharmacy, always under the watchful eyes of friends and neighbors. They can play in the tidal pools at Mother’s Beach, uncovering starfish and sand dollars, or learn to sail tiny Lasers at the Kennebunk Beach Improvement Association. There are craft fairs throughout the summer and fall on the Kennebunk River Green, and story hour at Graves Memorial Library. If the tale being told doesn’t suit, a child can always get lost in the exquisite storybook murals by Louis Norton.

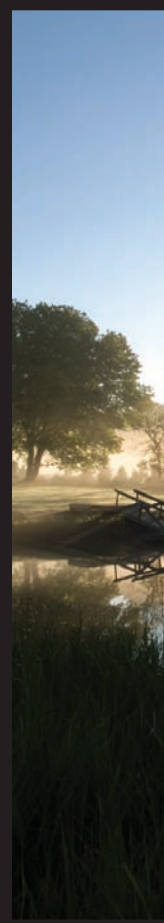
Shana Aldrich admits that it was the

At the end of Cape Porpoise’s Pier Road lies one of the few remaining harbors in southern Maine (previous page) that is dominated by working boats. After watching crews off-load their day’s catch, you can take in the sun set from The Ramp while you feast on local clams and mussels and Chef Peter Morency’s addictive Onion Strings.

Center: Pulitzer Prize-winning author and local resident Booth Tarkington used this boathouse, called “The Floats,” as a studio until his death in 1947. The large anchor emerging from the water belonged with his schooner *The Regina*, which was buried at sea after Tarkington’s death. Top Right: For decades, Port kids have made plans to meet in town at the pump, a highly desired point of connection because of its proximity to the candy store, ice cream stand, and comics at Colonial Pharmacy. Bottom Right: Since 1976, most important occasions for Kennebunkport families have been recognized with a card or a gift from Dannah. Beyond the dense bower of potted plants, Dannah Schoettner’s shop feels like the inside of a magical closet and delights all five senses. Below: As every native knows and visitors soon find out, Kennebunkport has charm and opportunity down every street.

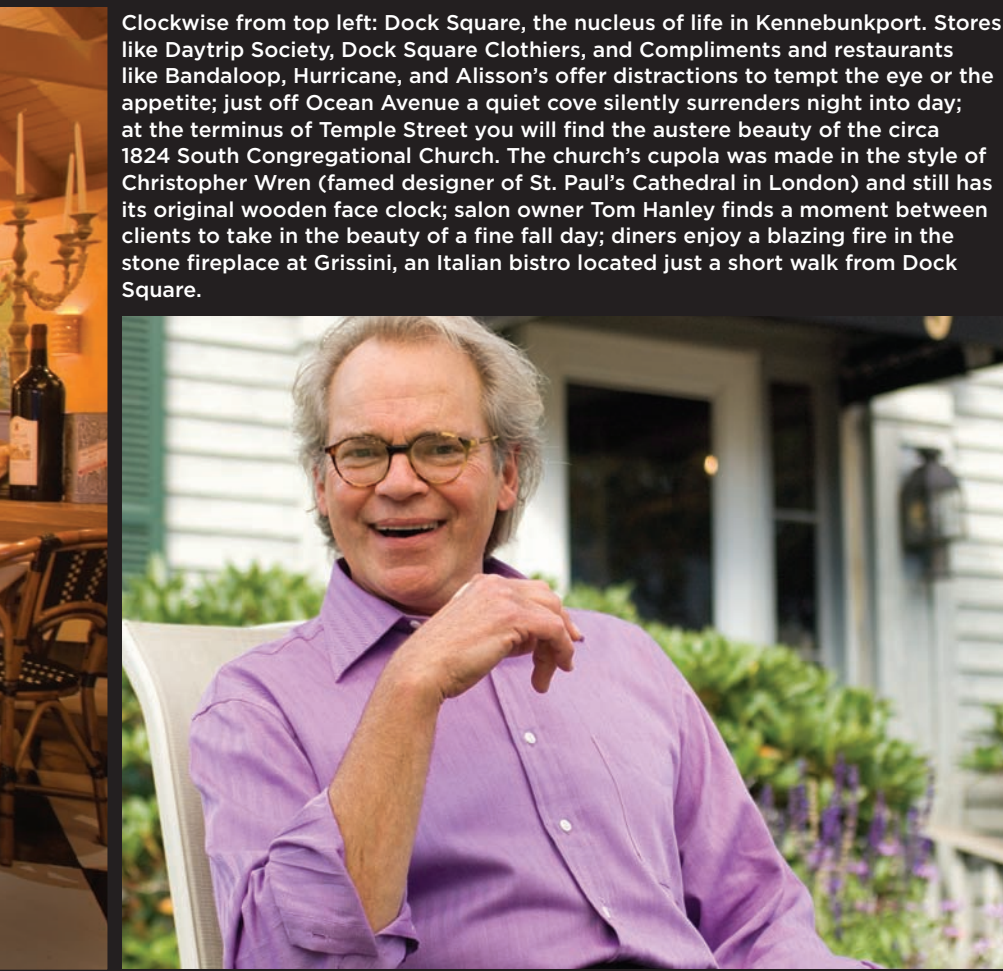








Clockwise from top left: Dock Square, the nucleus of life in Kennebunkport. Stores like Daytrip Society, Dock Square Clothiers, and Compliments and restaurants like Bandaloop, Hurricane, and Alisson's offer distractions to tempt the eye or the appetite; just off Ocean Avenue a quiet cove silently surrenders night into day; at the terminus of Temple Street you will find the austere beauty of the circa 1824 South Congregational Church. The church's cupola was made in the style of Christopher Wren (famed designer of St. Paul's Cathedral in London) and still has its original wooden face clock; salon owner Tom Hanley finds a moment between clients to take in the beauty of a fine fall day; diners enjoy a blazing fire in the stone fireplace at Grissini, an Italian bistro located just a short walk from Dock Square.



magic of her own childhood that brought her back to Kennebunkport to raise her son, Thomas, a two-year-old with preternaturally developed people skills. These skills have been honed at the Old Fort Inn, where Shana herself was raised. A graduate of Kennebunk High School and the Rhode Island School of Design, Shana worked as a fashion designer in Boston and New York. Three years ago, she moved back to join the family business. While she retains remnants of her New York edge, greeting guests at the Inn wearing her own creations fashioned from vintage fabrics, she is committed to embracing the best parts of life in Maine. "I'm constantly finding ways to make the practical beautiful."

Ohio native Tom Hanley, the strikingly handsome proprietor of the Cutaway, a salon in the heart of town, radiates charm and charisma. Bringing his own version of uptown elegance, Tom began applying some of the lessons he learned in Manhattan when he moved to Kennebunkport in 1976. "From the beginning, my interest was in serving the local community, not the tourist population," he admits. The salon is an oasis of refinement where the scent of fresh-cut flowers and coffee served in china cups await loyal regulars. Getting an appointment with Tom is only slightly less difficult than securing an audience with the pope. Summer clients begin calling for their June appointments in February.

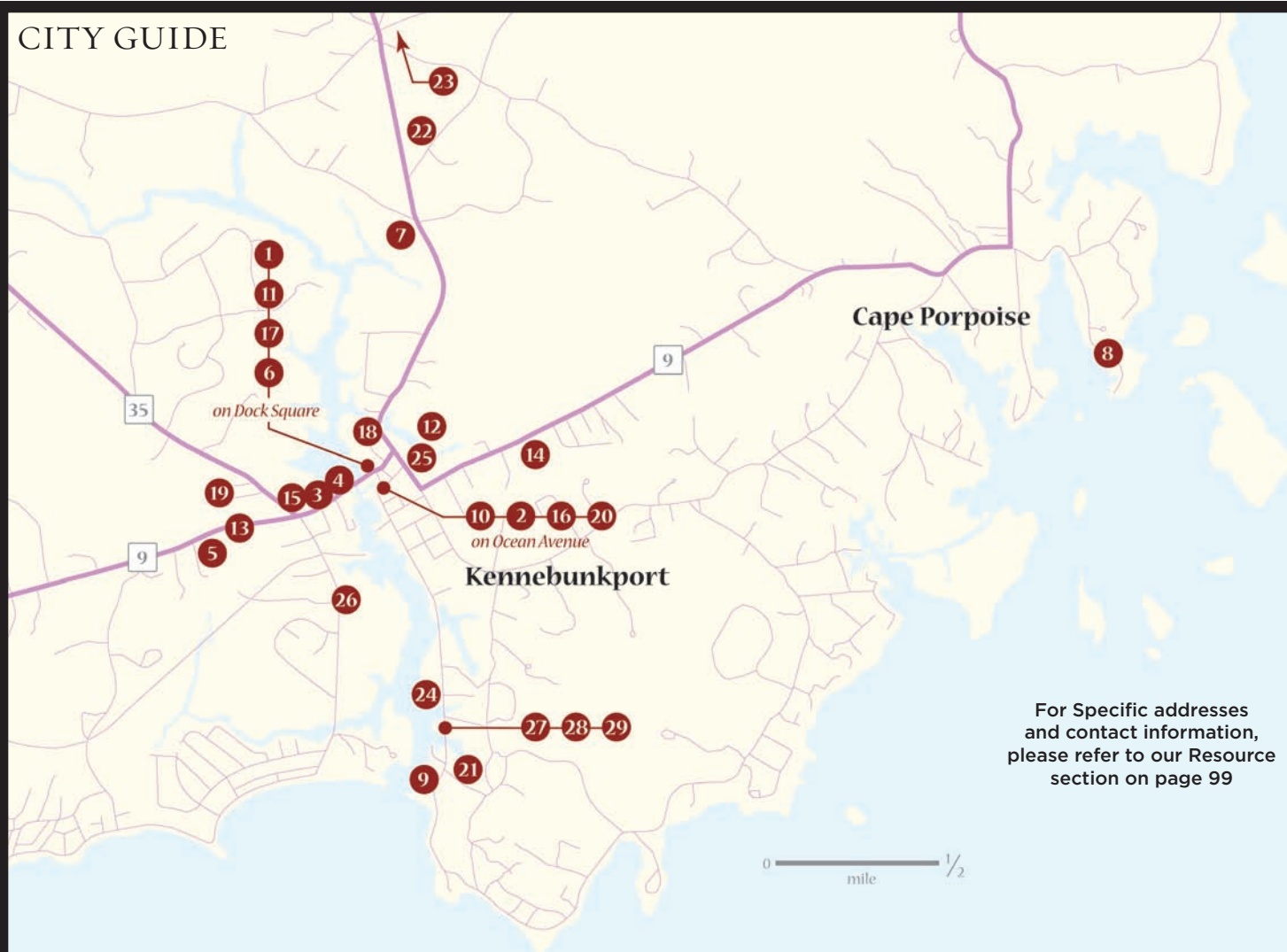
Earthly Delights

In a town that caters to a sophisticated local clientele as well as visitors from around the world, it is no surprise that the Kennebunkport restaurant roster runs the gamut from ultra-casual to ultra-chic, from the down-home charm of Mabel's Lobster Claw to the internationally acclaimed cuisine of the White Barn Inn.

Big Fish, a restaurant favored by Port scenesters and visitors alike, is housed in a converted blacksmith shop, the oldest standing building in town. Like much of the food they serve, the brother-and-sister team of Sarah Slater and Chris Rundlet was raised locally. Although they honed their chops in New York City, they returned to Maine to make their mark. With Chris in the kitchen and Sarah at the front of the house, they have fused a hip, urban vibe with the casual simplicity of native ingredients and imaginative preparation.

Drive to the end of Cape Porpoise and you will be treated to an unspoiled view of a working fishing harbor. This view is all it took to convince Kate and Peter Morency to move

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1. Alisson's Restaurant
2. Carrots & Company
3. The Cutaway
4. Hurricane
5. River Tree Center for the Arts
6. Daytrip Society
7. Patten's Berry Farm
8. Pier 77 and the Ramp
9. St. Anne's Church
10. Bandaloop

11. Colonial Pharmacy
12. Mast Cove Galleries
13. Grissini
14. Kennebunkport Consolidated School
15. Big Fish
16. Abacus
17. Favela Chic
18. South Congregational Church
19. Keys to the Kitchen

20. Compliments
21. Old Fort Inn
22. Kennebunkport Historical Society
23. Seashore Trolley Museum
24. Kennebunk River Club
25. Graves Memorial Library
26. The White Barn Inn
27. Dannah
28. Stripers
29. Mabel's Lobster Claw

from San Francisco and open Pier 77 and the Ramp in 2001. The more refined Pier 77 sits above the Ramp, a local hangout serving pub fare. Every table in the two restaurants has spectacular harbor views and both restaurants serve food informed by Peter's training at the Culinary Institute of America and his West Coast sensibilities.

If the abundant dining choices in and around Kennebunkport seem daunting, consider the staggering array of shopping selections. While it is easy for tourists to score a souvenir T-shirt or baseball cap, the level of retail sophistication in the Port has soared in the past decade. Kennebunkport native and second-generation shop owner Jessica Jenkins and her partner Andy West, a graphic designer from Portland, recently moved back to Maine from New York to open Daytrip Society, a Dock Square gift shop that features books, toys, accessories, and hip miscellany that is tied in either concept or design to nature and the environment. The shop's edgy

vibe would not feel out of place in Soho or Brooklyn. Just off the Square, the interior design store Favela Chic, which calls itself a salvage boutique, is also doing its part to raise the cool quotient in town, selling newly discovered designer pieces featured in *Vogue* and on *Oprah*.

More traditional, but no less enticing are shops like Dannah - A Gift Shop, which has maintained a loyal local following through several iterations since 1976, or Carla's Corner, where generations of fashionable Kennebunkport women find the latest designer clothing. And of course there are myriad opportunities to shop for antiques and art. Only a few blocks off Dock Square you can find Mast Cove Galleries, Maine's largest group fine art gallery, or Kate Madison Furniture, a delightful amalgam of reproduction and antique furniture and accessories with a view of the Kennebunk River basin.

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The Rhythm of Renewal

In many ways, life in Kennebunkport is dictated by the natural rhythms of the seasons. Summer is a joyous celebration of renewal. The population swells as inns, B&Bs, and vacation cottages are booked to capacity. Eager to take advantage of the ephemeral summer warmth and light, activity on the sidewalks and beaches is a happy frenzy lasting well into the night, the long hours of daylight abetting the festive atmosphere. Autumn brings a more subdued, though no less bustling collection of visitors. Once school is in session, the town plays host to legions of leaf peepers, while shorter days and brisk autumn breezes moderate the level of activity. By Thanksgiving, locals begin to gear up for Christmas Prelude, a celebration of the holiday season with a 26-year tradition. The Port is decked out in balsam-scented finery with garlands, and ribbons and wreaths festoon buildings and bridges. In the middle of Dock Square, a giant tree is decorated with lobster buoys and starfish, and on the first Saturday of December, Santa and his helpers arrive on a lobster boat tossing candy and trinkets to waiting children.

From New Year's Day to the Ides of March, the town's activity is stripped to its essence. This is Kennebunkport's secret season. Some would say it is the most precious time of year, a time for family and friends to reconnect, and a time to regroup from the busy summer and fall. Reading and knitting groups thrive during these long winter weeks and on the beaches four-legged visitors often outnumber their bipedal companions. Restaurants like Alisson's, Federal Jacks, and Bandaloop play host to the local majority, and on the coldest days, most of the people stopping by H.B. Provisions for a cup of coffee or a quart of milk leave their car engines running to fend off the chill.

And of course the cycle repeats itself. The inexorable passing of the seasons each year brings new ideas, new personalities, and new opportunities from around the world to this pristine coastal village. The ability to enthusiastically embrace change and incorporate the best the outside world has to offer, while holding fast to the traditions of the past, may be why the Port has discovered a singular way to manifest its magic.