



## Cottage Living

In the shadow of a lavish 19th-century resort, a close-knit summer community grows on Moosehead Lake's Mount Kineo island.

By Joyce Kryszak Photographs by Benjamin Williamson

**P**erched along the sloped western edge of Mount Kineo island, in Moosehead Lake, a line of charming, 1900s-era cottages snuggles beneath the mountain's hulking, furrowed-rock face. On a still morning last August, Fairfield newlyweds Justine Dutil and Dan Musser were holding hands in a pair of Adirondack chairs on the yawning porch of Oak Lodge. Owned for the last 20 years by Dan's parents, Floridians Bill and Karen Musser, it's one of seven buildings in Kineo Cottage Row, built in conjunction with a former Gilded Age resort. Oriented with their backs to the water, the cottages share the bygone-hotel's rolling nine-hole golf course — frequented by moose and geese — for a front yard.

Occasionally waving to golfers and visiting hikers,

Dutil and Dan were relaxing after their wedding the day before, when they had exchanged vows at the base of the mountain where they played and foraged for mushrooms as kids, sometimes peering upward and imagining the jilted, early-20th-century bride who, in one of Kineo's many legends, leaped from the mountaintop to her death. Dan is the third Musser child to marry on Kineo, where Cottage Row neighbors, most of whom have summered here for a quarter century or more, are like family. "The first was kind of a DIY wedding, done on a shoestring budget," says New Hampshireite Peggy Lamb, who, with her husband, Steve, owns the 1909 Breakwater cottage, formerly the hotel's yacht club. "I told Karen, 'Don't invite the Kineo people as guests. We'll dress in black and white like caterers, we'll cook and serve, and then we'll join in the festivities.' We were happy to do it for them."

The Lambs and the current Cottage Row homeowners have two dozen "Kineo kids" between them, who grew up





**OPPOSITE** Kineo Cottage Row orients toward a golf course (and assorted interlopers); recent owners have added windows facing Moosehead Lake. **THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT** Peggy and Steve Lamb renovated the 1909 Breakwater cottage,

formerly a yacht club; a flared corner tower distinguishes the 1905 Birch cottage; a porch encircles Ingo Pfotenhauer and Benita Zimmer's circa 1901 Dogwood cottage; the 1901 Fir cottage inspired Birch's design; Bill and Karen Musser own the 1912 Oak Lodge, the district's only Craftsman.

playing with sparklers on the Fourth of July and toasting marshmallows over campfires on Sunset Beach. As teens, a group broke into an abandoned hotel dormitory that was razed five years ago, and told ghost stories, says Dutil, whose grandfather, Marcel, owns the Kineo Golf Course. (Her great-great-grandfather, Québec lumber baron Édouard Lacroix, ran vast lumbering operations in the Allagash River region.) "We weren't supposed to go on the golf course either," she adds. "But we'd go at night and lay there looking up at the stars." Although her family's summer home is on the opposite side of the island, Dutil considers herself a "Kineo kid," and no one disputes her claim.

Constructed between 1900 and 1912, the cottages —

now known as Alpen, Birch, Cedar, Dogwood, Elm, Fir, and Oak Lodge — along with the Breakwater and the golf course, are all that remains of the grand 1883 Mount Kineo House. Erected on the island's southern tip, where an 1844 tavern, then an 1871 hotel, had burned, Mount Kineo House boasted five stories, an ornate ballroom, a 400-seat dining room, a bowling alley, a swimming pool, and three steam yachts; staff arranged camping trips and tours of the Allagash River as part of the developers' efforts "to draw overworked and under-sunned Industrial Age professionals, in danger of losing their masculinity, into the wilds of Maine to engage in prolonged bouts of 'roughing it' while fishing and hunting," wrote the *Moosehead Gazette* in



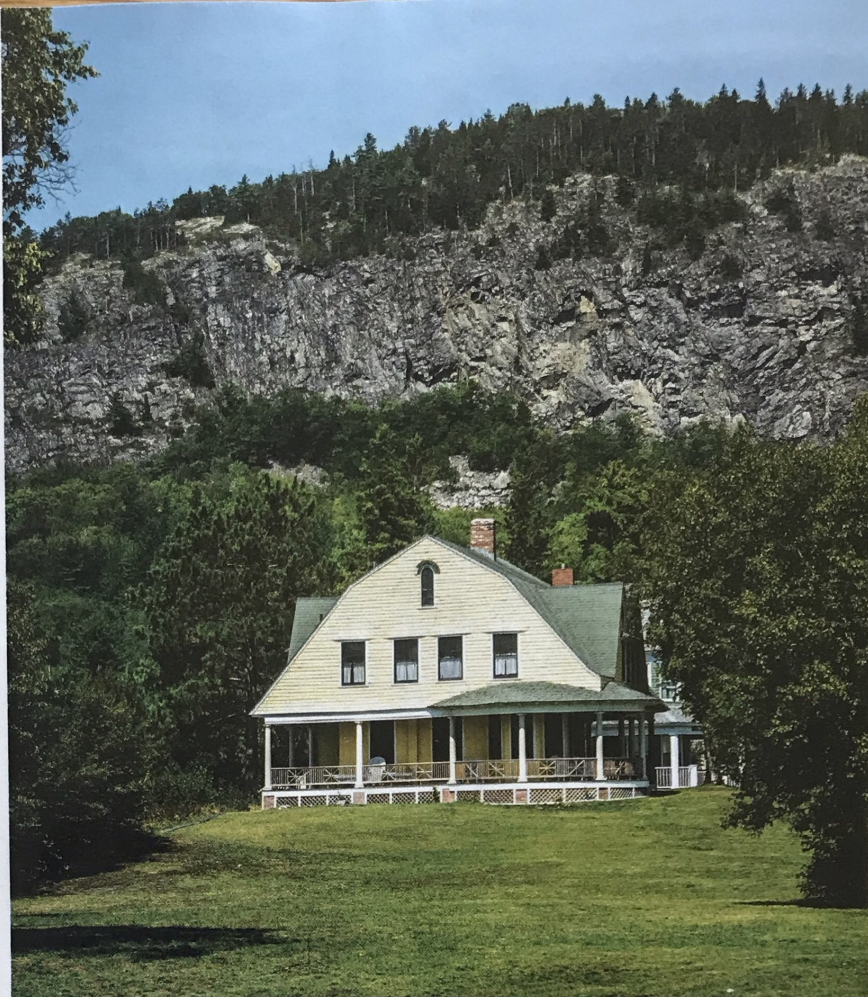
## NEIGHBORHOOD

1970. The cottages were added to provide hotel patrons with more relaxed, private accommodations, with one historian noting that “those who rented a cottage often brought their maid, butler, and family pet with them.”

Today, the 1,150-acre island still lures rusticators. Ingo Pfothenhauer, a former New York real-estate investor and yacht captain, says he stumbled on Kineo during a North Woods fishing trip with his son in 1995; the following year, he and his wife, Benita Zimmer, purchased the circa 1901 Dogwood cottage. “Now, we live to come here.”

The 1908 arrival of the Maine Central Railroad in nearby Rockwood brought more visitors to Kineo. In 1911, the railroad bought the resort and the Hiram Ricker Hotel Company oversaw a period of prosperity before closing the complex in 1937 in the midst of the Great Depression. The following year, according to the Moosehead Historical Society and Museums archives, some furniture, flooring, and china were removed and the hotel, which had fallen into disrepair, was partially demolished; then on a rainy night in October, the remaining structure caught fire. “The rumor around here is that the hotel was burned down, like intentionally,” possibly to avoid the expense of demolition, Dutil says. “What was left was pushed into the water.” Divers regularly search for

Mount Kineo, pictured behind the 1904 Alpen cottage, rises 700 feet above Moosehead Lake. The mountain is famous for its flint-like rhyolite, used by Native Americans to make arrowheads and other tools.



remains, turning up old beams, green Mount Kineo-brand soda bottles, and engraved silverware.

Over the ensuing decades, the property functioned on and off as a resort before being subdivided, its buildings sold or dismantled. In 1989, the Kineo Row Condominium Association was formed and the cottages that didn't already have private owners were put on the market. “The biggest complaint is that people want fresh eggs and we can't raise chickens here; it's against the covenants,” says Lamb, the association's president. Cars are also forbidden on Kineo, which is connected to densely wooded private land via a man-made isthmus. Residents arrive by private boat or by ferry from Rockwood and get around on foot or in golf carts.

In 2006, Kineo Cottage Row was designated a national Historic District. Designed predominantly in the Shingle style, with Colonial Revival and Queen Anne elements, the buildings feature gable or gambrel roofs, large, open-plan living rooms, wainscoting, and broad bay windows, some stacked in two-story corner towers. A few have leaded-glass windows. But their most prominent features are their ample porches with varied balustrades that wrap around in a warm embrace, or stretch wide open, beckoning neighbors to pull up an Adirondack chair.

From her porch seat last summer, Dutil summed up the devotion she and other islanders feel to their little slice of Moosehead Lake. “Dan and I have this running joke, asking each other, ‘Who do you love more, me or Kineo?’ And we both never answer. It's very close.” □

