

A BOLD AND COLORFUL LIFE: An Invitation

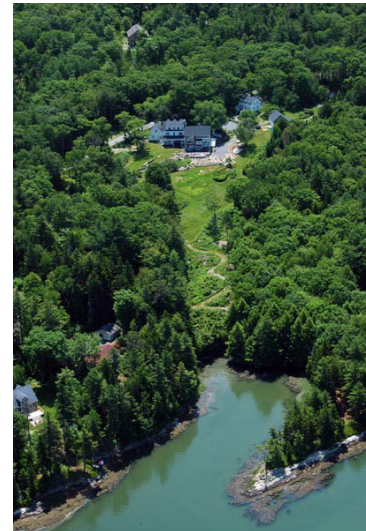
September
10, 2022



"... the property is a locale where I can be involved in all aspects of creativity, self-expression, autonomy and hospitality.

Despite the constant challenges, or perhaps because of them, THIS IS PARADISE."

-Melissa Thornton



Melissa, what prompted you to find a getaway in Maine?

I was happily ensconced and a bit too staid in Connecticut with a private practice in psychotherapy for over 20 years, when a couple of friends and I fell in love with kayaking. We paddled the waters of CT-rivers, shorelines, lakes-admiring the natural beauty and the wildlife. My friends became summer paddlers, but I was hooked. I paddled my kayak year-round and after a year or two, I tired of schlepping my 17¹/₂-foot kayak onto my Ford Explorer and driving the CT backroads to my favorite paddling spots, then turning around and heading home to clean up and meet with clients.

That's when my wanderlust and need for adventure took over. I began to search New England for a "small place, where I could roll down the lawn and into my kayak" and get straight into Mother Nature, a place of wonder, serenity and peace.

I looked throughout CT, the NY Adirondacks, VT, NH, and in 2004 began looking in Maine. That's where the serendipitous magic began.

Why did you decide to actually move to Maine?

In fall of 2005, looking for that second home, I was lost on an unprepossessing road in a town called Waldoboro when the sight of an old barn hidden behind trees caught my eye. I love old barns and I always respond to intuitive attractions, so I drove down and onto the property.

Later, the owner and I agreed that it was kismet-or the spirit of his mother, of whom I reminded him-that had led me down that road. There was an old farmhouse on a beautiful, natural property, which included a pond, rolling fields, that wonderful old barn and 1,800 linear feet along the Medomak River, with access for paddling. Heaven¹

Long story short, I left a note and card, heard from the owners (who lived in Alabama), met them in June of 2006 and shared a lobster bake, but we could not agree on a price. I began to think I'd have to run it as a B&B, rather than simply as a paddling getaway, in order to be able to buy it.

We had agreed to pay for professional market estimates, to see if we could agree on a price. but they changed their minds.

The magic continued, though, as I looked at and bought one of the "comparables" that the market estimate had included ... I took ownership of a beautiful property in Boothbay in late July 2006. By that time it was clear to me that I was meant to move to Maine permanently, and a psychic friend told me that I should share the lovely estate with as many people as possible, so my dream evolved substantially.



What were you looking for/dreaming about in a new property?

Both properties offered all that I had dreamed of: an historic farmhouse and barn on lots of beautiful land, river access, a pond to draw wildlife (I had hoped for visits from moose and black bear, but that was not to be with so many humans around), and gorgeous trees and plantings.

The Boothbay property, however, offered a much greater tourist draw, with a lovely waterfront town nearby, filled with great shops and restaurants, a history of shipbuilding and many excursions on the water, as well as lots of natural attractions for hiking and paddling and wandering. And by then, the idea of sharing it as a B&B with others had taken hold in my mind and heart.

The original property had an 1800s white Cape house and barn, both of which you moved. What purpose did you have in mind for each?

I loved the fact that the property had the ubiquitous Maine "big house, little house, back house, barn," but the barn sat on an unstable foundation, so my first plan was to have it raised so that a solid foundation could be poured under it. I happened to ask the men what it would cost to move the barn onto a new foundation out of the mighty winds that come off the Back River. It only cost 10% more, so that was the first big adventure, and the barn was moved successfully away from the back house. We took the back house down, timber by timber and reused all the timbers along the way.

Then, I worked hard to redesign and reconfigure the 1800s Cape Cod house into an expanded B&B building. No hope, as it sat right on a ridge, so I had the men lift it, turn it 90 degrees and move it off near the barn's new location. That was not so happy a story, but I persevered. And if you are curious about where the phrase "grease the skids" came from, they spread Crisco on the metal "I" beams and then pulled with two tractors to move the Cape house all the way across the courtyard!



To achieve all of this, I commuted to Maine from my home in CT for five years ... meeting with CT clients for parts of each week (and expanding my psychotherapy practice by getting licensed in Maine) and working with my workers and builders here for the other part. I had a great pair of workers who kept an eye on the builders when I was gone-my heroes.

The Cape house opened as a B&B in 2008, but this dead-end residential road, though only six minutes from the Boothbay center, is so quiet that the B&B idea did not take off. Few discovered it, in person or online. Luckily, vacation rentals had just begun and that's what both the Cape and the Farmhouse-to-be, would become.



Then you built the white Farmhouse, with its long, flowing, almost river-esque-shaped porch. And then you built the red barn building. Does this attach to the white Farmhouse?

This is a wild story. I studied the wonderful old Maine farmhouses and found an architectural designer to help me take my design into blueprints ... to be built on the original site of the Cape house.

Along the way, one of my "hero" workers discovered a zoo-year-old barn for sale, the Homer Jones barn, about 45 minutes away. I bought it and we all took it apart and moved it to this site. The timing was perfect for me to design the red "barn" building around this actual barn and attach it to the white Farmhouse plans that I had already completed.

Serendipity! The red building was built by a Canadian modular company to my specs, and hauled on flatbeds all the way from New Brunswick¹ The red barn is made of SIPs (structural insulated panels) and

miraculously, despite the economic downturn of 2008. it all came together and the Farmhouse opened as a vacation rental in August 2009.

Your Owner's Quarters occupies two-thirds of the red barn building, with a studio on the third floor. Do you paint?

Yes, I live in the "Owner's Quarters," the western part of the red building, year-round. **It** has a living room, dining room and kitchen on the basement level, with a fabulous view of the Back River: a master bedroom/bathroom/dressing room suite on the main level and a studio on the top level.



Yes, I do paint, though since I moved from CT I have been constantly painting the interiors and exteriors of five buildings, which are aging at different rates¹

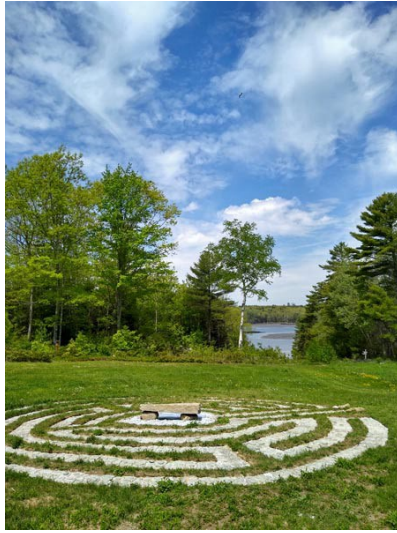
I did more painting on canvas when I was in CT, and all of the 10 rental bedrooms (as well as my own) have my paintings from that era. I hope to return to canvas painting in the near future.

Your Maine property, aptly named The Bold Colorful Life estate, is believed to have special healing powers. How did you find this out? Tell us about the healing amenities on the site.

More magic. I hosted a retreat in 2013 and afterwards we met monthly. in this healing alliance, for seven years. Along the way, these spiritual, creative souls and I realized that this site is a "mini-vortex," like Sedona, AZ, on a much smaller scale. It has beneficial energies and, for those in need of greater peace and serenity, can be a healing sanctuary.

Out of this realization came my commitment to enhance the energies with outside amenities, the [labyrinth](#) and [the forest bathing sites](#). The labyrinth is a double five-circuit classical path, marked with smooth stones from the U.S. and Canada for foot massage and reflexology, and divided by wildflower channels for sensual enjoyment. It's located in the center of the healing energy forces. Following the labyrinth-a journey of twists and turns leading to the center bench

-allows us to chill and perhaps to discover something about ourselves, about relaxation and about Mother Nature ..



And forest bathing, or "taking in the atmosphere of the forest." is an ancient Japanese healing ritual that has been shown to have calming, rejuvenating and restorative benefits for humans. There are 60 medallions on the 15-acre waterfront property, with numbers that show which forest bathing invitations are suggested at each spot ... to dance with a tree in the wind, to meditate on a lovely cloud, to drift mentally with the sounds of a running brook ..



You also bought acreage across the street. What do you use it for? Does this property have healing powers as well?

The magic continues. When the nine-acre property across the street came up for sale, I went wandering there and felt as though a childhood legend had come to life ... I felt that the wizard Merlin had resided in just such fabulous boulders, rock caves, ledges and trees, so I bought the property and added a Fairy Walk and two enchanted trails, so that the guest children, of all ages, could enjoy building a fairy house or just wandering the woodland trails.

You offer the Farmhouse and Cape house for vacation rentals ... How do you offer visitors the healing experience? You also treat your rental guests to a tour of the property. What special things do you point out?

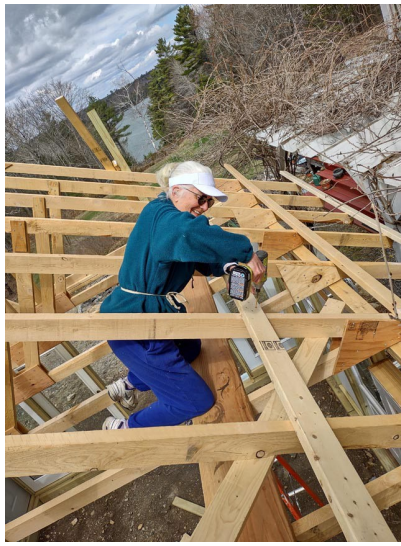
The Farmhouse is one rental unit and the Cape house is the other. Sometimes, before the pandemic, both houses were rented for destination weddings, or for large family reunions. I do hope that those options return as part of the "new normal."

I greet all vacation rental groups when they first arrive and offer them a three-part tour: **1)** of their house and all the components: **2)** of the grounds, including all the healing amenities, as well as the included kayaks and outside games, and an introduction to our local wildlife: and **3)** a map orientation to fun things to do on the site and on the peninsula, according to their interests. There is so much to enjoy onsite and nearby: I don't want my guests to miss a thing¹

The greenhouse is a wonderful place to disappear to. How did it come to be?



For 15 years, the evolution of this place has been about the guests: What would enhance their stay and their lives? And it has been a joy for me because I love the property evolution this has engendered.



This year, I turned 70 and decided it was time to add an amenity just for me. The most engrossing and satisfying project in 2022 has been the long-imagined greenhouse, where I hope to extend the growing season for flowers and vegetables, gather friends (outside in this beautiful space) in comfort in March through November and perhaps begin to paint on canvas again, in wonderful, exhilarating light-being outside is the best inspiration of all.

This greenhouse IS a wonderful place to disappear to. It allows me to be outside, in my private sanctuary, without inhibiting my guests in their enjoyment of the rest of the property.

What a great and creative solution the doors are ...



I had searched and searched online and in the world for a greenhouse that would meet my requirements and finally, about 18 months ago, I saw a pair of adorable cobalt blue exterior doors with interesting windows and realized that exterior doors were the answer—they were what I would use for the walls of my greenhouse! The east and west walls are made of doors with glass on the top half, as they are workspaces. The north and south walls are full glass doors, to let the sun in from the south and to show off the view of the river to the north.

They are far more insulated and sturdy than the single-pane windows I'd seen in other greenhouses. I spent those 18 months gathering good-looking exterior doors from all the Restore/Habitat for Humanity sites in Maine, and 22 of these have been installed in a wooden frame, creating an 18.5-foot by 15.5-foot greenhouse. [The story of the greenhouse, to date, is here.](#) It's also a wild journey and I wouldn't have

missed a moment!

What do you hope a stay-long or short-will give people?

The Bold Colorful Life theme is inspired by love of nature and beauty and art, by love of adventure and exploration; and it's grounded in spiritual awareness and growth. By building this estate, I am following a bold colorful dream. My hope is that my guests will leave their stress and hassle at home and fill themselves with the joy of the natural world, gathering with loved ones and exploring this uncommonly beautiful and enjoyable area of Maine. Then, refreshed and restored, they'll return home to have a more bold and colorful life¹¹

How has what you've created stayed true to the nature of this property and encouraged it to flourish?



Now I'm going to sound "woo-woo." I don't really own this property ... it owns me ... I'm just the caretaker. And I have felt, since the beginning, that it drives me and guides me. So staying true to this property has been the only path forward. The natural layout was so visually stunning that all I've done is add touch points-move an old Cape house into an apple orchard, build a new Farmhouse with endless river views, place a garden here, a labyrinth there, a bridge over the pond, a bench covered with grapevines-to guide my friends and guests to see and experience all the beauty that resides here. When I mentioned that I missed painting on canvas, a dear friend reminded me that the whole property is my art installation and I'm honored to think that's true.

What has living A Bold Colorful Life given you?

I flourish as the property flourishes! And I stay fit as I keep the property fit ... it's a symbiotic relationship. I love the four seasons and relish the stark beauty of the winters here, though my favorites are the bold and colorful seasons-spring and fall. Every day, I get to experience the awesome, changing natural beauty that people journey many miles to enjoy. And the property is a locale where I can be involved in all aspects of creativity, self-expression, autonomy and hospitality. Despite the constant challenges, or perhaps because of them, THIS IS PARADISE.



Your property has been an evolutionary process. What do you see as next?

The vacation rental season is about to be over, so I am looking forward to completing the greenhouse. I've only been able to accomplish quiet projects while the guests are here, as "peace and serenity" are two of the amenities I offer. So raised-bed gardens, pruning the wisteria and repainting the pergola, as well as completing the large stone entries to the greenhouse, are some of the recently completed 'quiet' projects.

I'll add the outside casements to strengthen the door walls, as well as choose the final door colors and paint them, enclose the areas above the doors with polycarbonate and with beveled glass. I can't wait to paint the glass areas and make them look like stained glass! And then I'll design a way to enclose the gable ends, probably with plexiglass, and install the "chicken-house fans" to waft the heat away in summer.

After that, I get to lay out the interior and go mad with whimsy and color ... all in New England style!

Off-season, the site is used as a gathering place for groups that I love-the Boothbay Gourmet Book Club and the local garden club. And it's also the site of charitable events-my friend Diane and I hold a swap meet once or twice a year, where locals clean out their closets and bring all sorts of unused items, (plus a brunch item), and lay them out in the bedrooms, then wander the bedrooms and pick up some cherished goodies (that's the "swap" part) and then gather for the brunch (the "meet" part). Diane and I then gather the unclaimed items and take them to our favorite charities, locally and in Portland.

Beyond specific projects, I hope to offer this property for its "highest and best" use as a perfect site for more retreats in the off season, led by anyone dedicated to helping people make a difference in their lives...for art retreats, personal growth retreats, forest bathing, hiking retreats, couples retreats...the possibilities are endless and truly magical



Diane (left) and Melissa (right)

boldcolorlife.com

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