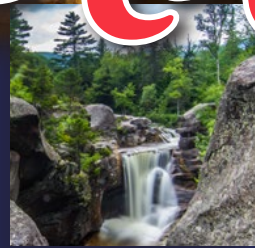
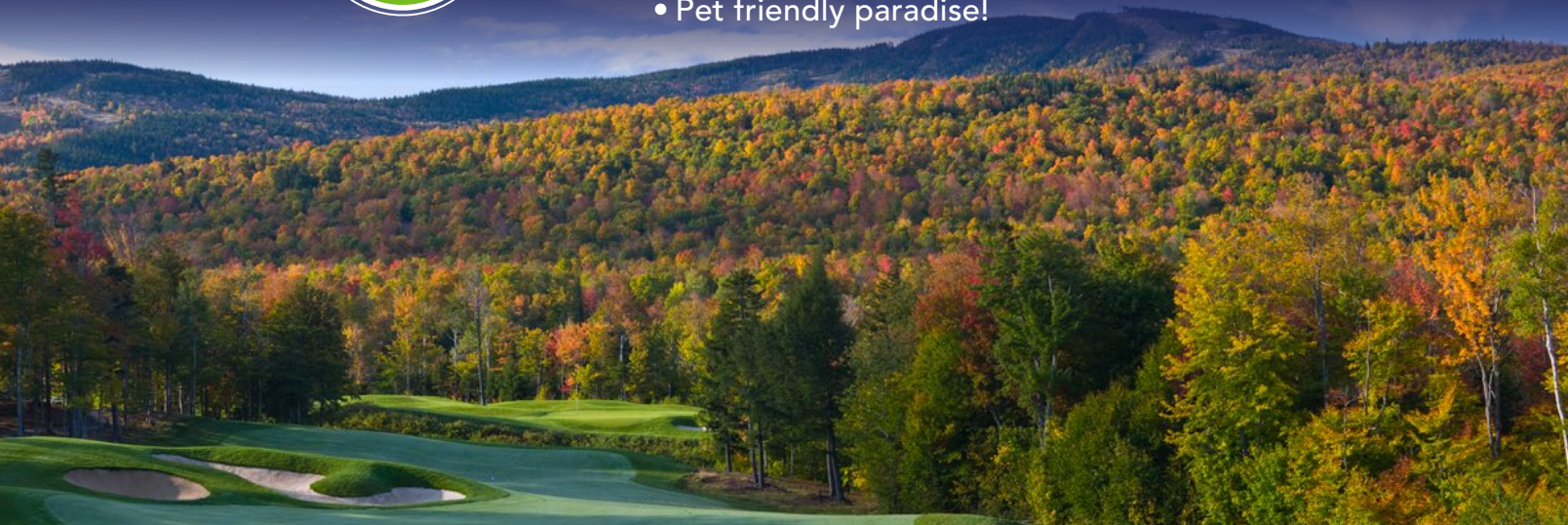


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# Floating A Concept

BY CLAIRE Z. CRAMER

Will this schooner be reborn as a Kennebunk restaurant?  
Dwight Raymond dreams so.

“She’s beautiful,” says owner Dwight Raymond of his 125-foot schooner *Spirit of Massachusetts*. The sleek white yacht is presently sparkling in Kennebunk’s Lower Village, sharing Raymond’s Performance Marine dock with his Pilot House Restaurant and First Chance whale-watching and lobster-touring fleet.

If all goes according to plan, the *Spirit of Massachusetts* will open as a floating restaurant any day now.

“We’ve had to jump through some zoning hoops,” says Raymond. He goes from meeting to meeting with regulatory boards. “It’s driving me *very* nuts. The problem is, it’s not like DiMillo’s. The town doesn’t



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## HUNGRY EYE

know where we fit, if we're under their jurisdiction or the Coast Guard's. Nobody wants to stick their neck out, but they say they'll make it happen. And I know they will."

### LONG VOYAGE TO KENNEBUNK

**T**he transformation from schooner to restaurant has been proceeding meticulously since Raymond acquired her in Portland last year. *Spirit* is a Gloucester fishing schooner replica built at Charlestown Navy Yard in Boston 30+ years ago. She was used as a school ship, along with the schooners *Westward* and *Harvey Gamage*, by the old Ocean Classroom Foundation, then based in Boothbay Harbor, which ceased operations last summer. Ocean Classroom has since been reincarnated under new leadership. Now based in Portland, OC is offering school semesters aboard the brand-new, three-masted tall ship *Oliver Hazard Perry* beginning in 2016. (See "Summer of the Tall Ships," Summerguide 2015 for more on *Oliver Hazard Perry*.)

"I've been looking to do a floating restaurant for 30 years," says Dwight Raymond. "I wanted a schooner. I have old photographs of all the old schooners that used to moor here around the bridge."

Perhaps Raymond worked as a schooner deckhand in his younger days? "You know, I never did," he says. "I'm a boatbuilder."

And as such, he's honored the schooner's original purpose. "We didn't destroy the sailing features—she's fully sailable. The sails are aboard. The idea is if we want to haul her for the winter in Portland or Gloucester, we can sail there."

### BECOMING A RESTAURANT

Ship's carpenter Robin Muir spent the spring fashioning a 60-seat restaurant and bar belowdecks. "Now when you go below you really feel like you're in a restaurant." Muir says he's also built "the bar and tables."

"The work is absolutely beautiful," says Raymond. The tables are made of salvage decking "with black walnut compass roses on each one." On deck, there's also a bar. "We held a cocktail party on deck for 145 in June and it didn't feel crowded. She's a deceptively big boat."

A custom awning with detachable glass panels will protect on-deck patrons from inclement weather. "We plan on staying open into the fall, when the tour buses come. We're building a very long ramp, directly to where



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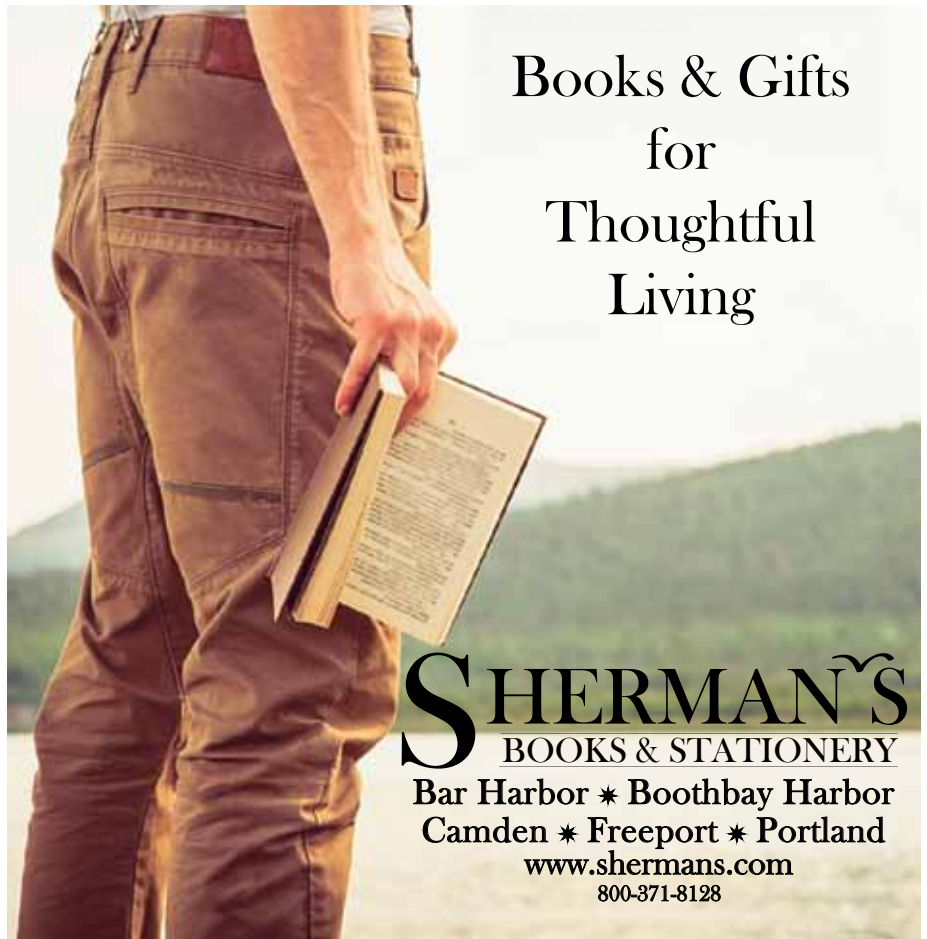
The compromises involved in turning a sailboat into a restaurant have been carefully considered, including the plumbing—the rest rooms are real bathrooms, not marine heads. Raymond says, "There's a 3,000-gallon holding tank. And with the disposable dishware, we'll only be washing pots and pans. The plating is bamboo—biodegradable, very low impact."

#### LET'S EAT

The menu posted on the *Spirit's* website is upscale casual. Starters include a raw bar selection followed by chowder, lobster stew, and classic salads. There are tasty-sounding small plates such as pan-seared scallops and shrimp spring rolls. And the must-haves—shore dinners, lobster rolls, and hamburgers—are there.

"There are a lot of places with the same menu in this town. We will not have fried food," says Raymond.

Despite scheduling delays, he does not seem stressed about getting his floating restaurant open. "Oh, it'll happen," he says. ■



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