

# ROCKLAND REVISTED

## A YEAR-ROUND DESTINATION

BY JEAN KERR

WHEN I FIRST VISITED Rockland, Maine, back in the 1980s, it was a blue-collar kind of place. It was a working, no-nonsense port with one of the larger working harbors on the Maine coast, complete with a fish processing plant that didn't add much to the view. The funny thing is that, nowadays, all of the above is still true. Nearby Camden and Rockport were considered the Midcoast's little jewels, destinations of choice with much quainter waterfronts. They boasted more elevated accommodations and dining than big-shouldered Rockland. That part is definitely no longer true.

The fact that both characteristics now define Rockland is what makes it so dear to my heart.

In the summer of 2006, my husband and I sailed into Rockland Harbor on our old wooden sloop. When we went ashore, we couldn't get over how the town had changed. When we first visited Rockland, the biggest attractions were the marine services available, as well as a bus station and ferry service to the islands of Penobscot Bay. All these conveniences are still there, but so are some of the loveliest inns and nicest restaurants I've visited in some time. And I'm pretty spoiled when it comes to dining out. Wandering around in the evening, we found three restaurants that looked wonderful. Good news for them, bad news for us, there was



The deck at the Captain Lindsey House

PHOTOGRAPHS THIS PAGE AND OPPOSITE PROVIDED BY OF THE HISTORIC INNS OF ROCKLAND

no chance of getting a table at such short notice.

So I was delighted to be invited on a press junket last March for Rockland's Annual Chocolate March. (Oh, the sacrifices I make for this job...) This and other off-season events are sponsored by the Historic Inns of Rockland, a group of three inns; each lovely in its own way, each with its own charm and distinct personality. The owners of each seem to think of themselves almost as curators and preservationists rather than just owners of these buildings. The proprietors all share a love and respect for these wonderful buildings and their history.

We stayed at the Captain Lindsey House, right off the main drag, making it an easy walk to restaurants, shops, and the

Farnsworth Museum, which houses one of the most impressive art collections in New England with works by Gilbert Stuart, Thomas Eakins, and Childe Hassam, among others. The four newest galleries contain contemporary art, and the Wyeth Center is devoted exclusively to the works of the Wyeth family.

The Captain Lindsey House feels to me like some of the English or European boutique hotels that I've been fortunate enough to stay in while traveling abroad. The inn is owned by Ken and Ellen Barnes, former captains of the schooner *Stephen Taber*. They are world-traveled mariners and world-class yarn spinners. The *Taber* is one of the twelve boats that make up the

Maine Windjammer fleet, and is the oldest documented schooner in continuous recorded service. The *Taber* is still in the family, run by the Barneses' son, Captain Noah Barnes and his wife Jane, who offer wine cruises and excellent food aboard. (For more information on these incredible vessels, visit [www.sailmaine.com](http://www.sailmaine.com).)

There are nine elegant and spacious rooms complete with wood paneling, Persian rugs, and an impressive array of antique and custom-made furniture. Our room was spacious, soothing, and beautifully appointed. Wonderful toiletries were provided in the private bath along with plush terrycloth bathrobes. When we first arrived, a fire was lighted in the parlor, which is decorated with the Barneses' collection of antiques from all



over the world. Decanters of port and sherry provided a fireside libation. There is also a library off the parlor, and in the warmer weather, guests can relax with cocktails on the deck or on the brick patio with a walled garden.

The building dates back to 1835 and was erected by Captain George Lindsey, who inherited the land from his father, a veteran of the French and Indian War. In 1837, the house became an inn, complete with a livery stable and popular tavern. The site remained an inn until the local water company bought the building and turned it into the company's headquarters. Ken and Ellen bought the building in 1995 to save it from being torn down, making it one of six historic properties they have renovated. In keeping with the tavern theme, the Barneses also own The Waterworks, a restaurant with a dining room and classic pub, as well as a deck for the summer season, right next door to the inn.

The Captain Lindsey House "continental breakfast" is a far cry from the standard chain-hotel affair. House-made granola, local artisan breads, stewed plums, fruit compotes, pastries, eggs on offer, as well as locally roasted coffee make it worth getting out of the extremely comfy beds. The make-your-own Belgian waffle station comes with whipped cream, fresh fruit, and syrups for topping. The manager of the Captain Lindsey House, Janetta Marino, is a delight as well as an excellent chef. On our last morning after two days of chocolate tasting (feeling like we didn't need to eat for a week), she prepared a perfectly shirred egg, with just a tiny grating of Parmesan on top along with some fresh fruit on the side. Perfect after the richness and abundance of all that chocolate.

The previous day, we had visited the Lime Rock Inn for more Chocoholics Anonymous events. Owners Frank Isganitis and P. J. Walter are wonderful, relaxed hosts and are justifiably proud of the inn's exemplary Queen Anne architecture and the building's place on the National Historic Registry. The Lime Rock Inn was built in 1890 for a U.S. congressman by the name of Littlefield. The mirror in the entrance hallway was a gift to his new bride. The inn became the first of Rockland's Historic District's bed and breakfasts. The building had been primarily a private home since Dr. Owen Lawry bought it in 1949 and practiced medicine out of the house until he retired. Longtime Rockland residents still refer to the building as Dr. Lawry's house.

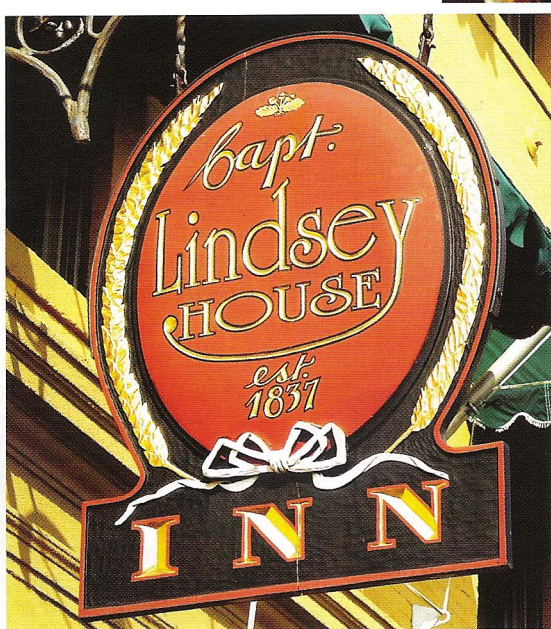
There are two front parlors, a wraparound porch, and an English country garden surrounding a backyard gazebo. There are eight beautifully appointed guest rooms,

decorated with loving attention to period details. Frank and P. J. use only Egyptian cotton linens along with private label soaps, shampoos, and bath beads. Three of the rooms have whirlpool tubs, and one of these has a two-person tub and wood-burning fireplace. A little romance anyone?

The Lime Rock Inn is the very definition of casual, comfortable elegance with indoor common spaces that include parlors on either side of the entrance. In the parlor on the right is a comfortable room for relaxing with a fireplace, library, game table, and sitting area with a TV and DVD player, with light filtering through a period stained-glass window. On the left is a more formal Victorian parlor, perfect for relaxing with a glass of sherry and a good book.

The Lime Rock Inn's chocolate-tasting event featured, among an amazing array of goodies, a lobster and white chocolate risotto. I have to admit it sounded like an unappetizing mélange, but boy, was I wrong. The hint of sweetness only amplified the sweet and slightly briny flavor of the lobster. Chef and caterer Beth Barbour who works with Frank and P. J. in the kitchen, often caters events at the Lime Rock Inn, which is a lovely setting for a wedding or other celebration.

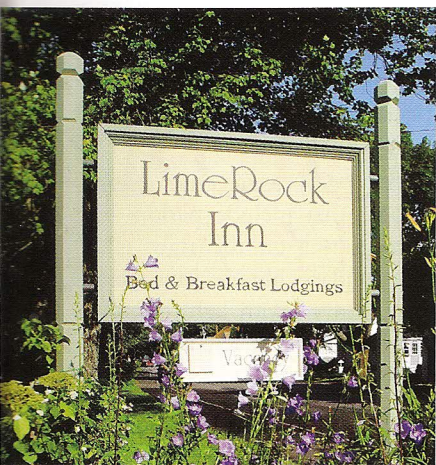
Like the Captain Lindsey House, breakfast is prepared with great care. Frank and P. J. — who consider themselves in the "live to eat" category rather than the "eat to live" group — offer breakfast



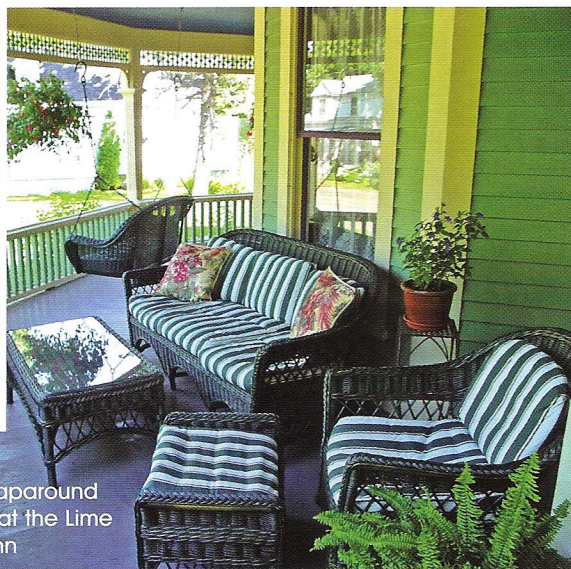
Breakfast at the Captain Lindsey House featuring make-your-own Belgian waffles







The wraparound porch at the Lime Rock Inn



specialties like Crepes Benedict and huge variety of pancakes, frittatas, and breakfast turnovers. Coffee is also locally roasted, and locally made preserves are served with house-made breads.

Last, but by no means least, is the third member of the Historic Inns of Rockland, the Berry Manor Inn. Described by *Down East* magazine as the “Wow House,” the building dates back to 1898 when it was built as a wedding gift for Charles H. Berry’s new bride. It was some gift—no expense was spared and it remained the primary residence of the Berry family for four generations.

By the time current owners Cheryl Michaelsen and her husband Michael LaPosta bought the building one hundred years after it was built, major renovations were necessary, and again, no expense was spared. But in order to conform to the standards imposed on buildings listed on the National Registry of Historic Places, all original architectural features had to be carefully preserved. The result is one of the best examples of Victorian architecture in New England. In a matter of months, Cheryl and Michael had created an elegance and charm that have been delighting guests ever since.

There are twelve beautifully appointed guest rooms; eight in the main building and four in the restored Carriage House. Two of the Carriage House rooms can be converted into a two room/two bath suite. In all the rooms, the décor is lovely, often with custom-made furniture and draperies. In one of the Carriage House rooms, the canopy on a handsome, custom four-poster bed required sixty yards of fabric.

The Berry Manor Inn may be elegant, but it’s anything but stuffy. In fact, just having breakfast with the owners serving is a bit of a floor show. At the multicourse breakfast that we enjoyed, Cheryl and Michael (who, I must add, delivered our breakfast wearing a felt chicken hat) entertained guests with lively banter. On the beautiful period sideboard is their substantial collection of singing, dancing, and talking windup toys. (Included is a singing and dancing plastic roast chicken. I kid you not.)

Breakfast begins with juice, fresh fruit, and then pastries, followed by a main course that may be Banana French Toast, Baked Eggs with Tomato and Basil, and the inn’s famous Lobster Egg

Casserole, served during the world-famous Maine Lobster Festival held each August. For this, the owners don lobster hats. (See page 32 for more info or go to [www.maine lobster festival.com](http://www.maine lobster festival.com).) Cheryl and Michael are also known for their pies, available in the guest pantry, anytime day or night, with or without ice cream.

For all their historic charm, all the inns have amenities for business travelers: high-speed Internet access, available computers, fax machines, and in-room phones. All the hosts are incredibly welcoming and helpful with anything from directions to dinner reservations. There are scheduled events year-round, including Halloween and Groundhog Day. Next up is the Lighthouses, Lobsters and Luxury celebration during the month of June, with a tour of the Maine Lighthouse

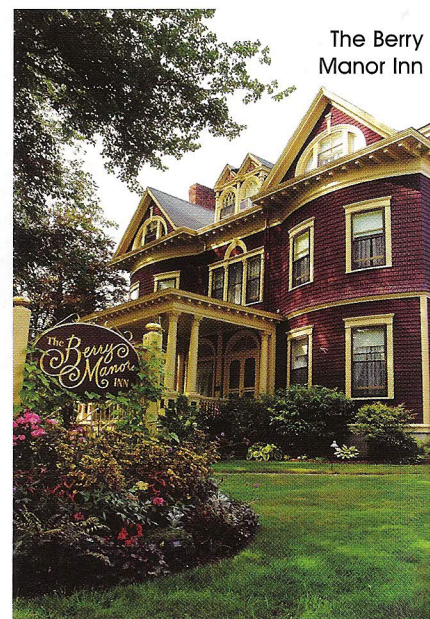
Museum, an eco-tour on a working lobster boat, a \$50 coupon good for a lobster dinner at participating restaurants, and more. In September, with the Seniority Has Its Privileges Package, guests older than age fifty-five are treated to tours, a trip to Vinalhaven, (the largest of the inhabited Penobscot Bay islands) and more, with a 25 percent discount on weekday accommodations. Anytime of year, you’ll find Rockland a great road trip. Check out [www.HistoricInnsOfRockland.com](http://www.HistoricInnsOfRockland.com) for complete information on prices, events, and celebrations.

### Where to Eat

There are plenty of places to eat in Rockland with the usual summer/tourist fare—it’s hard to go wrong at the height of lobster season—but anytime of year, check out these great spots. Reservations strongly recommended year-round.

### In Good Company

Sitting at the bar mashing whole, baked garlic with melted goat cheese onto bread at this winning wine bar just makes you feel hip, which isn’t always easy for those of us of a certain age. But the bar’s motto sums it up: *A tavola non si invecchia mai* (at the table one never grows old). The eclectic décor and casually chic atmosphere are the perfect backdrop for pairing great wines



The Berry Manor Inn