Round Pond Coffee has a devoted following in Coastal Maine. Their Facebook and Yelp pages are overflowing with rave reviews, villagers chat while waiting for a cappuccino (unthinkable in Round Pond less than 5 years ago) and local artists display their work on the walls.

With the store growing more and more each year, the owners were looking to expand their reach and hired me. I built them a website that would bring in more tourists from neighboring hotspots, show off their menu, and increase their visibility online.

My primary concern while building this website was the region’s lack of cell reception. To say that Round Pond has poor digital infrastructure would be an understatement.

In 2014, Maine’s internet speed ranked at 49th in the country. Most of Maine’s counties top download speeds range between 40-60 percent below the national average.

Portland Press Herald <https://www.pressherald.com/2014/01/08/maine_broadband_going_nowhere_fast__service_ranks_49th_out_of_50_states_/)>

This website needed to be fast, lightweight, and most importantly; <strong> fail gracefully</strong>. Complete pages in Maine take minutes to fully load. I designed the site to be functional as soon as possible, even if the page cannot finish loading.

**PROCESS**

**DESIGN**

Mobile-First Approach

Responsive Web Development to stretch designs easily from phones to desktops

Emphasize the appeal of the shop and surrounding area

Pictures of the village and ocean

Social media posts

Show off existing digital presence and give personal touch to the website

Takes advantage of the great reviews on both Facebook and Yelp, while encouraging new visitors to share the store themselves

I recommended that the owners periodically change the featured Instagram posts, that way visitors post their photos and geotag the location in hopes to be on the website

Help users find location

Embedded map to click straight to directions from phones and tablets while traveling

Single page design so users don’t have to try to load multiple pages

Supports goal of better loading

Used Bootstrap and jQuery to make interactive menu with tabs, so users have access to the entire menu without having to open a separate document or webpage. The tabs save valuable screen real estate and minimize unnecessary scrolling

Used smooth scroll effect to improve user experience

Reinforces that the rest of the page is still there on mobile devices and makes the site look more polished

Importance of matching business to website in terms of graphic design

Large part of RPC’s appeal is the local community. Customers choose to support a local business with Maine-made blends of coffee beans because they want an authentic experience.

Needed to balance graphic design to make it modern and easy to use, but not too flashy or trendy because that’s not in line with the company’s brand

Used the company’s established logo, but cleaned it up slightly in Adobe Photoshop and Illustrator to transform it into a SVG

Used solid background with white logo so it is clear even when the background fails to load

**PRIORITIZING SPEED**

Actual code

Trimmed down code and files to keep the website as fast as possible

Bootstrap for development because the built-in styles and scripts make the code less dense

Placed Javascript and jQuery tags at the bottom of the HTML so the structure and appearance of the page are prioritized. Users can still get what they need to find the store, even if the page fails.

I used Google PageSpeed Insights to better understand where the weight of my website was focused. I deleted all landing page redirects, minified the CSS, HTML and Javascript and optimized the images using Adobe Photoshop’s web exporting tools. I prioritized visible content and emphasized legibility to ensure a fast, legible experience for my users.

Images

Used SVG because they retain clarity at any screen size and are easy to modify if the owners choose to change details in the future. SVGs have smaller file sizes and load faster than jpgs and pngs, so they were perfect for this project.

The landing page’s background image proved to be unnecessary weight. I wrote media queries aimed at smaller screens so mobile devices would display a solid background color for faster load and better legibility.

**ROADBLOCKS**

Cross browser testing revealed an issue with embedded Instagram photos

Photos would not display on Safari, (the main browser of the majority of iPhone users) despite the link proving itself to be functioning properly across all other major browsers.

Looked through Stack Overflow and found other developers with the same issue. Through a combination of the advice on the forum and my own digging, I discovered the issue.

The images failed to load because Instagram’s JavaScript tags do not include “http://” in their computer-generated URL. When fixed, images will appear on every browser EXCEPT Safari. Switching to ‘https://’ fixes the issue for all browsers.

**TAKEAWAYS**

**Successful first paid project**

**The owners are very happy with the project. I launched the completed website in early 2018, just in time for the busy summer season.**

**CALL JIM AND SARAH FOR A REVIEW THIS WEEKEND**