

Maine Home

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Timeless Design

The transformation of an
island carriage house

Designing for 4 generations
on Goose Rocks Beach

The winners of the 2012
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Coastal CONTEMPORARY

A MASSACHUSETTS COUPLE TURN TO THEIR ARCHITECT
SON-IN-LAW FOR AN UNEXPECTED BEACH HOUSE





by DEBRA SPARK *Photography* TRENT BELL *Styling* JANICE DUNWOODY



*For almost 25 years,
Wendy and Ed Case had a cottage-style
summer home in Kennebunkport.*

Their place wasn't on the water, but it was close enough. They could walk down the road, cross a street, traverse a right-of-way, and find themselves, within minutes, at Goose Rocks Beach. A lovely arrangement that worked for a quarter of a century and might have worked even longer, if not for a surprise. One day a sign appeared on an undeveloped lot at the west end of Goose Rocks Beach. Wendy had always wanted to live where she could see and hear the water. Both Wendy and Ed had been wondering about a larger summer home now that grandchildren were coming into their lives. Should they buy?

The lot was not without complications. All along Goose Rocks Beach, older shingle-style homes were built right up against the seawall. But regulations didn't allow new homes to be so situated. Most of the available lot was on a frontal dune, so it couldn't be built on. There was a useable portion near the street, but the Federal Emergency Management Agency was revising their floodplain map, and then who knew what would happen? If the restrictions changed, the entire lot might prove unbuildable. And if FEMA was worried about flooding, maybe the Cases should be, too?

The Cases turned to their architect son-in-law, Brett Bentson, for advice. He went to the lot and climbed some trees to see what he could see. If they built, the Cases couldn't hope for the panoramic views that people in older homes had, but, clinging to a pine, Bentson realized that they had the chance for something that would still be quite wonderful: a house that was secluded from the beach and neighbors but that had views of the water. He made sketches of what he thought might be possible. Encouraged, the Cases decided to buy. They asked Bentson to be their architect and then gave him free rein to do as he pleased.

Bentson's minimalist contemporary aesthetic fit with the Cases' desire for something different from their traditional Cape-style home in Massachusetts. "Ed once said he wanted a black box and an ice cube," Bentson recalls. "I interpreted that to mean that he wanted some closed space and some glassy

space, so he could enjoy the views of the beach and smell of the water but still be protected."

In a sense, the house Bentson designed is the "box" Case asked for. It is a long rectangle with glass predominating on the beach side and wood on the street side. The house sits on concrete piers, creating what builder Shawn Douston of Douston Construction in Arundel calls a "flow through" foundation. Sand from the frontal dune blows back and forth under the house throughout the day. Should there be a significant flood, the house would be protected. And, perhaps nicest for neighbors, there's still a view across the lot to the water.

Of the basic structure Bentson says, "Within the box, I wanted to pull some things out." On the beach-facing side, a glass sunroom forms a square bay with a master-bedroom balcony above. Next to the bay, a deck with cable rails and a mahogany staircase leads to a sand dune. Two fireplaces offer another way, Bentson says, "to have something sit outside the simple box." A stainless-steel-wrapped chimney runs up the exterior wall, and a black chimney rises from the roof.

Although the external forms are simple, the house reads as anything but, in part for its use of materials. The exterior is paneled with live-edge white-pine siding, which has been stained gray with red accents on the street side and red with gray accents on the beach side. The gable ends of the home and the garage are clad with translucent polycarbonate panels. At night, when the lights are on, the garage gives off a subtle glow. Anodized-aluminum trim frames the entire house. Indoors, the kitchen island, top-floor ceiling, and several walls are made of furniture-grade white-oak plywood.

From the outside, the house looks like it has three floors. The garage and breezeway are on the entry level, as are a closet and small entry hall. The ceiling here is low and the space somewhat tight. This was intended, Bentson says, to help people transition from where they have been to where they are about to go. "It's to change the mindset and offer a totally different experience," he explains. Mahogany

Concrete stilts allow this contemporary home (opening spread) to float above a garage made of translucent polycarbonate panels. The live-edge wood siding is gray with red accents on the street side of the house. On the beach side, the architect felt a bolder statement could be chanced. Here, the wood is red with gray accents, an homage to the red house the homeowners raised their children in.

A mahogany staircase (opposite) leads to the home's central living space. The ceiling and right-hand wall are made of furniture-grade white-oak plywood.



The homeowners wanted a floor plan that would allow all four generations of their family to be together in one place, with pockets for retreating. The open-concept living, dining, and kitchen area is brightened with nasturtium-colored cabinetry made by Sylco Cabinetry in East Waterboro.

"Even from the outside, you get that the bright yellow element is the glowing heart of the house."





The master bathroom (left, top) features a glass shower, a floor tiled with river stone, and a vanity made by Sylco Cabinetry.

A “coat cubbie” in the front entryway (left, bottom) doubles as a bench to take off shoes.

The kitchen island (opposite) is set on legs and designed to look more like a piece of furniture than a traditional kitchen island. It is made of the same furniture-grade white-oak plywood that is used on the walls and ceilings throughout the house. A sunroom is off to the right. Outside, architect Brett Bentson enjoys the view with the family dog.



steps lead up from the entryway to the first floor, where the space opens up into a bright living room, kitchen, and dining room that offer views across the sand dune to the beach. The nasturtium color of the custom kitchen cabinetry and living room bookshelves is cheerful and unexpected, making the space feel warm even in winter. “Even from the outside, you get that the bright yellow element is the glowing heart of the house,” Bentson says.

In some ways, what you can’t see in the Case house is as interesting as what you can see. Like art. Bentson didn’t want any art on the first floor. His sense, says Wendy, “is that the outdoors, the scenery, is what you should be looking at.” Also lamps. Bentson doesn’t like them, so they’re kept to a minimum. As for window and door casings, there aren’t any. The idea was to make things as clean as possible.

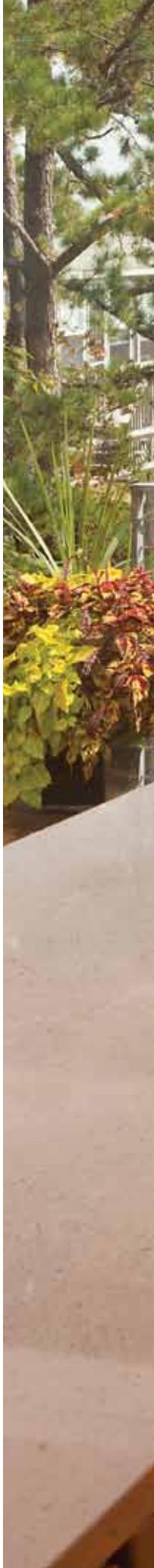
Wendy describes the top floor as “less minimalist and more cozy” than the main level. The walls have art. The beds have quilts. There are textures that might not seem at home downstairs, such as the river stones on the master-bathroom floor. It’s Wendy’s taste that drives the “homier” aspects of the design, but she emphasizes that the home reflects “all of us.”

“It was a real act of love on Brett’s part. Ironically, our daughter got pregnant with Jonah in the midst of all of this. So there was a lot of creating going on throughout the whole process,” she adds.

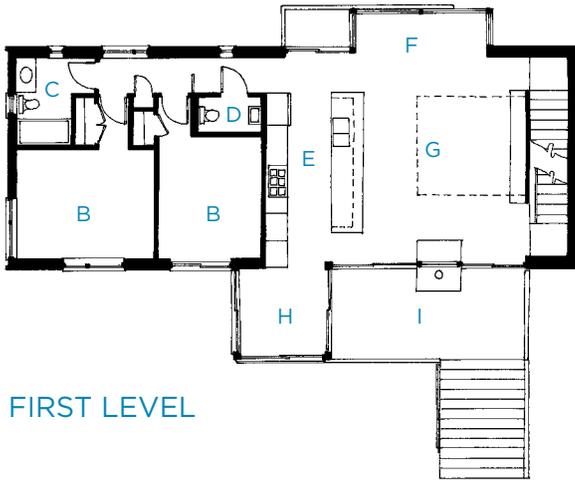
On a recent day, Ed and Bentson are taking turns holding Jonah and talking about the house. “All of us are really happy with the final product,” Bentson says, meaning the house, though his doting dad behavior makes it clear he could just as easily be talking about the baby. As he is turning his son in the air and flying him down to have a look at a Dahlov Ipcar book, his wife’s aunt is talking in the kitchen with his mother-in-law. His wife extends her arms, offering to take Jonah. One of the Cases’ reasons for building a new home was to lure everyone back to Kennebunkport, to provide a comfortable place for the scattered generations of the family to gather. So mission accomplished. Both new creations seem part of the draw.

MH+D

For more information, see Resources on page 117.

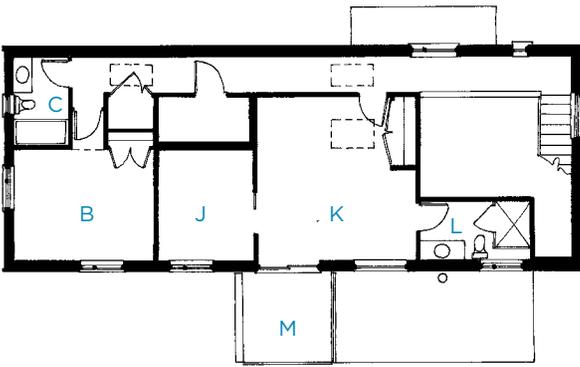




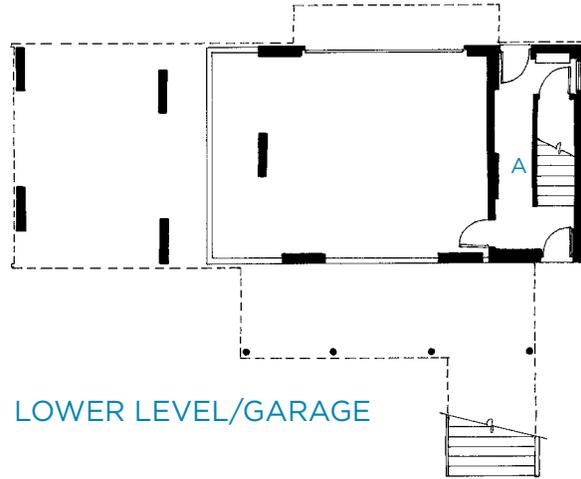


FIRST LEVEL

- A Entry/ Mudroom
- B Bedrooms
- C Bathrooms
- D Powder Room
- E Kitchen
- F Dining Area
- G Living Area
- H Sunroom
- I Deck
- J Office
- K Master Bedroom
- L Master Bathroom
- M Balcony



SECOND LEVEL



LOWER LEVEL/GARAGE

Glass predominates on the beach-facing side of the house (below), which features a sunroom, porch, and master-bedroom balcony. The silver pipe is a chimney for the living room fireplace.



BRIGHT IDEAS 

- Exterior walls and roof structure are high R-value structural insulated panels (SIPs). The panels are prefabricated (including window openings) and erected on-site with a crane.
- Sliding glass doors used in place of punched windows to maximize passive solar heating and natural light through the long winter. The sliders work in tandem with venting skylights to allow cooling sea breezes to filter through the house in summer.
- The exterior white pine siding is harvested and milled in Maine.
- The exterior wood decking is Forestry Stewardship Council (FSC) certified.