

Arched toward the view. A curved window wall, lean-to roof, and exposed rafter tails define the living area, diminish the height of the two-story bunkhouse, and add charm to a small guest house packed with bedrooms. Photo taken at A on floor plan. Photo facing page taken at B on floor plan.

A photograph of a two-story guest house with a curved window wall and a lean-to roof. The house features a mix of wood siding and white trim. The curved window wall on the ground floor is composed of several large, multi-paned windows. The upper story has a gabled roof with exposed rafter tails and two smaller windows. The house is surrounded by lush greenery, including a large bush with pink flowers in the foreground and a stone wall. The sky is clear and blue.

Sweeping Curves and Simple



BY GALE GOFF

In many ways, designing a guest house is the same process as designing a permanent residence, but there are also some distinct differences.

Elaborate kitchens and extensive storage are not essential to a guest house. Instead, more of the house is devoted to private spaces such as bedrooms and bathrooms. However, just like any other house, a guest house requires careful planning, siting, materials choices, and craftsmanship. In fact, these features become even more valuable in the small confines of a guest house, as do the outdoor spaces next to it.

Here, I sited the house to take advantage of views of a river and to create a shady terrace to be shared with the main house. Inside, I met the owners' needs by squeezing a light-filled family room, four bedrooms, a nursery, and two and a half bathrooms into only 1300 sq. ft. Simple details and materials made it affordable. Meticulous craftsmanship makes it beautiful.

Two different shapes for two different functions

The house is laid out in two portions. The larger portion is a rectangular, two-story bunkhouse with two bedrooms flanking a center bath on each floor (floor plans, p. 61). This plan eliminates hallways, making the rooms more spacious than you might expect in a small guest



A small guest house proves that you can make elegant spaces with stock materials

Details

Bottom photo: Warren Jagger

Inspired by the view. Through the large bank of windows is a long view down to the Westport River. The curved wall was inspired by a crescent in the shoreline. Photo taken at C on floor plan.



house and leaving enough space for closets in the bedrooms and a tub in the baths.

The other portion of the guest house is a curved single-story great room that wraps around the bunkhouse, embracing its northeast corner. Through an expanse of seven windows, sunlight illuminates the exposed framing and built-in cabinetry in the great room. A kitchenette offers guests a place to keep snacks and to prepare light meals. Narrow windows and fanned rafters articulate the curved wall. Although the room is only 12 ft. wide, the upward movement suggested by the vertical-grain fir rafters and the expanse of windows make this space feel much larger.

The curved-wall windows capture eastward views of the patio and a river that borders the property. At the western end of the great room, a transom above the main entry and two windows in the corner let the last light of the day into the room.

Uncommon ceilings from common materials

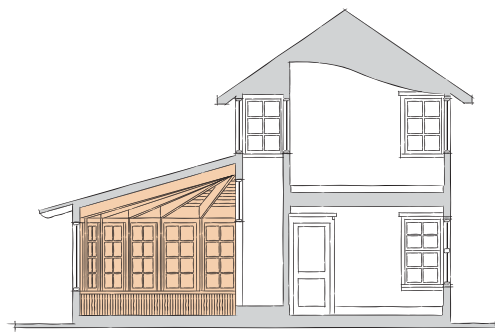
In the bunkhouse, the materials used were modest, and the dimensions were planned to take advantage of stock materials. The walls are



Just enough kitchen. Although a full kitchen is unnecessary in a guest house, the only thing missing from this kitchenette is a stove. A small refrigerator and a dishwasher fit under the slate countertop. Photo taken at D on floor plan.

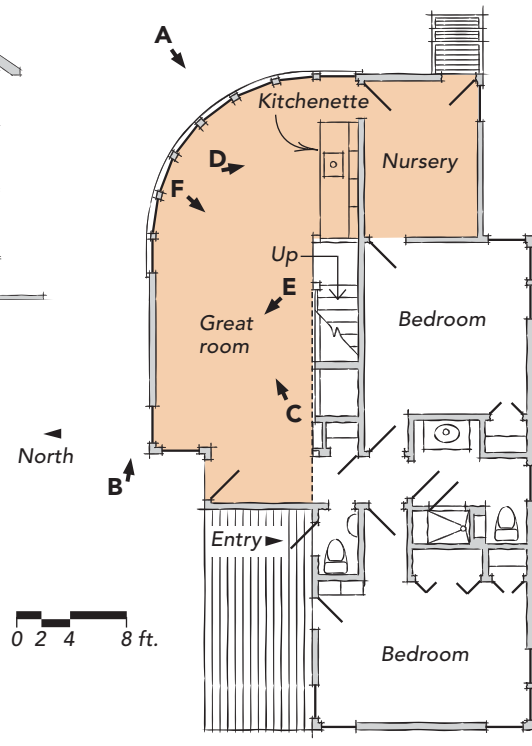
ONE PART BUNKHOUSE AND ONE PART GREAT ROOM

The guest house was constructed to be functional and fun. The two-story rectangular portion was designed as a bunkhouse with a bunch of bedrooms and bathrooms where guests can have some privacy. The great room is just the opposite. With a curved wall, built-in entertainment center, and kitchenette, the great room was designed to be a place for family and friends to come together.

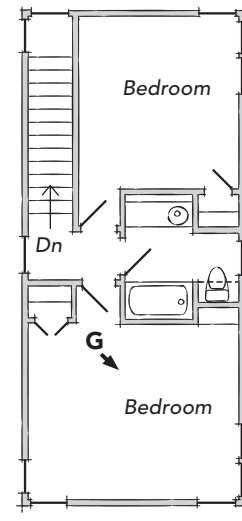


SPECS:

Bedrooms: 4, plus a nursery
Baths: 2½
Size: 1300 sq. ft.
Cost: \$227 per sq. ft.
Location: Westport, Mass.
Architect: Gale Goff
Builder: Highland Builders



First floor



Second floor

Photos taken at lettered positions.

skim-coat plaster on blue board, the floors are birch, the bathroom counters are plastic laminate, and the floor tiles are porcelain. The shape and dimensions of the bunkhouse allowed the use of 8-ft. studs and full sheets of plywood with little waste. However, in the upstairs bedrooms and bathroom, the owners and I chose natural wood to jazz up the ceilings.

In the bedrooms, waves of beadboard sweep over the room (photo p. 63). Although the ceilings look complicated, they actually are straightforward in their construction (drawing p. 63).

Saving money in the bunkhouse allowed us to have some fun with the detailing in other areas. In the kitchen, we used ¾-in. Vermont slate for the countertop. The fir ceilings, mahogany doors, and exposed beams in the great room create the rich details that give the guest house its character. The birch floors and stair treads are priced competitively, and are an unusual complement to the deeper-colored fir ceilings.

Simple details bring the staircase to life

In contrast to the elaborate curved wall in the great room and the curved ceilings in the upstairs bedrooms, we kept the other interior details simple. The trim is all made of flat poplar stock with a square profile. Along the ceilings, where we might have used crown molding, we either eliminated the trim altogether or again used the flat

A great place to gather. Unlike the bunkhouse, which is designed with function in mind, the great room is full of sunlight and rich details. The tongue-and-groove fir ceiling and exposed framing make the living area a cozy place for guests. Photo taken at E on floor plan.



Beadboard makes the staircase sing. To keep the staircase simple, the treads and risers are rabbeted to fit over the beadboard-wall finish. This detailing may appear less complex than many staircases, but because there are no moldings to cover the joints, it requires more precise carpentry. Photo taken at F on floor plan.





Flat ceilings are boring. A gentle S-curve ceiling floats like a sea breeze over each of the upstairs bedrooms. Putting the windows in the corner captures views of the nearby river and leaves wall space open for beds. Photo taken at G on floor plan.

poplar for a simple cornice board. But nowhere in the house do simple details come together better than at the staircase.

The birch stair treads extend beyond the risers and beadboard, capping the stair wall below. Instead of meeting at a piece of trim, the wall and risers are mortised into the bottom of the treads. On the two-story wall, the stair stringer is a narrow band of trim that shadows the risers and treads, and the newel and balusters are shaped with a slight taper. The space under the stairs is used for built-in cabinetry and an entertainment center.

Exterior details highlight the different shapes

We treated the exterior the same way we treated the interior, balancing details between the tall rectangular bunkhouse and the curved great room. The exterior of the bunkhouse is finished with an asphalt-shingle roof and cedar-shingle siding. Although the details on this part of the house intentionally were kept minimal, dormers add interest and bring light to the center of the second story. Pushing the windows to the corners of the house made wall space for beds.

On the single-story portion of the house, we used details to highlight the curved shape. Cedar shingles, wide overhanging eaves, exposed roof sheathing, and scalloped rafter tails draw attention to the roof. Decorative brackets that support the rafter tails and three bands of horizontal trim that mimic the windowsill accentuate the curve as it bends around the corner. □

BEHIND THE WAVY CEILING

Curvy plywood brackets nailed to both sides of the collar ties capture 2x blocking, which serves as a nail base for the beaded ceiling boards.

