



Now that's custom. Like a swell gliding by on an otherwise calm sea, the eyebrow over the front door is a timeless and irresistible shape for a waterfront house. Finished with spar varnish, the Spanish-cedar doors and windows glow against the deep-green trellises. Photo taken at A on floor plan.

Built to Blend In

Overlooking Maine's rocky coastline, this summer getaway follows the site's contours and takes on the color of the forest

BY ROC CAIVANO

For most of the year, Hot Springs, Ark., is a delightful place to live. But in the cruel heart of summer, when the hot, humid hammer comes down, it can be unbearable. That's when Hot Springs natives Isabel and John Ed Anthony head for Mount Desert Island on the naturally air-conditioned coast of Maine.

They began this tradition years ago and eventually bought an old summer "camp." This run-down little house clung to the side of a steep, wooded cliff, overlooking one of the most beautiful harbors on the Atlantic coast. But as John Ed recalls, "The carpenter ants were defeating our attempts to save it." The Anthonys eventually decided to tear down what was left of the old camp, and they hired me to design a new home to take its place. Their top priority was to preserve as much of the existing landscape as possible. This was no mean feat. The site is very steep, mostly granite with shallow-rooted spruce trees growing out of the crevices, and



Unexpected, and better for it. On the south side of the house, the site-imposed change in roof direction becomes the brim of a deep soffit that shelters the bay-view dining area. Photo taken at B on floor plan.

hard against a road on its uphill side. Not surprisingly, the property is governed by a rigorous list of state and local ordinances that limit the footprint and volume of any new construction.

The Anthonys asked for a garage, a workspace, and a guest apartment in the design. We talked, walked the land, and sketched, and eventually, we decided to put them in a separate building, a bit uphill and to the east of the main house. As a result, the garage is easy to reach from the road and provides some privacy from the neighbors.

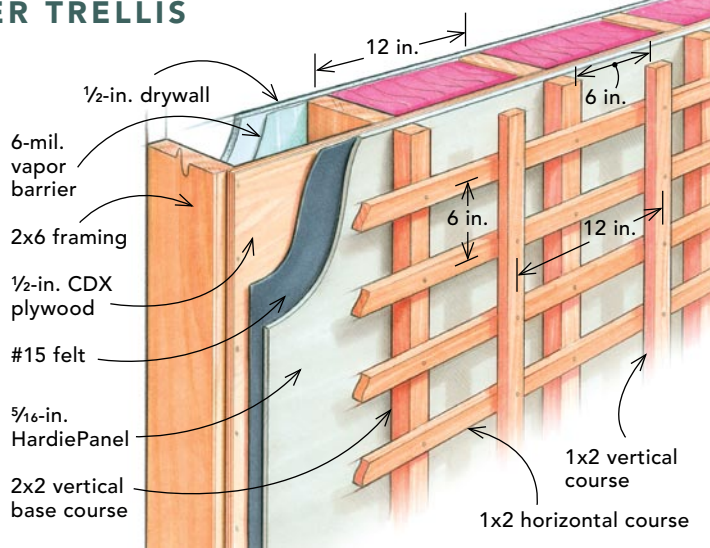
Take advantage of the kinks

Unlike in life, a kink can be a good thing in a well-designed home. The kink in the plan of the Anthony



A THREE-LAYER TRELLIS

The assembly begins with primed and painted HardiePanel affixed to 2x6 studs on 12-in. centers. Vertical seams are caulked and land on studs. Horizontal seams meet at Z-flashed intersections. Vertical 2x2 battens are screwed to each stud, followed by a layer of horizontal 1x2s and a course of vertical 1x2s.

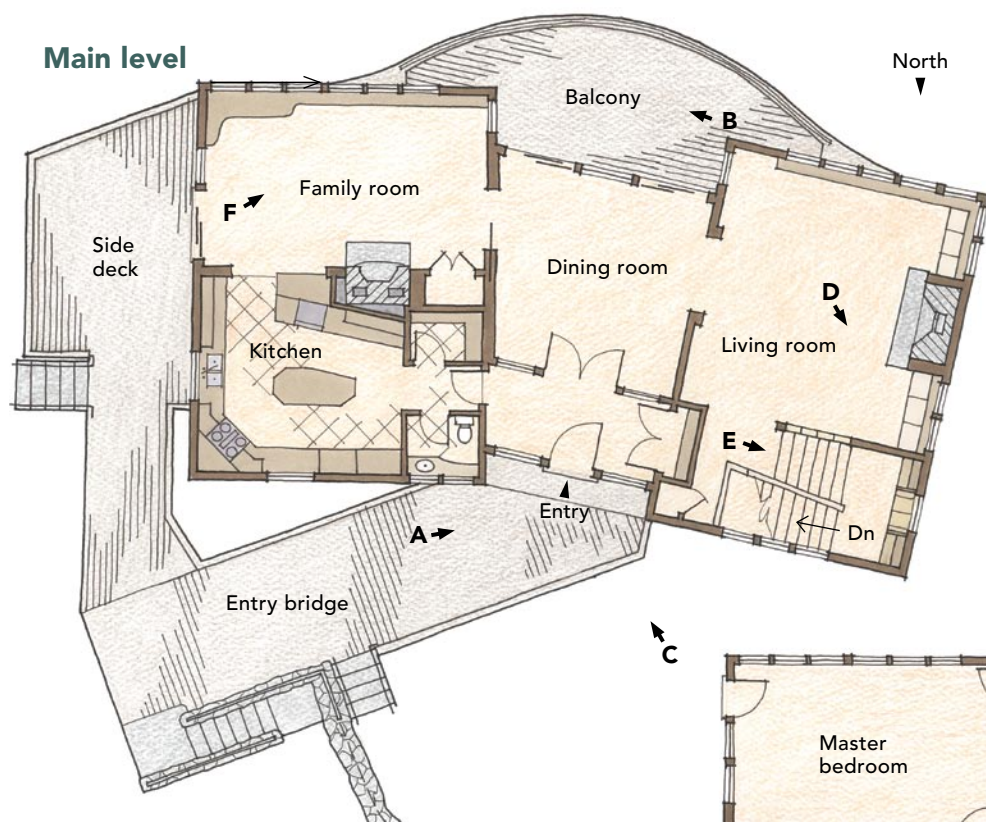


Come in, look out. On this steep waterfront site, the entry bridge leads to the main level of the house, where the view can be appreciated from all the public spaces. On the gable ends, the walls flare outward over the doors and operable windows to provide another layer of protection against fierce seaside storms. Photo taken at C on floor plan.



KINK IN THE PLAN? NO PROBLEM.

The site contours and setbacks required that the plan of the house bend a bit in the middle. Placing the entry at this intersection created a funnel-shaped space that opens toward the view, making it all the more dramatic.

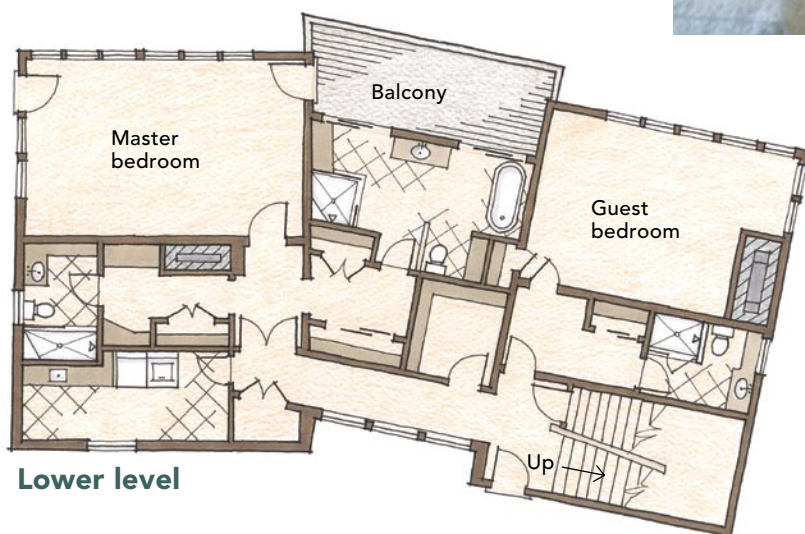


SPECS

Bedrooms: 2
Bathrooms: 3½
Size: 3700 sq. ft.
Cost: \$280 per sq. ft.
Completed: 2004
Location: Northeast Harbor, Maine
Architect: Roc Caivano
Builder: E.L. Shea

0 4 8 16 ft.

Photos taken at lettered positions.



house is the 11° bend between the dining room and the family room (see floor plans). This bend was a direct response to the shape of the site and its contours, the views, and the coastal-zone setback restrictions.

In this case, the bend presented a couple of opportunities to add some zest to our simple plan. For one, the bend made it visually logical to fold an eyebrow into the roof at the entrance, where the two roof planes intersect (photo p. 79). Also, the bend added a funnel-shaped flare to the entry-room walls to better capture its stunning view of the ocean.

The layout of the house balances two elemental facts. First, this is a downslope lot with magnificent views to the south. That influenced my decision to flip the traditional plan of downstairs living spaces and upstairs bedrooms. The entry is on the upper floor, where all the primary spaces—living room, dining room, family room, kitchen, and decks—have as much exposure to the view as possible. And second, the support spaces—hallways, bathrooms, closets, and laundry—line the north side of the building to create a sound buffer from the road.

Here on the coast, the light that bounces off the water has a particularly attractive glow as it washes over ceilings and walls. To take advantage of this light, the

interior surfaces are finished with traditional wainscot board-and-batten paneling with chair and plate rails painted a butter-cream color. Builder Steve Shea and his crew created masterful interiors with subtle relationships between window patterns, display shelves, partitions, and paneling (photos facing page).

Sometimes the light off the water can be too intense. That's when the Anthonys soften it with curtains that hang from hospital-style curtain tracks recessed into the ceiling (www.silentgliss-usa.com; model No. 6350).

Trellis walls tie the house to its site

We wanted the house to blend in with its site, and the trellises that cover much of the exterior walls are part of the strategy to make that happen. They break up the





A trim tutorial. Carefully composed details abound in this house. Note how the muntin patterns of the stairwell windows are repeated in the display shelves. The top shelf, in turn, defines the horizontal border atop the wainscot paneling and the window. In the stairwell, an angled handrail wall (see plan) allows a full view of the window seat. The pattern of the wainscoting is repeated in the handrail wall, but with boards in the same plane. Photos taken at D and E on floor plan.



Flush-mounted glare control. If the light off the water becomes too intense, the homeowners can draw the curtains. They hang from hospital-style curtain tracks mounted flush in the ceiling. Photo taken at F on floor plan.



larger planes of the building and soften its appearance. Once the climbing vines mature, the house will look like it has been here forever.

The trellises are made of clear cedar, primed and painted before installation. As shown in the drawing (p. 80), they're installed over painted fiber-cement HardiePanel (www.jameshardie.com).

We considered several kinds of vines, and along the way rejected wisteria and honeysuckle as too vigorous. They would cause maintenance problems down the road. Instead, we chose autumn clematis and climbing hydrangeas, which are both deciduous. They're also local favorites that bloom in August and can weather winter storms.

Storm-tested details

The northern New England coast has a long-standing wood-building tradition. It is based on carpentry details refined over generations to keep out wind-driven coastal storms and to resist the relentless freeze/thaw cycle that quarries exterior surfaces. The same Mother Nature that etched away the beauti-

ful cliffs surrounding this house has to be held at bay as much as possible.

On this island, one of the cradles of American shingle-style architecture, shingles are the gold standard for exterior finish. The Anthony house's walls are finished with northern white-cedar shingles, fastened with stainless-steel nails. When a house is inland, 5 in. of each shingle is exposed to the weather. On the coast, where the rain comes at the house sideways, shingle exposure is limited to 3 in. to 4 in. By the way, when salt water washing over acidic cedar shingles meets copper flashings, it erodes the copper. That's why we use lead-coated copper to flash coastal houses.

The flared drip caps over windows and doors on the gable ends are a traditional detail designed to impart an extra measure of defense against wind-driven rain. The sawtooth pattern along the bottom course of flared caps is called *pinking*, after the pattern made in cloth by pink-ing shears (inset photo, p. 81). This sawtooth geometry is said to lessen the erosive action of water as it flows off the shingles. Whether it does or not, it's a great-looking detail that helps to tie the house to a longtime tradition. □

Roc Caivano is an architect in Bar Harbor, Maine. Special thanks to Todd Hardy and Jeff Wright. Photos by Randy O'Rourke, except where noted.