

COASTAL LIVING

15th
ANNIVERSARY
ISSUE

HAPPIEST SEASIDE TOWNS!

15 Top Places to Live
on the Coast

50
BEST
SEAFOOD
DIVES

The most
romantic
cottage
ever! p. 70

The ultimate
ice-cream
sandwich!

JACK JOHNSON'S
ISLAND OASIS

JUNE 2012

ROMANCING *the* STONE

On a tiny island off
the coast of Maine,
a cozy stone cottage
stands the test of time

By Susan Stiles Dowell Photographs by William Abranowicz

The paintings flanking the window are by Tom Glover (on the left side) and Andrea Peters (on the right). The stenciled floor pattern is by Valliere Design Studio. Opposite: The table and windows are painted Soft Jazz by Benjamin Moore.





Some coastal places are so magical you never forget them. And if you're lucky enough to go back, you will feel the wonder all over again. This solitary stone cottage—built right at the edge of the ocean atop a one-acre island near Boothbay Harbor, Maine—has been in our magazine before. In fact, it was the cover story for the May-June 1998 issue of *Coastal Living* (pictured at right), and was photographed during our inaugural year. Back then, the house lacked modern amenities, but its rustic character and alluring simplicity made a lasting impression on us. And so this year, in honor of our anniversary, we went back. Now the home is in new hands, and the owners tackled an extensive renovation to add extra room for their family. They were careful to preserve the original charm, however, and we're happy to report the place has lost none of the romance that captivated us 15 years ago.

Built with the beach stone that it sits on, the cottage served as a hunting lodge during the early 20th century. The previous owners lived there for 30 years with rudimentary plumbing and no electricity. They had a small skiff to bring potable water and propane for cooking and lighting out from the mainland. Besotted by the serenity of the place's isolation, new owners Kate and Bob Horgan promised themselves they'd maintain its primitive beauty despite their need to enlarge and upgrade the cottage. "The feeling inside the thick walls was incredible," says Kate. "It was like being in a cocoon with water on all sides and nothing else but the sound of the sea."

The Horgans replaced everything but the original stone walls in the living room (above). The doors and windows are mahogany; the floors are concrete and water-resistant, a necessity in a house prone to flooding. The pillow and sofa fabric is from On Board Fabrics. The art above the sofa is by Kim Villard. Inset: The home's 1998 debut



In the kitchen, the pendant lights are from Rejuvenation. The custom cabinetry was designed by the Knickerbocker Group.

While Kate and Bob are grateful for the hard-won modern comforts they introduced, they treasure the house's romantic, rustic character



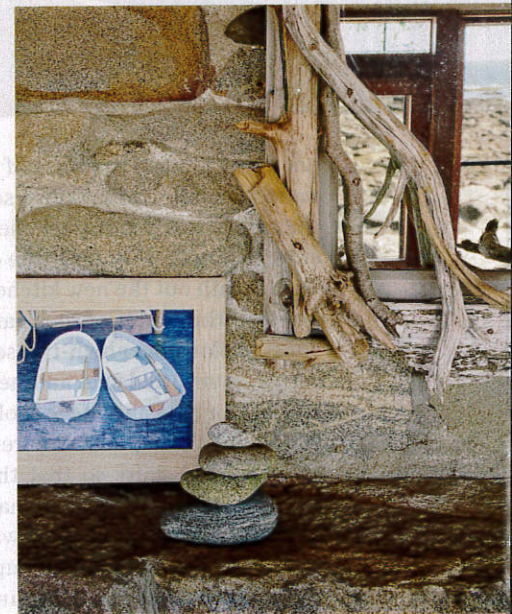
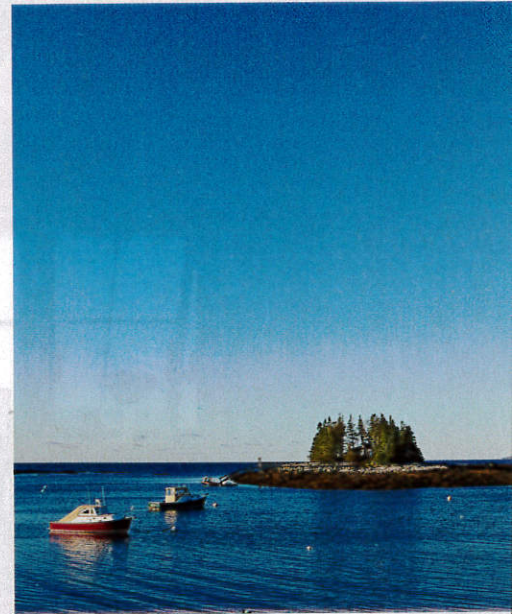
The Horgans' cat, Marly, suns herself in the frame of one of the new awning-style windows.



Kate and Bob enlisted Steve Malcom, of Boothbay Harbor-based Knickerbocker Group, to fortify the house and build a small addition in the spirit of the original building. Storms had lifted the roof eaves and sent so much seawater through the house that the concrete floor had cracked. The solution was to install rough-sawn hemlock beams in place of the rotten rafters, pin a metal roof to the old stone walls, and pour a new concrete floor over the original one. The new floor features scuppers to drain storm water that forces its way inside the house during tidal surges. The Horgans replaced all the doors and windows with weather-resistant mahogany left natural on the inside but painted Kate's favorite blue (Benjamin Moore's Soft Jazz) on the outside. The new awning windows pivot open from the top and are less likely to be ripped off the house in high winds than the original casement versions.

To bring the house into the 21st century, Steve added electricity and retrofitted the existing plumbing with state-of-the-art fixtures. Powering the house was no simple feat. The builders had to run submarine cables at the bottom of the 600-foot channel that separates the mainland from Hunting Island. The cables are held down with concrete weights and were installed by divers.

Adding space for their seven grown children, who visit often, was the Horgans' other objective. "The original house had one bedroom for guests and one bath with a basic shower and toilet for everyone," says Kate. Steve built a 385-square-foot, two-story clapboard addition in the footprint of a pre-existing stone shed attached to the back of the cottage. The top level houses a new master bath, complete with modern plumbing. Downstairs, the addition expanded the



Clockwise from top, left: The oyster shell-shaped fruit bowl in the kitchen is by Alison Evans Ceramics; the family ferries to and from the mainland in their boat, *l'Escargot*; the Horgans collect beach stones, driftwood, and seascape paintings.




once-tiny kitchen. Because of its placement, the kitchen is the room most vulnerable to flooding, so Steve outfitted it with lower cabinets that are actually furniture pieces on casters that can be moved into storage if necessary. Only the countertops and sink are affixed to the wall. A path out the new kitchen door leads to a recently added bunkhouse at the center of the island—the only ground approved for new construction under high-tide setback regulations. The 270-square-foot retreat is outfitted with another guest room, a bath, and storage space.

The Horgans and Steve took pains to preserve the cottage's rustic character throughout the renovation. They rebuilt and partially enclosed the stairs so that they would meet code regulations, but kept the original driftwood handrail. Stones from the attached shed that was torn down to make way for the expanded kitchen were used as columns to support the upstairs addition. The kitchen's whitewashed cedar walls and ceiling and the living room's whitewashed exposed rafters are nods to the original cottage's wood detailing, which had bleached after years of exposure to saltwater mist. Even the furnishings—unembellished wooden benches and tables and a few upholstered chairs—underscore the Horgans' simple lifestyle.

While Kate and Bob are grateful for the hard-won modern comforts that they introduced, such as classical music piped through the sound system and high-tech lighting for their collection of Maine land- and seascape paintings, they treasure the house's romantic, rustic character. The mainland isn't far from their dock, but for this couple, it might as well be a world away. They're enveloped by the ancient walls and refreshed by their isolation. "We value the quiet alone time," says Kate. "This house is like nothing else on Earth." 🌿 For more information, see Sources, page 120.



In the master bedroom (top), the antique French mirror, bergère, lamp, and bed are from Aidan Gray. Above: The bath fixtures are from Rohl.

A black and white photograph of a rustic interior. In the foreground, a staircase with light-colored wooden steps leads upwards. A black and white cat is perched on one of the steps, looking down. The staircase is bordered by a handrail made of a single, thick, weathered piece of driftwood. The wall to the left of the stairs is made of rough, textured stone or plaster. To the right, a doorway opens into another room, showing a glimpse of a living area with a sofa and a painting on the wall. A white wooden chair is partially visible on the right side of the frame. The ceiling is made of dark wooden beams.

To preserve the house's rustic character, the Horgans rebuilt the staircase with its original driftwood handrail.

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