

Maine Hunting Lodge

Hunting Island, Maine

OWNERS: Katherine and Robert Horgan

ARCHITECT: Rick Nelson, AIA, Knickerbocker Group

PHOTOGRAPHER: Darren Setlow

One Maine Sunday afternoon, Katherine and Robert Horgan were enjoying a boat ride down the Sheepscot River to the tip of Southport Island when they came upon an old stone house on a small island. Intrigued by its solitary beauty, they went ashore and discovered that it was for sale. They made a call to the real estate agent and let themselves in with a hidden key. Katherine wrote, “We went in and sat in silence in the living room. It was like being in France. It was like being in church. It was like being on a boat at sea.” This stone house on a one-acre island in Maine captured their hearts and their imaginations. They were the new owners by ten o’clock that night.

This stone cottage rises right up from the rocks that it is built upon. Perched and anchored near the shoreline, it is a fearless brace against ocean swells and high winds. Originally, the cottage was built to house men who came to the island for duck hunting weekends. The new owners envisioned a renovation and restoration that would update and illuminate the primitive aspects of living focused on one word: simplify. Kate and Robert were not shy about island living. They had

The stone cottage is as sturdy as the rocks that form it, surround it, and protect it during memorable summers and treacherous Atlantic winters.





OPPOSITE: The path to the new bunkhouse showing the natural palette and sky-blue exterior trim fitted onto the one-acre island, built under land-use regulations determined by the only available area allowed by shoreland zoning.

RIGHT: Objects washed ashore are gathered—stones, shells, and beach glass fill bottles on a simple crafted table. Tucked between the rocks and plantings, the terraces are a routine relaxation spot at the water's edge.



recently sold a home they had built on a sixty-five-acre island in Maine. They understood the isolation and the maxim “never waste a trip,” the first rule that islanders learn when carting supplies and groceries from ship to shore and vice versa. They were ready to create their “little jewel” with undaunted enthusiasm for a project that would sustain the charm and the sublimity of the location.

The original cottage had no electricity, a couple of small rooms, rustic plumbing, and the remnants of washed-ashore ocean debris from winter storms. The inconsistent whitewash pattern on the stone walls was a result of the scouring of the surf for more than forty years. The new owners wished to bring twenty-first-century upgrades into the home for convenience and comfort, while preserving the rustic beauty that existed when they first saw the property. They also wanted to add a master bedroom and bath, and detached guest quarters.

The cottage had been built from island stones. To maintain the original rustic aesthetic in the structural additions, salvaged

and locally sourced stones were employed in the new stonework. All existing stone openings were honored and reinforced, and only one crumbling building addition was removed. The stone from this old addition was used in the new addition. The thickness of the stone walls and the timeworn patina of the paint gives a rugged yet casual feel to the house.

Although this one-acre island had an existing cottage, improvements were limited due to its location within the restrictive shoreland zone and FEMA floodplain. A survey revealed that only 436 square feet of buildable space existed on the island, posing a tremendous challenge for the architects, who enjoy puzzles. The renovations also had to adhere to FEMA standards. Unique solutions, such as movable kitchen cabinetry “carts” on wheels for seasonal storage and protection from rough winters, were designed. The architects also created “ballistic” storm shutters for all the windows and doors, to keep out the basketball-sized rocks that have been tossed up during winter storms.



LEFT: The ocean is a step away, allowing the owners and their guests to immerse themselves in the dramatic effects of the ocean and the salt air.

OPPOSITE: Originally the cottage was a hunting cabin, with no electricity, minimal plumbing, and littered with debris from winter storms. The inconsistent whitewashed patterns retained on the living room walls detail a history of scouring surf and occasional flooding of the rooms.

palette pulls from the ocean beyond. The new second floor master suite was built over a portion of the existing cottage, and an area below was carved out to function as an entry porch.

The cottage was finished in an earthy palette, with a subtlety of blue hues both inside and on the exterior trim. Hand-painted stencil work by a local artist brings character to the existing concrete floors. Structural and aesthetic authenticity was a goal throughout the entire structure. The living room is brought alive by gold-framed local paintings, hand-wrought iron candelabra, and a flourish of patterns with color against the whitewashed patina of stone. The comfortable furnishings and muted background palette soften and contrast the rough walls. Found objects from the island are seen incorporated throughout. A whimsical driftwood banister is a tender nod to what existed before the renovation.

The dining area is adjacent to the living room and acts as the central gathering space for family and friends. Large windows span the entire wall, never allowing one to forget the ocean's presence. The driftwood mirror over the fireplace was handcrafted by the owners' daughter. A small seating area sits on the eastern side of the cottage and is the perfect spot to enjoy breakfast with the rising sun, or play a late afternoon board game. Tucked between the rocks and native plantings, the terraces are routine relaxation spots for family and guests. Home sweet home.

Careful attention was paid to guarantee that the building would withstand the water's winter furies, and yet invite gentle summer breezes and the rhythms of an ocean setting. Unique to stone houses, the thick walls enhance the sense of protection and also offer a deep sill for the display of artifacts and sea treasures. The ocean is but a door's swing and one step away, letting the homeowners and guests feel completely immersed in the music of the waves and the intoxication of salty, fresh air.

Simplicity and charm abound throughout the interior, maintaining the rustic beauty of days past. The blue-and-white





LEFT: The natural light and simple touches of the living room, with local artwork and driftwood framing the fireplace, create a welcoming interior.

TOP RIGHT: The bistro setting at the east window takes advantage of early sunrises.

BOTTOM RIGHT: A simple driftwood banister climbs the stairs to the landing above.





LEFT: Recent upgrades to the cottage can be seen in the simplicity of the stone work and deep window placements of the landing.

ABOVE: The guest bedroom takes up almost the entire bunkhouse, which measures a mere ten feet in depth. The French doors and open windows trimmed in blue, and the painted driftwood “monster” found on the beach, continue the natural interior aesthetic of the main cottage.

OPPOSITE: The simple bedroom captures the natural ideal of a space for rest and dreams.

