

# Maine Home

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**PERCHED ON THE POINT**  
Wide views from a narrow house  
in Kennebunk



# Slice of Paradise

On Lords Point, a narrow house with expansive views atop a seawall

Betsy Coughlan's house on Lords Point was once a garage for the house across the street. A renovation by Cape Neddick designer Wayne Rawley, Kennebunkport-based Spang Builders, and Hurlbutt Designs in Kennebunk expanded the structure by 30 percent, creating a slim footprint on which every inch was maximized.



by Rebecca Falzano  
Photography François Gagné



The open first floor (above) features a kitchen, dining area, and living area. In the kitchen, Louise Hurlbutt selected brass and satin nickel hardware and polished blue pearl granite countertops as well as white subway tile with a Carrara marble motif over the stove.



## On a sliver of land

jutting into the Atlantic just below Kennebunk Beach is Lords Point. To the west is Strawberry Island (also known as Libby Point), a small, stony landmass that was once farmland. The two enclose a little cove, and at low tide you can walk out to the island and spy oystercatchers with their long, pointy reddish-orange beaks earning the birds their names.

In 1873 shipmaster and merchant Hartley Lord founded Lords Point, then known as Two Acres, with the stipulation that anyone who bought land there had to build a house worth at least \$500. The tradition of grand homes has been kept alive through the generations, thanks to people like Lord's great-grandson, Hartley, and his wife, Bunny, who owned a house on the point until 2003. Across the street from their home was their 560-square-foot garage, which Bunny turned into a cottage in the 1970s. The tiny house had one main living room downstairs plus a bathroom, and a circular staircase leading to a small bedroom upstairs. In 1994 one of the Lords' neighbors, Betsy Coughlan, a real estate agent with Legacy Properties Sotheby's International Realty in Kennebunk, approached the family to ask about buying the cottage through a life estate. When the time came, she sold the house she had shared with her former husband down the street and bought this one—a new start.

Transforming the tiny structure into a livable year-round home required some creative thinking. Coughlan could expand the cottage by 30 percent according to zoning regulations, but the entire site is a mere 20 feet wide. Designer Wayne Rawley of Cape Neddick drew up a plan that enlarged the second floor and added a generously sized porch on the first level. At 14½ feet wide by 54 feet long, the house would have a slim footprint, which meant that Kennebunk interior designer Louise Hurlbutt of Hurlbutt Designs and Tim Spang of Spang Builders in Kennebunkport had to make every inch count. The first floor has an open layout that includes a kitchen, a dining area with a window seat overlooking the cove, and a living area with a fireplace and two sofas that double as beds. "We convinced Betsy that she didn't need a powder room on the first floor," says Hurlbutt. Instead, the team created a coffee nook in the kitchen, with a porthole window framing a beautiful tree across the street. Hurlbutt's palette took its cues from the surrounding seascape. Cool blues and greens in the fabrics and accessories mirror the water on both the cove and ocean sides of the house. White vertical nickel-gap paneling in the living room and stairwell adds a clean, crisp feel to the space. In the kitchen,



Hurlbutt paired brass and satin nickel hardware with polished blue pearl granite countertops, and white subway tile with a Carrara marble motif over the stove, from Blue Rock of Maine in Kennebunk and Westbrook. Outside, the living area is extended by a long covered porch with a stone fireplace that overlooks the cove.

The home's soaring stairwell belies the cottage's compact size and packs a big design punch. A massive two-story window allows top-to-bottom views of the cove, and an antique hanging lantern has the effect of an elegant vintage necklace on a simple white blouse. On the stairway walls hang two treasured colorful landscape paintings—one Coughlan bought in Australia and another by Kay Waltman, who Coughlan says was the decorator of the house across the street at one point in the property's history. "I love this part of the house," Coughlan says, "because it used to be just a ladder of a staircase that you had to really climb up. This feels so luxurious in comparison."

Upstairs, two bedroom suites have built-ins in lieu of closets to save space. Above them, three square windows let in light and frame views of the ocean side of the point. Hurlbutt suggested raising the bedroom ceilings to cathedral height, with horizontal nickel-gap paneling to "elongate the rooms and give them an airier feel." Off the owner's bedroom, a rooftop deck (stacked on top of the porch below) offers a panorama of the point.

Vistas and light come from some unexpected places as well: in each of the showers, a rectangular window centered on the wall allows a glimpse of the cove, its bright blue contrasting with the surrounding honed Carrara marble tile.

Spang has worked on 10 of the 14 houses on Lords Point and is also personally responsible for the landscaping around some of them. "Lords Point has a special place in my heart," he says. He and his wife, Louise, once spent half a day documenting every plant on the point to make sure the greenery they installed would thrive in the harsh conditions there. In the winter, his crew also takes care of the snowplowing for the point, acquainting them with every groove in the road.

Although Spang and his team had been filling sinkholes in the seawall along the western side of Lords Point for years already, when they began working on this project they realized erosion was happening below the wall as well. "I came out and dug in front of the existing seawall and found out it literally hit the bottom of the ocean and stopped—there was no footing," says Spang. To shore up the wall, he had to incorporate it into the home's foundation, a process that extended the length of the project by two-and-a-half months.

One of the biggest challenges in rebuilding the seawall was the sea itself. "Managing the tides was its own job," says Spang. "A full moon means a bigger tide, so I would watch out for that



The owner's bedroom (above) has a cathedral ceiling with horizontal nickel-gap paneling, and opens out to a rooftop deck with panoramic views of the point.

In the owner's bathroom (right), a window in the shower allows a glimpse of the cove, its bright blue a sharp contrast to the surrounding honed Carrara marble tile.

The dining room table (opposite) can expand when guests are over. The window seat, which has storage underneath the cushions, is perched right above the seawall.







A large covered porch functions as an outdoor living room and features a stone fireplace and stainless-steel cable railings that don't obstruct the view of the cove.







The guest bedroom (above) has two twin beds joined together to make a king. A view of the cove fills every window on this side of the house.

A painting (right) by Kay Waltman, who was the decorator of the house across the street at one point in the property's history, graces the stairwell. "I love this part of the house because it used to be just a ladder of a staircase that you had to really climb up," says Coughlan. "This feels so luxurious in comparison."

After discovering erosion underneath the seawall (opposite, top), Spang and his team had to rebuild the wall, a process that added months to the project. The foundation of the house and new seawall now sit on steel pilings driven 35 feet into the ground.

In the living area (opposite, bottom), Hurlbutt created custom sofas that double as beds for guests. Vertical nickel-gap paneling elongates the perceived height of the space.





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The owner's bedroom (opposite) is furnished with a European cane-style bed and floating nightstand—another space-saving measure.

A porthole window on the eastern side of the house (above) was cleverly placed in a nook in the kitchen to frame a tree across the street.

so we didn't have any men in the hole. I'd also look at the two-week forecast to see what storms were coming in and where they were coming from, and hope they were going in the other direction." His team constructed a temporary wall and held the ocean back through an elaborate system of pumps that ran for seven weeks straight. They then drove steel pilings 35 feet into the ground, on which the foundation and seawall would sit. "It was like building a bridge," says Spang. "That wall isn't going anywhere now."

Since there aren't a lot of rooms in the home, there aren't a lot of interior walls, which means there isn't much space for mechanicals, ductwork, and wiring. Spang was able to carve out a place for the "guts" of the home in a

storage nook under the stairs. "I always felt it was a small house until I was done. Now it actually feels bigger than it did on paper," he says.

For her part, Coughlan is glad she recognized a gem of a property and had the vision and the team to turn the modest cottage into a year-round home. She's been renting out her house here and there to guests over the past year, and everyone who stays there leaves rave reviews. "It's got everything you need," says Coughlan.

She's right—although the view alone would be enough. **MH+D**

*For more information, see Resources on page 140.*



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