

# DECOR MAINE

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APRIL 2021

## spring awakening

(open for flowers)

A MIDCENTURY  
MARVEL ON MOUNT  
DESERT ISLAND

perennial  
favorites:

3 DESIGNERS  
CREATE ARTFUL  
OUTDOOR WORLDS

serenity  
now:

A SPACE FOR QUIET  
ON PEAKS ISLAND

Becky Madeira and Grant Castle stand among the pink granite boulders that make up the ever-changing Southwest Seawall beside their home.

*architect:* Design Group Collaborative

# GOOD

A midcentury Mount Desert Island home makes a marriage of wood and water

written by Allison Paige photography by Lauryn Hottinger

# WOOD





**RIGHT:** Under a Francis Lipari painting, a cherry radiator cover by woodworker Joe Hanson “is like a piece of art,” says Becky. **OPPOSITE:** Grant, an avid guitarist, strums “A Hard Day’s Night” in his enclosed-porch office.



**ON MOUNT DESERT ISLAND’S SOUTHWEST** harbor, Becky Madeira and Grant Castle’s midcentury home nestles on a remote, windswept spot just beside the Southwest Seawall. The cedar-clapboard Deck home and adjacent cottage, once nondescript brown, were painted by the couple a sea-smoke gray.

“My idea was to make it disappear, to make it look like a big rock,” explains Becky. The monochromatic exterior looks unobtrusive, even organically appropriate, like a boulder or a tree bent by the north wind. But if the outside looks low and cool, inside it is woodsy and warm.

On a bright day, the interior positively glows, Becky shares. “The abundance of wood makes for an amber feeling in the whole house.” A collector of wooden sculptures and vessels from all over (“I’m a wood fanatic,” she

admits with a laugh), Becky notes that her last name—Madeira—means “wood” (in Portuguese). She and Grant fell in love with the home’s “good bones” and have renovated it over time to make the most of its high ceilings and spectacular seaside location.

The couple bought the four-bedroom, three-bath home and adjacent one-bedroom, one-bath cottage in 1998, but Becky can trace her island roots much further back. Her grandmother spent years in Long Pond, and in 1950, her parents honeymooned there and returned each summer. As a child, Becky made the trip with her family from Philadelphia to MDI every year. “Our son Jake was 10 years old when we bought the house,” she notes. “He was so blown away by the vast shoreline of unique pink granite boulders that he named the house ‘Stone Beach,’ and so it was.”

The fireplace hearthstone even comprises the very rocks that give the house its name. “We sparingly took a couple of pieces,” explains Grant. “It’s our only protection against the ocean, so we’re very careful.”

Becky admits that while the exterior didn’t initially wow them—“I joke that it looks like the clubhouse at the 19th hole of a golf course”—the expansive interior did, with 25-foot ceilings and ocean-facing windows. While there was work to do, they admired several design choices of the original owner, namely the rosy pickled pine tongue-in-groove carpentry and green slate floors. “I think she took the color palette from the ocean,” surmises Becky. “Because the ocean is green, and then she did the ceilings in a pinkish color which matches the rocks.”

Later owners made less flattering additions. “It had been abandoned for quite some time,” explains Becky.

“It was decorated with contact paper on the walls, the kind that you line your drawers with.”

“Peel-and-stick corkboard,” Grant adds. “There was a whole room of that, loaded with mildew.”

“It was really a job of just stripping out everything, going back to the bones and the original design,” says Becky.

In the kitchen, cherry cabinetry rhymes with the interior, alongside dramatic green granite countertops from The Granite Shop Plus in Trenton. “Becky chose that because it reminded her of the ocean,” notes Grant. “It’s green and swirls. There’s a foam to it. There’s brown, like the kelp. You’ll see those colors all the time in the ocean.”

Becky worked in public relations at PepsiCo and met Grant when his ad agency, TBWA Worldwide, created some of the company’s iconic ads. “I was there during



## WE LISTEN TO THE SEAWALL BEING MADE.

You can hear the rocks grinding around as they’re rumbling,” Grant marvels.

The cedar-clad home, which the family calls “Stone Beach,” and the open sea just beyond.





**LEFT:** In the living room, the pink granite hearth complements ocean-green slate tile and pickled pine. Thomas Moser furniture completes the woody aesthetic. **OPPOSITE:** The cherry-wood *sukiya* tub by Bath in Wood of Maine epitomizes the home's custom woodwork.

Michael Jackson's hair catching on fire and Madonna dancing in apparently ... sacrilegious ways," she laughs.

Becky is fortunate to have renovators in the family. Her late brother, Alan Madeira, ran the historic Claremont Hotel in Southwest Harbor, and niece Sarah's DIY "Freeport Fix-Up" appeared in our September 2020 issue. Alan and Brad Manette and Terry Crowell of Pine Coast Builders in Bar Harbor made many interior renovations, notably removing a loft space to open up the kitchen ceiling and tearing out a wall of closets to allow better circulation in the floor plan. They built the garage and brought the cottage up to snuff. Enclosing a side deck created a solarium-like office for Grant.

Woodwork, the undeniable hero of the home, rises to its apex in the sauna-style tub commissioned from Steve Batiste of Bath in Wood of Maine. "We build every-

thing to order," says Steve. "This particular tub is 58 by 31, made of cherry. It's a shape that we call *sukiya*, a Japanese word meaning 'refined simplicity,' and we've designed it to be as elegant and to make the best use of materials as possible. It has elbow rests," he adds, "because Becky loves to read in the bath."

"Steve is the best," Becky says. "We got to go to their workshop on Swan's Island and sit in a whole bunch of tubs to see what felt great." Contrasting black stone tile and fixtures make the vessel stand out. "Plus, the tub is so warm. To sit in it, it's just a dream," she says.

"We chose cherry to be sympathetic with all the other woods," says Grant. "Everything was there, kind of waiting for it." Most of their furniture is by Thomas Moser. In fact, they have such an affinity for his craftsmanship that he calls them "mavens," the couple joke. Grant, a





Inspired by Becky's resilient perennial garden, *Decor Maine* art director Kaylie Thompson and design intern Ariel Ferrel crafted a pattern (visible above) tailor-made for this garden-infused home feature.

self-declared “serious hobbyist” musician, keeps a collection of guitars that look like works of art alongside the home’s warm woodwork.

While the seawall is the dominant feature of the three-acre property, the rest is wetland and open lawn, where Becky has managed to make gardens grow. “Gardening is my passion,” she declares. “It’s a short growing season, so perennials are key—the hardy ones. Shastas, peonies, poppies, black-eyed Susans, snapdragons, hollyhock. I really like the traditional flowers.” She also keeps a vegetable garden and donates to the local soup kitchen. “The microclimate of the seawall is both rewarding and challenging. The salt air is brutal. Fog and salt and dampness roll in every day. It’s very difficult to get stuff to grow, but once it establishes, that’s what you nurture.”

Built in 1965, before zoning prevented residences so close to the ocean, the home, like the marvelous wooden tub, feels like a boat about to cast off to sea. “The house was on the market for quite some time because people

were concerned about the closeness to the ocean,” notes Becky. This proximity, while “sometimes scary” she acknowledges, is the very thing that makes the home so special to them.

“We listen to the seawall being made. You can hear the rocks grinding around as they’re rumbling,” Grant marvels. “As the current gets stronger, you can hear them roll up the seawall and then roll back down. A few of them stay, and most of them roll back down. The house shakes. It’s granite on granite, just vibrating all around.”

“Our bedroom is right along the seawall,” Becky adds. “You just lay in bed and watch the extraordinary waves.” ■

**OPPOSITE, ABOVE:** Becky loves to garden and grows both flowers and vegetables. “It’s a short growing season. So, perennials are key,” she says. **OPPOSITE, BELOW:** Becky gathers flowers from her garden. **ABOVE:** In the guest loft, seashells and boat boxes create a nautical theme. The wallpaper is by Serena & Lily.