

# Angling for a



An earnest upside-down saltbox is updated with a gracious entry, a shingled seaside style, and windows toward the ocean

BY ROB LAMBERT



# View



## PARKING AND PINE TREES

From the addition, two pine trees frame an ocean view. Turning the addition at a 7° angle to the existing house made this prospect possible. Because the homeowner didn't want the three-car garage to face the street, the driveway is designed with plenty of room to turn around a vehicle, and it has a small parking area that meets a walk leading to the new front entry. Photos taken at A on site plan.



## SPECS

**Bedrooms:** 3, plus a home office

**Bathrooms:** 2½

**Size:** 3280 sq. ft.

**Cost:** \$175 per sq. ft.

**Completed:** 2005

**Location:** Jamestown, R.I.

**Architect:** Robert H. Lambert Jr., AIA; Burgin Lambert Architects

**Builder:** Ray Construction, West Greenwich, R.I.

**D**oc wanted to retire to the coast of Rhode Island for two reasons: the ideal sailing conditions and the spectacular ocean views. As a longtime race-boat owner, he was already immersed in the local nautical community, but finding the right oceanside home wasn't such an easy transition. There's not a lot of waterfront property available, and what does come on the market is always expensive.

To maximize ocean views from building lots that are near but not on the water, many houses in the area have an upside-down floor

plan: The living space is on the second floor, and the bedrooms below. What Doc finally found was an upside-down saltbox near the ocean that almost had a view. He recognized the house's potential and called our firm to see what improvements were possible.

### The original house left out an important ingredient

Upside-down houses use elevation to overcome topography and distance to capture long views. It's a smart idea, and the house that Doc bought was a perfect candidate for this approach. Unfortunately,



the designer forgot one important detail: You need windows to have views. The long side of the saltbox roof faced the ocean and extended down to the first floor. In the roof were three skylights that brought sunlight to the living room, dining room, and kitchen. It wasn't much light, however, and there was no hope of an ocean view.

Otherwise, the existing house was well built and met many of Doc's needs. The second floor had a sociable plan with a kitchen open to adjacent dining and living areas. Below, three bedrooms and a bathroom offered plenty of space for a home office and guest quarters with a private bathroom (floor plans, facing page).

To make the existing living space work for Doc, we added two dormers to the roof. A gable dormer extends to the main roof ridge, adding height and natural light to the sitting room. For variety and interest, we designed a lower shed dormer over the dining area to serve the same functions. Both dormers have double French doors that open onto a new deck in front of the house.

To build the dormers, we removed two large beams that acted as collar ties and replaced them with a structural ridge beam. The result is a dramatic cathedral ceiling with a variety of interesting shapes and two tall columns that extend from each side of the kitchen all the way to the ridge.

### **A new angle on the foyer has a surprise benefit**

Doc had three requests that the footprint of the existing house couldn't accommodate. He wanted a more formal living room with a fireplace, a modern master suite, and a three-car garage to shelter his other passion, new and antique Porsches. In designing this additional space, we learned something interesting. If we turned the addition slightly away from the existing house (7° to be exact), we would create the best opportunity yet to capture a year-round ocean view.

Above the three-car garage, a master suite occupies the back of the addition, and a new living room faces Block Island Sound. The view extends down the driveway and is framed by two tall pine trees across the street (site plan p. 59).

As it turns out, the addition's angled orientation also helped us to create a unique entry where the existing house and the addition meet. The wedge-shaped foyer extends

## HEIGHT AND LIGHT ADD DRAMA TO THE PLAN



**Cathedral ceilings in a sociable space.**  
*Tall posts and sublime ceiling shapes inject character into the remodeled living area, where the open plan includes the kitchen, sitting, and dining rooms. Photos taken at B and C on floor plan.*



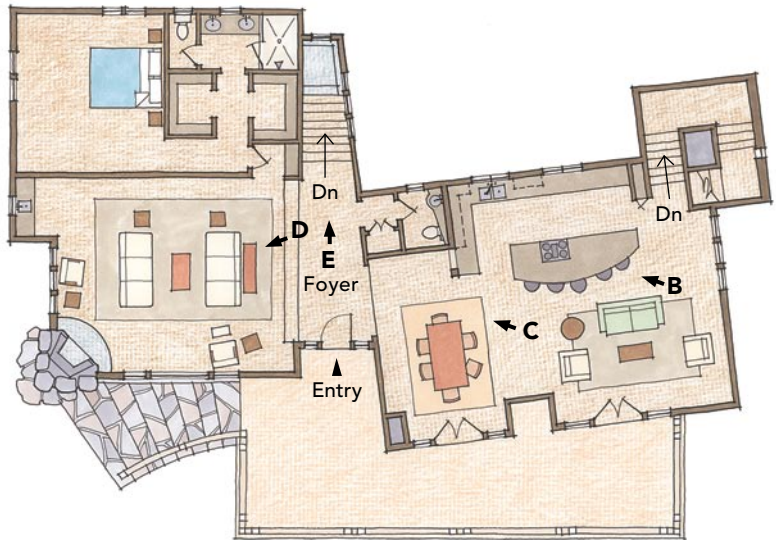




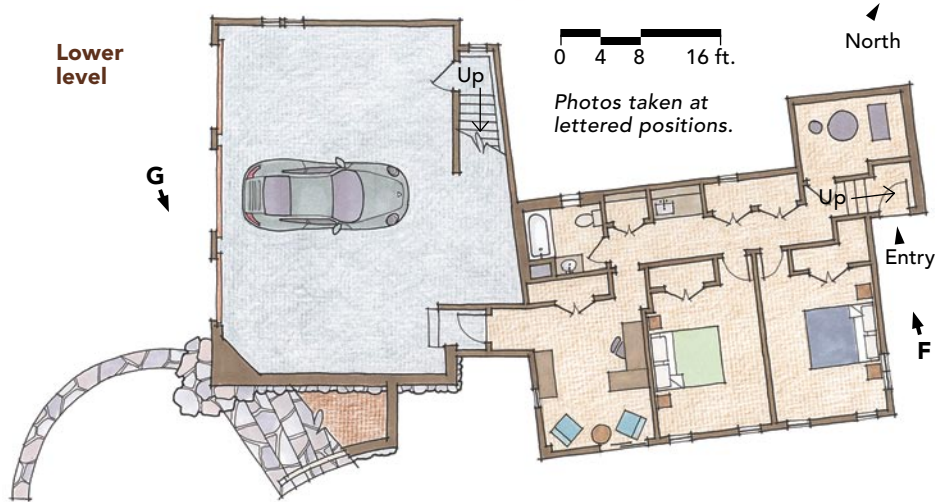
## A GOOD START AND A GREAT ADDITION

The existing house, an upside-down saltbox, met many of the homeowner's needs, including ample guest quarters and room for a home office. Three bedrooms on the lower level were topped with an open living space. After the remodel, new dormers improve the living area with sunlight and views, while a new addition provides what the existing house could not: a formal entry and living room, a master suite, and a three-car garage.

Upper level



Lower level



**Windows welcome the view.** The new formal living room has generous windows and a fireplace that warms the soul. The crisply incised dormer over the wet bar mimics the geometric ceiling shapes found across the foyer. Photo taken at D on floor plan.



# THE NEW ENTRIES GREET GUESTS WITH GENEROUS DETAILS



**The main entry foyer fades away.** The wedge-shaped foyer, with its low ceiling and forced perspective, accentuates the vaulted adjacent spaces. Mahogany treads signal a change in elevation, and horizontal mahogany wainscoting becomes wall paneling in the stairwell beyond. Photo taken at E on floor plan.





**An inconspicuous front door becomes a subtle side entry.** When the main entry was relocated to the west side of the house, the original entry became the side door it was meant to be. A robust bracket supports the deep overhang of the new roof. Photos taken at F on floor plan.



from the front door to the back of the house, where stairs lead to the garage below. With the entry floor a step down from the existing house on one side and two steps down from the addition on the other, the foyer is the transitional glue holding the two spaces together. Moreover, the foyer's flat ceiling emphasizes the cathedral ceilings in the existing house and in the addition.

The new living room, entry hall, and stairway are finished with horizontal mahogany wainscoting to ground the tall interior spaces. Both the existing house and the addition have red-oak floors, but we used mahogany treads to distinguish the steps in the foyer.

### Stone anchors the exterior

Before we remodeled, the driveway and the entry were on the east-facing side of Doc's house. The entry was little more than a side door that opened to the lower level and a dark stairway that led up to the living area. Building the addition on the west-facing side of the house gave us the opportunity to create a new driveway and a more formal entrance.

To our delight, Doc didn't want the garage doors to face the street, so the driveway bends around the side of the house. Along the way, visitors are greeted with one of the most stunning exterior details: A stout stone chimney supported by a base of large boulders grows through the roof's eave and rake at the corner of the addition.

Besides its location near the ocean, Doc's property has another distinguishing characteristic. The site is mostly granite, known locally as ledge. Although ledge can be an obstacle to construction, we used it to inspire us and to anchor the house, literally and figuratively. Along with the chimney, large stone piers are pinned to the ledge to support the new deck. The oversize deck posts and the brackets that support a cantilever over the garage maintain the proportions established by the chimney, as do the entry steps.

The curved bluestone steps radiate around the ledge and gracefully lead guests to enter the second-floor living spaces from the deck. With a small parking area in front of the addition, Doc's new entry is now an unmistakable example of the modern shingle style—a style that has deep roots here in Rhode Island. □

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**Boulders, brackets, and a place to park.** Tucked away from street-front view, the three-car garage is treated with no less detail than the more-visible elevations. A cantilevered portion of the master bedroom shelters the garage and provides a place to mount lights. The chimney springs from the rubble of large boulders that project into the driveway. Photo taken at G on floor plan.