

# GOING COASTAL IN ONTARIO



*A Michigan couple builds their dream cottage in Ontario's Georgian Bay area.*

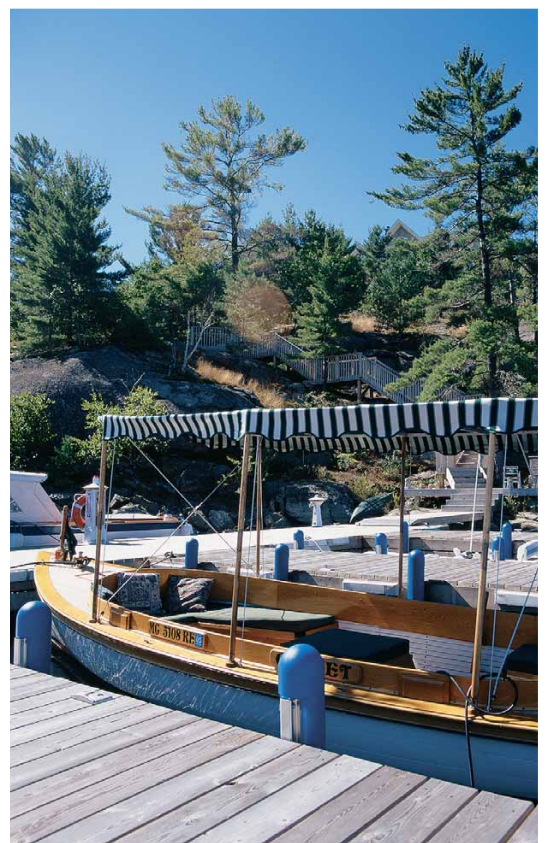
By **Dennis McCloskey**  
Photos by **Brian Barrer**

▲ *The new home is built high above the rocks of Carling Bay, in the Thirty Thousand Islands.*

► *The summer residence is a 4,500-square-foot timber frame home.*

**I**n 1853, American philosopher, author and naturalist, Henry David Thoreau, waxed poetic about the majestic beauty of Canada's landscape in his political essay *A Yankee in Canada*, when he wrote, "All the hills blush; I think that autumn must be the best season... You frequently exclaim to yourself, what red maples!"

Nearly 150 years later, Dick and Susan Baumann, an American couple who live near Detroit, Michigan, discovered the natural beauty of Canada's "near north" and decided to build their dream home high above the rocks of Carling Bay, in the Thirty Thousand Islands area of Georgian Bay, 15 km north of Parry Sound.





*The focal point in the great room is a dry stack fireplace, with a wooden mantel and a driftwood carving of two Canada Geese in flight.*

“We wanted to replace our old cottage in Traverse City, in north-west Michigan,” says Susan, an engineer, like her husband. “So, we looked for property in that area - as well as in Ontario. Georgian Bay won out, partly because the water is more beautiful and the shoreline more diverse.”

The Baumanns are avid boaters and wanted the “feel” of water at their summer residence. Susan describes some of the lots they looked at as being

“woody, more befitting a lodge”, which they did not want. “This property looks more ‘coastal’ than anything we have seen in Michigan,” she says.

After visiting the area in February 2000 - to visit their Toronto friends who have a 3,500-square-foot summer home on the property next door - the Baumanns fell in love with the area and purchased the adjacent property in March. In 2002, they purchased a custom-designed, 4,500-



square-foot Linwood timber-frame home. They chose the design from one of the firm's many plans in its Hampton Collection and had it erected on their four-acre lot (much to the delight of their friends next door) amidst tall pine, evergreen and maple trees, with a magnificent view of the water. Construction began in November 2002 and was completed one year later, on the U.S. Thanksgiving holiday weekend.

It is a six-hour drive from the Detroit area to their summer residence, near Kilbear Provincial Park, so when the Baumanns visit their dream vacation home, they like to spend extended periods of time there. Last autumn, on a day that Thoreau might have likened to an idyllic and serene day at Walden Pond, Susan Baumann provided a tour of the home for *Canadian Homes and Cottages*.

Susan began by praising the quality of work car-

*"This is a summer house, so I wanted a casual look and feel to the house," says owner Susan Baumann.*



*The antique island in the kitchen was custom built. Susan saw the design in a decorating magazine.*

ried out by the many “talented craftspeople” who came from various parts of Ontario to build, design and furnish their home, from such places as Parry Sound, Coboconk, Huntsville, Bracebridge, Mississauga and Manitoulin Island.

“We were very fortunate because all of the trades people were very conscientious, helpful, polite, and they did a great job,” says Susan. “There isn’t a single mistake, and that’s saying something when you’re having a house built long distance.” She credits the work of “our on-site guy,” project manager Harry Bates, and Paul Barber, general manager, commercial operations of Linwood Custom Homes, of Coboconk, who worked with the

Baumanns every step of the way. And she names a slew of tradespeople who were exceptionally obliging and meticulous in their work, such as Dave Gibson of Gibson Homes and Cottages, who looked after such interior carpentry jobs as the trim work and doors.

“It’s not an exaggeration to say that Dick and Susan had a thousand decisions to make,” says Barber. “Building a home like this can be an emotional roller coaster for clients, but it all comes down to trust. You have to trust the people you are working with - and that goes both ways.”

Barber says that client participation is a must because when you buy an existing home, you are



*The entire house was painted with an almond bisque paint colour that appears yellow in one room, but takes on a tan appearance in other areas of the home.*

buying what you see; with a custom home, you are buying a dream. He jokes that if you look up “dream client” in the dictionary, you’ll see a photo of the Baumanns.

Susan begins the tour in the great room, with its vaulted 32-foot ceiling and large Win-Mar windows that let in an abundance of natural light. The focal point of the open-concept layout is a floor-to-ceiling fireplace created by Wayne Martin, of Stoneman Enterprises of Sheguiandah, Manitoulin Island. Martin, whose slogan is “Rockin’ the Island”, built a “dry stack” fireplace that appears as though no mortar was used. This effect is achieved by dry stacking the rocks and stones in a recessed manner and creating a chiseled look. A large, wooden mantel features a design of loons and the Baumann boat on the water, painted by a Bracebridge artist. Above that are two Canada Geese in flight. They were carved from driftwood by an artist in Michigan.

The kitchen is outfitted with cabinets by Elmwood Kitchens of the Niagara Peninsula, with the base cabinets in Providence style and upper cabinets in Mission style. Both have a limestone finish on maple. The tropical brown countertops are honed granite.

But the centre of interest is an antique island that is similar to a Canadian Harvest table. It was



custom built by Ed Calder, of Calder’s Antiques of Norland, Ontario, who specializes in Canadian pine furniture. The design was taken from a picture that Susan ripped out of a homes magazine. “I wanted a casual table, not a formal island,” says Susan. “This is a summer house, so I wanted a casual look and feel to the house.” Calder also refinished two antique sideboards in the guest bath vanity and the kids’ bath vanity. (The Baumanns have two children – Laurie, who is studying public health at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland when she’s not playing soccer; and Andrew, 17, who attends high school.)

While the owners provided hands-on participation in every aspect of the home’s construction

**TOP:**  
*The master bedroom, like the living room, features cherry plank wood flooring.*

**BOTTOM:**  
*All of the bedrooms are permeated by a truly Canadian atmosphere.*

## Going Coastal in Ontario



▲  
*Susan says the “bubbler” bathtub is more like a Hawaiian lava pool than an ordinary whirlpool.*

▶  
*In a bathroom, casual antique wood furniture takes the place of a traditional vanity.*



(Dick stained a stair railing and Susan tended to the moss between the outdoor patio stones), they recruited the help of a number of experts, such as sales and design consultant Rheanon Hoogenboom,

of Maple Interiors. Hoogenboom helped the couple choose the flooring, carpets, interior trim, interior doors and hardware, tiles, backsplashes, cabinets and more.

While Dick and Susan purchased the art, artifacts and much of the furniture on their own (or brought them from their old cottage), they credit Hoogenboom’s esthetic taste, sense of style, and decorating savvy for such components as engineered wood flooring by Mannington Wood Floors. Mannington’s American Rustics Washington Cherry Plank in Sandalwood now covers over 1,000 square feet of the living room, master bedroom and en suite bath and powder room. The tiled floors are electric radiant heated.

The entire house was painted with a Benjamin Moore Almond Bisque that appears to be yellow in one room, and because of the change in natural light, takes on a tan appearance in other areas of the residence. The Coboconk designer also recommended two kinds of carpeting for second-floor bedrooms, and a catwalk that overlooks the great room. She also sought out interior, paint-grade trim.

Mention of the trim brings a knowing chuckle from the owner and her builder. Susan wanted all of the wood trim painted - including the poplar Madawaska doors and poplar French doors - so the B.C. Douglas Fir timber frame (which is not kiln dried) would stand out better. “She arm-wrestled me on that one,” says Barber. “But I love her taste in painted furniture (Susan decoratively painted a wooden armoire in an upstairs bedroom, and an entrance table that was once a dresser), and in retrospect, she was right. It looks great!”

Another one of Susan’s “finds” is a Dynamic Turbo & Aero Massage bathtub by Oceania. Susan says the “bubbler” is more like a Hawaiian lava pool, versus an ordinary whirlpool tub. The system puts the bather in touch with air jets that are strategically located in the sides and bottom of the bath and provide the soothing effect of millions of warm air bubbles massaging the entire body.

Downstairs, the large basement is unfinished and currently serves as a wine cellar/storage/work area, but the attention-getter is an array of pipes, coils, wires, switches, and other mechanical devices that inhabit a corner wall and serve as the home’s heating and water system. The compactness and tidiness of the propane-fired boiler system continues to awe Barber.

“This is a work of commercial art,” he says. When this home was in the planning stage, Dick saw an identical system in the home next door and exclaimed, “I want the person who did this!”

There is more than one stairway to the home’s

upper level from the main floor, and one is reached from a breezeway and pantry that connects to the two-car garage and also leads upstairs. A games room dominates the 1,200-square-foot second-storey area, over the two-car garage, with a pool table and Dick's astronomical telescope.

A truly Canadian atmosphere permeates the house and continues in the children's rooms. The eclectic décor in Andrew's room ranges from native Indian artifacts such as an eagle feather, an arrowhead and canoe paddles, to a figure of a hockey-playing moose on his dresser. Other examples of the Canadianization of the house are everywhere: a painting by B.C. wildlife artist (and expatriate Ontarian) Robert Bateman hangs on one wall, and a collection of four canoe paddles are displayed in another area. The four seasons are depicted on each of the paddles and were painted by decorative artist Laurie Jocque. The Canadiana *pièce de résistance* is a recent best-selling book near the bedside, given to the owners by their Canadian friends, titled *How to be a Canadian*, by Will Ferguson.

The exterior cladding of the home is Western Red Cedar with a pre-finished stain, and the roof is asphalt shingles. Barber says he likes to introduce different species of wood in a home. "It's not a problem to mix species," he says, pointing to the home's Douglas fir interior railings and cedar ceiling.

Barber says that his Michigan clients chose a stock design as a starting point and then modified it a fair bit. "There is a lot of flexibility in our program," he says. "I suggest to people that they make up a scrapbook of bits and pieces of the things they like, because everyone's lifestyle is different. This gives the designer a starting point from which to work. We consider each family's current and long-term lifestyle (do they want a quiet retreat or a place to entertain?) and then we mould it into a home of their taste and liking."

The most dramatic feature of the exterior landscape is the number of Georgian Bay granite stones and rocks that form retaining walls, and the Muskoka Gneiss that forms a waterfront patio and steps leading to the lake far below. Kirby Hall, of Hall Construction in nearby Parry Sound, hauled 60 truck-loads of the pink, blue and grey Muskoka



Gneiss from a quarry near Huntsville, Ontario. The granite ranged from oversized flagstone for the patio surface, to large pieces for support, and smaller and finer pieces that were placed "as needed." Hall says he was faced with the challenging task of bringing the site up 10 feet from the basement level to main-floor grade. Hall, 29, who has an engineering degree, says the job took more than 10 weeks to complete using a large excavator, loader backhoe and a smaller backhoe. He installed 40 stone steps leading toward the lake that connect to 115 wooden railed steps that end at a large dock with several wooden boat moorings attached.

Partway down the steps is a fire pit in the rock wall, and there is also an inviting hot tub overlooking the scenic bay. It appears to be the perfect spot where the Baumann family can relax and enjoy the view and the sounds of nature and think pleasant thoughts about what it's like to be an American in Canada...eh? ■

*The ceiling in the great room soars to a peak 32 feet above the floor.*