



Baby Got Back

This dreamscape doesn't just have a heart of glass—its stairs and walkways are glass, too.

BY COLIN W. SARGENT

Step into “Beach House” at 425 Ocean Avenue, Moody Beach in Wells, and you won’t just encounter tumbling blue waves. For \$2.775 million, it’s like watching the Atlantic on IMAX.

“You come in the door, you don’t know what to expect, and boom, there it is,” says seacoast-New Hampshire-based design consultant Kelley LaRue of studio kl, who created the singular glass stairway and walkways here, contemporary interiors, gourmet kitchen, and decor.

“From the street side, it’s nothing showy. You wouldn’t look twice at it,” says listing agent Steve Weigel of Coldwell Banker Y-Gull & Associates as we feel ourselves surrounded by the beach and ocean on three



sides. "But then..." He waves his arms as the compression-and-release effect from front to back sends us to the windows like a slingshot. "I've seen storms uncover the bones of a schooner out there."

He indicates a cool sweep of sand near the Ogunquit line. "This view is different every time you look at it," from dramatic white spume to the cool colors of the sea...the Moody blues. "I've also seen a right whale wash up on the shore, moose on the beach, deer, and, of course, seals."

"The original home was very small—a beach camp" on one of the fairly generous but identically sized (.16-acre, 7,100-square-foot) oceanfront lots for which this neighborhood is famous, LaRue says.



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"It has been private at least since 1888," Weigel says of the enclave, "when Charles Tibbetts, a Portsmouth lawyer, bought three miles of beach from the state of Maine, paying \$100 for each 50-foot wide lot, the story goes. Over the next few decades, he sold the lots for \$500 apiece, including the one-mile stretch bought in 1924 by the town of Ogunquit, who wanted to preserve the beach in its natural state. The farmers of Wells wanted nothing to do with that worthless land. In the 1980s, [one of these lots] with a home on it would sell for under \$300K (No. 425 sold for \$249,500 in 1987). A



beach house sold for \$300K to \$500K in the 1990s—with the first to exceed \$500K in 1997—then \$800K in 2001, \$1 million in 2003, \$2 million in 2005. The highest so far is \$2.2 million (by the way, Moody Beach is a private beach, while Wells Beach is public. Here, you literally own the sand to the low water line). Some new mega homes here would sell for \$3 million if one came on the market.”

“When we opened this house up, you could see the camp’s old roofline and how, over the years, the earlier structure had porches,” LaRue says.

But it isn’t just the *genius loci* of the place that inspired LaRue into keeping the original footprint.

“We really didn’t want to touch the outside front” for code regulations and permissions reasons.

Instead, the magic happens on the inside back of the structure, where its dimensions and its inhabitants are released from the sense of limits. Walls drop away on all sides. It’s as though you’re launched in a glider over the

surf, with a sense of safety and warmth enveloping you.

Climbing those glass stairs, you become aware that modernist etches across their surfaces provide traction and modesty while inviting light to fly all through the house. As you hit the top floor, you realize it’s totally devoted to a fantasy master suite where the ocean is closer to you than it was for Burt Lancaster and Deborah Kerr in the surf scene in *From Here to Eternity*.

This commanding perspective doesn’t mean there aren’t three more bedrooms and three full baths in this house, thanks to lovely contemporary accommodations in the concrete foundation level below the main entertaining floor, all painted in shades of the ocean’s ever-changing personality.

The town of Wells assesses the total parcel at \$1,511,930; taxes are \$13,040.

“This house has actually had two phases of updating. Before Dr. Michael J. O’Connell, the present seller, the previous owners were the very prominent Tamposi family from New Hampshire;



the father lived here. He's the one who ran this I-beam through the house," Weigel says, with LaRue adding more steel, much more glass, and more edges.

The Tamposi family saga, including litigation, would probably make better TV than *Downton Abbey* or *Dallas*. According to *The New York Times*, Samuel A. Tamposi (August 31, 1924-May 25, 1995) was "New Hampshire's largest commercial real estate developer" who started out as an Electrolux vacuum cleaner salesman. "Mr. Tamposi made his fortune buying and selling land and persuading Fortune 500 companies like Anheuser-Busch, Digital Equipment, and Raytheon to build plants in New Hampshire. [Former New Hampshire Sen. Warren] Rudman said...Mr. Tamposi 'brought more jobs to New Hampshire than all of the economic authorities in all of the state's cities and townships put together.'"

According to Wikipedia, Sam Tamposi, Sr., was also known for "his friendship with Ted Williams [a financial partner in the multimillion-dollar Citrus Hills development in Florida, which, according to the *New York Times* includes two Arnold Palmer-designed golf courses], and association with the Boston Red Sox." Sam Jr. still has a "limited partnership" with the baseball team, according to the site.

The Nashua *Telegraph* has reported (September 26, 2010) that battles between Sam Sr.'s survivors focused on "some 400 properties in New Hampshire and Florida, worth roughly \$70 million. Their debts totaled roughly \$50 million, however."

"The family's over on Drakes Island now," Weigel says.

Goes to show: For every inside looking out, there's an outside looking in. ■



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