

Over a 25-year span, Dave and Robin Knight have built and refined a series

One House at a Time

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Dave and Robin Knight always thought it would be a great experience to design and build a house for themselves and were jolted into action when their first daughter was born 27 years ago. After the house was done, they discovered that designing and building were so much fun that they embarked on a path that has continued to this day. Once they've lived in it for a little while, they put the family house up for sale, buy another lot and start all over again. To date, they've built nine houses and two houseboats.

When we first met them 25 years ago, they were living in their 800-sq. ft. cottage on remote Stuart Island, with two bouncy daughters, a huge wood-fired kitchen stove for heat and hand-built leaded-glass windows throughout. The house was small in scale and warm in spirit.

Over the years, their houses have matured. Each one is an evolutionary step from the prior project, polished and refined by direct, live-in-the-house experience. But even so,



1976

Steep, complicated roofs are a tradition. Built in 1976, the 1000-sq. ft. Stuart Island house displays many of the elements of later projects, but less refined and at a smaller scale. All the houses have steep, complex roofs, with dormers and towers that make the upstairs bedrooms charming and quirky.



1998

Stone foundations look as if they've been there forever. The houses always have stony foundations that exert a visual gravity. In addition, each house is considered an opportunity to try out new materials. This home, the Smuggler's Cove house, was the first to include a thatch-style cedar-shingle roof.



2001

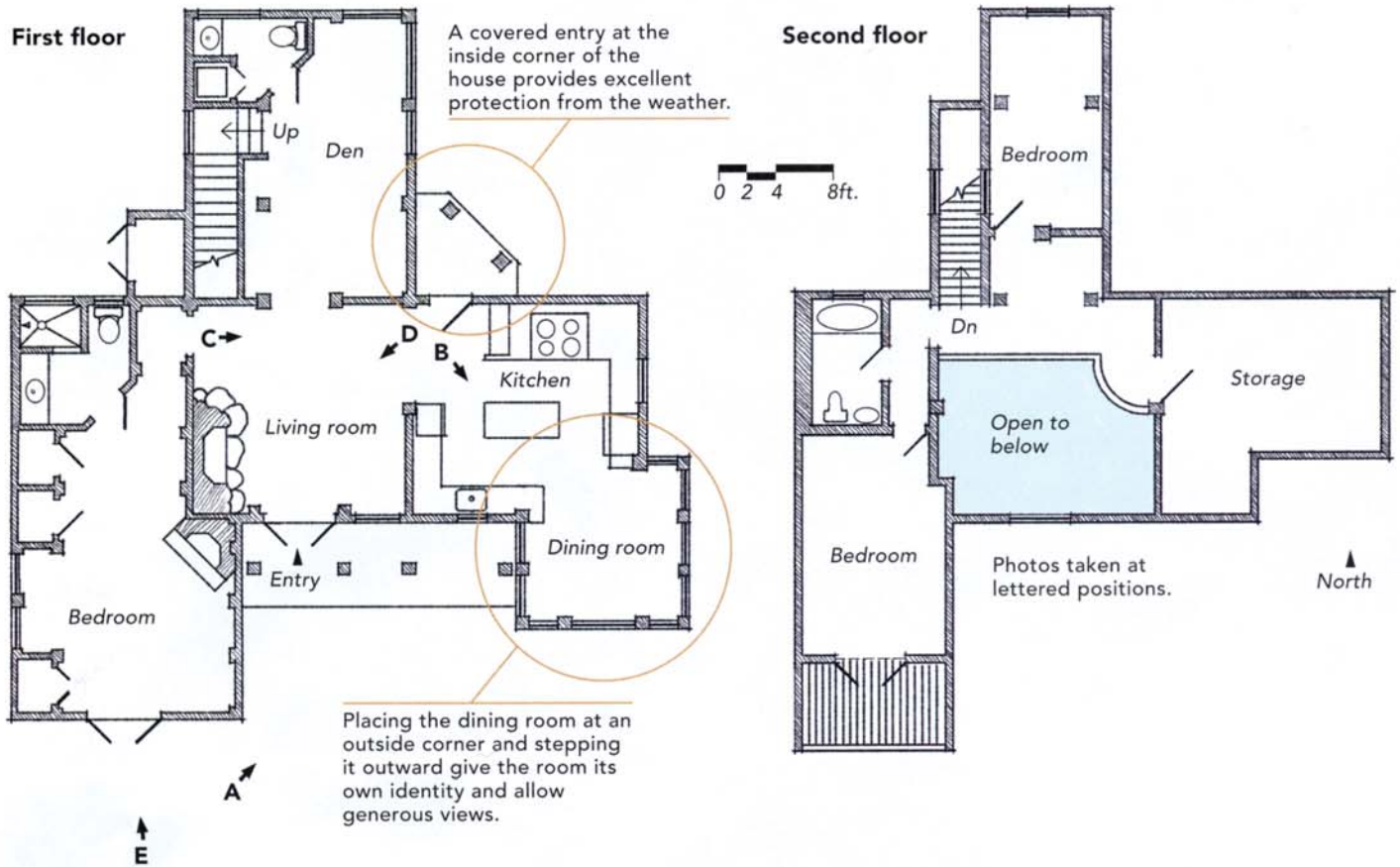
Separate spaces grafted together. Individual rooms take on their own identity by having their own roofs. Here, as in the prior houses, the dining room occupies its own hip-roofed alcove on a corner of the house. Photo taken at A on floor plan.

of homes in the San Juan Islands with enduring style and appeal



The Garrison Bay house

Although the sites change, some patterns are repeated in each Knight house. For one, the dining space is always on an outside corner in a room that jogs out from the house so that it can have its own roof shape. Another recurring pattern is the entry at an inside corner, where shelter is provided by the wings of the building.



the country roots of that first house remain evident in all their projects.

The "patterns" of a Knight house

As a body of work, the Knights' houses reveal a collection of design ideas reused again and again, each in a slightly different way. Most of the photos presented here are from the Knights' latest project, the Garrison Bay house. Two other houses, the Smuggler's Cove house and the Stuart Island house, demonstrate how the patterns recur and take different shape (photos p. 58).

Interior spaces influence the exterior look. Some of the spaces are conceived of as sepa-

Blurred around the openings. Instead of doorways, public rooms have generous openings where the contents of one spill into the next. In this dining room, for example, the kitchen counter wraps around the corner into the room. Photo taken at B on floor plan.

rate volumes with their own roofs, which then are welded into the bulk of the house. These special rooms often are located at the corners, such as a dining alcove on an exterior corner for a better view (photo p. 59). This design also can work in reverse, such as using an interior corner for an entry alcove, which can provide better protection from the elements (floor plans above). This approach results in an unusually complex perimeter and roof.

The major rooms overlap one another. Instead of doorways from one space to another, the rooms have fuzzy edges where they come together. For example, the dining room is part of the kitchen (photo left), and the den is open to the living area. The result is longer views and a sense of inclusion.

The roofs are complex and steep. They come low to the ground in places, strongly sheltering the building and defining the profile of the house (photos pp. 58, 59). The slopes