

# Paradise Found...Twice



THE BEACH HOUSE AND MAHA OLU HOMES AT BABY BEACH, LAHAINA

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(The Beach House)

ABOVE: Maha Olu, one of two houses built side by side on Baby Beach, a short walk from Lahaina, is a classic plantation style beach home.

RIGHT: A custom gate decorated with bamboo, banana leaves, and ginger greet guests as they enter the open foyer.



Working closely with luxury developer Michael Pierson, Mary Philpotts McGrath helped capture the vision of two homes which could be made into a large family compound.





ABOVE: In the great room of Maha Olu, glass fishing balls and an old wooden long board capture the spirit of the sea.

**“Because the focus of the homes is towards the sea, it was important how they look from the water. It wasn’t enough to just have lots of glass,” says Clifford.**



ABOVE: The entrance hall of Maha Olu is decorated with varying sizes of kapa cloth bark from around Polynesia including Hawai’i, Tonga, Fiji and Samoa. A beautiful hand-woven blue rug mirrors the kapa patterns.

**W**HAT COULD BE BETTER THAN OWNING ONE OF ONLY EIGHT homes on west Maui’s idyllic Baby Beach, just a short stroll from Old Lahaina Town?

How about owning two?

That is the enviable situation in which luxury developer Michael Pierson finds himself—a slice of paradise squared.

When the personal estate of Maui developer Masao Omori was divided, Michael Pierson—principal of Michael Pierson Company, Inc.—envisioned transforming the two-thirds acre beachfront parcel into two distinctive lots. There, two classic

plantation style homes would stand side by side. If joined as one large compound, the properties could enable a multi-generational family to live the ultimate Island lifestyle.

Recalling his mother’s home in Hāna (and a decade raising his own children while on Baby Beach), Pierson wanted to design two separate, unique homes that would retain their individual character while complementing one another. In order to achieve this goal, Pierson assembled the best in Hawaiian home building—3D Builders in Kahului; Clifford Projects, Inc. on O’ahu; Maui landscape architect Russel Y. Gushi; and Honolulu-





**OPPOSITE TOP:** The upstairs master bedroom in Maha Olu looks across the 'Au'au channel at Lāna'i while the downstairs master bedroom (opposite bottom) leads directly out to an inviting lawn and beyond, the beach.

**ABOVE:** The Maha Olu spa and curvilinear swimming pool were intentionally designed differently from the pool next door at the Beach House to help reinforce a sense of individuality.



based Philpotts and Associates Interior Design.

Key to fulfilling Pierson's vision for this rural Maui neighborhood was integrating the buildings into their natural setting. He also desired to retain a sense of seclusion, while bestowing an overwhelmingly open quality where indoor and outdoor spaces blend seamlessly.

"Michael wanted to create homes that captured a casualness and informality that make for really happy times," recalls famed interior designer Mary Philpotts McGrath, who has worked with Pierson for 25 years.

As a former resident of Baby Beach, Pierson knew the joys of waking up to the silver glassy waters off Maui, the endlessly swaying palms, and days capped with a sunset behind Lāna'i. He also recognized he had an extremely rare chance to create a family haven with two timeless homes.

The first house, the one-story Beach House at Baby Beach, sits on the neighborhood's largest residential lot (15,003 square feet), in the shadow of the Jodo Buddhist Mission's three-tiered pagoda, and boasts 4,391 gross square feet.

Its sister property, the two-story 3,661 gross square foot Maha Olu at Baby Beach, rests on a 10,846 square foot lot. It was

completed in March 2008, exactly one year after the Beach House.

In keeping with Pierson's custom of selecting materials that best reflect the surroundings and placing them in local architectural and historical context, both homes share high end coral stone columns, cedar lap siding and mitered corners along with low maintenance materials like granite countertops, slate and ipe hardwood floors. Coupled with superior workmanship, the homes boast solid character and promise considerable longevity.

Don Roth, owner of 3D Builders, points to deliberate insulation, ventilation and lighting strategies as examples of how each house maximizes Maui's abundant sunlight and steady trade winds to achieve the most comfort with the least energy output. No cost was spared when selecting Quantum window systems and sliding doors and Rocky Mountain hardware throughout, says Roth.

Because both homes focus towards the water, Don Clifford (architect and president of Clifford Projects, Inc.) knew it would be important how they looked from the water. "Just having lots of glass isn't enough," Clifford says. "These were beachfront properties that needed to capture the traditional Hawaiian





“Our objective was to establish a classic plantation style home for both properties that would integrate state of the art amenities to create subtle, sophisticated homes,” says Pierson.

ABOVE: Mahogany columns and trim add a touch of elegance to the living room in The Beach House at Baby Beach, a home that celebrates casual island living and encourages good, family times.





ABOVE: The Beach House at Baby Beach has a bright kitchen with a koa wood island, perfect for preparing pupus or a meal.



ABOVE: A coffered ceiling with clear cedar siding and mahogany beams accent The Beach House at Baby Beach's north master bedroom which looks out onto a rectilinear infinity lap pool and beyond, the sea.



LEFT: Designer Mary Philpotts McGrath purposely blended indoors and out, taking advantage of west Maui's near-flawless climate where warm days and cool nights enhance the attraction of indoor living room that feels like an outdoor lāna'i.

beach house ambiance.”

Pursuing Pierson's original vision, Clifford Projects designed two houses individual enough to stand independently, but when viewed as a whole would create a vision of harmony with each other and their surroundings. Palletes of various colors help retain character, while the quality of materials and shared exterior decking and fencing ties them together.

Both homes open onto wraparound lānais that drop four steps down to pools—a rectilinear infinity lap pool at the Beach House, and a more whimsical, kidney-shaped pool and spa next door at Maha Olu.

Two-story great rooms in both homes feature high, open-beamed ceilings. All other rooms radiate from these center points, making for open, welcoming spaces where families and friends can relax.

Clifford explains that the openness of the homes is enhanced by carefully designed transitional spaces. Guests move from the street to the ocean-facing lānai by traversing low, broad

steps, foyers, breezeways and shady courtyards replete with tropical foliage. “There is a feeling of transparency that gives you indoor/outdoor beach living,” says Clifford.

Inside the homes, rooms offer views of plants, sea or sky, but no windows look onto the lane leading to the lots. The sense of detachment from the road lends an air of privacy to the properties.

Drawing on memories of living on Maui's jungle-covered windward coast, Pierson wanted to recreate that same luscious sensation of dense, tropical foliage while preserving the parcel's natural, drier shoreline appeal and neighbor Island views. To get the best of Maui's diverse micro-climates, Russel Y. Gushi was hired to create protected courtyard gardens facing each other. These courtyards can be connected by a walkway.

Gushi, having worked with Pierson since the 1980s, understood that tropical landscaping is as much about sound and scent as sight. He introduced a granite water fountain and a pool of river stones which, in the enclosed courtyard, echo like





**ABOVE:** The Beach House, one of only eight residences at Baby Beach, occupies the neighborhood's largest residential lot (15,003 square feet). Built on the former estate of Maui developer Masao Omori, the home sits in the shadow of the Jodo Buddhist Mission's three-tiered pagoda.

**RIGHT:** The spa and lap pool at The Beach House gaze out onto Hawaiian coastal landscaping like coconut palms and naupaka with the island of Lāna'i visible in the distance. Inner courtyard gardens in both The Beach House and neighboring Maha Olu capture the dense green foliage of the Hāna Coast.

a hidden grotto.

Deliberately placed boulders serve as natural sculptures that lend a terrestrial symmetry with the more delicate plantings of red and white gingers, rhaps and fox tail palms, hapu`u tree ferns and spider lilies. Fragrant puakenikeni, plumeria and "heaven scent" gardenia were used not only for their ability to invoke calm and serenity, but for their arresting blossoms and rich green foliage.

Native Hawaiian naupaka, pohinahina and 'akia along with niu (coconut palms) accent the shoreline. Sweeping views of Lāna'i invite the eye across the 'Au'au channel, a protected humpback whale breeding ground in winter. "This is what people dream of Hawai'i," Mary Philpotts McGrath says. "The landscaping is lush and invigorating with colors that become iridescent in the light."

Pierson calls Philpotts McGrath a "true Hawaiian treasure," the acclaimed designer was able to "bring the outdoors in, and the indoors out" to Gushi's courtyard, placing a reclaimed antique teak bench as an ideal garden viewing spot. "This is old Maui," she reflects, "a place where time stands still."

In her designs, Philpotts McGrath selects colors that blend with the ocean and beach elements. Here, that means large driftwood hangings and an old wooden long board mounted above the sliding doors between the great room and lānai.

Enhancing the Hawaiian ambiance in the vaulted two-story entry hall of Maha Olu, Philpotts McGrath hung framed kapa cloth bark from Hawai'i, Fiji, Samoa and Tonga with similar patterns reflected in a Polynesian motif blue hand-woven rug. "Michael relied on us for the aesthetic interpretation of the houses, but was personally involved throughout," says Philpotts McGrath.

Together, these notable individuals—developer, contractor, architect, interior and landscape designer—formed a cohesive team to flawlessly execute Pierson's once-in-a-lifetime dream of creating a space where classic style, quality craftsmanship, Island style informality, and the intimacy of family become the stage for a lifestyle worthy of the setting.

His vision realized, Pierson's Beach House and Maha Olu at Baby Beach are as complementary and Hawaiian as fish and poi. The balance of function and beauty are as perfected as sea and sky. ❀

