



# MAINE ATTRACTION

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*Sharon and Paul Mrozinski, ABOVE, designed the keeping room, LEFT, as a family gathering space. Sharon says the room's neutral tones give it a restful feeling even when it's full of people.*

Following her heart, a native Southwesterner restores an 18th-century house in New England for her family's new home and antiques business.

"Maine chooses you—you don't choose Maine," Sharon Mrozinski declares. In fact, Maine captured this Arizona native's heart and imagination years before she first visited the region.

As a child, Sharon was so taken with New England that she filled scrapbooks with magazine photos of its villages and forested landscapes. Later, as a young woman, she traveled there for the first time. Charmed by a friend's 18th-century farmhouse (even though it lacked electricity, running water, and a telephone), Sharon vowed to return to Maine one day to live.

A decade ago Sharon and her husband, Paul, an architect, did just that. They packed up their collection of textiles, painted furniture, and folk art and moved into Marston House, a 1785 Federal-style home in Wiscasset. "We had been in Wiscasset the summer before with all the kids, and had loved the house when we spotted it," Sharon says.

Converting most of the first floor into a shop, and the rest of the house into a home for them and their four children, proved no small task for the Mrozinskis. Unoccupied for several years, Marston House had fallen into disrepair. "The back part of the house, which was added on in the 1850s, was in terrible shape," Sharon recalls. Now their kitchen and keeping room, this space was being used as a working shed and was in shambles. Undaunted, the Mrozinskis replaced floorboards and ceiling beams and boards; they also added a fireplace and windows. Only the

*Reproduction black-painted Windsor chairs surround the 1840 English library table, BELOW, which was placed parallel to the windows and also comfortably close to a deep fireplace. The 1790 Queen Anne wall shelf displays a collection of circa-1850s French pitchers.*







“The kids love the noises, the creaks that come with an old house,” Sharon says. “You can’t re-create that atmosphere in a new place.”

kitchen window and a vintage stainless-steel sink were retained. Paul designed the kitchen cabinets and had them built locally. “We worked excitedly, like a couple of kids,” Sharon says.

Furnishing the house came easier. With white walls as a backdrop, the couple’s treasured 19th-century antiques and reproductions mixed companionably throughout. In the keeping room, for example, a down sofa and oversize wing chair provide a soft counterpoint to an 1860 scrubbed-top worktable, an 1870 bench that does duty as an end table, and an 1840s English library table ringed by reproduction Windsor chairs. “We wanted the keeping room to be a cozy family space, where all six of us could be together—to eat, to play games, and to talk,” Sharon says.

Because she doesn’t feel comfortable buying art, Sharon says that except for some paintings, mostly of the house, she prefers objects as art. “I hang violin cases or musical instruments on the wall as art.” She also displays collectibles such as antique work baskets, old toys, and 19th-century pottery throughout the house.

Egg-related objects hold a special fascination for her: The master bedroom contains framed 1820 English chromolithographs of eggs as well as a collection of antique stone eggs, gifts from family friends or purchased on

*The 1820 New Hampshire red-painted cupboard, ABOVE, displays a collection of 19th-century striped pottery pitchers; the blue cabinet serves as the Mrozinskis’ pantry. An 1820 Maine wall shelf holds a collection of stone pears.*

*RIGHT: Avid cooks, the Mrozinskis ordered appliances for their retooled kitchen from a restaurant supply house. The kitchen worktable is 18th-century Vermont.*





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"I love calm colors in a bedroom," Sharon says. The reproduction pencil-post bed, TOP LEFT, has a rubbed white finish and is dressed in pale linen. An old architectural column was used for the lamp; the sign is 1860 New England.

ABOVE: The master bath retains an old fireplace and sink. The 1840 tin pie safe provides storage for towels and sheets.

TOP RIGHT: Paul designed the bedroom floor to resemble one of their antique quilts.

ABOVE, RIGHT: Sharon combines stone eggs with 1820 framed egg prints in the bedroom.

"I think that an egg is one of the most beautiful shapes I have ever seen," she says.

the family's travels. "I love the color of eggs," she says. "I could probably decorate my whole house around eggs."

Although she describes the family's collections amassed over the years as "rather modest," Sharon says she loves the kind of impact and display an entire collection brings to a room. "I can't stand buying several items all the same and leaving a few behind," she says. "It's like separating puppies."

Now comfortably settled in the house, both Sharon and Paul found renovating the place so satisfying that they have since transformed a carriage house into a bed-and-breakfast, and fitted out a neighboring store as a gourmet food shop (see page 20). "All this renovation was good for the kids, too," Sharon says. "They saw how you can take an old house and turn it into a home. It's been a wonderful experience—we've all really enjoyed it." □

For more information about the Mrozinskis' furnishings, bed-and-breakfast, and food shop, turn to Sources on page 172.