

Cherished OBJECTS



The Marston House, a shop and bed-and-breakfast in the antiques district of coastal Maine, specializes in simple, everyday objects whose beauty shows the hand of time. Owners Paul and Sharon Mrozinski travel as far as France to find vintage pieces that reflect the perfect imperfection of the past.

TEXT NANCY A. RUHLING PHOTOGRAPHY KATE SEARS

A red enamelware teapot that romantically serves only enough for two, along with toddlers' leather shoes and antique toile d'Avignon linens, opposite, set the stage at The Marston House shop. Here, an 1820s pencil-post tester bed, constructed of plain pine, is a showcase for heirloom linens and antique kitchen cloth made into comfy pillows.





Around the bend and down the hill into Wiscasset, “Maine’s prettiest village,” there’s a charming sea captain’s home.

The Marston House, which is what proprietors Paul and Sharon Mrozinski have called it since they opened it a little more than two decades ago, is one of nearly two dozen antiques shops that have made this tiny town a precious find for collectors.

In the white-clapboard, Federal-style structure that was built in 1785, on any visit you’ll find an array of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century antiques, including handmade French garden smocks, striped harvest sacks, Parisian dressmaker mannequins, handblown glass cloches, and delicately painted milliners’ heads. The inventory also features a Swedish clock, a round bistro table, and a pair of wrought iron garden benches whose undulating frames are supported by horses’ hooves.

“I’m attracted to things that are simple, natural, handmade, and utilitarian,” says Sharon. “My real love is items from up to about the 1840s.”

Although Sharon grew up in the desert of Arizona, she always had her sights set on New England, going so far as to keep a scrapbook of photos





Colorful vintage linen sheets, newly hand-dyed by a French alchemist, and toile d'Nantes pillows form a bright backdrop for handmade beeswax candles and bride's boxes, as well as a circa-1800 Swedish clock whose face is hand-painted with the names of the bride and groom for whom it was made. A French vintner's oval tilt-top table is set with an artful arrangement of household objects. An easel-like orchard ladder holds an array of linens.





of places where she dreamed of living. "People ask me why I moved to—of all places—Wiscasset," she says. "Well, just like all the objects in The Marston House, I didn't find it so much as it found me."

Many of the antiques displayed in the shop come from the Luberon region in southern France, where Sharon and Paul spend their winters in the hilltop village of Bonnieux.

Of all the items Sharon collects, it is the antique textiles that speak most eloquently to her. "Some of these pieces were made by hand 250 years ago," she says reverently. "Each has irregularities and a signature that reveals the sort of hand that made it. When you touch one, you can feel the body and soul of the weaver. There is a spirit that transcends these pieces that's very fulfilling."

In addition to the shop, the Mrozinskis have found another way to share their love of The Marston House with visitors: They have turned the carriage house on the property into a bed-and-breakfast.

"I have a wonderful life's work," Sharon says. "I'm recycling, re-inventing, reusing, and passing wonderful things on to others to enjoy. It is their energy that endures." *V*



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A child's squeak-toy bear from the 1940s stands guard over an 1890s drafting table and stool, and a 1920s handmade rabbit peeks out at the other wares, which include a cupboard filled with nineteenth-century French quilts. In the bed-and-breakfast's guest room, a pencil-post bed and a dining table and chairs rest comfortably under a hipped roof. Owners Paul and Sharon Mrozinski often dine in the garden, where breakfast is served to guests.

