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This elegant Greek Revival house was originally built by New England merchant mariner Isaac Tompkins in 1840. The house is now a stunning setting for three centuries of American antiques.

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A view of the picturesque New England village in which the couple reside.

**OPPOSITE:**

Antique furniture is not the only area in which this couple collects. A passion of the husband's includes their ten antique vehicles — three of which are shown here — a 1930 Ford, a 1929 Briggs, and a 1931 Ford Roadster. He enjoys finding antique cars in disrepair and restoring them to working order.





# *A Time Capsule with Heart*

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PHOTOGRAPHY BY J. DAVID BOHL





This pristine Greek Revival home on the southern New England coast was neglected for at least sixteen years until the present owners acquired it in 1993 and began the careful reclamation that allowed it to emerge from the brambles, bamboo, and bittersweet that had overgrown the property. Born and raised on the New England coast nearby, the wife developed a love for local architecture and antiques. She was thrilled to find this coastal New England gem for their retirement. Today the house and the outbuildings the couple added are filled with their wide ranging collections drawn from their former residences, a 1670 house north of Boston and a 1750 farm in New Hampshire. Seventeenth-, eighteenth-, and nineteenth-century New England and English furniture and decorative arts have all found a home in this meticulously restored 1840 house.

The neighborhood was a whaling port as early as 1760. The house was built by a merchant mariner of some means who gave his home high ceilings and spacious rooms. It retains the original moldings around the doors and windows and the original horsehair and clamshell plaster. Evidence of the original sinks and hand pumps on the first and second floors indicate that the house was built as a two-family residence.

The husband, a retired surgeon, recalls prowling the countryside for antiques even



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The red paint of the floor against the white walls of the dining room seems to elevate the dining table and chairs. The English dresser was acquired in Petworth, England, and holds some of the couple's collection of English pewter. It also holds a sixteenth-century ceramic horse and a coin bank thought to be Chinese. Two nineteenth-century English prints, one of which depicts the Royal Mail, and the other, the Birmingham Tally Ho, hang above one of a pair of Queen Anne chairs and a fine splay leg stand. The living room, with the Silas Hoadley tall clock, is seen in the room beyond. In the front entry, a William & Mary dressing table is placed below a Chippendale looking glass.

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The couple's most prized piece is the charming mid-nineteenth-century portrait of a child wearing a tasseled hat and holding an orange. Though the artist's name is obscured, the attribution is to New England based on the painting being found in the attic of a Maine house.



In the hall hangs a portrait of a dashing New England sea captain by Amsterdam port painter Carolus Delin (1756–1818) who painted many visiting American mariners to his city. The tin chandelier hangs above a bold Connecticut banister back chair.







before he completed his medical training. Several decades later, a large house, two barns, and a tea house can barely contain their collections. “We love the simple lines and the quality of New England pieces,” says the husband, whose accent attests to his Georgia heritage.

Upon entering the front door, visitors are immediately greeted by the striking Connecticut banister-back chair with mushroom hand grips; it came from the late dealer Mary Allis. In the living room to the left, a

tall-clock signed by Plymouth, Connecticut, clockmaker Silas Hoadley (1786–1870), keeps the time opposite the couple’s most prized piece, a charming mid-nineteenth-century portrait of a child by a New England artist. The painting was purchased from Maine dealer Ross Levett who found it in the attic of a Maine home, and though signed, the name of the artist has been obscured. A portrait of the child’s father by the same artist hangs nearby; a portrait of the mother also exists.

A prized coverlet on a tester bed in an upstairs bedroom complements the colors on the facade of a carved and painted Connecticut chest nearby, purchased from dealer David Schorsch. The cats of the hooked rug play off the carved lamb placed on a small early eighteenth-century green storage box on ball feet and with snipe hinges. The decorative marbling of the fireplace surround was completed after the house was built. The walls are hung with a portrait of a young lady by itinerant artist William Matthew Prior (1806–1873), and an eglomisé gilt mirror, both from the nineteenth century.



The wife's tea house is a repository of eighteenth-century furnishings from the couple's former New Hampshire farmhouse. The 1932 Ford BB farm truck from the couple's automobile collection is driven in parades and other celebratory occasions.



Their passion for collecting is so strong that the couple could not possibly have retained all of the objects they have acquired over the years, so they exhibit at early American antiques shows throughout New England. Though their love is Americana, the couple has also traveled to England to purchase antiques, and objects from the two countries share space in the same rooms: The Georgian dining table was bought in England; the accompanying Queen Anne chairs are American. Though originally acquired for resale, the English dresser in the dining room was instead employed in the house to display pewter. A ship's portrait, acquired in England, hangs over the downstairs kitchen mantel; though from overseas, like all the other maritime objects in the collection, it was bought specifically for this coastal home.

This is a home in which the antiques are used. By the fireplace in the main kitchen, yellow paint-decorated matching fancy chairs surround an ample harvest table at which children, grandchildren, and friends are always welcomed. A nineteenth-century wood box originally acquired for the couple's New Hampshire house supplies the fireplace.

If all of their collections were confined to the house, it would be bursting at the seams. Fortunately their four acres have allowed the couple to grow the collection beyond their dwelling, thus fueling the collecting bug by having the space on which to expand. The wife's shingled tea house, which replaced a tumbledown shed, is surrounded by stone walls and granite blocks that shelter the adjacent patio. The scents of the garden drift in through the open door on a fine summer's day. It is a soothing space designed to reproduce an early interior with exposed beams and whitewashed walls and is furnished with favored objects from the couple's 1670 house. The large windows allow the sun to



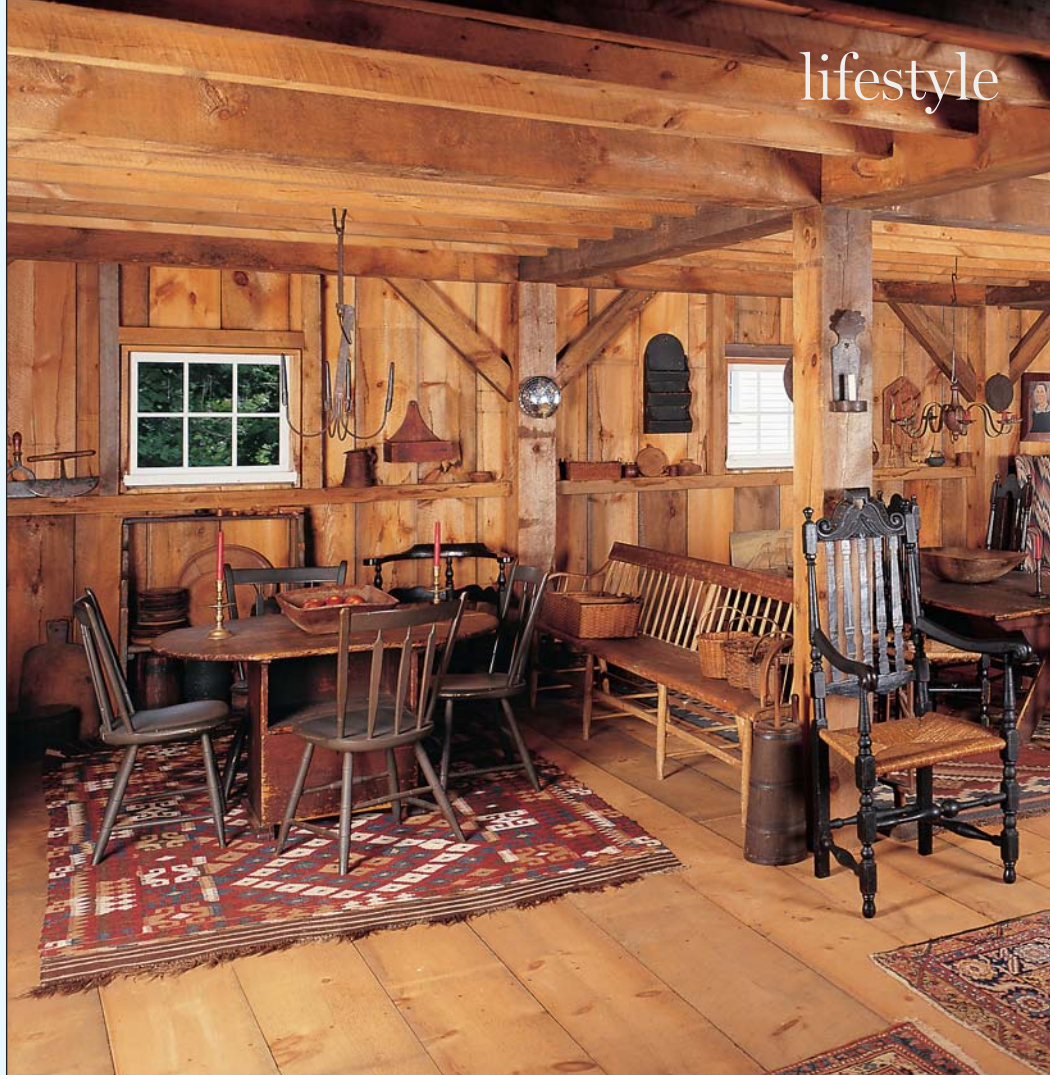
The couple built the tea house based on an eighteenth-century design and techniques, and then filled it with period furniture and accessories. The butterfly drop-leaf table in the tea house is set with pewter from the couple's large collection.



The upper level of the barn is divided by the supporting beams into small dining and sitting areas. The couple has gathered a grand array of banister-back and turned "Carver" chairs, some of which are placed against the barn's beams, facing each other like sentries.







Choice examples of country seating in the barn are used for entertaining, with a sawbuck table in one setting and a hutch table in another.

brighten the space all year and keep it warm in the cooler months. The husband glazed all 192 frames of the windows with old glass that he found on the side of the road, in the dump, or “any place I could find it.”

The early eighteenth-century single-drawer butterfly drop-leaf table is the star of the one room house. A period step-back cupboard holds a collection of baskets, which also cover a fine old red blanket chest. An elongated whale-form shelf fitted with two drawers hangs above a William and Mary tavern table, which is covered with an early eighteenth-century table rug. Pewter pieces from the couple’s expansive collection are stored in the drawer.

Though a delightful retreat, the tea house is limited by its size and the couple needed more room. The solution? Build a barn; no, two barns. One, located below the house, is where the husband keeps some of the ten antique

automobiles and trucks that he has collected over the years. He first stumbled upon antique cars when he was fifteen years old. He began with passion in the 1980s, when he purchased a 1930 Model A Ford. Over the next two decades, he increased the collection to ten vehicles, all of which have been fully restored.

Every year, friends and family join the couple for an old-fashioned Fourth of July celebration. The gathering includes a drive through the New England countryside and coastal areas in the antique cars, and ends in games and a picnic by the sea.

The other barn was erected beside the house. The husband says, “We had the option of buying an old barn and moving it here or building a reproduction.” They chose the latter, copying the design and mortise and tenon construction of a nineteenth-century example.

The ground floor houses the overflow of antique cars, generally the finer examples, as well as a workshop complete with the assorted





parts and tools the husband uses to keep the cars in working order.

The second floor of the barn is like walking into a time capsule, opening the volumes of Wallace Nutting's 1928 *Furniture Treasury* and seeing the pages come alive. American furniture and decorative arts are displayed in room settings, the rugged supporting beams of the barn demarcating the open space into individual areas for display. Each bay is given its own focus, though there is an overwhelming sense for the grand extent of the objects throughout the entire space. Though it may seem like every nook and cranny is filled, pieces continue to be added to the space. As the husband says, "We can't help ourselves."

Here the true nature of the collecting spirit is evident, with multiple examples of forms or devices on display or stored in drawers or in cabinets. Redware and Delftware fill the shelves of a tall step-back cupboard in red paint; pewter lines the shelves of a blue-painted cupboard. The walls are hung with an assortment of items, from tape looms to lighting devices; treenware, firkins, and a selection of sundials are among the items displayed on the rails. A selection of domestic necessities juxtaposed around one of the supporting beams includes a spinning jenny, a child minder, and a banister-back chair. A flax wheel, a niddy noddy, a candlestand, and a turned "Carver" chair are clustered around another.

Part of the couple's collections of colorful German kugels (glass balls, the largest of which is fourteen inches in diameter) hang in graduated order from the beams, providing bright sparks of color against the earth tones of the furniture and barn planks.

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A Boston chest with split spindles is located along the southeast wall of the barn. Serving a dual purpose, it is visually striking as well as being a repository within the drawers for small early hand mirrors, watercolors, and wooden tools and implements.

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A nineteenth-century schoolmaster's desk, with early ledger and writing implements, occupies a corner of the barn near the owners' cache of research books. On the floor is an early lantern and faux-painted dome-top box.





A nineteenth-century portrait of a young man holding brushes and an artist's palette signed "Ireland," with a Concord coach in the background, was found in New Hampshire. While the sitter's smug expression assures his continued residence in the barn rather than the house, the husband says the painted frame is the "best one I have ever seen." Another portrait, this one of Boston physician and Revolutionary War hero Joseph Warren by Samuel Yates, was done in the 1700s according to a fragmented label on the back. Dr. Warren was one of three brothers who were founders of the Massachusetts General Hospital. The couple feels an affinity for it because of the commonality of Boston medicine.

Three turn-of-the-eighteenth-century Massachusetts chests line the southeast wall. An elaborate early Boston chest embellished with a raised geometric arrangement and split spindles, which came from dealer Pam Boynton, has its drawers brimming with more collections. One drawer houses small early hand mirrors and watercolors, silhouettes in another, and yet another drawer contains wood tools and implements.

Though the impression of the barn collection is first one of a museum, as with the objects in the house and tea house, these pieces are meant to be used and enjoyed. The large, open space is conducive to events, and the barn was recently the site of a graduation party for their eldest grandchild. It now seems that a tradition has been established and the younger grandchildren are looking forward to their own celebrations in this enchanting space. Though it is easy to become engrossed in the surroundings of the barn, it is but one component of a cohesive, well loved and continually changing collection.

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This two-door Rhode Island cabinet in blue paint turned up at the former Lowell Street antiques district in Boston in the late 1960s and has traveled with the couple from house to house. Today it is filled with a collection of lamps and lighting.

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Redware and Delft line the shelves of a red step-back cupboard in the barn. A brass telescope and spyglass are a nod to the maritime history of the area.

