

house beautiful

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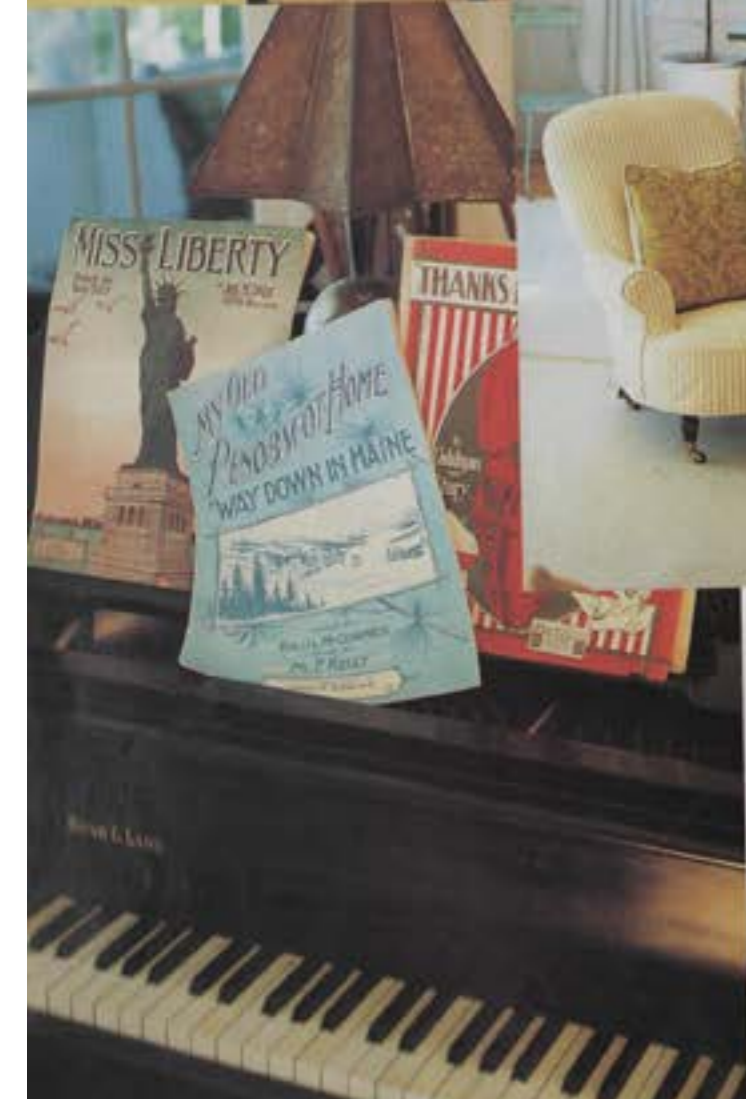
DEARLY BELOVED

Each piece of furniture, each lamp and shell in Mallory Marshall and Peter Haffenreffer's Dark Harbor, Maine, summer house preserves some tender personal history—reflecting the owners' own sense and sensitivity

BY CAROL PREBANT PHOTOGRAPHY BY MICHAEL MUNDY
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In the chair-filled living room, shocks of black linearity and several small treasures—two shells, a birdhouse on a pedestal, two tiny bronze terriers—are all silhouetted against a creamy backdrop that includes cushiony sofas, a pale rug, and thick linen-sheeting curtains. The cracked-leather club chair lived for a spell in a gas station.





The essence of home, clockwise from top right: a comfortable rocker; favorite books and objects; photo of a friend, Elizabeth Holmquist (a Sister Parish cousin); old songs, old piano; original wainscoting moved from pantry to hallway. Center: A canary and finches in a fanciful cage.



Bobbing on the Atlantic just beyond the house (right) is Peter Haffenreffer's adored boat. Below: Linking the house to the newly built replica of his childhood garden shed is a noble white pergola. Gravel walks flank raised beds, and (center right) a perfect summer convertible awaits.



On the dock (above) local lobstermen Babe Hatch and Bill Riedy drop off dinner, prepared (right) by Mallory with an assist from her children, Kelsey and John. Far right: The droll sign in the pantry cautions passersby, and perhaps Father Time as well.



She loves Maine for its crystalline light; its sense of measureless, honeyed time; and finally, for its silence, attributable both to its citizens' taciturnity and their profound lack of interest in power tools. Mallory Marshall has a house in Dark Harbor that is the essence of home. It is the reconfigured half of a once-grand structure, the other half having been moved and re-erected elsewhere. Here have come to roost a few beloved ancestors (in a cemetery she recently established, 18th-century-style, on her own home grounds); a perfect reproduction of husband Peter Haffenreffer's favorite garden shed and long-lost childhood boat; beloved mementos of dear old friends; and innumerable pieces of new and antique anthropomorphized furniture such as a leather Chesterfield in the kitchen that she considers "a big man with a cigar" and a red chair that she heard begging, "Help! Get me out of here!" from a stall at the Paris flea market.

The house was, at purchase, done up in insipid 1980s peach laced with fluffy lime. "Like California meeting Santa Fe," Marshall laughs. So when friend and mentor, Boston designer William Hodgins, "came in like a lion," swept his eyes around the living room, and declared, "You have to put a window there," the "Hodgins Window" was installed post-haste. The master commented, "You can never have too much comfortable seating." He provided the butterscotch yellow upholstery that anchors the living room, and Marshall dutifully launched a great chair acquisition. Despite the potentially intimidating presence of the Hodgins Window, though, tag-sale pieces have gently insinuated themselves to mellow every room.

With talented partner James Light, Marshall has recently started her own design firm, Mallory James. For this house they have together stitched up curtains from old linen sheets (with throwaway-chic hem-level monograms), put a nun's bathtub in the "August overflow" room, incorporated a veterinary gurney into the kitchen, and turned the once-dismal attic into a whimsical aerie, a family playroom complete with snug boat beds under gables, illuminated by fake portholes ("like moons"). A common thread throughout are subtle colors from putty to white, allowing Marshall's quirky treasures to shine.

Some Marshallisms: "Sofas should look like the Queen Mother"—i.e. have major presence, no fat legs, a bit of age, and lots of comfort. Do ranch-house clients yearn for old house ambiance? Mallory James says, "Fix it with moldings." Do clients desire instant history? Marshall and Light are willing to provide that, too, although they "could never work for anyone who didn't own at least two boxes of old, really corny Christmas ornaments."

So romantic, so sentimental, so pure, so Down East eccentric—just like Mallory Marshall.



James Light, Marshall's decorating partner, terms the dining room wall tint "the breathiest green." The finish on inexpensive dining chairs improved with an "aging" rubdown. Marshall used laundry marker to add an Edna St. Vincent Millay verse around the border of a painted rug. A powdery painted cabinet and a Swedish clock (in the hall) are lifetime favorites.



In the master suite (clockwise from left) ostriches (among other birds) cavort on slipcovers, doubtless watching over their own nearby eggs, electrified and mounted on wall brackets. Mica lamp illuminates memorabilia. Red tub chair in the bathroom is a rare deep accent. Master bedroom's scribbly duvet reminds Marshall to write thank-you notes.



A curtain descends from the crossbeam in the attic playroom (top and above) to create a stage for theatricals, and son John marshals his troops at the foot of a cozy boat bed. Left: In guest bath, a tub offers an unobstructed view of the curly iron bed and chandelier (close relatives).



Scroll-painted walls in a guest bedroom echo the headboards of painted Swedish beds. A carved Inuit bear awaits a dance partner, says Marshall, and "somehow looks like Peter."

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