

ANTIQUE CHIC

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The living room's palette of white with gray trim feels clean and serene (Benjamin Moore's Pewter and Linen). The Swedish banjo clock at left inspired the color pattern of the painted floor.

By Allison Paige | Photos by Lauryn Hottinger

An antiques dealer's 1800 renovated cape in Kennebunk brims with character and charm. Frank Grdich, the owner of Bulfinch Antiques in Kennebunk, fell into the business by happenstance. While managing DePrisco's Jewelers in Massachusetts, he and his partner, Bill Floyd, would attend antiques auctions for fun. "I saw all these dealers buying box lots. I said to them, 'What do you *do* with all this stuff?' And they said, 'We quit our jobs. We became antiques dealers!'"

On a whim, Frank gave it a try. "One day, I bought a box lot and made more money selling those few antiques than I did all week in the couture jewelry business."

His eye was good, honed, no doubt, over countless hours of studying carats under a loupe.

"I had a good eye for well-made things like silver and fine china," says Frank. He could tell the difference between ordinary glass and Baccarat and Waterford at a glance.



Frank Gridch, left, and Bill Floyd right, in the sitting area off the kitchen. Roll-arm club chairs are paired with a table made from honed granite from Morningstar Stone and Tile. Frank mounted the stone on a pedestal that he painted silver.

Eventually, he opened Bulfinch Antiques on Boston's quaint Charles Street. Named from two distinctly different local legends, Charles Bulfinch, the architect of the gold-domed State House, and the Bull & Finch pub, a locale made famous by the TV show *Cheers*, Frank's shop did a brisk business. But after six years of grueling commutes—Ipswich, Massachusetts, to Boston—he was ready for a change. In search of a simpler life, he and Bill, a retired education consultant, moved to Maine, where they found another sort of hidden treasure, an antique cape in Kennebunk that, much like the box lot Frank once bid on, turned out to be a diamond in the rough.

When they bought it, the circa-1800 post and beam was in forlorn condition, but Frank's eye for quality served him well. A combination of love, patience, and creativity uncovered its hidden assets.



"It was done piecemeal, over time," Frank explains. "The couple we bought it from, the widow had lived here as a newlywed in 1926 and never did much to it since then. Everything was replaced with Homasote cardboard walls to make it look modern for the twenties."

The drab interior held no promise of historic charm, save a rusted claw-foot tub, but Frank had a hunch. With the Homasote removed and the attic opened up, they were rewarded with handsome beams and a high ceiling.



Removing the home's attic revealed handsome beams, numbered with Roman numerals, and created a lofty, light-filled living space. The contemporary painting is by Bernard Chaet.

"We looked behind there and found the beautiful beams, numbered in Roman numerals," says Frank. "We think maybe a French Canadian person did the carpentry."

Bill posits, "It was like one of these barn raisings where they bring the pieces and carve codes in it so they know which piece goes where."

"When people walk in, they say, 'Oh wow!'" says Frank. "They're a little surprised."

From the outside, the yellow clapboard home retains its traditional silhouette, but step inside and you are greeted with a vaulted ceiling that is open, airy, and bright.

"We wanted to keep the house looking simple and not too fancy," says Frank. "We didn't want to overdo it."

There is nothing fussy about the serene space, where Frank's careful curation ensures that only the most meaningful objects are displayed. Divided-light windows from Kolbe look period-correct, and a steep original staircase leads to a guest room papered in black-and-white toile.

In the living room, the home's palette of linen, bone white, and pewter gray makes a neutral backdrop for the couple's witty mix of antiques, where a 1920s chinoiserie rattan settee is joined by an 18th-century Italian gilt mirror and a coffee table fashioned from an old carousel carriage. In the master suite, an Eastlake bureau is paired with a Federalist bull's-eye mirror and Portuguese needlepoint rug.



A moose skull hangs on the shingled wall of the porch where Frank and Bill enjoy relaxing and watching for birds and wildlife.



The enclosed porch is a favorite spot for the couple to relax, where Frank enjoys making arrangements with his vast collection of coral.

Frank designs the interior, which he notes is ever evolving. Since moving to Maine, he has welcomed in a touch of nautical without going overboard. "Sometimes they go too far with the blue and white," he remarks.

The colors of a Swedish banjo clock inspired the striking living room floor, painted by Jim van Dike in a diamond pattern of blue and gray sea hues. Throughout, arrangements of coral, a favorite of Frank's for both home and store, look sculpturally elegant.

"I really brag on it," says Frank. "I think I have the biggest collection for sale on the East Coast in my shop." Most of it is sustainably farm-raised in or near Australia, he notes.

Over time, the house expanded. Contractor Bruce Adams of Kennebunkport was hired to build an addition that contains the kitchen, dining room, sitting area, and master suite. Clad in natural shingle, the exterior melds harmoniously with the original home.

“We added on to it over the years. We had no plan for it; it just sort of grew,” Frank admits with a laugh. This is a humble description of their process, which, while gradual, resulted in an updated cape that blends modern convenience with antique chic.



The fresco-like effect of the glazed dining room walls was a happy accident. The antique farm table is paired with contemporary chairs and lit by a toleware chandelier. The painting on the far wall is by Emil Carlsen.

Designed by Jeanne Rapone of Centerline Design & Build in Yarmouth, the modern kitchen features granite accents and stainless steel Thermador appliances and gives Bill, an enthusiastic home chef, plenty of space to improvise.

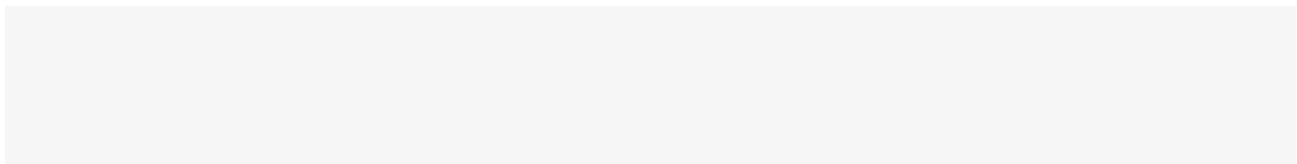
One of the most noteworthy aspects of their decor, the mottled fresco-like walls of the dining room, was a happy accident.

“On a hot summer day, Bill did it, having a beer,” recalls Frank. “I said, ‘Just glaze it.’ He did, but it dried very fast and got patchy and he thought I was going to kill him!” he laughs. “I said, ‘Oh, it’s *perfect!*’”

The golden walls are complemented by yellow Swedish draperies. An antique farm table and contemporary chairs are topped by a toleware chandelier.

Located on a bustling state road, the home is buffered by marshland and two ponds, which give it a peaceful, rural feeling and attract all manner of wildlife. A favorite space for the pair is the screened-in porch, which offers a quiet spot to watch for birds and deer.

An avid gardener, Bill nurtures the surrounding property, which includes a weeping copper beech, willow trees, and bountiful dahlia gardens that people stop to photograph in the summer.





The guest bedroom is papered in toile from Brunschwig and Fils. A metal bedstead from Crate and Barrel is in keeping with the rest of the home's antique decor.

The three-bedroom, two-and-a-half-bath post and beam sits on just shy of an acre that includes a cottage the couple rent out and a beautifully converted pony barn where Frank continues to run Bulfinch Antiques. His commute has shrunk exponentially since his Boston days, now just a few steps from the front door.

Reflecting on how to describe their home, Frank offers, "It's eclectic, antique. It's cheerful and you don't know what you're going to see next."

"It's homey," Bill agrees. "It doesn't feel staged."

"I'll buy things and swap out something else and put that in the shop. And he doesn't even notice it sometimes for two days," teases Frank.

"It is true. But careful!" Bill cautions. "If I don't like it, it doesn't stay!"

Evident in this good-natured joshing is the humor and heart necessary to sustain a multidecade renovation labor of love. Joining their aesthetics, passions, and expertise, Frank and Bill's home, like the shop just beside it, brims with character and timeless treasures.

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