



Scott and Staci Prinz's restored farmhouse in Rye, New Hampshire.

It's All in the Details

BY SUE HERTZ

PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHERYLE ST. ONGE

**How an 1840 Colonial farmhouse restored to its original glory
now accommodates a 2004 lifestyle**

Scott Prinz was hopeful about his new computer chip business, but not so hopeful that he felt comfortable offering a million dollars for a farmhouse in Rye, New Hampshire, regardless of how beautifully it had been restored, how inviting he and his wife Staci found the fields of apple orchards, the manicured lawn, the kidney-shaped swimming pool. Yet on that snowy Saturday in March 1999, Scott found himself wandering the old Rand farm with its owner, again noting the hand-planed paneling, the custom windows with antique glass, the wide pine floors stained a rich pumpkin. So much craftsmanship. So much attention to specifics. He made an offer.

Herb Grant, the owner, accepted. They shook hands.



"This will always be your house," Scott told Herb. "I'm just the caretaker."

And, despite two other offers that day, both higher than Scott's, Herb stuck to his handshake and turned over to Scott the property, the renovation of which consumed nearly two years of his life and cost him far more than he would receive in the sale. A handshake is a handshake, a deal is a deal. Beyond that, Herb was touched by Scott's promise to continue the meticulous restoration.

And so where Herb Grant left off with his custom-made mantels, copper roofs, and multiple heating and cooling systems, Scott Prinz picked up, adapting the property to the taste and lifestyle of his young family, updating the kitchen with granite, the outbuildings with mahogany, the living area with soft colors and wall murals, and building a second barn to house his business.

The result of the two men's efforts is a stunning blend of past and present, of 19th-century grace and 21st-century technology. Above all, the old Rand farmhouse stands as a testament to the power of detail.

Herb Grant's restoration of the farmhouse

To fully appreciate the story of this restoration, we need to start at its beginning when Herb Grant first toured the farm in the early '80s. Although he had long nurtured a dream of restoring a center chimney colonial to its original integrity, he was too busy as CEO of Kingston-Warren, a multi-million dollar company in Newfields, New Hampshire, to



Above, left: The four buildings and nearly seven acres of Seabreeze Farm, as the Prinzes call their home, as seen from the air. **Above, right:** Everyone, including Murphy, the Prinzes' dog, prefers to use the side porch entrance to the farmhouse.

tackle reviving the c.1843 farm, which had suffered decades of neglect. Windows had cracked, the roof had caved, and much of the soft pine flooring and paneling had either split or rotted. The acres of apple orchards behind the house were a tangle of knee-high weeds and poison ivy. Yet when he, at not yet 50 years old, sold his company in 1986 and the property was still on the market, he snapped it up.

Preparation was key, and to restore the farm to its original luster, he needed to understand its history. By researching the deeds, he learned that the barn arrived first, moved from West Road in 1767, and that the house wasn't built until 1843 or so, and that it was renovated significantly twice, once around 1900 and again in the 1960s. One by one, sheds were built on the east side until the house was connected to the barn. He learned that the blacksmith Rands, not the lumber yard Rands, built the farmhouse and worked out of a small structure on the property's west side, the stone foundation of which remains.

Outside, little by little, the original 70 acres

were sold off until only seven were left, five of which composed the apple orchard. Rand family members lived in the house until 1968; Herb was only the third owner who wasn't a Rand.

To reproduce an 1840s gentleman's farm, Herb thought about saving the original materials, or salvaging old moldings and timbers, but after touring Strawberry Banke's Pitt Tavern, which was created with new materials to replicate a 1788 tavern, he opted for new. His builder, Joe Tucker of Rye, indexed the woodwork in each room to duplicate as well as possible the original moldings, flooring, and paneling. To achieve an old look, Herb hand-planed every piece of paneling and wainscoting.

It has long been said that windows are the eyes of the house, and Herb knew that the wrong windows would spoil the look he craved. Sashes of the 1840s offered slender profiles, narrow muntions dividing numerous panes. He couldn't find any manufactured windows that suited him so he asked Joe Tucker to custom build



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windows for the home's front and sides, filling the nine-over-six panes on the first floor and six-over-six on the second with antique glass that he bought from a German outfit. He can't remember the price of the restoration glass, only that "it was very expensive." Joe Tucker's memory, however, hasn't faded. The windows, he says, smiling slightly at the understatement, "were labor intensive."

Fortunately for Herb, the Rands were innovative, developing an elaborate cistern system for collecting rainwater that saved the house and barn from serious water damage. "Everything was plum and square," says Herb. Only one small piece of sill had to be replaced. The structure of the connector, however, wasn't as sturdy. Without foundations, each of the sheds comprising the connector was lucky to still stand. After careful documentation by TMS Architects in Portsmouth, the old connector was demolished, a new foundation poured and granite stones were applied to the aboveground portion to match the house and barn's base. The new connector is slightly higher—six-feet—to accommodate a second floor with a master bedroom and bath and fourth bedroom, and wider to add depth to the sunken family room downstairs, but still, Herb maintains, looks like its 19th-century counterpart from the street. To enhance the historic look, instead of

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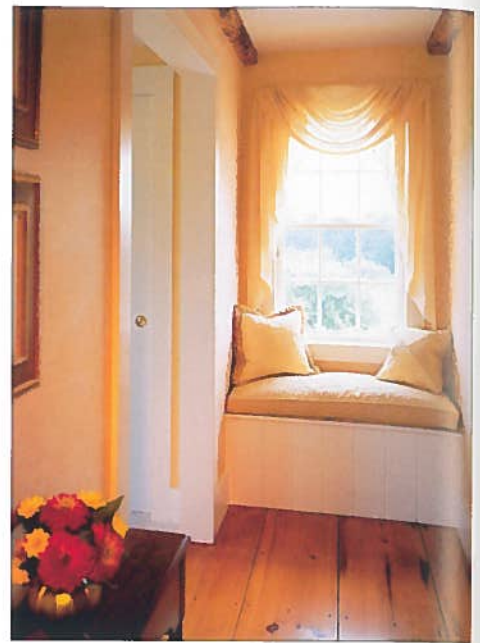
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Guests enjoy a view of the Prinzes' apple orchard from the cozy window seat in their second-floor room.

installing standard garage doors for his carport in the last part of the connector, Herb built doors that look like carriage entrances and open sideways.

Inside the main house, he kept the original floor plan downstairs—a formal dining room, study, living room and kitchen—allowing that once the living room with its massive fireplace served as the kitchen and the current kitchen may have sheltered animals in winter. The upstairs rooms, once all bedrooms became one large and one small bedroom, a laundry room and bath. Most of the rooms had fireplaces, which Herb was delighted to find in good shape. The chimneys, however, were rebuilt from the attic floor up.

To achieve flow from the old to the new, Herb covered the floors in every room but one with wide pine boards stained a rich pumpkin. He painted one bedroom floor as was the style 150 years ago. All the woodwork in both the main house and new connector, from the mahogany doors to the wainscoting to the windowsills, were custom made. "People say that they can't find good craftsmen," says Herb. "I learned that they are out there. You just have to be willing to pay for them."

While Herb was ferocious in maintaining historical accuracy in the front, he was anything but a purist in the back. Instead, he wanted the rear of the house to take

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Above: The elegant taupe silk window treatments complement the serene grays and ecru of Coleen Hanlon's mural in the dining room.

Left: Artwork by Coleen Hanlon hangs in the kitchen, where hand-painted cabinets give the room a comfortable feel.



advantage of the view of the acres of orchards, gardens, kidney-shaped pool and terraced lawns lined with stone walls that he would create, and also to incorporate modern amenities such as a hot tub and exercise room. He built French doors and lots of windows overlooking the yard with its southern

exposure, including an enormous bay window on the first floor in the Jacuzzi/workout room above which rests the master bedroom's circular porch.

Herb thought that after all the time and money—more than \$1.5 million (in 1980s cash)—he devoted to the restoration that the only way he would leave the house would be in a box. But he and his new wife Robin discovered Arizona in their travels and opted for the warmer climate and year-round golfing. More than a year later, Herb sold the farm to Scott Prinz.

The Prinzes renovate the farmhouse

While Scott says he still considers himself “the caretaker,” that “caretaking” has involved more than \$1 million worth of his own renovations and additions, including a second barn that he uses as headquarters for his high-tech company.

Awed by Herb's reverence for the most minute detail—the seamed lead

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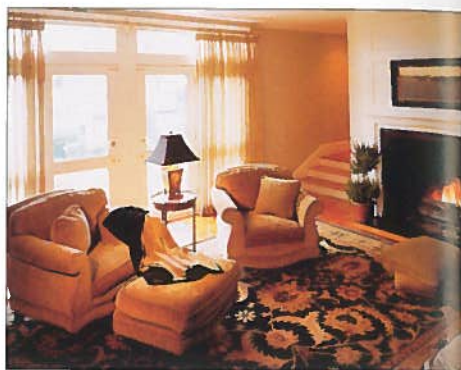


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Above, top: The Prinzes' pool house has mahogany raised paneled walls, tumbled marble floors and light gray granite counters. **Bottom:** The Prinz family spends a great deal of their time in the large family room.

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copper roofs, the hot water toilets (to avoid sweating seats in summer and cold seats in winter), downspouts hidden in exterior columns — Scott launched his own changes with the same obsession. He found experts to match his taste: Jon Lummus of Islington Mill Furniture in Portsmouth for cabinetry and mahogany paneling in the outbuildings; Joe Tucker for help with the new barn construction; Diane Hughes, an interior designer in Rye who not only helped with redecorating but also hooked him up with other artisans such as Colleen Hanlon, who painted plaques of farm scenes for the kitchen and a mural of marsh and woods in the dining room. "We needed a designer who could bring an elegant but unpretentious feeling to the home," says Scott, "someone who could blend colors with textures in a subtle way and make guests feel comfortable. Diane was just that person."

Except for networking the entire house with wireless Internet service and changing Herb's European sleek kitchen to a more traditional eating area with white cabinets and granite countertops, the alterations in the main house were mostly cosmetic —



painting the rooms complementing hues of soft tans and greens and yellows from Benjamin Moore's historic palette, replacing carpeting with wood floors in the master bedroom and two other rooms, building new cabinetry and installing new flooring in the master bath, and adding window treatments of light linens and silks. The only formal area is the dining room with its rich mahogany table and chairs and floor-length drapes, a room that the Prinzes, who prefer barbecues and jeans, have used only once.

Diane credits Scott for his attention to detail, but Scott maintains his love is creating, and since he didn't have much need to create in the main house, he targeted his talents outside, first at the pool house, which, Scott claims, once served as the sheep birthing shed. Instead of a spot to change bathing suits, Scott created a cathedral-ceilinged



Above: The more formal living room spans the rear of the Prinz home and continues into the library.

Left: A cabinet for electronics was custom-made by Kevin Ouellette of Rye, New Hampshire. Eric Karl Andersen painted the chest in gray tones like the bark of the trees in the apple orchard.

7:15 P.M., Saturday, Jane and David Bronsman: *Romance*



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A mural by Eric Karl Andersen was inspired by the birch trees seen through the transom window above.

living room, complete with mini-kitchen and bath. He installed a floor of tumbled marble and lined the walls with mahogany raised paneling, book matched by Jon Lummus so that the grain flowed smoothly. He hid an entertainment system behind a panel. "It's fun to watch movies here in a snowstorm," says Scott. To keep his toes warm in the winter, he added radiant heat. In the summer, it's always comfortable in the pool house, thanks to air conditioning.

Next, Scott decided to build a second barn to use as his office. He wanted it to look as if it had always been there, nestled in the apple orchard, but he didn't want to remove any trees, or touch any, for that matter. He wanted it to match the main house and original barn so he hired Joe Tucker to build the barn, knowing that he would be fastidious in its construction and preservation of the apple orchard, and had Joe's 85-year-old uncle Harold Tucker build a cupola to match the main barn's cupola, which Herb Grant had had restored and re-roofed with copper. On the outside, Scott placed floor-to-ceiling mahogany arched doors made by Jon, large enough to allow a tractor to enter. Farm equipment, however, isn't stored in the new barn's first floor. Rather, the open room serves as a play space for Kiley, two, and her brother Ryan, three-and-a-half, and a workout space for their mom Staci, a triathlete. The wide pine floors match those of the main house and the

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The pedestal vanity was created by Jonathan Lummus of Islington Mill Furniture in Portsmouth.

mahogany paneling in Staci's exercise room matches that of the pool house. Windows abound, affording plenty of light and views of the orchard. Upstairs is Scott's office, complete with cream-colored cabinetry to hide the fax machine and copier and standing Herman Miller workstations, wood of course, that can also be lowered to accommodate someone sitting. The grates in the floor are wood, stained to match the floorboards.

Like Herb Grant, Scott admits that he doesn't anticipate earning back what he has put into the property they call Seabreeze Farm when he one day sells. And, like Herb Grant, he shrugs it off. "This is a great place to raise a family."

Who could argue? ■

Sue Hertz is an associate professor of journalism at the University of New Hampshire and author of Caught in the Crossfire: A Year on Abortion's Frontline. Her work has appeared in regional and national magazines, including Redbook, Boston, House Beautiful, Parenting, and the Boston Globe Magazine. When she's not teaching or writing or watching her two sons kick soccer balls, she's plotting renovations for her Federal-period home in Newburyport, Massachusetts.

After Cheryle St. Onge spent a decade at Clark University as a photography faculty member, she began creating portfolios for architects in Boston. She shoots regularly for Home magazine, and her photographs of Adirondack camps appear in the book Cabin Fever by Rachel Carley.

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