



Settlers from the City

A weekend visit to Castroville hooked San Antonians Mary and Michael Arno; today it's their home away from home.

By Julie Catalano



For Mary and Michael Arno, life in Castroville, Texas, began on a weekend in 1982. The doctors—she's an ophthalmologist, he's an anesthesiologist—were contemplating buying a second home, where they

could spend time with their four children after a hectic week at work in San Antonio. Nearby Castroville, with its old-style charm and leisurely pace, was ideal territory for city dwellers heading west as weekend settlers.

It was love at first sight when they saw their house, or more accurately, the compound: Two homes, a smokehouse, and a barn dating from the mid-1800s graced the property.

Undaunted by the enormity of the task at hand, the Arnos recognized the promise of a charming

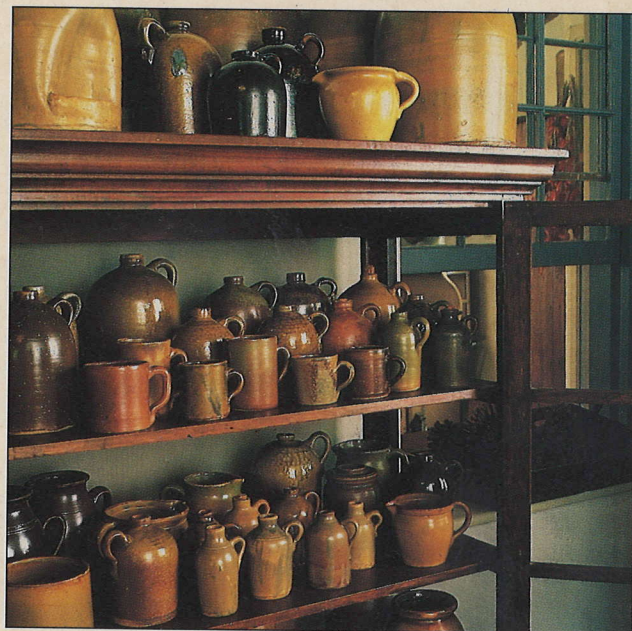


Top: The Arnos, from left: Stephanie, Andrew, Michael, Elizabeth, and Mary. (Son Tad was away at school.) Left: Texas daybeds lend charm to the living room. Above: The main house includes a kitchen, a living/dining area, and a small office. Mary's sister and Texas architect Diane Hastings drew up the restoration plans.





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home glimmering through the cracked linoleum and garish pink and green interior color scheme.

Their infatuation with the weekend home blossomed into a full-scale relationship as the Arnos spent the next five years researching, restoring, and furnishing the structures. Authenticity was a main concern. "We appreciated the architecture and wanted to stay true to its roots," explains Michael.

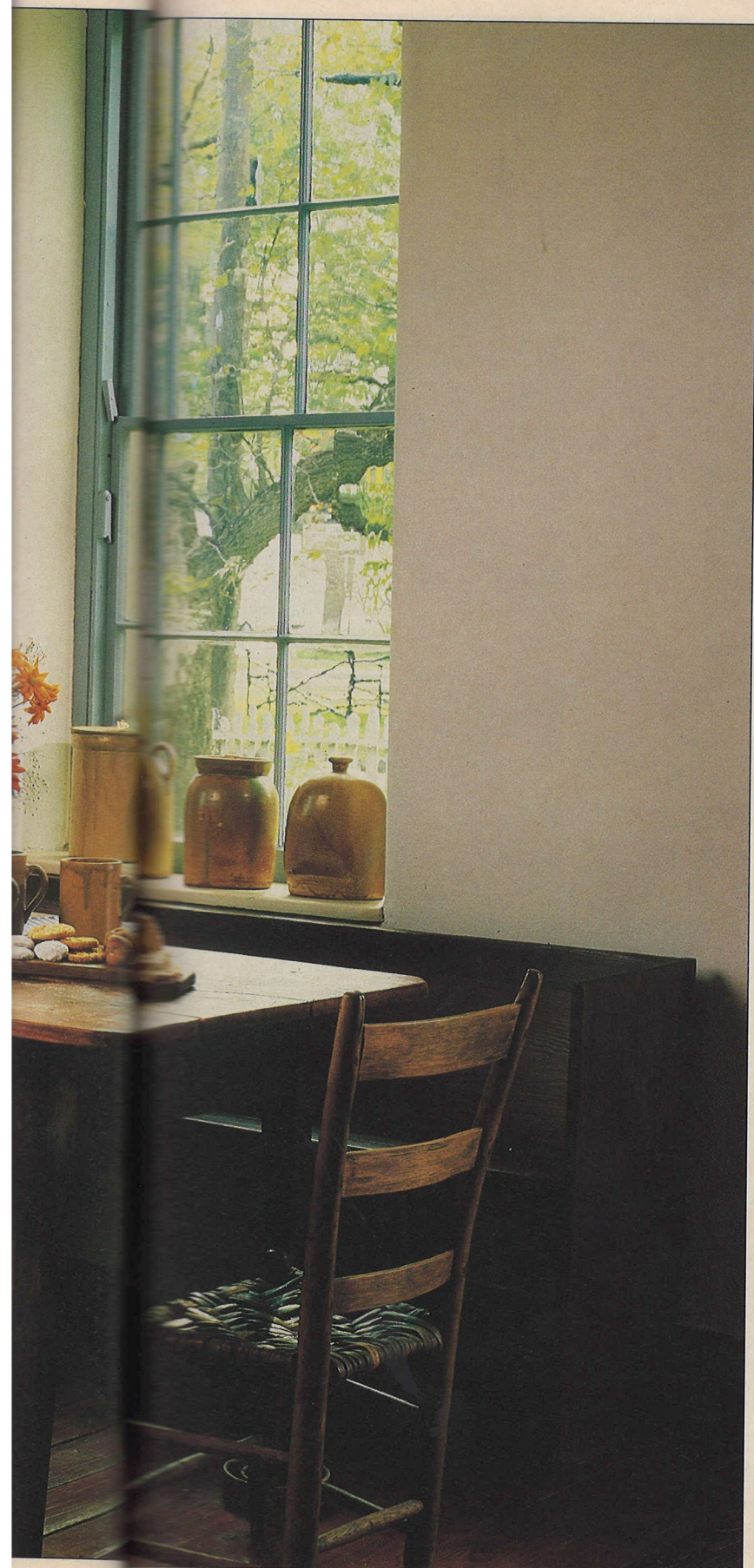
As newcomers to Castroville, the Arnos found themselves receiving welcomed help with their home. One of their best resources was local carpenter Rob Hardy, who had helped restore the town's historic inn.

Mary and Michael credit Rob for the magnificent pine flooring in the main room of the large house. After the room's old linoleum and the rotted plywood beneath it had been removed, the spacious sitting/dining area had been left with less-than-gracious dirt floors. Rob suggested using a wood floor salvaged from a San Antonio house that had been built in the same time period and was also being restored.

"They were forced to take [the floor] out because of termite damage along the edges, but Rob was able to buy the wood, then laboriously piece it back together here," Mary says. "I think the best part of



Left: Sensitive restored antiques warm the dining area; both the pine dining table and the wardrobe, which is from Boerne, Texas, still show traces of original black paint. Above: The home is rich with examples of Meyer pottery. The simple wares date from 1887 and were glazed with a slip made of local clays in Atascosa, Texas.



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this room is this fabulous old floor."

Although you'd never suspect it, the Arnos had no real interest in early Texas antiques before setting up house in Castroville. Their collection of Meyer pottery, for instance, began when they stumbled across a 5-gallon jug buried under a pile of junk in the barn. "We didn't know a thing about Meyer until then," says Mary. Now they own more than 200 pieces.

Understandably pleased with their restoration efforts, the Arnos also enjoy their home's location on September Square, the site where the town's original settlers first camped. It's a fitting address for Castroville's new settlers. □



Top: Behind the main house are the original barn and a second smaller house, which is converted to two bedrooms used by the Arno children. Right: The main room of the barn is now a sitting room, preserved in its barnlike atmosphere as much as possible. A handmade Texas woodworker's bench displays Michael's antique tool collection. Above: An addition to the barn made room for a cozy master bedroom. A handmade quilt dresses the vintage bed.



