

House

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on, the couple made the decision not to borrow money for the building project because they didn't want to be in debt. They figured they would just save up and pay for materials as they went. Berk still remembers how much a single window was back when they were beginning their construction journey: \$350. The house's first iteration was a windowless plywood structure.

"Every week or two we'd save up to buy another window," Berk, who works at the Natural Resources Council of Maine, said.

The strategy worked, according to her husband.

"We built the house without a mortgage," Foley said. "That means it still takes 30 years, but without writing the monthly check to the bank."

Meanwhile, they planted at least 3,000 trees on the property and built up the cooperative vegetable gardens, which cover 0.4 of an acre of sunny land next to the farmhouse. They've been gardening there with friends since 1989, and the garden now has five gardeners who plant, tend and harvest the neat rows of tomatoes, potatoes, corn, squash, beans, carrots, basil, arugula and so much more. The gardens feed all those people and then some, and also provide abundant opportunities for potluck lunches with their fellow gardeners.

"We think the outdoors is as much where we live as the indoors," Berk said.

But the indoors is vibrant and lively, too. After years of diligently saving paychecks to construct their 1,600-square-foot home, they built something worth waiting for. It has inviting touches throughout, such as the window behind the kitchen sink where they display their colored glassware, which the couple calls their "stained-glass window cabinet."

Upstairs, the master bedroom has large windows that frame the flower gardens that were ablaze with sunflowers. The walls are lined with art done by their

friends and family and a cozy nook contains a spare bed for overflow guests.

"We have a lot of summer visitors," Berk said, adding that the couple has hosted as many as 14 people at a time. "I feel like it's sort of a clubhouse."

Energy efficiency is important to Foley and Berk, who heat the super-insulated home with about a cord of wood a year. The 12 solar panels installed 3½ years ago on the roof of Foley's next-door office, "the corporate headquarters of Holland and Foley Architecture," Berk said, provide all electricity for the house and the office. They are off the grid and proud of it.

"We're getting toward our retirement," Berk said. "We have very few bills. That helps us be more secure for the future. It's important for people to be aware of what's possible, and it's possible to dramatically reduce your energy bill."

Elsewhere on the property, the couple constructed a cabin with a screened porch, a sleeping room and a Coleman stove for cooking. Guests love it, and Berk and Foley venture there every Labor Day weekend, just so they can feel "we're up to camp," Berk said.

"It's the simple life," she joked.

But not really. Foley and Berk continue to work on their house and land, finding new projects every year. They change it, and, they said, it has changed them. They are looking toward a future where they can think of downsizing while still living on their property. They may move into the downstairs guest suite eventually or convert the building with the office into an apartment with full bathroom. Foley calls this kind of planning "future proofing," adding that it was important to create a home that would work for different kinds of contingencies.

"We've co-evolved with it. I say it's who I am, but we shaped this place and this place has shaped us," he said. "I'm at the stage where I'm looking back and taking stock of things. We didn't have children, but I see these 40-foot trees and the stone walls we've built. We've done something."

ALBUM

Engagement



Katherine A. Walker
Brian D. King

BANGOR - Katherine Anne Walker would like to announce her engagement to Brian David King. The wedding will take place Sept. 26, at All Souls Church, Bangor. Katherine is celebrating from Long Island, N.Y. She is a journalist for US Magazine and hostess and event planner for celebrities in New York City. She graduated from BHS, Bangor, ME, in 1982. Brian D. King is from Farmington Hills, Mich., and is an attorney. The couple resides on Long Island and will honeymoon in Kuai, Hawaii.

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School

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She heard about the school through a classmate at the liberal college, where grades and majors don't exist. Entering her final year this fall, Lapointe will write her thesis on traditional homesteading skills in a modern world, using experiences derived from her year here.

Lapointe's choice was fine with her mother, who took a similar sabbatical when she was her age to live and work in the Caribbean. Her peers raised eyebrows at first, thinking the idea had merit, but wondered if this lifestyle could be maintained.

"Absolutely. It's the only way of living that feels real to me," a determined Lapointe said.

When she returns to Amherst, Massachusetts, with a killer show and tell — a hand-crafted, locally sourced, free-range home — she will have concrete proof. On campus she plans to lead discussions on sustainable living and low-impact building. A hot topic with coeds.

On a nearby pasture

"It's the only way of living that feels real to me."

SOPHIE LAPOINTE

where horses graze, Lapointe learned to grow zucchini, tomatoes, brussel sprouts and corn. She also became adept at milling timber, canning food, making wine from rose petals and a host of other frontier skills she wouldn't have picked up studying in Paris.

"Living here is magical," she said, with a wide-eyed youthful glow.

How many homestead schools exists in the country is hard to tell. But as farming becomes increasingly popular with 20-somethings, back to the landers like Cornish are delving deeper.

"You can apprentice to learn to be a farmer, but where do you go to learn to homestead?" said the instructor, who is focused on 1900 to 1930 agricultural practices combined with newer trends, such as composting and cover cropping. "Moving it forward to where our past meets our future," is the school's motto.

So far he has taught three students to build tiny homes, which have exploded

in popularity. TV shows, magazines and blogs focus on living small because "people have their necks in the yoke, going to work every day to pay their mortgage," Cornish said. "This is affordable housing."

And easy to maintain. Lapointe's tiny house will be heated with a wood stove. Electricity comes from a photovoltaic panel, water will be reused, meals cooked on a three-burner propane stove. There are several windows, a loft for sleeping and a composting toilet. Cornish can build you one for \$20,000, but most enthusiasts want to do it themselves.

Homesteading to Cornish "is inherent in our DNA. We are hunters and gatherers and farmers," he said, adding students immersed in his programs, like Lapointe, learn to "eat well and live well."

What else has she learned? "What haven't I learned?," said Lapointe, not eager to return to college life after a year spent in a rhythmic rural rhapsody. "That would be easier to answer."

there have been some painful rifts between him and those he cares about. Copp wishes ill on no one, but abides by his commitment to living according to his found truths.

"It was the same earnestness to understand truth that brought me in and took me out," he said.

He is finding his peace, carrying out his devotion to right living, and continuing to produce beautiful furniture made with care and responsibility to the Earth.

"Life has been good to me," he said. "I hope when I leave, I'll leave the world a better place."

Read more about Kenneth Copp's woodworking at locustgrovewoodworks.com.

Robin Clifford Wood welcomes feedback at robin.everyday@gmail.com

Wood

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Copp is dedicated to partnering with his horses, but "Horse power takes a lot of patience," he said. "Unlike driving a buggy or plow, in a workshop you are not right behind the horse to talk to them or keep them moving."

Copp uses a system of ropes that lead from his workshop to the horse power barn. If the horses slow down or stop, so do his machines, so he pulls a rope that flicks the horses' flanks — like a tap on the shoulder to remind them to keep moving. Better long-term power storage would be more consistent and efficient.

In addition to the horse treadmill, Copp hopes to install solar panels to store en-

ergy. He hopes to get back off the grid entirely as soon as he is able, not because of any rules or dogma, but because it's the right way to live.

Copp, who now thinks of himself as an "Amish atheist," said his evolution of thought has felt almost like a rebirth, something he calls a "deconversion." He attributes it to education and is now as devout a believer in learning as he once was in his faith.

"When you become educated," he said, "you realize you're not the only one in the world. There's more than your personal bubble of experience."

That realization has fed the fire of his commitment to low fossil fuel consumption, even though he feels less bound by other rules of his former life. In consequence of his education,

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shoulder
fixed!”

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