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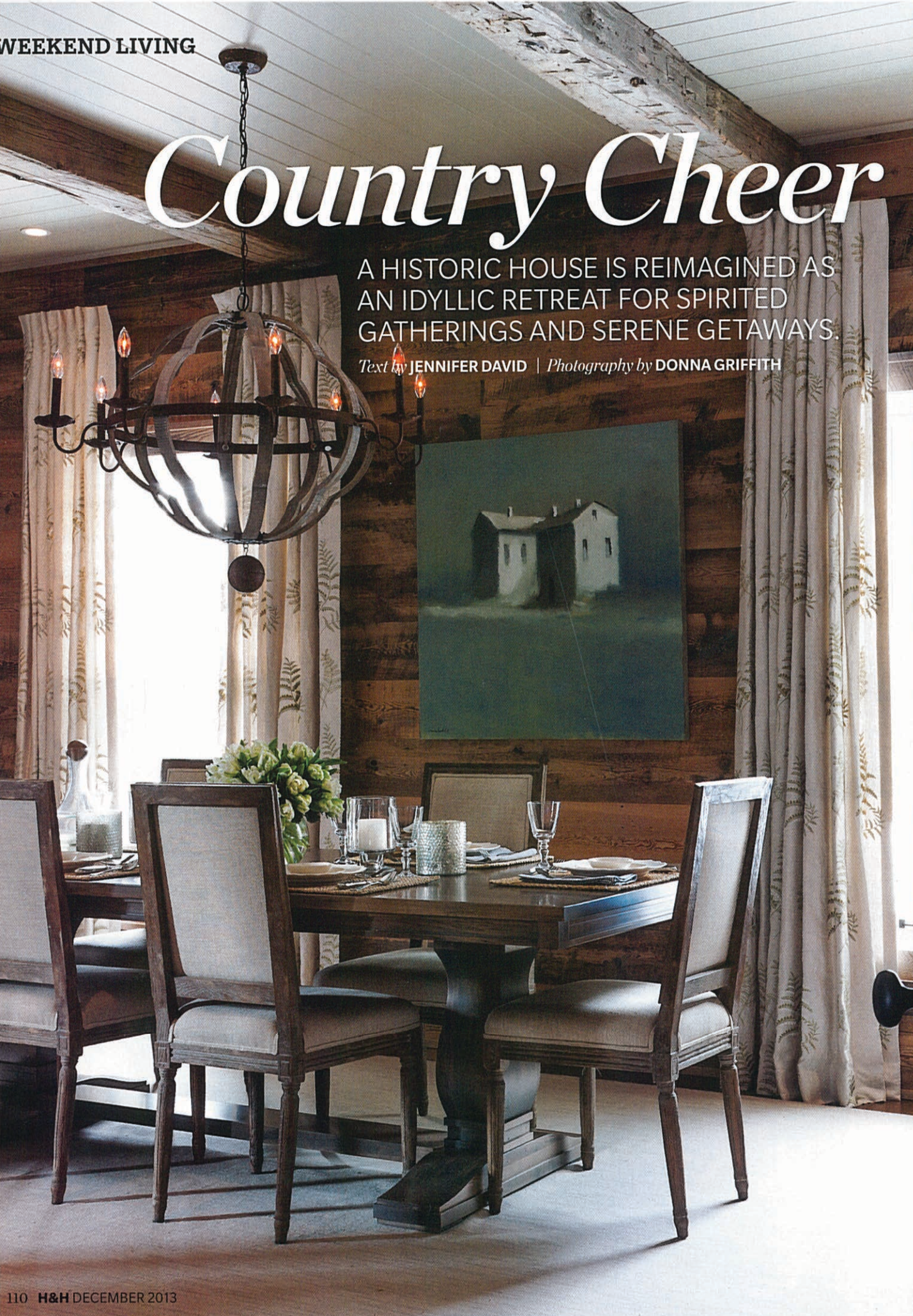
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Country Cheer

A HISTORIC HOUSE IS REIMAGINED AS AN IDYLIC RETREAT FOR SPIRITED GATHERINGS AND SERENE GETAWAYS.

Text by JENNIFER DAVID | Photography by DONNA GRIFFITH



HISTORICALLY SIGNIFICANT HOMES come with a unique set of dilemmas for new owners. Do you fit your life into the preexisting layout or alter the house to suit your personal style? The Toronto owners of this country property faced this very challenge shortly after they started looking for a year-round retreat in 2010. Their wish list included 100 acres of land, trails for meandering walks and cross-country skiing, and a place where they could entertain friends and family, particularly during the holidays when they're joined by their three adult children and their families. "I grew up going to a weekend farm, so we liked the idea," says the homeowner. To their delight, less than an hour outside the city they found a house that ticked all the boxes and held an unexpected surprise: it was designed by prominent 20th-century architect B. Napier Simpson Jr.

A heritage conservationist who designed noteworthy houses in Toronto and Caledon, Ont., Simpson was also instrumental in the creation of Black Creek Pioneer Village. He designed this country house in the early 1970s, on a scenic piece of land with rolling hills, extensive trails, wetlands and thick stands of evergreens. As an added perk, the property was just one road over from the owner's old childhood farmhouse. Sold!

The couple quickly appreciated what they had acquired: a vintage Simpson house with tremendous potential. But they realized some changes were required for it to become the pastoral escape they desired. With the exception of the great room, the spaces were small and closed in. Plus, the ceilings were under eight feet, and the ubiquitous drywall gave the home a more urban feel than the new owners desired.

To adapt the house, they called on Toronto architectural designer Ray Murakami. Like the homeowners, he's an admirer of Simpson's designs, and together they embarked on a gentle renovation to upgrade the home's personality and improve its flow while preserving as much of Simpson's imprint as possible. "We wanted to be very respectful of Simpson's design," notes the owner. Defining features such as the fieldstone flooring, board-and-batten exterior siding and the great room's arched ceiling beams were left intact.

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TOP LEFT: For visual interest, the white-painted tongue-and-groove ceiling sections in the dining room were oriented in different directions. An elegant Indiana limestone mantel lends the fireplace unexpected polish. **Chandelier**, Boo Boo & Lefty; **ceiling colour**, White Down (CC-50), Benjamin Moore; **flowers, greenery** (throughout), Liliium Fine Flowers.

TOP CENTRE: The nearly 100-acre property has picturesque trails ideal for exploring or cross-country skiing. TOP RIGHT: The owner's favourite winter arrangements are loose and natural, and often collected during her rambles on the property. **Birch-bark vase**, Liliium Fine Flowers; **pitcher, low bowl**, Elte; **tea towel** Mjölök; **white bowl**, Hollace Cluny.

OPPOSITE: New barnboard wall siding and hand-hewn beams give the dining room its rustic mood. Louis XVI-style chairs by RH Restoration Hardware and full-length drapes in a Cowtan & Tout linen inject sophistication. **Architectural design**, Murakami Design; **interior design**, Ann Johnston Design Consultants; **builder**, Barry McLean Construction; **rug**, Custom Creative Matters; **fabric** by Cowtan & Tout Primavera; **tableware**, Crate & Barrel.

OPPOSITE, TOP RIGHT: Floor-to-ceiling windows and new french doors give the breakfast room an indoor-outdoor feel that's enhanced by the use of modern wicker chairs. **Pendant light**, Union Lighting; **chairs**, Crate & Barrel; **pedestal table**, Ann Johnston Design Consultants; **wall colour**, Classic Gray (OC-23), **trim colour**, White Down (CC-50), Benjamin Moore.

BOTTOM LEFT: Rugged materials like barnboard and stone veneer cover the walls and give the interior its country character. New wide-plank oak floorboards flow throughout the house. **Floor**, Moncer Specialty Flooring; **stone veneer**, Ciot.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Exterior bifold french-style doors slide smoothly along a track to open the family room up to a new screened porch. Johnston kept the furniture low in profile to maximize the views. Even the antique ladder-back chair keeps sight lines open while adding a classic country note. **Armchair design**, **coffee table**, Ann Johnston Design Consultants; **armchair fabrication**, Creative Custom Furnishings; **rug**, Elte; **vases** (on mantel), West Elm; **wall colour**, Classic Gray (OC-23), **trim colour**, White Down (CC-50), Benjamin Moore.

Architectural designer Ray Murakami and designer Ann Johnston refreshed the impressive great room by adding reclaimed barnboard panelling on the peaked ceiling and giving the fireplace a weathered-wood mantel. A Gothic-style chandelier highlights the striking support beams. The owners pulled the oversized chairs and sofa out of storage and centered them around a new coffee table that's large enough to hold trays of snacks and rainy-day board games. **Coffee table**, Ann Johnston Design Consultants; **chandelier, lamp**, Boo Boo & Lefty; **throw, lantern** (on hearth), West Elm; **wooden bowl** (on coffee table), Mjölkk; **white bowl** (on coffee table), Elte; **windows, doors**, Ridley Windows & Doors.



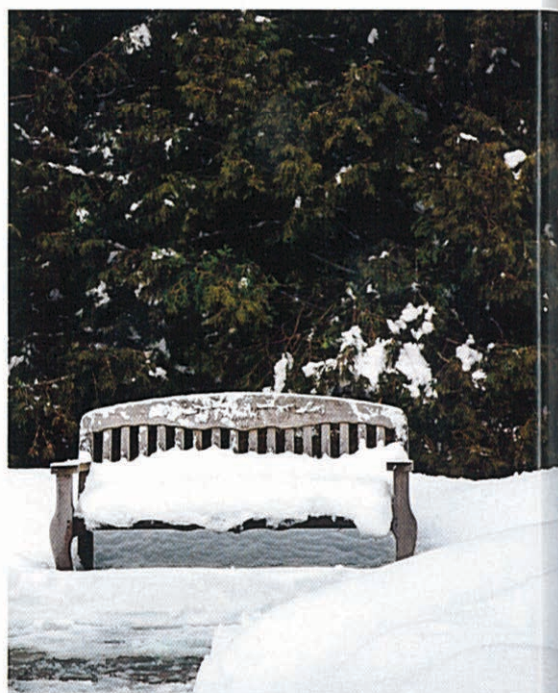


TOP RIGHT: An armchair and ottoman nestled into a quiet corner of the second-floor guest room provide the perfect place to curl up and read. **Fabric** by Kerry Joyce (blinds), Primavera; **blinds sewing**, Sew It Seams; **chair, ottoman**, Silva; **throw**, Elte.

LEFT: Fallen pine cones arranged in a rustic wooden bowl are an unfussy holiday decoration. **Table**, Ann Johnston Design Consultants; **velvet pillow fabric**, Designer Fabrics; **pillow sewing**, Sew It Seams.

BOTTOM LEFT: Shades of white and pale wood feel soothing in the principal ensuite. The double-sink vanity includes plenty of storage. **Vanity design**, Ann Johnston Design Consultants; **vanity fabrication**, Shelburne Kitchens; **sconces**, Universal Lamp; **towels, soap dish, glasses**, Ginger's.

BOTTOM RIGHT: The expansive open-concept kitchen overlooks both the family room and the breakfast room; a barnboard ceiling defines the family room space. **Armchair and sofa design, coffee table, stools**, Ann Johnston Design Consultants; **armchair and sofa fabrication**, Creative Custom Furnishings; **throw, rug**, Elte; **fabric** by Rogers & Goffigon (on stools), Primavera; **cabinets**, Shelburne Kitchens.



In the principal bedroom, Johnston lightened the mood by whitewashing the new wood planks on the angled ceiling. Throw pillows covered in fabric by Cowtan & Tout dress up the bed, while a faux-fur throw adds wintry comfort. **Headboard**, RH Restoration Hardware; **wicker chest**, Muskoka Living Interiors; **throw**, Elte; **fabric** by Cowtan & Tout, Primavera; **lamps**, Ribbehege & Azevedo; **lantern pendant**, Universal Lamp.

“I WANTED NATURE TO BE THE FOCAL POINT AND DIDN'T WANT THE DISTRACTION OF BUSY PATTERNS”

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WEB Browse a gallery of Murakami's favourite projects at houseandhome.com/dec2013