



A *visit* TO
heartland

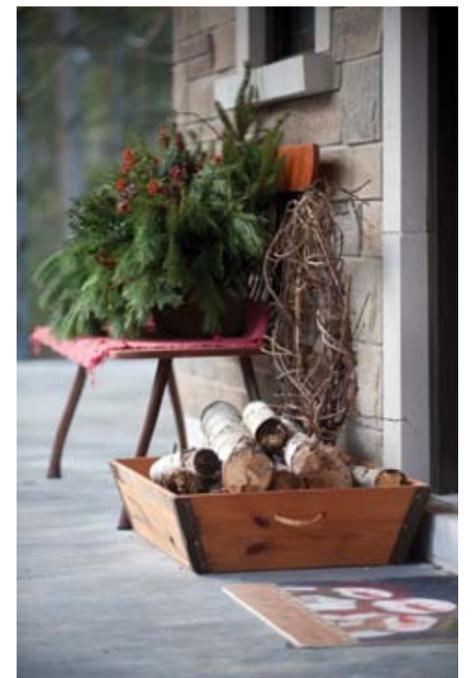
BY ANDREA TOMKINS // PHOTOGRAPHY BY SUZANNE BIRD

There aren't a lot of cowboys in Ottawa anymore, but if you look hard enough, you can find a place where even the roughest, toughest wranglers can put up their boots and find comfort.

Deirdre and her husband John aren't exactly cowboys. They're city slickers just like most of us, but there's something about that cowboy style that has always tugged at their heartstrings. In fact, Deirdre had been designing their custom Dunrobin home, filled with rustic details for nearly a decade before they even started to build. "I love the country mountain house and I love cowboys," says Deirdre. "It's been a burning desire to build this casual, lived in, wonderful space. We call this place, Heartland, because it speaks so much to us."

The connection was made the moment they saw the land; nearly seven acres of woody brush. It was well situated on a slope with a creek behind it. It was only the second property they looked at. "It was one of those 'oh my God' moments," explains Deirdre. "For years we talked about building a cabin on a lake. We always talked about building a cottage, but this seemed to be a good combination of casual, and comfy." *Continued on page 22*

LEFT: The living room is large and bright and makes for a great gathering place when entertaining. Its fireplace with rustic stone chimney extends to the ceiling. **CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:** (1) A collection of Santa figurines is prominently displayed. (2) A peek from the living area into the pantry, which resembles an old-time country store. (3) The home is layered with details symbolic to the family. (4) & (5) Natural and rustic decorative touches lend a warm welcome to the home both inside and out. (6) Homeowners John and Deirdre with their dogs (each was a rescue) Larry, Charlie and Sunny.



feature

The couple were their own project managers, and in terms of design, Deirdre was a lady on a mission. “I knew I wanted a stretch of cabinets; I knew I wanted shaker style, in a rich brown and I wanted a huge island and I wanted it to be black. I just knew,” she says.

You can call it cowboy chic or modern ranch, but there isn't a scrap of frilly gingham to be seen. From wooden roosters, to old licence plates, and a rusty Coca-Cola sign that had been used for BB gun target practice in a former lifetime; the space is filled with many creative and personal touches. “All these things have their own little histories,” she says. “Everything you'd ever want to know about me, you can tell, just by looking at this house.”

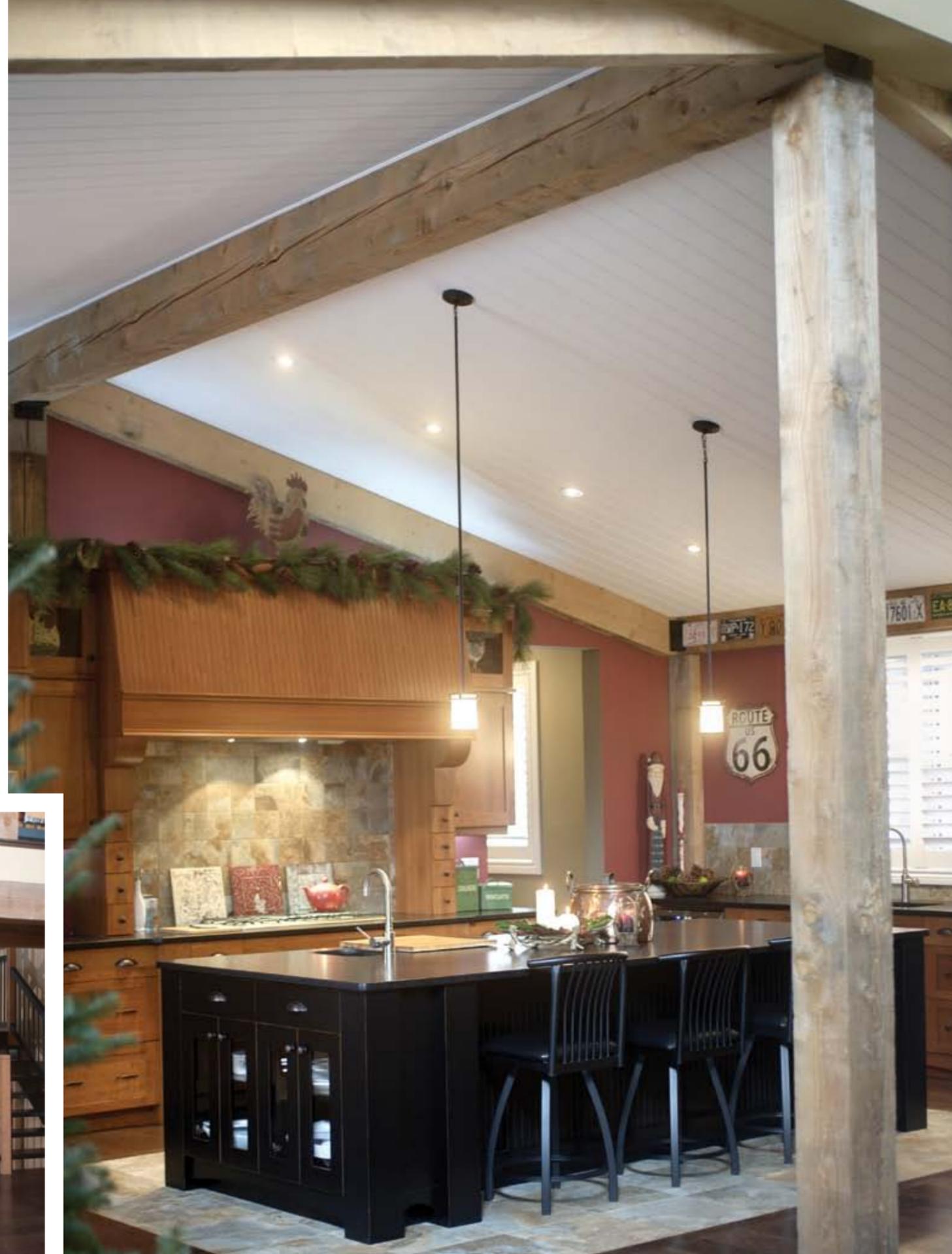
It's not unlike the kind of cabin you'd find at the end of the trail deep in the Rockies; big, heavy and full of light, but with rough dark accents. Take for example, the stairs. “These are rebar,” she says, pointing to the balusters used. “I didn't want something typical. It's a big heavy house, I wanted big heavy railings.” She drew it out for the fellows at **Fred Welding & Machine Shop**.

She got some weird looks along the way, but she was so confident in her choices that it didn't shake her. “I always knew we were going to live somewhere country-type with peaked ceilings, a big fireplace and big windows, I knew that.”

Large beams made out of B.C. fir proved to be a big conversation point with Conception Duboisé and **Kott Lumber**. Some of the beams were to be used as part of the structure but most had a decorative purpose and were considered cosmetic timber. “When it came on site there was a huge response with people saying ‘Oh my, look at this!’, she laughs.”

In this kind of home, where the structural elements are so dark and heavy, lighting (all from **Multi Luminaire**) becomes extra important. “Good lighting brings out feature walls and adds character where there isn't any,” says Deirdre.

Most of the living area is on one level and the kitchen is the main artery. The space is perfect for entertaining. “Forty people in here is not crowded, and everyone wants to be in the kitchen anyway,” says Deirdre. *Continued on page 24*



LEFT TO RIGHT: (1) A little whimsical touch near the front entrance. **(2)** The staircase was designed to complement the home's decorative detailing. Heavy railings and balusters made of rebar were Deirdre's own custom solution, providing both function and style. **(3)** Deirdre says her kitchen is the main artery of the home. A ring of tile was used around the large kitchen island to eliminate the common unsightly wear of the high traffic area. **ABOVE:** A collection of leather cowboy boots is perched above the unique open-style pantry, which resembles a quaint country store.



OPPOSITE CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: LEFT: (1) Beautifully decorated for company, the long table was altered to accommodate even more people. (2) Impressive beams made of B.C. fir frame each of the rooms. (3) Glass stars hang from the Christmas tree. Deirdre had planned its location during the initial design phase and had the power source for the tree installed right into the floor. (4) The home is brimming with decorative pieces from days gone by. LEFT: The cosy master bedroom connects to the sunroom at the back of the home. ABOVE: There's lots of natural light in the en suite and no worries about neighbours peering in the windows. "And the deer don't care either," laughs Deirdre.

Like in many traditional country kitchens, a wooden harvest table figures prominently. **After Harvest** added a permanent leaf in the middle of their existing table so it could accommodate more people.

A wall of cabinets that spans the kitchen and dining area (by **Potvin Kitchen and Trim**) holds some special surprises. Deirdre had a cabinet designed just for tablecloths. Rods span the width of the cabinet, and the tablecloths are hung right after they're washed and ironed.

The bank of cabinets was a must as there are no uppers for dishes. These are stored in reinforced drawers instead, right next to the dining table.

An unconventional open pantry suits that lived-in country kitchen feel. "It kind of looks like a country store," she says. "When my kids bring friends home I often find them in here at three o'clock in the morning!"

The floor design (**Embrun Floor Covering**) around the kitchen island came as a result of experience. The couple had hardwood in their previous kitchen, but with young kids and dogs it was a constant challenge to keep it in good shape. Their solution: ring it with tile. It's a practical and attractive solution for the high traffic area. *Continued on page 26*



feature

RIGHT: At the back of the home is a massive sunroom, which features a wall of windows (Golden Windows Ltd.). **BELOW LEFT:** The front exterior of the home. **BELOW RIGHT:** The sunroom was designed to resemble a large veranda and offers a great place to enjoy views of the woods by day and the starry sky by night. **BOTTOM:** The room's heated floors are made of stamped cement.



Deirdre's favourite area is a small shrine to family and friends. A collection of cowboy boots (some even donated from friends) is perched on a high wall overlooking the living room and family photos decorate a nearby bureau (**Gendron Antiques & Reproductions**).

The piece that ties it all together, is the sunroom. Designed to resemble a veranda, it stretches the entire length of the home. "This is heaven, right here," says Deirdre. And how could it not be, with cement-heated floors, cushy seating and a million-dollar view of the woods. "It's all about relaxing," she says. "Coming home to this house is such a treat, and there is not a day that goes by that we don't pinch ourselves and say, 'oh my God, we live here.'" **OH**



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