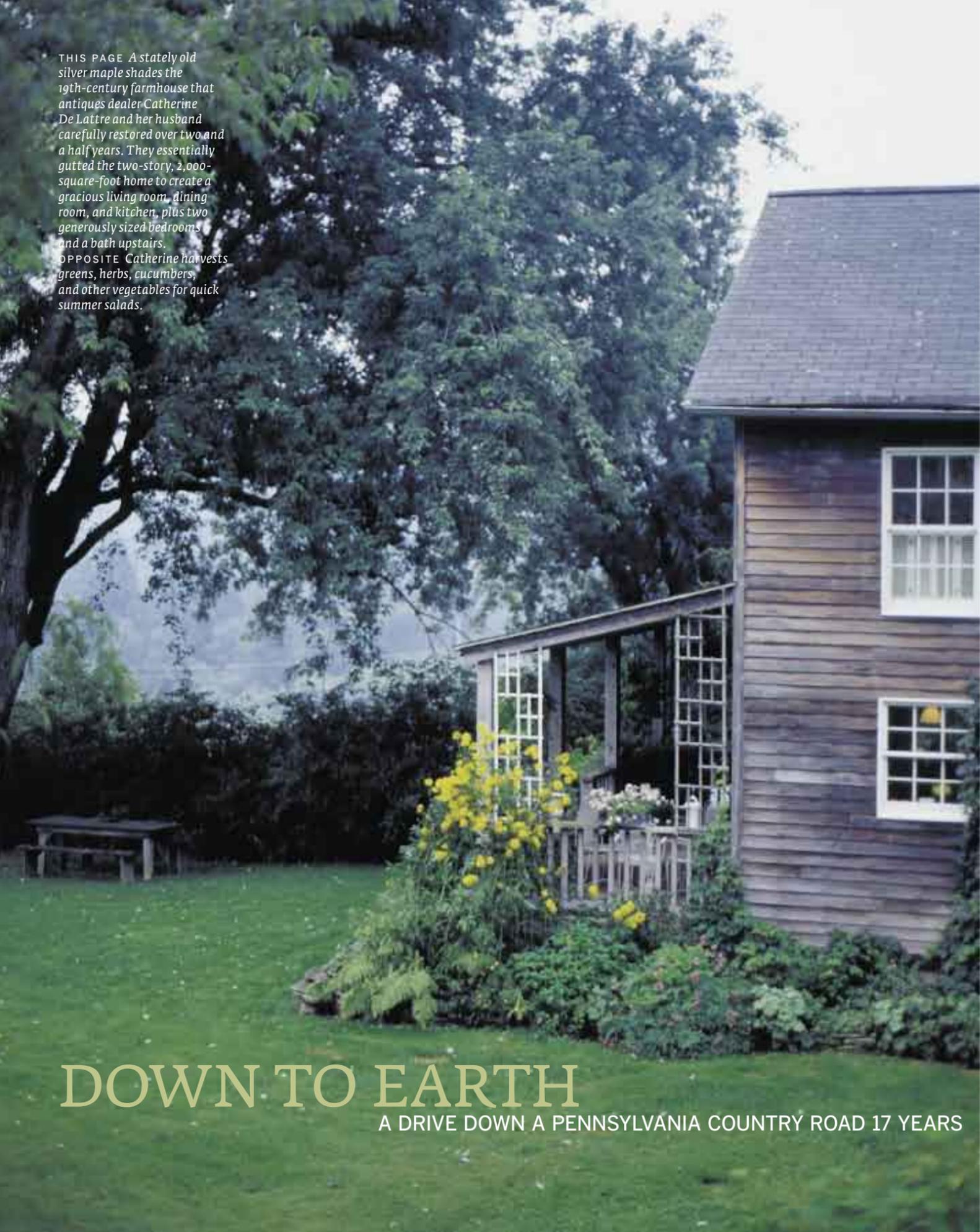


THIS PAGE A stately old silver maple shades the 19th-century farmhouse that antiques dealer Catherine De Lattre and her husband carefully restored over two and a half years. They essentially gutted the two-story, 2,000-square-foot home to create a gracious living room, dining room, and kitchen, plus two generously sized bedrooms and a bath upstairs. OPPOSITE Catherine harvests greens, herbs, cucumbers, and other vegetables for quick summer salads.



DOWN TO EARTH

A DRIVE DOWN A PENNSYLVANIA COUNTRY ROAD 17 YEARS



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AGO SPARKED A FAMILY'S PASSION FOR THE RUSTIC LIFE.

WHEN CATHERINE DE LATTRE AND HER HUSBAND, GERRIT VANDERMEER, GOT THE ITCH TO FIND A COUNTRY RETREAT IN THE LATE 1980S, THEY CAST A WIDE NET IN ALL DIRECTIONS FROM THEIR HOME IN NEW YORK CITY. THEY WERE SEEKING SOMETHING WITHIN A THREE-HOUR DRIVE,

and that covered familiar and popular locales upstate, on Long Island, and in Connecticut. But in the end, Catherine and Gerrit followed a tug that came from the northeast corner of Pennsylvania. ¶ At the time, sizeable chunks of farmland were coming up for sale at affordable prices. And Catherine and Gerrit's purchase of 175 scenic acres in Wayne County included just that—no charge for the forlorn, 100-year-old farmhouse and barn. "The house hadn't been lived in for 16 years," says Catherine, "and the broker just assumed that the buyer would tear it down and start over. But an engineer told us that the home and barn could be restored because their metal roofs had done a good job of protecting them over the years." ¶ Even so, Catherine and Gerrit (a television producer for Fox Network) spent many dusty days on demolition and repairs to get the house to a point where they and son Julian could comfortably spend weekends. Outside, the front porch needed rebuilding, and a new roof was installed. All the windows needed replacing, and the house was given a new skin of cedar clapboards. Inside, the home had evolved over the decades into a warren of cramped living spaces and bedrooms to accommodate the larger families of yesteryear. Tearing down these nonstructural walls revealed the home's original post-and-beam framing and also produced a bounty of nicely aged pine and hemlock planks that were recycled into furniture, wainscoting, baseboards, and kitchen cabinets and shelves. Catherine and Gerrit were also pleasantly surprised to discover well-preserved floor planks after pulling up linoleum throughout the house. ¶ "It took two and half years in all to get everything done, and then I didn't know what to do with myself," Catherine says with a laugh. "That's when I started collecting wildly for the house." ¶ Catherine isn't quite sure where her passion for antiquing came from (the couple's Manhattan apartment is very contemporary and has nary an antique), but she has a natural-born gift for unearthing painted American and French country furniture at flea markets and estate sales. She has also amassed a world-class collection of ironstone and yellowware (including the green-glazed variety) over the years. In turn, Catherine's collecting bug progressed to a fever for dealing, and she began renovating the barn with an eye toward opening Dancing Dog Antiques. ¶ What you see in Catherine's house is what you get in her shop. Pieces are artfully arranged in clean and airy vignettes that suggest to clients how rustic chairs, tables, cupboards, and accessories can find places in their country modern rooms. ¶ "Most of my customers buy for a look," Catherine explains. "Except for my pottery, I don't really obsess on collections. I'm more interested in how individual objects live in a room. When you keep it simple, you can see and celebrate each thing." ¶ Of course, Catherine doesn't measure the rewards of rural life by cash register rings. What's important is the many friendships that she and Gerrit and Julian have forged since taking that fateful drive down a country road 17 years ago. "It turned out even better than the way I dreamed it."

The dining room is the heart of this home. The table was made from planks salvaged from the house; the legs are posts that came from the front porch. Subtle color is introduced into the serene white settings with decorative objects, such as the old painted wall-hung shelf that came from a hardware store, green-glazed McCoy yellowware, and a circa-1910 lithograph of potatoes.





THIS PAGE (clockwise from top left) Catherine makes apple pies with fruit from this tree, which has withstood the ravages of time and storms. A reproduction metal electric chandelier hangs over the table in the dining room; for the few windows in the home that Catherine decided to dress, she chose gauzy curtains from a mail-order source. Dancing Dog Antiques, just a 50-yard walk from the house, resides in the renovated barn. A simple painted chair frames the view in the upstairs hallway. The long and lean bench in the perennial and vegetable garden once served a New York City park. Catherine grouped these mirrors together because of their green paint. Above the pedestal sink in the bathroom, an architectural element provides a foothold for a mirror and an old marble vase filled with Queen Anne's lace.



THIS PAGE (clockwise from top left) Catherine displays everyday ironstone on open shelves in the kitchen. She indulges her fun side by plunking a bouquet of 1950s hard-plastic tulips in the middle of a display of yellowware. A late 1800s green-painted kitchen cupboard shows off more ironstone in the dining room. Now high-school age, Julian has allowed his old log fort to become the domain of Dusty the beagle. From hardware store parts, Gerrit fashioned pendant lights for the kitchen around vintage milk-glass shades that Catherine found; since the family loves to cook and entertain, they opted for modern stainless-steel appliances. Heliopsis brings sunny cheer to the porch in late summer and autumn.



THIS PAGE In the upstairs hallway, a French country secretary that dates to the 1920s displays a collection of vintage McCoy and Shawnee pottery vases. The white paint on this and other pieces is old but not original.

OPPOSITE Catherine designed and had slipcovers made for the living room sofa and other upholstered pieces found elsewhere in the home. She spiced up the rustic wall shelf with four old carved-wood architectural details and crowned her achievement with one of her most prized McCoy pieces. Whitewashed posts and ceilings contribute to the updated, romantic country look.





THIS PAGE In the bath, a humble mirror that was handmade a hundred years ago is flanked by a pair of sophisticated French country sconce shelves. OPPOSITE (clockwise from top left) Like the tub, the pedestal sink is an antique. An impressive Victorian-era dresser dominates one wall of the master bedroom; Catherine finds these old slipper chairs (for herself and customers) at estate sales and reupholsters them in dreamy white chenille. The ceiling in the master bedroom was vaulted to make way for the reproduction four-poster bed.