

# HOUSTON house & home

THE COMPLETE RESOURCE MAGAZINE FOR YOUR HOME DECEMBER 2005

## Very merry

BRIGHT  
LOOKS FOR  
A HAPPY  
FAMILY  
HOLIDAY

WORLDLY MAPS AND GLOBES  
HIGH-TECH TOYS FOR YOUR HOME  
LUSCIOUS & LOVELY CAKES FOR THE HOLIDAYS  
AFFORDABLE APARTMENTS IN THE EAST END  
HIGHLIGHTS FROM HIGH POINT FURNITURE MARKET

in the  
spotlight:

ROBERTS CARPET & FINE  
FLOORS ON THE ART OF  
CHOOSING AREA RUGS





Left: Set for Christmas in North Carolina. The dining table is from (Crisco) at one chair pad fabric. The centerpiece is by Frank Thomas of Beavers while the stars quilt was done by Bob and Barbara.

Above: The slipcovers are an essential part of Helen Stroud's design scheme, a feature she saw when she was in Texas, N.C., very long, or as her home in The Woodlands. The quilts from her 1800s are still used in her home, designed by Helen Stroud, N.C. as from a day.

Helen Stroud has a distinctive decorating style and knows exactly how to achieve it. Her most recent project has been decorating and furnishing her family's second home in the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina for Christmas this year. There was no question of the look and feel she wanted her decoration to radiate: "I want, happy, happy, happy," she says.

For years, Helen and Dan Stroud and their five children and menagerie of pets — nine dogs, four cats and other assorted animals — have celebrated Christmas at their home in The Woodlands (featured in *Home & Home* November '03 issue). This year, the lively Stroud clan decided to move their Christmas celebrations to a new setting they've become totally enamored with — the vacation home that Helen and Dan bought three years ago on Lake Sammie in the quiet little mountain village of Tuxedo, N.C. After years of renovations, including the addition of a large screened porch, the place is ready for prime time.

red and more red, dried roses and evergreens, comfy quilts and french linens put the "merry" in merry christmas at this holiday home in the mountains

by Jean Henry • photography by Reba Graham



Everyone always ends up on the porch, says Helen. The 1800s lampshade was a gift from her dad.





*Above: The staircase garland by Frank Thornton is made of dried herbs, the plum-like flowers here. It includes five dried floral arrangements.*



*The house, built in 1989, originally had a deck that was totally open to the elements. The Sevens rebuilt part of it to make a covered porch.*



*Above: Detail of the Sevens' garland's dried floral arrangements with dried rose, lavender and lettuce.*

With seven bedrooms and two full kitchens, the house has plenty of space for the family and their guests. Built in 1999, it was large but lacking charm when they bought it.

They jumped at the chance to buy it, anyway, because properties on Lake Superior, fed by clear mountain streams, rarely come up for sale. Furniture there goes down houses from generation to generation but rarely sell them. Helen was familiar with the lake because her father, die, and her seven siblings and her five children have all attended summer camps there and have happy memories and sentimental attachments to the place. "Once you're on that lake, it's magic," Helen says.

"We'd had a realtor looking for a house for us there for years," she says. Then one day, her cell phone rang, and the realtor announced he'd found a house for sale. "I was praying for a miracle, and I got it," she says.

#### THE PLUSH, RELAXED LOOK

The house wasn't perfect, but Helen knew its lack of charm and history could be remedied. An inveterate shopper of flea markets, second-hand furniture stores and consignment shops in Houston, Helen knows how to pick an elegant-yet-lived-in look together. She doesn't like interior that are "too done, too perfect, too stiff." Her penchant for plush yet relaxed home furnishings and European looks is evident in her store, *Olivine*, located in the Galleria area's Uptown Park shopping center. Fine French linens, fabrics and embroidered pillows are her passion, and *Olivine* overflows with them, along with a few highly edited pieces of furniture for sale.

Slipcovers, usually white, are an important part of her design repertoire (and intricacy at *Olivine*) because Helen adores living with dogs and not having to worry about them soiling or scratching the furniture. And she wants others to be comfortably living with their pets, as well.





The sweet bedroom overlooks the covered porch. Bed linen is from Orlino.

Below: Here is a neighboring pasture.

#### DECORATING FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Helen's first call for Christmas decorations was to her friend, Frank Trelino, owner of Topsy Turvy in Boerne. He used to have a shop in Houston, and Helen, to admire his work, she gladly drives to Boerne to buy his beautiful ficus and dried flower arrangements.

For her North Carolina house, Frank fashioned garlands made of hops, the glass used in flavo beer, and accented them with dried roses, lavender and berries. Arrangements of hops and roses also serve as centerpieces for the main dining table.

Helen wanted a living Christmas tree, temporarily planted in a bucket, then permanently placed outdoors after the holidays. The tree skirt, an old crazy-quilt bordered with silver piping, is by Embellishments in Houston.

Much of the furniture in the living and dining rooms is from one-of-a-kind shops in Houston's Heights neighborhood. The coffee table in the living room is an old Chinese table, she had the legs cut to lower it. Always, when her children are in residence, there is a board game or Risk ongoing at the table, she says.

The new stucco porch, designed by Helen's architect brother, Patrick Carroby, is where everyone lives, she says. The two wood rocking chairs on the porch are from an Azula furniture shop in Hendersonville, N.C. Everywhere, there bowls of bright red apples, as Hendersonville is known as the apple capital of North Carolina.

Now all the Christmas decorations are up, the tree is in place and the surroundings definitely inspire a cheerful mood in the home. The age is set, but the real cheer of the Simul's vacation home is the joy the family takes in being with one another. ■

#### RESOURCES

**Embellishments**  
Distinctive Pillows  
8715 Katy Freeway  
713.465.5893

**Hotline Embroidery**  
713.465.1303

**Olivine**  
1151 Uptown Park Blvd.  
#10  
713.622.7776

**Spring Antique Mall**  
1609 Spring Cypress Road  
JD  
281.355.1110

**Topsy Turvy**  
Boerne  
830.269.0577

**Woodlands Upholstery  
& Drapery**  
27327 Robinson Road  
281.292.3129

