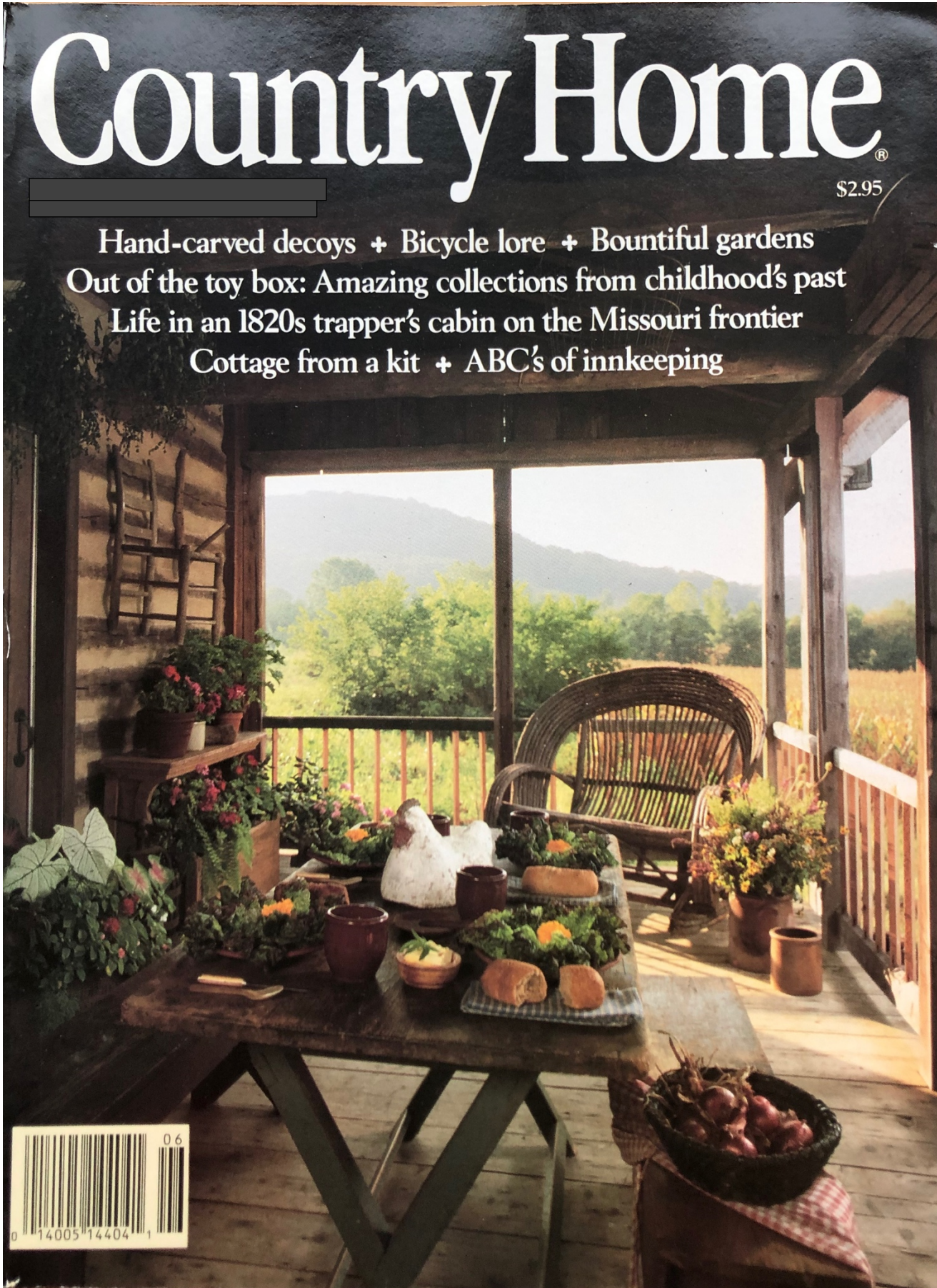


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Life in an 1820s trapper's cabin on the Missouri frontier  
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# DOWN BY THE RIVER



*By Deborah Hufford*

*A charming old home nestled in a broad and fertile Indiana river valley brought Bob and Donnie Hawkins a peaceful life-style.*



On a moist autumn morning, steam swirls off the Whitewater River, enveloping the valley in a vast, formless fog. Donnie Hawkins peers out her kitchen window into the gardens of her backyard. The velvet cooing of a mourning dove floats in the dawn mist, and there is the diaphanous outline of Queen-Anne's-lace, its delicately fringed blossoms heavy with dew. Lofty pillars of maple and elm vault upward through the silvery veil, joining the rolling woodlands that swell above the valley. Amid the trees, Donnie spies a deer and her fawn grazing peacefully.

Ten years ago Bob and Donnie Haw-

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*In 1805, pioneer Samuel Rockafellar built a log tavern near the Whitewater River in southeastern Indiana. In 1816, he added this home, above and opposite, which was both an inn (on the left side) and his family's private residence (on the right). In the early 1900s, the log tavern was torn down, but the inn survived. Having weathered many years and many tales, it now graciously serves as home for Bob and Donnie Hawkins, top. The home's twin doors still bid a double welcome to modern-day visitors.*

kins found their dream while driving through southeastern Indiana down Highway 52, a scenic route that snakes along the Whitewater River. They were heading home to Cincinnati in a van loaded with antiques when

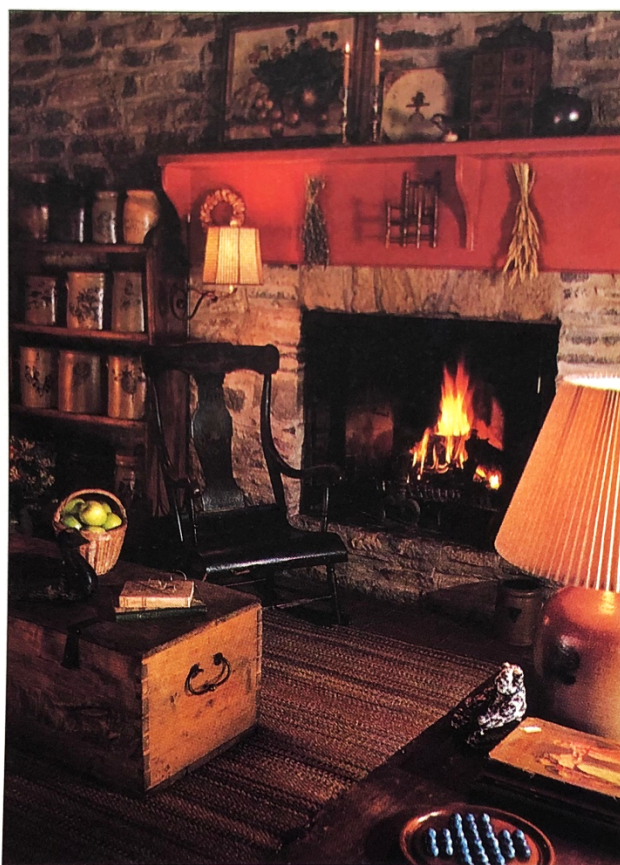
they spotted the For Sale sign in front of an old country inn just outside the village of New Trenton.

Intrigued, they returned on a chilly autumn day to inspect the home. A fire roared in the kitchen fireplace, cookies fresh from the oven were cooling, and the aroma of succulent pork roast wafted through the house. "It smelled like home," Bob says. "Let's buy it," Donnie said that day.





## DOWN BY THE RIVER



*A keeping room houses the kitchen, opposite, and a sitting area, above, in the back of the house. Hanging in the kitchen are bundles of herbs from the Hawkinses' garden and antique culinary utensils. The fire from a stone fireplace (one of five in the home) warms the room, while an antique rocker waits patiently for an occupant. ■*

Tucked away in these verdant forests are sleepy villages with many memories. Once hubs of activity in the new frontier of the early 1800s, these towns saw the mainstream of America's pioneer migration pass, and river trade boomed. Today the rolling hills are still veined with overgrown buffalo traces and pioneer trails.

In this valley, Samuel Rockafellar built his business and home in 1805 in an area that would become the town of

New Trenton. First he built a log tavern, and in 1816 he added the brick inn, which also served as the family home, to the tavern's front. All the brick and mortar were made on the property, Bob says.

Also built on the property in 1805 was a blockhouse, a shelter where the settlers sought protection during confrontations with Native Americans. Later, the blockhouse became the village icehouse, where blocks from the

frozen Whitewater River were stored. Today, it dutifully serves as a garage.

When the Hawkinses purchased the home, it had already been completely restored. The five fireplaces—closed for years—had been reopened. The brick-and-mortar walls had been exposed, the floors refinished, and wiring and a new stairway installed. A stone keeping room was added in 1966 to the back of the house, where the original log tavern had stood before it was



## DOWN BY THE RIVER



Above: On the bed in the upstairs bedroom is a handwoven Indiana coverlet, circa mid-1800s, signed and dated by the weaver. In the background is the tightwinder staircase to the attic. Below: The bathroom harbors a richness of textures—fieldstone, barn wood, and quarry tile. In the foreground hang heirloom aprons that belonged to Donnie's great-grandmothers. Opposite: The upstairs toy room hosts a collection of antique dolls and toys. ■

torn down in the early 1900s.

The home is decorated warmly with old Shaker-like furniture and many antiques that befit the dignity of the old house. Among the Hawkinses' favorite antiques are their collections of mid-1800s Indiana coverlets, toys, and cobalt salt-glazed stoneware.

As much a part of the house as its brick walls and antique furnishings is the memory of those who have taken shelter here. Donnie likes to tell the story of the frontier woman who, while herding her hogs to market in Cincinnati, stopped for the night at the Rockafellar inn. The woman was on foot and great with child. That night in the inn she gave birth to the baby, and the next day, with the child in her arms, she continued on her journey herding the hogs to Cincinnati—30 miles away. Such was the stuff pioneer wom-

en were made of, says Donnie.

The old inn that has welcomed so many travelers and holds so many stories today stands stalwart against the



forces of time, the elements, and its most insidious foe—neglect. It is crisply painted, and a welcome wreath hangs between its two front doors.

The Hawkinses are happy in their country home. They garden, plant trees, and refinish antiques. Summer evenings are spent sitting in rockers on the open back porch. The pace of life is slower here, and pleasant. "We don't miss what the big city has to offer," Donnie says. "We have both worlds. We're close enough to go to a tiny farmer's market on Wednesday and a superstore on Friday."

Bob loves the fresh air, trees, and wildlife. There are deer in the backyard, foxes that climb the cherry trees, birds, rabbits, squirrels, and possums that love peanut butter. They share a life, sumptuous and good—life in the country, down by the river. □