

It Was...

# Love

At First Sight

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Falling in love with a person and a house have much in common. With both, there is an undeniable spark—a connection—that says: This one is special. The four couples whose homes are featured here each felt that spark the first time they walked through the front door. Janet and David James discovered a 19th-century log cabin that they revere, and they've let that respect guide them in the remodeling process. Martha and Patrick Michelson hoped to

find a modern home in Bloomington as fabulous as the one they were leaving in Wisconsin—they found a postmodern one that's even better. Mary Catherine and Marc Carmichael wanted a brick home in Elm Heights and found a cottage classic. Sophia Travis had always dreamed of living in an old rambling farmhouse; she and her husband, Gregory, have one with a ton of history and in a magnificent setting. Here they are: *Bloom's* class of 2012!



(left) The cabin's living room is an intimate refuge with the original cabin's hand-hewn log walls and an old stone fireplace with a maple mantel.

(below) The spacious outdoor room is surrounded by eight forested acres.



## A Cabin in the Woods

"When I first saw this house, I saw the broad axe marks in the old logs and the chisel marks in the stone—I could see all the muscle and sweat it took to create this place," says David James of the pre-Civil War log cabin he and his wife, Janet, purchased in 2001. Since then, they have added their own hard work and imagination to the cabin and made the structure the heart of their 21st-century home.

Tucked away on eight acres of deep woods in northeast Monroe County, the cabin was reassembled in its current location by former owner Jim Deckard in the 1970s. Deckard added an upstairs to the cabin, which had been in his family for generations but had been taken apart. It was a pile of loose logs when he acquired it. According to the Jameses, Deckard found newspapers dating from 1850 in the log chinking.

In the 1990s, Farm Fresh Studio, a local recording business, was based in the cabin and built an adjacent studio. A core group of twenty-somethings lived there, made music and some architectural adaptations, and left their old school bus on the property. The Jameses are



Janet and David James love to relax and dine on the cabin's back porch.



The house is built around an 1850s cabin. An avid gardener, Janet James has received landscaping guidance from Jackson & Fourth Garden Design.

mindful of their contributions and the studio and the bus remain.

“After living here for a while, we started to make changes in increments,” says Janet, retired director of Indiana University Conferences. We wanted to bring more light in without defiling it.”

A friend suggested that they talk to designer/contractor Russ Herndon, owner of Herndon Design, so one day Janet knocked on the door of his house on Fess Street. Their meeting was the beginning of a long collaboration. Herndon, whose first house was a log cabin in Brown County, is known for minimalist modern design, but he was

excited to work with the Jameses and the historic structure.

“Janet and David didn’t want a traditional rustic look, so we took it in a different direction,” Herndon says. “We had weekly ‘aesthetics meetings’ that were creative and fruitful.”

Adds Janet, “We didn’t approach the cabin with the idea of a style. We came at it wanting to embrace the history and essence of this place by focusing on what was already there.”

Already there was the original cabin built from virgin poplar. And so the new entryway, porch, and cabinets were built primarily



1. Wood, tile, and glass create a neutral palette that allows colors to pop in dining room art and accent pieces.

2. “The intimacy of the living room in winter especially contrasts strongly with the openness of the rest of the ground floor,” Janet says. “It captures the sense of ‘cabin-ness’ that we didn’t want to lose when we gave the house a new voice.”

3. The Jameses and designer/contractor Russ Herndon consider the kitchen the “crown jewel” of the renovation. The long continuous wood grain on the poplar cabinets echoes the original horizontal logs.



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from local poplar. In addition, the revitalized cabin and its landscape reflect the skills of many local artisans and craftspeople—including cabinetmaker John Rinne, woodworker Jay Anderson, Walter Schmidt of Hickory Tree Studio, and Anita Bracalente and Jerry Sinks of Jackson & Fourth Garden Design.

“There is so much talent in this town,” says Janet. “People who work with stone, wood, metal, earth—people who design and dig—all have put something into this house and infused it with the spirit of the place.”



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4. A recessed spice rack of magnetic stainless steel next to and facing the stove keeps ingredients handy for Janet, who is a passionate cook.

5. Open shelves for plates and glassware and deep drawers for cooking tools maximize functional space in the kitchen. The island top started life 30 years ago in the First United Methodist Church kitchen.



## A Postmodern Gem with Panache

Martha and Patrick Michelson loved their renovated 1970s split-level in Madison, Wisconsin, and wanted to find a modern home when they moved to Bloomington in summer 2011 with their five-year-old son. After looking at more than 20 houses online, their Realtor, Beth Ellis, steered them to the house of their dreams in the Blue Ridge Estates neighborhood.

“It was a soft landing,” says Patrick, whose new faculty position in Indiana University’s Department of Religious Studies brought the family to town. “When we stepped into this house, we immediately felt that it was the one. It is considerably larger than our old house—about 2,700 square feet, whereas our previous one was only 1,700—but it had a lot of the same features, like an open floor plan and great light.”

Built by Loren Wood Builders working with Kirkwood Design, the three-bedroom, two-and-a-half-bath house showcases contemporary design and building techniques. The main floor’s open plan, which includes the kitchen, dining, and living areas, allows the family to be together even when they are



1. A curb view of the Michelsons' new-construction contemporary home in the Blue Ridge Estates neighborhood. Surprisingly, considering the recession, the house was constructed on spec by Loren Wood Builders.

2. The spacious living room is furnished with new art acquisitions and modernist furniture the Michelsons brought from Wisconsin. In the evening, the family often plays board games at the large table.

3. Patrick and Martha Michelson love that their new home is in an established Bloomington neighborhood with diverse architectural styles.

4. The east-west exposure of the living room provides great light.



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engaged in different activities; the living room's soaring 13-foot ceiling is well proportioned with the large space and optimizes use of available daylight. The spare industrial-chic aesthetic is warmed by the incorporation of locally milled maple cabinetry and limestone countertops. The postmodern design also complements the character of the established neighborhood.

In fact, the neighborhood was a big selling point. "We love that we found a brand new home in an established neighborhood with mature trees and diverse architectural styles. Plus it's only five minutes from downtown; we are always at the public library, Farmers' Market, and WonderLab," says Martha, a creative director who cofounded Shopbop, a high-end online fashion site

now operated by Amazon. Martha now does freelance design work in the open study she shares with her husband and son on the top floor landing; the space has become a focal point for family activities like drawing, working, and playing games.

The Michelsons are very much at home in their new house. All of the furniture from their Madison house fits right in, and all they've purchased are decorative items like art and rugs. They say they have no big home-improvement projects in the works, just some sprucing up of the yard.

"In warmer months, we spend a lot of time on the back patio enjoying the outdoors, so we'll definitely do some landscaping this year," Martha says.



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5. The open kitchen features limestone countertops. The cabinets were refaced in walnut by NR Hiller Design.

6. Martha does freelance design work in a second-floor open work space that also serves as a home office and art studio.

7. Set off by cool surfaces and understated accent pieces, this colorful collage packs a visual punch.



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8. Judy Pfaff's large-scale print makes a compelling statement in the master bedroom amid minimalist furnishings from Design Within Reach and Ligne Roset.



The 1926 Tudor Revival is a quintessential Elm Heights home.

## A Charming Cottage in Town



(left) A wood-burning stove and original oak flooring add warmth to the living room.

(below) Mary Catherine, Marc, and their son Dylan enjoy collecting vintage maps and travel posters.

In 1998, Mary Catherine and Marc Carmichael were casually house hunting. When they saw the 1926 Tudor Revival in Elm Heights, they were smitten.

“The house was decent size and had not been overly remodeled; plus it didn’t have that student rental wear-and-tear that a lot of houses close to campus have,” says Mary Catherine. The house is a compact 2,300 square feet with three bedrooms, two full baths, a finished third floor, and a full, unfinished basement.

When the Carmichaels moved in, they knew the house required immediate attention—specifically, removal of an iron spiral staircase connecting the second and third floors. The precarious structure was irresistible to their three-year-old son, Dylan.

Over the years, Marc did a lot of the repairs and upgrades himself, as he had worked construction while in college.



“Old houses appreciate what you do to them,” he says. “The only frustrating thing is that you need to deal with everything the people ahead of you have done with varying degrees of skill.”

Major projects included redoing the kitchen and the downstairs bathroom in period-appropriate style. Mary Catherine, who recently left her job as director of Leadership Bloomington-Monroe County to launch her interior design business, [carmichaeldesignonline.com](http://carmichaeldesignonline.com), used her professional eye to design various aspects of the rooms and worked closely with the contractors. She strategically focused on details such as adding custom display shelving for her large collection of vintage turquoise pottery, which she started gathering at age 12.

“When I see a piece I am tempted to buy her, I often hesitate because I’m not sure she doesn’t already have it,” says Marc, who shares Mary Catherine’s love of antiquing. Together they have found vintage light fixtures to replace those that were not original to the house.

The family uses every room of the house, a rarity in middle-class American homes these days, but has favorite spots for hanging out.

“We spend a lot of time in the sun room with its many large windows and skylights,” says Mary Catherine. “Despite being so open, it feels cozy. We also spend a lot of time in the kitchen and breakfast nook. Hours of homework have been completed there, as have dozens of Valentine’s cards, Easter eggs,



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and Christmas cookies. The dining room has been the site of our happiest memories, with our family around the table that came to us from my maternal grandparents.”

When Dylan, now 15, graduates from high school, the Carmichaels plan to move to Indianapolis so that Marc, currently president of the Indiana Beverage Alliance, doesn’t have the long commute he has endured for many years. But in the meantime, they plan on enjoying their charming cottage and giving it plenty of TLC.



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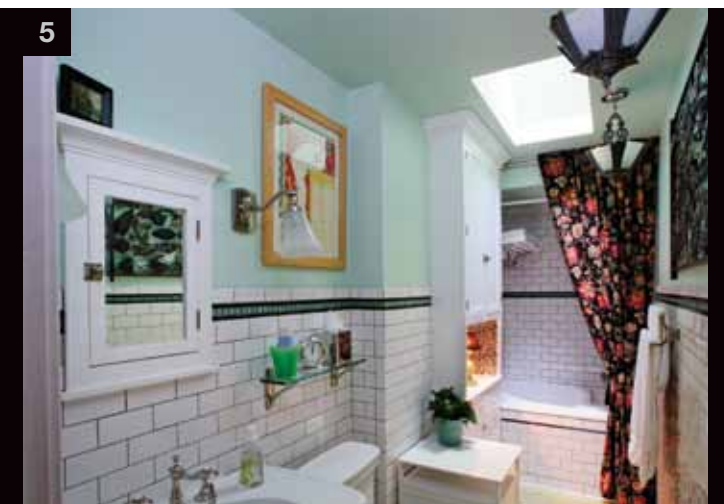
1. A John William Waterhouse print, *My Sweet Rose*, hangs above the dining room sideboard. The double-neck art-glass lamp was an eBay purchase.

2. The dining room is furnished with a 1930s dining set that belonged to Mary Catherine’s grandparents. She designed the display shelves that hold her vintage turquoise pottery collection.

3. The kitchen was refurbished with a period-appropriate look by Bloomington contractor Bert Gilbert and cabinetmaker Larry Ferree.

4. The Carmichaels’ antique globe collection sits atop a bookcase.

5. A closet was removed in order to make the downstairs bathroom more spacious.



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Built in 1850, the Ketcham house is one of Monroe County's oldest structures.

## At Home with History

Moving into the old Ketcham farmhouse in Clear Creek Township in 1998 was the realization of a lifelong dream for Sophia Travis, who grew up a peripatetic “military brat.” The house exuded a strong sense of place and permanence and was an important piece of local history.

“I had always wanted to live in this very exact kind of home and rural environment,” Sophia says. “The house has a benevolent and charming mood all the time. I love the way it is situated in the bend of Clear Creek on a slight hill. It’s private yet welcoming—the house kind of tells me things every day.”

Gregory Travis, Sophia’s husband and a history buff, shares her appreciation for the

Federal Italianate-style house. “Colonel John Ketcham was an early settler of Monroe County and an interesting man,” says Gregory, who is self-employed in the IT field. “He was one of the first trustees of Indiana University and he designed the first Monroe County courthouse. He built this house in 1850 for his eldest son, George Piercy Ketcham, and died in it fifteen years later. The home stayed in the Ketcham family until the 1940s.”

The Traveses are the fifth family to own the house and have worked on it steadily over the years. Much of the work they did involved shoring up or replacing infrastructure that had been compromised over the years.

“When we replaced the roof, our roofers



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1. The dining room, lavishly decorated with the artwork of four-year-old Finn Travis, opens into the harpsichord room, one of two first-floor music rooms.

2. Charming keepsakes, each with its own story, adorn the nooks and crannies of the Travis home.

3. (left to right) Finn, Sophia, and Gregory Travis. The home is filled with musical instruments and the artwork of family members and friends. A classically trained musician, Sophia often plays an art deco accordion that belonged to her grandfather.

4. Sophia, who taught piano for 15 years, has collected several keyboard instruments. Two harpsichords and a piano occupy the large first-floor music room.



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took it down to the rafters. To their surprise, there were five layers of roof—not very prudent!” says Sophia, a musician and community activist. “When we renovated the second-floor bathroom, the demolition revealed that the floor joists had been cut without any regard for sensitivity to the structural importance of the joists. This led to tearing out the ceiling in the parlor on the first floor in order to create ‘sister joists’ in the area that had been compromised. This project literally took years.”

Adds Gregory with a laugh, “I come from a long line of people who take a long time to do what we want to do.”

Both parents delight in seeing their four-year-old son, Finn, growing up in the rambling, quirky house they love and other families have loved before them. “Finn plays throughout the whole house, which I enjoy very much,” says Sophia. “I don’t like rooms being off limits. It’s a wonderful privilege to be able to play with a little boy in this setting.”

The Traveses very much see themselves in a historical context—the current caretakers entrusted with this treasured home. “It’s a real paradox to be so attached and rooted here largely because of our passion for this home but to also know we’re just a chapter in this home’s history,” says Sophia. “The Ketcham family descendants whom we’ve met have expressed their sustained appreciation for their connection to this place, and it’s an honor to be stewards of this home and protect the sense of place it contributes to Monroe County.” ✧

5. Finn Travis sprawls on his parents’ bed to enjoy a picture book.

6. Sophia painted a hand-me-down sideboard with a bucolic scene of the Ketcham house. The painting over the sideboard was done by Gregory’s grandfather.

7. Bloomington carpenter Jackson Moore renovated the upstairs bathroom. The linen closet features a Gothic arch theme original to the house. The bathtub is built on a platform to compensate for floor-sloping issues.

8. The cheerful yellow and green kitchen features an “espresso nook” and is decorated with whimsical objects Sophia has collected over the years.



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