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What would make a confirmed city dweller with two grown children and a successful family counselling practice in Los Angeles give it all up for life in the Ontario countryside?

Love, of course. When Jayne Bingeman met her gentleman farmer husband, Gord, it was a fairy-tale match made in heaven. Sort of like her idyllic new life in Canada, in fact, which centres on a beautifully renovated 150-year-old stone house.

All his life, Gord told Jayne, he'd loved the old stone farmhouses dotting the countryside where he grew up. But, as Jayne laughs, contrary to popular belief, 'farmhouse' and 'charm' are often mutually exclusive terms. It took a while for the couple to find the right house for them. Until they saw this one, that is.

"What struck us first was the drive in from the road, lined with trees on either side like an *allée* in Paris, and you couldn't see the house – there was an air of mystery about it." Then all at once the view opened up and there before them stood the house, nestled in a little valley beside a rambling creek. It was love at first sight, once again.

Originally built in 1852 by a Scottish immigrant, the house was in fine shape for its age, with high ceilings and wonderful deep-set windows. However, it was ripe for remodeling, with a kitchen full of dated knotty pine

panelling, a master bedroom so small that Jayne thought at first it was the guest room, beautiful interior stone walls hidden behind prosaic plaster and lath, and the kind of odd layout that comes from a century-and-a-half of adding on as the need arose. The Bingemans set about restoring and reconfiguring the old place, and made an extensive addition of their own for a new master suite; from the beginning, their aim was to restore, and in some cases reinvent, the home's romantic heritage.

One of the most extensive transformations came in the large kitchen. An expert cook, Jayne had a long wish list, but the sheer size of the space – some 20 by 26 feet – overwhelmed her. The local tile store suggested she give Kitchener, Ontario, designer Denise Holmes a call.

"It was clear that while Jayne had great ideas, she needed someone to help pull it all together," Holmes recalls. She organized the big space into two main work areas: on one side a cooking centre, consisting of two built-in ovens and a six-burner cooktop with a range hood; and on the other a big, deep country sink. In the centre, an expansive island provides plenty of



Opposite, centre: In one of those fateful coincidences, a grandfather clock Gord Bingeman has owned since childhood has almost identical side columns to the fireplace in the family room, as if it was destined for that spot. Chair, The Olde Hide House; firescreen, rug, Willow House; side table, pottery jam jar, Old Bertha's; telephone, Pottery Barn; wooden pineapple, wooden letter, At Home; pillow, Putti.







Jayne Bingeman's favourite window seat overlooks a pretty herb garden (left). Pillows, Putti; sconces, The Timeless Material Co.; picture, Old Bertha's; sheers, Conestoga Fabric. Stone walls form a backdrop for stainless steel appliances and granite countertops (below). Linens, Putti. The armoire in the dining room (opposite) was custom-designed by Kitchener, Ontario, designer Denise Holmes. Its paint is so skillfully distressed that a friend asked Jayne if she was planning to refinish it. Table, Castle's Antiques; chairs, Almira Home Fashion Market; chandelier, L'Atelier; rug, Elte Carpets & Home; vases, At Home.



The patina of the island's generous copper work surface will only become richer over the years

room to roll out pastries, and for guests and family to sit and chat with the cook. The patina of the island's generous European-style copper work surface will only become deeper and richer over the years.

Gord's dream was to bring out the home's classic elements. He stripped the plaster off the interior of the stone walls, leaving in place the pine straps that originally supported the lath. Boards and timbers from a demolished barn in the area were skillfully incorporated into the beams and flooring of the new addition, and the window seats were restored

throughout the main floor.

The combination of restored elements and sensitive improvements – just like the combination of aged and distressed new furnishings along with evocative vintage pieces that furnish the house – frame a portrait of a modern-day love story. “I love how my home changes by day and night, and the contrasts between old and new,” confides Jayne. “I’m very aware of how lucky I am. To find love a second time – and with that, a new country, a beautiful house, and a wonderful new life.” ●





The powder room (above, left) is simply designed in board and batten; the carved mirror came from California, as did the two vintage postcards, framed so if you turn them over, you can still read what the senders wrote. Linens, soaps, Putti; ladder, fixtures, faucet, all Ginger's; sconce, Urban Lights.

The peaked ceiling and cathedral window of the newly added master bedroom (above, right) blend perfectly with all the older parts of the house. Jayne Bingeman designed the room's four-poster bed years ago. Duvet, Willow House; earthenware jug, Old Bertha's.

The Los Angeles urbanite who became a Canadian farmer's wife: Jayne Bingeman, right, relaxes in a corner of her Ontario kitchen.



armoire amour

Some of the most striking aspects of the Bingemans' home are the handsome armoires in several of the rooms, used to display vintage stoneware and other collectibles. Designer Denise Holmes offers some advice for great armoire displays that work equally well for bookcases and open cabinets.

> **CONTRAST.** Choose objects that contrast with the setting: white china on dark shelves, for instance, or crystal and glassware against a light or white backdrop.

> **BALANCE.** Go for balance rather than symmetry, such as combining one large piece with two or three smaller pieces.

> **ODD NUMBERS.** The stylist's trick of threes and fives works beautifully within the framework of an armoire; group pieces that are similar in shape, colour or function.

> **VERTICALS.** Large platters stood on edge form a pretty backdrop for smaller items placed in front, and introduce a vertical element.

> **VINTAGE TOUCHES.** For a French-Canadian look, line shelves with vintage linens or finish the shelf edges with borders of scalloped eyelet, gingham or lace.





Another hutch, this one in the sunroom part of the addition, combines old with new: the top is vintage, with the lower cabinet custom-designed to match. Hutch, window treatment, chair, rug, all Willow House; bowls, teapots, Old Bertha's; basket, Paris Road Antiques; rectangular vase, pitcher, print, linens, pestle and mortar, all Putti; table, Nina's Antiques; lyreback chair, Almira's; vase, pineapple, At Home.