

# AMERICAN FOLLY

With the help of interior designer Melissa Morgan, one man's dream of having an authentic log cabin on his Texas property has been brought to life with a transplanted 19th-century wooden structure filled with local antiques and plenty of rustic spirit

TEXT **MIEKE TEN HAVE** | PHOTOGRAPHS **STEPHEN KARLISCH**



**THIS PAGE** The cabin, built in the 1860s by settlers in Ohio, was dismantled and then painstakingly reassembled in its new home, a ranch in Texas Hill Country. Following some alterations to the upper storey, the leftover timber was used to build a covered porch. **OPPOSITE** Melissa added cushions in an embroidered linen from Chelsea Textiles to the dark green-blue painted Swedish bench. The rug was designed by Bunny Williams for Dash & Albert. Two early-Texas pine chairs are teamed with linen seat cushions









Situated at the edge of a pond among the rolling pastures of Texas Hill Country, Micah McKinney's log cabin looks right at home in the landscape, as though it has been there since time immemorial. While the cabin is authentic – it was built by settlers in the 1860s – it is actually an improbable transplant to this area from rural Ohio. 'I've always wanted a log cabin,' explains Micah, who worked with a local company to source it. Immediately drawn to the original, unbleached patina of the wooden structure, he had it assiduously deconstructed, labelled, transported by truck and then rebuilt – timber by timber – on his 1,200-acre ranch in Fredericksburg, which he shares with his two young children.

Enlisting the help of Melissa Morgan, of M Interiors in San Antonio, Micah wanted to preserve the rustic spirit of the early American structure, so it has no power or running water. 'It's the only job for which I've had to source working kerosene lanterns,' says Melissa. What it lacks in modern amenities, however, it makes up for in charm and atmosphere. Melissa has furnished it with authentic local antiques in a nod to the region's history – think simple pine furnishings, which early settlers would have brought with them from Germany in the 19th century, or which were made by immigrants in the local area. Many of these pieces were sourced from San Antonio store The Cottage Antiques.

In the sitting area, a Swedish bench, painted a dark greenish-blue, doubles as storage with plenty of useful space concealed below. For the seat cushion – and also the curtains – Melissa chose a Chelsea Textiles check and she covered cushions in a tree of life design by the same company. They add a refined touch to the simplicity of the hand-hewn pine. An early-Texas chest acts as a coffee table, flanked by an American Windsor chair and a pair of pine rush-seat chairs with French linen cushions. The striped rug is a Bunny Williams design for Dash & Albert, while the antique wrought-iron chandelier above it holds only candles – the kerosene lanterns hanging from wooden hooks on the walls serve as functional sconces. Deer antlers discovered on the ranch decorate the timber-and-plaster-striped walls and repurposed wood from the cabin was fashioned by the contractor into window surrounds. An early-Texas pine cabinet acts as a bar when Micah uses the cabin for entertaining.

In the dining area, a wood-burning stove sits on top of a large slab of limestone quarried from the property. 'The table was my granddad's kitchen table in West Texas,' says Micah. This is teamed with a set of six antique rush-seat American chairs and, behind it, an 18th-century French walnut cupboard holds simple antique glasses, copper vessels, ironstone plates and enamelware. Micah altered the second storey to accommodate a vaulted ceiling and a sleeping loft. 'It's just a basic covered area upstairs to lay out sleeping bags,' he explains. In front of a window near the foot of the ladder used to access the loft is an old milking stool with a crescent-shaped carrying hole; this is tucked under a Texan pine table displaying an antique American hand-carved wooden bowl. The original timber freed up by this alteration work was used to create a generous new front porch.

This new addition allows for lazy time spent reading, gazing, entertaining and fishing – the primary pastimes in this rustic escape – and from one of the Adirondack chairs lined up on the porch, Micah can enjoy watching his children swimming in the pond. One could think of it as a folly – albeit with a rough-hewn, pioneering charm to it. 'The cabin is special – it's become a real focal point,' he says with a certain satisfaction □





**OPPOSITE TOP** A ladder provides access to the new mezzanine sleeping loft. **OPPOSITE BOTTOM** Deer antlers found on the ranch are displayed throughout the cabin. A wooden bucket on a rope and pulley can be used to bring objects up into the loft space. **THIS PAGE** The cabin has no electricity, so illumination is provided by the hanging kerosene lanterns and candles in the wrought-iron chandelier

