“I wanted to fuse our family antiques with my modern taste”

No longer a sock-skating rink for her children, this once-empty room is full of life as Katherine Cobbs’ stylish family retreat.

FOOD WRITER KATHERINE COBBS did what many consider terrifying: She moved cross-country with her husband, John, and their three daughters, Ella, Parker, and Addie. Turns out, that was the easy part. After three years in the new cottage, Katherine admits, “the main room remained an empty eyesore, and my children considered it their own private sock-skating rink.” Katherine suffered from a common case of design paralysis. She had an attic full of hand-me-down pieces yet couldn’t see their potential. She even bought a neutral sofa with clean lines but was afraid to take the next step. “I know what I like when I see it, though I don’t have the guts or the know-how to achieve it,” she says. COTTAGE LIVING assistant decorating editor Anne Turner Carroll guided > A chunky abaca rug and new velvet-upholstered chairs create a cozy seating area in the updated living room. “We spend so much time in here now, we’re neglecting the rest of our house,” Katherine says.
Katherine’s antique secretary, flanked by windows fitted with woven blinds, seamlessly blends with the room’s more contemporary upholstered pieces.

Anne Turner pushed me to relinquish my plain-Jane tendencies

Anne Turner Carroll leads you through the metamorphosis of Katherine’s living room; search “Cobbs” at cottageliving.com

“The good life express your style

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Anne Turner Carroll

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The living room, just off the foyer, acts as a pass-through to Katherine’s home office (through the glass door). Anne Turner suggested keeping the walls a soft white but accenting doors and window sashes with bold black to match the ebonized floors.

Ella and Parker perch at the game table (above), one of their favorite spots to hang out. A new tweed cushion on the window seat and a set of diminutive stools—a lucky flea market find—round out the seating.

Anne Turner chose a crisp shade of blue for the inside of the antique secretary. “The subtle hits of blue and orange are a great way to add color to a space without it being overpowering,” she says.

Katherine pulls the pieces together; turn to page 65 >
Cottage Confidential
How Katherine created a living room that actually gets lived in

I started with lots of inherited antiques that I wanted to blend with more modern pieces.

I added Mom and Dad’s sixties retro slipper chairs, reupholstered in kid-proof white vinyl. It looks more expensive than it is.

I subtracted a Queen Anne-style upright piano, which just didn’t harmonize with the room.

I couldn’t live with a TV in the room, so we found other ways to have family time, like the groovy game table my girls love.

I couldn’t live without loads of seating for the whole family and guests. We made use of our window seats with new cushions and fashioned floor pillows from the perfect “tie-it-all-together” fabric.

I splurged on a pair of new velvet chairs finished with nailheads.

I saved on repurposing an antique secretary as a bar. We painted the inside blue to liven it up—all my barware fits behind the glass doors, and my cocktail napkins and coasters stow away in the drawers.

I finished it off with an amazing wall hanging system for our family photos. (See “Find it fast!” above, right.) The frames have removable backs, so I can update the pictures as the children grow. The photos make me smile every time I walk into the room.

Katherine’s fabric breakdown
A lively mix of prints and solids keeps things colorful. See swatches at right, from top to bottom:

- **Graphic punch (floor pillows):** Bloomsbury in Emerald by Lulu DK (luludk.com), available through Pacific Design Services; 310/360-6418.

- **Plush texture (side chairs):** Velvet in Aloe (360-TOU) from King Cotton; 205/322-5878.

- **Splash of color (sofa pillow):** Stripe in Vert by Hable Construction (hableconstruction.com), available through Pacific Design Services; 310/360-6418.

- **Grounds the palette (window seat):** Tweed (262-135) from King Cotton; 205/322-5878.

- **Lightens things up (throw pillow in window seat):** Woven Checker in Serbin by Hable Construction (hableconstruction.com), available through Pacific Design Services; 310/360-6418.

- **Sleek and modern (slipper chairs):** E-Z Vinyl in Bone (EZY-5003) by Spradling International, Inc.; 800/333-0955, ext. 146, or e-mail georgia@spradlingvinyl.com for more info.