

# old time charm

story by Christy Heitger  
photos by Paul Gregersen



One couple  
finds joy in  
antiquing  
their cabin

Are you a “junkie?” I’m not referring to a sports, chocolate, or television enthusiast. I’m talking about the addicted antique junkie who lives to snoop out and snatch up new (well, old) “junk” that will fit seamlessly into their cottage décor. Kris Walseth is one such self-proclaimed junkie who has no plans to seek therapy for her addiction because to her, searching for antiques is therapy.

## Taking the Old and Keeping it Old

Purchased in 2001, Kris and Dan Walseth gutted their 60-year-old, 600-square-foot cabin in order to winterize it. When they gutted it, they saved and reused the original pine board paneling to give the place an “olden” feel. They also used reclaimed timber on the ceiling and floor, and outfitted the entire place with old door hardware, light switch plates, kitchen cabinetry, light fixtures, lamp shades, wall sconces, book cases, table lamps, and furniture.



Why all the fuss? It's pretty simple.

We didn't want our cabin to look like a suburban home, says Kris. "There's so much more charm and character in a place that looks old."

## What to Buy ... and Where to Put It

Kris gathers ideas from all sorts of places – the Internet, antique stores, architectural salvage shops, magazines. Then she comes home and collaborates with her fabulous carpenter, Rick, who installs everything from door-knobs and drawer pulls to bookshelves and wall sconces.

The inspiration for her red and green living room wall came from stepping inside a little Scandinavian shop. There she spotted a unique red, green and gold hutch. Mesmerized by the striking color pattern, she decided to incorporate that same color scheme into her cabin. So she worked with Rick and together they came up with the idea of hanging the hutch on the wall and then building shelving all around it that reaches up to the ceiling. This addition added both charm and functionality to the room.

Kris insists that antiquing is not about acquiring old stuff. Rather, it's about using décor to set a desired tone or feeling.

"Not everything in my cabin needs to be ancient," says Kris. "If I see something I like and it fits with the feel that I'm going for, then I bring it home."

Sometimes Kris will buy now and think later about what to do with her purchase. For instance, she came across a beautiful piece of intricately carved wooden trim. She didn't know where she'd put it at first, but a few days later inspiration struck and she realized it would look great on the side of one of the bunk beds. ➔

Everything old is – old again, and beautiful. When Kris and Dan Walseth purchased a 60-year-old cabin, they didn't raze it. They choose instead to renovate it, restore it, and decorate it with antique touches.





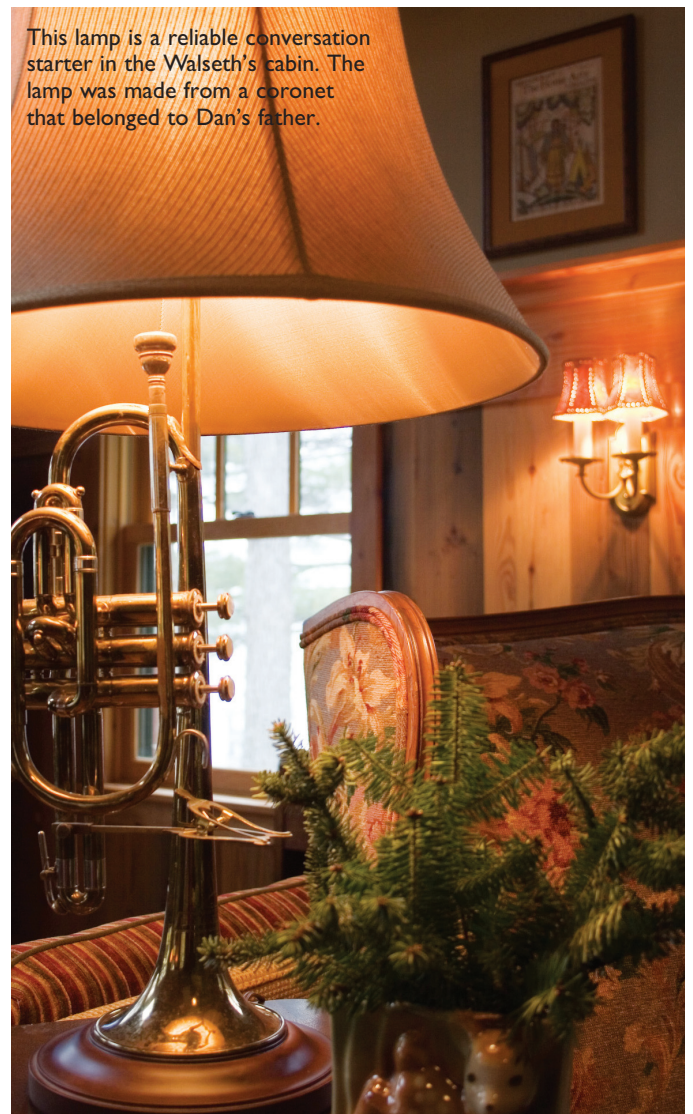
## A Personal Treasure Trove

In the end, perhaps the greatest treasures are not the treasures themselves, but rather the memories that go along with how each unique antique was acquired. For the Walseths, there are many such pieces. For instance, there's the 70-year-old chair that came from Kris' best friend's parents. And the dining chairs that Kris' folks purchased as newlyweds over 60 years ago. And the cool tortoise shell doorknob that came from an antique shop in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. But by far, the most popular conversation starter at the Walseth cabin is the trumpet table lamp – made out of the 75-year-old coronet that once belonged to Dan's father.

"I love that it was made into a usable piece of furniture and is displayed in our living room rather than sitting in a case where it wouldn't see the light of day – no pun intended," says Kris.

This antique junkie loves her hobby and it shows. "Antiquing the cabin has made it so cozy and inviting," says Kris. "Just the way a cabin *should* be." ~

*Frequent contributor Christy Heitger doesn't purposefully collect antiques; she just doesn't clean out her closets as often as she should.*



This lamp is a reliable conversation starter in the Walseth's cabin. The lamp was made from a coronet that belonged to Dan's father.

