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# Beyond

THE ACORN

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*Designer Discovers  
Vintage Gems*



## Chocolate

*Sweet Object of Desire*

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# Cottage *of* curious finds

Written by LESLIE GREGORY HAUKOOS  
Photos by JOAN PAHOYO

It's not unusual to see Jennifer Grey leaving her Newbury Park home at 4:30 a.m. on a Saturday morning in her empty pickup truck, equipped only with a flashlight and her taste for a great flea-market find.

First thing in the morning is when you'll happen on the real gems, she says. Sometimes she spots them when the vendors are still unpacking their trucks before sunrise. That's why Jennifer brings a flashlight, so she can get a closer look at just what's coming off those trucks and nab the good pieces before anyone else has a chance to even see them. She's on the lookout for what she calls "curious finds," things quirky, sometimes valuable, but mostly unexpected.

Flea marketing kind of runs in the interior designer's blood. Her grandparents used to sell things at the Rose Bowl Flea Market, one of the oldest markets in town. "My mom would take me to the Salvation Army when I was a kid," she

says. "I'd have my \$2 to spend. When I was about 8 years old I found a Baby Ben clock. The man at the Salvation Army said, 'You don't want this. It's broken.' But I said, 'Yes, I do.'" That clock was one of Jennifer's first treasures. "Even early on I loved the old stuff."

Jennifer credits a neighbor with training her in the ways of flea marketing. "I was 24 when I met her. I would see her coming home with her old red wagon filled with things. I saw she could make a living at it." That neighbor taught Jennifer about crystal, glass and jewelry as well as how to detect flea market treasures.

"At some point I thought it would be fun to bring these things into my home. I wanted to live with these pieces."

That, coupled with what she describes as "being thirsty

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There are stories behind so many of Jennifer Grey's home furnishings. Right, the master bedroom headboard is an old fireplace mantel. Jennifer spied it looking neglected in someone's yard. She stopped her car, asked the homeowner if she was willing to sell and brought it home with her. Above, a detail from the dining room shelves where cotton branches make an unexpected appearance in a vintage pitcher.









Courtesy of JENNIFER GREY

*Jennifer Grey, an antique dealer and interior designer, began her online business and blog 12 years ago. The blog, found at her website [www.theoldpaintedcottage.com](http://www.theoldpaintedcottage.com), has over 30,000 followers.*

The kitchen island does double duty as a breakfast counter and workspace. Jennifer painted the surface with chalk paint to imitate the look of slate. Left, the children's armoire in the entry is one of the designer's flea market treasures, discovered as it was being unloaded from the vendor's truck.







Jennifer's husband, Adam, built the wall-to-wall dining room buffet. Shelves above are ideal for showcasing antiques and vintage finds. Right, an oversized mirror rests against the living room wall. The coffee table is an old factory cart.

## Feeling inspired?

If you like Jennifer's cottage style, check out Topanga Vintage Market. That's the designer's favorite source for the kinds of treasures she has in her home.

Located on the Pierce College campus, Victory Boulevard at Mason Avenue in Woodland Hills, Topanga Vintage Market is open the fourth Sunday of every month.

[www.topangavintagemarket.com](http://www.topangavintagemarket.com)

Another fun source is the Ventura Flea Market. Held on Sundays, six times a year, Ventura's only and original flea market is steps from the ocean at the Ventura County Fairgrounds.

[www.rgcsHOWS.com](http://www.rgcsHOWS.com)





with very little water to drink”—in other words, possessing a passion for great old things without much budget to spend on them—explains the evolution of the charming cottage which Jennifer shares with husband, Adam. It’s the couple’s first home.

Though just 1,200 square feet, the Greys’ house is chock full of charm and innovative solutions to creating great design without spending much. The result is not only unique, but is infused with Jennifer and Adam’s blood, sweat and tears—literally.

The kitchen is a great example, a DIY project that cost the Greys around \$3,000 (appliances included). Of course, the couple accomplished that by providing most of the labor themselves after shopping around for the best buys on materials and appliances.

That meant Adam cut the subway tile for the backsplash and Jennifer set it. She chose white for its classic, timeless appeal. The farmhouse sink, butcher block countertop and kitchen cabinets were Ikea finds. And the freestanding island came from J.C. Penney.

But accessories came from flea markets and antique stores and Jennifer uses them in unexpected ways. Her vintage plates are displayed in an antique barbershop comb and brush rack and old player piano scrolls have become an unusual centerpiece.

The dining room chandelier is another of Jennifer’s finds—\$5 at a garage sale. Adam built the 11-foot dining room buffet out of 2-inch-by-6-inch planks and Jennifer hung burlap from it to create some storage space. A carpenter built the massive shelves above, which she uses to display small antiques.

“I try to get away from using a lot of little tchotchkes.” That’s part of her strategy of introducing surprisingly large pieces in what are modest rooms. A large mirror rests against the end wall in the living room, clearly bigger than what you might expect for a room that size.

“Small things in a small room make it feel small,” she explains. “It’s the psychology of design.” That would explain the oversized chair and massive coffee table—actually an old factory cart—and the armoire, which originally lived in a nunnery somewhere.

“I love it,” Jennifer says. “It’s so imperfect.”

But it is the child’s armoire in the entry that really speaks volumes. It was one of Jennifer’s 5 a.m. flea-market finds. “They were unloading it when I spotted it.” She paid \$30 for the piece, which has all the original appliques intact.

Jennifer gets a kick out of describing how she faked board and batten in one of the bedrooms using gardener’s bender board and lattice. And how she bought an end table for \$5 and cut it in half lengthwise, creating two separate occasional tables.

The master bedroom has yet another of Jennifer’s creative concoctions. She spotted a fireplace mantel outside someone’s home, parked her car and offered the owner \$100 for it. That mantel now serves as headboard for the master bed. Jennifer placed tufted fabric in the space where the fireplace would go and now has a charming—and soft—headboard.

But the designer is quick to say that, for the most part, she doesn’t get too attached to any of her curious pieces. She’s usually ready to part with them when the time comes to make room for a new, old friend. *B*

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