



The twig furniture on Dixie Kennedy's front porch is by Rick and Denise Pratt of Around the Bend Willow Furniture, Wooster, Ohio. They show and sell their twig creations at the Marburger Farms Antique Show (Tent G) in Round Top.

From River Oaks to Round Top to Burton



The two large screen doors at the front of the house are pure Texana. Kennedy placed clerestory windows above them to catch more light. Above the windows is a metal horse from the American Folk Art Museum in New York City. The wicker chair is from the Round Top Antiques Fair. Kennedy made the shell box from shells collected at Martha's Vineyard.

DIXIE KENNEDY STARTED OUT LIFE IN THE CITY. THEN SHE DISCOVERED FARM AND RANCH REAL ESTATE.

"I drew the farmhouse plan on a piece of paper," she says. "It's mainly one big room because people congregate around the kitchen. I just wanted a big open space so people could all be together in one room."

On one side of the great room, she drew a simple bathroom and two smallish bedrooms with ample windows to catch the pretty views. Having sold rural real estate for some 20 years in the Round Top/Burton/Brenham area (and beyond), she knew the value of Texas porches and how very pleasant they can be when there's acreage surrounding them for

BY LINDA BARTH • PHOTOGRAPHY BY RAYMOND ALDERETE

The rolling hills punctuated with live oaks, post oaks and pin oaks in the pastoral landscape around Burton make the perfect backdrop for a simple Texas farmhouse.

So when Dixie Kennedy set out seven years ago to design a farmhouse for her newly acquired farm in Washington County, she knew she didn't want something fancy. If she'd wanted a more formal setting, she could hop in her SUV and drive to her house in River Oaks, an hour and 15 minutes away.

privacy. She drew a large front porch 12 feet deep for the front of her house and a 12-foot screened porch for the back of the house.

Kennedy specified 10-foot ceilings to make the relatively small house feel larger. For walls, she wanted painted shiplap boards for a rustic look. And her front doors are classic Texana: two big, wide screen doors reminiscent of those at a sweet country store or dance hall.

Knowing exactly what she wanted, she turned her drawing for the farmhouse over to a local general contractor, and her farmhouse became reality. But it wasn't quite all that easy: "I had to clear the



ABOVE: Duck silhouettes above the bread box in the kitchen belonged to Kennedy's father. The stone flower vase on the island is from Martha's Vineyard. Stools are from the Round Top Antiques Fair.

entire property of underbrush before I could build," she says. In addition to the farmhouse, she built a small pond at the front of her property, stocked it with bass and catfish and lined it with clusters of Louisiana irises, ready to burst forth in bloom any day.

EYE FOR DESIGN AND REAL ESTATE

Kennedy is neither architect nor designer, but she does possess a keen eye for design. Reared in West University, she graduated from Bellaire High School and then moved to New York City, where she studied marketing and merchandising at Parsons School of Design. After a three-year stint working retail in New York, she returned to Texas in the 1980s.

Living in Houston, she began selling real estate in the Washington and Fayette counties, beautiful rolling farmland sometimes referred to by Easterners as "the Connecticut of Houston." Many country-loving Houstonians keep second homes there, as the area is a convenient, short drive on Highway 290. The area became popular with Houstonians in the 1950s and '60s, especially when Miss Ima Hogg and her good friend, Faith Bybee, began buying historic Texas farmhouses from the 1840s-60s and restoring them.

Kennedy started Kennedy Country Properties in Brenham and commuted between Houston and Brenham. She enjoys a faithful following of Houstonians who trust her to find the right country place for them. "I've developed a lot of lifelong friendships with people I have sold property to and for," she says.

FURNISHING THE FARMHOUSE

"I wanted a relaxed and comfortable country look," Kennedy says. Nothing is fussy or over-designed. Sometimes a country look can devolve into clutter. "The knickknack look," she calls it. There are no collections of geese in bonnets at her

farmhouse; her furnishings and accessories are purposefully edited.

Furnishing her farmhouse was easy as peach pie at the Burton Café. Most of Kennedy's furnishings are antiques she has purchased over the years at the Round Top Antiques Fair and at antiques shops in the area.

LOVING THE COUNTRY LIFE

Enthusiasm for country living comes easy to Kennedy. "I've always had a love of the outdoors and gardening," she says. "I like the peacefulness and the wide open spaces of the country. I guess it's the free spirit in me that loves it."

An avid perennial gardener, she has landscaped the grounds around her house with perennial flowers from the Antique Rose Emporium in nearby Independence. "People come from all over the world to go there," she marvels. "My sisters and I go there every spring and take photos."

When she's at the farm, does she ever get lonely? Doesn't she miss the city, social events and sushi? "You can't be lonely here," she says, smiling. "There are so many activities—the Round Top Antiques Fair, the year-round concerts at the International Festival-Institute at Round Top, the Cotton Gin Festival in Burton in the fall." For the last three years, Kennedy has chaired a barn dance fund-raiser, hosting 600 people at LaBahia Hall to help maintain the Burton Cotton Gin Museum, which receives supporting funds from the Smithsonian Institution.

"It's important that people know you don't have to be a cowgirl or cowboy to come to the country," she says. "There are a lot of diversified activities here."

With the party-friendly farmhouse she has built, she has plenty of friends and family who love to come over and sit on the porch or have dinner. At a recent gathering at her farmhouse, a friend from Houston teased, "Dixie, you've just built the world's best bachelor pad."



ABOVE: In the main living area, the ash table in the corner is by Columbus artist Mark Potter. The lightning rod on the table is from the Round Top Antiques Fair. The much-used and nicked coffee table, which Kennedy has had since 1974, was once a carpenter's bench.

BELOW: Kennedy designed 12-foot-deep porches for her simple frame farmhouse. The rocking chairs and desk are from the Round Top Antiques Fair. The screened-in back porch frames a view of her land, once part of a larger estate belonging to the late Houstonian Gardiner Symonds, president of Tenneco.





In the guest bedroom, the bed frame was once strung with rope to hold the mattress. Now a wood panel supports the mattress which had to be custom made to fit the small bed.



Dixie Kennedy at home on her front porch



The sideboard near the kitchen area was originally a sewing table; threads and notions were stored in the cupboard above. Kennedy found the two at the Round Top Antiques Fair. The dining table is from Cantrell Antiques in New Ulm; the slate oil candle atop it is from a shop in Fredericksburg.

RESOURCES

ASH TABLE IN LIVING ROOM
MARK POTTER
Columbus, 979.732.9535

ANTIQUE HEART-PINE FLOORS
NAYLOR'S WOOD FLOORS
Brenham, 979.836.3702

CHAIRS, OLD SEWING TABLE
**THE ORIGINAL ROUND TOP
ANTIQUES FAIR**
Round Top, 512.237.4747

FARM TABLE IN DINING AREA
CANTRELL ANTIQUES
New Ulm, 979.992.3233

ROPE BED IN RED BEDROOM
FINN'S ANTIQUES
Burton, 979.289.5102

TWIG FURNITURE ON PORCH BY
RICK AND DENISE PRATT
**MARBURGER FARM ANTIQUES
SHOW**
Round Top, 800.947.5799

**KENNEDY COUNTRY
PROPERTIES**
Brenham, 979.836.1002



THE SPIN ON ROUND TOP

When wildflowers start to bloom in spring and the antiques shows toss open their doors (or tent flaps, in some cases), thousands of Houstonians flock to Round Top and neighboring Warrenton, Burton and Brenham for a grand time of antiquing and wildflower gazing.

THE TOWN

The town of Round Top is bustling, as some of the early-Texas historic houses and cottages assembled by Charles and Faith Bybee and their Pioneer Arts Foundation in the town square in the 1970s now house small retail shops and galleries.

Houstonians Geri and Katherine Druckman bought some of the Bybee houses two blocks south of the town square on Highway 237 and have established Village Green Round Top, a charming collection of shops and galleries. One building is headquarters for the Art Texas Foundation dedicated to the business of the arts in Texas.

Round Top even has its own wi-fi coffee shop, the Coffee Connection, where local rancher Bobby Coleman cheerfully serves up espresso, coffee, iced tea and pastries as Round Toppers clack away on their laptops.

Pasquale's Restaurant at Village Green offers steaks and seafood, along with Italian specialties. Next door, Moore's Fort, a log cabin built in 1831 by John Henry Moore who fought in the Texas Revolution, can now be rented to groups for dinner parties; Pasquale's caters the food. The cabin has a gorgeous view of a hilly pasture with grazing longhorn cattle.

Royer's Round Top Café downtown continues to draw crowds with its contemporary comfort foods and famous pies.

TOP OF PAGE: Royers Round Top Café offers contemporary comfort food and luscious pies.

BY LINDA BARTH • PHOTOGRAPHY BY RAYMOND ALDERETE

Tiny little Round Top, population 77, in Fayette County, about an hour and 15 minute drive from Houston, has got to be the smallest town with the busiest calendar in all of Texas.



The Big Red Barn, one of four venues for the Original Round Top Antiques Fair

ANTIQUES

Emma Lee Turney started the fervor for antiques in Round Top 39 years ago with the Round Top Antiques Fair, which has become famous internationally for the quality of its antiques.

Susan and Bo Franks, owners and managers of the fair now called the Original Round Top Antiques Fair, have instituted a couple of changes for the spring 2007 show. The fair will be open not three but four full days, March 28-31, from Wednesday through Saturday, for the same \$10 admission. The doors open at 9 a.m. Wednesday for everyone. Eager customers line up to be the first at the doors starting as early as 7 a.m.

Also this year, Royers Round Top Café will provide food service at the Big Red Barn, located at 475 South Highway 237 in Round Top. Other locations for the show are the Carmine Dance Hall, Rifle Hall and the Great White Tent. For more information, call 512.237.4747 or visit www.roundtopexasantiques.com.

On April 3-7, the Marburger Farm Antique Show in Round Top celebrates its 20th twice-yearly show. This spring, there'll be 350 exhibitors from 39 states and several countries, so you're sure to find something original to take home. Nebraska dealer Kristi Bacon, for example, is bringing a 1940s wagon wheel chair and rocker set in original Western tooling. Shelly Weidner of Bulverde is offering early Texas furniture, including an 1860s piece by "Jahn," the cabinet maker from New Braunfels.

The Marburger Farm Antique Show opens 10 a.m. Tuesday, April 3, for early buying at \$25 a person. At 2 p.m. that day, regular \$10 admission begins with the show running Wednesday, Thursday and Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturday, April 7, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. For more information, call 1.800.947.5799 or visit www.roundtop-marburger.com.



At Village Green, Moore's Fort built in 1831 can be rented for group dinners. Photo by Joan M. Perrin

One of 350 dealer booths at the Marburger Farm Antique Show

Village Green Round Top features small retail stores and a coffee shop. Photo by Joan M. Perrin