

ROMANTIC PRAIRIE STYLE

HOMES INSPIRED BY TRADITIONAL COUNTRY LIFE



FIFI O'NEILL

FOREWORD BY CHRISTINA STRUTT,
CABBAGES & ROSES

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARK LOHMAN

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To Louis, with love, always

Fifi

"Take this little thought from me,

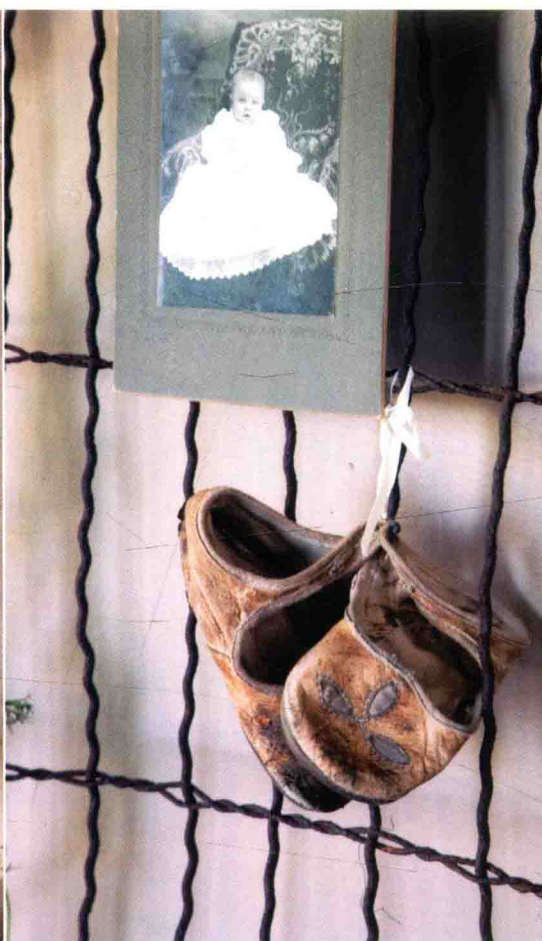
You are what I want to be

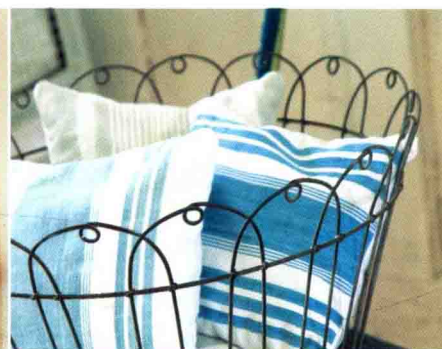
All the kindly deeds you do,

Make me wish that I were you.

You are the finest of the fine,

Good, old loyal friend of mine."





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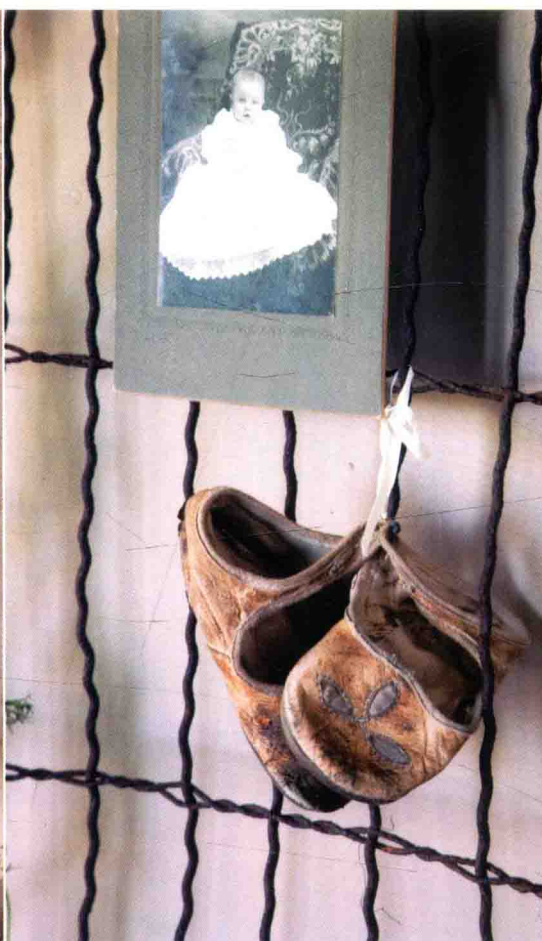
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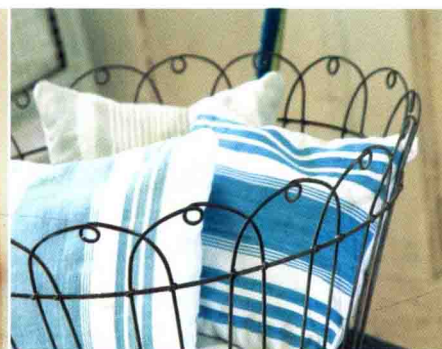
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FOREWORD

by Christina Strutt, Cabbages & Roses

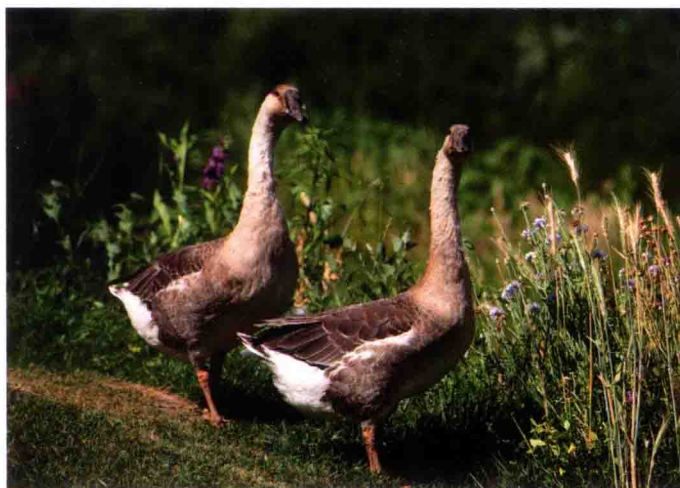


This evocative tour of the cream of prairie homes, spanning thousands of miles, is testament to my friend Fifi O'Neill's unstoppable and inspiring energy and enthusiasm for all things beautiful. **Romantic Prairie Style** is a most charming record of houses and farmsteads dotted through the American homelands, reminding us of the history and endearing way of life, the traditions and spirit, barely changed since the houses were built.

Appearing almost untouched by brilliant twenty-first-century technological inventions—unimaginable when these houses were built—it is the enduring, wholesome creative charm that is worth photographing, writing about, and compiling into a book. This beautiful book on a beautiful subject, that can only have been put together by Fifi, with her outstanding ability to seek out the most compelling settings, will outlive the cleverest inventions and the newest technologies, and inspire many generations to come.



OPPOSITE AND RIGHT Stone and wood outbuildings dot the prairie landscape and are prized for their organic and timeless beauty. Robust old pickup trucks are the ideal form of transportation and vintage ones are repainted in cheerful colors. Bales of hay, quilts, and animals herald the simpler life.





ABOVE Color and texture are the details that make this wholesome display oh-so prairie. The rugged, fading finish of the old pitcher balances the soft hues of hydrangeas to perfection. Vintage bottles and the sleek marble and weathered wood add contrast.

INTRODUCTION



THOUGH I WAS BORN IN THE CITY, I WAS ALWAYS A PRAIRIE GIRL AT HEART. I ALWAYS HAD A LOVE OF WIDE OPEN SPACES, WILD FLOWERS, AND UNCONTRIVED INTERIORS. Even as a child I was the happiest when the holidays came and my parents would take my sister and I away from Paris to a stone cottage in a meadow, deep in the heart of France. There life was pure, simple, and delightful. The landscape sparkled in unspoiled luminous clarity and it wasn't unusual to open the wooden shutters early in the morning and find a wayward cow or goat munching on dewy grass. Those were the days when we were free to jump feet first in limpid pools of rainwater, and gather armfuls of field flowers or baskets of fruits from adjacent orchards. On sunny afternoons the scent of freshly baked pies wafting from the kitchen would lure us back to the house.

Many years have passed. I moved far away and have lived in various countries, but these idyllic days and pastoral settings remained forever etched on my mind and influenced my decorating preferences wherever I called "home." The years I spent on the vast Manitoba and Illinois prairies only strengthened the primal feeling that comes from being in tune with the rhythms of nature and my affection for their ever-changing kaleidoscopic beauty grew even deeper.

Maybe it's a sign of the times, maybe it's the cyclical nature of life, but more than ever the world is longing to return to a simpler way of life. The upside of an unfavorable economy is that it makes us look inward, not just within ourselves but within our own settings. The benefits are measurable both emotionally and physically and clearly visible through the homes and lifestyles gracing the pages of this book.

**I AM STANDING IN THE SUMMER SUN,
WHERE THE RABBITS HIDE AND THE SMALL QUAILS RUN.
I LISTEN TO THE PRAIRIE'S SONG
IN EVERY BREEZE THAT COMES ALONG.**

BETTY LOU HEBERT, "PRAIRIE GENTIAN"



This is much more than a decorating book—it's a way of life. One that reconnects us with what truly matters: family, home, and the earth. Honest materials, artisanal goods, and time-honored objects are once again valued and create homes, not just shelters. The lessons learned come together in the celebration of a wholesome life. Now, we look back to yesteryear because to understand the past is to secure the future. We embrace the present, hence fostering stewardship of the land. The authenticity and healing qualities inherent to this sustainable lifestyle define prairie style. Traditions and preservation are its heart. The nobility of the land and the fragility of our heritage are its soul. The spirit of prairie style drifts eternal in the romance of nurturing interiors and the abundant beauty of nature.

Fifi O'Neill

BELOW Romantic prairie is at its best when the rugged and the refined unite, as in this gentle mix of a pink alabaster lamp with a crackled nightstand wearing the patina of time.

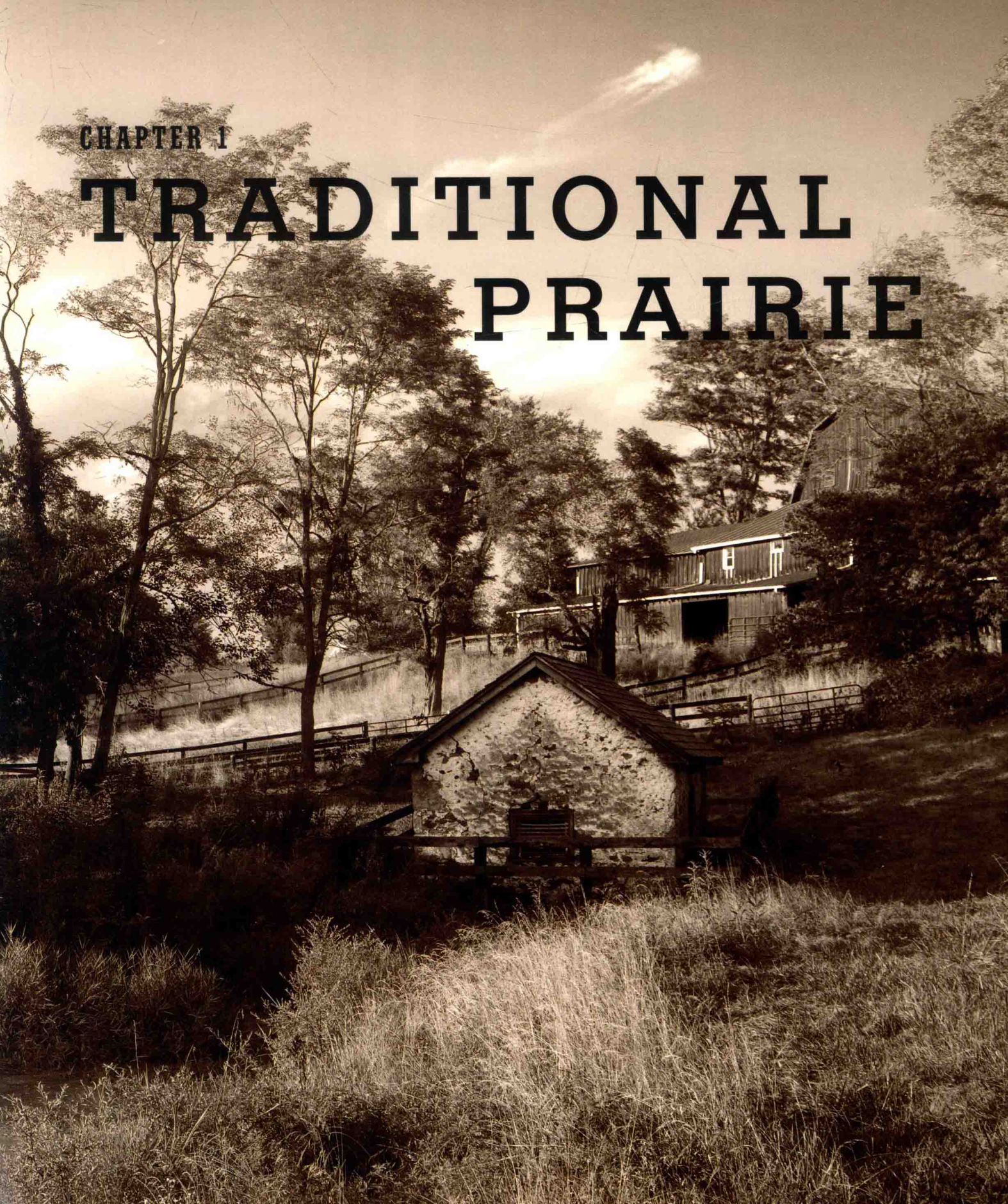
BOTTOM Simple cotton and grain sac pillows look particularly inviting on a little wooden bench under dappled sunlight.

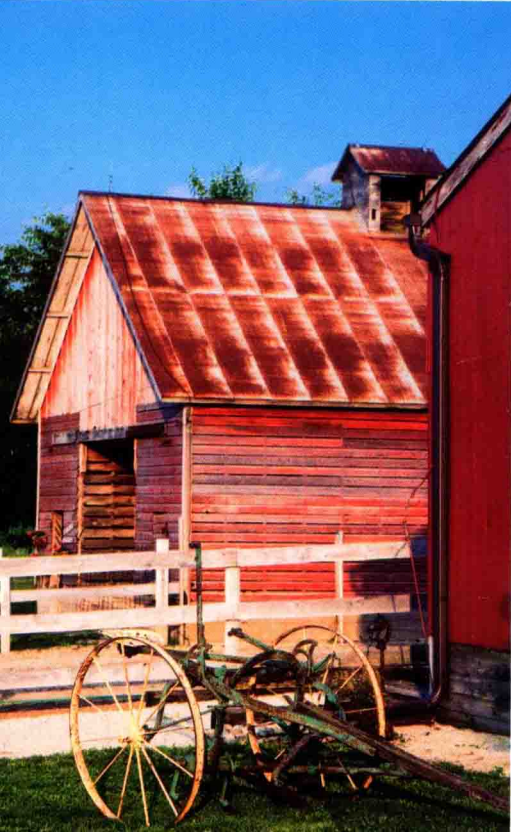




CHAPTER 1

TRADITIONAL PRAIRIE







LEFT AND RIGHT Set against a verdant cornfield backdrop, weathered outbuildings corral horses, Gilberta the goose, and Anne Marie's rare chickens. The original corn crib's ceiling makes a striking architectural statement. Jason added a ledge of old wood to a hand-carved mirrored shelf. A table dressed in vintage linens provides room for seasonal displays. Outdoor fun and indoor chores are an intrinsic part of farm life.



PIONEER SPIRIT



THE NARROW ROAD MEANDERS FOR MILES THROUGH LUSH CORN FIELDS AND PICTURESQUE PASTURES WHERE CATTLE AND HORSES GRAZE PEACEFULLY UNDER A CLOUDLESS SKY. One last bend of the twisting path reveals the entrance to Na-Da Farm and its four-square home. For Anne Marie, it was love at a first sight. The serene setting brought back memories of her childhood and spoke to her pioneer spirit. "I grew up on a farm in a small river town. There was an apple orchard in the back, a pond with a dock, a large barn, and a huge garden," she recalls. "My Hungarian great-grandmother used to sell the vegetables from her fields—which were plowed by a team

