



# BIG SKY JOURNAL HOME

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Mountain Living and Architectural Design



# STRONG *and* Simple

There is no gingerbread or frill here,  
just the plain, utilitarian beauty of weathered wood.

STORY BY SEABRING DAVIS PHOTOGRAPHY BY ROGER WADE

After years spent hunting through dusty antique stores across the country, relocating a 200-year-old Vermont barn for a guesthouse and studio to their property in Ketchum, Idaho, was a natural progression for John Marsh and Anne Winton.

"I've always wanted a barn," John says. "I love their simple architecture."

Raised back East, Marsh went to college in Vermont and became particularly intrigued with the clean style of agricul-







Left: Architect Candace Tillotson-Miller carefully designed the vast windows of the barn to fit into the original framework. Inset: Simple hay ladders were added to the barn to accent the natural, weathered wood. Right: Marsh and Winton used bright pumpkin and yellow paint on the master bedroom floor to contrast the natural wood throughout the house. Below: The strong and simple framework of the 200-year-old Vermont barn was left intact out of respect for the building's history.



tural buildings on farms in that area. The historic barn was a way for John to unite his passion for early American antiques and connection with the northeastern countryside with his family home out West.

Accustomed to gathering treasures as varied as Shaker-style chairs, folk art and collectibles at antique fairs or secondhand stores, the "Yankee"-style barn is the ultimate antique. John and Anne purchased the 30-by-30-foot post-and-beam structure from The Barn People, a Vermont-based company that has been salvaging and reselling barns since 1975. Owner Ken Epworth helped the couple find the small hay barn after the company acquired it from a family who had homesteaded in the Connecticut River Valley since the 1700s. Built in 1820, the











barn had weathered well; the frame was dismantled, restored and reassembled in Sun Valley.

Once the barn was chosen, John poured himself into researching the best approach to rebuilding the structure without compromising its architectural integrity. He chose architect Candace Tillotson-Miller, of Miller Architects in Livingston, Mont., to give the building a new life. With a clear plan in mind, John approached Miller and brought her to Sun Valley for a weekend to survey the building site.

Opposite: The vast height of the barn's original ceiling allows for natural light to filter into both levels of the space.

Left: In the kitchen, hand-troweled plaster in a sunny yellow offsets the natural wood of the barn's interior.

Below: Allowing the framework of the barn to show adds architectural detail and lends interest to even small spaces like the bathroom.





"I had been following Candace's work for years," John says. "She's sensitive to vernacular architecture in the West, with scale and proportions that are right on; she can design a 10,000-square-foot home and make it look like a small house."

Known for her intricate and thoughtful designs using old materials, Tillotson-Miller understood immediately what John and Anne wanted. Her love for the texture, warmth and history of reused buildings drove the restoration.

"It was important to stay true to the barn form, which is strong and simple," Tillotson-Miller says.

The site was dominated by open views of the Pioneer Mountains to the east, so the great room and bedroom were naturally oriented toward this feature. But the challenge was to capture the views and natural light without carving into the barn's original form. The goal was to make it look like a working barn from the outside and tailor it for comfortable modern living inside.

Fascinated by the precision joinery and old world craftsmanship in the barn frame, John was involved with every step of the building process. Reconstructing the barn was like

putting together pieces of a puzzle, he says. Unlike new construction, a recycled barn frame is built from the inside out, meaning that the interior layout of the structure defined what would happen on the exterior. John was adamant about using old materials and maintaining the building's vintage authenticity. He worked side by side with general contractor Mark Sills of the Croy Group, splicing pieces of weathered siding from other buildings and customizing any new materials to fit with the original barn frame.

At John's request to maximize the small space and to accentuate the character of the structure, the barn needed to remain open and airy. In response to this, Tillotson-Miller placed a wall of windows on the east side of the building, spanning from the living room floor to the top of the 27-foot ceiling. A utility kitchen nests behind the open living area. Rather than walls to divide the space, vintage hay ladders are used between the living and kitchen area.

Originally the barn consisted of three 10-foot bays on the main level and a hayloft upstairs. Now, one of the bays has been converted into a garage and storage area, while the other



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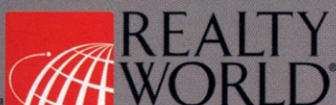
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two are used for living space. Half of the hayloft was opened up to take advantage of the building's high-pitched ceiling. The other half was enclosed as a sleeping loft, with a set of stairs leading to the master bedroom that overlooks Hyndman Peak, the tallest mountain in the range, at 12,000 feet.

A set of stairs painted pumpkin and red lead to the peaceful bedroom and an elegant bathroom. The painted staircase and matching wood floor in the bedroom subtly establish the tone for the house's decor. Although the furnishings are a collection of eclectic country pieces, they are connected by red accents throughout, whether it's a light fixture, armoire or a throw across the back of the couch. John and Anne consulted with Tillotson-Miller on the color scheme but mostly worked together to lace the building's natural patina with their own style.

The final result is a guesthouse with only 900 square feet on the first level and just another 500 square feet in the sleeping loft. But the space does not feel small; instead it is warm and cozy. Decorated with furnishings and collectibles from John's antique adventures, the house resonates with its own history. John refers to it as a "little gem of a building."

At once rustic and contemporary, the barn lends itself to many uses for the owners. There is no gingerbread or frill here, just the plain, utilitarian beauty of weathered wood. Guests marvel at the welcoming atmosphere when they stay here. Anne teaches modern dance classes on the main floor and plans to use it for a pottery studio, too.

"My favorite part of the house is the expanse of it," Anne says. "Standing in that main room looking up to the loft and the ceiling and outside through the windows, you feel like you are looking out into the world."

In the end, the barn has completed John and Anne's property. It brings a continuity to their family home and creates a private compound that is as intimate as it is inviting.

"The barn looks like it was the original homestead house on the property," John claims. "It fits into the tall grass and the land around it." **H**

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