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THE LOCAL LOOK

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NEW LIFE FOR OLD BARN WOOD, SNOW FENCE AND BEETLE KILL PINE
ESCAPE TO CRESTED BUTTE'S SWANKIEST SPOT

MONTANA CHRONICLES

NEWLY BUILT FROM OLD LOG CABINS, BARNs AND LOCALLY SALVAGED MATERIALS, A COZY HOUSE NEAR LIVINGSTON, MONTANA, PAYS TRIBUTE TO YELLOWSTONE COUNTRY



STORY BY **NORMAN KOLPAS** PHOTOGRAPHY BY **AUDREY HALL**

A staircase with balusters by local wrought-iron artist Kevin Warren provides a striking backdrop for the dining room, which features a glass-topped table designed by homeowner Lauren Harris. The wet bar was once an antique ranch sink, found in Bozeman. FACING PAGE: In the entry, Old West and Old World join forces: salvaged railway bridge beams and a Montana sandstone wall complement French Country-inspired pigmented plaster. The pendant light is from Fire Mountain Forge in Livingston.





“The most important thing for us was that our house fit the land,”

Lauren Harris says of the two-bedroom residence she and husband Anthony Eaton planned to build on Tall Pony Ranch, their 300-acre property along a tributary of the Yellowstone River, just south of Livingston, Montana. “We wanted what we built to enhance the historical aspect of the setting, not take away from it.”

With that goal in mind, they hired local architect Candace Tillotson-Miller, principal of Miller Architects in Livingston, who specializes in procuring old homesteads, barns and other buildings from the area and repurposing the materials into new structures that echo the regional vernacular. Such materials, the architect explains, “blend beautifully with the landscape around here, and that idea resonated with Lauren and Tony.”

The project’s first two finds were a pair of century-old hand-hewn log cabins. Materials from the larger one were used to construct the new house’s living room, while the smaller one became the guest suite. “We numbered the buildings piece by piece, took them apart, and then re-constructed them on-site,” Harris says.

That reassembly, however, was more complicated than just putting a puzzle back together. Building codes in the seismically active Yellowstone area require very stable construction, and Miller wanted more insulation than a

traditional stacked-log structure can offer. So each log was split lengthwise, its halves were attached to the interior and exterior of insulated frame walls, and latex chinking was applied between the log slabs to achieve the look of a true stacked-log structure.

Although the rest of the house is technically new construction, it was executed with locally sourced materials, many of which are recycled. The beams that endow the living room with the cozy character of a classic national park lodge, for example, were salvaged from a demolished railroad bridge that once crossed the Yellowstone River. Rusted old corrugated-steel roofs from an old barn in Chico, Montana, were flattened with a steamroller to become wall paneling for other rooms. “We laid them all out in a field and sorted them by color, ranging from dull gray to burgundy, and then decided which rooms would get which colors,” Harris says.

Even the home’s little details, such as throw rugs made from old flour sacks, and the living room chandelier’s link to a now-classic movie, strongly express a local sense of place (see sidebar).

The owners and architect did make room for a few departures from classic Montana style, however. Harris, who lived in France for many years, wanted to include French Country touches, expressed through richly tinted plaster walls, beamed ceilings, patterned fabrics from Provence and select antique furniture. The couple also shares a taste for modern design, and items such as dining chairs designed by Philippe Starck, along with much of the art displayed throughout the house, help keep the home very much alive in the present day.

Through such sensitive blending of old and new, the house is far more than a historical artifact. “What we’ve created,” says Miller, “is a comfortable, welcoming nest that reflects the personality not just of its place but also of its owners.” ◊

FACING PAGE: The kitchen cabinetry and facings for the refrigerator and dishwasher show the marks of the circular saws with which they were cut from old barn wood. Here, as throughout the house, the floors are antique local fir. The island’s walnut counter is the only new wood in the room. French doors open to a kitchen garden designed by landscape architect Linda Iverson.



Locally Sourced

In the house at Tall Pony Ranch, large and small design elements alike express a true sense of place:

HARLOWTON MOSS ROCK Named for the Montana town near its source, this sandstone is primarily gathered, not quarried, which explains its softly weathered edges and lichen-tinged surfaces. Exterior and interior walls of the stone complement the home's wood and plaster surfaces.

BARN WOOD Three old barns provided weathered fir boards that panel parts of the exterior and were recut to make the kitchen cabinets.

RODEO BLEACHERS When homeowners Harris and Eaton heard that the old grandstands at the rodeo grounds in Ennis, Montana, had been replaced, they wondered, "How can we get that wood?" They tracked it down, and the weathered, silver-hued boards now panel the living room ceiling.

GALVANIZED STEEL Old galvanized-steel roadside billboards (dotted with bullet holes) cover sections of the kitchen wall. "We use magnets to hang posters and attach spice jars near the stove," Harris says.

HICKORY FURNITURE Founded in Shelbyville, Indiana, in 1898, the Old Hickory Furniture Company furnished most of the then-new national park lodges, including Yellowstone's Old Faithful Inn. The company still produces its original designs; Harris and Eaton bought select new pieces to complement their collection of antique Old Hickory pieces.

WAGON-WHEEL CHANDELIER The living room's wagon-wheel chandelier once hung in Livingston's old Long Branch Saloon. Its vintage screw-in incandescent Edison bulbs were props used in the 1992 Montana-set film *A River Runs Through It*.


TOP LEFT: In the guest suite, built from materials reclaimed from an old cabin, French doors lead to a porch. LEFT: Another porch extends off the dining room. FACING PAGE: Viewed from its interior balcony overlooking the living room, the master suite is accessed via French doors at the top of the staircase.



"THE HOUSE'S DESIGN WAS
PARTLY DICTATED BY THE
OLD BUILDINGS WE FOUND."

ANTHONY EATON



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LEFT: The living room was built from materials reclaimed from an old cabin. Notches in a log to the right of the chimney once supported joists for the original structure's second floor. "They help give the space character," the architect says. So do myriad other details, including early-19th-century benches and an old flour sack draped over a chair.

ABOVE: An armchair and built-in bookshelves under the eaves form a reading niche in the master bedroom.

ABOVE, RIGHT AND NEAR RIGHT: Traditionally styled new hickory chairs surround the table on the covered dining porch. BELOW: Rusted corrugated steel salvaged from old shed roofs panels the cozy library's ceiling.



"I LIKE TO TAKE A MORE SIMPLISTIC APPROACH TO ARCHITECTURE AND LET THE MATERIALS, TEXTURES AND DETAILING TAKE CENTER STAGE."

CANDACE TILLOTSON-MILLER