

# CABIN FEVER

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RUSTIC STYLE COMES HOME







## WAY OUT WEST



Work on this Montana spread of some ten thousand acres was a team effort that involved everything from building new bridges, roads, and fencing to salvaging dilapidated barns and outbuildings. A new log cabin (opposite) was added as the main house, and an old schoolhouse was rescued and relocated to serve as a fishing cabin and office (above).

**P**art cowgirl, part architect, Candace Tillotson-Miller creates buildings that seem to lean comfortably back on their boot heels and look as sunburned and relaxed as an old wrangler hanging around the corral. Consider, for example, this family compound on a river in southwestern Montana, designed in close collaboration with the interior designers Charles Gandy and Bill Peace and the building firm Yellowstone Traditions. Although work on the three rustic wood cabins was finished only a few years ago, sensitively handled materials and a careful grafting to site play down their youthfulness. Completing the effect is a simple but elegant decor still comfortable enough to allow the family of six to kick up their spurs and enjoy themselves. "They wanted the rooms to be absolutely welcoming from the very beginning," says Tillotson-Miller, "but not so precious that you can't subject them to Montana living."

The trick was to build two wood cabins from scratch (a main house and a two-bedroom bunkhouse for guests), move and revamp an old square-hewn log schoolhouse as an office and fishing cabin, and furnish all three without making them look self-conscious. Architect and designers took their cues from the property itself, a generations-old cattle and hay ranch worn down by hard use. In a landscape dominated by flat hayfields, the two new buildings are near each other in a stand of cottonwood trees that provide shade and a transition in height. The main house has a log veneer over a stick frame to permit large windows and a more flexible design than true log building would allow, and rooms are kept small for an intimate feeling.



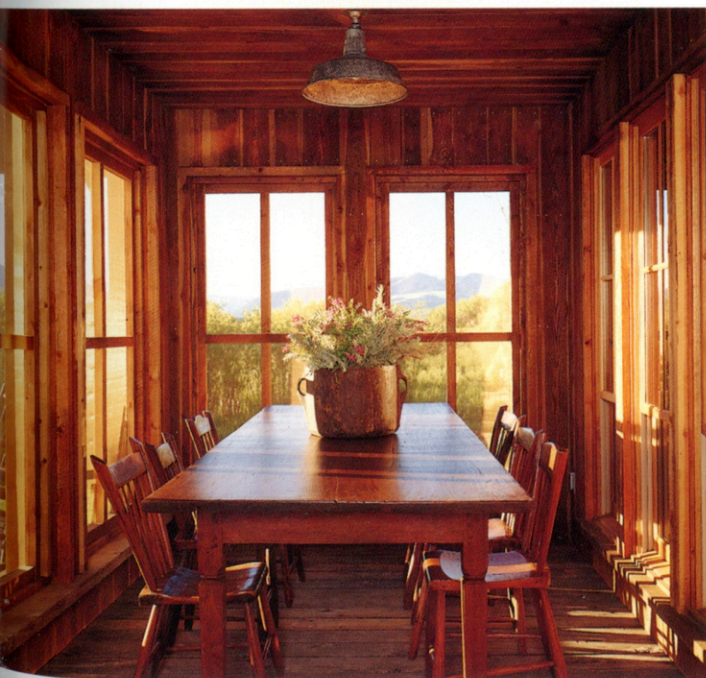






Tillotson-Miller was after a traditional look and picked up the local vernacular of the frontier vocabulary: copper screens, simple fir trim, two-over-two windows, and rough-sawn boards. Whenever possible, materials like the rolled rusted tin lining a bathroom were recycled from some of the dilapidated ranch outbuildings. "We thought hard about what can take wear, age gracefully, and even get better with time," says the architect.

The understated furnishings and details determinedly avoid what Gandy and Peace call a "cowboy cliché." Their surprising color palette is an amalgam of soothing greens, chocolatey browns, and rich ochres drawn from bark, leaves, willows, sagebrush, and stones gathered on the ranch. Burlap draperies filter sunlight, and comfortably worn oriental carpets never look too new. Ever sophisticated, the design stops well short of being cute. "We tried not to force the issue," says Charles Gandy. "In the end, we just want you walk into a room and feel like you should be there."



Living areas at the ranch are centered on hearths. The stone fireplace in the new bunkhouse living room (opposite) was deliberately designed with a small firebox to set a cozy scale. A vintage Craftsman rocker stands in the foreground. Dining occurs inside and out. In the main house (left top), a polished cherry mirror and an English oak table add subtle elegance. In the bunkhouse (left bottom), two-over-two windows on the porch reflect the local building vernacular.









Vertical planks of rough-sawn fir side the bunkhouse (left), where log bunks grow into the ceiling (above). In the master bedroom (page 142), an old iron gate makes a new headboard; above it are vintage photographs depicting Old Faithful. Bathrooms too are partly old, partly new (page 143). For example, an outdoor spigot serves a bucket sink (battered to look old) in the powder room (top right), where flattened, corrugated metal covers the walls. For the fishing cabin (bottom right), an old porcelain sink was salvaged, a tree holds towels and toilet paper, a water trough becomes the base of the shower, and soft chamois skins serve as curtains.







