



RUSTIC REVISITED

INNOVATIVE DESIGN FOR CABIN, CAMP, AND LODGE

ANN STILLMAN O'LEARY

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANDREW WELLMAN



HOME ON THE RANGE

MONTANA

ARCHITECT: CTM ARCHITECTS, CANDACE TILLOTSON-MILLER, AIA

BUILDER: YELLOWSTONE TRADITIONS, HARRY HOWARD INTERIOR DESIGNERS: CHARLES GANDY AND BILL PEACE

A spectacular “big country” setting was the location selected for Sawtooth Mountain Ranch. This property at the rim of Yellowstone National Park in Montana is the habitat for elk herds, grizzly bear, and loads of wildlife. This is cowboy country. The ranch was an historic homestead built in the late 1800s when this magnificent park was begun and came with a trapper’s cabin and barn. The design team channelled the spirits of these pioneer dwellings to form the main house.

Architect Candace Tillotson-Miller and builder Harry Howard have a history together and are accomplished in executing the best of the Old West. Known for their sensitive application of indigenous and reclaimed materials, the net result is always traditional, restrained, and elegantly rustic. Tillotson-Miller relies on certain tenets of architecture to attain the proper balance: massing (simple yet elegant forms), rhythm (subtle, not tricked out), and texture achieved through the use of native and aged materials. It is a look that is timeless in appeal. The ranch conjures up images of homesteaders, German and Swedish pioneers of the Old West, and is a direct reference to the cabins they built from the materials at hand in this region.

From the Appalachian Mountains, the owner tracked down two barns built in the late 1800s that were made from square-hewn

logs, typical of that region. These became the springboard for the design of the ranch. As was characteristic of these structures, the logs are a mix of oak, chestnut, poplar, and pine (whatever the land would yield) and they were assembled in no particular sequence. The construction mode of choice is 2 x 6 framed walls clad with this historic log veneer. It is an architectural sleight of hand that allows for larger windows and structural stability in this seismic zone. One of the barns was “rebuilt” as the main body of the house and the other as the master suite. The onus was on the contractor to find like-minded materials for the rest of the project to harmonize with these buildings.

The alluring interiors mirror the exteriors in finishes: the same log beams are sawn and applied to the walls in irregular spacing, the chinking runs between 1” and 5” thick. (Western chinking used to be made of chicken wire, straw, and dung.) Douglas fir is the preferred local wood and was used in tandem with reclaimed oak for flooring. Wax provides an added layer of age to the wood surfaces; the aural experience promotes the western mystique.

Subdued and unselfconscious, the interiors rely on texture and variation on an earthtone color scheme to achieve a quiet elegance. Burlap draperies, oiled leather seating, hand-planed wood, and hammered iron create quiet ambience in this sepia tone still life.



OPPOSITE The ghosts of two Appalachian barns are fully integrated into the ranch house on this breathtaking parcel on the old frontier. The building is a testament to the honesty of the pioneer homesteads of the 1800s. "Simple forms" and "no pretenses" are the catchphrases—the front stoop and twin dormers the only concession to architectural embellishment. Every board and piece of stone in this house has been hand picked for its veracity and then reworked on site. As Harry Howard of Yellowstone Traditions states, "This is a soulful house."

Photograph by gordongregoryphoto.com

ABOVE Tillotson-Miller strives to make spaces comfortable and intimate, not overwhelming. Getting the essence of a room to appear simple is a lesson in restraint. The color palette throughout the ranch is intentionally quiet, allowing the landscape to speak and the occupants to bring in pieces with personality. Harlowton Stone was stacked with recessed grout to appear dry laid and forms the fireplace. This sandstone litters the prairies of Montana and because it is exposed comes naturally weathered with lichen and moss as a bonus.

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RIGHT A cottage-style Eastlake bed is the main attraction in the guest room. Wide swaths of chinking provide a strong horizontal stripe as a backdrop to the carefully edited ornaments telling the story of western homestead living: pelts, creels, and animal skulls.

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BELOW Historic materials keep the past alive in this project. Reclaimed fir flooring, and adze-hewn log beams applied in a heringbone motif contribute to the authenticity at Sawtooth Mountain Ranch and are signatures of the architect and builder.

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OPPOSITE TOP The unpretentious kitchen is a great place to rustle up a gourmet meal. There are no lavish gestures here just uncomplicated, clean spaces and as Tillotson-Miller states "We don't perform a lot of tricks—the trick is restraint." The kitchen cabinetry is from aged boards taken from the owner's farm in Georgia. They have been heavily waxed to bring out the rich amber tones.

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OPPOSITE BOTTOM-LEFT

The wall in this unique powder room at Sawtooth Ranch is made of corrugated steel roofing material that has been rusted, flattened, and sealed. A cauldron from the owners' farm in Georgia has been newly employed as a sink.

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OPPOSITE BOTTOM-RIGHT

The architect uses many outdoor rooms to create extra living rooms and transitional spaces. In all directions they take advantage of climates, light, and views, fully engaging the landscape. Colorful toboggans are unexpected as wall décor on this porch.

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