CABIN STYLE

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Photographs by AUDREY HALL

TIMELESS AUTHENTICITY

In a home that seems rooted in place, its most telling detail might be the tree trunk that serves as the central post for its spiral staircase. Builder Tim Blazina of Yellowstone Traditions found the windblown lodgepole pine on a friend's property outside his hometown of Red Lodge, Montana. It was strapped on a sledge, dragged out of the woods through the snow, trucked to Jackson Hole, then lifted by crane into the house through a section of the roof that had been left open for just that purpose. Once in place, the debarked and finished tree, flared base and roots still intact, was integrated into the staircase treads and irregular stone slab landing by master craftsmen working on-site. Extending the ethos of bringing nature indoors to its logical conclusion, the tree trunk staircase is just one detail among many in a home that is all about handcraftedness, appropriateness, and authenticity and is uniquely suited to the site.

Architect Peter Zimmerman worked with Yellowstone Traditions, designer Bill Peace, and a host of artisans to create a timeless home in a pristine setting for the Pennsylvania-based owners of the Wilson, Wyoming property. Situated on almost twenty acres surrounded by conservation land at the end of a road, the site enjoys spectacular views through aspens and conifers over protected ranch land to the Tetons and the iconic Sleeping Indian. Working within a proscribed building envelope, a height restriction, and a limitation of less than 4,500 square feet was no hardship for these owners. One of their main goals was that the home feel intimate, with no overscaled rooms, and that the site be as undisturbed as possible, as if it were a meadow naturally appearing in the woodlands. Their success in this pursuit resulted in the project being honored with a Palladio Design Award for traditional architecture.

Structurally, the home is essentially a one-story building with second-level bedrooms tucked under the sloped roof, with generous gabled dormers creating room to breathe and allowing for cozy window seats with far-reaching views. This lent itself to the theme, notes Blazina, as the sloped roof creates the feel of an older house despite the home's substantial size. A separate garage structure is connected by a covered walkway, which lends transparency and allows for a dead-on view of the Sleeping Indian through the breezeway as one approaches the house. Four bedrooms and a bunkroom provide ample berths for holiday gatherings of extended family, while an open kitchen with many handcrafted details offers a highly efficient meal-and party-staging space adjacent to the vaulted great room.

A home in the shadow of the Tetons melds walls of square hand-hewn logs and a cedar-shake roof in a way that feels rooted in place. Designed by architect Peter Zimmerman and built by Yellowstone Traditions, the structure makes the most of its gently sloped site and stunning view of the Sleeping Indian. The project was honored for its thoughtful conception and execution with a Palladio Design Award for traditional architecture.

The entire project is a study in appropriateness. The primary massing employs repeated gabled forms, mimicking the topography of the mountains beyond. The tops of the chimneys were given a crenelated sawtooth treatment, which speaks to the ruggedness of surrounding peaks and boulders while helping them blend into the landscape. On the exterior, antique salvaged, resawn hewn wood was chosen for the natural checking that occurs over time. Naturalistic meadowlike landscaping and organic paths of subtly multicolored stone lead to a plunge pool—concrete lined but made to look natural with rock edges—and a hot tub fashioned to resemble an old wooden rain barrel. The roof of the outdoor living room is supported by tree trunk columns, their bark still visible. An irrigation stream was rerouted closer to the house to further the immersive nature experience.

The owners committed to an interior finished entirely of reclaimed planking and stone—the structure has no exposed drywall or plaster—which creates a warm, textural environment and heightens the sense that the home was built solely from natural materials found on-site. For that reason, square timbers were chosen over round logs, since the area's homesteaders would have been more likely to hew by hand to a square shape. At the base of staircases, organically shaped rocks ground the home and convey the notion they have been built around, as if too heavy to move. In other places, stone fireplaces protrude through walls to the next room to form a bookshelf, or the wall of a shower. European antiques nod to the wife's Irish heritage and mix comfortably with custom forged ironwork, Navajo rugs from the '20s and '30s, and important Western artworks from the homeowners' collection.

"Authenticity was very important to the clients," says designer Bill Peace. "They wanted warmth, comfort, and coziness with a bit of an old-world/new-world feel. Our goal was to make it feel collected-over-time." The result, he says, is a

The form of the structure mimics the mountains beyond, while the crenellated sawtooth treatment on the chimney stacks speaks to the ruggedness of the terrain. The front door, handmade, as is everything else in the home, was crafted of wormy chestnut. A covered connector between house and garage allows for views through to the mountains while approaching the house.

house that's textural rather than merely dark, and that feels like it's been there forever. It will, he adds, age well.

Despite the relatively compact size of the home, Zimmerman was able to incorporate many opportunities for quiet moments in window seats, alcoves with desks, private balconies and sitting rooms, and, the ultimate retreat, an old trapper's cabin. The only building original to the site, it was rebuilt as it was—that is to say, imperfectly non-plumb. Western antiques expert Terry Winchell, owner of Fighting Bear Antiques, was given free rein to fit out the cabin with period-appropriate furnishings and regional relics such as antlers, old horse gear, snowshoes, signage, and vintage hickory chairs. The interior has applied-pole pieces, '30s-era cowboy art, and an old lodgepole pine day bed with a red leather-trimmed cushion. It can handle overflow guests, but its main purpose is as a time-capsule-like retreat from the bustle of the main house.

The entire project, says Zimmerman, was about intimacy, scale, and grounding. "We tried to create an environment almost as if we'd found an old homestead house, then renovated it and added on. It's tied so closely to the land." The result, he continues, is a home that defers to its site, tucked in the woods in the shadow of the Tetons.

The great room is characterized by hand-hewn walls, standing dead log rafters, and a dry-stacked moss rock fireplace. Blacksmith Wil Wilkins made the custom chandelier. "The house was designed to be intimate and at a scale two people could enjoy," says architect Peter Zimmerman, but it also needed to be able to accommodate a crowd. Explains interior designer Bill Peace, who mixed contemporary sofas with period antique chairs, "They wanted a family home where they could come spend time together and have a family experience. They also love to entertain; everyone is welcome all the time."

The owners spend half the year in Wyoming. When their children and grandchildren arrive, there are opportunities for privacy for everyone. The owners' suite includes a lofted area finished with a vintage chair and applied-pole desk leading to a balcony that's perfect for quiet contemplation or a good cigar. A comfortably furnished central upstairs lounge offers the perfect place to read or take a private phone call.

The well-laid-out kitchen has a low ceiling to create a feeling of intimacy and integrated woodwork crafted by Yellowstone Traditions. Cabinets were custom made of wormy chestnut and antique oak; the island slab is walnut and the counter-tops are honed soapstone. The leather-upholstered barstools are from Hickory Chair. Glass-fronted doors lighten the space, while copper pendants from Ann Morris Antiques add a vintage feel.

LEFT: Despite the strictures to stay within a limitation of less than 4,500 square feet, the house has many different spaces for varied uses. The architect used the natural slope of the site to create a sunken lounge with fireplace leading to the patio and hot tub. Traditional-leaning furnishings, such as the custom dining table and chandelier, and a subdued palette imbue the home with a feeling of timelessness.

ABOVE: A dormered volume creates the coziest of guest bedrooms and makes the most efficient use of space.

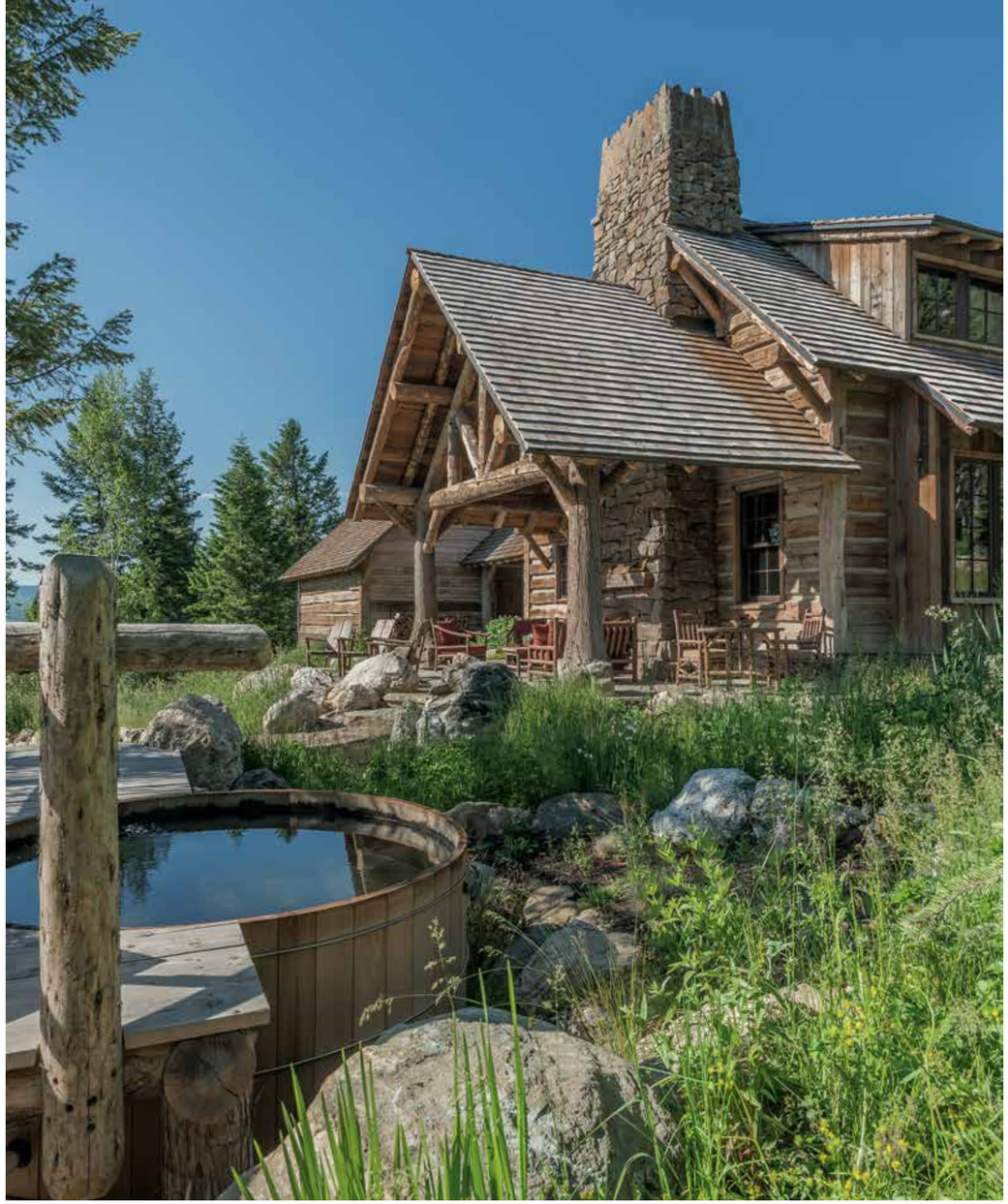
FACING: In the vaulted master bedroom suite, a classic western-rustic ethos includes exposed log ends in the lofted gallery, a heavy, irregular stone fireplace base, antlers, and traditional art. The graceful iron chandelier is from Rose Tarlow; rug is Edward Fields/Tai Ping. Designer Bill Peace selected suede and Ultrasuede for the headboard and sofa for added comfort and warmth.

LEFT: Light pours into the cozy bunkroom, where the rug and pillows add color and life. Pocket doors can be left open when the room is not in use to enhance the feeling of spaciousness in the home.

BELOW: Rustic meets refined in the graciously scaled master bathroom. The tub has an in-the-treetops feel as well as a view.

ABOVE: The vaulted great room has dynamic architectural elements and is anchored by the irregular stone fireplace, which asserts itself as the heart of the home. Mohair and velvet were used on upholstered pieces for luxury and warmth; the draperies are a de le Cuona Huckleberry Tweed.

FACING: The integration of the monumental stone staircase base into the wood stairs and lodgepole support is a testament to the builder's artistry. Traditional furnishings include Navajo rugs, an antique cabinet from Robuck & Co., and Bill Gollings' 1914 painting *Returning to Camp*.



FACING: Charles Bunney of Yellowstone Traditions built the unique modern steel staircase to the master bedroom loft, creating one of the home's touchstone moments. The tree was a windblown lodgepole pine Tim Blazina found on a friend's property in Montana. The Native American rug and vintage leather chair add color and soften the wood and steel elements.

ABOVE: MD Landscaping reclaimed the site, installing local sandstone patios and native plantings. The hot tub, made to look like an old rain barrel, is a short walk from the patio.