



# Mountain MODERN

A WHITEFISH, MONTANA HOMESTEAD FORGOES THE TALL, DARK AND RUGGED STEREOTYPE IN FAVOR OF A LIGHTER, MORE REFINED—BUT STILL MOUNTAIN APPROPRIATE—DESIGN STYLE.

BY DEBORAH DONOHUE PHOTOGRAPHED BY HEIDI A. LONG



Sometimes we are able to magically step into and savor our dreams long before they are destined to come true. Such was the case with Sue and Rick Williams, who many years ago snowshoed into their favorite spot in the pristine wilderness above Whitefish, Montana, to gaze at the valley and lake below, a bottle of wine, cheese, and crackers in their backpacks. Little did they know it would be the exact location of the home they would one day design for themselves.

Rick Williams' work in the field of Geology in western Canada would often bring him by Glacier National Park, through what was once a sleepy community called Whitefish. An avid skier, Williams purchased property in the Whitefish area as an investment in the late 80s. Although he and Sue built a timber frame house in western New York, they also secured a duplex at the base of the mountains around Whitefish, an area they came to love. When the lot of their dreams—and the location of their many snowshoeing picnics 2,000 feet above the enclave of Whitefish—came on the market as part of the

Whitefish Mountain Resort Ski area, they immediately bought it. But they didn't rush into developing their vision: a residence that looked like it had been there since the homesteading days. Before they purchased the land, many trees had been cleared by earlier developers. So much so, that each tree remaining became a sacred entity. The plan was to build as "green" as possible, preserving the remaining trees, with the intention of causing as little disturbance as possible to the natural ecosystem. This included removing logs, rocks and native plants and recording their location, returning them to their original spots when construction was complete.

With the help of architect Rich Graves of Altius Design Group and builder Brad Reedstrom of BigFork Builders, they created a structure that could withstand the extremes of the Montana winters, when hundreds of inches of snowfall are common. The summers were also a consideration; smoke from wildfires can necessitate closing the windows, but maintaining a way to cool the interior of the home is also necessary. To these purposes, a

THIS PAGE: LICHEN COVERED SHINGLES, MONTANA FIELDSTONE, AND RECLAIMED TIMBERS GIVE AN AGED FEEL TO THE EXTERIOR. RIGHT: THE GREAT ROOM'S VIVID ORANGE ACCENTS AND WHITE PAINTED MILLWORK ADD A FRESH TWIST TO TRADITIONAL WESTERN AMBIANCE. THE METAL BAND-BOUND, WINE BARREL CHANDELIER AND INDUSTRIAL COFFEE TABLE ARE BOTH FROM RESTORATION HARDWARE. CHARCOAL GREY VELVET SLIPPER CHAIRS, JAYSONHOME.COM. PLAID ARMCHAIR, ANTHROPOLOGIE.



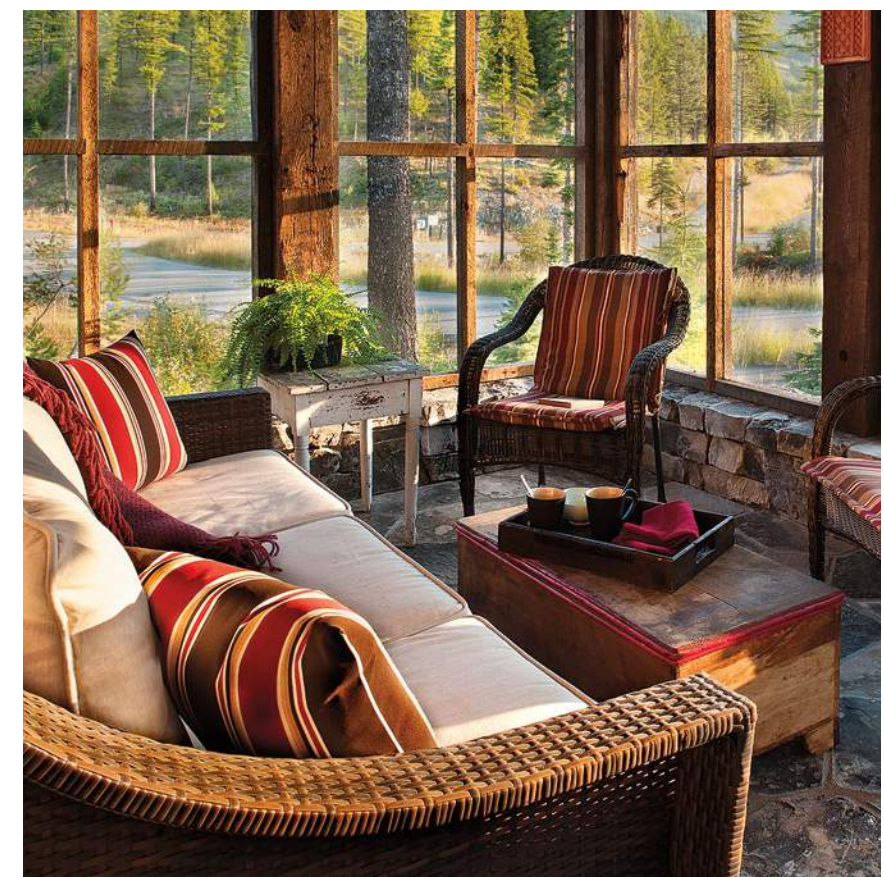


“ ALL THE EXTERIOR MATERIALS HAVE A NATURAL PATINA. THERE ARE NO STAINED OR PAINTED SURFACES...EVEN THE CORRUGATED METAL ROOFS HAVE A RUSTY PATINA. ”

system was designed and installed for both radiant floor cooling as well as heating, along with an air cleaning and humidification control. For both practical and aesthetic reasons, the home's exterior is rugged and weathered.

Reclaimed wood, lichen-covered shingles and “barn tin” pieces of salvaged roofing comprise the found and re-purposed materials. Much of this was discovered on old ranches outside Marion, Montana. According to architect Graves, “All the exterior materials have a natural patina—there are no stained or painted surfaces other than sealer on the windows. Even the corrugated metal roofs have a rusty patina. Other than the window and doors, the only new materials on the exterior are the asphalt/fiberglass roof shingles, chosen for their cost effectiveness and fire resistant features. It was desirable that the materials had a history—much in the same way that we wanted the home to look like it was part of the history of the area. Like it could have been one of the original structures up on the mountain.”

The residence itself is an L shape, with the charming appearance of having had additional sections added on as needed, as was commonly done in pioneer days to accommodate a growing family. The interior is both a surprise and a delight, with its east coast take on traditional western design elements. Owner Sue Williams' command of—and natural instinct for—interior design, along with her New England sensibility, created a hybrid of rustic elegance.



THIS PAGE: ON THE CHARMING, SCREENED IN PORCH, WICKER FURNITURE AND COLORFUL CUSHIONS FROM TARGET ARE MIXED WITH AN ANTIQUE WHITE SIDE TABLE. AN OLD TRUNK IS REPURPOSED AS A COFFEE TABLE.

OPPOSITE: ANTIQUE CRYSTAL CHANDELIERS ARE SUSPENDED FROM PART OF AN OLD HORSE DRAWN CARRIAGE OR WAGON, THE ORIGINAL METAL FOR HOLDING THE TACK STILL ATTACHED. UPHOLSTERED CHAIRS AND CROSS-BACK CANE CHAIRS, RESTORATION HARDWARE. SUNBURST MIRROR, GILT.COM. HORSE SCULPTURE, LAYLAGRAYCE.COM. STORAGE CONSOLE, TERRAIN.



SHAKER STYLE CABINETS AND GREY SOAPSTONE COUNTERS ARE CLASSIC AND UNFUSSY. PENDANT LIGHTS, RESTORATION HARDWARE. BAR STOOLS, BALLARD DESIGNS. THE LIGHT FIXTURE ABOVE THE HEARTH WAS A CREATION OF SUE'S IMAGINATION, EXECUTED BY DAMON DESIGNS. VINTAGE BOWLING PINS ON THE MANTEL ADD A WHIMSICAL TOUCH. FLOORS ARE RECLAIMED FIR.

“ THE MASTER BEDROOM HAS A GLAMOROUS FEEL WITHOUT LOSING ITS LINK TO THE WILD WEST. RECLAIMED WOOD FRAMES THE PANED WINDOWS WITH THEIR CUSTOM MADE VELVET DRAPES, WHOSE COLOR IS ECHOED IN THE TUFTED LINEN HEADBOARD. THE EUROPEAN MOUNTS WERE DISCOVERED IN AN ANTIQUE STORE AND REPAINTED BY THE OWNER. ”



**ABOVE:** THE BEDROOM IS EVIDENCE THAT HIGH STYLE DOESN'T HAVE TO COME AT A HIGH PRICE. LAMPS ARE FROM TARGET. PEACOCK ALLEY GREY CHECKED COTTON BED COVERLET, TUESDAY MORNING. TUFTED SEATS, RESTORATION HARDWARE. CHANDELIER, LAYLAGRAYCE.COM. **OPPOSITE FROM TOP LEFT:** SWEDISH ARMY BLANKETS POP AGAINST THE WHITE DOWN COMFORTERS AND MILL WORK IN THE BUNK ROOM. THE GALVANIZED LAMP SHADE WAS ONCE PART OF A MILKING APPARATUS. BEDSIDE CUBBIES AND OUTLETS FOR ELECTRONICS KEEP THE ROOM UP TO DATE AND USER FRIENDLY; ADIRONDACK CHAIRS ON THE BACK DECK; FRENCH DOORS OPEN INTO A HALLWAY WITH PORTALS TO THE MASTER BEDROOM AND OFFICE. THE OWNER'S FAVORITE DECOR PIECES—ANTIQUE CRYSTAL AND STAG HEAD SCONCES—WERE FOUND ON EBAY.



The residence's hand-hewn beams and wood slab siding are balanced and softened by painted mill work and smooth white walls. Old fashioned, built-in bookcases in the great room have vivid orange interiors; nearby Mongolian lamb pillows are dyed the same vibrant hue. The ceilings in each room vary, creating a disarming coziness despite the spacious 5,000 square footage of the home. Windows are traditionally scaled and carefully placed to take advantage of the views—a wise choice on a site where oversized walls of glass would let in too much harsh light and actually draw heat from the body of someone standing near them. Floors are “reclaimed fir and larch blends”, states Graves, “with varying textures that would be consistent with whatever was available when old ranch buildings were constructed.” Ledge stone, cut from Montana fieldstone with its own natural history and mystery was gathered for the hearths. Family friend Cheryl Bagley of Cheryl Bagley Design was enlisted to help with textile choices for cushions, pillows and draperies. The result of the team's efforts is a light and gorgeous mountain retreat with good bones, modern amenities and an unabashedly historic ambiance.

ARCHITECT  
Rich Graves  
Altius Design Group, L.L.C.  
rgraves.adg@gmail.com

BUILDER  
Brad Reedstrom  
Bigfork Builders  
bigforkbuilders.com

INTERIOR DESIGN  
Sue Williams

IRON WORK  
Damon Designs  
(406)257-2565

