

BIG SKY JOURNAL HOME

Mountain Living and Architectural Design



Rustic Perspective



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Comfortable living
doesn't compromise
LEED certification
in this classic cabin

For one family, a very personal meaning of the place Montana has been carried throughout the years. They have dreamt of making a home here. Recently that dreaming has found a place to settle.

Nestled between the Mission and Swan mountain ranges, near Condon, Triple C Ranch feels much older than it is. Tucked in along the meandering shore of a pond, amidst larch, aspen, fir, pines and meadow grasses, are a few newly constructed buildings that one would swear had been there for many a season.

"Not much will change here, situated as it is," shares the owner of Triple C. "We always wanted to find a place just like this and feel strongly about preserving its sense of history and natural setting — I've enjoyed learning more about the area and people here."

One of the two modest guest cabins gains its namesake from a peak in the Bob Marshall Wilderness framed by its windows. Walking the path to Lone Chief Cabin from the horse barn and ranch manager's place, a certain hush comes. The trail to the cabins is passable by foot, ski, bicycle or mule. Often, the loudest sounds here are the aspen leaves and tree tops in the breeze, a fish jump in the pond, grasshoppers, crickets and birdsong.

A tasteful sign along the trailside marks the turn to a short path of natural rock steps leading to the cabin's front door. Two bark-on tapered cedar log posts frame the entry. The cabin's timbers spent a century submerged in the Blackfoot River, as part of the Bonner Dam, before they were reclaimed during the removal of the dam. Bigfork Builders, of Bigfork, Montana, found that they were a natural focal point for the cabin, align-

ing with the client's goal of creating a historic ambiance.

"When we found that material," shares Brad Edstrom of Bigfork Builders, "we really hit a home run and the rest of the project came together in an amazing way."

The Lone Chief cabin earned a gold star rating from the National Association of Home Builders' Green Building Program. As a LEED certified project, a hallmark of Bigfork Builders for over a decade, the dwelling incorporates such components as energy-efficient fixtures and appliances; low-flow

faucets and toilets; HVAC system to efficiently heat and cool — including a HRV air purifying system; resource-efficient features such as attentive site planning and seasonal lighting considerations; landscape preservation surrounding the dwelling and the utilization of local supplies and labor wherever possible. Attaining the gold star rating requires a third-party inspection as well, which ensures the highest quality and project integrity.

Quality and integrity are clear in Lone Chief's construction. The roof is a traditional 8/12 pitch with treated and fire-rated wood shakes and the proportions are modeled after traditional homesteader cabins. Just shy of 1,500 square feet, Lone Chief cabin feels solid, well-hewn and settled into its site.

Gibson Architecture of Bigfork, Montana designed the Lone Chief cabin and other buildings on the property. The firm is involved in a variety of residential and commercial projects in the region embodying a

similar finely-crafted rustic appeal.

"We sited the cabin such that it would settle in to the slope, without a basement, and with the private areas on the view side, away from the trail," notes architect George Gibson.



Opposite: Lone Chief features salvaged and reclaimed wood, much from local barns, supplied by Wild Wood Eccentrics. Interior trim and doors are also of reclaimed wood, mostly locally plentiful fir and larch. **Above:** Outside bark-on cedar posts frame the hewn logs, stone and cedar materials.



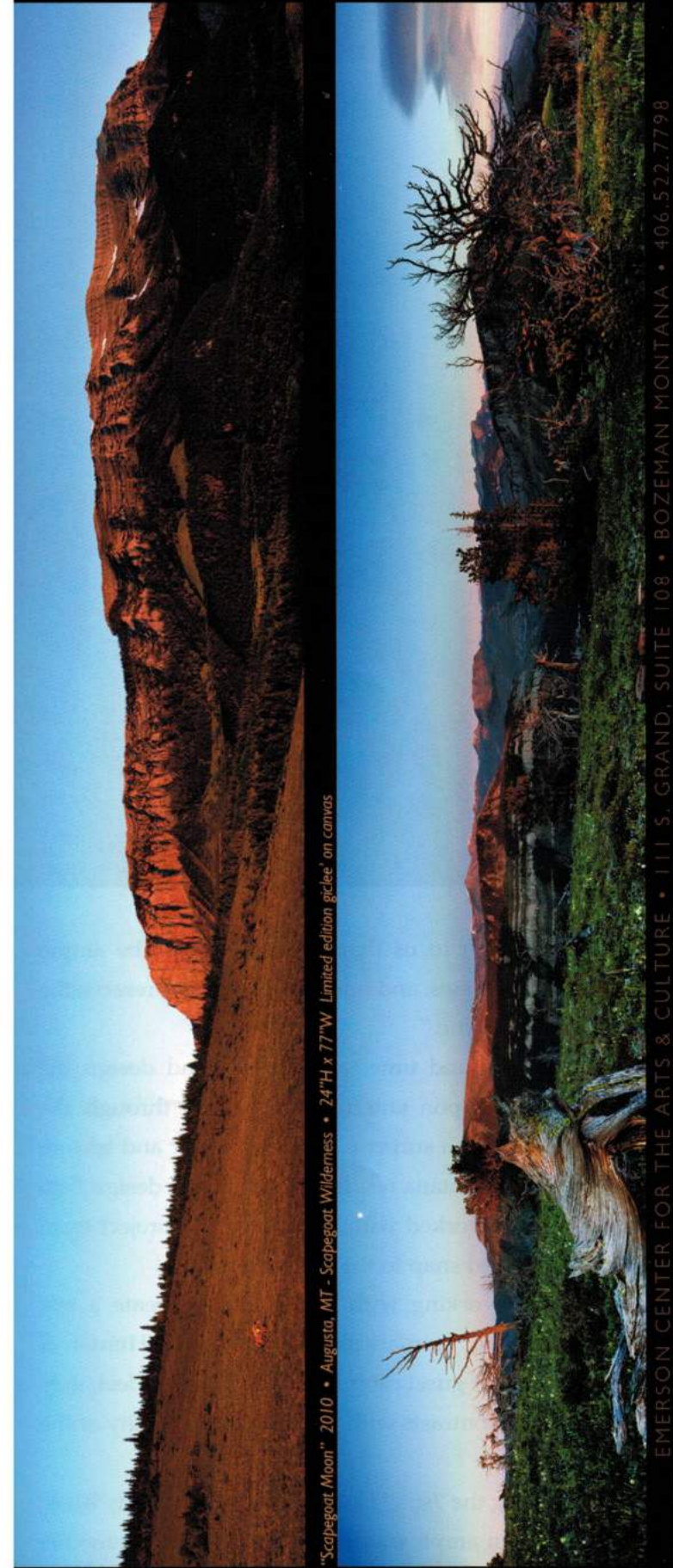
"It was also important to us that the windows to be ample enough to honor the views, and humble enough to preserve the traditional cabin aesthetic."

The team's care and time taken to site and design the dwelling is evident. Upon entering Lone Chief through the thick wood plank door, a surprise of eclectic color and texture delights. Whitefish, Montana residential and resort design firm Hunter & Company worked with the clients and project team to bring some luxe and snap to the modest cabin.

"We enjoyed working with the clients to create a spa feeling to the interior," remarked Jodi Shirley of Hunter & Company. "Each of the guest cabins really has its own feel, they offer a surprise that contrasts with the understated unity of the exterior structures."

Before reaching the "spa" environment, one's dusty boots must be shucked. An ample mudroom with a native stone tile floor, bench and hooks receives boots, a backpack, a fishing rod and anything else you feel like leaving at the door.

Opposite page: A large rug in the central room is a focal point with its modern flower geometries. An antique wood dining table warms the modest kitchen. Original oil paintings by Greg Osterhaus grace the cabin walls. **Above and left:** Luxurious bedding was a client priority in Lone Chief. Upholstered headboards contribute bold style, while dynamically engaged patterns, textures and colors amongst bedding and drapes bring a definitive pop.



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Defined by jewel tones, the effect drew out a rich amber hue throughout the home.

Two private sleeping suites, each with its own bathroom, balance either side of the cabin and are married by a central gathering space. Through this vaulted and timber-trussed center room wide glass panes reveal views to the pond, then up over green meadow grasses, and upward to Lone Chief peak in the Bob Marshall Wilderness. A modest native stone fireplace graces one side of the room, while on the opposite wall a floor-to-ceiling wood-framed mirror expands the space.

In order to maximize sleep space in the cabin, Hunter & Company placed a unique daybed in a corner of the center gathering space, rather than a more traditional bunk bed. Patch-worked contrasting textures hopscotch along the daybed's upholstered side rails, adding a splash of style and whimsy. Interior furnishings are all unique antique, hand-crafted or a one-of-a-kind pick.

While the family takes their time to thoughtfully design their main lodge, they make regular use of the guest cabins and recreation building for sleeping, gathering and cooking. Hot tubs beckon outside each guest cabin, with views of earth and sky. Large boulders amidst the natural grasses and trees provide places for sitting, setting a plate, cup or dog-eared book.

Great care was taken to preserve the natural integrity of the site through the design and landscape work of Doepker Landscaping of Kalispell. Lily pads frame the pond's edge, a stone's throw from the porches. Green seems to be everywhere. The Whitefish design team pulled in the blues and greens of Lone Chief's surroundings in their choices of fabric, crackled tile and painted wood surfaces within. At the architect's suggestion, moss and lichen-covered native surface stone was incorporated into both showers in the private suites.

"We have been very pleased in working with the whole team," shared the Triple C Ranch owner. "We have appreciated the creativity, the clarity of communication and the realistic budget forecasts. The entire team takes such pride in their work."

That work translates to the more personal idea of Montana that this family has held dear: Home. **II**