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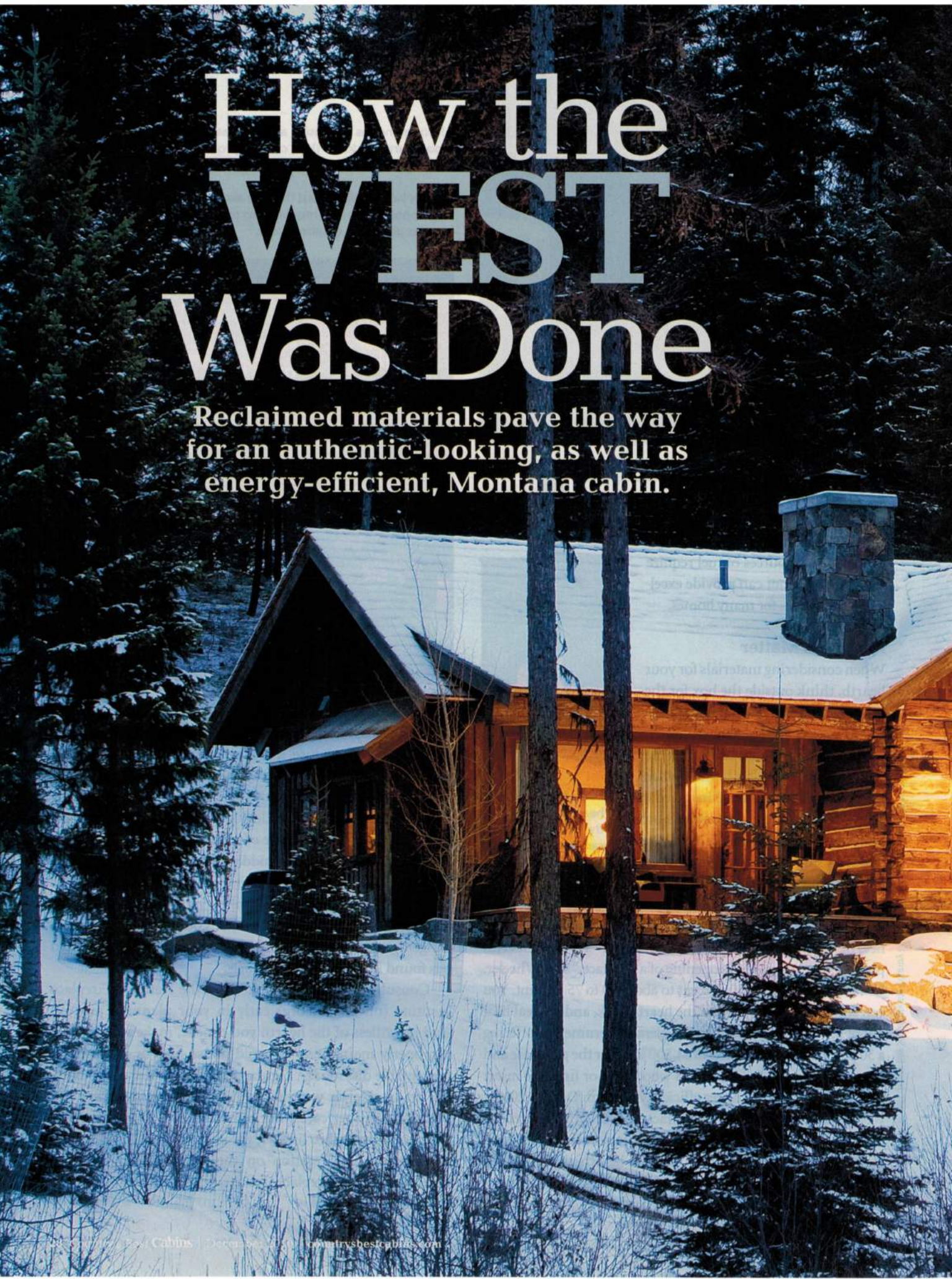
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# How the WEST Was Done

Reclaimed materials pave the way for an authentic-looking, as well as energy-efficient, Montana cabin.



Jim and Lani Gifford nestled their cabin among the trees overlooking their lake to make it appear as if it had been there for ages. They didn't leave much to chance. "We probably planted more trees than we took down," says Jim.

Local cedars support the roof over this cabin entrance. They were harvested in the winter when there is little sap in the log. A large steel knife set in each log's concrete base goes through the boulder and into the log to help it withstand seismic shocks.



Ranch manager Jim Boyd and his dog, Zip, haul in a Christmas tree for the great room. A 10-foot-plus span of windows serves as a great focal point for such a decoration.

Century-plus-old logs were reclaimed from the Stimson Dam for the cabin. The Giffords and the builder decided the logs made such a dramatic statement that the corners should not be dove-tailed, as originally planned, but saddle-notched (opposite).



Miami native Jim Gifford, his wife, Lani, and their three young children first visited Montana in 2000, not knowing that the trip would soon change their lives.

"I had the stereotypical view of the West gained from watching television and going to the movies," Jim says. "Montana was a revelation. It opened our eyes to another world. And eventually it made me want to provide my family with an alternative to bright and shiny city life, shopping malls and video games."

The Giffords bought a parcel of land with a private lake

and a view of Holland Peak, the highest point in the Swan Mountain Range. When Jim and Lani considered where to site the cabin, they gave a great deal of thought not only to the lay of the land but to how the cabin would fit in with the rich tradition in that part of Montana.

"I have a deep appreciation of history," says Jim. "I wanted our cabin to blend in with the history of this region — to look, in fact, like it had been here 100 years."

Jim selected Bigfork, Montana-based Bigfork Builders to build his dream cabin. "The people at Bigfork understood my tastes, as did all the professionals working on the project," he notes. "We were lucky to be working with a crew that loved what they did and did what they loved very well."







Leather sofas and woven reed chairs, selected by Whitefish, Montana-based interior decorating firm Hunter & Co., provide comfort and clean lines in the Gifford great room, while the candle chandelier, made by Burbank, California-based Laura Lee Designs, provides light and ambiance.





Reclaimed materials permeate the kitchen and dining area (above). The dining set comprises a restored Virginia farm table and new chairs. The floors were made from corral planks taken from eastern Montana, which is much more arid than the western part of the state and, therefore, kinder to old wood.

Hunter Dominick, founder of Hunter & Co. interior decorators, found the unique starburst mirror (opposite) on a trip to Mexico.

Brad Reedstrom, one of the founders of Bigfork Builders, figured the best way to comply with the Giffords' wishes would be to actually work with 100-year-old wood. He turned to Wild Wood Eccentrics' proprietor JL Halverstadt for help. Halverstadt found logs recovered from the Stimson Dam, built in 1886 on the Blackfoot River of "A River Runs Through It" fame.

"The dam was an all wood dam, attached with wrought iron pins — a rarity," says Halverstadt, a former logger. "Most of the wood is ponderosa pine. It has ferris staining, giving it a spectacular bluish-black tone. Knots stick up from the wood a whole inch or an inch and a quarter."

"The raised grain screamed 'really old,'" states the builder. "Our original plan was to dovetail the logs at the corners, but we decided it would be a disservice to the wood. We saddle-notched the corners and left the ends exposed." The interior of the house also comprises natural or reclaimed materials, such as surface stones, barn wood and corral planks.

The use of such local materials factored well into the cabin's Gold-Level certification under the National Association of Home Builders' (NAHB) Green Building Standard program. "Our approach was fairly straightforward," the builder explains. "We wanted a tight building. We put two inches of foam on the inside





## RESOURCES

**Square footage:** 1,480

**Bedrooms:** 2

**Bathrooms:** 2.5

**Log species:** ponderosa pine

**Architect:** George Gibson Architecture, Bigfork, MT (406-837-6898; gibsonarchitecture.com)

**Builder:** Bigfork Builders Inc., Bigfork, MT (406-837-3373; bigforkbuilders.com)

**Cabinetry:** Montana Cabinet & Canoe, Bigfork, MT (406-837-4185; montanacabinetandcanoe.com)

**Daybed; great room sofa:** Old Hickory Tannery, Hickory, NC (828-465-6599; ohtfurniture.com)

**Doors:** Swan River Door Co., Bigfork, MT (406-837-3766; swanriverdoor.com)

**Foyer hooks and side table:** Monroe Metalsmithing, Whitefish, MT (406-270-5419)

**Foyer plate wall decor:** Global Views, Dallas, TX (888-956-0030; globalviews.com)

**Guest and master bedroom bedding:** Bella Notte Linens, Novato, CA (415-883-7626; bellanottelinens.com)

**Guest bedroom bedding:** Mario & Marielena, Cookeville, TN (800-551-1441; mariomarielena.com)

**Guest bedroom desk; master bedroom headboard and desk:** Environment, Los Angeles, CA (323-935-1330; environmentfurniture.com)

**Guest bedroom window treatments:** Duralee Fabrics, Bay Shore, NY (800-275-3872; duralee.com)

**Great room armchairs and ottoman; guest and master bedroom armchairs:** Hickory Chair, Hickory, NC (828-324-1801; hickorychair.com)

**Great room chandelier:** Laura Lee Design, Burbank, CA (818-842-5300; lauraleedesign.com)

**Great room and kitchen paintings:** Greg Osterhaus

**Great room rug; interior decorator; guest and master bedroom window treatments:** Hunter & Co., Whitefish, MT (406-862-1402; hunterinterior.com)

**Kitchen dining set:** Antique Blue, Roanoke, VA (540-344-4085)

**Landscape designer:** Doepker Landscaping Inc, Kalispell, MT (406-755-2372)

**Log provider:** Wildwood Eccentrics Reclaimed Wood, Columbia Falls, MT (406-892-9677; wildwoodeccentrics.com)

**Masonry:** Adoretta Masonry, Bigfork, MT (406-212-4983)

**Master bathroom mirror:** Uttermost, Rocky Mount, VA (800-678-5486; uttermost.com)

**Master bedroom bedding:** Traditions, Claverack, NY (518-851-3986)

**Master bedroom window treatments:** Dogwood Fabrics, Atlanta, GA (800-883-4119; dogwoodfabrics.com)

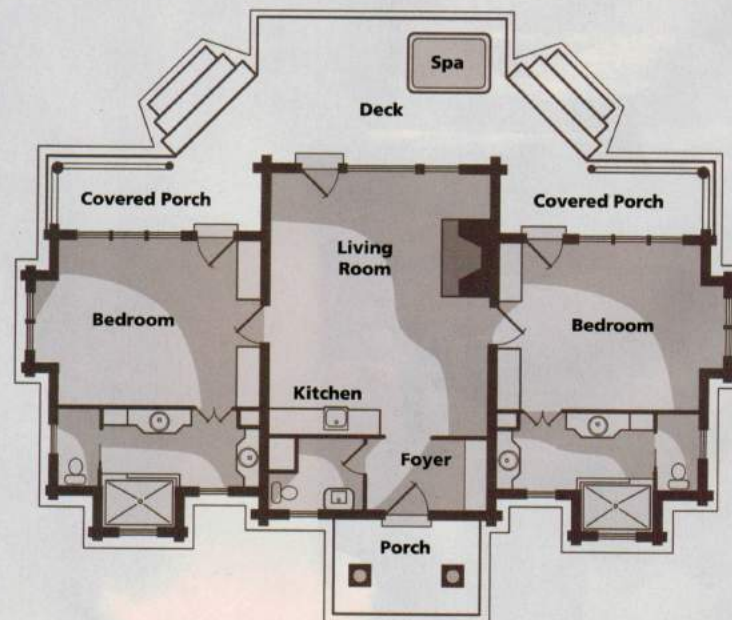
**Windows:** La Loma Doors, Tucson, AZ (520-745-2477; lalomadoors.com)



of the logs and fastened the interior walls to the logs through the foam. It's an energy-efficient structure, trapping cool air in the summer and warm air in the winter."

The Giffords use their cabin chiefly during the warmer months. "We do a lot of entertaining in the summer," says Lani. "Our friends and family love it. They can do things they've never done before. We regularly celebrate July the Fourth at the cabin. We hike, ride horseback and swim in the lake. As we tell our friends, Montana is not a place to see — it's a place to do."

Christmases provide an opportunity to partake in some less-frequent activities for the family. "That's a different experience for Floridians," says Jim. "Items on the to-do list in the winter include skiing, snowmobiling and snowshoe hiking." Not to mention gazing at the snow-covered, isolated splendor of ancient Holland Peak from the warmth of their not-so-new cabin.



Patchwork upholstery on a daybed from Old Hickory Tannery brightens the small nook adjacent to the foyer and the great room.

Located on the opposite side of the home from the kitchen, the master bedroom (opposite) also has private access to a covered porch leading to the back deck. Jim Gifford claims the master bedroom as his favorite room because it affords spectacular views of Holland Peak and the lake below.