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TRUE Heritage

Reduce, reuse, recycle.
It's the triumvirate of sustainability,
and this "old" timber barn built
from the reclaimed wood of older
structures performs a green hat trick.

STORY BY REED KARAIM
PHOTOGRAPHY BY HEIDI LONG



THIS PAGE: The sliding doors on both sides of Roger Martin's 850-square-foot "rec barn" allow a view through the entire structure, adding to the illusion it was once a working barn.

OPPOSITE: The great room offers both the warmth of a majestic fire for chill mountain nights and soaring windows to let in the light on summer days.



ABOVE: A sitting area tucked into the loft provides a quiet retreat in an open floor plan. A framed beaded vest is an unusual but fitting focal point for this eclectic space.

OPPOSITE: The small dining table sits below the sun-drenched loft, reached by an old-fashioned ladder.

IS the Martin family's striking timber frame "rec barn" built near the Swan Mountain Range in Montana a new structure or an old one? The correct answer is probably both.

The barn was built only a year and a half ago and incorporates state-of-the-art mechanical features, but it was built almost completely out of reclaimed wood from barns, sawmills and other buildings in rural Montana, all of it decades old.

Indeed, the weathered, cinnamon-colored wood gives the home such a feeling of age and belonging it's hard not to believe that it isn't a remodel of an existing structure. "We wanted this particular building to have a sense of history," says owner Roger Martin. "As much as possible, we wanted it to feel like an old barn that's been on that spot for a long, long time."

The family was building a primary residence nearby, but wanted a separate structure

for entertaining and recreational activities down by the spring-fed lake. It's only 850 square feet inside and has no bedrooms, but the simple design has room for a small kitchen, a bar, a gathering area centered around a majestic fireplace, a pool and foosball table, and, in the loft, a long shuffleboard table.

Paul Miller, partner at RMT Architects in Avon, Colorado, designed the building with the classic proportions of an old barn, a screened-in porch cleverly substituting for one of the wings. It even includes sliding barn doors on both sides that can be opened to a stunning, through-the-building view of the lake.

Timber framing was essential to the structure. "I love the history and romance of Montana, and that goes hand in hand with the architectural heritage of the state," Roger says. "To me, the timber-frame design is really a part of that."





ABOVE: A concrete sink and custom cabinet made from reclaimed wood carry the attention to period detail into one of the barn's two bathrooms.

RIGHT: The rec barn was built to entertain. A small bar is tucked into a corner of the great room.

OPPOSITE: The cabinets in the kitchen were all handmade from reclaimed wood, while the hammered-metal countertops were made by a local metalsmith.



The reclaimed wood was the other critical element. It's become increasingly popular in Montana construction, says J.L. Halverstadt of Wild Wood Eccentrics in Whitefish, Montana, which provided the Douglas fir and ponderosa pine planks and beams that came from old buildings. The wood is prized both for its rustic look and for being an environmentally responsible choice. "People who feel a commitment to the green movement like

the fact that you're reusing something instead of cutting down more trees," J.L. explains.

The Martin family took that commitment farther than most. "You usually see reclaimed wood used more as a decorative element, but probably 90 percent of this project was done with recycled material," says Brad Reedstrom, co-owner with Andy Fischer of Bigfork Builders in Bigfork, Montana. "That's really an incredible amount."

The most challenging aspect of the Martin home, Brad says, was the structural timber frame that supports the building. "Because we were working with reclaimed timbers that had joinery and mortises and notches in them," he explains, "you had to take real care in selecting the appropriate piece of wood."

The result, however, is just as the Martins hoped—a family friendly modern barn that's true to Montana's history and heritage. ■



The Secret Benefits of Reclaimed Wood

It's not cheap disassembling old buildings, removing nails by hand and carefully sorting out the old boards for reuse. Not surprisingly then, the higher cost of reclaimed wood is often the biggest barrier to using it.

But J.L. Halverstadt of Wild Wood Eccentrics believes reclaimed wood has benefits that offset the upfront cost. "Maintenance is a huge advantage," he says. "You don't have to finish it every five years. You just leave it alone. If you spill wine on a floor, it's no big deal. Who's to say that blemish wasn't there in 1951?"

He also believes installation is easier. "It's a more relaxed installation because the wood already has flaws," he says. "I like to say it's perfectly imperfect."

And, there's the benefit you can't put a price tag on: character. No one will have siding or a floor exactly like yours.

OPPOSITE TOP: The symmetrical floor plan mimics a traditional Montana barn with two wings, but one is actually a screened-in porch.

OPPOSITE BOTTOM: It's a small space, but the family made sure they found room for a pool table.

RIGHT: Indoor and outdoor living merge at dusk when the doors are thrown open on both sides of the rec barn.



Home Details

SQUARE FOOTAGE: 850
 ARCHITECT: RMT Architects
 BUILDER: Bigfork Builders
 TIMBER PROVIDER: Wild Wood Eccentrics
 FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE FIND IT
 HERE ON PAGE 75.

