

Refined Rustic

Combining all the elements of a true Montana home, the team of Faure Halvorsen Architects, Battle Ridge Construction and Haven Interior Design created the perfect retreat

PHOTOGRAPHY BY GORDON GREGORY



IF A HOME IS AN EXPRESSION of the people who live in it, then Jim and Diana Wagner's house has a lot to say.

The drive to the house is telltale on its own, communicating that these folks aren't afraid of rugged country. The long, winding dirt road creeps through aspens and pines to a saddle in the Gallatin Range that is seldom seen by other



people. The house, tucked smartly away from the wind, but situated to take advantage of the vistas is constructed of log, stone and wood, speaking to the owners' love for Western architecture. Framing the front entry, columns made from massive cedar trees with the bark still intact hint at a passion for the outdoors. Then crossing the threshold through the oversized front door, the impact of the eastern view toward the Absaroka Mountains solidifies the fact that this house was built to honor the beauty of Montana's wild spaces.

"One reason we like this location," explained Jim Wagner, "is that we see so much wildlife: elk, mountain lions, grizzlies, even wolves."

Yet inside, the incredible detail that is layered into the living space, construction and interior design definitively speaks to the Wagners' appreciation for refinement and art, as well as to personal priorities of family and friends.

"The owners were looking for a house that incorporated the Montana vernacular, but their ideal was a refined rustic style," said architect Matt Faure, of Faure Halvorsen Architects in Bozeman.

When Jim and Diana decided to build their home up Trail Creek, between Bozeman and Livingston, it was the result of a lifestyle change. They had sold two properties: a family home in Indiana and a Clyde Park horse and cattle ranch. The plan

Opposite: Haven Interior Design thoughtfully combined elegant lines, as in the simple pedestal base end table by Ironies, with the rustic architecture to balance the dominant log and stone structure in the great room. **Below:** Battle Ridge Construction nestled the Wagner residence in a saddle of the Gallatin Range, utilizing Montana moss rock, peeled and hewn logs and cedar posts with the bark on to capture the essence of contemporary Western vernacular as designed by Faure Halvorsen Architects.





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was to downsize. They took up golf and planned to travel more. But don't get the wrong idea. They *are* grandparents, but the tiny single-level condo on a golf course in town just wasn't their style.

Instead, they built a dream house in the mountains. It's a big departure from the simple farmhouse they sold down in the Shields Valley and even more of a departure from the crisp architecture of the brick Georgian style home in Indiana. The new house is a marriage of all things Montana: stone, log and wood along with an elegant blend of influences from art, antiques and a love of entertaining. The result is a uniquely personal mountain home.

"I didn't want a dark, log cabin," said Diana. "I wanted something more refined inside that would feel like it was truly our own."

To achieve this design balance, the Wagners entrusted

their ideas to Faure Halvorsen Architects, Battle Ridge Construction of Livingston and Haven Interior Design, Inc., also of Bozeman. Architect Matt Faure and general contractor Shaun Ryan have extensive experience working together on a variety of architectural styles and are accustomed to the extreme weather conditions of Montana. The trio of architectural design, construction and interior design resulted in "a remarkable team," according to the Wagners.

In fact, walking through the house with general contractor Shaun Ryan, it's clear he has personal pride in the finished product. He carefully points out the well-crafted detail in every corner of the Wagners' home; he rattles off sources for the materials (the flooring, for instance, is from Superior Hardwoods in Missoula) and notes that much of the branches used as accents on the stairs and exterior railings were harvested from the property.



CAROLE SISSON

Opposite: Uba Tuba granite counters highlight the natural palette that matches the organic elements in the house, while the swirled pattern of pressed tin on the doors to the pantry add refinement. The hood was fabricated by Bill Moore, custom cabinetry was made by Todd Gardenier.

Above: The log trusswork visible on the main level of the home adds visual interest to the dining area, where an elegant antique iron chandelier by Dessin Fournir sets the mood for an evening gathering.

“It’s our job to find materials with just the right character to bring the architectural drawings to life,” said Ryan.

To that end, he points out the big round logs on the exterior that reflect the craftsmanship applied to the historic Old Faithful Inn; the intensely intricate detail of the truss work that weaves through the ceiling on the main floor; and the handcrafted elements applied to the mesquite door to the wine cave and the bar top on the saloon downstairs.

Ryan, along with his partner Scott Wagner at Battle Ridge Construction, have expertise in building the iconic structures that are popular in mountain architecture, but likewise, Ryan considers himself to be well versed in all types of building

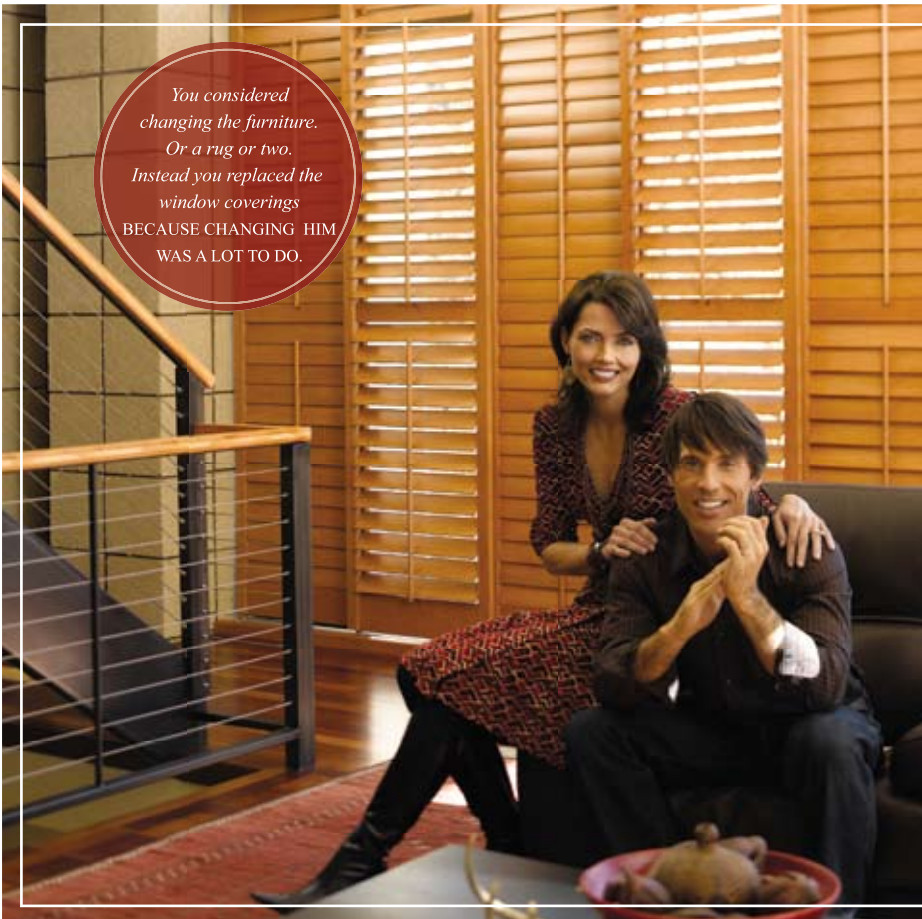


Above: A customized theater room flanks the old saloon downstairs. **Opposite:** Outdoor spaces were created to enjoy views to the east of the Absaroka Range.

styles. As a fourth-generation builder, Ryan has knowledge of construction in the classic historic forms seen throughout the eastern portion of the United States and other architectural styles that range from highly rustic to ultra modern.

“Rather than specializing in one area,” said Ryan, “I like to think that Battle Ridge is known for quality construction no matter what the style of architecture.”

With the construction underway, the Wagners turned



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to the interior design. They worked with Phoebe McEldowney of Haven. McEldowney and design partner, Debra Shull, have cultivated a simple approach for their projects: to create interiors that reflect the beauty and aesthetic of the West. But, of course, every client is different and the design team responds to that with each project. In the case of the Wagner residence, McEldowney explained, "The home really is a blend of casual pieces by local craftspeople mixed with slightly more refined custom pieces."

The relationship between designer and homeowners was a genuine collaboration. They started with a soft, natural color palette. Then, following Diana's direction, McEldowney



carefully selected lighting, rugs and furniture that maintained an elegant line. There was a challenge to cultivate a more polished style on the main level, versus a true, heavy rustic downstairs. The goal was to balance the spaces, making them distinct, yet compatible.

"The style on the main level matches the sweeping view that you experience there," said McEldowney. "Whereas downstairs the view is more intimate and immersed in the landscape."

The result is a home that reflects Jim and Diana's personal style, yet allows the rustic elements to speak to the architecture of the home.

Incorporating the Wagners' Western art collection, from contemporary paintings by Andy Thomas to vintage

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Edward Curtis prints added another dimension to the home's flowing style. The couple began collecting over the years from Montana Trails Gallery and other sources. In their new home they combined the collection so that paintings and sculpture infuse the house with another layer of connection to the place they love.

Now, perched in the Gallatin Range, the Wagners have no regrets about their lifestyle change. Instead of cattle in their front yard, they have elk;

Above: At the owners request, architect Matt Halvorsen designed an authentic western saloon, replete with pressed tin ceilings, mirrored backbar, rustic wood slab bartop and swinging saloon doors. **Right:** Epitomizing refinement, a custom-made wine cave is accessible from the dining room.



they live comparably closer to town; and their grandsons visit regularly. And for all the things their mountain house says about them, the couple has one thing to say about it: This is *home*. **BSJ**

Seabring Davis is the editor of Big Sky Journal and the author of the new architectural book, The New Montana Cabin: Contemporary Approaches to the Traditional Western Retreat, (Globe-Pequot Press, 2008).

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