

at home

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A Legacy of Place

FAMILY CRAFTS NEW LOG HOME
WITH TIES TO THE PAST

In the studio with painter Richard Pence



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Local couple honors the past with construction of new log home

Judging from the size of the trees, this log cabin has been a part of the landscape for many years. Old pines surround the home, enveloping it in privacy. While this home has stood here for a mere two years, the owner's heart has resided here for a lifetime.

Steve and Lona Petri finished building their log home just east of Bozeman in August 2003. On

this exact spot was the house where Lona had grown up with her two sisters. She has fond memories of playing in Rocky Creek, which meanders through the 12 acres.

Her grandfather, John Wheat, purchased this land during World War II. During the early 1900s, he homesteaded 600 acres in Bridger Canyon where he and his wife raised a family of 11 children. But when the military required five of his sons to serve



On the opening page, Lona Petri said when she and her husband decided to build on the property where she grew up just east of Bozeman, they took painstaking care not to disturb the mature trees that surrounded the original home. Above, the dining room table is made from an antique bridge that spanned nearby Rocky Creek, and then was damaged in a flood during the late 1940s or early 1950s. At right, the home was built with logs salvaged from the Fridley Fire that burned a few years ago south of Bozeman. Some of the logs, like these in the master bedroom, retain portions blackened by the fire. Opposite page, rough-sawn fir floors run through the living room in this view from the kitchen island.





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in the war, he lost his primary workforce. Realizing that he could no longer physically handle all of the work, he sold the land in Bridger Canyon and bought this property of a more manageable size in the early 1940s.

"My family said that the boys were extremely disappointed when they returned from the war," Lona said. "They expected to go home to Bridger Canyon."

After living in an antique-filled home on the historic south side of Bozeman for 32 years, the Petris decided to build a log cabin on the family property.

"The home that her grandfather purchased and where she had grown up was still there," said Steve. "For sentimental reasons, she didn't want to tear it down." So Steve decided to hire a house mover and try to sell the house. "It worked out great," he said. "It was purchased by a person who had some land but no house. It was moved north of Bozeman and the owner is remodeling it."

Lona is pleased that the family home still stands.

"I'm glad to know that it will be a home to someone else," she said.

The couple wanted to preserve the mature trees and shrubs that stood sentry around the original home but inevitably, some had to be removed in order to move the house.

"We lost 10 cedar trees on the north side," he said.

After that Steve, owner of Bear Creek Log Homes, was able to refine the home plans that he and Lona had designed.

"I laid out the perimeter of the house in string and white lines several times to be sure it would fit the space," he said.

Working with general contractor Mark Hackbarth, the log home began to take shape. Most of the lodgepole pines were purchased from private land that had been damaged by wildfire.

"Ninety percent of our logs came from the area of the Fridley fire a few years ago," Steve said. White bark pines were purchased from land being cleared for

A stone fireplace gives a cozy feel to the living room.



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development.

“Mark was even able to incorporate branches of the removed cedar trees in an ornamental way,” said Steve.

The result is a hand-peeled, log home with Glacier rock accents. The 3,000-square-foot home provides a generous open living space for the couple. A 1,400-square-foot cowboy inspired guest area over the garage offers private and spacious quarters. Covered porches are on three sides of the

home, including a sitting area with a wood-burning fireplace. The Petris are fond of this spot, just off the master bedroom, where they are able to enjoy the abundant wildlife and the sounds of the creek during the cool evenings. Original outbuildings and the orchard planted by Lona’s grandfather remain on the property, preserving a slice of her family history.

The inside of the home is an eclectic blend of rustic log walls and elegant antiques, creating an

artful juxtaposition. The living room features a swirled river rock fireplace to match the scale of the log walls in contrast. An antique clock from the late 1800s sits on top of crystal and silver. A modern technology of the cabinet was a plasma television.



The pillar theme of the house carries over onto the front porch.

the way around," she said.

In the kitchen, a large island with a black granite countertop provides a sleek, convenient space for work and entertaining.

Decorative beams were placed in the room to give the feel of having a lower ceiling.

"I wanted the beams to draw your eye lower," said Lona. "It visually reduces the volume of the large spaces so it's not so overwhelming."

A bay window over the sink offers views to the east and of the many birds visiting the feeders. Cherry cabinets with travertine tile counters blend well with the home's wood interiors. A copper range hood adds a charming contrast to the wood.

The breakfast nook gives the illusion of sitting in an outdoor gazebo rather than inside a house.

"We wanted it to feel like the outdoors," said Steve. "We chose to fit panes of glass between the logs to preserve their character rather than install windows." The couple credits Hackbarth with this masterful piece of handiwork that kept the distinctive qualities of each log intact.

At first glance, the dining room table appears to be part of the couple's extensive antique collection. But Steve actually crafted this trestle table from antique bridge planks that were stored on the property.

"The bridge had been disassembled by my father after

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Rocky Creek flooded," Lona recalled. "Steve found the planks and thought they would make a great table. It ended up being so heavy that it took three men to carry in the top."

In an effort to preserve the character of the logs used in the home's structure, Steve carefully selected each one for dramatic visual impact.

"I like to situate them in order to highlight their unique qualities," said Steve.

With years of experience in building log homes, he was also aware of the need to maximize the natural light. "We added 14 skylights, in addition to the windows, to be sure the house felt light and bright," he said.

Lona was also mindful of the need to

incorporate color in a log home.

"Since there is no color on the walls, you have to make sure you use it elsewhere," she said. Rich colors are featured in the window treatments and decorative elements throughout the home.

Just off the kitchen, the master bedroom provides a quiet retreat for rest and relaxation. The adjacent master bath artfully incorporates one of their favorite antique finds as a functional element. A mirrored barber wall, formerly housing the workspace for two barber chairs, serves as the backdrop to the twin pedestal sinks. Rescuing this piece from several coats of white paint was no small feat.

"After stripping off layers of paint, we had to use dental tools to remove it from all the intricate details," said Lona.

Onyx countertops, similar to those found in old barbershops, complete this a stunning, one-of-a-kind design element. Steve built custom cabinets for storage that echoed the mission-style features of the base of the barber wall.

In a careful balance, the Petris have crafted a unique home, while honoring the past. But they acknowledge that this is the setting for many new family memories.

"Two weeks after we moved in, my daughter got married here," Lona said. "We barely had the furniture moved in." In that way, the Petris have created a bridge between generations, linking past and present. 📍

Denise Glaser Malloy is At Home's managing editor.