

# Mountain Living<sup>®</sup>

*easy*  
outdoor  
living

GLORIOUS GARDENS  
AND THE DESIGNERS BEHIND THEM

MAY/JUNE 2009

MOUNTAINLIVING.COM



# Aged to Perfection

RECLAIMED MATERIALS BRING  
AUTHENTIC CHARACTER TO A NEW  
GUESTHOUSE SET AMONG THE CEDAR  
TREES IN BIG FORK, MONTANA

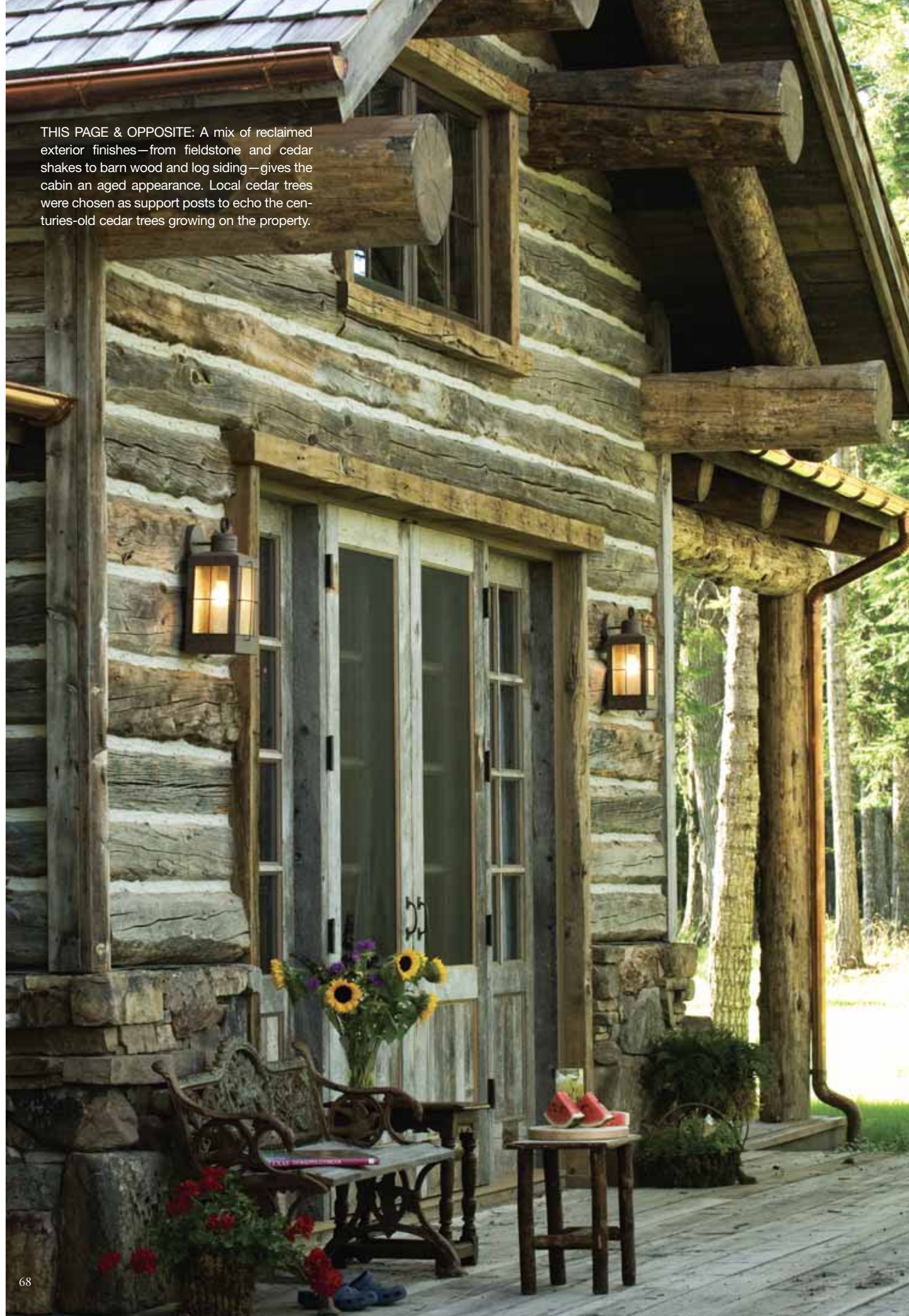
ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN Classic Design Group  
DESIGN/BUILD High Country Builders  
INTERIOR DESIGN Pat Wood Interiors



THIS PAGE: Covered porches and decks offer a cozy fireplace, lounge areas, an outdoor television, dining area and kitchen. The outdoor fireplace is placed back-to-back with the living room fireplace and shares the same stack of stone to house the chimney flues.



THIS PAGE & OPPOSITE: A mix of reclaimed exterior finishes—from fieldstone and cedar shakes to barn wood and log siding—gives the cabin an aged appearance. Local cedar trees were chosen as support posts to echo the centuries-old cedar trees growing on the property.



W

hen building a second home on their 10-acre spread in Montana, homeowners Tom and Marilyn Waggoner had several requirements: a private place for guests, an everyday office and exercise room for themselves, and lots of space to entertain and enjoy the outdoors. “We also wanted something rustic, like an old trapper’s cabin,” says Marilyn. Walt Landi of design/build firm High Country Builders and architectural designer Randy Kaatz of Classic Design Group teamed up to deliver exactly what the homeowners requested.

**MOUNTAIN LIVING:** This cabin is new, but it looks like it’s been here forever. How did you achieve that look?

**WALT LANDI:** It is important to me to design and blend a house into its footprint to make it look like it belongs there. In this case, we were very careful to leave the huge cedar trees—some of them are hundreds of years old—close to the house. We also used a variety of aged materials to make it look as if the house evolved over time. If you fit a house into its environment, it looks like everything else grew up around it.

**ML:** What were some of the challenges of fitting this house into its surroundings?

**WL:** The homeowners live in a new house only 300 feet away, so we had to try not to compete with the other house. That’s one reason why we went with old materials: to make it look like this was the original house that a family outgrew and then built a new one.

**ML:** The materials you chose play a major role in the design of this cabin. What did you use to add age and character?

**WL:** We gathered together almost all reclaimed and natural materials—barn wood, cedar shakes covered with moss and lichen, unpeeled log beams from an old homestead, native Montana fieldstone—and we made new things look old, like the granite countertops with their chiseled edges. Adding rustic ambience takes skill and artistry. Once you get started, it’s like taking a tiger by the tail. You have to keep your guard up in every selection to make sure you carry out your theme all the way. Otherwise something will catch your eye and not make sense. >>



## YEAR-ROUND OUTDOOR LIVING

WHEN YOU THINK OF AL FRESCO DINING, you rarely imagine winter in Montana. But one of the best parties homeowners Tom and Marilyn Waggoner ever hosted took place on their spacious decks and porches just before Christmas. “We invited 100 people and told them to dress warmly,” explains Marilyn. Guests were greeted at the gate with a horse-drawn sleigh that set the mood and delivered them to the cabin. The hosts cooked and served food both inside and outside, with partiers freely mingling between the two settings. They were warmed by the novelty of the party, the big outdoor fireplace and propane heaters on the deck. “You really can entertain outdoors year-round, even in Montana,” says Marilyn. “You just have to be a little brave.” And think outside the house.

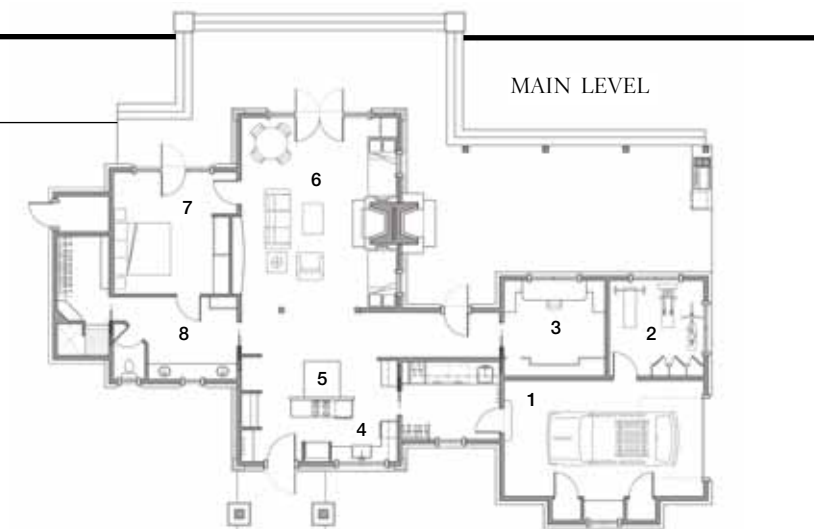


LEFT: Almost 800 square feet of covered porches and decks line the side of the house that faces the river, offering perfect places to while away the hours. ABOVE: The kitchen features custom cabinetry with willow twig panels and granite countertops, some with irregular chiseled edges, selected to enhance the room's rustic appeal. Builder Walt Landi installed a distressed copper backsplash next to the built-in dining table; overhead is a stucco-and-barnwood range hood of his design that evolved as the project went along. “I didn't want anything that looked new and shiny,” he says.

## FLOOR PLAN

a rustic riverfront cabin

- 1 Garage
- 2 Exercise Room
- 3 Office
- 4 Kitchen
- 5 Dining Room
- 6 Living Room
- 7 Master Bedroom
- 8 Master Bathroom





THIS PAGE: Homeowners and art lovers Tom and Marilyn Waggoner commissioned the painting of a long-horn steer from artist Nancy Cawdrey of Big Fork. The floor lamp was designed by local artisan Rock Corbett.



“WE USED A VARIETY OF AGED MATERIALS TO MAKE IT LOOK AS IF THE HOUSE EVOLVED OVER TIME. IF YOU FIT A HOUSE INTO ITS ENVIRONMENT, IT LOOKS LIKE EVERYTHING ELSE GREW UP AROUND IT.”

**ML:** What are some of the design elements that distinguish this cabin?

**WL:** Some of the first things you notice are the tree trunks used as support posts. The intact root flares add a lot of character and substance because of the size of their bases. Inside, the lintel stone on the fireplace draws your attention: it's a big slab of native stone with different color variations that really stand out. It is simplistic, like a homesteader might have built, yet functional and appealing to the eye.


When I first suggested the design for the cabinetry, my cabinetmaker thought I was crazy. I had him insert local willow twigs into distressed alder doors. It may be unconventional, but it works.

**ML:** The homeowners love the outdoors and selected this site for its proximity to the Swan River. How did you take advantage of the natural setting?

**WL:** We built as close to the river as was allowed (50 feet) and placed almost 800 square feet of covered porches and decks along the side of the house that faces the river. Large windows and doors provide access to the outdoors and a connection to nature.

**ML:** You specialize in custom log and timber homes. What distinguishes your designs?

**WL:** My style is about using native, natural materials in a different way. One man's garbage is another man's treasure. Lots of people wouldn't think 75-year-old cedar shakes and old barn wood are good choices for a brand new house, but they are quite durable and useable. We collect old discarded materials and turn them into something pretty special. The beauty of this style of house comes from simple materials. It's a matter of picking and choosing how and where to apply them that makes it unique. ●

[more](#)  Log on to [mountainliving.com](http://mountainliving.com) to view exclusive photos of this Montana cabin.