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Wild, Wonderful Teton Valley

AN EASTERN COUPLE FINDS INSPIRATION IN WESTERN THEMES.

STORY BY Margaret A. Haapoja
PHOTOGRAPHY BY J.K. Lawrence

Old Westerns influenced Robert and Mary Stein when they designed the interior of their vacation home in Jackson Hole, Wyoming. The balcony overlooking their great room reminds the couple of classic saloon scenes in which cowboys tumbled over the railing down onto the bar. Both born and raised on the Atlantic seaboard, the two sought to build a second home as unlike their Eastern residence as could be.

OPPOSITE: The home's many angles and rooflines, along with its half-log and rough cedar siding, give it a rustic appearance reminiscent of bygone days in the Teton Valley. **ABOVE:** Facing north, the great room's wall of windows frames the changing vistas of the mountains.

ABOVE: The great room and adjoining dining room share a massive Montana moss stone fireplace that opens to both spaces. The chairs' elk theme echoes the metal sculpture on the face of the great room fireplace. OPPOSITE: A chandelier of resin rather than antlers lends a Western look while saving a bit on cost.

"Our home on the coast in Virginia is a very contemporary wood-and-glass, three-story structure," says Robert. "Out here we wanted to create something entirely the opposite. We wanted the house to look like it could have been here in 1900 when the valley was first being settled. That's a stretch, of course, because we also wanted all the conveniences that we've come to enjoy."

"Everything wraps around the chimney, and you're always wondering what's around the next corner. It draws your imagination with it." –Chris Lee, architect

Robert and Mary fell in love with the Jackson Hole area several years ago and decided to build a retirement home there to share with family and friends. "I think the raw beauty here is just phenomenal," says Robert, "and we really adore viewing wildlife. It's fascinating when they walk through our property." After considering a home in the woods, they eventually chose a 4-acre lot in the Teton Valley where Mary could garden. "We're out in the open with phenomenal views of the Grand Tetons, yet we have huge evergreens and cottonwoods right in the back of our property," says Robert. "We feel like we've got the best of both worlds."

"One of the neat things about living in Jackson Hole is that the site almost always dictates how the house wants to be," says architect Chris Lee. "Their lot has views of the Grand Tetons on the north, so that tells you where all the big rooms should go." To take full advantage of those views, the couple chose not to use any window treatments in their great room. "It's a northern exposure so we don't have to worry about sun, and we like having it wide open," says Robert.

During the planning process, the couple pored over magazines, tearing out pictures of features they wanted to incorporate into their home. After asking friends to recommend local architects, they noticed the same names appeared on all the lists. They interviewed three and chose Chris. "We knew we liked the traditional homes in this area with large logs both in and out," says Robert, "and although Chris is quite young, he has a reputation already for being very creative with logs and making the logs very functional in your home."

Despite the fact that their home was a long-distance project, the process went smoothly. The 4,100-square-foot home is conventional construction with half-log siding of lodgepole

Building in an Earthquake Zone

Jackson Hole, Wyoming, is second only to San Francisco and West Yellowstone in the risk of a significant earthquake. Because of that threat coupled with high snow loads, contractors working in the Teton Valley have to take special precautions when building. Architect Chris Lee, who works in Jackson Hole, says the layout of a home's walls dictates the amount of extra material needed to withstand the lateral force caused by earthquakes. Added strength can be achieved with heavy-duty framing, such as 2-by-6s, by designing interior walls that extend to the top of the roof, and by reinforcing exterior walls with plywood. The ultimate reinforcement is steel, which can be used to frame an entire home or only where needed. In the Steins' home, for instance, just one wall needed to be framed in steel: the one made up largely of windows. In houses where the need for steel support is extensive, home owners forgo full log walls and use log siding over traditional walls instead.

OPPOSITE: The kitchen's bi-level island makes meal preparation easy for both short and tall chefs. ABOVE: Contrasting the modern elements, the knotty alder cabinets add a rustic touch to the room.

pine on the lower level and vertical board-and-batten siding on the second story. "We used cedar with a lot of relief to give it texture," says Chris, "and we staggered the lower edges to give it a rough character and to make it appear more rustic and natural." The house took less than 13 months from groundbreaking to completion, and the couple only visited the site once during that time. Robert attributes much of the project's success to careful advance planning. "We did a lot of due diligence with Chris before we started, and he understood what we wanted," he says.

When friends are amazed that the house was completed on time, Robert explains that not making change orders during construction made a huge difference. "And though we used beautiful materials in the house, there was no material that wasn't readily available," he says. "We didn't get caught up in the game that so many people do of having to bring all of your stone from exotic places around the world." To stay within their budget, the couple selected an antler-style chandelier made of resin rather than real antlers. In closets and out-of-the way areas, they used fluorescent lights, and they chose Formica countertops for the guest bathrooms rather than natural stone.

Among the most unique features of the home are its many angles and rooflines. Although the complicated construction increased the overall cost of the home, Robert appreciates the aesthetics. His architect agrees. "I like the overall geometry of the house," Chris says, "and I like the way it flows. Everything wraps around the chimney, and you're always wondering what's around the next corner. It draws your imagination with it." The great room sits at a 45-degree angle to the rest of the

LEFT: Drywall brightens the rooms and offers an ideal backdrop for Native American and wildlife art. BELOW LEFT: Tumbled marble tile adorns the floor, counter and tub in the master bath. OPPOSITE: An outdoor fireplace turns the deck into an extra living room for entertaining on chilly evenings.

house, and the kitchen is horseshoe-shaped with the upstairs master bath cantilevered over it. An L-shaped fireplace opens into both the dining room and the living room.

Outdoors, a fireplace transforms their deck into an extra living room during August and September when evenings are otherwise too chilly to sit comfortably outside. Like the indoor hearth, it is built of natural Montana moss stone.

Because they both like to cook, the couple has a two-level kitchen island. The standard 36-inch height is perfect for Mary, but Robert is more comfortable working at his 42-inch-high section. They eat most of their meals at the island and enjoy serving French toast or pancakes to guests from the convenient cooktop griddle. Knotty alder cabinets and a custom hutch by Doug Harmer of Willow Creek Woodworks add to the Western ambiance of the home.

An in-floor radiant hot-water system keeps the house at an even, cozy temperature. "I'm the cold member of this family," admits Mary, "so I love the warm floors, especially in the morning." Because hydronic heat has a slow recovery time, that is, it takes two or three days to warm and cool, the Steins added a forced air system in the great room to warm the house while the hydronic system gets up to speed.

Mary enlisted the help of interior designer Anne Standing to decorate the first floor of the home. "I wanted the house to have a warm feeling that reflected the natural surroundings of sage, cottonwoods, evergreens and aspens," says Mary. "Most of the house is in earth tones of yellow, beige and sage." To display their collection of Native American and wildlife art, the pair chose drywall for every room. Drywall makes it easier to hang the art and provides a plain backdrop to show it off.

Mary did her own landscaping, planting flowers like lupines, delphinium, flax and Indian paintbrush—all native to the West. Around the front of the house, she established native potentilla, arctic willow, red twig dogwood, lilacs and aspens. "Gardening is my therapy," she says.

Robert and Mary are Wyoming residents now, and they look forward to spending more than half the year in their new home. Winters, they cross country ski and snowshoe, and summers, they hike, fly fish, kayak and bicycle.

"We really feel much more relaxed in our lifestyle here than in the East," Robert says. "We hope to own this home for a very long time." ■

Home Details

Square footage: 4,100

Architect: Design Associates Architects

General contractor: Dave Leinonen Custom Homes

Log producer: Ridgeline Custom Truss

For more information, see Resources on page 97.

Main Level

Upper Level