


ASPEN reclaimed

FOR THE FOUNDER OF RESTORATION TIMBER, A WEEKEND HOME
IN THE MOUNTAINS WAS THE PROVING GROUND FOR HIS
BUSINESS PLAN. BY JEAN VICTOR PHOTOGRAPHY BY ROSS KRIBBS AND MICHAEL BRANDS



At dusk, with fireplaces ablaze indoors, the Western mountain house commands a view of Aspen's most prominent peaks. RIGHT: Massive reclaimed Douglas fir timbers are joined using log cabin-construction techniques. Montana moss stone gives the facing a natural yet refined look.



I fell in love with Aspen when I was seven years old,” Jim Stafford says. “This is where I learned to ski and where I spent at least three weeks every summer—hiking, gathering wood for the campfire, all those things that are so much fun as a kid.” So when Stafford, a Bay Area resident and former magazine publisher, decided to build a mountain getaway, he was inspired by his childhood memories of winter ski vacations and summer camping trips to revisit the landscape he loved, 1,200 miles from his home near San Francisco.

The parcel of land he purchased looks south across the valley, all the way to Snowmass, offering 180-degree views of a series of 14,000-foot mountain peaks. Stafford envisioned a Western mountain retreat, part authentic log cabin but with the refined woodworking and more intimate scale found in classic Japanese design. While he wanted to capture the views of Aspen’s most prominent peaks, he wasn’t interested in soaring ceilings or huge, jaw-dropping spaces. “I wanted the house to feel warm and comfortable,” he says.

The vaulted ceiling in the breakfast room highlights the richness of the Douglas fir trusses, hickory windows and hemlock floors. Interior designer Lisa Staprans had the table and chairs custom made from reclaimed speckled elm.





Enter Rich Carr of CCY Architects, a firm in nearby Basalt that is known for its site-specific architecture and exquisite detailing. Carr took note of Stafford's "refined rustic" aesthetic, conjuring up a house with the structural integrity of a log cabin and a level of craftsmanship to rival Greene & Greene. Since the property is on the side of a mountain and visible from below, Carr broke up the house into several smaller elements, which are linked together via enclosed breezeways to form a compound. "The house sits quietly on the land and doesn't feel too grandiose," he says.

"A lot of timber-looking houses aren't honest structural timber frames," says Carr. "But the log work and the timber trussing you see in this house are real. It takes an extra step, but when you're in the house you sense the heavy-boned quality, and it feels right." The 12-by-12-inch Douglas fir timbers on the exterior of the house form the interior walls, for instance, and the beams in the ceilings function as true structural supports.

The mix of materials in the kitchen includes limestone floors, a hand-forged iron hood, and claro walnut and elm for the cabinetry.





Both Stafford and Carr point to the breakfast room as an example of how the design successfully mixes timber-frame joinery with a sophistication and refinement of detailing. “The room has a unity and symmetry that fit together in a way like you’ve never seen before,” says Carr. The adjoining kitchen is designed to be highly functional, with a marble island for baking and a thick, round maple end-grain chopping board, and shares the same authentic character and patina as the rest of the house. The floor is antique French limestone, and the hood and crown molding are hand-forged iron. The cabinetry is a mix of dark reclaimed claro walnut on the islands and lighter elm along the walls.

LEFT: Jim Stafford, founder of Restoration Timber, in his San Francisco showroom. BELOW: Architect Rich Carr created gallery spaces for art throughout the house, including this hallway leading to a family room.

When it came to furnishing the house, Stafford and interior designer Lisa Staprans, design director of Lisa Staprans Interior Design in Portola Valley, selected comfortable, understated pieces that don’t compete with the richness of the architecture or

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The heavily beamed ceiling in the living room was kept at a comfortable scale, with views to the south framed by a wall of windows.

Playful red and white quilts add bright contrast to the Douglas fir walls in an upstairs bunk room.





with Stafford's collections of pre-Columbian art and gabbeh rugs, which are displayed throughout the house. Indeed, one of Carr's challenges was creating enough wall space to accommodate the framed textiles. "There were tough decisions to make between the view and solid walls," says Carr. "The links we created to break down the massing of the house also function as gallery spaces that are specifically oriented around pieces of art."

Stafford's appreciation for ancient artifacts extends to the actual timber used in the building of the house. From the start, Stafford was interested in using as much reclaimed wood as possible, both for its beauty and sustainability. But after months of receiving either the wrong wood or only half of what he had ordered from suppliers, he decided to personally source the wood himself. "I went trekking around the Midwest, buying up wood from people taking down old barns," he says. "You can get 2,000 to 3,000 square feet of hemlock for flooring from one barn, but I needed 6,000 feet, so I was going from barn to barn, piecing together what I needed to get enough wood to the flooring installer."

ABOVE LEFT: A pre-Columbian textile hangs over the bed. ABOVE: The vanity is made from reclaimed sycamore.

This adventure inspired Stafford (with business partner Mike Wilson) to form Restoration Timber in 2000. The company now has showrooms in San Francisco and New York (the East Coast side of the business is run by Stafford's brother, Jeff) and sources wood for projects ranging from SoMa lofts to homes in Carmel and Cape Cod. "The wood we provide is from deteriorating barns and other structures built from trees that were cut down 100 years ago or more," he explains. "Not only is it an environmentally friendly practice, but the wood itself is rich in grain and color, with a structural integrity often lacking in wood from young, fast-growth trees."

Though the success of Restoration Timber keeps Stafford close to home in the Bay Area or traveling back roads around the country in search of reclaimed timber, the calm of his mountain home—not to mention the lure of making fresh wintertime tracks at Aspen Highlands—draws him to visit his boyhood roots as frequently as possible. "It's my oasis," he says, "my peace and quiet." ■