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Riverside Rustic

Reclaimed materials paired with smart design elements create an easygoing feel in this waterfront timber home.

STORY BY SCOTT GIBSON | PHOTOS BY JAMES RAY SPAHN



The house sits on the banks of the Gunnison River, a well-known trout-fishing stream. An upstairs game room opens onto the second-floor deck.

INSET: Although the house looks as if it's well off the beaten path, it's only seven minutes from the Gunnison, Colorado, airport and even has a couple of close neighbors.





ABOVE: The foyer by the main entry is floored with stone that came from the builders' nearby ranch. The massive stone lintel over the entrance to the foyer was set by a crane.

OPPOSITE: The open first floor includes this cozy fireplace area. The trusses and frame members were made locally from wood that was originally part of a North Carolina tobacco factory.

IT WASN'T THE MOST auspicious start for Barbie Clariday and her husband Greg.

A year and a half after the Houston couple started building their custom home alongside Colorado's Gunnison River, the house was still open to the elements and the Claridays were so discouraged they considered selling the property.

Fortunately, they decided to take the advice of their architect instead, and hired a new general contractor who was able to get the project back on its feet. Some 20 months later, Pike Builders of Gunnison, Colorado, delivered just the house the Claridays had wanted all along: energy efficient, beautifully detailed and rich in reclaimed materials, and right on the banks of a popular trout-fishing stream.

The finished 5,100-square-foot, five-bedroom home is not only a comfortable seasonal retreat for the Claridays, but has plenty of room for their three daughters and spouses, six grandchildren, their own siblings and a long list of friends. But it took some work to get there.

By the time Pike Builders got involved with the project, the frame, which is made up entirely of reclaimed timbers, had been largely completed by Combined Timber Crafts, Inc. of Gunnison, says Steve Pike, who runs the company with his brother Paul. But the general contractor overseeing the project was in over his head, Steve adds, and the house "wasn't in real good shape." Pike's 12-person crew reworked some of the framing, rebuilt the roof and brought the work up to code before installing the windows and roofing, and turning their attention to the interior.



The kitchen island is made from knotty alder that's been distressed and made to look as if it came from an old circular sawmill.

The house is a true timber frame, what Steve calls “old-world style construction,” with a fully structural frame and infill walls built from 2-by-6-inch dimensional lumber.

The yellow pine timbers used to make the frame were reclaimed from a North Carolina tobacco factory. Pine siding and the mix of hand-scraped red and white oak flooring also comes from reclaimed sources.

In addition to using reclaimed lumber, the Pikes went to unusual lengths to give the house the unmistakable patina of age. The roofing, for example, is made from Cor-Ten material that rusts over time to mimic the appearance of a century in the weather. Even the elastomeric chinking between horizontal pieces of siding is a modern material that has been doctored to make it “look like an old farmer did it,” Steve says. The process, which the Pike brothers invented, involves treating the chinking with sand and sawdust.

But while the Claridays strived to make the house look as if it has been around for a while, the insulation and mechanical systems in this house are completely up to date. The roof is insulated to R-79 and walls to R-39 with soy-based closed-cell foam, Steve says, which helps to keep the house comfortable even in an area that can see more than 8,000 heating degree days a year.

The home’s heat is provided by a ground-source heat pump and a radiant-floor distribution system. Rather than dig wells or trenches for the heat-exchange tubing, the Pikes made use of a pond on the property that was so overgrown the Claridays didn’t even know it was there. “We cleared away the brush and trees, dug the pond out to a depth of 27 feet



ABOVE: The comfortable master bedroom includes a walnut-paneled bump-out (to the left) with seating that overlooks the river.

TOP: A second-floor bunkroom includes eight bunk beds, capable of handling all six grandchildren at once with room to spare.



ABOVE: A first-floor bathroom includes two pedestal sinks and unique, wooden mirror frames.

LEFT: The large soaking tub in the master bath is made of copper, which exudes a warm feel against the matching tile floor.

and installed miles and miles of geothermal coils along the bottom,” says Steve.

Barbie Clariday credits the craftsmen who work for the Pikes and designer Gail Lyons of Houston for the attention to detail on the interior of the house. From the carefully fitted stone floor in the foyer to a wine rack perfectly scribed to the stone wall behind it, the house is a harmonious blend of materials and craftsmanship.

And despite the rocky start, the house is doing exactly what the Claridays had hoped. Seven minutes from the airport and 20 minutes from a ski area in Crested Butte, Barbie says, “You feel like you’re out in the middle of nowhere.” ■