

TIMBERED THE Elegance

LIVING ON LOST CREEK RANCH

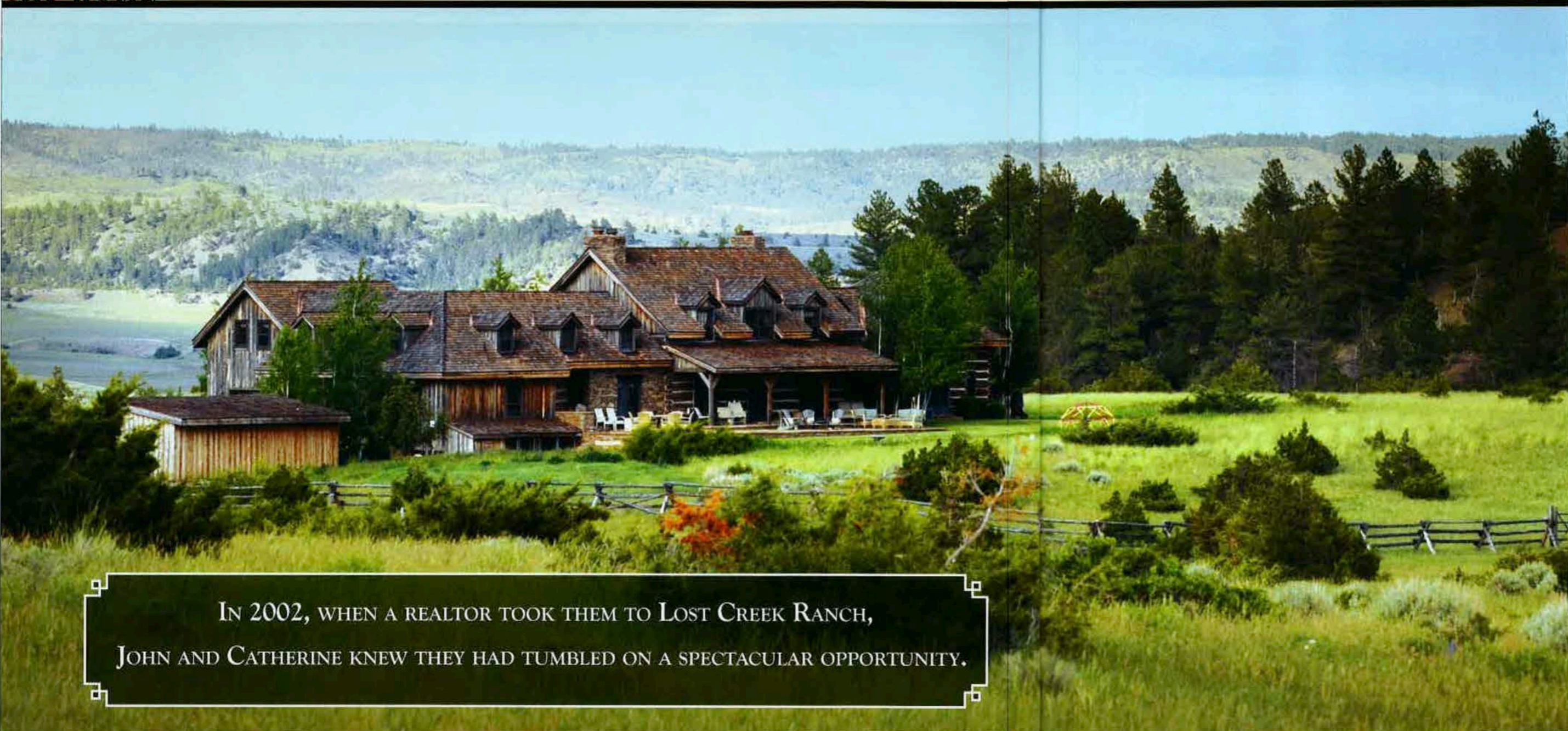
By ALLYN CALTON • PHOTOGRAPHY BY JAMES WOODCOCK



CRESTING THE TOP OF THE GRASSY HILLSIDE, THE HANDSOME COUPLE QUICKLY REIGNED IN THEIR MOUNTS.

“LOOK AT THAT!” THE WIFE EXCLAIMED. LESS THAN 50 YARDS AWAY, COMPLETELY UNDISTURBED BY THE HUMAN INTRUSION, A HERD OF ELK STOOD SILHOUETTED AGAINST THE SETTING SUN.

“THAT EXPERIENCE SEALED THE DEAL,” SAID THE HUSBAND, PAUSING TO TAKE A LONG, SATISFIED LOOK AT HIS SURROUNDINGS. “LOST CREEK RANCH CAME OFF THE MARKET THAT DAY.”



IN 2002, WHEN A REALTOR TOOK THEM TO LOST CREEK RANCH,
JOHN AND CATHERINE KNEW THEY HAD TUMBLED ON A SPECTACULAR OPPORTUNITY.

The main ranch home was constructed using three circa 1850s buildings from Ontario, Canada. The center or main structure was originally a barn, and the two end structures were bunkhouses or “bunkies.”

Both former corporate executives, Catherine and John spent many years on the fast track before moving to Montana.

“We worked hard, and we were very successful. Yet success came at a price,” says John.

The pace of life in southern California is frenzied. Long commutes, endless work hours and relatively little time at home was the norm. And although the couple lived in a gated home in a beach community, safety for their young children was a constant concern. “I was raised in rural Kansas; we didn’t worry about playing outdoors. Yet, despite all the security, we wouldn’t let our children play in the front yard unsupervised. It didn’t seem like a natural way for the kids to grow up,” says John.

Eventually, Catherine and John decided to make a break from the city and started looking at ranches in the western U.S. To be considered, a property had to meet several criteria. First, it had to be no farther than 2 hours from a city with cultural amenities and a major airport. Weather patterns were also high on the list. “Snow didn’t scare us, but we didn’t want to live in a place that was chronically overcast like western Montana,” says John.

Scouring the west, the couple soon narrowed their search to property between Billings and Bozeman. In 2002, when a realtor took them to Lost Creek Ranch, John and Catherine knew they had tumbled on a spectacular opportunity.

Finding paradise

Located near Greycliff, Mont., the sprawling 2,600-acre ranch boasts rolling, timbered hills, natural springs and views of the Crazies, Beartooths and Yellowstone River. “You have two choices – be in the view or have a view. We wanted to have a view,” says John.

From the highway, a 2-mile long private road leads to a circular driveway and the main ranch home. The home itself was constructed using three circa 1850s buildings from Ontario, Canada. The center or main structure was originally a barn, and the two end structures were bunkhouses, or “bunkies.”

Large, hand-hewn logs – some as much as 24 inches wide – frame the

exterior. Inside, the floor was made of reclaimed antique yellow pine boards from a Seagram’s distillery.

“The bones were here, but there was a lot of unfinished work. The house was basically four walls on dirt when we bought it,” says John.

Roughing it

The first year was trying. Summer brought sweltering heat, and winter, record-breaking cold. “It was December. We had a 2-week-old baby and the temperature dropped to minus 25 degrees. Every pipe in the home froze. Our friends in California thought we were crazy for moving here, but we knew we could do it,” says John.

Undaunted, the couple spent the next several years refinishing,

re-chinking, remodeling and renovating the home from top to bottom.

Now fully restored and furnished in a refined western motif and period antiques, the home is both beautiful and warmly inviting.

Rustic perfection

“We love to entertain, and the flow of the kitchen, dining room, great room and patio make this a perfect place for intimate groups as well as large gatherings,” says Catherine.

From the circular drive, a flagstone patio and french doors lead to the roomy kitchen. Along one side stands a massive dry stacked fireplace stretching

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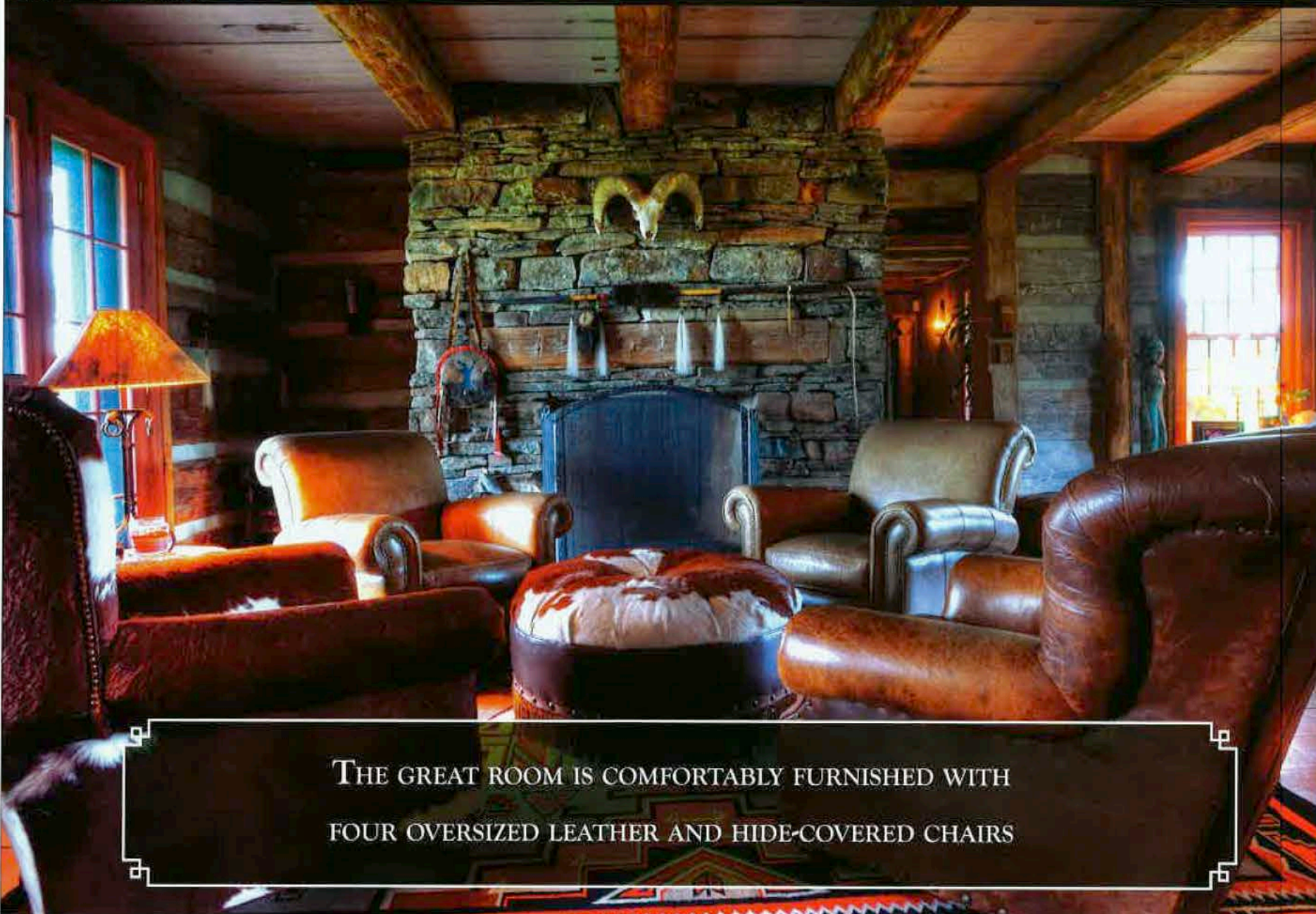


Above: French doors lead to the roomy kitchen with a cathedral ceiling and a massive dry stacked fireplace stretching floor to ceiling. **Right:** The formal dining room is large enough to comfortably fit an oversized dining table and 10 chairs, yet the antiqued timbered ceiling creates a sense of intimacy.

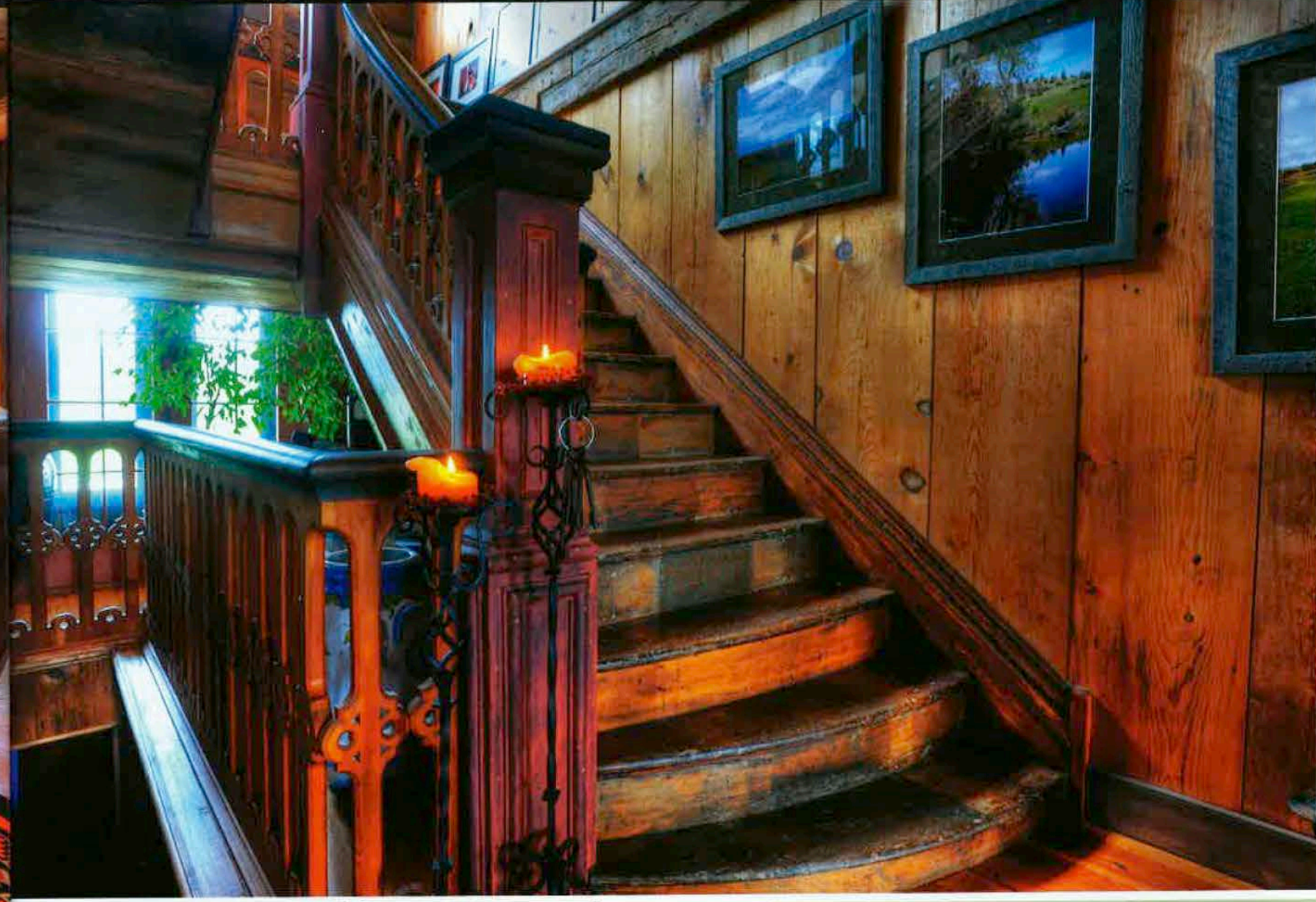
from floor to ceiling. In the center a generous island provides space for setting out a banquet or enjoying a simple family dinner. Custom Shaker cabinets painted mustard-over-red and antiqued contrast pleasantly against the weathered log walls. Splashes of red and green enliven the space, creating an inviting ambiance.

Opposite the kitchen is the formal dining room. The room is large enough to comfortably fit an oversized dining table and substantial chairs plus an antique buffet, yet the scale of the room is tempered by the





THE GREAT ROOM IS COMFORTABLY FURNISHED WITH FOUR OVERSIZED LEATHER AND HIDE-COVERED CHAIRS



Above: Another large fireplace made with stone quarried from the property is the focal point of the great room. **Top right:** The main staircase was reclaimed from an old Victorian home in Canada and dates from the 1850s. The railing to the stairway to the lower level was milled to match. **Right center:** The spacious master retreat features a 32-foot tall hand-troweled plastered ceiling with multiple dormers. The gigantic armoire is fitted with antique doors from a palace in east India.

timbered ceiling, bringing an intimate feel to the space.

Next to the dining room the great room is comfortably furnished with four oversized leather and hide-covered chairs. Another large fireplace, also made with natural stone quarried from the property, serves as the room's focal point.

On the far end of the home is the master suite. "Initially there wasn't enough light, so we bumped out the wall behind the headboard and added two more windows," says John. The room's hand-plastered, cathedral ceiling reaches 32 feet. "The height created quite a challenge," says John.

The main staircase was

reclaimed from an old Victorian home in Canada. Dating from the 1850s, the stairway features hand-carved spindles and posts. "The work is stunning," says Catherine. "The rail around the stairs leading to the basement was custom milled to match the original pattern."

Outside, stretching along the entire back of the home is an oversized patio. Several sets of doors open onto the patio, creating an easy flow between the interior and exterior living spaces.

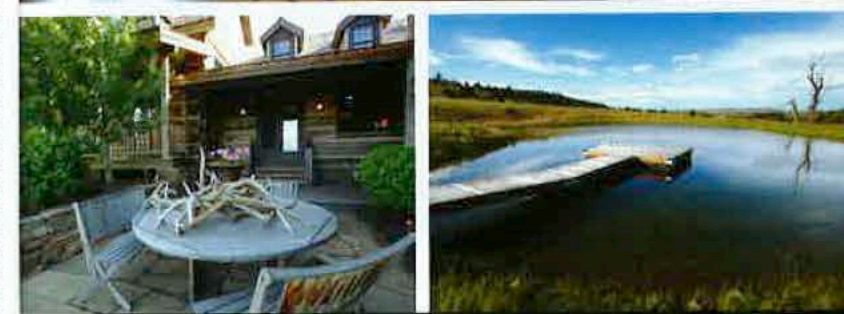
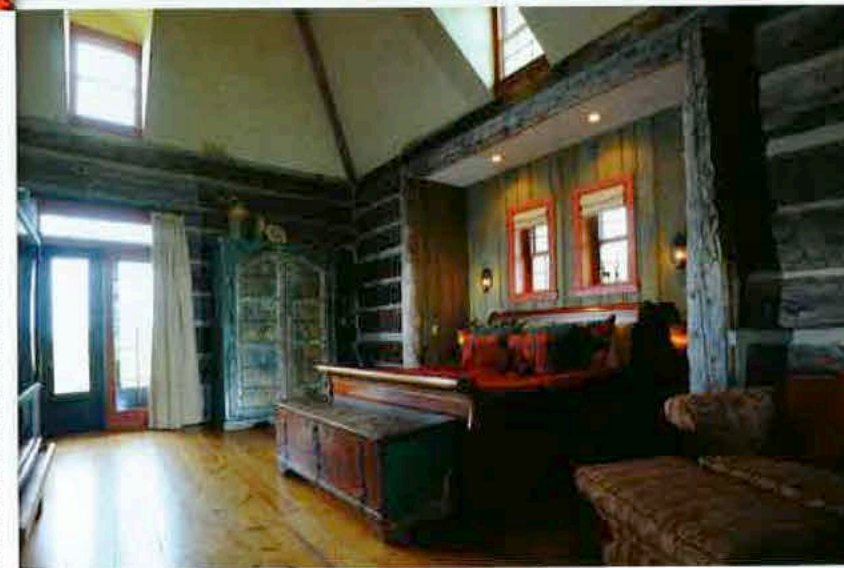
"Large groups of people can easily mill in and out, and no one feels crowded," says Catherine.

A passion for place

Avid outdoors people and respectful of their natural resources, John and Catherine have worked hard to eradicate noxious weeds, create buffer zones for wildfires and protect historically-significant remnants from early pioneers.

But above everything else, they insist theirs is not a showpiece or vacation dwelling, but a well-lived in, well-loved family home.

"This is our home, our community now," says Catherine, flashing a beautiful smile. "We could have moved anywhere. We choose to live here." **MC**



Far left bottom: A flagstone patio creates an inviting setting at the home's main entry. **Left bottom:** Taking advantage of the natural springs and underground stream, the couple constructed a pond and stocked it with Yellowstone Cutthroat. The floating dock was a family project, finished last summer.

RESOURCES

Architect/Home Builder:
Tradition Home Designs Inc.
(Canada)

Home Construction:
On-Site Management, Bozeman MT

Architect:
Mikel Kallestad AIA, Bozeman MT

Interior Design:
Catherine Lane Interiors, Livingston & Bozeman MT

Overheads:
Nellis Custom Woodworks, Manhattan MT

Heating and Cooling:
Rite Temp Heating and Cooling, Lewistown MT

Mechanical Engineering:
JM Engineering, Missoula MT

Chinking:
Roche Jaune Chinking, Inc., Livingston MT

Concrete:
Moos Concrete Construction, Big Timber MT

Pond Design:
Oasis Environmental, Livingston MT

Pond Construction:
Tom Roe & Son Construction, Inc., Big Timber MT

Landscape:
Curry & Son, Big Timber MT