

WESTERN Interiors & DESIGN

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COLORADO REDO

WEAVING TOGETHER **HISTORIC WESTERN ELEMENTS** IN A FRESH WAY

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MATTHEW MILLMAN/TEXT BY LINDA HAYES

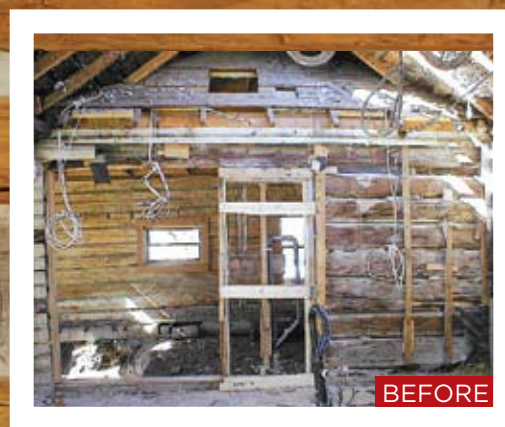


"I wanted to bring light into this dark Victorian farmhouse," says designer Jane Smith, who renovated her residence in Emma, Colorado. "I also wanted to preserve the 1890s rancher cabin around which the house was built." OPPOSITE: Working with architect Gary Ferguson, she added a cupola and a porch to define the entrance. THIS PAGE: An entrance hall and dining area connect the cabin (left) with the main house. A James Surls sculpture hangs in the cupola. The antique French dining table is surrounded by Italian chairs; the armoire is from the Pyrenees.

The first time interior designer Jane Smith laid eyes on the historic little farmhouse she has since painstakingly restored in Emma, Colorado, a ranching community about twenty miles from Aspen, she was overwhelmed by its attributes. “It was all there for me,” recalls Smith, whose company, Jane Smith Interiors, is based nearby in Basalt. “The house, the pond, the yard, the location. Emotionally, I had no choice in the matter. I had to buy it.”

What wasn’t so apparent until after the previous owner moved out was the extent of the house’s flaws, especially within the original 450-square-foot circa 1890 rancher’s log cabin at its core. “It was pretty grim,” admits Basalt architect Gary Ferguson, whom Smith called to the rescue. “Over the years, everything had been covered up by layers and layers of ‘good intentions.’ The entry was awkward. The ceilings were low, which made the interiors dark. The connection between the newer house and the log cabin was poorly constructed, and the log portion had sunk into the ground, causing some of the wood to rot.”

A turning point in the formidable restoration process came when Ferguson banged a hammer through what turned out to be a dropped ceiling and discovered the original ceiling two feet above. “Knowing we’d be able to raise the height of the ceiling was like seeing the light at the end of the tunnel,” Smith says.





"I knew that the cabin, formerly the master bedroom, had to become the living room," notes Smith. "The entire structure had to be lifted and moved to pour a new foundation," explains Ferguson, who also added a stone fireplace. Custom sofas flank a low table made from an old Mexican door, and Christian Liaigre cast-iron bronze stools covered in red leather echo the colors in Smith's Navajo rugs. A Russell Chatham painting is above the mantel. **OPPOSITE:** Smith set an antler chair, a Mexican pine table and a mirror with a hammered-tin frame in a living room corner.



“The kitchen and breakfast areas were conceived as a farmer’s kitchen and were added on,” notes Ferguson. “The south wall comprises continuous French doors.” A French iron-base pastry table with a marble top is paired with red-leather Room & Board dining chairs in the breakfast area. Custom cabinetry and *verbena romano* granite countertops contribute to the fresh look.

In addition to reorganizing the interior layout to make it more functional, Ferguson hit on a pivotal architectural element—a generous central cupola that would join the two sections of the house and serve as a bright and open entry. High operable windows capture light from all four directions and provide ventilation. Just outside, a wraparound porch was added to extend the indoor living space.

Exterior materials and details were chosen both to suit the farmhouse genre and to reflect the time periods in which the original portions were built. Some choices, like the white paint, fit serendipitously. “I always intended for the house to be white, and then it turned out that when it was first built, white was the only paint color available here,” Smith notes. Other choices, like the standing-seam metal roof, were more purposeful. “Historically, the mentality on the western plains was that you put the best roof on the house that you could,” says Ferguson. “Metal was the best.” Victorian detailing, like the fish-scale shingles, was restored but downplayed.

Inside, other challenges needed to be met, particularly the restoration of the cabin, which was to become the living room.

“To save the cabin was everything,” Smith says. “The color and texture just make this house.”

In order to build a much-needed new foundation and bring the walls up to the proper elevation, the entire log structure was raised and set to the side. Once the foundation was replaced, layers of wood, plaster and wallpaper were removed from the inside walls to expose the logs, which had long been covered up. After that, they were corncob-blasted to restore their natural beauty and then re-chinked. A stone fireplace was built into an exterior wall.

A wood-beam-framed opening joins the cabin living room to the rest of the house, which includes an open dining area, kitchen and master suite downstairs as well as a guest suite upstairs. Throughout, walls and beamed ceilings are creamy white, while reclaimed wood floors help the rooms flow.

Along with the cupola, the kitchen—complete with a wall of French doors that overlook the yard and pond—was a new addition to the house. While the room echoes that of the original structure in size and shape, the granite counter surfaces and stainless-steel appliances mix up the traditional farmhouse kitchen formula. “It’s a contemporary farmhouse,” Smith says.



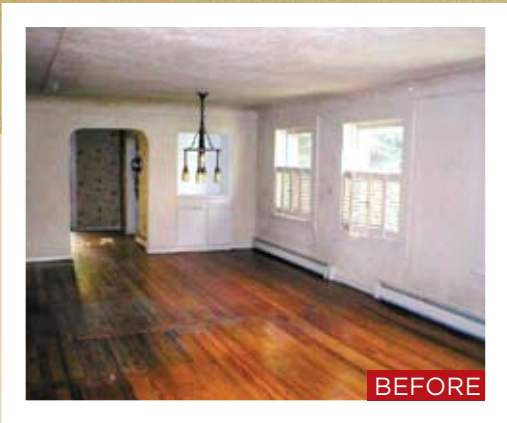
BEFORE

"The ceiling of the cabin had beams cutting across," explains Smith. "To open the space, new structural beams were put inside reclaimed hollowed-out beams that maintain the historical aesthetic." Existing windows and French doors were replaced, increasing light and ventilation. "I had the living-area sofas made," says Smith, who added a Ralph Lauren fringed suede pillow to each. An eighteenth-century Peruvian armoire doubles as a bar.





"The upstairs bedroom was originally a converted attic space," says Ferguson. "A shed dormer expanded it, making it a functional guest suite."



"My current bedroom was the former owners' dining area and living room," notes Smith. "I installed shutters that allow for a great connection to the outdoors during the day and privacy at night." A chestnut dowry chest from Spain sits at the foot of an iron Kreiss four-poster bed; iron and rawhide-shaded sconces from Ranch Home Outfitters are on either side.

OPPOSITE, BOTTOM: A Shabby Slips chair sits next to a cast-iron tub in the master bath.





“From a designer’s point of view, bringing different styles together really worked against the neutral background.”

The concept of mixing things up comes into play in the house’s decor as well. “I have antiques and vintage and contemporary pieces bringing the house all together,” notes Smith, who placed a James Surls mobile in the entry cupola and a Pyrenees armoire near it. In the living room, Christian Liaigre stools with red leather play off Smith’s collection of Navajo rugs. Numerous artifacts and antiques that Smith amassed while living and

working in Santa Fe, New Mexico, are found throughout the house—a group of vintage Mexican ceramic pots lines the top of the kitchen cabinets, while a French antique pastry table is used in the breakfast area.

All of the effort and emotion that Smith poured into the eighteen-month-long renovation project deepened her initial connection with the house. “I know what’s under these floors, beneath these walls and under this roof,” she says. “It makes me an integral part of the house.” ➤



“A wraparound porch was added to take advantage of the back yard and pond,” says Ferguson. “The exteriors were painted white, historically the only color available in the area when the house was built. A standing-seam metal roof reflects the ranchers’ use of durable, lasting materials.”

DESIGN DETAILS: REMODELING A WESTERN GEM



“Once I got started, there was no turning back,” says designer Jane Smith, who undertook a one-and-a-half-year renovation of her residence in Colorado. “There was a time I considered selling it—it was such a can of worms—but I’m so glad I didn’t.”



Smith picks up Navajo pots whenever she goes to the Santa Fe Indian Market, one of her favorites.



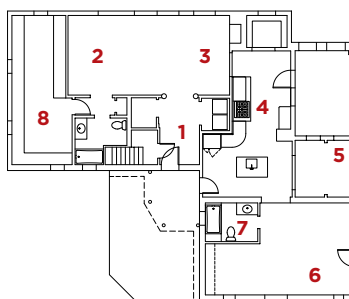
“I knew I didn’t want all antique or all contemporary furnishings,” notes Smith, who updated an antler chair from a European hunting lodge with white upholstered pillows and a cashmere throw in the living room.



Similar to sandblasting but less damaging to wood surfaces, corncob blasting uses grit made from ground-up corncobs to clean away dirt and rot from old logs, giving them a lighter tone. Smith hung a Michael Eastman photograph on the log wall in the dining area.

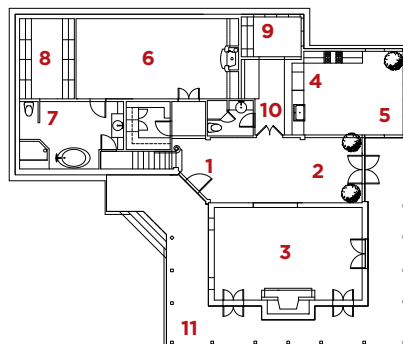
BEFORE

- 1 Entry
- 2 Living area
- 3 Dining area
- 4 Kitchen
- 5 Breakfast area
- 6 Master bedroom
- 7 Master bath
- 8 Office



AFTER

- 1 Entry
- 2 Dining area
- 3 Living room
- 4 Kitchen
- 5 Breakfast area
- 6 Master bedroom
- 7 Master bath
- 8 Closet
- 9 Office
- 10 Library
- 11 Porch



“I’ve had my Navajo weavings for twenty or more years,” says Smith. “To me they add a contemporary look because they are so graphic and geometric.”



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