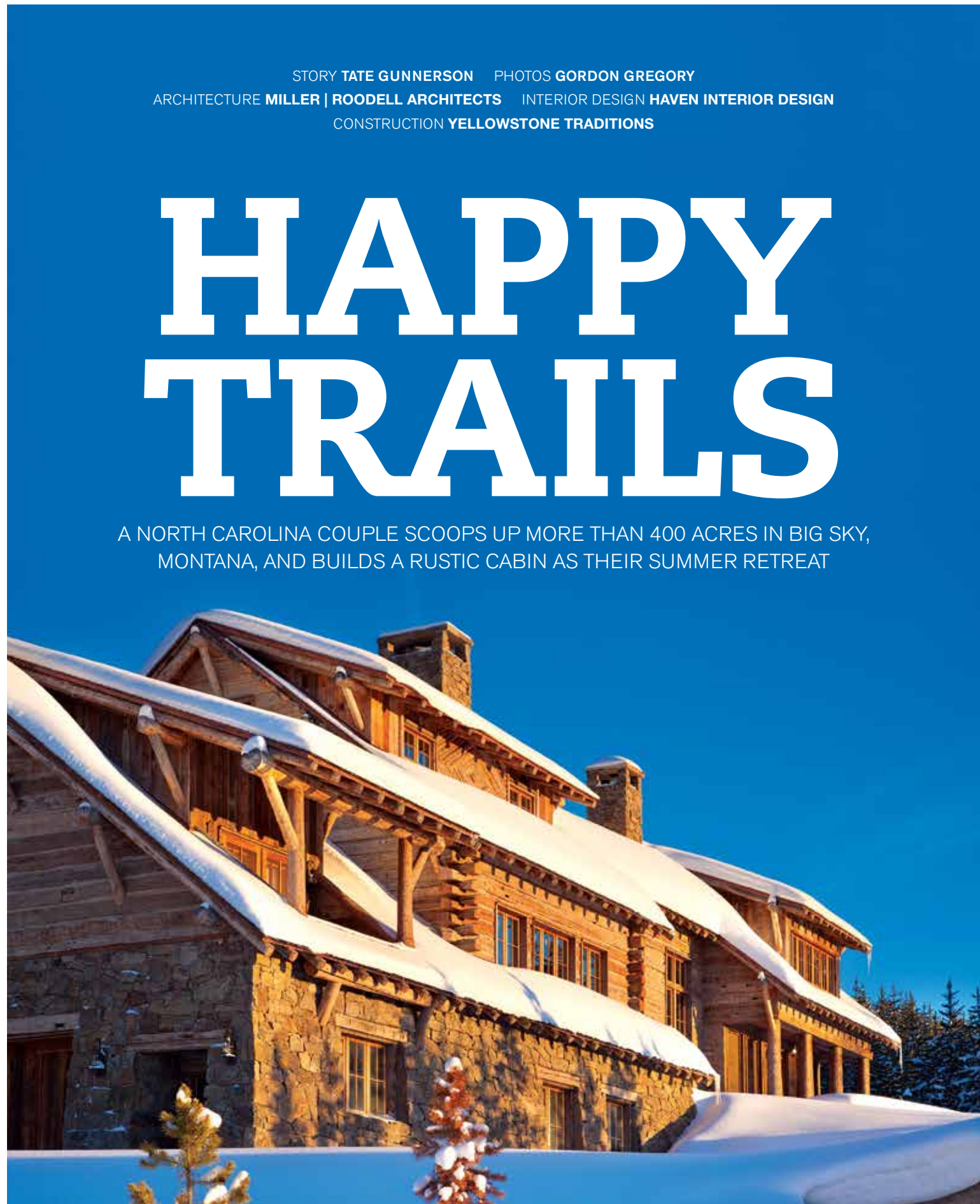




THIS PAGE: The great room includes an elegant fireside sitting area furnished with a pair of custom mohair-covered sofas in front of a handsome coffee table fabricated by Bausman Collection. OPPOSITE: The rustic abode was inspired in part by iconic architecture in national parks.



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# HAPPY TRAILS

A NORTH CAROLINA COUPLE SCOOPS UP MORE THAN 400 ACRES IN BIG SKY, MONTANA, AND BUILDS A RUSTIC CABIN AS THEIR SUMMER RETREAT



Life is very different out West, says a Charlotte, North Carolina, wife and grandmother who with her husband owns a cabin on more than 400 acres in Big Sky, Montana. Since the couple bought the land, she has mastered the chainsaw, helped a friend build a log playhouse and spotted tons of wildlife, including a mother moose and calf who casually dined on aspen trees just 15 feet from the back porch. “I shot a shotgun in the air to try and scare them away, but it didn’t bother them at all,” she says, noting that they stayed for days. “It’s always an adventure here.”

The couple and their children have been visiting the area since the mid-1990s, eventually buying a seemingly secluded parcel in Moonlight Basin that’s actually a short drive from all the modern amenities to create a special spot for their family. They hired architect Candace Tillotson-Miller and interior designers Debra Shull and Phoebe McEldowney to bring their vision for a relaxing family compound to life.

Inspired in part by the iconic architecture of national parks, the result is a rustic abode with a Montana moss rock foundation, reclaimed hewn log walls and a series of gabled rooflines supported by bark-on cedar columns that taper naturally near the top, just as they grew. “It looks like they went onto the property and uprooted trees,” Tillotson-Miller says.

Only the home’s many energy-efficient windows and doors distinguish this house from the ones that dotted the landscape a hundred years ago. But unlike the dark cabins of yesteryear, this one gets natural light all day long, and nearly every room has a door to the exterior, where there are a number of covered porches.

Visible from the front foyer, the double-height great room features large windows on both sides, flooding the space with light and framing mind-expanding vistas of the Spanish Peaks. “You’re looking at the far view of the mountains on one side of the dining room/living room, and a more meadow-like view on the other,” Tillotson-Miller says, noting that because the house is built into a hill, the main level is elevated 12 to 13 feet off the ground. “It feels like a treehouse.”

The room’s reclaimed hewn walls with chinking and exposed timber ceiling beams are juxtaposed by a mix of classic antiques and tailored contemporary pieces—for example, a pair of matching tailored sofas covered in green mohair, part of a >>

A beacon when illuminated on a frigid, snowy night, the home’s Montana moss stone foundation, reclaimed hewn log walls and tapering bark-on cedar columns blend effortlessly into the magnificent forested setting located not far from the iconic Yellowstone National Park.



### CREATING A TIMELESS ENVIRONMENT TO LAST FOR GENERATIONS

*At first glance, it's difficult to discern the age of the log cabin that architect Candace Tillotson-Miller and interior designer Debra Shull designed for a couple seeking a family retreat, and that was the idea. "Many of our projects will be passed down through the generations, and that's how this was conceived," Tillotson-Miller says. They share tips for creating a timeless space:*

**GIVE PIECES A REFRESH** If the furnishings become dated, update them, to make the space feel fresh again. **REFERENCE OTHER ENDURING DESIGNS** The architecture at national parks like nearby Yellowstone, for example, inspired the mix of materials and cedar bark-on columns used throughout the project. Traditional park-architecture designs have stood the test of time. **MIX AND MATCH** Vintage kilim rugs add color and pattern to nearly every space, and the rooms are furnished with a mix of newer pieces alongside more streamlined antiques. "Antiques bring a strong sense of age and permanence," Shull says. **ROPE IN NATURAL MATERIALS** The outdoors will never go out of style, and with its reclaimed square hewn walls and exposed beams, this house feels almost like it grew out of the site.

OPPOSITE: Perfectly coordinating with one of the home's several kilim rugs, a pair of lounge chairs covered in red leather flank the stone fireplace in the husband's office. ABOVE: Custom island stools made by Rocky Mountain Furniture and comfortable, casual wooden chairs fabricated by Hickory Furniture Designs ensure there is plenty of space for the chef's friends to sit and chat. RIGHT: The owners have enjoyed many long dinners at the custom table fabricated by Bausman Collection in the open dining area.





“THIS IS MY PIECE OF HEAVEN ON EARTH.”  
 — THE HOMEOWNER

seating group in front of the floor-to-ceiling Montana moss rock fireplace. “It’s a touch of luxury,” Shull says.

A kilim rug defines the dining area, where a simple iron chandelier illuminates a reproduction table and chairs alongside an antique buffet. Kilim rugs also grace the adjacent family room and the office, where red leather chairs offer a spot to read by a stone fireplace flanked by built-in cabinets with exposed iron hardware.

The designer selected a more traditional rug for the master bedroom, a gentle space with a mix of wooden and plaster walls. In the corner, a plush side chair has been paired with an iron side table base in the shape of branches; a small deer adorns the bedside table lamp. Not to mention the framed yellow wildflowers, old prints by Mary Walcott. “I just love the softness that they bring,” Shull says. “Those organic forms keep things from looking too formal.”

It’s hard to be anything but chill in the home—and that’s exactly what the owners wanted: a respite from their hectic lives back East, where activities include competitive bridge, golf, enjoying grandchildren, and yoga and Pilates classes. In Montana, the wife often just hikes up the trail they had blazed, which leads high up into the Spanish Peaks to a spot that overlooks the meadow below. “This is my piece of heaven on earth,” she says. “It’s the place where I’m the happiest.” ○

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: A coverlet made of Cowtan & Tout fabric dresses the solid wooden bed in the master suite. While it’s located on a private parcel of forested land with spectacular vistas, the home is located not far from town. Artwork by Cindy Baron from A. Banks Gallery adorns the stone fireplace in the billiard room. A kilim rug complements the handcrafted cabinetry in the master bathroom.

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