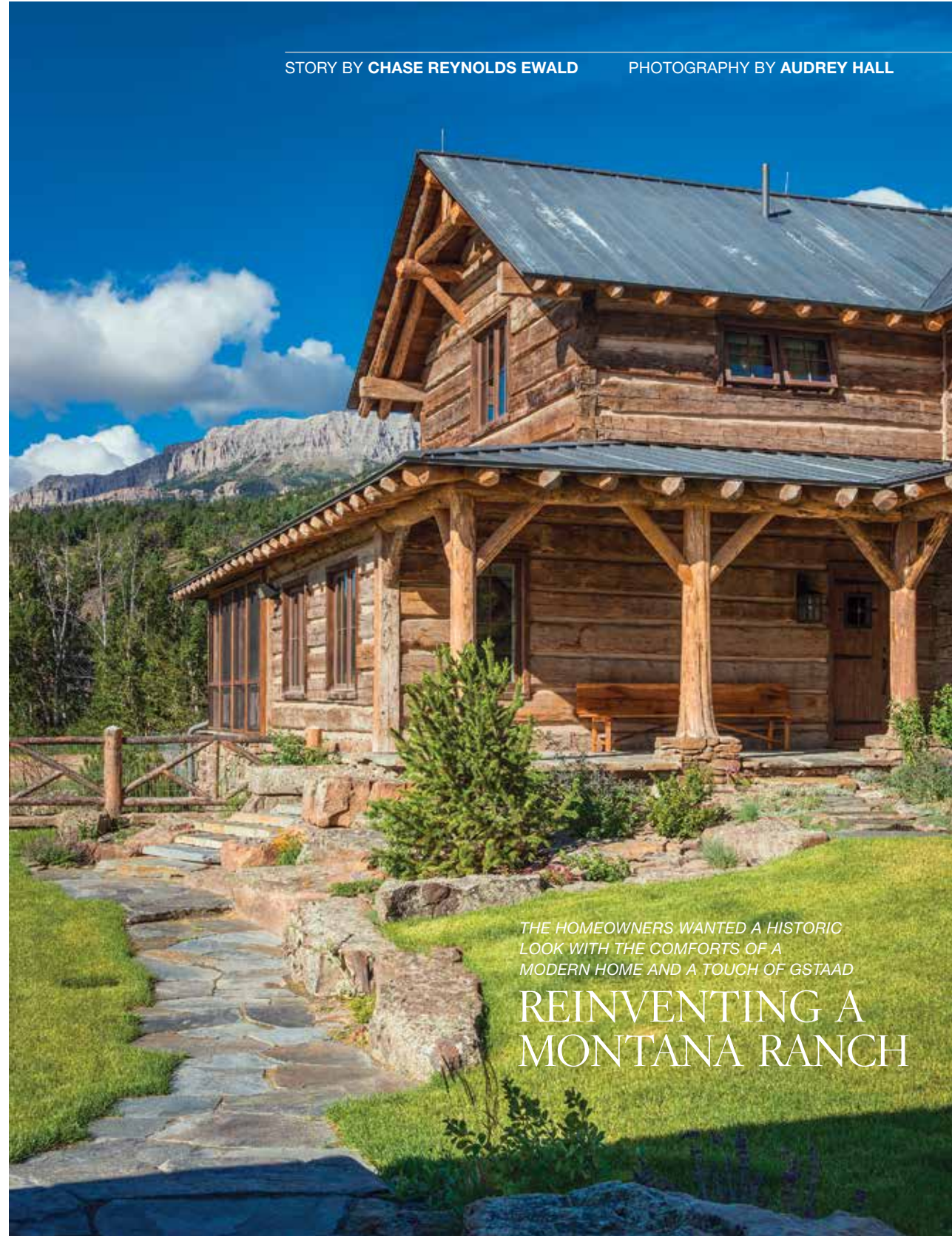


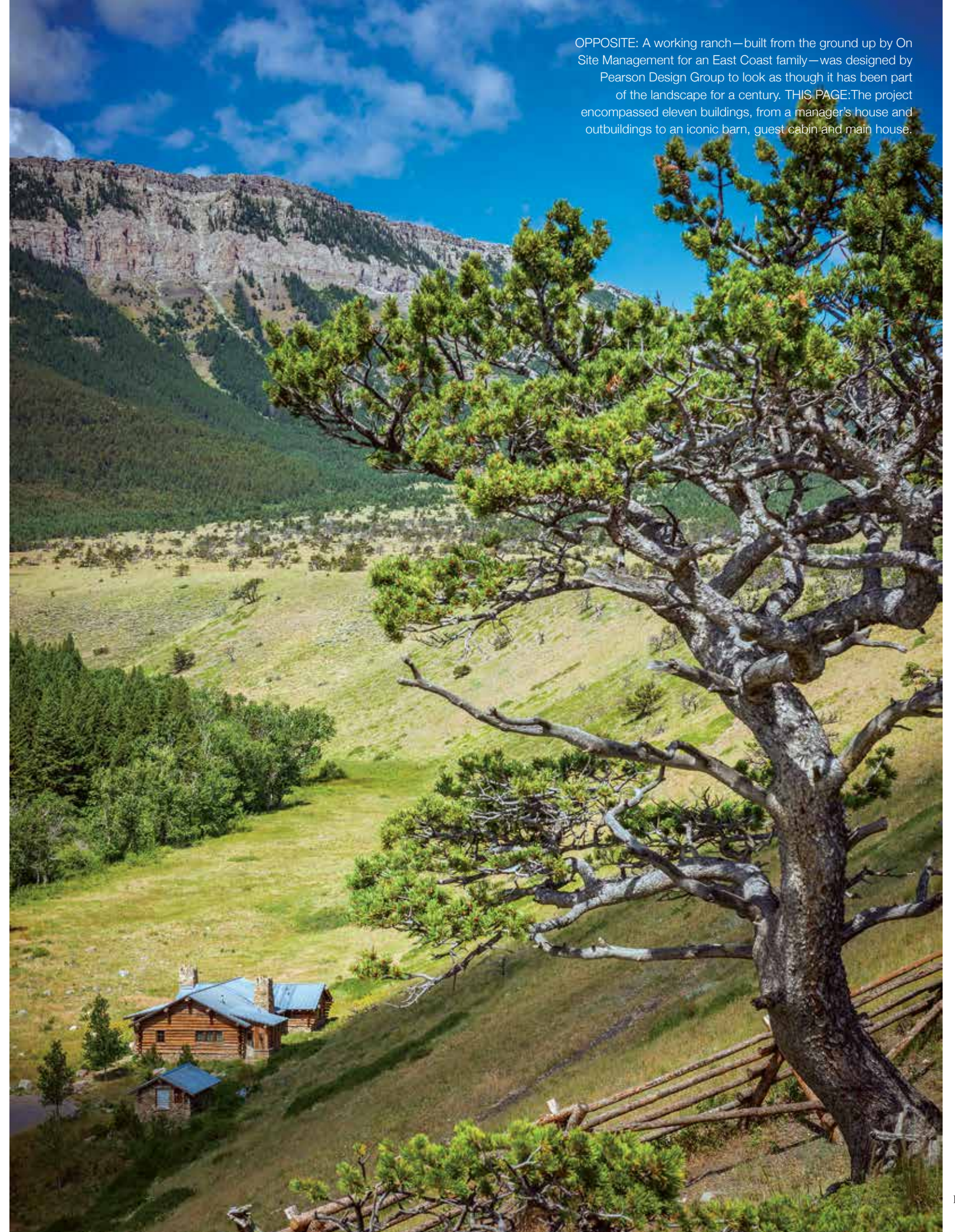
STORY BY CHASE REYNOLDS EWALD

PHOTOGRAPHY BY AUDREY HALL



THE HOMEOWNERS WANTED A HISTORIC  
LOOK WITH THE COMFORTS OF A  
MODERN HOME AND A TOUCH OF GSTAAD  
**REINVENTING A  
MONTANA RANCH**

OPPOSITE: A working ranch—built from the ground up by On Site Management for an East Coast family—was designed by Pearson Design Group to look as though it has been part of the landscape for a century. THIS PAGE: The project encompassed eleven buildings, from a manager's house and outbuildings to an iconic barn, guest cabin and main house.





ARCHITECTURE BY **PEARSON DESIGN GROUP**  
INTERIOR DESIGN BY **PEARSON DESIGN GROUP AND HOMEOWNER**  
LANDSCAPING BY **VALLEY OF THE FLOWERS, JEREMY AND JENNIFER STARK**  
CONSTRUCTION BY **ON SITE MANAGEMENT, INC.**

### A COUPLE—NATIVE WESTERNERS LIVING ON THE EAST COAST—

embarked on a mission to find the perfect ranch property. The husband had grown up hunting and fishing and had always dreamed of owning a ranch, but it was the wife who undertook the initial search. She visited 75 properties in Colorado, Wyoming and Montana before she glimpsed the property on the edge of the Bob Marshall Wilderness. “It was so raw, so primal, with every species still out there. I just fell in love with the landscape and the end-of-the-road feel.”

The landscape is stunning: vast meadows fed by live water, perfect for grazing livestock and growing feed crops, buffered by foothills backing to steep mountains with treed slopes and dramatic granite escarpments. The property is remote, but the purchasers were more interested in hunting, fishing, experiencing nature and an end-of-the-road private location rather than downhill skiing or proximity to a large town. They were in it for the long term: they intended to call it home.

Having perused rustic architecture books for years, the new landowners were familiar with the work of Pearson Design Group (PDG). They knew they wanted a rugged, handmade look appropriate to the region and its history but comfortable and livable, with an updated rustic aesthetic and, most important, built to last. To this end, their contractor, On Site Management, was a crucial partner, contributing meticulous attention to detail and creative problem-solving, an important consideration when you’re 40 minutes from the nearest town and dealing with Montana weather.

The team—homeowners, architects and contractors (the owners did their own interior design in partnership with PDG)—worked on the plans for four years, from siting the access road to building in multiple phases. The ranch manager’s house came first, followed by other ranch outbuild-

ings—ultimately, eleven structures in all. For a full year the owners lived on-site in a yurt while the guesthouse was being completed.

Says PDG principal and project architect Justin Tollefson, “Architecturally, we were asked to reinvent the ranch in a historic but nouveau way.” Any structures would have an eye on history but needed to meet a young rancher’s needs as well. There would be a working compound that would serve as the hub of activities, a classic barn designed as an iconic marker in the landscape, and a main house and romantic cabin for the owners and guests. “It’s a functioning home and ranch as much as it is a retreat,” explains Tollefson. “We attempted to create something that represents the material palette of the American ranch.”

The two-story main house, constructed of restacked walls and trusses of antique hewn timbers and grounded by weighty, distinctive fireplaces, has lodgepole pine porches and rafters, reclaimed plank exterior siding and a metal roof. Interiors are finished with reclaimed hemlock interior paneling and flooring and, in the kitchen, antique white oak and reclaimed hemlock cabinetry built by On Site Management. The homeowners worked closely with blacksmith Wil Wilkins of Firesong Forge to design authentic handcrafted accents using repurposed materials such as wagon wheels, ore cart track and barbed wire; these include the great room chandelier and sconces as well as cabinet hardware and mudroom hooks. Furniture, textiles and artwork choices were driven by the owners, who worked with sources across the country for clean interiors combining antiques, traditional artwork, wildlife mounts and antlers with contemporary-leaning, comfortable furnishings.

“We wanted a home; we didn’t want a lodge,” says the owner. “We wanted it to look as though it had been there 100 years but with a little touch of Gstaad, with fur blankets and modern furniture.”

This new/old ranch was built to sit lightly on the land while lasting for generations. And as the bison roaming the ranch suggest, it nimbly embraces the past while looking to the future. ○

OPPOSITE: The interiors of the rugged yet timeless main house are characterized by reclaimed timbers and flooring, stone walls and distinctive fireplaces. Furnishings include a redwood slab coffee table by Pollaro, upholstered pieces by BDDW and Alexander Lamont leather chairs. Fireplace tools, door hardware, chandeliers and sconces were all handmade by master craftsman Wil Wilkins. The effect is updated rustic with an emphasis on comfort.





## STEWARDSHIP IN THE WILDERNESS

When building on the edge of a major wilderness area, stewardship has to be part of the conversation. Larry Pearson, founding principal of Pearson Design Group, understood that his client's property on the edge of the Bob Marshall Wilderness had been used for ranching and hunting for a century and wildlife was abundant. "The task was more than just producing architecture and design," he says, "but undertaking an analysis of the ranch and surrounding lands, including migration paths and the effects of wind."

Clearly, special places demand a special responsibility and consideration. Questions the owners and their design team discussed included:

- Choosing what crops to grow
- Deciding where to build and fence to mitigate effects on wildlife and neighbors
- Minimizing vulnerability to weather
- Building for self-reliance (generators are a must!)
- Considering the aesthetics of any new construction
- Observing the migration patterns of the elk
- Understanding how to accommodate grizzlies
- Deciding what animals to graze



“ I JUST FELL IN LOVE WITH THE LANDSCAPE AND THE END-OF-THE-ROAD FEEL. ”

—the homeowner

LEFT: The owners raise bison instead of cattle (the native Plains animal has less impact on the land and its meat is leaner) and keep horses for moving stock, riding the fence line and exploring the countryside with their young daughter. ABOVE: The ranchland, a dramatic, wildlife-rich parcel, lies on the edge of Montana's Bob Marshall Wilderness.





OPPOSITE: For the dining area, the owners commissioned a table of petrified wood with a base made by Wil Wilkins. The chandelier is from Ochre. THIS PAGE, TOP: A cozy nook features antique brass chandeliers and an antique Moroccan rug acquired through Doris Leslie Blau. THIS PAGE, BOTTOM: The kitchen's custom bar stools and glass-fronted cabinets were crafted by On Site Management. The antique brass pendants are from Obsolete, the copper mules from BDDW.





“ WE WANTED IT TO LOOK AS THOUGH IT HAD BEEN THERE 100 YEARS BUT WITH A LITTLE TOUCH OF GSTAAD, WITH FUR BLANKETS AND MODERN FURNITURE. ”

—the homeowner



OPPOSITE: A walnut slab bed anchors the master bedroom, which is furnished with a cabinet and nightstands from BDDW and an antique brass chandelier and sconces from Bjorn Wiinblad. THIS PAGE, TOP: In the bathroom a graceful custom copper-and-tin slipper tub from William Holland is illuminated by a Kalmar pendant and positioned to enjoy the views. THIS PAGE, BOTTOM: A spacious porch for dining and lounging is outfitted with Sempre outdoor furniture from Belgium.