

FROM
'Flintstones'
TO
Fabulous

>>>

A Log Home Gets a New Look in Mountain Village

20



At a rambling log home in Mountain Village that was built in 1995, architect-and-interior-designer duo Peter Lundeen and Trevor James of FUSE Architecture + Interior leaned into the log and ditched the outdated elements, fusing rustic and modern into a new realm of design.

The year was 1995. Monica Lewinsky became a White House intern. Grateful Dead singer Jerry Garcia died. Kendall Jenner and the public version of the World Wide Web were born. And in the newly incorporated Town of Mountain Village near Telluride, a brand new house was built at 101 Autumn Lane.

Like many of its counterparts in the neighborhood, this rambling, L-shaped house was made of logs. Lots and lots of logs. Big ones. Stained pinkish-orange with grayish chinking.

There was nothing subtle about this house. It had location, location, location. A wall-sized fireplace clad in smooth, round river rock. Antler chandeliers, and a

white buffalo trophy above the front door. A cavernous kitchen with a heavy black hibachi hood. A party hot tub on the deck outside. Ski-in, ski-out access right on Telski's Double Cabin run. Enormous picture windows. And views. Truly colossal, in-your-face, bodacious mountain views of Dallas Peak, Mill Creek Basin and the wildly lovely San Sophia Ridge.

Views like that never go out of style. Houses like that do.

So when Don and Amy Smith came along to look at this house in 2015, the first thing they thought was: "Dated."

"It had some things we vehemently disliked, like the old river stone and the lovely shade of pinkish," said Don. "But when we opened the front door and saw the views and the ski access, I was instantly hooked."

It took Amy a little longer to come around to the idea that they could turn the house into what they wanted. But they loved the location, and they loved the views. So they bought the house — logs and all.

Based in Pennsylvania, the Smiths frequented Telluride over the next year, to get to know their new mountain retreat. It had its quirks, for sure.

"You'd get half a mile of walking in before you'd get breakfast made because the kitchen was laid out so bad," said Don.

"It was a horrible layout," Amy agreed. "And it was very dark."

The outdated energy of the house even followed them outside. The back deck had these old log railings with chunky pillars. "We would sit on the lawn behind the deck because you

>>>




The living room features colossal picture windows framing views of the San Sophia Ridge across the valley.

The fireplace in the living room was tamed by introducing blackened steel design elements and replacing a riot of river cobbles with soothing Telluride Gold stone veneer. Dark-stained logs with lighter chinking throughout the house evoke the cozy feeling of a historic log cabin.

>>>



A rustic log cabin interior with large windows overlooking a snowy mountain at night. The cabin features heavy wooden beams and a warm, cozy atmosphere. In the foreground, there is a dark leather sofa with patterned cushions and a brown leather armchair. A wooden dining table with chairs is visible in the background. A large window on the right side of the image provides a view of a snow-covered mountain peak under a deep blue night sky. A modern chandelier hangs from the ceiling, and a lamp with a yellow shade sits on a wooden table to the right.

*“But when we opened
the front door and
saw the views and
the ski access, I was
instantly hooked.”*

couldn't see through the railings," Don said. "Then the sprinklers would come on, and things like that. It was almost like camping out."

Living in the house for that first year was awkward, but it helped the Smiths figure out what they liked, and what they wanted to change. For the most part, they realized, they appreciated its mountain look. They just wanted it to be refreshed and modernized, but not to the point where it became sterile.

To achieve this tricky balance, they

turned to architect Peter Lundeen and interior designer Trevor James at FUSE Architecture + Interior.

BRINGING OUT THE BONES

Many of the choicest lots in Mountain Village, like 101 Autumn Lane, were constructed upon in the 1990s, at a time when traditional log was all the rage. Today, this rustic look has fallen out of favor — hard. And there is a backlog of outsized cabins on the market.

"It's sort of like geology," said Town of Mountain Village planner Sam Starr. "There is a stratification that will tell you the different eras. You can drive down Adams Ranch Road and get a real sense of the history of Mountain Village just by the architecture. The large-lot, large log homes, the smaller homes with that brick base we started requiring as part of the 2013 land use ordinance, and the even smaller and more modern homes that represent the current architectural demand."



In the kitchen and dining room, the original stone floor remains in place. The ceiling height was dropped by a foot to cozy and brighten the space. Pumpkin-shaped corbels on the massive log pillars were trimmed away. A tea-green finish on the cabinets creates a pleasing counterpoint to the log and evokes a farmhouse ambience, reflecting the Smiths' Pennsylvania roots.

The family enjoys spending time in the bar and gameroom in the evenings.

Bathrooms throughout the house received a sophisticated update.

Over the past few years, Lundeen and James have made a name for themselves breathing new life into the log abodes that represent the Precambrian level of Mountain Village's architectural strata.

When it comes to log, they know their stuff. And their first rule of thumb is to work with what you've got.

Many of these early log structures got their start as kit homes. Builders would then reconfigure them on site to make the most of a particular view or other aspect of the lot. This tended to work

well for some parts of the house, but created a logjam out of others.

"They weren't typically laid out in the best possible way," Lundeen allowed. "They've got weird shapes and weird, almost leftover spaces. You really have to know what to change and what you can't change to improve what is there."

And the one thing that you really can't change? The log.

"It's there, whether you like it or not," James pointed out. "You can't hide from it. It's got a strong character. It can be

really sort of fabulous when it does play nicely with modern materials or textural materials that are there to complement, rather than fight or hide."

Their second rule of thumb is to look for the opportunities that lurk within the drafty spaces. "Some of these homes have special features that you won't get again," said James, like choice slope-side lots and giant windows that wouldn't be allowed under Mountain Village's current building regulations.

>>>



And the one thing that you really can't change? The log.

"It's there, whether you like it or not. You can't hide from it. It's got a strong character."



The original log stairs were replaced by sleek wooden treads on a blackened steel frame.

Their third rule of thumb is to listen to their clients.

"You have to figure out what they are wanting," Lundeen said. "We are very particular about what we key in on. We try to listen and best present our ideas, versus being egomaniacs and saying, 'It has to be this way.'"

"Humor helps," James added. "You can describe something as Jimmy Durante's nose, or Frankenstein's forehead. It gets the point across, but it's not so serious they can't chuckle and go, 'Oh yeah. I see that.'"

LOGS AND ENDS

As far as James and Lundeen are concerned, it's not so much the log that is the problem with these houses. It's the whole '90s aesthetic that goes along with it.

"With a lot of these houses, the joke is 'lipstick on a pig,'" Lundeen said. "But it's more, 'How can you really distill it down?'"

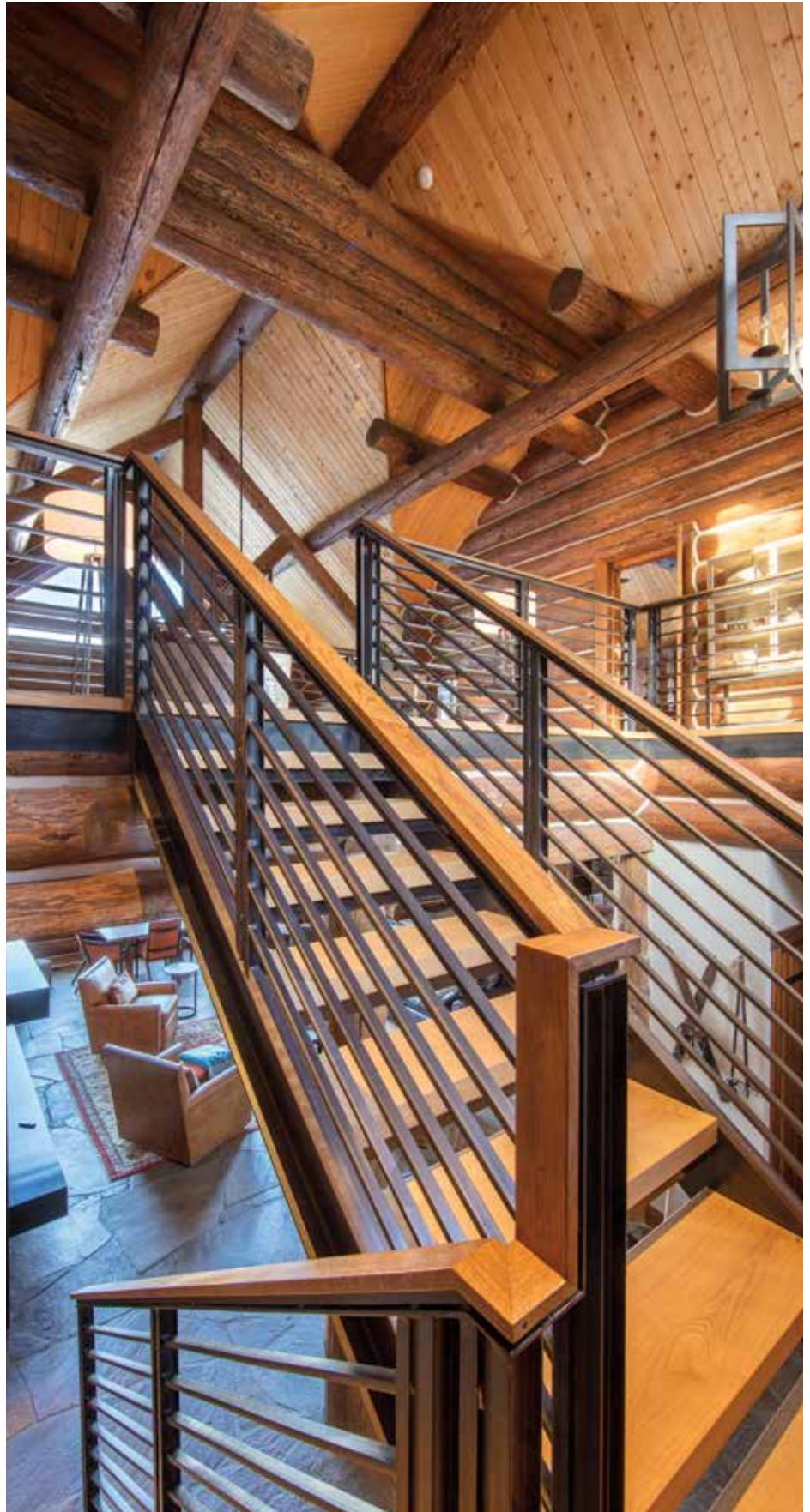
At 101 Autumn Lane, there was an awful lot of stuff that needed distilling.

All that river rock, for starters. The Barney- Rubble-era entryway. The chunky log railings and heavy stairs. The antler chandeliers. The pumpkin-like corbels atop the wooden pillars in the kitchen, the scalloped window frames, the odd "knuckle spaces" created where log joints came together, and all the other the funny, fussy bits of superfluous decoration, for lack of a better word, adding up to the architectural equivalent of Jennifer Aniston's "Rachel" haircut: Perfect for the 90s, but unsettling to the millennial aesthetic.

Or to use a metaphor from an even earlier era of television, "It sort of felt very 'Flintstones,'" James said. "When you are thinking about the river rock and the giant logs."

There was also the matter of scale. "When everyone was thinking about the log cabin in the woods, they were thinking of something that is about 2,000 square feet," Lundeen said. "That's the structural sense that got translated into these 'Mountain Lodge' estates. They are up around 8,000 square feet, and the vernacular used to build them was almost at odds with what they became."

Rather than apologizing for the logs and the scale, Lundeen and James worked with general contractor Allan Ranta and Circa Interiors designer Cindy Eckman to



In the loft/bridge area overlooking the living room, diaphanous metal railings let in the light and the views. Antler chandeliers gave way to more artful and sophisticated contemporary counterparts.



27

strip the Smiths' house back to its bones. They made the logs darker, to evoke the cozy feeling of a historic log cabin, sand-blasted out the icky putty-gray chinking, and replaced it with new chinking that had a cleaner ivory hue.

And all of a sudden, the logs came to life, because they were closer to the original vernacular.

"Instead of fighting the log home, we were celebrating it and looking at where it came from," James explained. "That then allowed us to bring more modern materials in places like bathrooms, that were a counterpoint to the rusticity."

When it came to cabinetry, the Smiths opted for smooth tea-green and taupe painted farmhouse finishes, creating a cleaner, brighter foil for the heavy texture of the logs, a recurring "story" that was told throughout the house.

"It was finding a balance of not too sharp and modern, not covering up the log, working one with the other so you've got a comfortable mix," James said.

In some places, Lundeen and James made no changes at all, other than updating the materials. And in other places, they prescribed log surgery to clean up the lines, dramatically opening up the volume and the space.

Some of the changes they made were counter-intuitive, like dropping the ceiling by about a foot in the cavernous kitchen, "which you never do," said James. "Those sort of moves can be a little terrifying."

But in this case, the dropped drywall ceiling and new pendant light fixtures cozied things up. They also had raised the ambient light level and chased away the drafty, light-swallowing, oppressive feeling that had previously pervaded the space.

The entire fireplace was re-designed to make it seem less massive, replacing the dated river cobbles with a Telluride Gold-stone veneer and modern, contrasting blackened steel. "It was this tiny fireplace and huge chimney before. So we changed the size of the fireplace to be in keep-

ing with the size of the chimney, and reduced the size of the chimney to make the loft and the living room feel better," Lundeen said.

The massive, primordial log lintel above the fireplace was repurposed as a bench outside and replaced by a slimmer contemporary counterpart. The jettied, party-sized hot tub was jettisoned, replaced by a clean, inviting terrace with a fire pit that seamlessly integrates with the wild back yard.

Extremely dated, arched windows got "rationalized", as James put it, to let in more light. "Instead of having these petals at the top, you've just got a straight line that is clean," he explained. "You've got more light that comes in, because it isn't cut off at the corners."

(All arch elements throughout the house were removed, a simple modification that had a huge impact — like trimming a bad haircut.)

The log stairs rising ponderously from the lofty great room to a bridge/sitting

>>>

In the master bedroom, an accent wall is decorated with a repurposed fur rug.

room area above were replaced by sleek wooden treads on a blackened steel metal frame.

All of these updates were impactful. But a surprisingly large part of changing the feeling of the house came from swapping out interior and exterior log railings for diaphanous metal slats, allowing the space to breathe, and letting through the views and the light.

In architecture, as in fashion, things come and go. And sometimes, they come back again (like the great wallpaper comeback of 2019). But as for those log railings, “I don’t see this sort of thing *ever* coming back as a trend again,” James groaned. “It’s sort of like the bellbottoms of architecture.”

Finally, the house received a new roof, new appliances, new light fixtures and furniture and new, state-of-the-art mechanical systems to see it well into the 21st century.

The cumulative effect of all these updates: a refreshingly elegant, spacious yet cozy mountain retreat where the



A guest room that used to be clad entirely in faux denim has been transformed into a serene and welcoming space. Fine art landscape photography by Kane Scheidegger adorns walls throughout the house.

Smiths, their three grown children and daughter-in-law, and their many houseguests enjoy spending time together. There's plenty of space for everyone to have their privacy, and plenty of space to gather in.

"The TV is never on," Don said. And the views are *always* dialed in.

The river rock and antler chandeliers have been banished forever. But the white buffalo trophy still looms above the front door (at the kids' insistence) like a guardian spirit from another era, watching over the people who shelter here now.

Lundeen and James have made several presentations to local realtors about the project, which was showcased in a recent issue of the glossy real estate trade magazine *Truly Telluride*. The house at 101 Autumn Lane has become the Mountain Village poster child for "loving log again."

FROM HOUSE TO HOME

The year was 2019.

At the White House, President Trump was on a Tweeting tear. Grateful Dead lyricist Robert Hunter died. Kendall Jenner was famous for no reason at all. And in Mountain Village, the Smiths' newly remodeled house was a featured venue during the prestigious Telluride Art + Architecture Weekend, a movable feast of art, performance, architecture and design, paired with delectable bites, craft cocktails and fine wine.

Although buildings have been reused and remodeled throughout time, the process of doing so has rarely been treated as an art form. But on the summery day that the Art + Architecture tour descended on 101 Autumn Lane, the art form of the remodel was honored.

At the appointed hour, guests took their seats in the back yard, craft cocktails in hand, as four barefoot dancers with the Telluride Dance Collective performed on four different decks — as if on mini-stages — on the back side of the house.

Finally the dancers descended and danced together on the new terrace below. One of them read a poem aloud that they had written about the house.

The title of the poem was, "What is Home?"

Cozy amongst the logs, the Smiths think they've got that figured out. 🏡



"What is Home?"

Written and performed at Telluride Art + Architecture Weekend 2019

by Erika Curry-Elrod, Emily Osan, Stephanie Osan, Kelsey Trottier

Home is the space you retreat into, curl up in,
bury yourself under covers, hide, relax, then unfurl.

Home is for dancing naked alone.

Home is the stillness and love, deeply felt, comfort.

Home is knowing you belong.

Home is wrapped up in the embrace of your dears.

Home is the launching point.

The safe space you're pulled to, then depart from for adventures.

Home is where your plants grow.

Home is where your heart grows.

Home is where you become brave.

Home is where you plant the seeds of your dreams,
home is where you allow your roots to ground,
the soil you return to and the nest you leave from.

Home is a sense of groundedness that drifts with every
move undertaken.

Home is an ever-evolving thing that exists within,
a stillness of feeling completely in the moment,
in the right place at the right time.

Home is feeling connected, feeling known, feeling seen.
Home is familiar faces while moving with community.

Home can only be created from your own soul, heart, hands.
Home can never be taken.
Home can only be lived, not built.

Is a house a home?

What happens if the walls crumble?

Can you find home without and within?