

OUR HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE

THE PREMIER MAGAZINE OF THE WEST

# COWBOYS & INDIANS

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2014

## Tommy Lee Jones

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HOME INTERIORS

# True Western Hideaway

A RETREAT IN THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS PAYS TRIBUTE TO THE HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN WEST.



By Allyn Hulteng  
Photography by Karl Neumann

**W**HILE VISITING THEIR GRANDPARENTS' MOUNTAINSIDE retreat in Big Sky, Montana, a herd of youngsters squeal with delight as they thunder across the aged fir floor in the hearth room. Nearby, their grandfather watches, smiling as the scene unfolds. "I dreamed of one day being able to have a home someplace in the West," he says. "It's been fun to introduce my kids to the Western experience, and now we get to share that experience with our grandchildren."

The homeowner, who grew up in the 1960s when western films and TV shows were at their prime, reveled in stories of cowboys and Indians as a young boy. And his fascination with the American West only grew as he experienced it for himself on family camping trips to Montana and Wyoming.

As an adult, he returned to the Land of the Shining Mountains in 2003, this time with his wife, to ski at the Big Sky Resort. Not only the beauty of the region but also Big Sky's low-key environment resonated deeply with the couple, and they realized they had finally found their place in the West. By the next summer, they'd also found the right spot to build: a picturesque property at the nearby Yellowstone Club, spanning just over 3 acres of the Rocky Mountains. "The views are incredible," notes the husband. "We have a 360-degree vista encompassing Lone Mountain, Cedar Mountain, Pioneer Mountain, and the Gallatin Range."

The mountainside lot provided the perfect backdrop for building his Western dream home, and central to the design was a massive rock tower for taking in the scenic surroundings. "It was the owner's idea to build a tower in order to take advantage of the incredible views in every direction," explains Matt Faure, principal at Faure Halvorsen Architects, who was contracted to map out the blueprints. "But we didn't want a tower element packed onto a house; instead, the tower became the heart of the home and the organizing element for everything else."

**The Big Sky, Montana, ski retreat was designed in the vernacular of 19th-century lodge architecture and custom-built from regional wood and stone.**



COWBOYS

INDIANS



From the great room off the front entryway, an open doorway leads past a rock wall and into the tower structure, where guests can grab a drink at the bar on the main level. An elegant stairway then leads them in one of two directions—down to the expansive wine cellar below or up to the third-story lookout, which offers a 360-degree panorama.

“We intentionally forced the scale and size of the stairway to replicate the feeling of climbing old towers in Europe, which the owners loved,” Faure says. The lookout room at the top of the tower is comfortably outfitted with six hair-on-hide pub chairs, along with six cowboy hats and six shot glasses. It’s here where the owners and their friends gather to relax, unwind, and take in the last rays of light as the sun slips behind the snowcapped peaks. In fair weather, they can even take in the fresh mountain air, strolling outside onto the widow’s walk that encircles the exterior.

Along with unobstructed views, historic context was also a main focus of the home’s design. “The owner had a fascination with the history of the American West—not just the Wild West, but history as it pertained to the authentic architecture of the time,” explains Faure. So he developed ideologies for the home that fit with the architectural vernacular of that era.

Then Peter Lee, owner of Teton Heritage Builders, signed on to do the heavy lifting. “The historic design made this such an exciting project,” he says. “It was really about taking a late 19th-century lodge and amenitizing it for the 21st century.” With offices in both Wyoming and Montana, Lee proved the perfect man for the job of bridging the design and construction. His years of experience in

custom mountain dwellings and his connections to local specialty craftsmen proved essential in making the owner’s dream a reality.

“You feel like you’re stepping back in time to 1885, which is exactly what I wanted,” says the owner. “Matt and Peter are brilliant, and were a joy to work with. We couldn’t have done it without them.”

When it came to selecting materials for the framework, all parties agreed the home should benefit its surroundings. Combining rustic fieldstone, heavy timber, and 100-year-old fir planks, the resulting structure not only seems to belong in the mountains of Montana, but appears to have grown straight from the soil.

Indoors, the same log-and-stone palette continues throughout the home, paying tribute to the Montana landscape while also bringing scale to its large living areas. One of the couple’s favorite places to gather is the hearth room, adjacent to the kitchen, where oversized club chairs and leather sofas create a cozy mountain lodge environment. The main sitting area is purposely devoid of a television and all other electronics. Instead, guests are beckoned to sit around the large fireplace and enjoy intimate conversation next to a roaring wood fire.

Designed as a focal point of the room, the fireplace is a mosaic of irregular chunks of fieldstone, artistically pieced together by local stonemasons, that looks to be part of the home itself. “The fireplace is amazing,” notes Faure. “The goal was to have it feel as

**OPPOSITE (from top):** The home’s main staircase was handcrafted from natural fieldstone and reclaimed juniper wood. A punched tin ceiling adds interest to the dining room. **THIS PAGE:** The master suite consists of an elegant bedroom with its own stone fireplace and high ceilings, and a spacious bath, where a tub is inset in a covey of windows.





though it was alive and growing out of the ground.”

A matching fieldstone staircase adds to the enduring, organic aesthetic. Its knotted wood railing was created by painstakingly exposing the root systems of salvaged juniper trees, cut below grade. The splayed roots were then integrated into the fieldstone, making it appear as though they are growing out of the rock, and connected with bands of twisted branches, which serve as the banisters.

To give the home a finished look, its rugged framework was softened by elegant details, such as layered lighting, fine furnishings, and artisan accents. As seen in the dining room, where a plush wool rug woven in an intricate pattern of rich colors sits beneath the heavy wood table. But it's the ceiling that is the dining room's highlight: A large rustic chandelier hangs from an inset of punched tin tiles finished in an antique copper wash, adding another element of refinement while keeping with the Old West aesthetic.

Finally, the historic lodge-styled home was made complete with a heavenly master suite in which modern luxuries were not ignored. A space of ultimate relaxation, the room features a high, vaulted ceiling and a stone accent wall with a built-in fireplace. Elevating the appeal are creature comforts like a large plush bed, a wall-mounted flat-screen TV, and a spacious connecting bath, where a window nook is fit with a tub for thawing out after a long day on the slopes.

The mountain retreat is the fulfillment of a Midwestern child's fantasy. As the proud owner and grandfather notes, “This is my childhood dream come true.”

## Resources

**Matt Faure**  
**Faure Halvorsen Architects**  
 Bozeman, Montana  
 406.587.1204, [www.faurehalvorsen.com](http://www.faurehalvorsen.com)

**Peter Lee**  
**Teton Heritage Builders**  
 Gallatin Gateway, Montana  
 406.522.0808, [www.tetonheritagebuilders.com](http://www.tetonheritagebuilders.com)

**Rick Secora**  
**Secora's Dead Wood Creations**  
 Gallatin Gateway, Montana  
 406.581.5678, [www.secorasdwcreations.com](http://www.secorasdwcreations.com)

**Fire Mountain Forge**  
 Livingston, Montana  
 406.222.9732, [www.firemountainforge.com](http://www.firemountainforge.com)



**CLOCKWISE (from bottom left):** The owners wanted their mountain retreat to include a tower for enjoying the Big Sky scenery, and, according to architect Matt Faure, “the tower became the heart of the home and the organizing element for everything else.” Inside its third-story lookout at the top of a winding staircase, a cozy sitting area is furnished with six hair-on-hide pub chairs. The homeowner notes that, from the widow's walk encircling the tower's top story, “The views are incredible. We have a 360-degree vista encompassing Lone Mountain, Cedar Mountain, Pioneer Mountain, and the Gallatin Range.”

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