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\$5.99



PHOTOGRAPHY BY EMILY REDFIELD

Barn Raiser

Erinn Morgan discovers how an Aspen homeowner transformed a snowfall-collapsed structure into an equestrian stable of dreams

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COVERED IN COLORADO-SERVED fresh, powdery snow, the exterior of the expansive, towering structure is flanked by an army of pure white aspens. Its rough-hewn, reclaimed-wood-and-stone walls are dotted with welcoming lights and paned windows with working shutters.

While it may appear to be a luxurious, finely crafted yet down-to-earth home from the outside,

this building is, in fact, a stunning equestrian stable with a highly mindful and focused design.

The genesis of this unique structure was a heavy snowfall in 2008 that doomed the original stable of a legacy property in the stunning Rocky Mountain town of Aspen. This weather event, which also claimed a wealth of brand-new ranch equipment, cleared the way for a completely new beginning.

“It was an old building and a total collapse — and that really gave us the opportunity to reimagine what the new stable would look like,” says Robert Sinclair, AIA, principal of Robert G. Sinclair Architecture (RGSA), the Aspen-based firm that oversaw the design of the new equestrian stable.

The owner of the original stable, which was part of a large, distinctive property with several building sites on it, approached RGSA about constructing a stable that would last for generations to come but, at the same time, appear as though it had already been there for a century. “I gave Rob the freedom to design with the authenticity and attention to detail warranted by the reclaimed materials and traditional assembly methods ... as if it had been there for generations. He achieved a functionally beautiful stable for our prized horses, with all of the character and charm that I was hoping for,” says the property owner, who prefers to remain anonymous.

How would these seemingly divergent yet at once perfectly congruous architecture and design goals be met within the parameters of this project? “The client gave us some latitude to really suggest and imagine what this could and should be to complement the broader property, so we started looking in the direction of the original stable, which dated back decades to the ‘40s or ‘50s,” Sinclair says. “But then we



thought, ‘What if we doubled that?’ What if the end result looked like it were here for 100 years?”

The result is an impressive blending of the old with the new. Inside the stable structure, soaring ceilings are punctuated by sunlight-drenched skylights, beautiful handwork appears on everything from railings to doors, and painstaking details like brass-colored lighting fixtures and paned windows heighten the entire effect.

The finished structure is divided into three equally standout zones, all heated by radiant modular heating. The first zone is a shop built of reclaimed, hand-hewn oak, with a loft above crowned by an opaque skylight. The second, built of reclaimed fir, features six 12-foot module-type stalls, two wash stalls, and a foaling stall, with a hayloft above. The third is a two-story tack room, also crafted out of fir. It boasts an impressively scaled, double-sided fireplace with a one-piece stone mantel.

Even outside, the design of this equestrian stable is in perfect alignment with the old-meets-new ethos. Just outside the barn doors lies a round pen and paddocks that flank the structure’s stone-clad exterior, which is graduated in size from top to bottom.

According to Sinclair, the critical means to achieve the proper historical design was to employ a true timber frame structure with authentic detailing, historically accurate assembly methods and the right patina. It was also critical to ensure that the new stable was sourced entirely from reclaimed materials. “Almost all the materials used in the new stable are at least 100 years old: the decking, siding, timber frame, lumber,” Sinclair says. “We even did a reclaimed slate roof — when no one else was doing reclaimed slate roofs yet. We had to wait an entire 12-month period to get the slate roof we really wanted [which was reclaimed from an old church in the Northeast], but the client said, ‘I want to this to be right,’ so they were willing to wait.”

VINTAGE APPEAL
To achieve the proper vintage look, the architect designed a true timber frame structure, complete with authentic detailing, historically accurate assembly methods and reclaimed materials.



LIGHT BRIGHT
Soaring ceilings punctuated by sunlight-drenched skylights and brass-colored lighting fixtures brighten the structure's heavy woods and stone.

Sinclair also notes that the full range of reclaimed materials for the new stable structure was sourced from a wide network across the country. “It was a really big undertaking, with timbers coming from various states like Pennsylvania and Indiana,” he says. “It was all consolidated by a single supplier in Utah, and then refabricated in Michigan.”

And because reclaimed wood does not come structurally rated, RGSA’s team had to grade each and every timber, beam and column. Sinclair says this important step took three full days. Then, they took their engineer to the fabricator’s location in Michigan and literally assembled the entire stable right there, with all of the parts and pieces. “It was an incredible 3-D jigsaw puzzle,” says Sinclair. “Everything is where it is because we put it there.”

To keep in step with the historical look of the project, RGSA also employed mortise and tenon joinery (a traditional, historical way of joining timbers together without mechanical nuts and bolts) when the structure was constructed on-site. “There was a real frontier atmosphere when we were raising this barn,” says Sinclair. “It felt like we were really somewhere out in the middle of nowhere.”

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From start to finish, this unique architectural project spanned a full 2 ½ years. And, the end result is a perfectly successful marriage between the old and the new. The owner’s — and the architectural firm’s — original goal was fully realized.

When asked about his favorite feature of this spectacular stable, Sinclair’s passion for the historical is more than evident. “I truly love that every stick of timber is reclaimed,” he says. “We did all reclaimed oak for the center bay; and for the stalls and tack room, we did reclaimed fir. It really gives the notion of this being designed and built some time ago.” ✨