

{ writer David M. Brown }

RECLAIMING A FAMILY HOME IN PASION



To build their 4,900-square-foot Gold Canyon home and guest house, this family-minded couple reclaimed Douglas fir from a trestle bridge spanning the Great Salt Lake, from Canadian granaries and from a barge dock on the shores of Lake Superior — even oak from antique English hard-cider barrels.



**above: Completed in October 2003, the 4,900-square-foot Gold Canyon home and guest house is a product of two Scottsdale companies: DLB Custom Homes Inc. and Phoenix Design Group L.L.C.*

**above right: Landscaper MLA Associates Landscape Architects of Tempe matched the Arizona Ranch style with indigenous plants such as saguaro, palo verde, and barrel cactus, as here in the entryway courtyard.*

Completed in October 2003 by Scottsdale's DLB Custom Homes Inc, their home rests beneath the legendary Superstition Mountains in the Gold Canyon community of Pasion. Passion, indeed, has built this getaway — of the homeowners and DLB; the architect, Scottsdale's Phoenix Design Group L.L.C.; MLA Associates Landscape Architects, of Tempe; and two designers, Pam Nairn, principal of Panache Interiors, Invermere, British Columbia, Canada, and Kimberly Alonzo, ASID, of KA Designs in Scottsdale.

The owners, natives of Calgary, Alberta, have been married for 30-plus years and live in their Gold Canyon home for about five months of the year. When they come here for business and pleasure, they are often joined by their large family from Alberta: five adult children and three grandchildren. So, much of the vision for their four-bedroom home was for an expansive space where the family could gather comfortably: everyone accommodated without feeling cramped.

"With a large family and a lifestyle centered on entertaining around the



“The family is one of nature’s masterpieces.”
—George Santayana

kitchen, the home had to be an open concept, a home that was casual yet beautiful, a home that grandchildren as well as adults could enjoy at the same time,” one of the owners says.

His wife adds, chuckling: “My oldest grandson visited us this past summer. He wrote back to his parents in Calgary: ‘Grandma and grandpa have two pools — a big one and a little one!’” In their backyard, just past the covered back deck, the big one is a heated negative-edge pool, which seems to fall off into the desert; the little one, the spa, sits conveniently adjacent.

We’re not in the Rockies Anymore

Accommodating a large family was one desideratum. Next: Make the home different from the owners’ other home below the often snow-capped Canadian Rockies.

“Just look at Superstition Mountain,” one of the owners says, pointing north outside the retractable doors of his great room. To the west is Dinosaur Mountain, and to the east is Rattlesnake Hill — the one without creatures from the past, the other, no doubt, with very present rattling reptiles. He continues: “That’s

why we moved here. But the desert: It’s so different from everything else in Alberta. The mountains are different. We never thought we would live here, but the desert has grown on us.”

Visitors to the Gold Canyon area for a few years before building, the couple loved the home on the adjacent lot to the east — just below Rattlesnake Hill. Built in 2001 by Daniel Boylan, DLB president, that Arizona Ranch-inspired home mixes Southwestern with Spanish influences and includes reclaimed beams, antique distressed heart-pine flooring



**above: A long, narrow dining room table offers intimacy as well as expandability for the owners' guests and their large family. A copper-topped countertop is used as a buffet for serving from the contemporary kitchen.*

**above left: For the breakfast room adjacent the kitchen, green was chosen to contrast with the earth colors used throughout the home.*

**right: The great room and its patio incorporate Douglas fir reclaimed from Canadian granary elevators; from a dismantled trestle for a bridge over the Great Salt Lake; and from the Marquette ore dock in Michigan—a home wonderfully 'aged' even before the owners moved in.*

and a masonry fireplace accented with stone. “We met Dan onsite one day and told him how much we loved the home — inside and outside,” he says. “We just went from there.”

Because the couple are from another country — and come to the desert because of its getaway magic, Boylan based the home in what he calls “truth in materials.” He explains: “I felt it was important to create an environment that allowed them to experience something different from how they lived in Canada. By introducing great materials, it gave us the opportunity to

bring some of the history and story-telling relevant to the architecture.” The couple was immediately appreciative of this commitment — and the team’s interest in their input: “They allowed us to draw from our own palettes, experiences and interpretations,” he says.

Their home is Arizona Ranch with a mild Mediterranean/Spanish influence. Designer David Arambula of the Phoenix Designer Group, explains: “The overall architecture is fitting for homes in rolling hills or mountains. Even though we are not ‘Tuscany,’ the feel, the intent, is similar.”

RECLAIMING A FAMILY HOME IN PASION



Southwest inspiration manifests itself throughout: on the outside, for instance, in the tumbled adobe brick pavers on the rear patio as well as the front-entry courtyard by the three-car garage; in the courtyard custom water feature with its cobalt-blue Mexican tiles; in the copper accents on the exterior fascia; on the antiqued stucco; on the use of culture and cantera stone, as by the custom iron-detailed entry door.

For the landscaping, Pat Morse, principal of MLA Associates, maintained a Sonoran Desert motif, relocating

and planting indigenous trees such as ironwood and palo verde as well as shrubs and cacti, including a salvaged 100-year-old-plus saguaro — a spectacular multi-armed specimen which greets visitors in warm Southwest style at the entry courtyard. In the pool area, the plants create an oasis effect. And, alongside the perimeter, a custom wrought-iron fence discreetly separates the transformed desert of the home to the untouched desert just beyond.

“Taking into account the location of the project and the guideline requirements

for the subdivision, we developed a design philosophy that would be typical of this area,” Morse explains. “We located native plant species adjacent to the residence and disturbed areas to blend with the undisturbed natural areas.” To complete the desert look, MLA specified granite boulders to be trucked in and arranged them into natural configurations.

Barging into the Great Room

Dan Boylan of DLB just doesn't go the extra mile to give his homes a historical feel: He goes thousands of miles and

RECLAIMING A FAMILY HOME IN PASION



**above left: A vaulted niche and a chandelier provide additional detail to the home's luxurious master bathtub.*

**above right: In the master-suite tub area, Dana Tafelmeyer, of Scottsdale-based Eclipse Design, applied multi-colors of glaze in drifts and soft veins for the appearance of natural stone.*

**right: Tafelmeyer brush washed the guest bedrooms with a combination of paint and varnish. Adding to the old world texture are arch doorways and art and furniture niches.*

**above far right top: In the powder room, Tafelmeyer brush washed the wall with layers of tinted varnish to create a leathery look.*

**above far right bottom: Details such as the raised powder room wash bowl (whose earthen color contrasts with the black granite top and cabinetry) accentuate the traditional and Tuscan themes in the home.*

hundred of years. For other homes, he has called for beams and millwork from the 19th-century Haddon Craftsman Book Publishing building in Scranton, Pa.; from the 1917 Durant Motor Company factory in Elizabeth, NJ; and mantel accents from the beams reclaimed from the old Seagram's St. Louis warehouse.

For the Gold Canyon home, Boylan went to three North American sources for Douglas fir and to England for brown oak. Most of the great room ceiling structure, including many of the rafters and the ridge beam, was obtained from three granary elevators in Saskatchewan. For the great room beams and some of the rafters as well as the exterior-patio post and beams, they used Douglas fir from a dismantled trestle for a bridge over the Great Salt Lake just

outside Salt Lake City, Utah. And, for the 12-by-12-inch lintels at the entrances to the great room, they used wood from the Marquette ore dock in Michigan (see sidebar). Finally, for the oak on the dining room floor, they reclaimed wood from antique cider barrels (see sidebar).



The result was a home already full of character even before the owners moved in: "These historic, indigenous and reclaimed materials create a wonderful presence in this home," Boyland

says. "They tell a remarkable story, which the owners can share with their guests."

Throughout, newly cut wood juxtaposes antique wood. In the great room, rough-sawn Douglas fir contrasts with the reclaimed wood. And throughout most of the home, the cabinetry and the doors are distressed knotty alder, full of



character. The 21st century is here, too: the finest custom lighting, a full home-automation system, including lighting, media, audio, security, and pool, and, in the kitchen, appliances by luxury manufacturers such as Sub-Zero and Viking.

Real Alder and Lush Faux Walls

Boylan and his clients worked with the two interior designers to provide the warm Southwest Tuscan look: Alonzo provided space planning, initial materials selection and some of the design detail of the flooring. Coming in midway through the project, Nairn, who has done two other homes for the couple, finalized colorization, materials selection, backsplash design and furnishings. She developed a palette that, while respecting the desert light and its colors, added color and mountain tones — greens, for instance, and goldenrod. “We added a clear, fresh, rich, mountain influence with ‘today’s fresh colors,’” she says. For additional color, the clients added the artworks of the Maria Sharylen, a Gold Canyon artist who specializes in brightly lit Southwest subjects.

Everyone’s favorite room is the great room, with its reclaimed cider-barrel flooring and three-sided full-masonry gas fireplace. Alonzo designed the fireplace wall (Walnut Southern Ledge faux stone by Cultured Stone), adding niches for accessories and artwork. “This is the primary focal point when someone comes through the entry door,” she says. “It creates a warm ambiance and character that flows throughout.”

Nairn found a long, narrow dining room table, which provides intimacy as well as expandability for guests and that large family. To echo the custom copper hood vent in the kitchen, she called for a copper-topped countertop, which is used as a buffet between the dining room and the kitchen. But her favorite elements here are the details: “I just love the chandelier and the custom dinnerware,” she says.

Dana Tafelmeyer, president of Scottsdale-based Eclipse Design, applied the home’s spectacular faux finishes. In the main areas of the house, she hand rubbed several colors of translucent glaze over the walls for a soft fresco look. She

Floored with Hard Cider

Crack open an antique barrel of hard cider, and what do you get?

A new floor — historic, time-tested, patinaed with the soak of a century.

The Gold Canyon home great room flooring began as the insides of a 60,000-gallon, 27-foot-tall aging vat at the H.P. Bulmer Cider Mills of Hereford, England.

In 1911, the fortunate company received a royal warrant from the House of Windsor to produce hard cider, which had been making royalty and commoners very happy since the Bronze Age. The magic liquid has also been used in baptisms, as partial pay for farm labor, and as a cure for gout, urinary tract infections and rheumatic diseases.

In 2001, Bulmer modernized to stainless steel, ending the usefulness of the English brown oak vats. Mountain Lumber Company of Charlottesville, Va., rescued 70,000 board feet of the tight-grained wood by slicing the 75-year-old-plus vats longitudinally to create two products, both named for the company’s cider products: “Strongbow” from the outside and “Scrumpy Jack” from the inside. After cutting the reclaimed wood, Mountain Lumber kiln dries it, mills it, and delivers it to customers.

“Strongbow” has rich golden hues and toasted warmth, while “Scrumpy Jack”, used for the Gold Canyon flooring, has been naturally stained by hard-cider seeping over the years.

“Both are in very limited supply, with the ‘Scrumpy Jack’ being the more difficult to obtain of the two,” says David Foky, marketing director of Mountain Lumber, founded 30 years ago by its president and still avid wood-finder, Willie Drake. The company has saved rare and historic wood from many sites, including old John Deere and Studebaker manufacturing buildings. Its list of “clients” includes four American presidents (for home restorations) and other public locations, including The South Street Seaport Museum in New York City, The Portland Museum of Art in Portland, Maine (designed by I.M. Pei’s firm), and The Pequot Museum in Connecticut.

That is why this “cider house” turns heads and makes its guests just a little heady — with admiration, of course. (DMB)



RECLAIMING A FAMILY HOME IN PASION



What's Up, Dock?

What's up in the Gold Canyon Home is ore, oats and a railroad cut-off.

Much of the home's exposed support structure is Douglas fir – with a history.

In the home's exterior timber work, including the rear patio and the front porches of the main house and the guest house, the wood is from a disassembled trestle over the Great Salt Lake; a razed ore-transport dock at Marquette, Mich.; and from granary elevators in Saskatchewan, Canada. All of this wood has been painstakingly reclaimed by AntiQuus Wood Products, a division of Salt Lake City-based Intermountain Wood Products.

The trestlewood is from a 12-mile stretch spanning the lake as part of the Lucin Cut-off, a 103-mile run of the Southern Pacific Railroad. The original run went to Promontory Point, where, in 1869, the golden spike had been driven, connecting the east and west coasts. But this run had steep mountains, causing time delays and bottlenecks, so a young railroad employee suggested the "cut-off." Trestle construction continued from 1902 to 1904, with approximately 34 million board feet of Douglas fir and redwood used. The trestle serviced the Southern Pacific Railroad from March 1904 to May 1956 when a fire shut it down. Salvage began in 1993 and continues today – in particu-

lar for pilings that have broken off and remain below the surface.

The Douglas fir is from salvaged pilings, which were submerged in saline waters for almost a century. This wood now forms part of the covered patio of the home. "The minerals deposited in the wood provide characteristics and properties that are rare even compared to other reclaimed woods," says Dan Peterson, Southwest territory manager for AntiQuus "This wood contains coloring not found anywhere else, and it is highly resistant to flame spread."

The three large grain elevators stored the wheat and barley from the prairies of the Canadian "grain basket." From here, the grain



**far left: Faux stone, wood and hand-applied wall finishes create textural complexity throughout the Pasion home.*

**left: In the media room, tinted varnish applied in geometric patterns by Dana Tafelmeyer creates a look so real guests touch it to confirm that it's faux.*

brush washed the guest bedrooms with a combination of paint and varnish for the subtle look of polished plaster. In the vaulted foyer entrance to the master bedroom and the master-suite tub area, she applied multi-colors of glaze in drifts and soft veins for the appearance of natural stone. And, perhaps most impressively, in the media room and powder room, she brush washed the walls with layers of tinted varnish, in ochres, rusts, reds, and browns, to create an antiqued leathery look: Guests touch it, so real is the faux. “The media room has the added effect of overlapping geometric areas to create a more contemporary feel,” says Tafelmeyer, whose business is also well known for trompe l’oeil and murals.

The owners love the mountains of Calgary, but they also love coming south to cactus and Superstition Mountain: “We wanted a home that ‘fit’ with the desert setting and a home that reflected Southwest architecture,” he says. “But most of all, we wanted to build a home, not just a house — and we think we accomplished that.” ✱

would rail ship to flour mills in Canada and the US or to port for overseas delivery. “The relative protection from the elements allowed most of these timbers to age to a soft brown patina, with very little rot or insect damage,” Peterson says.

Finally, AntiQuus recovered Douglas fir from Dock No. 6 at Marquette harbor, the greatest port on Lake Superior. The largest deposit of iron in the United States is found in Marquette County. In the middle of the nineteenth century, the Iron Mountain Railroad began transporting iron from county mines to the port. By the



end of the century, however, furnaces and mills elsewhere along the lakes began to process the ore, so the Wisconsin Central Railroad built a number of large docks to facilitate the movement of the ore into barges and freighters.

But, by the 1950s, modernization in the industry victimized the docks, which were

slowly dismantled. The wood from them, however, still carries a red iron-ore cast — as well as the large iron bolts used to secure them.

Small wood world: Doug fir from Michigan, Saskatchewan and Salt Lake City meet in an Arizona desert home for a family from Calgary. (DMB)