

# FROM TRASH TO TREASURE

BY REBECCA BALLOTTA

## Unfinished Manhattan barn transformed into guest bunkhouse

**T**HE 15-ACRE PROPERTY WITH Gallatin River frontage was perfect for Jannet Borrmann and her husband, Eric to finally build their dream home. But, they had to first decide what to do with an unfinished, 20-year-old barn/living structure left behind by the previous owner.

“We were trying to figure out whether it was even worth keeping because it was this plywood structure with a green, metal roof that was partially coming off,” Borrmann explained. “It had been boarded up for a long time. It was quite nasty when we finally did get inside, and we initially thought it was a scrapper. And, since we wanted to build our house here, we wondered what would we need that for?”

Upon closer inspection, both the Borrmanns and their friend, Penny Murray, owner of Penny Lane Home Builders, discovered it was “still reasonably square and plumb and seemed to be sturdy.” It was a large struc-

ture and only a small part of it was clearly designed for storage. Then it hit them.

“The Borrmanns get a lot of company,” Murray said. “And it’s not just two people at a time; it’s six or eight or 10 people at a time. So, our thought was to make this like a bunkhouse so they have some overflow for sleeping for all of their guests – especially all the teenagers and kids that are becoming teenagers. So, the upstairs became kind of the bunkhouse section, and we did put a little sitting area downstairs along with the bathroom.”

Borrmann, a certified stager, met Murray when she staged Murray’s parade home in 2007. Murray later did some work for the Borrmanns at their Bozeman home. They discovered they worked well together and in this project, their collaboration of ideas congealed readily.

Because this was a pole barn structure, newly added walls had to be tied to the existing structure and the decision was made to leave

the connecting posts and metal plates exposed. They decided to also leave the trusses and their connecting metal plates exposed and, ultimately, a rustic-industrial theme emerged. This was solidified by using pipe fittings obtained at Pacific Steel for the stair railings. To add to the character, Borrmann turned the piping so the stamps of origin were visible on the railings. She also took particular care not to sand or stain over the stamps of origin and 20-year-old dates she found on the trusses because she thought they looked “really cool.”

To keep things simple, Borrmann used one color of paint (limestone) for all the walls. She went a bit lighter than her original choice since she knew once it was on the walls it may appear darker than expected, which could make this small space seem even smaller. They kept the stairway open and strategically placed mulled windows to maximize natural light throughout.

Although this is a stand-alone accom-



Photo courtesy of Penny Murray, owner, Penny Lane Home Builders

A 20-year-old barn, with part of the roof falling off, was left on the property the Borrmanns purchased.



Photo by Adrian Sanchez-Gonzalez

Rather than scrapping it, the Borrmanns turned the unfinished barn into a guest bunkhouse.





AFTER

The completed loft includes a full-sized sectional couch and a king-sized bed.



BEFORE

Despite being "quite nasty" inside, the Borrmanns discovered the barn was still sturdy and in pretty decent shape.



Downstairs, the barn includes a sitting area, table and chairs and a "pantry" under the stairs.

modation for guests, it's not an official dwelling, so there's no kitchen. However, Borrman provided a table and chairs, glass-fronted cabinet for dishes, and an ingenious "pantry" under the stairs which houses a mini fridge, small microwave and shelves for food items.

Going against her general staging sense, Borrman furnished the upstairs with a king-sized bed and a full-sized sectional couch.

"If you have a small space, you use small-scale furniture," she explained. "But once I started thinking about it ... I realized these are the size of beds, so just use these."

Besides contributing to the design process, Borrman did all the staining and painting, helped with the flooring and finish carpentry, and provided the furnishings.

"We're very pleased with how it turned out," she said. "And we learned a lot, too, that I think – hopefully – we can apply to the house; what to do and what not to do." ☺

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