

ranch
ROMANCE

*A passion for alpacas inspired
this home on the range.*

by **SARAH GOLDBLATT**
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A

lthough Pamela Ray grew up on a South Dakota farm, she wasn't fully prepared for the adventure awaiting when she headed to a livestock auction for fun 23 years ago. "I went with a friend who bought nothing—and I came home with an alpaca," she remembers. Ray was smitten, but at the time was a Denver-based lawyer, not a farmer. So she set the animal up at a Platteville farm and soon more alpacas followed. After enduring 16 years of commuting from their Denver home to tend the expanding herd, Ray and her husband, Dale Cantwell, decided they needed to be

closer to the alpacas and purchased farmland in Frederick. Here they could nurture the animals and eventually build a homestead of their own. The ranch that would become Xanadu Alpacas was born.

Cantwell selected the two-acre site on which to build the house—analyzing how to minimize prevailing winds and flood risk while maximizing views—while Ray envisioned how she wanted the home to feel.

"I had this idea of a California ranch house," explains Ray, "a real ranch that would be simple with lots of stone and natural woods." To realize their dream of exposed ceilings, light-filled rooms, rustic finishes and an indoor-outdoor connection, the couple enlisted Denver architect Kristen Park and interior designer Laura Abramsom to give form to their vision. And while Western ranch houses tend to be sprawling, Park employed an efficient H-shaped floor plan, with both open and interlocking rooms, to maximize functional space—all within 2,900 square feet.

"The layout establishes a formal entry courtyard that is a mediator between the house and the wild," explains Park. "It's a place to pause." Inside the home, an elongated great room features vaulted, whitewashed ceilings and a prairie-influ-

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Inspired by the prairie, Camellia Interior Design's Laura Abramson selected sagegreen and golden brown colors throughout the home including hand-made tiles from Waterworks at the kitchen, hickory flooring and earth-toned granite countertops. "It wanted to be a place of coming home, just warm and easy," says Abramson.







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enced color palette that sets the peaceful ambiance. Hand-hewn, reclaimed barn timbers add rustic texture while recycled hickory flooring adds to the modern ranch-house feel. As for the farmhouse kitchen, Cantwell notes it's mainly his domain. “I love to cook,” he says, pointing out the oversized island, the espresso machine and steam oven.

Ray, since retired from law, now spends her days caring for her flock of 55 alpacas, which produce fibers for luxury textiles. With functionality and durability at the core of the design, Park located Ray's home office to have direct views to her pasture and barns so she can easily keep tabs on the animals—while sandstone flooring used throughout her office and adjacent mudroom ensures easy upkeep. “I can hang up my farm stuff here and I don't have to ask my customers to take off their boots,” she says. A serene master suite with a spa-style steam shower and tub completes the plan.

Cantwell's office faces the landscaped courtyard. A former engineer, he now works to improve conditions for Peruvian children. The couple's passion for Peru's national animal has expanded into philanthropic endeavors in Peru's Sacred Valley, which might find Dale juggling efforts to secure solar panels and Wi-Fi for a Peruvian school.

The interior seamlessly merges with the architecture, thanks to designer Laura Abramson's flourishes from rugs to window coverings. “[This space] wanted to be a place of coming home, just warm and easy,” says Abramson. “With this much expanse outside, it could be difficult to feel cozy,” Cantwell says. But the couple agrees the home's blend of minimalism and handmade, rustic richness provides the perfect atmosphere for their anything-but-ordinary everyday life. **EC**