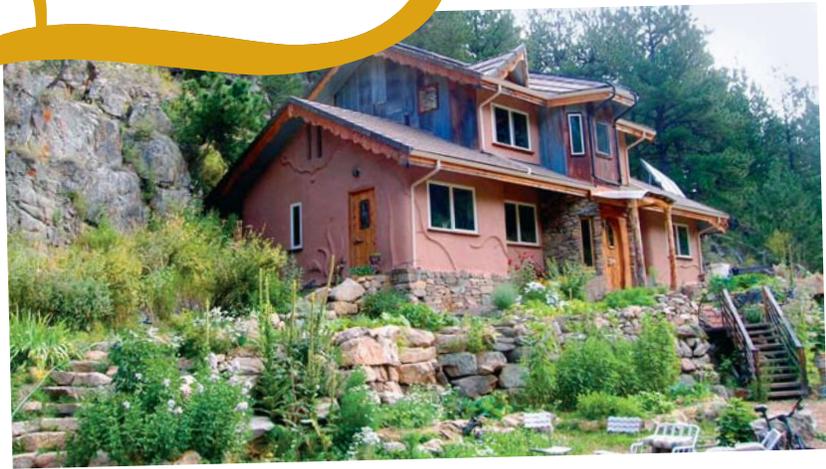


The Maddux Home— A 'Slow Building' Masterpiece



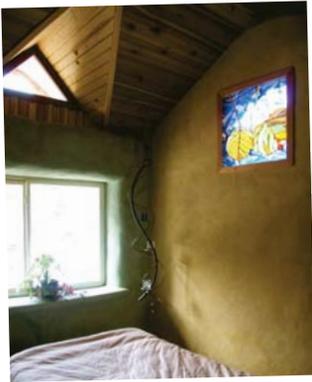
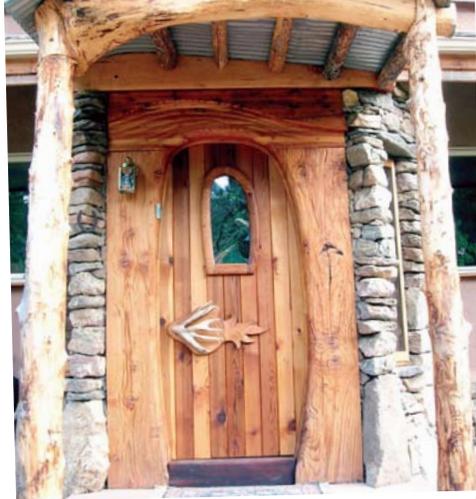
By Naomi Maddux

My husband Rick Maddux and I began the design and construction of our straw bale home in Lefthand Canyon in the fall of 2000. Almost nine years later, we are in the finish work stages of completing our home. Some would call it “slow building,” as in the slow food movement.

Without being under the constraints of a construction loan, we have been able to work thoughtfully and take our time gathering materials, paying for things as we could afford them, and concentrate on making the smallest footprint possible while infusing as much creativity and hand-craftsmanship into the process as we could muster.

We have the good fortune to live on a beautiful piece of land. This land is our inspiration to build in such a way as to honor the creative web of life that nurtures and sustains us. Our way to achieve this is to utilize Permaculture principles, engage our imaginations, backs and hands instead of credit cards, to purchase as little new material as possible, and to support our local economy by purchasing re-used, new materials and labor from local businesses when needed.

This means situating the house south facing on the hillside for passive solar gain. It means using on-site rock for our retaining walls and landscaping, and carefully harvesting dead standing Ponderosa Pine beetle kill for our timber frame and beams. It means scavenging materials from alleyways and dumpsters, and



deconstructing buildings set to be demolished. It means purchasing reused materials from friends, ReSource and Rayback. It means purchasing new materials from local business like Boulder Lumber, TC Woods and McGuckins vs. Home Depot. It means buying our straw bales from a local farmer in Berthoud. It means paying Ryan Chivers of Artesano to teach us how to mix and apply our own earthen plasters and adobe floors and then running volunteer parties to teach others the same skills while they help us. It means taking a friend up on his offer to teach me the art of stained glass before he left the country and buying all his scrap glass and tools so that I could make my own windows and glass mosaic countertops. I could go on for pages

this way... there are so many ways to conserve resources and contribute to the well being of your community while building your house.

It takes skill, patience, ingenuity and strength to do things by hand and use natural and reused materials. As we approach fifty, we are grateful that we began this project in our forties and had the physical strength to pull off the bulk of the heavy work earlier in the process. The saying "necessity is the mother of invention" is a cornerstone of our experience, as over and over again we stretched ourselves to figure out how to make something work with the materials we had at hand.

By having an open mind and being willing to learn, we have found we have acquired far more skills by choosing to build this way than if we could have paid to have it done for us with

new materials. Rick is a fine woodworker by trade (Albatross Woodcrafters) and is now much more adept at rock work, wiring, plumbing, and solar PV and Thermal installations. I am a Feng Shui consultant, professional organizer, and am now a Stained Glass artisan (MadduxWorks), master plasterer, designer, project manager and landscape/gardener.

If we had it to do all over again, perhaps we would have built smaller, but as it is now, we seem to use all the square feet we have. It is our dream that this house will long outlive us and be useful for many generations to come. We hope in the meantime it can be an inspiration for the value of human creativity and the quest to celebrate the beauty of the natural world in the practice of sustainable living. •

Naomi and Rick Maddux are opening their home for a special CRC event and tour. Please email crc@conservationcenter.org if you would like to be invited.