

Marks Lumber

Clancy, Montana

TPM Member Since
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Marks Lumber is a longstanding, family owned operation in Clancy, Montana that has carved out a niche by producing and marketing specialty lumber products including beams, timbers, rough lumber, flooring, siding, paneling and other planed products. Marks Lumber also constructs timber frames, log archways and other specialty log projects. They will even do the installation. In addition, Marks Lumber utilizes every part of the log, producing by-products that include firewood, colored mulch, bark, sawdust, planer shavings, hog fuel and chips. And, if that isn't enough, they capitalize on their expertise, manpower and equipment by contract logging, grinding and forest restoration. This specialization and diversification has helped strengthen the operation and has sustained it over the years during the ups and downs of the industry.



Timber trusses like this are a mainstay of the Marks' product line.



Here is an example of the rustic circular sawn flooring that provides that rich rustic look.

ranching, Steve set out in 1989 to make wood products his first priority when ranching turned sour. He went into this as a full-fledged business, not wanting to get into commodity type production but to operate as a specialty mill.

To distinguish himself from the pack, Steve capitalizes on "the Montana look," making the most of distinctive wood grain and coloration to please customers who regard Big Sky Country as something to be reflected in their individual tastes and homes. The signature piece is the circle-sawn Douglas fir tongue and groove flooring. Customers seek the soft red tones of the Douglas fir and the patterns that the circular saw method creates. Marks Lumber grew its reputation turning out tongue-and-groove flooring, massive beams, and a variety

Steve Marks, owner of Marks Lumber, likes to say he has a Master's Degree in perseverance, but he's earned a PhD in business diversification as well. Marks Lumber just keeps reinventing itself, adapting to the changing times and fickle markets. The third generation of his family to work in the timber industry, Steve combined the work ethic of the past century with the thinking, practices, and equipment of the 21st century to keep his valuable 18-person work crew working despite the economy's wild ride. Part of the Marks Lumber success story is its original business plan. Although his father and grandfather had operated small mills to supplement



One facet of Marks Lumber is the grinding and chipping operation.

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of accent pieces that continue to be popular in log and timber frame homes and businesses. When the company built its new headquarters in 2004, the building served as a showcase for the type of products Marks Lumber could deliver. Steve's son Cody, who Steve regards as a true artisan, did the building's design and construction, incorporating the Montana look throughout. Cody now works with his Dad in many aspects of the business and is especially valuable in the timber framing and specialty log projects.

As the markets fluctuate, Steve says he has the ability to ramp up production at the mill to get more into a commodity scale, and he does furnish wholesale lumber to some high-end markets. On the whole, however, the Montana look is still the mainstay, and he enjoys seeing people appreciate the company's lineup.



Calvert beveled edge siding compliments this building with the "Montana Look" that is often desired.



Montana winters do not slow down the Marks Lumber crew!

As Steve reflects on his success even in extremely challenging times, he gives much of the credit to his father, Bob Marks, who at 81, still lives nearby and has a hand in encouraging his sons in the wood products business. Steve's wife Laura is also a steady and valued presence, keeping watch over the books. Steve likes to have his hands in all aspects of the business and Steve admits to his multi-faceted management style. "I like to stay up with things. If you're in business for yourself, you're never away from work. You're always thinking about how to make things better."

The colored mulch, bark and animal bedding products are one more way Marks Lumber diversifies its offering. Much of the product is ground in the woods from Marks' logging projects and shipped to a ready-and-waiting market. Roadside hazard trees, Forest Service campgrounds, and government service contracts provide even more material. So far, however, 95 percent of Marks Lumber's materials are taken from private lands. The company works mostly with Ottman Forestry, a Missoula forestry consulting firm, and also trades logs with other mills, all in the name of staying resilient. There is an insurmountable pile of the 'red and dead' and Marks Lumber capitalizes on that. With the B66 grinder and the other equipment Marks has, new opportunities keep coming along.



Rough cut lumber is available, and can be custom cut if necessary.

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