

# iSERIES

The Unico System®

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Unico, Inc. manufacturing plant and sub-assembly plant

Unico, Inc. is the leader in small duct heating and cooling systems and other high-end HVAC systems. The company manufactures all of its products in St. Louis, Missouri, with over 125,000 square feet of modern manufacturing space. The company is well known for extensive use in older, architecturally unique homes and buildings as well as elite, high-end custom homes. The company is family owned and operated and their products are available throughout the United States and Canada, and in over 28 countries around the world.



National Trust for  
 Historic Preservation  
*Save the past. Enrich the future.*



“Oh, give me land, lots of land  
 under starry skies above...”

## Small Duct System Enhances “Rustic Chic” of Montana Cabin

The title of this piece is the first line of Don't Fence Me In, Cole Porter's classic ode to the wide-open freedom of the American West. The song is an apt description for the Whitefish, Montana, setting of Ted Valentiner and Linda Shannon-Valentiner's cozy cabin home. Montana is called “Big Sky Country” for good reason, and this dream home, nestled in the foothills of the Rockies, provides plenty of views of that big, big sky.

Ted, a Coloradan, and Linda, a transplanted New Zealander, both grew up in open spaces and dreamed of one day building their perfect cabin in the mountains. In 2012, that shared dream came true when they began construction on a log home. While the base design of

the structure was supplied by Kalispell Montana Log Homes, Ted and Linda had very specific custom finishes and a unique vision for their new home's interior. In fact, Linda designed the floor plan. Interior appointments of hand-hewn flat logs, reclaimed barn wood and corrugated metal meld to create a pioneer vintage vibe that Linda dubs “rustic chic.” “Putting it all together is my passion,” she explains.

The Valentiners occupy only the first floor, which is 1,080 square feet. The lower level is a guesthouse. This relatively small living area forced the Valentiners to look for ways to maximize the home's interior space, which presented a challenge when it came to choosing a central heating and cooling system.

The Unico System®



The Unico System's unobtrusive round outlets blend into the ceiling. While wood outlets are available and can be stained to match any wood type, the Valentiner's decided that dark brown outlets would better contrast and highlight the reclaimed barn wood of the ceiling.



Can you spot The Unico System outlets in this view of the breakfast bar/kitchen?



How about in this view of the master bedroom? Do you see the Unico outlets?



Unico System outlets give the appearance of oversized knotholes above the cabin's front door.

### Strategy:

To use the limited space efficiently, the Valentiners – working with architect Eric Bachofner and builder Jim Blankenship – designed the main floor to include cupboards that reached the ceiling and storage spaces above closets and the laundry area. All the house wiring and mechanical system are on the lower level. After researching space-saving HVAC solutions and visiting a home that had a Unico System installed, Ted and Linda decided on Unico's small duct heating and cooling.

The contractor installed a 2.5-ton Unico System air handler with a hot water coil for central heating and cooling to both levels of the structure. The Unico hot water coil and a radiant floor heating system on the lower level are paired with a geothermal heat pump. Geothermal heat pumps are common in the American West and are an energy efficient and ecologically friendly method of providing indoor heating and cooling. Typically, a series of coils are buried in the ground and, in winter, heat from the earth is transferred to the interior heating coil and radiant floor system. In the summer, the process is reversed with heat being transferred from the home to the earth.

### Results:

Ted and Linda couldn't be happier with The Unico System's look and performance. Having once lived in the Middle East where air conditioning is delivered by noisy, bulky conventional ducted systems, they were surprised by the quietness of The Unico System. "From my time abroad and my career in project management, I know how important air handlers are," says Ted. "I'm so pleased the Unico air handlers deliver our conditioned air quietly and comfortably."

The couple is also pleased with the low heating and cooling expenses. Living in the mountains means they don't need to use the A/C very often but when it is hot, Ted says it works great. When forest fires crop up from time to time, he says it's too smoky outside to open the windows, so that's another benefit to having air conditioning.

The Valentiners' home was originally meant to be a single-story structure, but a happy, unplanned realization occurred when they began excavation. Due to the way the cabin is situated on the hillside, Ted and Linda were able to double their living space with a lower level that includes a walkout. With this happenstance, they now operate the lower level as The Old Wagon Wheel guesthouse, with a separate entrance.

Beautiful wide-open spaces, fresh mountain air, cozy cabin living and superior indoor comfort courtesy of The Unico System. "Don't fence me in," indeed.

### Owners:

Ted Valentiner & Linda Shannon-Valentiner  
The Old Wagon Wheel  
[www.theoldwagonwheel.com](http://www.theoldwagonwheel.com)

### Photo Credits:

Heidi Long  
[www.longviews.com](http://www.longviews.com)

### Benefits:

- Even, draft-free temperatures
- Quiet operation
- Geothermal compatibility
- Discreet supply outlets
- Flexible design and installation



The master bathroom features its own fireplace, period claw-foot bathtub and discreet central heating and cooling with The Unico System.