

DIY SECRETS: BUILD YOUR LOG HOME

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Great Room Makeover

Cowboy Contemporary



*An artful mix of logs and other materials
highlights a New Jersey home.*

STORY BY ROLAND SWEET | PHOTOS BY KCJ PHOTOGRAPHY

The home incorporates 12-inch white spruce half-logs affixed to conventional construction to achieve a full-log look. The angled front door adds distinction.

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ABOVE: The pool table occupies a prominent space in the great room. The floors are 5-inch-wide, hand-scraped teak.

OPPOSITE: Textured walls surround the great room windows, which are framed by half-logs that echo the angles of the majestic roof trusses. Furniture combines artful wood and comfortable leather pieces.

Living in a log home was a long-held dream for Steven and Diana. The New Jersey couple enjoys the outdoors, especially vacations out West. “We love to ski in Colorado, and they have some magnificent log homes on the ski slopes,” Steven notes. “That’s where I got turned on.”

When the time finally came to build their log home, “we brought the West to us,” he says. “Now, every time I pull into my driveway, every day, I feel like I’m on vacation. It’s so different from living in a regular house.”

With their log home in mind, they bought a 6-acre, pie-shaped property in

Freehold about 13 years ago. It came with a house, which the couple rented out while they planned their log home. Their top priority was an open layout to suit their lifestyle. They made sure the home was livable and that every space was usable and comfortable. Two distinctive features they specified were a saloon to recall the Wild West, placed directly off the kitchen

to create a flow perfect for entertaining, and impressive log trusses above the great room. “We love being able to see the architecture of the logs from the front of the house all the way through to the back,” Diana says.

The design was a 10-year work in progress as the couple made sure they included everything they wanted. After designing “every square inch of the home,” accumulating pages and pages of drawings, Steven topped it off by making a three-dimensional cardboard scale model, “a couple feet long and a foot or two high.” He says he wanted to be able to perceive the house as it would look. “I could see it



Painted walls brighten the kitchen and dining areas, which share a tile floor. The kitchen cabinets are all custom crafted. Through the door at the rear left of the dining area is the saloon, a popular place for entertaining.

on paper, but I really wanted to visualize exactly how the elevations would look first hand. It was almost an exact replica of how the house turned out.” Because he spent so long designing the house and in exacting detail, he recalls that as construction progressed, he realized, “I’ve seen this all before in my head. I almost felt like I was here before.”

For the look of the home, the couple wanted a mix of logs and drywall — “more of a hybrid home than full log, chiefly for functionality,” Steven says. “As much as I like logs, there’s nothing wrong with full, painted Sheetrock either.” That preference led them to Wisconsin Log Homes, a Green Bay company that specializes in half-log systems, where the logs are attached to insulated framed walls. Diana and Steven chose 12-inch white spruce logs for the exterior and inside for the great room and loft. They showed their plans and the cardboard model to Wisconsin’s home consultant Ehren Graf, who coordinated between them and the company to bring their vision to life.

The main level of the 6,500-square-foot home features an angled entry with double doors that open into a foyer, with a view of the stairs and the central great room. Also on this level are Steven’s office, the dining room, the kitchen, the saloon and a spacious laundry room. Upstairs, the master suite is separated from three children’s bedrooms by a roomy loft sitting area that features its own fireplace, one of four in the home. A whirlpool tub fills a glass-surrounded bump out off their master bath, but Steven “doubts we’ve used it three or four times since we’ve lived here,” instead preferring the outdoor shower off their back balcony from April to October.

Steven was his own general contractor, on-site every morning, every lunch break and every evening. He admits he’d never tackled a project of this magnitude but notes, “I am a handy guy. I love building things and have no problem trying any-



The loft sitting area, which separates the master bedroom from the three other bedrooms, celebrates the home's large logs and features an efficient gas fireplace. Wisconsin Log Homes owner Dave Janczak crafted the mantel for the homeowners.



thing myself.” After the logs and lumber were delivered, for example, he and the couple’s teen-age son George would use a grader to move the logs that were needed for the coming week near wherever the building crew would need them. “My builder never built a log home before, so the hybrid worked out great because any good builder could build it,” he concludes. Construction took 22 months.

For their decor, the couple wanted a western look to remind them of their vacations. “A lot of times people do their log homes in Southwestern, but that just wasn’t our taste,” Steven says.

“We wanted more cowboy western.”

Much of the furniture came from a weekend buying trip to North Carolina, but Steven built some of the furniture in the saloon, and Dave Janczak, the owner of Wisconsin Log Homes, made the home’s fireplace mantels and the bar top in the saloon. The couple picked up a few lamps and other smaller items while vacationing in Colorado. All the cabinets are custom made.

After living in the home nearly four years, Steven is well aware of the need to maintain the logs, observing, “It’s easier to keep them looking nice than to have to fix them later.” To reduce maintenance in

high spots, he opted for vinyl siding at the gable ends that mimics cedar shakes and pine clad in aluminum for the soffits. The cedar that had been delivered to use for the soffits became the paneling in the saloon.

There are many features the couple like about their home: how open and welcoming it is, the floor-to-ceiling fireplace in the great room, the saloon, Steven’s workshop and even the laundry room. But Diana’s absolute favorite is that Steven put his heart and soul into designing the house for their family. “How many people can say they live in their dream home?” she points out. “Steve and I are lucky enough to live in ours.” 🍷



The uplifting staircase melds wood and metal, and offers a breathtaking view of the wall logs and roof trusses. The wheel in the lower railing adds a novel touch.

LEFT: A bistro table in the saloon was fashioned from an old whiskey barrel and topped with a polished wheel and glass.