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The open French country kitchen artfully blends classic glazed cabinets, log accents and slate flooring. Wood-trimmed windows reinforce the 19th-century styling, while the room borrows light from the adjoining eating area.

Planned To Perfection

An Ontario couple spends years to make sure they achieve the home of their dreams.

STORY BY TERESA L. WOLFF | PHOTOS BY JAMES RAY SPAHN



A wooden cottage in the woods was the lifelong dream of an Ontario couple. They spent years researching log homes and tearing out pictures from log-home magazines. When an advertisement for Wisconsin Log Homes caught their eye, the husband recalls, "I went to visit their facility and found the hand-hewn look they are able to accomplish in their milling process is exactly what I wanted."

To achieve this look, the home uses large-diameter, white pine half-logs applied to conventionally built, insulated walls. Bob Patschke, design manager at Wisconsin Log Homes, notes that the company's Thermal-Log Building System

boosts energy efficiency and minimizes maintenance. It also provides an interior that blends logs with drywall.

Because the couple intended this to be a vacation home where they could entertain large groups of friends who enjoyed outdoor activities, they searched for a site within an hour of Ottawa. They located 11 acres of lakefront property where, in the summer, everyone could enjoy swimming, fishing, kayaking or just boating to the waterfall at the end of the lake. In winter, a nearby ski resort offers downhill skiing, or they can go snowmobiling or tobogganing. When the lake freezes over, there is the option of scraping off the snow to ice skate or play hockey.

ABOVE: Sidelights flanking the knotty alder door brighten the foyer, and fieldstone flooring extends the transition from outdoors.

OPPOSITE: Sprawling prow windows connect the great room with the woodland surroundings. White pine king-post trusses draw the eye to the 25-foot cathedral ceiling.

The homeowners met with Wisconsin's in-house design team to create a three-story home based on the company's Alpine Meadow II plan, with modifications to meet their specific needs and style, and to fit the contour of the property. "We generally spend 80 percent of our indoor, non-slumber time congregating around the kitchen, so we enlarged this space and included a large island," the



wife states. “We also opened the kitchen so it would be a part of the great room and dining room.”

To make the kitchen a true show-piece, the couple enlisted Kitchen Interiors Showroom & Designs. “The design concept was inspired by many factors, including the beautiful setting, and the result is a mixture of many styles that work in harmony,” architect and senior designer Mona Saeed explains. “Because it is an open kitchen visible from the great room, we opted for a classy but casual space. All materials are green and environmentally friendly, from cabinets in maple wood to granite counter tops and solid wood butcher block.”

Just as people seem to spend most of their time in the kitchen when they are indoors, the homeowners find that they and their guests congregate on the deck

ABOVE: African slate covers the floor and walls in the master bath, where a converted baker’s table serves as a vanity.

OPPOSITE TOP: Salvaged beams from a century-old barn form the bed frame in the master suite, whose floors are reclaimed elm.

OPPOSITE BOTTOM: The inviting loft features a coffee table crafted from an old cart and a whimsical couch made by cutting away the side of an antique roller.

when they are outside. They added a very large wraparound deck with connecting gazebo to make sure there would be plenty of space and to take in the view of the lake.

In his younger years, the husband worked in construction but didn’t feel he had sufficient experience to act as the builder. He hired two different contractors. Paul Barber of Infinity Fine Homes built the frame and applied the white pine logs with 12-inch vertical round corners.

Kevin Pilgrim served as the project

manager. “We did the interior design on the fly,” he says. “We would take a look at the materials we had been shipped and would consult with the homeowners to let them choose between several different options. The result was a home that is truly a legacy for their two children.”

One of the interior’s unique aspects is the custom-textured finish applied to the drywall. “We troweled on layers of plaster and used a ragged roller to rough up the textures,” Pilgrim explains. “We then knocked off the rough edges to give it a cottage-style look.”

The husband is an accomplished woodworker and felt inspired to get involved in some of the actual hands-on construction, notably completing trim work, building vanities, mirrors, closet shelving and furniture. He also helped make the stone fire pit and multiple gar-

home details

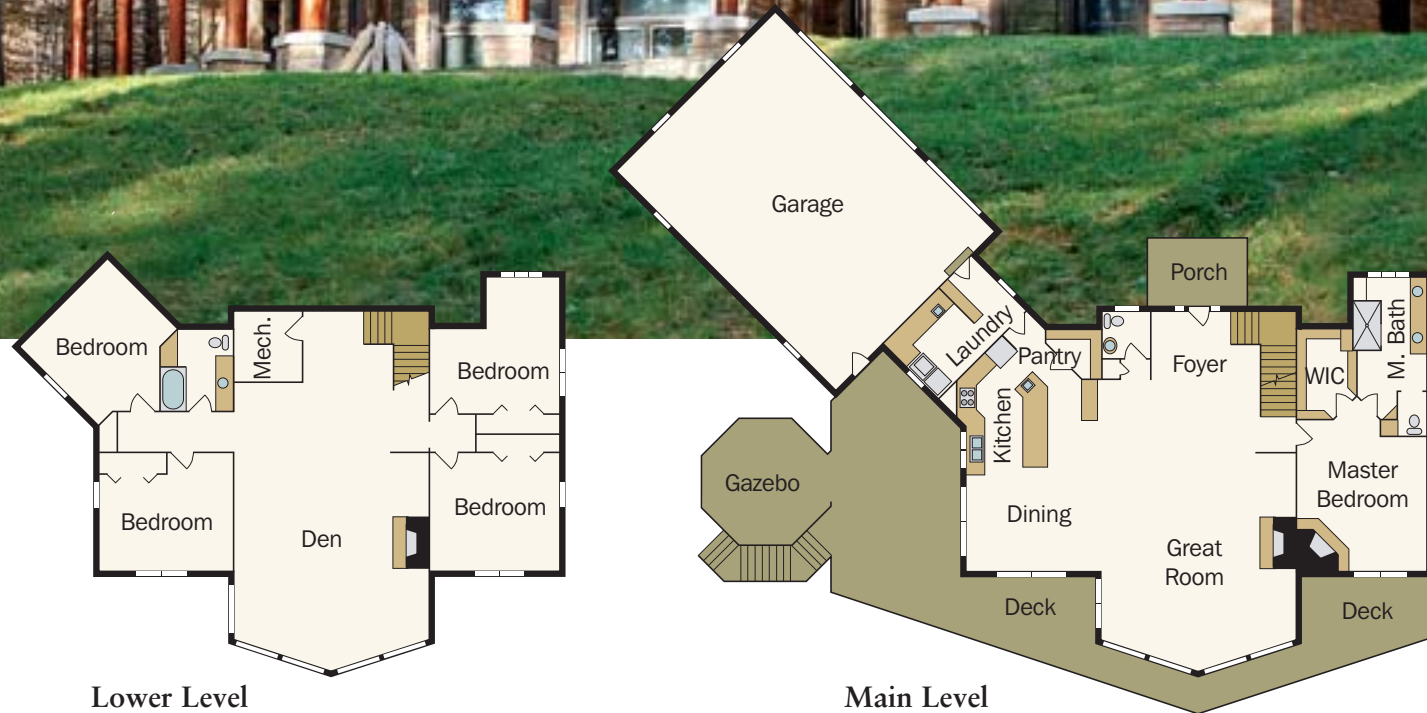
SQUARE FOOTAGE: 5,500

LOG PROVIDER AND DESIGNER: Wisconsin Log Homes

BUILDER: Infinity Fine Homes Inc.

PROJECT MANAGER: Kevin Pilgrim

The appeal of half-log construction is the ability to mix a variety of surface materials, such as logs, drywall and, in the case of this home, stone. This interior versatility modifies the log look, while allowing the exterior to reveal full-log character.



Fieldstone piers anchor the home, whose modest front belies its size. A standing-seam steel roof is the perfect topping.

OPPOSITE: Abundant windows and the deck provide a view of the lake and woods. The home features 10-inch, hand-peeled white pine half-logs with 12-inch, full-round corners.

den levels. He even designed the three-car garage with an engineered floor to allow a lower garage where he now enjoys his woodworking hobby in the 40-by-25-foot heated workshop.

Decorating the home was as simple as including furnishings he had made and others the couple had collected over the years. She notes the home has a modern flair but fits into the natural environment with colors and cabinet styles more closely aligned to the Provence Region of France. One of the bathroom sink bases is made from a yellow birch tree stump found on the corner of the property.

Outside, the homeowners limited the number of trees that had to be cut for the

home's construction. "Our goal was to retain the natural beauty of the gradual slope down to the lake," the husband explains. "We also finished the lower patio and fire pit with flagstone for a more organic transition between the patio and the lawn."

The couple's many years of research paid off as they realized their dream of a cottage in the woods. He can't overemphasize how important that initial part of the process is to the success or failure, pointing out, "Even though we had collected a large portfolio of ideas for our home and even though we spent many years in preparation, we were surprised how the project actually came at us so quickly. We felt prepared, but we also had to make

decisions without delay in some cases."

Reflecting on his experience, he advises, "As you research log-home construction, you may be surprised at the many different choices available, many more than you think are possible. Finding good finish carpenters will make all the difference in your home. They will guide you through options for adding unique touches that may not be that expensive but may make all the difference between an OK home and a wow home."

The rewards were worth the wait. "When we are here in our wow home," he explains, "I feel like my batteries are being recharged, and I am happy and relaxed and happy we did our homework." 🏡