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Lure of the Lake

A Wisconsin cabin draws on its family heritage



For generations,

Lighthouse Lodge on the Three Lakes Chain in northern Wisconsin was the vacation destination for city dwellers looking to enjoy the North Woods. In the late 1950s, Jim Gross's paternal grandparents purchased the lodge and continued to operate the business until his grandfather's death. At that time, the lodge was closed to the public and became a family retreat. Over the years, the property fell into disrepair until it got to the point where it was too expensive to refurbish.

While vacationing in Beaver Creek, Colorado, Jim and his wife, Bridget, stayed in a log resort. The experience inspired Jim to build a vacation log cabin on the site of Lighthouse Lodge.

After researching log-home companies, they found Tomahawk Log & Country Homes to their liking. The biggest attraction was the half-log system, which provided the full-log look on the outside but greater design flexibility inside the home. Besides providing a turn-key log package, Tomahawk was able to serve as the general contractor—an important consideration as the family lives in Chicago and wouldn't be on-site during the construction. "Fortunately, Jim's parents live just an hour-and-a-half's drive away," Bridget says. "Jim's father, Ray, would visit the site every week and send us photos of the progress so we could have input into each phase."

Jim and Bridget collaborated closely with Troy Gullo, a sales and design consultant at Tomahawk, to create the floor plan for the 3,200-square-foot home. The main entry opens to the great room and leads to a full bath, laundry-mud room and a master bedroom suite. On the second floor are three



ABOVE: Half-log stairs form a cubbyhole for the bench, hand carved by Jim's grandfather. The open door leads to the main-level master bedroom. **LEFT:** Hand-hewn pine logs provide the structural support while adding character to the great room. Cedar railings across the loft add visual texture against the knotty pine ceiling. Combining leather and upholstered furnishings gives the great room a comfortable, lived-in feel. **PAGE 42:** Located at the Three Lakes Chain in northern Wisconsin, this vacation home features hand-hewn half-logs covering insulated framed construction. CertainTeed Independence asphalt shingles in a driftwood shade help the home blend into its wooded environment.



The massive flagstone walkway provides access from the lake side of the home to the covered porch adjacent to the dining room. The river-rock foundation anchors the home and adds an additional natural element.

bedrooms, a full bath and a loft sitting area. Due to the lake's high water table, only a 4-foot crawl space was possible below the home.

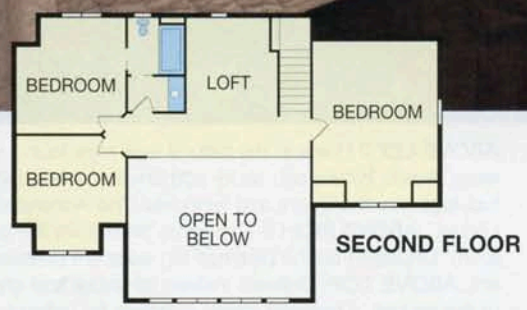
A screened porch was one of Bridget's must-haves. She wanted a place where the family could retreat when bugs became a nuisance. They positioned the porch on the side of the house to provide access from both the great room and the master bedroom.

Beaver Creek's Ritz-Carton Hotel was Bridget's

inspiration as she set about decorating the home. She selected her favorite shade of red as the starting point and found furnishings that would create a warm and lodge-like feel without breaking their budget. She searched the Internet, catalogs and local stores for items that give the desired look. "Woolrich has a wonderful line of bedding, which I purchased at Target, that is ideal for a lodge," Bridget says. "Area rugs from Costco and metal drapery rods from Ikea helped



ABOVE LEFT: Holes in the natural river rock facing the wood-burning fireplace allow heat to augment the natural-gas furnace. Rustic brown ash floors add another wood tone to the white pine half-logs and knotty-pine ceiling. Large-diameter half-logs trim the doors and windows. The Adirondack-style chair facing the windows comes from the original Lighthouse Lodge. **ABOVE RIGHT:** The game table from the original Lighthouse Lodge enjoys a new home in a corner of the great room. Displayed on the pine half-log walls are postcards from each of the cabins, featuring the names of their original owners. **ABOVE TOP:** Drawers instead of doors and shelves in the bottom cabinets and open shelving add to the efficiency of the kitchen. Character maple cabinets by Schrock are topped with tile and finished with a coffee stain to enhance their knotty character





Side tables from the original lodge flank the master bed, colorfully adorned with warm Woolrich bedding. Jim's grandmother became one of artist Frank Zirbel's first patrons when she invited him to Lighthouse Lodge to paint. Some of his creations hang on the knotty-pine walls. The screened porch is accessible through the French doors.

me keep down the cost. If you are looking for doorknobs and pulls and shelf brackets that appear old or rustic, I recommend Van Dyke's Restorers, which can be found on the Internet. That is where I purchased most of the hardware for the cabin."

Bridget was adamant that nothing in the house be shiny and glitzy. She selected black matte kitchen appliances and rustic lighting fixtures. She even asked the electrician to take out all of the gold-colored canned lights and spray paint them a flat black tone.

Susan Swanson, an interior designer and Bridget's friend, helped design the kitchen. Bridget's goal was for efficient use of space with open shelves that are both practical and cost efficient. "Susan's philosophy is that anything that you can put in a cabinet, you can put in a large drawer," Bridget says. "Thus, all of the bottom cabinets are drawers, which is so much more efficient as you don't have to constantly be bending down and moving things around to find the pot or pan you need."

As much as Jim and Bridget share the cooking responsibilities, they like nothing better than sitting in front of the fire with a glass of wine and watching Jim's sister, Carrie, set about creating one of her culinary masterpieces. Carrie uses the efficient space to help entertain family and friends.

Bridget made many of the window treatments, shower curtains and tablecloths. Because she wanted their cabin to have a connection to the original lodge, she salvaged whatever pieces of furniture she could and refinished them.

Even though the cabin is primarily used in the summer, the Gross family endeavors to visit at least once a month during the colder seasons. To augment the home's super-insulated construction, they installed a forced-air furnace and a wood-burning fireplace in the great room.

With 100 feet of lake frontage and a sloping hill up to the access road on the front of the home, the property was a bit of a landscaping challenge. Jim and Bridget were adamant

RIGHT: Soft and durable short-shag carpet adds comfort in second-story bedroom. Bridget's grandfather made the family heirloom cedar chest. The red chair came from the original lodge.

that they would rather spend their time water skiing on the Three Lakes Chain or watching bald eagles fly overhead than tend to yard. They enlisted Northern Lakes Landscaping in Eagle River, Wisconsin, to create as low-maintenance an exterior environment as possible. Northern Lakes built a rock retaining wall to allow for a relatively flat lawn and installed massive flagstone steps leading to the front porch. Deer-proof plants and native grasses add color.

During the summer months, Lighthouse Lodge is home away from home for the Gross family. While Jim attends to his business, Bridget and their daughters—Hallie, 10, Marin, 8, and Paige, 5—love to fish or just float on rafts on the lake. Each night they build a campfire and roast marshmallows. Bridget says they often look at the lodge and remark, “What a cool cabin we have. We are truly blessed.”

She adds, “I can truly feel the weight being lifted from my shoulders as soon as we get into the car to come to the cabin. It is such a relief to be able to leave the traffic and noise of the city behind and enjoy the peace and quiet of the North Woods.” **LHI**



To see **more photos** of this home, visit www.loghomesnetwork.com/LureOfTheLake



ABOVE LEFT: For the bath, Susan Swanson chose a rustic drop-in, hand-hammered copper sink to complement the multicolored tile counter tops. Maple cabinets with a coffee finish include oil-rubbed bronze faucets by Moen.
ABOVE RIGHT: Large-diameter logs create dramatic interlocking corners. The roofline enhances the visual impact by mixing various sizes and pitches. An outdoor shower located on the side of the home leads to the mudroom and is ideal for warming up after a day of swimming in lake.



The screened porch is one of Bridget's favorite spots. Pressure-treated wood decking and knotty-pine ceiling assure a safe and dry setting for viewing the Three Lakes Chain. She purchased the patio set with its tiled top and high-back mesh chairs at Costco.

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