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# THE LURE OF THE LAKE

A photograph of a log cabin with a large wooden garage door and a green door, set against a backdrop of trees. The cabin is constructed from natural stone and half-logs. The roof is covered in green shingles. The garage door is made of wood with a grid pattern. The entrance door is green. The cabin is surrounded by trees and a gravel driveway.

Natural stone and half-logs  
compose the home exterior.  
The front gable provides both a  
shelter and welcoming entrance.

*A Wisconsin family enjoys all that their lakeside*





*log home offers for their active lifestyle.*

BY GLORIA GALE • PHOTOS BY DAN HOFFMAN



Investments come and investments go. In the case of John and Kris Dries, not only did they invest wisely in northeastern Wisconsin property, but their lifestyle also profited in more ways than one.

"It was all about timing," says John. "In 1994 I purchased four acres of wooded shorefront property in Three Lakes, Wisc. As we watched interest rates drop, my wife Kris and I began to seriously consider building a second home, specifically a log home. Actually, all this happened much sooner than either of us anticipated, because we purchased the property with thoughts of retiring there, not of building now with our young family."

Once the Dries determined that the timing was right, they delved into thoroughly researching their project. "We really did our homework, studying magazines, talking to folks, and visiting a number of log home companies. We learned a lot as we poured over magazines, borrowing a bit here and a bit there," says Kris.

The drive from the Dries' primary residence in Brookfield, Wisc.,

was 250 miles, but that wasn't particularly a deterrent for John and Kris. Soon enough they found Tomahawk Log and Country Homes, about 70 miles from their property, to be a perfect match for their ideas. The inspiration was already in motion because John had been coming to this chain of lakes region since the 1960s and hadn't forgotten its beauty.

"We have to give lots of credit to Tom Seehafer, a sales representative with Tomahawk, who was so professional and treated us with a great deal of respect," says John. "His knowledge of his product was instrumental in creating our customized design."

Once the ink dried on the contract, John and Kris worked in tandem with Seehafer to map out all of the elements they wanted to incorporate into their 4,300-square-foot, three-story home. "The Dries purchased our turn-key package, allowing us to act as general contractor," says Seehafer.

As construction proceeded, there were few glitches. "The founda-





RIGHT: Striking windows and doors are trimmed in log for a distinctive look. BELOW: An open hand-hewn staircase climbs three stories. An expansive wall of windows and French doors allow in ample light and panoramic views of the lake.







tion was poured in the spring of 2002 and the log home was finished in late fall of 2002. Everything we wanted, which was a considerable amount of customizing, was done according to our plans," says John.

A case in point is the front gable the couple wanted. "This feature was integrated to give a distinctive, full-log look and provide a welcoming entry to the front of the house," says Seehafer.

Another factor that pleased the couple was the log home company's customer service. "I felt the follow-up from Tomahawk was so important to our experience," says John. "If anything went wrong, they were great about fixing it."

As building progressed, the Dries visited periodically to keep a handle on the home's development. The home was built using conventional insulated walls with half-logs attached to the outside and inside.

"Once we moved in, John and I took approximately four months to decorate," says Kris. "We looked through magazines and even found an ad in one for a retailer in New Glarus that had a lot of the lodge-type furnishings we wanted in the home."

With their three children, the Dries happily made themselves at home very quickly. "Since I'm a teacher, once school is out I come up here with the kids and stay the entire summer. John joins us on weekends in the summer months and all of us try to come up at least once a month in the wintertime," says Kris.

It's not hard to spot the house, settled in the midst of the birch, pine, and oak of the Wisconsin woods. Since the house is located on a slight rise, it's not unusual to spot eagles gliding overhead. "Because eagles frequent the area and it's just a short walk down to Big Fork Lake, it was logical to call the home 'Eagles Perch,'" says John.

Inside the house the main floor rooms blend into one another. A wall of windows provides a focused view of the lake. "We wanted as many unobstructed views as possible" says John, who adds that "when you look back at the house from the lake you see this incredible definition of logs outlining the windows."

Not only is the house design notable, but so is the landscaping. "I have to give credit to Terry and John Tillman, the two gentlemen who did the landscaping," says John. "They did an exceptional job making sense of





ABOVE: The exterior back of the house sits only 100 feet from the lake. The family enjoys easy outdoor entertaining, from picnics to hot tubbing. BELOW: Maple cabinets complement the northern white pine logs found throughout the rest of the house. Because of the unique half-log wall system on both the home's exterior and interior walls, the rooms look like they have full log walls. LEFT: John and Kris wanted to lend a comfortable yet rustic touch in their furnishings. Their dining room chairs and a wooden plank harvest table reflect this style.



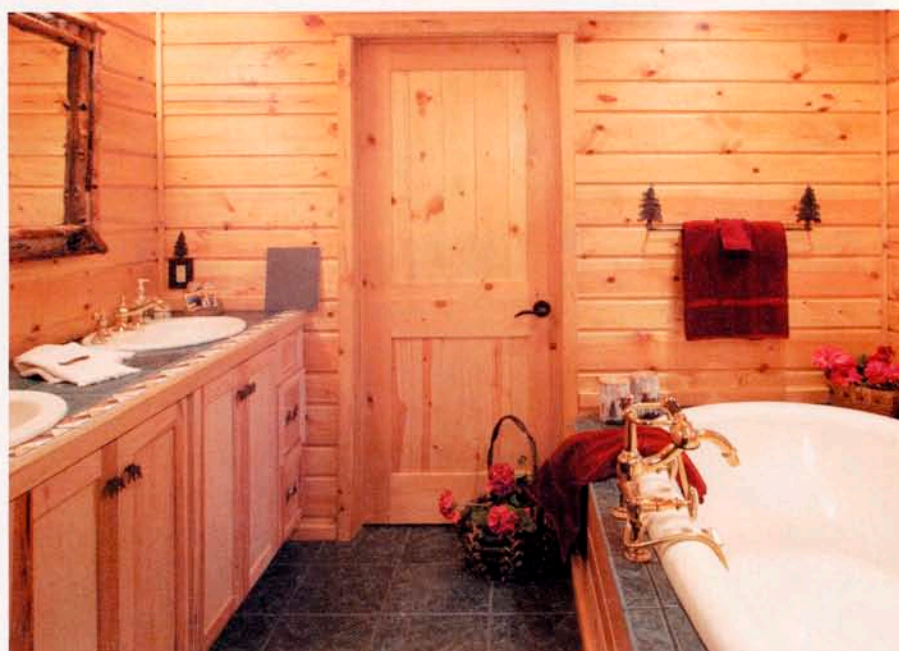




**LEFT:** The Dries' two daughters share an upstairs bedroom. Hand-carved animals and birds settle on the log bedpost.

**BELOW:** An eagle perches on the hand-hewn log bedpost in the Dries' master bedroom. It reminds the couple of the abundance of wildlife found outside their window.

**RIGHT:** The home's North Woods lodge décor is evident in the master bath with its spa tub. Pine walls and a tile floor add to the natural, rustic ambience.





the lot. In the back, they built a small retaining wall with native stone to lend definition to the property, then added brick pavers within the interior of the yard, carving out a place for the hot tub and picnic area."

Obviously, this is a family that enjoys the outdoors. "We are here the whole summer," says Kris. "Since the kids are involved in a water skiing club, the lake gets major use. I like to do hand crafts like needlepoint and quilting, and John and I play golf. In ski season, you will find all of us heading to our local ski mountains, Blackjack or Powderhorn."

Wintertime in Wisconsin finds temperatures dipping dramatically. "We have two natural gas forced-air furnaces, but I think the highest monthly bill we've had has been about \$300," says John.

The Dries also have two wood-burning fireplaces, one in the great room, another in the finished basement. "Both are constructed of native Wisconsin stone and help keep the house warm," says John.

In the summertime, the house stays relatively cool—the Dries do have air conditioning, but mostly they enjoy the fresh air circulated from ceiling fans.

With the height of the vaulted ceiling in the great room and open floor plan on the main level, the Dries admit that "it's a very spacious, comfortable house."

"We really got everything that we wanted," says Kris. "One of the

things I like so much about the home is the warmth."

"Not only does the house have great design for the kids' bedrooms upstairs and all the public rooms on the main level, but the logs, stained a natural color, are also very inviting," the Dries agree. From the maple cabinets in the kitchen to the pine tongue-and-groove ceilings in the home's main area, the house has considerable character.

Distinctive touches are everywhere. The front door is hunter green and ceramic tile pavers lead into the large great room.

"We wanted a comfortable, casually styled feeling to our home. It helps to have decorated in a classic North Woods lodge style," says John. "There are twig-constructed chairs and tables, log beds, and a wonderful hand-hewn log staircase. In the kitchen, we have green tile embossed with woodland animals on the backsplash. The house is generally lit with a variety of lighting: iron pendants, table lamps, spots, and recessed fixtures. The overall ambience enhances the glow of the natural-colored stained logs.

"We have to say that the house, which we credit in large part to Tom Seehafer's vision, is exactly what we planned. We are glad that we made the leap to build sooner rather than later. Now we can enjoy all that this home provides for our active lifestyle," says John. ■

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**LOG HOME PRODUCER AND BUILDER:** Tomahawk Log and Country Homes, Inc., Tomahawk, Wisconsin.

