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Coming Home

Wisconsin natives return to the Northwoods to build their dream retreat

Story by Stacy Durr Albert • Photography by Roger Wade

After living in South Carolina for more than a decade, the owners of this inviting log home yearned to return to Wisconsin for their retirement. So they left their Southern home on Kiawah Island, and headed to the Northwoods to pursue their dream of creating a rustic, log retreat.

"A log home is a true contrast to the island living we were accustomed to," says Catherine, who like her husband Jim, is a native of Milwaukee. "But it was something we had thought about for a long time."



Opposite: The great room looks similar to one in a rustic lodge, but makes guests feel like they are visiting a cozy cabin in the woods. Left: Set in the midst of Wisconsin's Northwoods, the home features a series of decks, which offer private places to escape.

Tomahawk Log & Country Homes photos/Styled by Debra Grahl

The first step in creating their new home was finding the right company for the job. The couple looked through regional publications and interviewed a number of log home producers. When they met with Tomahawk Log & Country Homes of Tomahawk, Wisconsin, they knew their search was complete.

"We had finally found someone we could trust to bring our plans to fruition," Jim says. "Tomahawk seemed like a company that would really go to bat for us."

Locating the right piece of property was the next step. Working with a real estate agent, the couple searched Wisconsin's Three Lakes area for just the right parcel. Patience proved to be a virtue—the couple ended up with a scenic 1.7-acre lot offering 580 feet of shoreline.

"The Northwoods area has charm, and we found a piece of land that captures it," Catherine says. "There are beautiful evergreens and white birch trees all around us. We really feel set apart up here."

Room for Everyone

Jim and Catherine next turned their attention to designing a floorplan. They gathered rough ideas and took them to the design department at Tomahawk. The design team helped create a custom floorplan that incorporated all of the owners' wishes.

"Jim and Catherine are very family-oriented, so it was important for them to have room for all of their kids and grandkids," says Troy Gullo, a sales consultant for Tomahawk. "They really knew what they wanted. They wanted a comfortable house that was very authentic-looking. It took some strategic planning to fit the home onto the site, since there was an inlet of water to work around."

Once the design was finalized, the initial stages of the building process began. Tomahawk sent a small crew to work on the project daily; the company was responsible for everything from permitting and excavating to carpentry and landscaping. "This was a true turn-key project," Troy says.



Opposite: The dining room showcases the extensive log work of the home, including the purlins of the cathedral ceiling and the log staircase. Below: The kitchen's ash flooring and hickory cabinets reflect natural light from a window strategically placed over the sink.



Below: The owners filled their den with log accessories, giving it a rugged and handsome appeal. Opposite: The rustic flavor of the log home is contrasted by the English country manor decor in the sunroom.





Less than a year later, the 3,425-square-foot home was complete. The owners were delighted with Tomahawk's work ethic. "It was really a great experience to work with them. We would do it again in a heartbeat," Jim says.

Built for Efficient Living

Tomahawk is well-known for its Energy Log System, which boasts incredible energy efficiency. This system employs 2-by-6-inch frame construction with 6-inch fiberglass insulation, 1-inch foil-faced rigid insulation, and a half-log exterior. Jim and Catherine opted for the company's "Cross-Lok" 12-inch round logs with traditional butt-and-pass corners for the exterior. Inside, they selected both round and flat logs using a combination of Norway red pine and northern white pine.

"We really tried to make it easy living," Catherine says. "There's not a piece of drywall in the house, so we don't have to worry about painting. The inside logs are lighter in color than the outside logs, and have been finished with a linseed-based product for longevity."

The layout of the home is also geared to practicality. The main floor houses a great room that contains the kitchen, dining area and living room. An office, mudroom, den, bath, foyer and two spacious guest bedrooms also are on this level. The upstairs includes a loft that overlooks the great room and the master suite, which is just beyond a set of elegant French doors.

"The house takes advantage of the beautiful lake views," says Catherine, noting the panoramic vista showcased through the windows of the great room and master suite.



The interior decor suggests a rustic tone, though Catherine insists it is still a work in progress. "I would really like to emulate the look of a Lake Placid lodge," she says. "I want our place to feel homey and rustic."

Part of the reason Jim and Catherine are still working on the decorating is because a majority of their furniture was destroyed in a warehouse fire during the move. "Some of the items were too Southern for our new home anyway," Catherine says, "but there are just so many personal items we can never replace."

One of the most dramatic focal points inside the home is the 8-foot-wide fireplace on a gable wall. Made with natural fieldstone, it soars to a height of 24 feet. A Tomahawk craftsman carefully constructed the raised hearth. "He was truly a genius," Jim says. "He chose stones with different variations for artistic value. Also, instead of hav-

ing an unsightly vent, he left small spaces in between the stones. He really finished it to a tee."

Outdoor Accents

The exterior of the home is just as dramatic as the interior. "The footprint of the main roofline is 30-by-58 feet," Troy says. "There are enormous dramatics when you walk into a house of that size."

Several outdoor decks add even more interest to the design. In addition, the property is terraced with stone, so there are a number of striking outdoor retaining walls to complement and contrast with the wood tones of the house. Overall, the landscaping is natural, and virtually maintenance-free. One challenging aspect of creating the outdoor ambiance, however was the driveway.

"I wanted a circular driveway with lots of curves and surprises," Jim says. "A straight driveway just doesn't seem to work in the country. It is



Opposite: The master bathroom includes a haven for relaxation with its large soaking tub.
Below: Norway red pine and northern white pine square logs frame an elegant set of French doors, which lead into the master bedroom.



Right: The fieldstone chimney and retaining walls add architectural interest and complement the wood tones of the home.

much more romantic when it twists and turns." After extensive discussion and careful planning, the crew compromised with the owners and created a driveway that twists around evergreens and forms a slight "S" shape.

The curvy gravel driveway satisfies the owners, and it has seen its share of tire tracks—the owners' children and grandchildren love coming up to the log retreat for a little respite from the everyday world. "Our kids love the casualness of it all," Catherine says. "This past summer, we had 26 people stay here for 10 days. Our family has made so many memories here already. They've begun to call our home 'The Bunk House!'"

Whether they are entertaining a house full of guests or simply enjoying some time alone, the owners cherish their special retreat. "I never knew what the sound of quiet was before I came here," Catherine says. "You sit outside and hear the wind rustling through the trees and it just touches your soul."



A Natural Disguise for a Modern Fireplace

Builders are always looking for ways to incorporate modern day efficiencies into a log home without disturbing the rustic coziness. The natural grill for the heat exchanger on this fireplace is a perfect example.

When building the hearth for Catherine and Jim's log home, the masons from Norb Renn Construction faced a problem. They needed to create a vent for the heat exchange fireplace but they didn't want to install a standard metal grill since that would disturb the rustic, Old World coziness of the natural fieldstone.

The solution? A natural vent.

The masons hid the heat exchanger's 1-by-3-foot upper opening behind strategically placed fieldstones. Mortar holds the tops and bottoms of the stones in



place, while the sides are left open so the warm air from the heat exchanger can enter the room.

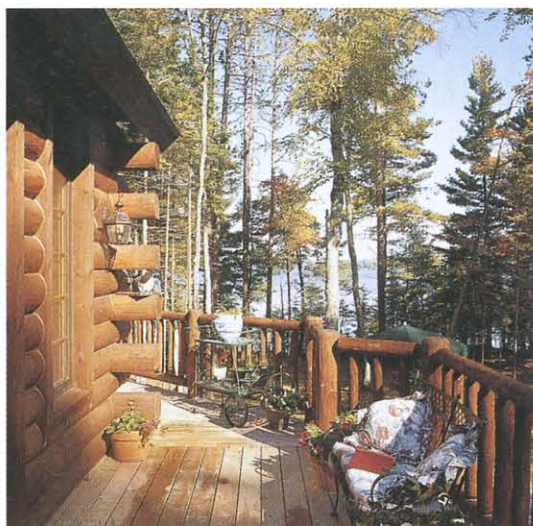
The result? An Old World-style hearth that efficiently heats the great room.

Behind the scenes, the Acucraft fireplace insert draws in cold air from outside for combustion, while circulating the warmer air from inside to heat the room. The inside air is pulled from the bottom vent of the fireplace, circulated through the heat exchanger and then pushed up the masonry

chamber and out the holes between the stones.

This method maintains the continuity of the dramatic hearth structure that is the focal point of the great room.

— Rachel Machacek



The traditional butt-and-pass corner system used for the home is just as eye-catching as the view from the wraparound porch.

Notebook

Log package price: \$210,000-\$250,000

Square footage: 3,425

Log producer: Tomahawk Log & Country Homes

Chinking: Sashco Sealants

Desk: Thomasville Furniture

Fireplace insert: Acucraft Fireplace Systems

Kitchen cabinetry: Schrock Cabinet Co.

Masonry: Norb Renn Masonry Inc.

Roof: CertainTeed Corp.

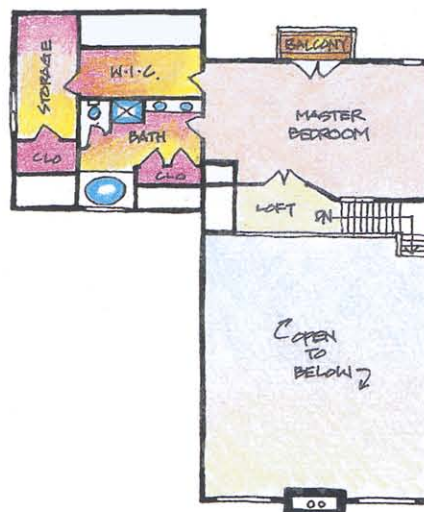
Stain: Velvit Products Co.

Tub and faucet: Kohler Co.

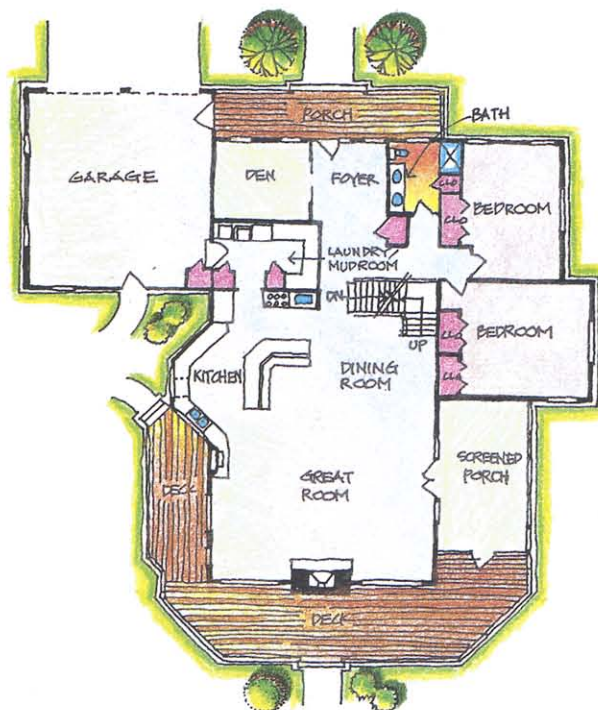
Wicker furniture: Pier 1

Windows and doors: Pella Corp.

For more information, see Resources on page 153.



Second Floorplan



First Floorplan