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North Woods *Welcome*

HOW A WISCONSIN COUPLE'S HOME BLENDS NATURE AND NURTURE

The rugged beauty of Wisconsin's north country—with its lush forests and pristine lakes—certainly calls out to people. Typically, though, those people are guys. Which makes Barbara Pitterle anything but typical.

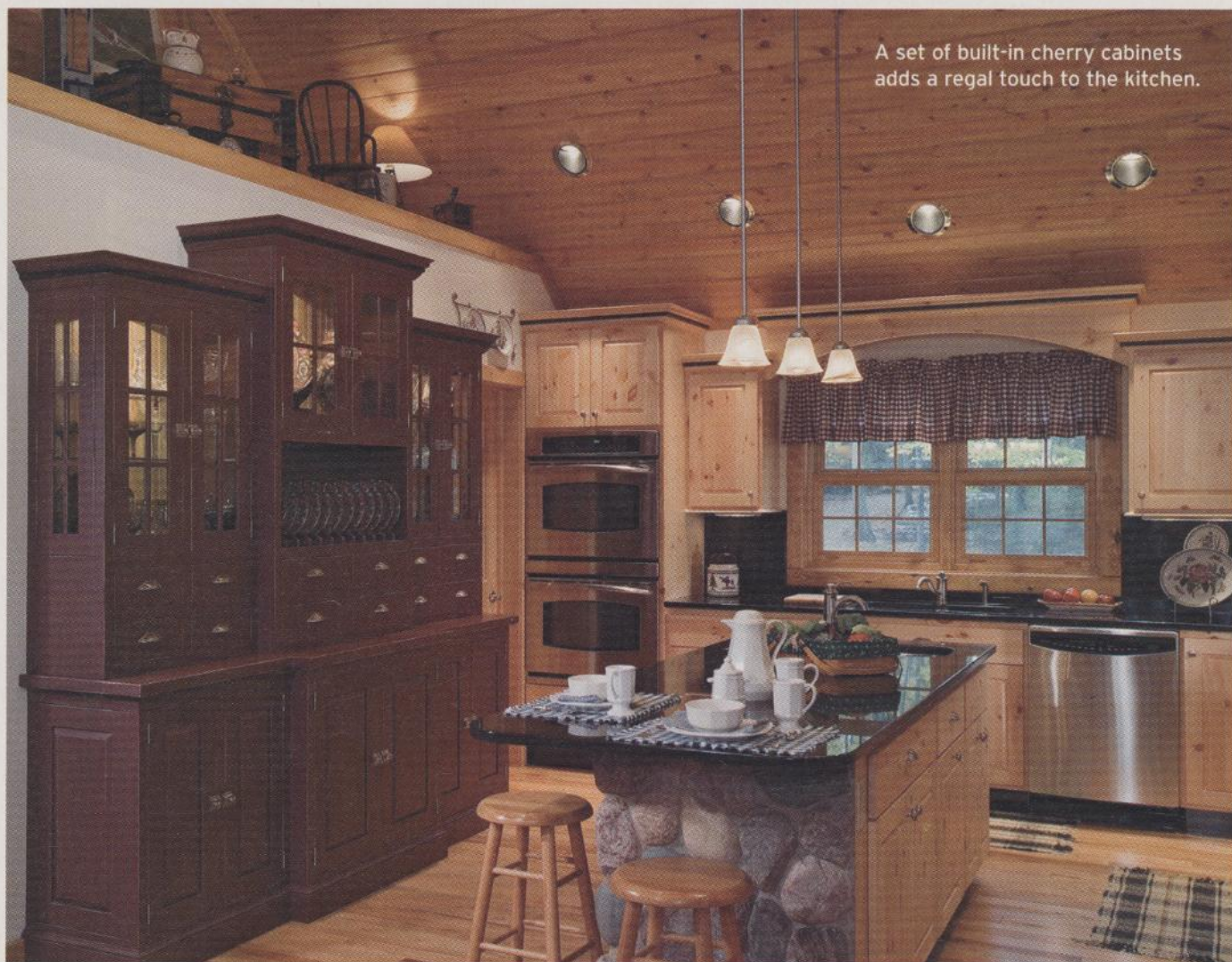
STORY BY Holly Smith • PHOTOGRAPHY BY Roger Wade • STYLING BY Debra Grah

Tonahawk Log & Country Homes photos

A soaring ceiling and fireplace make the great room spectacular; cottage-style windows make it cozy.

OPPOSITE: "We were kind of blown away by it," says Steve Pitterle of the grandeur of his home in Wisconsin.





A set of built-in cherry cabinets adds a regal touch to the kitchen.

"Usually it's the husband who wants to go and live in the North Woods, but it was really Barb who wanted to be up here," says Steve Pitterle about his wife's lifelong dream of getting back to nature. Content to move toward "the second phase" of his career in the more cosmopolitan Madison, Steve was nonetheless happy to follow his wife's dream. With one caveat.

"I said, 'O.K., if I'm going to be up here and go through the winters climbing the walls, then I want there to be enough walls to climb,'" he recalls, laughing.

Judging by the Pitterles' soaring 4,000-square-foot log home in St. Germain, Steve got his wish, too.

Family First

Steve and Barbara didn't set out to build a log home. Although they'd spent time in

rustic homes over the years, they weren't truly bitten by the bug until they bought a piece of land on Wisconsin's Little St. Germain Lake and put a cabin on it. Later, while living in Texas for Steve's telecommunications job, they decided their future dream house cried out for logs.

But it would ultimately cry out for something else: more space.

"It's all about family," says Barbara of the growing Pitterle brood, which includes three adult children, three grandchildren and countless aunts, uncles and in-laws. "We have room here to deal with a lot of people at one time."

So important was family that not only did Steve and Barbara design their home with their kids in mind, they designed it *with* their kids. One of them, at least.

"Our older son, Jamie, is an engineer,

so we started giving him ideas," recalls Steve of the many doodling-and-dreaming sessions they held prior to breaking ground. "He'd go away for two hours, and *voila!* He'd come back with drawings."

From there, the Pitterles handed the sketches off to Ron Volz, vice president of Wisconsin-based Tomahawk Log & Country Homes, who oversaw the final design and construction of the house, completed in late 2005.

"Steve, Barb and their son came up with a tentative floorplan," says Ron, who estimates that 98 percent of Tomahawk's homes are custom. "And our in-house designers made sure we could build it all," including a stone fireplace on the covered porch that backs up to another one in the great room.

In business since 1986, Tomahawk

Like the house itself, the Pitterles' dining room is ready to host a crowd.



Mornings spent reading and taking in dazzling views of the forest make the master bedroom feel like an elegant North Woods escape.



A custom glass-block shower brings a touch of urban flair to the master bathroom.



uses a half-log (or “Energy-Log”) system exclusively, meaning each of its red- and white-pine structures, including the Pitterles’ home, is conventionally framed and insulated, but it boasts hand-hewn half logs on the exterior and interior. This system offers home owners the drama of a full-log look with the construction of traditional houses.

As the Pitterles’ home proves, it also offers virtual carte blanche in terms of layout and creative embellishments.

Solid as a Rock

To accommodate their growing brood, Steve and Barbara designed their home with an open floorplan and lots of space to sleep. In addition to three bedrooms, guests can bunk in the loft or the finished walkout basement. And three full bathrooms save overnighters from having to queue up for a hot shower.

Ironically, one of the features that most lends to the place’s comfy feel is itself: rock hard.

“I just had to have a stone foundation around the house,” says Steve—not to mention a staggering three-flue chimney and formidable hearths created with locally quarried fieldstone all hoisted up, one by one, on the scaffolding. Striking but not flashy, the mammoth foundation serves as a pedestal for the home, which overlooks 4 acres.

The Pitterles’ house, verdant land-



A clever outdoor fireplace warms porch-sitters on cold North Woods nights.

scape aside, is a stunner. Inside, timber-scribed half-log accents, tongue-and-groove paneling, wainscoting and patches of drywall combine to create a sophisticated yet earthy decor. Hardwood and slate-tile floors provide beauty underfoot, while pine and cherry cabinets make an already grand kitchen even more so.

When it came time to choose windows, however, the Pitterles weren’t thinking grand—they were thinking homey.

Thus, their great room—with its rectangular cottage-style windows—is still

“great” in every sense of the word, but doesn’t exude the ski-lodge vibe given off by more grandiose panes.

“We wanted it to look like a real log home—so we pictured traditional windows,” says Barbara.

Overall, the place itself is beyond what the Pitterles pictured: It’s more than they ever imagined. What began as a house where the couple could spend their golden years has morphed into a welcoming home base where the extended family can gather every year.

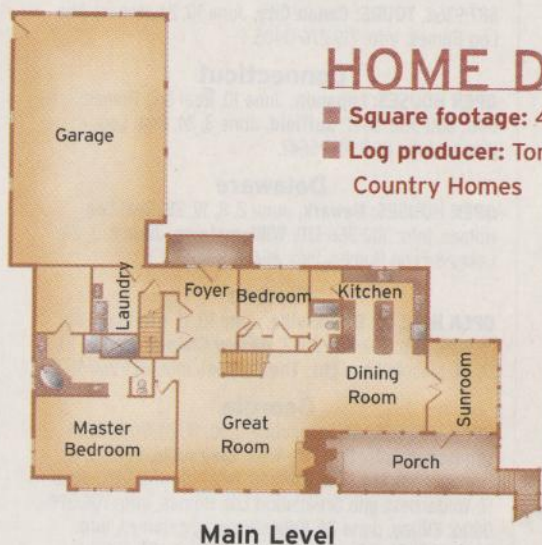
Steve and Barbara wouldn’t have it any other way. ■

HOME DETAILS

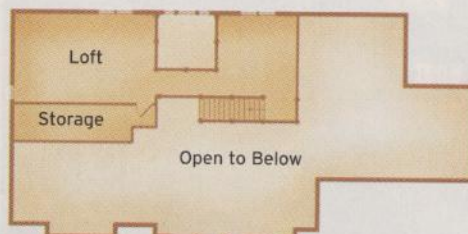
■ Square footage: 4,000

■ Log producer: Tomahawk Log & Country Homes

For more information see Resources on page 92.



Main Level



Upper Level



Lower Level