

A COMPLETE ARCHITECTURAL GUIDE TO CLASSIC WOOD HOMES

TIMBER HOMES

ILLUSTRATED®

Casual Elegance

Furnish Your Dream Home With Style

Create a Perfect
Outdoor Room

Investing In
Handmade Furniture

Find an Open House
In Your Area

Floor Plan Ideas
For Your Home

© 03408 • JUNE 2004



0 09281 03408 7

06

\$5.99 U.S. / \$5.99 CANADA



In all his years in mortgage financing, Fred Graf saw applications for a wide variety of homes come across his desk— from contemporary homes to more rustic log homes. It wasn't until a customer bought an 19th century barn and refurbished it, though, that Fred knew the type of home he wanted to build when he and his wife Jean retired.

The Grafs had bought six acres of pristine North Carolina woodland 15 years earlier. Although they lived in Wisconsin at the time, Jean had family in North Carolina and the laid back life-style and milder climate appealed to both of them.

The couple had made at least eight or nine trips to the state over a five-year period before they finally found the unique parcel—located on the W. Kerr Scott Reservoir in Wilkesboro, North Carolina—that they would eventually call home. The reservoir and dam, which are maintained by the U.S. Corps of Engineers, was built to control flooding in the area.

The land, which boasts 700 feet of waterfront, used to be a campground. “There is residential development on about a third of the lake,” Fred says, “and the rest of it is campgrounds and remains natural. Because our land had originally been a campground, it had not been logged. So there is a forest full of magnificent trees here.”



Following Their Roots

Knowing that his rustic property would be the perfect place to build a wood-filled home, Fred became interested in knowing more about how that barn he had financed was built. He discovered the foundation for the antique barn was based on a wooden post-and-beam structure, which reminded Fred of his family's homestead in Switzerland.

That old homestead, which Fred had visited several times and is still in family hands, was built with mortise-and-tenon joinery in an Old World European style. "Our farmstead over there is built the same way with the great beams," Fred says. "It is probably 300 years old. It's in the Swiss chalet style with the barn on one side, the house on the other and a hay mound over the whole thing."

Interested in possibly building a more modern version of his family's homestead, Fred and Jean tried to learn as much as they could about the craft of timber framing. "We started going to visit model homes and trade shows," Fred says, "and then I bought some books on timber framing and I started studying it."

The Grafs also went to many "Parade of Homes" houses to see how new homes are built now.

All of the wood in the frame was reclaimed from an old logging operation on the Saint Lawrence seaway. The black streaks reveal the places where the timbers, in their previous life were chained and bolted together. After being in the water for half a century, the iron from the bolts leached out into the timbers streaking the wood in the process.



The view out the windows of the great room rivals that from within -- where reclaimed Douglas fir posts and beams, given a natural finish, take center stage



The kitchen features oak cabinetry handcrafted locally and solid surfacing on the countertops. A pantry (the large cabinet to the right of the passageway) is one of the many special touches incorporated into the kitchen by the couple's cabinet-maker.



The frame that provides the skeleton for the home includes several queen-post bents and a number of interesting joinery changes, which have become points of discussion for observant guests.



Finding a Framer

At a timber frame home show in Nashville, Fred met Rick McCurdy, a sales coordinator with Blue Ridge Timberwrights. Rick hit it off with the couple and invited them to visit Blue Ridge's office and shop in Christiansburg, Virginia. Over the course of the next several years, the couple visited Rick at least three times to talk to people he had worked with and visit some of the homes the company had built.

It wasn't until the Grafts went to the raising of a winery in Meadows of Dan, Virginia, that they made their decision to go with Blue Ridge. The couple had been interested in possibly using reclaimed wood in their home, but when they saw the type of unique reclaimed timbers being used in the construction of the winery, they knew for sure which company to pick.

"The timbers were reclaimed Douglas fir from the St. Lawrence Seaway," Rick explains. "They were used as booms as well as fences to keep pulpwood out of the shipping lanes. Three or four of these big timbers—up to 60 feet long—were bolted together and put end to end to surround the logs."

What Fred and Jean found so appealing about the timbers were the long black streaks that formed around the holes where the bolts had been. The timbers' decades of use in water had taken their toll.

"Where these timbers in their previous life were chained or bolted together, the iron leached out into the timbers and stained them," Rick says. "The result is black smears around those holes."

In Fred and Jean's timbers, black smears can be seen everywhere. There are even little black marks where smaller, standard-sized nails had been hammered into the wood. While some people might not like these character marks, it gives the wood a distinct look and a place in history to boot. "History and appearance are two of the factors that motivate people to use reclaimed timbers," Rick says. "We try to provide a written history of the wood as well as pictures, if possible. We have old pictures of

The couple incorporated three stones with special meaning to them into the fireplace. The stones were from Switzerland (a reminder of Fred's Old World roots) and North Carolina (where they have retired).



Seeing in 3-D

With Blue Ridge chosen, Fred submitted plans he had drawn up for his home to the company's architect. After going to so many open houses and model homes, the Grafts had a pretty good idea of what they wanted in their home. "I actually staked the house out full size in our yard in Wisconsin," Fred says. "I used surveyor ribbons so that Jean could walk from room to room. I could walk through the house in my mind, but Jean had to see it visually. And then later on, I took these square little sticks and I created a three-dimensional, timber-framed model of the house, so that Jean could get an idea of what the framing would look like."

After the couple sold their home in Wisconsin, they moved to North Carolina and waited out the duration of their home's construction in a rental property. When the home was finally completed by the David Mitchell Construction Company nearly 10 months later, the couple couldn't have been happier.

The home, which is fully framed except for the breezeway and garage, was constructed using several queen-post bents and a common rafter roof system. Some of the most interesting features in the home are the different types of joinery used in the frame's construction. In some cases, the joinery is different on opposing sides of a post. "The joints change from the stairway in the front foyer into the great room," Fred says. "It makes an interesting conversation piece because a number of people who have come to our house have noticed that the joinery is done differently on one side than the other."

To this day, Fred and Jean still can't believe how blessed they are to have such a beautiful home. "It kind of takes your breath away when you walk in," Fred says. "All the beams just glow."

As a surprise for Jean, Fred secretly had the builders install an in-floor heating system in the master bathroom. On Valentine's Day he turned it on.