

**1998 BUYER'S GUIDE**

# Timber Frame Homes

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# The Country Life

## An Ohio couple designs an expansive barn-like home

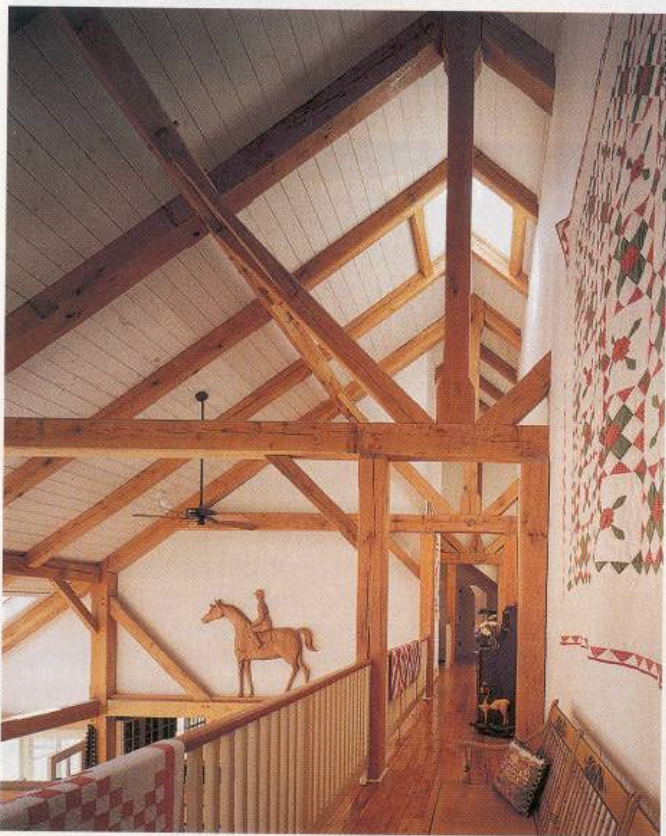
Story by  
Cathy Nelson Price

Photography by  
Brad Simmons

*I* imagine watching your home go up in flames just as you've completed an addition. For Chuck and Joanna Smith of Richwood, Ohio, that nightmare became a reality five years ago when, as Joanna recalls, "We got out with the clothes on our backs. Everything else was lost."

Not quite everything. Somehow, the Smiths kept the heart and courage to try again, replacing the burned-out timber frame home with a new one on the same site. And while the house itself—5,500 square feet set on 30 acres surrounded by family land—is a feast for the eyes, what makes it special is the teamwork of the architects, timber suppliers, builders and decorators who completed the project on a rigorous schedule because they didn't want the Smiths to go through any more stress.

*Opposite: To give the master bedroom the look of a stable, the timber frame posts and rafters were set close together. Stairs lead to a loft above the library. Left: A balcony spans the main section of the house, which was designed to resemble a barn. A carved horse and rider reflect the Smiths' love for all things equestrian.*



Blue Ridge Timberrights photos styled by Megan Griffin

It was November 1992 and the Smiths were looking forward to moving into their expanded timber frame house. "As far as we know, [the people preparing the floors] left oily rags, hundreds of them on a pile of trash just outside the house," Joanna says. "We think it must have been spontaneous combustion; then when it hit the house, it just took off because the house was full of fumes." Luckily, because of those same fumes, the Smiths were staying with Joanna's father at the time; which turned out to be a lifesaving move.

Rather than try to duplicate what they'd lost, Chuck and Joanna decided on a more sophisticated design. They engaged two Columbus firms, Glavan & Associates architect Ed Feher and Betley Vistain Builders, who in turn led them to Blue Ridge Timberwrights in Christianburg, Virginia.

**Right:** A Palladian window frames a lush, green view in the guest room. Whitewashed tongue-and-groove decking lines the ceiling.

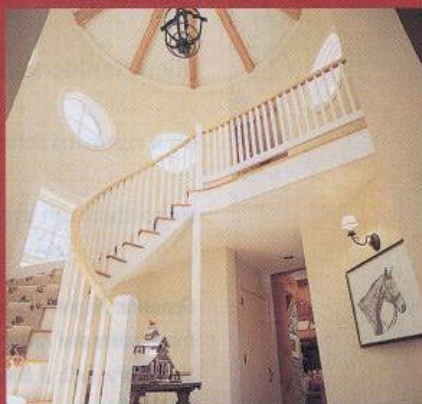


## Working with an Architect to Build Your Dream

**W**hether you know exactly where each room will be placed in your future home or you only have a few ideas, an architect or designer can put those ideas on paper.

If you haven't worked with an architect in the past, don't worry. "Very rarely does a client bring in a plan," architect Ed Feher of Glavan & Associates says. "It takes several meetings to get to know the client's personality, style and how they want to live." For the Smiths' home, Ed learned of Joanna's love of horses and wanted to convey her interest through her timber frame. To do so, he incorporated barn, silo and stable motifs into the home's design.

Ed tries to visit the future building site as well. "I like to visit the site with the clients, talk about its attributes, find its orientation to the sun," Ed says, "and find the views that the clients like and dislike."



Once this information is gathered, a diagram is drawn. "This will locate the rooms on the site," Ed says. Afterward, model buildings and electronic models that show textures and finishes are developed to give the clients an understanding of how the home will look.

Even though Ed was familiar with timber frame homes when he took on the Smiths' home-building project, to design their house, he consulted with several timber frame companies to combine the floorplan with the timber frame structure. Once he and the Smiths felt comfortable that the floorplan fit the family's lifestyle and needs, the plan was finalized and construction drawings were completed.



Al Anderson, a project coordinator with Blue Ridge Timberwrights, remembers that Chuck in particular was emphatic that the house be finished on schedule. "We had extra help to make sure that we got the frame up. Everybody wanted to give a little extra because we felt like the Smiths had been through enough!"

"Ed Feher picked our brains for the design and then had to work within the parameters of the timber frame company," Joanna explains. "We sat down with him and said, 'When we walk in the door, this is what we want to see. We entertain a lot, and this is what we want to do.' " For example, even though the Smith children are grown and out of the house, they each requested a bedroom. The bedrooms are there, but on the second floor, away from their parents' master wing.

The frame, which recently won a design award from the Timber Framers Guild of North America for "Best Residential Design," was cut from mixed red and white oak. No exterior stain was used, except for a clear tung oil finish.

Faithful to its "barn" inspiration, the main house incorporates inclined purlin posts supporting principal purlins. The purlins are interrupted by principle rafters and connected to each other with splines. Large posts help to define both the downstairs hall and the upstairs balcony.

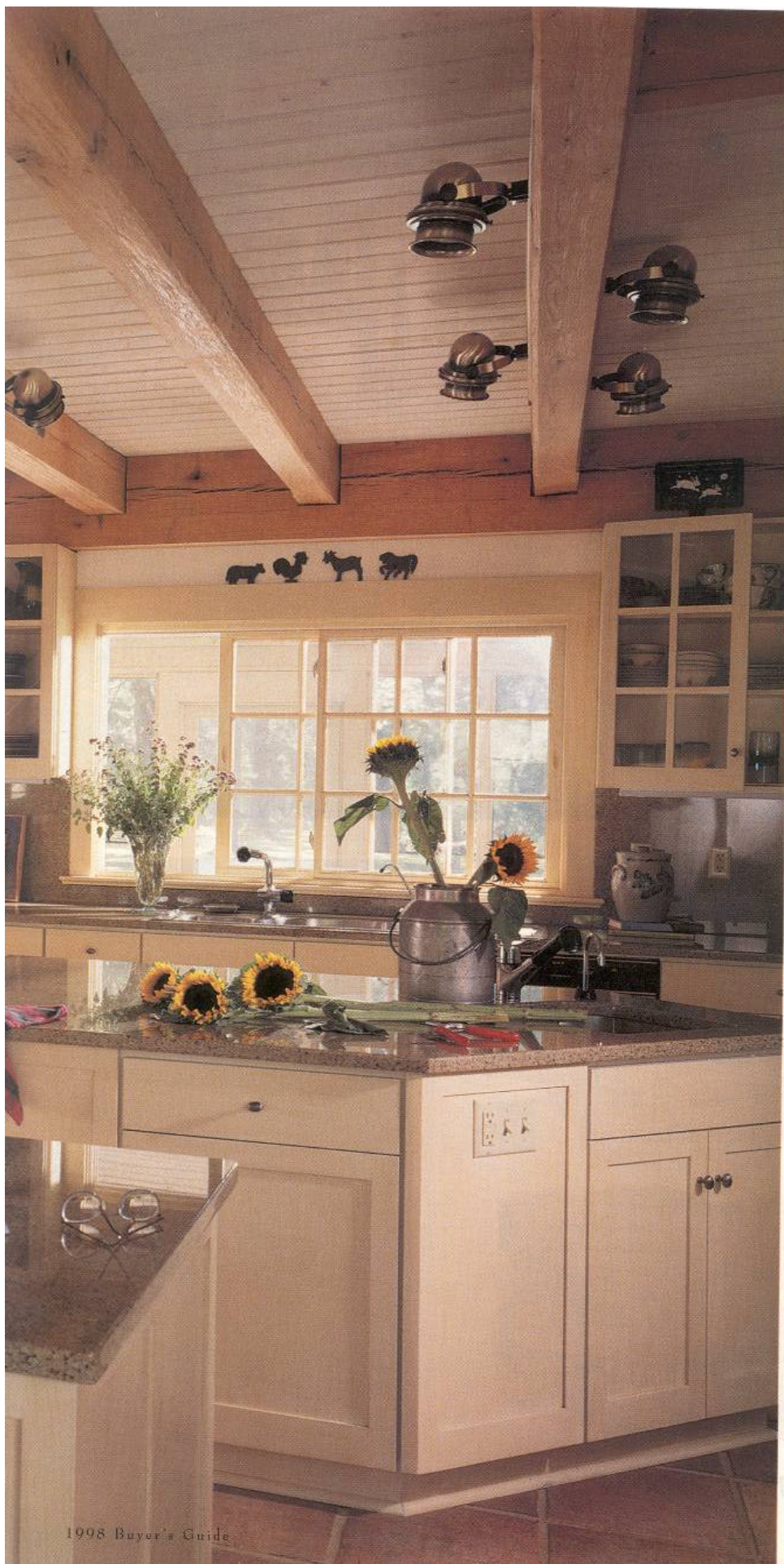
The Palladian window in the guest room is surrounded by a timber-framed wall system. Three other dormers, and the cupola, are built of structural insulated panels. For the "stable" look of the master bedroom, the posts are



*Top: A bank of skylights, wide windows and French doors pour sunlight into the great room. The timber frame's diagonal knee braces both strengthen the frame and impart the feeling of an old timbered barn. Left: When the Smiths' first timber frame home burned down, two of their dining room chairs were saved. The two chairs were copied to create a full set.*



*A copper range vent, brass track lights and granite countertops gleam in the open kitchen. A screened veranda wraps around the back of the kitchen.*



spaced closer together for a cozier feel. Out front on the adjacent porch, posts and girts suggest stalls.

The original plan for the "silo" or stairwell called for structural panels arranged like barrel frames under a timber-framed roof system. After some budget cuts the silo's design was revised, now it boasts a timber-framed roof set on 2-by-6-inch framed walls.

"This was one of the most pleasant projects we've ever worked on," builder Jeff Vistain recalls. "Everyone pitched in to make sure that the Smiths had exactly what they wanted. And after what had happened the last time, we made sure that every little detail was covered twice over."

Construction began in September 1993. "Watching the timber frame go up was the most exciting part. Blue Ridge Timberwrights sent a great bunch of people; it felt like a family," Joanna recalls gratefully.

A year later, the Smiths moved into their new home. "It seemed like an eternity; we felt homeless for so long," Joanna says. Thankfully, the house went up without a hitch. Though some trees were lost in the fire, enough were saved to give the house its woodsy setting on a natural grade.

Entering the house, a foyer opens into the great hall, with its 28-foot-high cathedral ceiling, skylights and raised stone hearth. Italian tile flooring extends into the dining room, breakfast area, kitchen and utility rooms beyond. Though there are additional fireplaces, the main level has a radiant heating system under the floors. The home is also pre-wired for a future whole-house audio system.

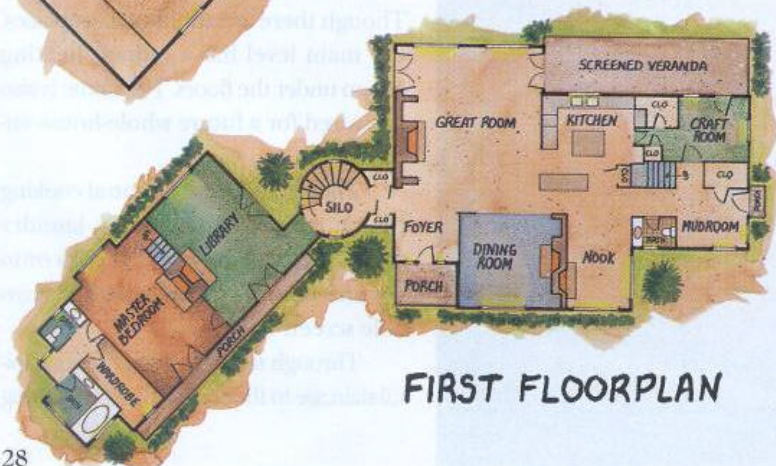
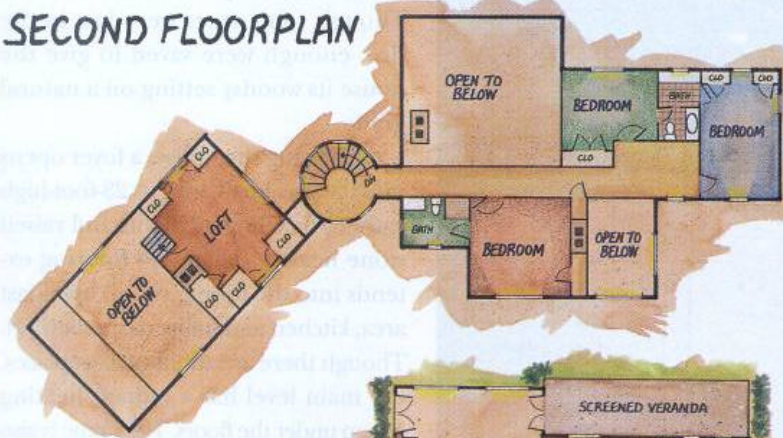
The kitchen, with a central cooking island, connects to a pantry, laundry room and craft area, which exits onto a stone-floored veranda with removable screen walls.

Through the silo, which houses a spiral staircase to the second floor, is the wing

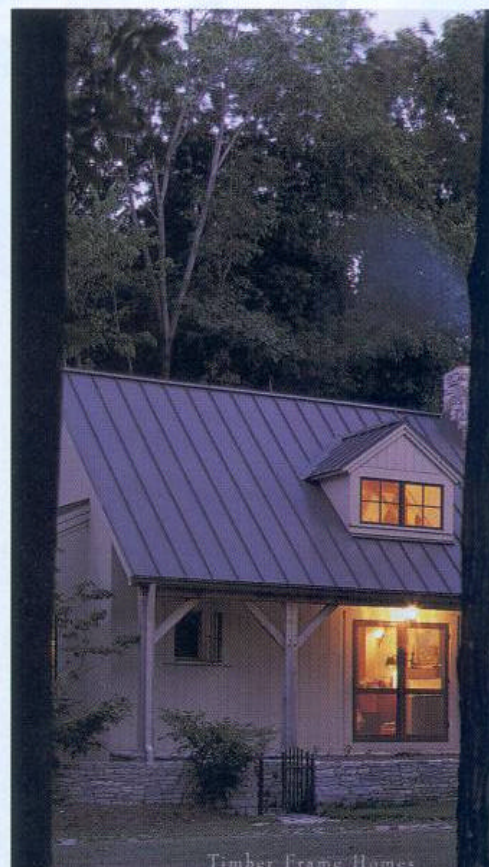
One of the Smiths' four dogs lounges by the fireplace in the library off the master bedroom. Oxblood-red walls set off the home's oak framing. A lowered ceiling and soft furnishings create a feeling of casual intimacy.



## SECOND FLOORPLAN



## FIRST FLOORPLAN



Joanna confesses is her favorite—the library and master bedroom. “The architect made up a story about how the house evolved,” Joanna explains. “In his mind, the main part of the house—great hall, dining room, breakfast, kitchen—was the barn. The master bedroom-library wing was the shed, and the silo connects the two.”

Red clapboard siding and barn-like patio doors accent the library, a room Joanna loves. With its floors of Australian cypress, it’s hospitable to the Smiths’ four dogs, who can run at will throughout the house without carpet restrictions.

In fact, says interior designer Ann Greely, the dogs were an important factor in the home’s overall ambiance. “The Smiths wanted a home where the dogs would feel comfortable,” Ann says. “Yet there’s a casual elegance that’s extremely inviting.”

Above the library is a loft, which, Joanna says, “would be my office if I can ever get to spend some time there. I mostly hang out in the barn.” The

home’s three additional bedrooms on the second floor can be reached either via the silo or by climbing a back stairway near the rear of the kitchen.

With no existing decor to match or build on, Ann and the Smiths had to start from scratch except for two of eight French antique country chairs that were out of the house at the time of the fire. “We were able to find a craftsman to duplicate the rest of those chairs,” Ann says. Ann, who shops worldwide for antique furnishings for her clients, went to horse-loving England to find appropriate pieces for the Smiths.

Though there’s no mistaking the house’s spacious beauty, it has an unstudied elegance that’s as natural as its surroundings. As befits a time of rebuilding, Joanna has added more horses to her stable, and daughter Suzy has returned home temporarily to help show and train. Suzy is the fifth generation of Joanna’s family to live on their land and if the faith and resilient grit of her parents is any indication, she won’t be the last.

Architect	J. Edward Feher of Glavan & Associates
Builder	Betley Vistain Builders Inc.
Interior designer	Ann Greely Interiors Inc.
Timber framer	Blue Ridge Timberwrights
Cost of frame package	\$200,000
Square footage	5,269
Floorplan name	Custom
Wood in frame	Red and white oak
Wood stain	Tung oil finish
Fireplace facing	Local stone
Flooring	Australian cypress and Tangina Visconti Biondo tile
Wall system	Structural insulated panels
Roofing	Standing-seam metal roof
Siding	Cedar with local stone on silo
Award	This home won the Timber Framers Guild of North America’s award for “Best Residential Design” in 1997.

**Below: Set on a 30-acre horse farm, the Smiths’ timber frame home echoes the shape of classic farm buildings: a barn, silo and stable shed. Framing details at the doorways hint at the stunning timber structure inside.**

