



SITTING PRETTY. A full-length cedar-plank porch, sitting under a shake roof, on the front of the home is a perfect place to enjoy cool late-summer evenings. Ann and Bruce added a matching log-sided garage (shown here), complete with its own porch, to store their summer toys.



TRIMMED IN TRADITION. A solid, four-plank pine door, set between two large sconces and held together with traditional black metal strapping, welcomes visitors while keeping gusting lake winds at bay.

SHORELINE serendipity

A Wisconsin lakeside retreat, found by sheer happenstance, enables a family of five to resume a beloved childhood tradition.

STORY BY JOE BOUSQUIN | PHOTOGRAPHY BY SCOTT AMUNDSON
HOME BY KEN LACOY CONSTRUCTION AND CUSTOM LOG HOMES

HEARTH WARMING. Not only do the massive ceiling beams support the second floor, they provide a cozy, warm space in front of the living room's Indian Creek fieldstone fireplace. Southwest and prairie-style motifs blend for a tasteful, comfortable gathering spot.



LIFE'S A PICNIC. The dining room's long oak table, with benches in lieu of chairs, allows for big family meals with the casual feel of having a nightly picnic. An Early-American-style chandelier gives rustic sophistication to the space.

As a girl, Ann Christensen treasured family time at the rustic log cabin her grandfather built on Northern Wisconsin's Middle Eau Claire Lake. A family tradition since the 1920s, she and her siblings would visit the house each summer to swim, fish or hike through the lush woodlands of nearby Chequamegon National Forest.

As an adult, Ann decided that she and her husband, Bruce, would continue the custom, bringing their own children, Charlie, Jane and Ellen, to the bucolic lake house.

But with the addition of each new niece or nephew, the little cabin on the lake got more crowded, and time at the family retreat became harder to come by. So, when Ann and Bruce saw an open-house sign while on a leisurely drive to nearby Upper Eau Claire Lake, they stopped

in on a whim. What they found couldn't have been more perfect for their family had they designed and built the place themselves: a 5,000-square-foot home of 18-inch, hand-hewn, squared Engelmann spruce logs with traditional, dovetailed corners. Harvested from standing-dead timber, the logs came from Custom Log Homes of Stevensville, Montana, a hand crafter that's been in business since 1976. Thick, white chinking and a special treatment that turned

the logs a weathered gray, complete the turn-of-the-century look.

"As soon as we laid eyes on it, I could see the wheels turning in Bruce's head," Ann recalls. "We were going to figure out a way to make it happen."

And make it happen they did. Now the proud owners of a home that looks like it could have been built a century ago, Bruce and Ann aren't pressed for space anymore. Just one lake over from their family's original retreat, the new home boasts six spacious bedrooms and five sets of bunk beds, so accommodating a crowd is never a problem. "The house sleeps 18 comfortably, each in his or her own bed," Ann gushes. "So far, we've never needed more than that." The only addition they've made is a stand-alone garage, which they outfitted with log siding and a porch to match the style of the house.

Located on 9 wooded acres, the home enjoys 450 feet of lakefront on Upper Eau Claire's Lyndale Bay. With 16 windows facing the water, visitors enjoy views from just about any room in the house. "And depending on how the storms roll in from Lake Superior, the scenery can be quite dramatic," Bruce says.

A cedar-plank porch runs the entire length of the front of the home. Rockers make for a lazy refuge on cool fall nights, and a screened-in porch along the side of the home provides the perfect outdoor outlet during the warmer months. "We basically camp out there during the summer," Ann says with a laugh.

Inside, reclaimed-pine floors in a pale-blond shade lie throughout the upper and lower levels, making a stunning complement for the honey-hued pine-paneled interior walls and ceilings.

Yet, for all its rustic tradition, the house is thoroughly modern. Ann's kitchen boasts a full-size Viking range and granite counter on a center island, while a reclaimed-oak-topped bar creates a friendly boundary (and gathering spot) for her hungry brood and their friends. Custom-made, reclaimed-barnwood cabinets complete the country-kitchen feel. "I love cooking in that kitchen," Ann says. "Its open to the action, but it feels distinct."

The adjacent dining and living rooms sit under a planked ceiling supported by massive, 20-inch beams. Initially designed with a typical soaring-ceiling great room concept, the home's original owners asked local builder Ken LaCoy to modify those plans so they could have more room on the second level. "We had to specially engineer those beams to bear the load of the second floor, and they were so heavy, we had

to set them in place with cranes," Ken says. "That proved to be one of the bigger challenges on the project."

Ann and Bruce appreciate the effort, though. "I commend the original owners on that decision," Ann says. "Not only does it give us more space, but instead of the living room having that 'grand' look, it feels cozy and it stays warmer in the winter." A substantial Indian Creek flagstone fireplace supplies the heat. "That fireplace never goes dark during the cooler months," Bruce says.

Having extra space upstairs also provides the kids with their own hang-out to play cards or watch Minnesota Twins baseball games. "It's important for us to have our own space," Ann says.

Now, with a retreat of their very own, Bruce and Ann will be able to carry on their family's tradition of visiting the lake for years and, hopefully, generations to come. ▶

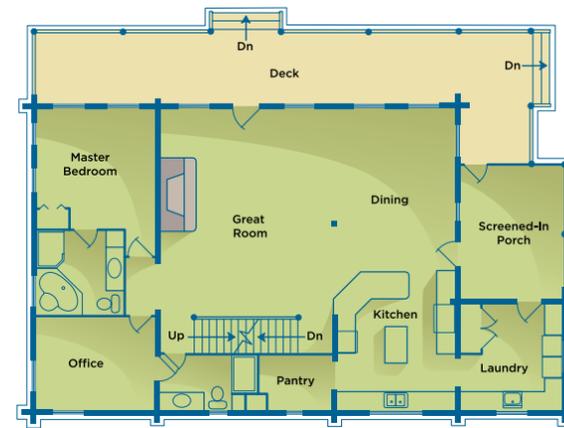
MY SPACE (clockwise). A second fireplace and gathering spot upstairs allows different groups—such as kids and adults—to have their own space within the home. The Western-style wagon-wheel chandelier, mounted buck above the mantel and knotty-pine ceiling create an authentic homestead feel.

NOW WE'RE COOKIN'. A reclaimed-oak countertop on the breakfast bar and barnwood cabinets keep true to the home's rustic ambiance, while a granite-topped center island and stainless steel appliances (opposite) add contemporary flair to this kitchen.

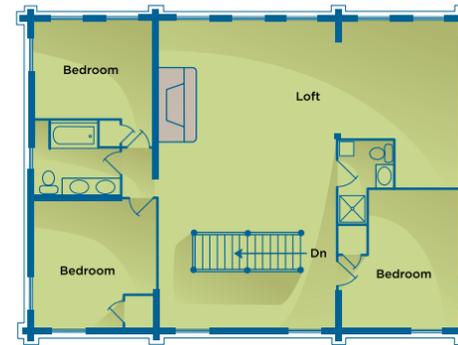
SOMETHING'S FISHY. The mudroom is the perfect place to drop fishing gear after a day on the lake. Access to the kitchen makes cleaning the catch of the day (and washing up) a breeze. Note the subtle contrast in color of the light-pine doorframe against the darker logs.



SLEEP TIGHT. A hickory bed frame and delicate nightstands, both boasting dark espresso shades of stain, are the perfect choice for the simple master bedroom.



Main Level



Upper Level

SOURCEBOOK

Builder: Ken LaCoy Construction, 715-634-8609; www.kenlacoconstruction.com

Garage design: Rehkamp Larson Architects, 612-285-7275; www.rehkamlarson.com

Landscape design: Northern Native Plantscapes, 715-794-2548

Log producer: Custom Log Homes, 406-777-5202; www.customlog.com

Windows: Marvin Windows & Doors, 888-537-7828; www.marvin.com

REFLECTIONS OF BEAUTY (above right). Like the rest of the home, the master bath's cabinetry is built with reclaimed barnwood topped with tumbled-marble tile. A carved mahogany mirror, punched-tin sconces and beadboard paneling provide a touch of country style.

ROOM FOR IMAGINATION. The overhead loft in the girls' bunk easily transforms into a great fort, a ship's deck or whatever other fantastic place a child's mind can conjure.



HOMESPECS

Square footage: 5,000

Builder:

Ken LaCoy Construction

Log producer:

Custom Log Homes

