

A Captivating Nature

WHEN BOATERS DRIFT DOWN Lake Wixom in Hope, Michigan, and pass by the property owned by Jim and Cheryl Draves, their gazes linger on the immaculate landscaping and stately lodge that grace the embankment. Little do they realize that the seed was planted for such a welcoming home over 30 years ago in Sanford, Michigan, when the Draves's daughters, Jamie and Laurie, told their parents they wanted a playhouse.

"We lived on 80 acres of land that we shared with my mother," Cheryl explains. "At the time we could not afford to buy a playhouse for the girls, so Jim went and cut down some trees and built one for them out of log. It was just darling and I think that was what really sparked our love for log homes."

Thirty years later, the Draves left their home in Sanford and relocated to a new lot on Lake Wixom. Compared to the acreage they were used to, their new lot

The Draves home sits on 2.5 pristine waterfront acres on Lake Wixom, Michigan. Lake goers often comment on the immaculate landscaping and flowers carefully appointed by Jim Draves.

BY KRISTA PETERS
PHOTOS BY ROGER WADE
STYLING BY DEBRA GRAHL

A 30-year journey beginning with a log playhouse leads a Michigan couple to a nature-filled home on the lake.

RIGHT: The mantel that adorns the wood-burning stone fireplace was chosen from the wetlands on builder Kent Russell's property.

BELOW: The pine flooring throughout the house, as well as the staining and varnishing of the interior wood in the home, were completed by the Draves, who own a painting business in nearby Midland, Michigan.

had the semblance of what Cheryl describes as “a postage stamp,” and the home they built was not made of log. “We love the outdoors; we boat and fish in the summer and cross-country ski and snowmobile regularly in the winter. The new property did not suit our personality. We really needed more room.”

Jim and Cheryl own a painting business in Midland, Michigan, and merely two years after moving into their new home, a client approached them with an opportunity the two could not pass up: He would sell them 2.5 acres of secluded property on the lake in a subdivision that was a buffer zone for privacy if they were interested. “Finding 2.5 acres on the lake is unheard of, let alone the circumstances this lot afforded,” notes Cheryl. “It is located only 20 minutes from where we work and is a half-mile from the main road, so we would have privacy as well as be located near all of the lake activity. We knew that if we ever saw someone else’s house on this hill we would be forever sorry.” They took the client up on his offer, and this time the home and the land would suit the Draves’s disposition. It would be a lodge constructed of Tennessee white pine.

Fortunately, the timing coincided with the building of their youngest daughter Laurie’s log home. Kent Russell, a dealer representative for The Original Old-Timer Log Homes and owner of Russell Log Homes in nearby Gladwin, Michigan, had constructed the exterior of Laurie’s home while Jim Draves stained and varnished the tongue-and-groove interior. After experiencing the actual process of constructing a log home and finding





the rustic results were more than worth the effort, the Draves hired Kent Russell as their consultant and building partner for their project.

The third time was a charm for Cheryl Draves, who after building two homes was an expert on what to look for in the new lake home. The floorplan, like the property, is anything but confining and perfectly suits the Draves. "I knew I wanted a spacious floorplan where the living room, dining room, and kitchen were all open to each other. The wood-burning corner fireplace is strategically placed so that no view of the lake is obstructed." The

2,000 square feet of living space feels boundless due to 20-foot vaulted ceilings with V-cross beams and views of the lake from every room. "We even left the master suite loft area open so that it would have a lake view as well," Cheryl exclaims. "We just love it."

The open master suite was one of the aspects of the home appreciated by Russell. A former heating and plumbing contractor, Russell went into the log home industry after building his own home over 15 years ago. Russell remarks that he is intrigued by how every project is unique to the owner. "The Draves chose a plan with a

OPPOSITE: The hand-hewn cabinets in the kitchen have stone handles, a rare find from the Woodworker's Shop. **BELOW:** Cheryl describes the home's theme as "antique lodge." The wildlife that embellishes the walls adds to the atmosphere.





ABOVE: The floorplan features two bedrooms, including the master suite, which occupies the second-floor loft.

LEFT: A corner soaking tub provides a view of the landscaped gardens below.



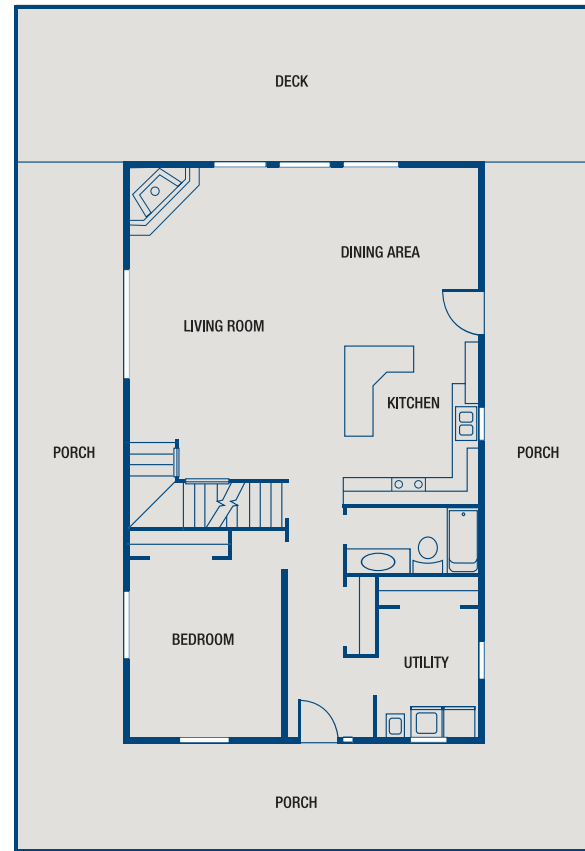
three-sided wraparound porch and an entire second-floor master suite loft which really give the home character.”

If the exterior shell and floorplan reveal the Draves’ nature, the finished results reveal their love of nature. The couple projected their crafty talents, cultivated from years of being in the painting business, and put them to work staining, varnishing, and sanding their new log home made entirely of 8-inch round logs. They installed the pine flooring themselves, which was subsequently scratched by their 102-pound Labrador retriever, Woody. “At first I was disappointed because Jim and I had spent so much time on the floors and they were perfect. With that extra

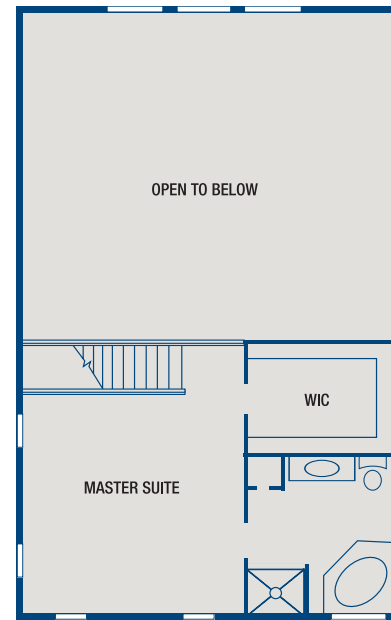
set of feet, we get marks and scratches on the floor. But we decided the dogs are family and, actually, the scratches have added texture to the floor which now looks like it’s made from rustic pine planks from an old log cabin.” In addition to the floors, hand-hewn wood cabinetry adds a charming primitive touch to the kitchen. “The cabinets have real stone handles, which is a rare feature,” Cheryl points out. “Kent Russell has them custom-made and mentioned they were available from the Woodworker’s Shop in Cummings, Michigan. We drove out to see them on display and knew we had to have them. They were just so different.”

ABOVE: The house was carefully situated so that every room would have a lake view, including the second-floor master suite loft.

OPPOSITE: The home is built with eight-inch Tennessee white pine round logs fashioned in tongue-and-groove style. The three-sided wraparound porch was a necessary amenity as the couple spends most of their time outdoors.



Main Level



Upper Level

Dozens of details throughout the home illustrate the couple's love and admiration for the outdoors. They have collected the nature-inspired artworks of Charles Denault over the years and have the pictures framed around the home. The wildlife mountings that accent the walls are souvenirs from various hunting trips Jim has taken. The lodge theme of the home is captured by several lamps and tables that were handcrafted by Jim—products of his skills in woodworking.

Although Jim and Cheryl's residential setting would appear to be the logical culmination of an ever-evolving affection for the outdoors and their log home the sanctuary they had dreamed of for over 30 years, the Draves are more open to new ideas and traditions than ever. When Kent Russell's crew suggested engraving a sun in the stone above the fireplace mantel, Cheryl was in awe of the results. "When I saw it I thought, 'Wow this is awesome!' It was so one-of-a-kind." The sun engraving is a trademark of Russell Log Homes.

"We usually suggest the sun engraving to those clients we feel would be interested," Kent Russell clarifies. "I also usually offer owners the choice of a traditional mantel or one custom made from a chosen log out of the swamp on my land," he modestly notes. The Draves were quick to accept this proposal and they chose the mantel that now sits below their engraved stone sun after a trek through wetlands on Russell's property.

Their openness to new traditions is accompanied by a

warm and welcoming invitation to new company and friends, and Cheryl and Jim have had their share of visitors. Every summer the lake fills with boaters and tourists who head to Pontoon Alley, a sandy area on the lake where groups drop anchor, play volleyball, swim, fish, and enjoy long summer days in the sun. "When you live on the lake it is just a friendly atmosphere and people love to come," Cheryl laughs. "I remember one summer I went to the grocery store in Midland and the clerk behind the counter said, 'You're buying more pop?'" Cheryl tenderly and jokingly replied, "You don't understand. I live on the lake and I have lots of company!"

When asked what his favorite aspect of his new lodge is, Jim Draves is quick to answer, "I love it all but I think the lake and the property is the nicest part of it." The lodge on Lake Wixom, with waterfront views from every window and the scent of pine in every room, virtually captures the outdoors within its walls. The Draves have traveled a long road from building their daughters' first log playhouse 30 years ago to constructing the distinguished dwelling they now enjoy. They even built two houses in the process. The third time, naturally, was a charm. 🏡

LOG HOME PRODUCER: The Original Old-Timer Log Homes, Mt. Juliet, Tennessee; **BUILDER/DEALER:** Kent Russell, Russell Log Homes, Gladwin, Michigan.

