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home in the hills

A log home makes just the right statement in the rolling West Virginia landscape

Story by Ronda Mollica
Photography by Rick Lee
Styling by Dorie Workman



The front stairway, built of leftover fireplace stone, is a strong element in the open foyer. The artwork on the antique table is a John Rogers statue, "Council of War."

On Interstate 77, just north of Charleston, West Virginia, is the site of a log model home built by Appalachian Log Structures that is seen by thousands every day. Jerry Watson, a local businessman, had passed it many times. When the time was right, he would stop in and take a closer look.

In 2004, the time was right. Jerry had downsized a few years back and was not happy with his current home. He'd found 11 acres that bordered the Kanawha State Forest. All he needed was the right inspiration.

When Jerry decided to take a closer look at the model, Appalachian Log Structures sales rep Tom Bush was there. "I could see that Tom was very knowledgeable about the construction of log homes

and he helped me through all the phases of design," says Jerry. "I was very grateful for Tom's understanding and patience during this first step."

Jerry selected the 8-by-12-inch double-notch white pine log with dovetail corners. The profile allows for chinking, but Jerry opted to keep it all wood. "I love the look of chinking, but once I saw the shell in place, I felt that chinking might take away from the look I was going for," he says.

Once the foundation and driveway were in place, Jerry followed Appalachian Log Structures' recommendation of a local general contractor to build the log shell. "Robert Lyons of R & R Construction was excellent and had the job done on time," says Jerry. "He



The 10-by-56-foot porch wraps to the back deck, where most of the entertaining takes place. The wooden porch furniture was hand-made by Amish craftsmen.

BUILDING BLOCKS

Check contractor references

Getting off on the right foot is crucial because you may not be able to plan for what lies ahead. Jerry Watson had hired a local excavator who had made lots of promises, but couldn't follow through. "This set me back by four months and about \$20,000," says Jerry.

"The lesson here is to check references on any contractor before you hire them to do a job," he says. "Luckily I found a reputable one and was able to go forward."



The great room is Jerry's favorite space. It features a large expanse of windows and easy access to the deck. The dry-stacked fireplace is built with Huron Heritage stone, an architectural rock that has the look of real stone, but is a fraction of the cost to install.

was even able to help me with a few revisions during construction that made the home more livable.”

One revision was to use a steel support beam instead of wood for the floor structure. This enabled Jerry to have a completely open open space in the basement, rather than several posts throughout. He also had Lyons plumb in three separate washer/dryer locations for more convenience. Lyons also built a unique stairway with the excess stone left over from the fireplace.

Once the shell was complete, Jerry was able to hire someone for the finish work. “I love how everything turned out in this home,” he says. “I built it for myself, but always had resale in the back of my head.”

RIGHT: At the top of the stairway is a sitting room decorated with formal furnishings from Jerry's previous home. The window is divided by a gable-end truss and has the look timber frame construction.

BELOW LEFT: Built-in hickory cabinets have chicken wire insets instead of glass for a country look. A braided rug and rustic antler pendant light add to the charm. The wood floors are made from utility-grade red oak; random sizes and imperfections give them an aged look.



Honey-spiced hickory cabinets by Kraftmaid include a built-in display case that houses Jerry's extensive pig collection. The oversized stainless steel appliances and expansive granite countertops provide the perfect kitchen for entertaining large groups.



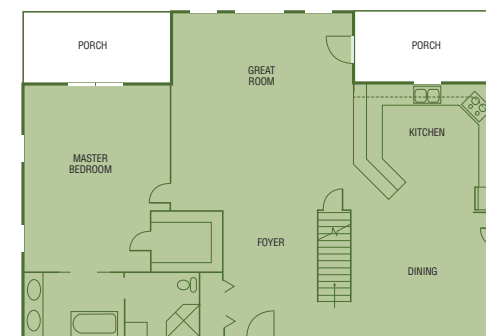
Watson requested several built-ins throughout the home, including a lighted display case in the kitchen for a pig collection, another for Civil War art, and a sideboard cabinet in the dining room for added storage and serving.

TOP: The traditional white pine log home with dovetail corner notching features a full front porch.
LEFT: The weathervane is part of Jerry Watson's pig collection.

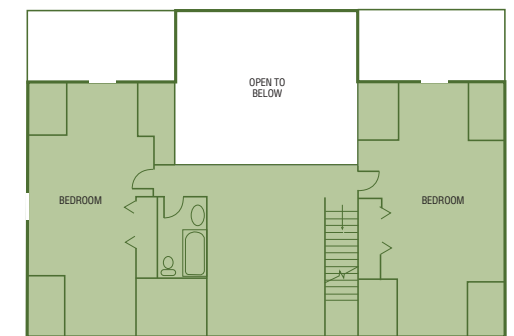
Jerry Watson loves to share his love of nature and the outdoors with his family and friends in his new wooded retreat. “I'm so happy I made the choice to build a log home and look forward to many years here in the hills,” he says.

RESOURCES

SQUARE FOOTAGE: 2,900 (plus lower level)
BEDROOMS: 3 (plus bonus room)
BATHROOM: 3
LOG HOME PRODUCER: Appalachian Log Structures, Ripley, West Virginia.
FLOOR PLAN: Fairmont (revised)
APPLIANCES: Amana



Upper Level



Main Level



BUILDING BLOCKS

Find the right HVAC system

When your floor plan states “HVAC provided by others,” it means it's up to you to find the right system for heating and cooling. “You will have to do some research to find the best heating/cooling combination for a log home,” says homeowner Jerry Watson.

“Duct work can be a challenge with log walls. I ended up with four air handlers to supply forced air throughout the home.”

Three were placed in the upstairs eave spaces, and one was situated in the basement. “We were able to create a system without any ductwork,” Watson says. “Compared to my previous home, my electric and gas bills have decreased substantially.”