

The house of sticks

A Canadian legacy stands the test of time

By Lauren Carter • Mark Wanzel Photography



Lynne Stage has been captivated by the romance of the log home, that iconic Canadian image, for a long time. As a young girl, she entertained herself by drawing up plans for houses, many of them built out of big trees. When she started teaching in North Bay, she took cross-country ski lessons from a Finnish instructor who built round log homes.

“That inspired me to keep (dreaming), but it took me 25 years to get my first log home,” she says. The first one was built in North Bay. By the time she retired, she knew that both the construction method and the company that crafted her house, Bracebridge-based True North Log Homes, were keepers. When Lynne and her partner, J.J. Serre, moved south to be closer to her kids, they built another True North home, this one on the west edge of Simcoe County.

Perched on a nearly two-acre lot near the small village of Everett, their home glows amber both outside and in. Built of northeastern white pine harvested in Northern Ontario, the house exudes the sweet, spicy smell of wood. Preferring the natural look, Lynne and J.J. decided not to cover the interior walls throughout much of the house. The homey feel of all that wood is accentuated by a fire crackling in the hearth and a massive “stone” chimney that rises to the height of the cathedral ceiling and beyond.

“It looks very real, but it’s actually cultured,” Lynne freely admits. The substitute material, a manufactured veneer that is lighter and cheaper than actual granite or other stone, looks convincing enough set against a background of wood beam walls.

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Though the romantic image endures, most log homes aren’t built among the black bears in some remote northern forest. In fact, reports Robert Wrightman, the CEO of True North Log Homes, the company’s houses are all over the place, from wooded lots in colder climes to some pretty surprising landscapes. “We’ve built in Korea, Japan, Germany, England, Ireland, probably every

or standing and talking to the chef while food is prepared. In the great room, the hearth is the centre of action. Seating is arranged so everyone has a good view and can enjoy the fire as drinks are served or a meal is laid out on the kitchen table. “We like to gather with family and friends and (this area) is great for entertaining,” says Lynne.

The two-bedroom guest wing, separate from the master bedroom and ensuite

Lynne and J.J. have desks and office areas that face each other. The transparency allows for an open view into the rest of the house. “It’s very open and yet it’s still cozy, (because) the ambience of the golden colours of the log makes it very warm,” says Lynne.

While the couple keeps their high-efficiency wood stove running through much of the winter, their main system is radiant floor heating which works exceptionally



U.S. state including Alaska, and pretty well every province in Canada,” he says. “We’ve even got one in the Bahamas.”

Largely fueled by the dream image of the log home on the northern frontier, nearly 1,000 houses have gone out the company’s doors since it set up shop in 1986. Each brings together the beauty of wood and the specific needs of the homeowner. For Lynne and J.J., this meant designing a place with enough room to work from home and comfortably entertain.

On the main floor, the great room, kitchen and eating area are open concept. In the kitchen, the gleam of stainless steel appliances is complemented by cherry wood cabinets fitted with silver knobs. A large island provides ample space for fixing drinks

bathroom, is an appreciated feature. “The nice part about the design of this house is that when you have company, you still have your own space and they have theirs.”



Clear tempered glass enclosing the 1,200-square-foot deck provides an unobstructed view of the property. The same kind of glass is used on the railing in the upstairs loft where

well with this type of home because the logs provide a thermal mass. The mass retains the heat and radiates it back into the room. “It makes for a very even, consistent heat,” Lynne explains.

The construction of the house also helps. “If the house is properly assembled, it won’t leak air,” says Wrightman. With a 25-year warranty for zero air infiltration, the houses don’t require caulking or chinking, he adds.

For Lynne Stage, currently working on the design of her third log home by the same company, these practical benefits combine with the aesthetics to create a house – or a few – worthy of her long-held dream. “Coming home to a log home is like living in a resort.”