

# HIGHER GROUND

*A Wisconsin family turns a setback  
into a big design advantage.*

STORY BY TERESA L. WOLFF | PHOTOS BY KCJ PHOTOGRAPHY



**OPPOSITE:** Property restrictions forced homeowners Tim and Colleen Omer to build 100 feet from Crystal Lake, even though they owned 800 feet of lake frontage. They turned the provision to their advantage by designing a long but narrow home that permitted every main-level room to enjoy a view of the lake.

**LEFT:** Double wood doors open to the foyer, where a custom-crafted log staircase and natural slate flooring make a dramatic first impression. The three candlesticks signal the home's eclectic decor. "Getting creative was easy in this custom home," interior designer Stephanie Hintz states, "as the homeowners desired uncommon natural elements as their accents."

A second item on their wish list was being able to accommodate large groups of family and friends. "When we have a whole house full of guests, at times we feel we need to be able to escape to a separate place," Tim points out. "We designed the master bedroom suite as our oasis, with a breakfast bar with sink and private screened porch. It is almost like a home attached to the main house."

Remembering that their guests at the cottage always seemed to congregate in the kitchen, the Omers planned for the kitchen to be the center of their log home. The kitchen flows seamlessly into a large dining area adjoining a bar with TV, wine room and great room. This arrangement allows them to accommodate as many as 40 guests at any one time and provides easy access to the outdoor patio, which connects to the dock, hot tub and fire pit.

Having learned from spending a summer in a tent in pouring rain, Tim and Colleen added a porch off the dining area. "Even though it isn't heated, the wood-burning fireplace provides sufficient warmth for us to use it year round," Colleen says. "It is probably the room where we spend the most time."

The couple designed the second floor for plenty of sleeping space, as well as sitting areas to accommodate a wide range of

**A**fter a rainy summer spoiled their tenting vacations in northern Wisconsin, Tim and Colleen Omer decided to move to drier ground. They were able to purchase a small cottage on Crystal Lake, where Colleen had spent her childhood vacations. The cottage worked well for the Omers and their four children, but it wasn't the log home that Tim had long dreamed about. "I had been in a couple of log homes and had found them to be warm and inviting," Tim says. "I just never got over wanting one, but our lot at Crystal Lake wasn't large enough to accommodate what I had in mind."

Over the next several years, two adjacent properties came up for sale, and Tim and Colleen purchased them. These lots gave them a total of five acres with 800 feet of lakefront. They were limited, however, in that any new construction had to be set

back 100 feet from the lake. This restriction, which severely limited the width for a new home as the setback put them very close to the road, turned out to be a positive. Since their wish list included as much visibility of the lake as possible, designing a home that was long and relatively narrow meant every room on the main level could have a view of the lake.

The couple began looking for a log-home company that could provide a turnkey vacation residence. They chose Wisconsin Log Homes, whose half-log system gave them greater flexibility with design while providing the look of full-log construction. Besides supplying the log package, Wisconsin Log Homes acted as the builder. Working with the company's design team, Colleen and Tim created a custom floor plan for a lodge-style home that met their desire for lake views.



The great room gable features log-trimmed windows that flood the room with light and frame the lake view. A 7-by-4-foot custom-quarried fossil slab above the mantel adds drama to the towering fireplace.



guests. For families with young children, there is a small suite with two bedrooms — one with a queen bed for the parents and a second with a twin trundle bed for the youngsters — a Jack-and-Jill bathroom and a washer-dryer. An additional guest bedroom and full bath are available for adults with older or no children.

A very large bunkroom over the garage is accessible from the oversized three-car garage and the staircase to the loft in the main house. Three bunk beds, a couch, lots of floor space and a large flat-panel TV make

this a haven for the older children. “Our plan was to put a billiards table in the open loft. Unfortunately, the game is too noisy and interfered with conversations on the main level,” Tim says. “This provided us with the impetus we needed to finish the lower level. Along with the billiard room, we included a rec room, a media room, a full bath and lots of storage. The loft now has a shuffleboard and a poker table for our guests to enjoy.”

Stephanie Hintz, Wisconsin Log Homes’s interior designer, helped the Omers decorate the home in a Progressive Rustic

**ABOVE: Terra cotta walls and slate flooring harmonize with rustic hickory cabinets in the kitchen, which also features granite countertops with thick chiseled edges. Low, backless stools add rustic flavor, while recessed, pendant and over-and-under counter lighting aid functionality.**

style. They opted for a mix of light and dark tones as the perfect canvas for highlighting high-end finishes, such as solid hickory flooring in the great room. All of the furnishings for the home were new. “We alternated between simple chocolate-brown leather upholstered pieces and lighter, natural-toned



Combining the handcrafted dining table with darker teak chairs made from reclaimed wood blends old and new. A traditional Oriental rug over the wood floor adds color, while wall sconces keep the look contemporary.



furniture, log and trim to bring drama to the space without making it feel heavy,” Hintz says. “This concept is repeated in the adjacent dining room. A hickory and cypress dining table, hand crafted for the homeowners by Dave Janczak, the owner of Wisconsin Log Homes, is paired with darker teak chairs made from reclaimed wood as a conscious design decision to blend old with new. Traditional Oriental-style area rugs soften the spaces and add pattern and color.”

Colleen wanted to complement the rustic look of the logs with modern accents in the faucets, handles, tile work, and contemporary light fixtures and wall sconces. “Since the logs are an artistic work of their own, there was very little I could do in that regard, so I concentrated on decorating the seven bathrooms to express my individuality and creativity in the home,” she says.

The Omers are thrilled to have “a log home where we truly feel like we were on vacation,” Tim says. Colleen adds: “This home let us be together with our family and friends. The logs smell good and the home just feels good. When we are here we feel like it is a piece of heaven. We are able to let go of everything and just relax.”

**TOP:** A simple aromatherapy soaking tub with a clever elevated faucet combines with a generous glass-enclosed shower to offer a spa-like experience in the master bath. Gray walls, highlighted by wood trim, blend with the slate flooring and swirling colors of the marble countertops.

**BOTTOM:** Tim and Colleen designed their master bedroom to be their retreat within a retreat, allowing them privacy even when they have a houseful of guests. The corner gas-burning stove takes the chill off Wisconsin nights, and large windows afford views of the lake.





**ABOVE:** Spacious nooks with intriguing ceiling angles in the loft create the ideal spot for fun and games. The loft overlooks the great room and enjoys abundant natural light through the wall of windows that face the lake.

**RIGHT:** Logs and drywall interplay in this upper-level bedroom. It features twin trundle beds that make the room handy for visiting children. Their parents stay in an adjoining room, creating a guest suite with its own laundry room.





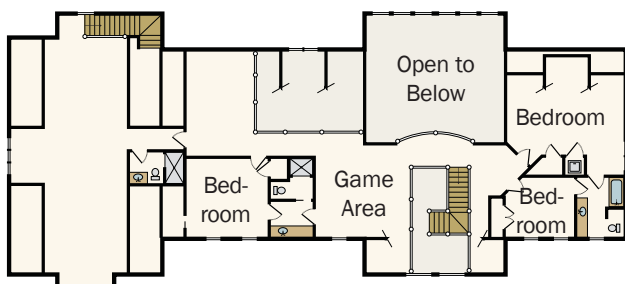
## home details

**SQUARE FOOTAGE:** 5,285

**LOG COMPANY:** Wisconsin Log Homes

**ABOVE:** The front of the lodge-style vacation home shows off the snow-shedding metal roof that adds further interest to the staggered roofline. The logs, part of Wisconsin Log Homes's Thermal-Log building system, feature a medium-brown stain that combines with bronze-colored aluminum window cladding for both function and style. Note the smaller windows compared with the rear of the home that enjoys a view of Crystal Lake.

Upper Level



Main Level



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