



Mill • Direct News

Living the Log Home Lifestyle

Winter 2017-2018

VIEW FROM THE MILL

By Levi Hochstetler

Saturday we had our first snow for the season! I would venture to say that is possibly about a month later than normal. For a while everyone was concerned that the leaves aren't going to be as colorful as normal and perhaps fall off without changing color. However, though they may not be as bright as sometimes they are colorful albeit several weeks later than normal.

We hear the comment; we are probably going to pay for this, meaning that they expect we will have cold weather to make up for the mild weather we are having. I agree that normally the temperature doesn't fluctuate much from year to year. However, for every mild day we have it means one day closer to spring! On the otherhand a typical cold Ohio winter suits me just fine.

Steve Lykins recently got back from a two week sprint through southern Germany and Switzerland studying log and timber homes. See his story in this issue.

I will be out the next two days celebrating our 30th wedding anniversary. We are doing something special by taking my parents and a few of my dad's brothers to Nappanee, Indiana to visit my dad's other brothers and sisters out there. My dad grew up in that area and we hope to get to see his home place. This past April he turned 80. Only last summer he and his twin brother recoated the Black Fork model. I cringed as the pair climbed all around on ladders and planks 20 feet in the air. Recently his twin brother passed on to his maker. See ya next spring!

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Wood Architecture of Germany & Switzerland *Part 1 - Wood Structures of Germany - by Steve D. Lykins, P.E.*

Architecture, like other forms of art, is a reflection of culture. Like any other artist, inspiration is key to being a successful architect. During the first two weeks of October this year I was fortunate enough to have the opportunity to travel abroad to gain some inspiration and survey some architecture and cultures of the world. While another architect may have chosen to travel to France or England for the gothic cathedrals or to Japan for the wooden castles, I chose to travel to Germany and Switzerland to experience the rich history of wood in residential architecture. This was certainly a cultural experience as well as an architectural experience. With a little research and some good advice I decided to visit some open-air museums in several regions as well as some mountain villages that have maintained a certain culture and/or architecture. In this first part of a two part series, I will describe the wood architecture that I experienced in Germany.

My flight arrived in Zurich, Switzerland on Friday, October 6th, 2017. I immediately drove my rental car into southern Germany and north across the country for the first leg of the trip. In about one week's time, this part of the trip would take me to several open-air museums near Gutach (Black Forest region), Bad Sobernheim, Essen and Cloppenburg, Germany. These open-air museums are much like a traditional museum with all of the historic information and artifacts, but in an outdoor park-like setting. The structures here are the artifacts. They range in age from about 150 years old to nearly 700 years old! They are brought in from nearby villages, towns and cities in order to preserve them from demolition and to make way for more modern structures. In most cases, the original wood timber-



"Vogtsbauernhof" circa 1612 in Gutach, Germany. Combined livestock & living quarters. Reed thatched Dutch hip roof, mixture of blockwork and timber frame construction, original building at the museum.

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Choosing the Right Builder - *by Levi Hochstetler*

One of the most important considerations in having a successful dream log home building project is choosing the right builder. You simply can't risk hiring the wrong builder.

A log home is not like a conventional stick home where it makes sense to contract with a builder for everything. The builder designs the home, pulls the permits, orders the material from a local building supply place, builds it and bingo, there is your house.

Having a custom log home built on the other hand is far more complex. For many years you have been dreaming of building a log home of your own. Finally, after saving for all those years the time is right and things seem to fall in place. Perhaps you want a remote gathering place for the family and eventually move in after you are both retired. You cannot afford leaving anything to chance. Most importantly, "you," and not the builder, should decide who your designer and log home manufacturer will be.

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Wood Architecture of Germany & Switzerland

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framed or log structures are still in fine shape, but functionally they no longer suit the lifestyle of modern society. Some of the timbers in the older structures seem to have taken on a special quality that can only be seen after several hundred years of aging. The surface of the aged timbers is smooth to the touch, yet grooved with deep shadows and the color is a rich silvery grey. The structures in these open-air museums consist of barns, storehouses, mills (driven by water and wind), chapels, butcher shops, bakeries, breweries and residences; but because of the heavy agriculture in these regions, nearly all structures were once part of a local farmstead. In some cases the residents and the livestock shared a common living space under one roof with little or no separation! Basements were common in all regions, especially in the mountainous regions where building on a slope afforded a basement accessible from the exterior. All foundations for these structures are stacked stone masonry, sometimes parged smooth and whitewashed for a prestigious look. Only the storehouses were built atop wooden piers in order to keep pests out. Roofs varied from straw thatched roofs to wood shingle roofs to clay tile roofs. Roof overhangs in mountainous regions of southern Germany were typically two to four feet (or more) past the walls and in northern Germany typically one to two feet. Larger overhangs were supported by fly rafters at gable ends and by diagonally braced beams under the eaves. Many structures had half hip roofs (also called Dutch gable) or full hip roofs. Especially in southern Germany, gable-end walls were usually not left exposed to the elements. Most gutters were made of hollowed sections of logs. Many structures had a log near the roof eaves to guard against piles of snow crashing down and injuring or trapping the occupants inside. I found it very surprising that many buildings still had the original solid wood doors with wood hinges. By protecting the door from damaging moisture and sun with a roof overhang low to the ground, the wood doors were preserved for centuries. Most windows had been replaced with replicas using wood frames with individual panes of float glass, but a few original windows remained that were made of globs of molten glass that were pressed into flat, circular shapes and configured in the opening with lead caming (much like a stained glass window). Windows are commonly protected with shutters on the exterior, which become part of the architecture. Some structures have walls made of log blockwork

(stacked logs) and others are timber framed with a wood reinforced straw & clay infill (wattle & daub), typical of southern Germany, or brick masonry infill more common to northern Germany. Log blockwork structures in Germany typically had either round logs or, more commonly, rectangular logs between 4" and 6" thick with double saddle notched corners. Blockwork logs were exclusively Pine. ALL roofs are framed and braced with heavy oak or fir timbers and utilize traditional joinery, including: mortise & tenon joints, lap joints, scarf joints and dovetail joints all using wood pegs and wedges. It is clear that the builders of these structures had a sophisticated understanding of the forces involved in a heavy timber framed structure. Most of the traditional joinery observed in these older structures is replaced with steel brackets, hangers and dowels in modern construction for the sake of cost and speed of construction. Many of the structures also displayed impressive hand carvings in the structural timbers, which had been sawn or hewn square. Usually the carvings were a description of the purpose, date of construction and owner(s) name. In some cases the carvings were decorative and even more elaborate than just a name or place. Some of the utilitarian buildings used whatever materials were at hand, including some barns that use severely gnarled and curved timbers left round, perhaps sawn or hewn flat on one side. I was especially inspired by the willingness of those who built these structures to find creative solutions to overcome the challenges posed by the availability of tools and materials. There was no lumber yard that carried a stock of huge, perfectly square and straight timbers. There were no sky lifts or crane rentals. They found a way to use the tools and materials at hand to create these architectural gems.

It is obvious that the designers/builders and owners of these structures took a great amount of care in their construction. I don't believe their thinking was 'another day, another dollar', rather it was about creating something useful, sturdy and beautiful not only for themselves but also for future generations. This reflects my own architectural philosophy, adapted

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Cambridge

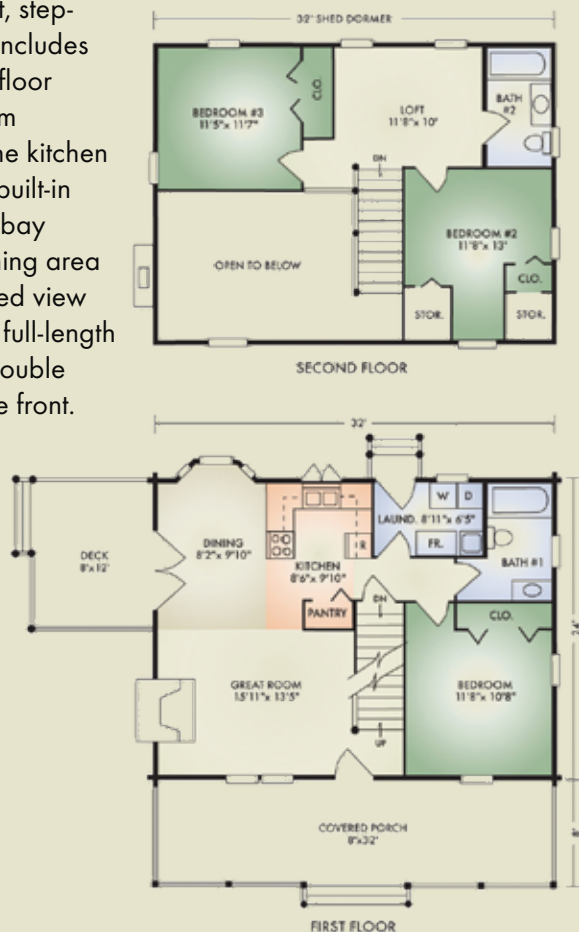
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The Cambridge is a very popular traditional log home designed for those who desire a smaller, three bedroom home at an affordable price. This still features the popular open-concept great room with exposed timbered ceiling and fireplace, a deck off the dining room, and open loft overlooking the downstairs.

Upstairs, the rear shed dormer maximizes the space in the back bedroom, loft and bath. This efficient, step-saving plan also includes a convenient first-floor laundry/mud room accessible from the kitchen or outside and a built-in kitchen pantry. A bay window in the dining area offers an expanded view out the back. The full-length front porch and double dormers grace the front.



“Vogtsbauernhof” circa 1613 in Gutach, Germany. Intricate joinery overlays blockwork infill.

continued on page 6

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Labor Of Love

by Bill Dinkins



Todd and Suzanne Stoker share a love of the great outdoors and the relaxing log home lifestyle, so it wasn't too surprising when they visited Hochstetler's Log Cabin Days that they became intrigued with the possibility of building their own log home. In fact, Suzanne had even made a sketch of a log home, similar to the McKay model, with the inscription, "Lord...if this is your will then let it be the path we travel together. Thank you for your abundant blessings." So when they broke ground in September of 2015 their goal was to embark on this journey and make their home a place where the whole family - their parents, children, and grandchildren could come, relax and enjoy their peaceful lifestyle with its abundant blessings. Suzanne was quick to point out the help they received along the way made the "journey" possible. Much of the interior work, like the decorating, installing the tile in the bathrooms, hanging drywall, and staining, was done on the weekends by Todd and his parents and Suzanne and her mom. Suzanne's dad, who passed before the actual construction began, will always be remembered for his paintings throughout the house, including the beautiful sunflower painting above the mantel in the great room.

This "labor of love" began when they sat down with the Hochstetler design team, and settled on the McKay floor plan with several changes. Their plan featured the popular, open-concept great room area like the McKay, but with an enlarged master bedroom, adjoining master bath, nearby laundry area, half-bath, and breezeway leading out to the garage. The upstairs included two bedrooms, a loft and full bath. Todd is working on additional living space in the basement.

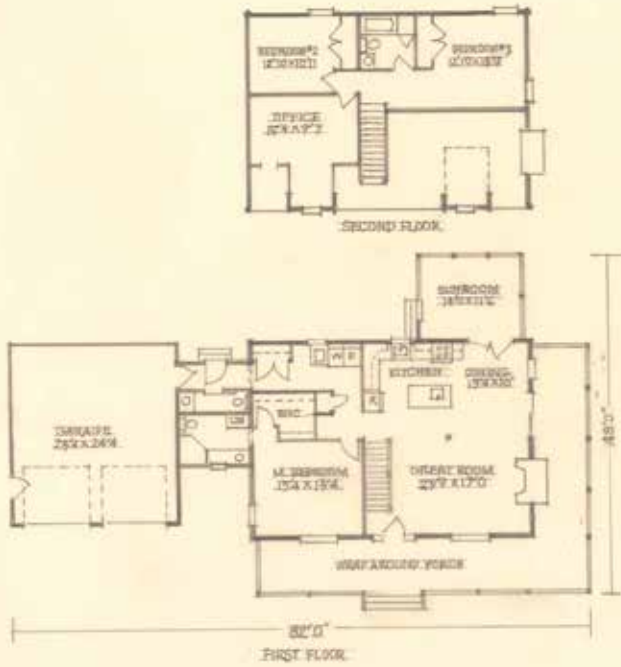
The Stokers' home site is located in the scenic rolling hills of western Pennsylvania, north of Pittsburgh. The 2-acre site sets back from the road and is perched atop a wooded ravine, offering a great view of nature from the large rear deck. Deer, wild turkeys and smaller critters are frequent visitors. One evening, Little Addison, their 4-year old grandchild, was particularly excited to see all the lightning bugs and hear all the frogs as they began their nightly serenade and rushed inside to tell Papa Todd. As they went outside to join the others she was

still chattering non-stop until he told her, "be quiet, I can't hear anything but you."

After the drive was put in, the foundation and footer were dug, and filled with gravel. "Superior" walls were then installed for the foundation. This unique system features 8' steel-reinforced fiberglass panels that are bolted together, sealed off and "float" on the footers. This system is very energy-efficient and is ideal if you intend to finish off the basement. Todd also credits the controlled humidity in the Superior walls with minimum checking of logs throughout the home.

Upon completion of the foundation, Owen Miller of Raymar Log Homes and his crew were able to start the actual log construction. With a simple handshake and gentleman's agreement, work was soon under way with the arrival of the first logs from Hochstetler. Owen's steadfast dedication to quality craftsmanship and the Stokers' tireless work ethic on the weekends enabled them to move into their "dream" home in April, 2016. After completion Owen said, "I've done what I said I would do. Is there anything else?" And Todd replied, "No, you've done a fantastic job." Their "labor of love" was over and Todd was quick to praise the work of all involved, especially Owen and his crew and Hochstetler Milling, for making the entire project run so smoothly.

In keeping with their strong family ties and traditions the home is full of heirlooms and antiques. There are homemade quilts throughout, a Singer sewing machine and antique ice box in the great room, and a wooden butter churn in the kitchen, to name a few. Many of the antiques came from Todd's and Suzanne's parents, who owned farms. The striking bathroom vanities were custom designed from reclaimed barn wood and include copper sinks. One of Suzanne's favorite antiques is her rusty, old tricycle. Her parents, after seeing the wheels without any rubber decided it was high time to buy her a new one. But Suzanne had other ideas...and after a quick trial run on her new bike, ditched it and hopped back on "Old Squeaky," her beloved vehicle. 🏠



For additional information about the home of the Stokers please contact Hochstetler Milling at 800-368-1015.

Wood Architecture of Germany & Switzerland

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from Roman Architect Marcus Vitruvius, of practicing good architecture by creating places with commodity (utility), firmness (sturdiness) and delight (beauty). This is the measuring stick for good architecture. I have gained great inspiration from this experience of German culture and architecture and I have learned that it is important to create something lasting to inspire future generations to do the same. Are you leaving something inspiring? 🏠

See the next issue of Mill Direct News for part two of this two part series, *Wood Structures of Switzerland.*

Choosing the Right Builder

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Sheri and her husband (not her real name) thought they were doing it the easy no-hassle way by handing everything over to a builder to take care of. Early on,



One of two posts that are nesting on a few blocks of wood downstairs

they researched multiple log home companies for someone to help them realize their dream log home. Finally, they decided on Hochstetler Milling as someone they could trust with a great team of professionals and craftsmen to help them with their design work as well as supplying them with the quality log home they desired. All was good until they stumbled across a local builder. The builder talked a good game, was local, promised to have them moved into the home by Christmas, said he didn't need blueprints and was even recommended by the loan officer at the bank. After seeing his work they signed on the dotted line. Sheri had dreamed of

owning a log home since she was a child and had worked hard for over 30 years to save towards achieving this dream. Her husband really liked the log home idea as did their five children. While waiting the completion of their dream home, the family of seven, were crammed into a 2-bedroom, rickety old farmhouse next to their log home site.

After a year of waiting and frustration they and the bank decided it was time to dismiss their builder. First of all, the builder had barely started by Christmas and here it was July of the following year and all they had for a log home was a partially completed shell! The roof was partially covered with felt paper and there were no windows and doors. The foundation was cracking in numerous places, the subfloor on the wide-open upstairs garage suite and the breezeway were literally ruined because of all the exposure.

In her dream, Sheri had always wanted a lot of glass in her log home. However, the builder ended up reducing the sizes and quantity of windows from what she had understood that they was getting. This was on top of making the home 4 feet smaller than what was agreed on.

Unfortunately, Sheri, with only a contract to build the house and no construction plans had no real documents of what they had agreed on. Making it even worse was the fact there was no oversight from a third party building inspector or architectural engineer to hold him accountable. Thus, the builder was able to take advantage of the unsuspecting homeowner by cutting corners, saving him a considerable amount of labor and money.

To remedy the problem they came back to us for help. When we inspected the home we found multiple items that did not meet code. The two main footings that hold up most of the floor and roof load, as one example, were less than 1/3 the size of what they should have been! Quite a few of the structural beams were undersized, besides the fact that they were ungraded.

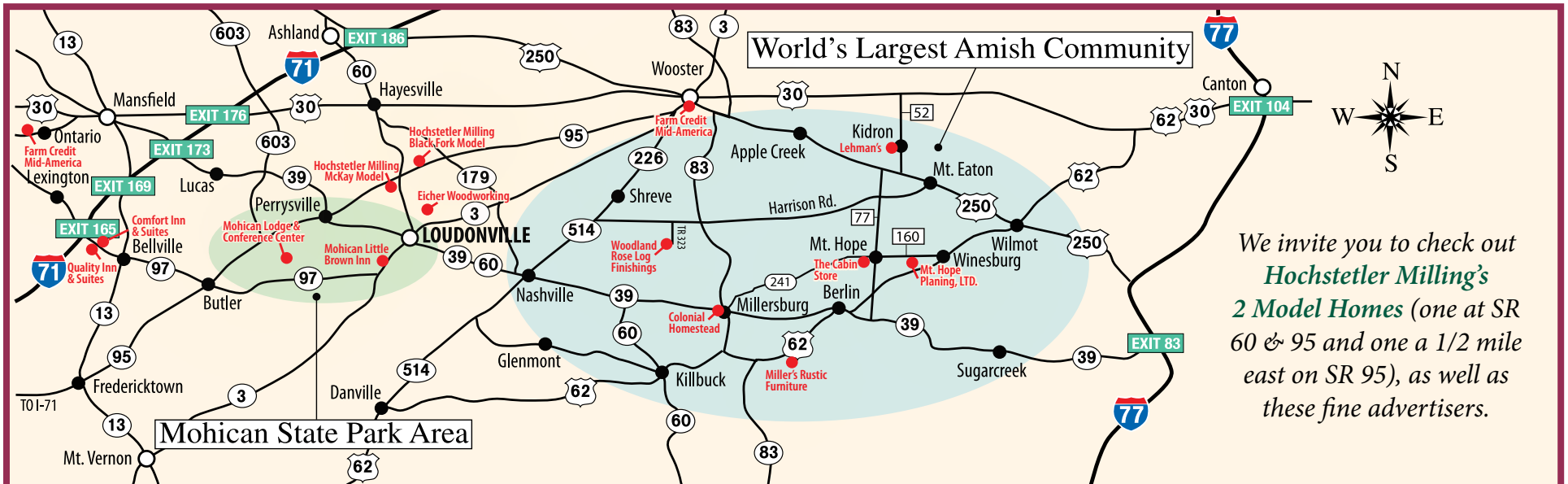
They are in quite a fix. To finish the home as planned and to bring in another builder to remedy these issues would be cost prohibitive and put them way over their budget.



A post with a few blocks holding up the large post upstairs

The bank needs the project completed but naturally does not want to give them any more money than what they originally borrowed. The builder did admit that he under-bid the project. As much as they don't want this builder back, it seems that is the only way that they will be able to afford to finish their home.

Sheri and her husband are not the only folks that had a bad experience when solely depending on a builder for their home design, material and construction all in one contract. Currently, clients from multiple states are pursuing legal action against builders for taking deposits of up to \$130,000 and walking off without building their home. One builder after using the deposit from a client for a hunting trip to Alaska was unable to purchase



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material for the home including the log package. A builder in southern Ohio uses a well-known log home company's name to sell the log home packages and then turns around and substitute's material from other sources without the client's knowledge. Another lady who lost her home in hurricane Katrina gave a deposit to a builder and never saw or heard from him again. I know of several builders that finally met their day in jail but what good does that do for their string of customers that have gotten fleeced?

With a little homework, and some common sense assessments, you should be able to steer clear of the above bad experiences. One of the key things is to have a check and balance situation. I can't overemphasize this enough. Never entrust your entire life's savings with a single company when planning your dream home. Have the design done and order the log home direct from the manufacturer and then have a separate contract with the builder to build it. This will give you a check and balance situation. The idea is that the manufacture and the independent builder will keep each other in line. If you contract with only one to do everything, you lose this safeguard. While this is not fail proof, at least your batting average goes way up. This becomes even more important if you're building where there are no structural building inspectors. The added bonus is that you're not putting all your eggs in one basket.

Often a trusting client, like Sheri in the above story, will contract with a builder on a promise of a "no-hassle, we take care of everything approach." This is very tempting as it sounds so easy; however, it opens you up to be taken advantage of. There are no checks and balances like there are if you contract with two separate companies. This is the best insurance towards getting the dream home you have envisioned with the quality you were expecting. 🏠

Next issue, we will have some tips on choosing your builder before you hand over your hard-earned cash.

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“MYSTERY FISH” by Jim Garrison as told to Bill Dinkins


Walleye fishermen eagerly await early spring each year, since it is the peak time for taking this succulent fish. For many that means a trip up to the big lake – Lake Erie, the walleye capital of the world. But for others it can mean a trip to one of Ohio’s lakes or rivers where its cousin, the Saugeye, have been stocked. The Saugeye is the hybrid offspring of the Walleye and Sauger. Years ago, ODNR (Ohio Division of Natural Resources) found the Saugeye could adapt to Ohio’s turbid water and was more aggressive than Walleye, making them easier to catch, while still providing the same mouth-watering fillets.

Pleasant Hill Lake, in north central Ohio near Perrysville, was one of the first lakes to stock Saugeye and quickly became a local “honey hole.” These tasty fish stack up below the dam, presumably awaiting for smaller bait fish to be washed over the dam into the swirling eddy below.

Early one spring day my friend, Jim, decided to try his luck there after hearing from his buddies the Saugeye were hitting. He rigged up his favorite spinning rod with 6 lb. monofilament line, and leaded jig with a bright-green, florescent “twister-tail,” plastic lure. The trail from the parking lot to the stream below the dam is long and steep, so Jim was nearly exhausted when he finally reached the rushing water. One side was packed with fishermen, so he decided to avoid the crowd and crossed slightly downstream where the water was shallow, but treacherous, since the rocks were slippery and the current was moving swiftly. Still he persisted and reached the other side “high and dry.” And, still upright.

After a half hour of fruitless casts he latched onto something and whipped his rod back strongly. Must be a rock, he thought, since there was no movement on the other end. That is until a second later when his line started moving upstream. “Hum”, he uttered, this didn’t feel like a fish. It was heavy enough, but seemed to move from side-to-side - as if it was crawling. Each time he lifted his rod to bring the fish to the surface it would dive back down to the rocky bottom. Finally, after a 10-minute tussle he was able to get a look at the critter on the other end of his line. It wasn’t a fish after all, but a large snapping turtle in no mood to be captured! He’d heard that turtle meat was good and someone had even told him there are 9 different flavors. (I’m sure one was CHICKEN!)

He carefully eased the critter onto shore and noticed why he had fought so diligently. He was snagged in the tail! Jim preceded to walk around the snapper, which hissed each time he got close. Eventually, Jim seized an opportunity and quickly grabbed the turtle by the tail - and in one motion hoisted him up while eyeing the chomping jaws.

After summing up the options of his situation, some of which included missing fingers, he wisely decided to unhook the beast and let someone else try to catch this “meal on wheels.” 




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