

## VIEW FROM THE MILL

By Levi Hochstetler

Here we have been having one of the nicest autumns in recent history. The weather was mostly pleasant - nice, cool, dry and sunny. The foliage was exceptionally pretty. One of the employees, Dan Reeves, traveled out of state to do some leaf peeping. He admitted the nicest leaves they seen were near home right here in North Central Ohio!

Edwin, my third son, who is heading up our maintenance department, is getting the new maintenance shop in working order. It is located about a ½ mile from the mill. In addition to keeping our equipment up and running, he hopes to be able to do some outside work. And, he wants to keep in-stock maintenance items to sell that we use such as bolts, pipes, fittings and hoses, etc. He is also setting up to occasionally install and make primary and support equipment for the company and others. My son Aaron will continue to do the basic maintenance here at the mill.

We are currently installing a second sawmill at our Sullivan location, where we cut mostly hardwoods. We hope with this additional capacity to shorten our lead time for heavy timbers to our faithful timber-frame customers spread throughout the country. Some of our customers we have had for over thirty years.

If you own land and are looking to build in 2023, now is the time to order your blueprints before the spring rush begins. We will be able to serve you better at this time and you can avoid the extended lead times.

It was so good to get to meet so many of you during Log Cabin Days. Thanks for coming! Hope to see most of you again next year!

**Hochstetler Log Homes, LTD**  
**800-368-1015**

## Log Cabin Days: More than its Name

- by Donna Peak: Editor of Log & Timber Home Living

I don't know what took me so long to attend Hochstetler Log Home's annual Log Cabin Days (held on September 16 and 17 this year). As the editor of Log & Timber Home Living magazine, I blame pressing deadlines and, of course, a little travel deterrent called the pandemic. But now that I've experienced this incredible event for myself, I'll be back every year the Hochstetler family is willing to host it.

These two days were jam-packed with the kind of wholesome, real family fun I believe we all yearn for but are challenged to find — centered around the legacy and beauty of log and timber frame homes.

The grounds of Hochstetler's facility were peppered with vendors selling everything from craft candies (Koch's caramels were my weekend obsession) to handmade furniture (I had my eye on a live-edge dining room table that I put on my Christmas list).

Our gracious hosts served hearty breakfasts and lunches daily and sold the most delicious pastries for dessert. In fact, I ate my first "hand pie," which if you've never had one, you have to try it. I am not a fan of pie ... like, I really don't like pie at all ... but this lemon-curd-filled confection with the lightest, sweetest crust I've ever had is the closest any pie has come to changing my

*continued on page 2*



## Building a Good "Builder-Homeowner" Relationship *(Part III Continued from Fall 2022 Issue) - by Levi Hochstetler*

### #4 Cost overruns and didn't stay in the budget

The last several years this has been a widespread problem - both for the builder and the home buyer not to mention the financial institutions. Recently though things have stabilized. However, the feedback from clients was during normal times and before Covid.

Probably the key remedy here is a well-defined contract along with a comprehensive description on what is and isn't included. Never hesitate to ask questions if there is something on the contract that you don't understand.

If you had hired a general contractor there shouldn't be any additional cost to the home owner unless of course you added additional features to your home. Note the difference between a builder and a general contractor. If you hire

*continued on page 5*

# Fairhaven

Sq. ft. 1,856  
3 BR / 2-1/2 BA



The Fairhaven features the popular open-concept great room with fireplace and exposed timbered ceiling, large master bedroom with adjoining walk-in closet and master bath, and kitchen with island and raised serving counter. Plus, convenient mudroom off the garage, first-floor laundry and rear deck off the dining-kitchen area. This dream ranch is both stunningly beautiful and step-saving practical.

All our plans can be modified to fit your lifestyle. Call 800-368-1015 to get your new home started.

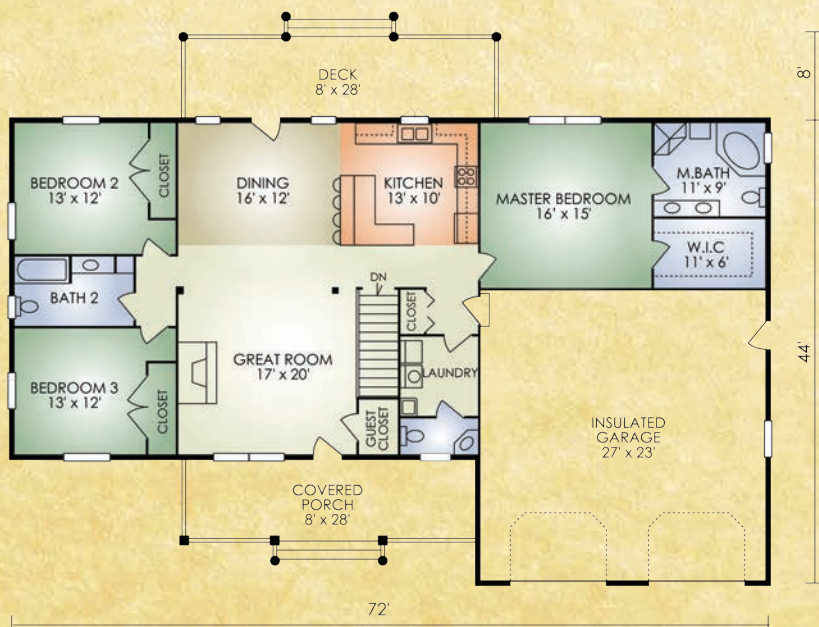


Photo and floor plans may differ slightly from actual blueprints.

anti-pie stance.

But stuffing my face with candy, pie and chicken merely filled in the blanks between the weekend's main events, which included outstanding educational workshops, log home tours and building demonstrations — plus two concurrent charity auctions that can only be described as an overwhelming number of the most exceptionally crafted furniture ever assembled beneath two humongous tents. While I wasn't able to take a dresser or coffee table home in my suitcase, I thoroughly enjoyed the rapid-fire auctioneer garner the best possible prices to support the Mohican Parochial School.

Furnishings weren't the only things raising money for the cause: A small log cabin, built from the first log course to the roof by Woodland Rose Log Homes during the two-day event; and several timber-framed pavilions brought in tens of thousands more. While the adults were bidding, scores of children scampered with wild abandon from the petting zoo to the horse-drawn train to the hand-churned ice cream as they soaked in the sun-filled days.

In all, it was the kind of event that slows you down and allows you to be in the moment. I found folks willingly put their phones away and engaged in real, meaningful conversations with perfect strangers who quickly became friends.

So yes, I will definitely be back next year. I'm already counting down the days. 🏠



MARK YOUR CALENDAR  
FOR NEXT YEAR'S  
LOG CABIN DAYS®

Sept. 15 & 16, 2023



Come One, Come All!  
**HOLIDAY**  
**OPEN HOUSE**  
 at Hochstetler Log Homes



It's that time of the year when we wish to invite you to come in and enjoy the casual and relaxing lifestyle that makes a log home so special. Refreshments will be served.

This is the ideal time to discuss your building plans with our experienced design staff. Beat the spring rush and get an early start with your blueprints! Call to make an appointment. 800-368-1015

Open house will be held at the Blackfork Model - 552 State Route 95, Loudonville, OH 44842

**Open House days are: December 26, 27, 28, 29, 30 & 31.**

**Closed on December 23, 24, 25.** We hope to see you!



CUSTOMER TESTIMONIALS

Overall a great experience, start to finish. Representative was very helpful and everyone involved. The quality of the product is the highlight and represents a great value for the discriminating customer. Our nearly finished log home is a dream come true and beyond even what we imagined! We find Hochstetler to be an honest, committed, and trustworthy company and will recommend them to anyone thinking of a log home.

Shaw – Logan, OH

Our home is absolutely beautiful. The ability to customize the home made Hochstetler the right choice for our family.

Teske – Dublin, OH

Incredible professionalism! Your ability to put the home package together with outstanding accuracy is amazing. Prompt response to all questions. And I called a lot!

Howe – Angola, IN

Thank you for making our dream of living in a log home come true. Everyone at Hochstetler was wonderful!

Staton – Hendersonville, NC

HOCHSTETLER IN THE NEWS



Congratulations to Tim & Debbie Werner in receiving the honor of having their log home featured in the National Magazine "Log & Timber Home Living, October/November Issue 2022"

**Pine Lane**  
 STAINING LLC

LOG HOME STAINING FOR INTERIORS & EXTERIORS  
 STAINING • MEDIA BLASTING  
 CAULKING • REPAIR  
 CALL NOW TO SCHEDULE FOR THE SPRING!  
 ASK ABOUT OUR MAINTENANCE PROGRAM  
 FREE ESTIMATES!

4486 TR 156, Millersburg • Duane Raber 330-231-2473, pinelane20@gmail.com

See Mill-Direct News back issues at [www.HochstetlerLogHomes.com](http://www.HochstetlerLogHomes.com) • 3

Hochstetler Log Homes would like to thank the ODNR in giving us the honor of working on this great project, “Hocking Hills Lodge”. You will have to put this on your bucket list to visit someday. While you’re there you can’t help but notice the beautiful timberwork throughout, all from Hochstetler Log Homes. Following is an article written by the ODNR on their recent grand opening.

## Governor DeWine and ODNR Director Mertz Open Hocking Hills State Park Lodge and Conference Center

October 8, 2022

(LOGAN, Ohio)—Ohio Governor Mike DeWine joined Ohio Department of Natural Resources Director Mary Mertz to officially open the long-anticipated Hocking Hills State Park Lodge and Conference Center.

“Hocking Hills attracts millions of visitors each year, and this new lodge will provide an even greater experience for Ohio and all its visitors,” said Governor DeWine. “We’re happy to give people a place to relax after a day of learning and exploring in beautiful Hocking Hills.”


“There is so much local flavor that people will see all over the lodge,” said General Manager Todd Tucker. “The artwork, the live-edge lumber that surrounds the bar, the Nelsonville-made mantles above the fireplaces on the fireside concourse- all of these things are from right here in Ohio and it’s those special touches that make this place even more exceptional.”

The new Hocking Hills State Park Lodge was built on the same footprint as the state park’s former lodge restaurant and conference center, which was destroyed by a fire in December 2016. The total cost was \$40 million.

The nearly 74,000-square-foot lodge has 81 guest rooms where visitors can spend the night. There is full-service dining at the Rock House Restaurant and Pub with food prepared by the popular chef from the state park’s previous lodge, Matt Rapposelli. There is an event space that can host hundreds of people, a grab-and-go café, gift shop, and indoor and outdoor pool areas with hot tubs that can be enjoyed in any season.

“I am beyond thrilled to welcome people into this new lodge that was a real labor of love for us at ODNR,” said ODNR Director Mary Mertz. “From the rooms to the restaurant, to the outdoor views – this lodge was our gift to Ohioans, and we hope they come and enjoy it.”

Unique touches are found throughout the lodge, including a custom designed water feature, two 39-foot stone fireplaces, and a mezzanine sky bridge with views through a floor-to-ceiling window. Looking toward the gorge, visitors will find a large patio with a wood-beamed pergola. Massive timbers from Hochstetler Log Homes were used to construct the walls and roof. These special features will ensure that everyone finds their favorite spot.

Hocking Hills State Park is a national and internationally acclaimed State Park. Stunning in every season, Hocking Hills features beautiful towering cliffs, thrilling waterfalls, and deep, hemlock-shaded gorges. 



[greatohiolodges.com](http://greatohiolodges.com)



## BECOME THE PREFERRED LOG HOME BUILDER IN YOUR AREA



### Attend the Professional Log Home Builder Workshop!

Learn from the experts how to build log homes at our “Hands-On” Workshop. **February 23, 24, & 25th**

- You will learn what’s involved in the process from start to finish that’s unique to log home construction.
- Got your own builder? Have him attend the workshop so he can build you a “done right” log home.

**\$475**

Additional Person \$129

**Lunch is included**

**Seating is limited  
Register early!**

Call

**800-368-1015**



**LEHMAN'S**  
FOR A SIMPLER LIFE

*Make your home uniquely you.*

Outfit every room of your log cabin with beautiful and useful products.

Shop anytime at [LEHMANS.COM](http://LEHMANS.COM) • 800-438-5346

*Let's Be Social* @lehmanshardware

*On the Square in Kidron, OH • Open every day except Sunday*

**The Cabin Store**  
AT MT. HOPE

9-5 Mon-Fri  
9-4 Sat

**Outfit your Home or Cabin**  
**Custom-Built Available**  
**330-674-1838**  
**7860 SR 241, Millersburg**  
**Only 10 miles from Millersburg**

**Dining Room • Living Room • Bedroom • Barnwood**

## Building a Good “Builder-Homeowner” Relationship - cont'd from page 1

someone as a builder you might actually be considered the general contractor. As an example, let's say someone backs into your block wall causing it to collapse. Whoever is considered the general contractor may end up holding the bag.

Without fail, every job will have changes and they all translate into what builders call, “add-ons.” Maybe you decided after the construction of your home was started, to finish out a bedroom in the basement for the children to stay in overnight. Or perhaps you wanted your deck enlarged and beefed up to accompany a hot-tub or decided to add a screened-in porch. Whatever it is, it always seems to happen. Ideally, the builder will fill out a legible change order for you to review and to sign that you are in agreement. Too many times the builder might grunt a few incomprehensible adjectives mixed in with, busy, laborers, expensive and price. At best, if they even bother with a change order, the pencil scratches will often appear like something akin to the Morse code.

Here again, make sure everyone is clear on the additional work that is to be performed and at what cost. You don't want expensive surprises in the end that you didn't budget for!

### #5 Poor workmanship

The best prevention to this is to simply ask the potential builder to see several of their homes built in the past. Ideally, one of those would be under construction. If the craftsmanship doesn't meet your expectation then don't sign up.

Don't just depend on



what your friends say about the quality of their builders work. Your expectations might be far different than theirs. Try to see for yourself if the craftsmanship meets your approval. There is a large difference in what people consider as being good workmanship.

Years ago, when looking for the right builder to build our shop I visited several contractors. This one contractor's site looked awful messy. There were trucks setting around that appeared like they had just come back from a mud run, splattered from front to back.

Many years later when doing an addition to our shop our contractor that we had hired ran behind schedule and sub-contracted some of the work out. It so happened that the sub they hired was a remnant crew who had originally worked for the above messy contractor. (The original company had gone out of business by then). I ended up having to call back our contractor several times to fix items that this particular subcontractor had worked on. This goes to show that your first impression might be right. 🏠

# Mark's Man Cave



*by Nathan Hochstetler*

*- Photography by Style Life Photography*

*W*

With every good plan there are always the naysayers saying it won't work. So it was for Mark Shaffer who had always dreamed of living in a log home, and in '96 he was close to achieving that dream when his relatives and friends talked him out of it. "Log Homes are so much work you have to stain it every couple years," they told him. So he built himself a stick-frame home but he didn't lose the vision of one day building a log home and this time he would not let anyone talk him out of it.

Twenty years later Mark was ready to move closer to the area he grew up in. He came across the perfect property for a log home on top of the mountains in Somerset County, PA. (Minutes from where flight 93 crashed). After putting in a call to the realtor he found out they were asking about double the amount he wanted to pay but he told the realtor to give the owners his offer for about half of the asking amount. The realtor said there was no way they would take it, but as luck would have it she called back the next day asking for proof of funding.

The next step was to find the team to help him put together his dream home. He talked to a construction company that recommended Hochstetler Log Homes as the company that could make his dream a reality.

He made a visit to Hochstetler's facility and met with the design team. By the time they were ready to head home, they had the custom design laid out, blueprints ordered, and all of the colors picked out for the home. They were convinced that Hochstetler's was the company they wanted to work with.

The Cape Cod style (similar to the McKay) appealed to Mark, but he wanted a larger great room off the back with lots of glass. As an avid hunter, Mark needed a place to display his numerous trophies where he could see them and appreciate his efforts. The great room was the perfect setting and it's now his favorite part of the home. After a cold day of hunting or working it's the perfect place to relax, with the wood burning




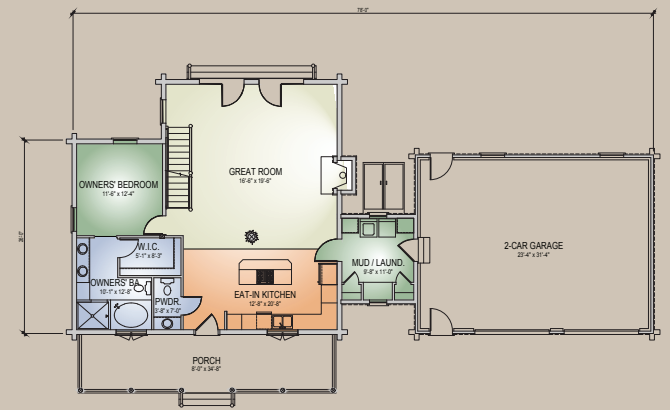
fireplace making it nice and cozy. Soaring timbers in the cathedral ceiling and the large angled windows bring the outdoors in.

The beautifully crafted cabinets and floor are made from Hickory, which complements the home very well. The Master Bedroom and Bath are located on the main floor.

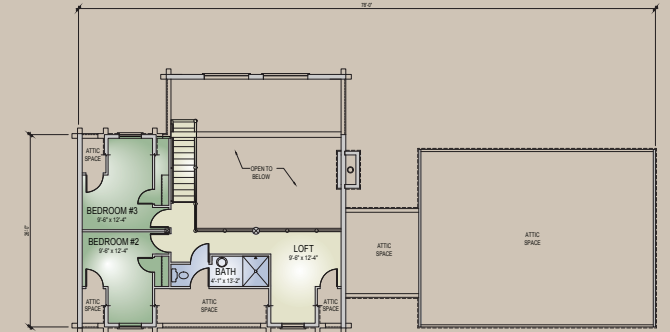
Two additional bedrooms, a bath and a loft area are located upstairs. Laundry is in the breezeway which leads to the 2-car garage. The total square footage came to 1,755. In addition, there is a finished basement where Mark does his taxidermy work.

The only problems with the log building process were the few hiccups he encountered with the builder along the way. Mark ended up doing some of the build himself and his advice for any future homebuyers is, "get a high quality builder!"

Mark's dream is now reality and he is enjoying it immensely. He loves his log home and he says "the naysayers were wrong." He has been in this home for 5 years and hasn't done any maintenance on it. When his hunting buddies ask him if he has a man cave, he tells them, "my complete log home is my man cave." 



*First Floor Plan*



*Second Floor Plan*



*For additional information about this home, please contact Hochstetler Log Homes at 800-368-1015.*

# 26 Most Frequently Asked Questions About Log Homes

- By *Levi Hochstetler*

## #1: Does a log home cost more than a stick build home?

If you priced a simple home with four walls, one with solid logs and the other with 2x4 stick-framed, and both with conventional roof-trusses the price would be a wash. However, people who love log homes also like cathedral ceilings, exposed timbers, quality cabinets, nice chandeliers and they don't want just any old front door. All these added niceties make the initial investment for a log home higher.

## #2: How much does a log home cost?

This question is virtually impossible for me to answer as there are too many variables. Following are a few factors to consider when establishing a budget for your new log home.

**Design:** More complex home designs with lots of corners and angles or homes with a smaller footprint typically cost more per square foot. A single story home is generally higher per square foot because of the additional roof and foundation required compared to a 1 ½ or 2 story home.

**Location:** The closer you get to any larger metropolitan area, the more your home will cost, also, if you're building in the New England states add 50% over what homes might be in the mid west, but plan to double it in California.

**Amenities:** It's all in the components. Just like on a bicycle, components can vary 500%. Depending on the water faucet you choose, the cost can vary anywhere from \$50 to \$750 each. Kitchen cabinets can vary for the same plan anywhere from \$5,000 to \$50,000. The front door can vary from \$500 to \$30,000. Other finishes affecting your investment amount include countertops, floor type, fireplace, metal or shingle roof, windows, heating system, and foundation type.

In general, the investment amount for a log home will be very similar to a high quality, highly custom home in your area. We can help you establish your preferred finishes for your new home to find out the approximate turn-key investment for your home.

## #3: Can I build it myself?

Yes, if you have: general carpentry experience/skills; aren't much older than 50; have more time off than just evenings and weekends (ideally off several months during the summer such as a school teacher); and lots of friends that won't disappear when the work starts. But if you don't have at least some of the above criteria, think twice before you commit to it. Believe me, it's not the easiest endeavor, even when qualified. Also, consider being your own general contractor instead. Hochstetler Log Homes has a log home builder workshop every spring that you should consider attending if you decide to try it. Attending the workshop can help determine if you're up to it or not. Note: banks normally require a larger down payment with a self-build.

## #4: Could I save money by building myself?

Yes, but not as much as you might think. A contractor with the proper tools will be far more efficient than what a typical homebuyer could ever hope to be. I expect, on the average, a builder with the same amount of labor can do about twice the amount of work. For one, by the time you have the cords and air hoses unwrapped in the evening it would be about time to wrap them back up again. However, if you don't consider you and your spouse's labor it can be the difference between being able to afford the home you need or not.

One added savings benefit for building it yourself is the fact that your own labor is before income tax, whereas what you pay for labor to a builder is after tax money. Depending on your tax bracket it can be significant.

## #5: Can I use my local lender for financing my log home?

A log home package is custom made. This requires a deposit up front before materials can be cut, dried and milled. Also, there will be two contracts for your project, one with the log home manufacturer and one with the builder. Ask your lender if they accommodate this arrangement. Otherwise, contact us for lending institutions we have worked with.

## #6: How long does it take to have a log home built?

From start to finish the building part takes from 6 to 9 months on average for a 2000 square foot home. Typically, the design process takes about three to four months. If financing is needed, which it usually is, expect three to six months for that depending on the bank, your credit and a host of other potential setbacks.

## #7: Does pre-cut actually save me labor over random length logs?

The idea is that with pre-cut you have less labor in the field. However, builders have told us time and time again that pre-cut doesn't save them any labor! With random, you can put any bundle of logs on the deck, grab any log and start stacking. Whereas in precuts, you have to find the right bundle with the first course and next you'll have to start looking for a certain log that goes where you would like to start laying logs, only to discover that it's clear on the bottom.

Another down side to pre-cut is that if the foundation happens to be too long or too short it could be a major problem, whereas with random length logs, there is no problem. Several other benefits of random length logs is that if you, the homeowner, would like to move a window or door, or you happen to damage a log or two with the forklift, no problem. Not so with pre-cut logs. You'd have a major expense and lost time having to order new logs from your supplier.

However, it's important that when you buy random length logs to make sure they are end squared and that the saddle notches or dovetails are pre-cut. There is a major labor benefit in using end-squared over rough end logs, and if your home has dovetails or saddle-notches that those are pre-done.

*This story will be continued in the next issue of Mill-Direct News*







8691 TR 323 - Holmesville, OH 44633

**330-763-1285**

**OUR SERVICES INCLUDE:**

- New Log Homes
- Hunting Cabins
- Log Home Staining
- Chinking
- Complete Log Home Care

LOG HOMES BUILT FOR GENERATIONS TO ENJOY



Windsor Chairs • Antique Tools

Handmade Period Furniture

6515 St. Rt. 241 • Millersburg • 330-600-9445

**LOG HOME STAINING**

by Furman Helmuth

Please call for our services

**419-606-6912**

2430 Twp. Rd. 505, Loudonville, OH

MADE IN AMERICA



Basic Set

Family Set



**CALL CUTCO ROB: 440.463.3856**  
BUSINESS, GIFTING, SPECIALIST



*Large Selection!*  
"Rustic, but Comfortable"

See us at  
Log Cabin  
Days!

Rustic & Cabin Furniture

- HICKORY
- ASPEN
- PINE
- RECLAIMED
- RED CEDAR
- HAND HEWN BARN WOOD
- SLAB TABLES



**Furniture Built On-Site**

Bedroom • Dining • Living Room • Occasional

6101 County Road 68  
Millersburg, Ohio 44654

[www.millersrusticfurniture.com](http://www.millersrusticfurniture.com)

**330-674-9709**

[sales@millersrusticfurniture.com](mailto:sales@millersrusticfurniture.com)

# Employee Log Home Tour

- by Nathan Hochstetler

One of the more exciting and enjoyable benefits Hochstetler employees experience is the opportunity to see the “fruits of their labor”. Levi Hochstetler, the founder invited the Hochstetler “team” to visit several homes that they have created – including the design and the material supplied for our customer’s dream homes.

Our first stop on our log home journey was at Marvin Wengerd’s home. He tore down an old farmhouse, redid the foundation and built a log home on the same location. It is a custom 5-Bedroom, 2-bath log home. The stacking logs were 8x6 square with a bevel and dovetail corners. To take it up a level the Wengerd’s chose multiple color finishes for the interior. The exterior is striking with the grey stain against the white window frames.

Wengerd’s



Next stop was at Sam and Judy Paulus. This home is based off the Hudson design with a breezeway and a 2-car garage added. It has 3 bedrooms and 2-1/2 baths. They chose the 6x12 square logs with the chinking on the exterior which goes well with their antiques they have on display throughout the home.

Paulus’



On to Jim and Sherry Kulway’s home. A custom ranch style home with 2 bedrooms and 2 baths. The home is beautifully laid out for an age in place home. The Kulway’s recently added a timber octagon screen porch on the back, complete with its own fireplace - the perfect spot to relax on a nice summer evening!

Kulway’s



A short ride was made over to Mike & Belicia Biskup. The Biskup home is based off a Sweetwater floor plan with a few modifications and a large 3-car garage. Featuring 2 Bedrooms and 2 baths on the main floor. Two additional bedrooms, a bath and a loft area are located upstairs. The Biskup’s integrated their love of wood throughout the home. They prefer the warm look of wood instead of painted walls or wallpaper and appreciate the lower maintenance.

Biskup’s



Brenda Smith’s home was the next one on the route. It was built over 18 years ago and it still has the beauty of a new log home. It is a custom home with 2 bedrooms and a bath on the first floor and the Master Bedroom and Bath are located in the upstairs. Brenda’s love for horses is evident as you walk through her home. The property has two large horse barns and you can watch the horses in the field while sitting in the great room.

Smith’s



Dr. William and Mary Elder's home is a home that you can visit multiple times and you still have the same feeling when you walk in the front door "WOW"! They have named their place "Big Stiks" and the name is adequate for the home. Massive round timbers are found throughout the home. They were harvested from storm damaged trees found on the property. Anyone can tell why the Elder's grandchildren love to come over. The loft is set up as a children's fun center with lots of activities to keep them occupied. Plus the Elders's hospitality makes it all the more enjoyable!



Elders'

The next home was completed just this year. Rodney Bly's custom home has that nice and cozy feel of a log home. It has all the amenities a family could want and is only 1600 sq. ft. The Master Bedroom and Bath are on the first floor, and an additional bedroom and bath are located in the upstairs. You can't help but fall in love with this home.



Bly's

What a fulfillment it was to see the finished homes that we all had a part in creating. But the best part was the smiling faces that greeted us at each home. And listening to the owners converse about how their dream was fulfilled, as they proudly showed us around their homes!



Filled with everything you need to know about designing, building and finishing your dream home, *Log & Timber Home Living* is a must-have for any wood home enthusiast. Every issue is packed with photo inspiration and expert advice for creating a log or timber home of your very own.

**SUBSCRIBE TODAY & GET 2 FREE GIFTS!**

To subscribe, call **800-234-8496** or visit **loghome.com**

Thank you, Hochstetler Log Homes, for being a valued partner of Log Home Living

**Order your blueprints before the spring rush!**  
**Call Hochstetler Log Homes**  
**800-368-1015**

**BW Best Western PLUS.**

Complimentary Breakfast • Fitness Room • High Speed Internet

243 E. Liberty St., Wooster • (330) 264-7750 • [bestwestern.com](http://bestwestern.com)

## Visiting Hochstetler Log Homes?

*Here's a variety of lodgings to suit your taste.*

**BEST WESTERN PLUS HOTEL**, 240 East Liberty, Wooster, OH 44691  
 Distance 24 minutes East • 330-264-7750

**HAMPTON INN**, 2055 East Main Street, Ashland, OH 44805 (Located off the Ashland Ohio I-71 exit on US Rt. 250) Distance 15 minutes North • 419-903-0900

**COMFORT INN & SPLASH HARBOR**, 855 Comfort Plaza Dr. Bellville, OH 44813  
 (Located at I-71 & St. Rt. 97 Exit 165) Distance 20 minutes West • 419-886-4000  
[www.SplashHarbor.com](http://www.SplashHarbor.com)

**MOHICAN LODGE**, 1098 Co. Rd. 3006, Perrysville, OH 44864.  
 Distance 20 minutes West • 419-938-5411 • [www.MohicanStateParkLodge.com](http://www.MohicanStateParkLodge.com)

**PLEASANT HILL LAKE PARK CABINS**, 3431 SR 95 Perrysville, OH 44864.  
 Distance 15 minutes West. Stay in a Hochstetler Log Cabin. Only 10 available.  
 419-938-7884 • [www.pleasanthillpark.mwcd.org](http://www.pleasanthillpark.mwcd.org)

Years ago, I had heard that Lake St. Clair in Michigan was a world-class fishery for Muskie and my favorite, Smallmouth bass, so I was curious and asked my son, Mark, to join me on a fishing trip this past September. I'm 82 years old and running out of time to travel far from home, so this was on my Bucket List.

I arranged to get a guide and hotel for the two-day trip, so we went up the day before to get an early start the following morning. Next day, we met our guide, James, a young man with over 20 years guiding on the big lake. Armed with his high speed bassboat, a dozen rod and reel combos and the latest fish finders, he was certainly well equipped. He even delivered a 20-minute discourse on proven tactics for catching big smallmouths, so we felt confident in his ability. First, there was the steady, "smooth as silk" retrieve with the white shiner imitation, followed by the "lift and reel" retrieve with the crawfish imitation, and finally the "reel as fast as you can" retrieve with a plastic swimbait. I said that looked like the venerable, Finnish-made Rapala, a staple lure for all game fish, especially bass, and he replied, "this is a hundred times better." Needless to say, after his lengthy discourse and desperately trying to remember all his key points, Mark and I were anxious to finally wet our lines.

We headed down the channel leading out to the main lake - armed with so much knowledge that I was getting an anxiety attack! We cast toward every weed patch we could see for several hours as we motored down the shoreline. From 8:30 'til 1:00 we had only hooked 5 fish. I had a small perch, a small largemouth, and a smallmouth which jumped and spit out my white shiner. Not exactly what I had envisioned for this "Bucket List" trip.

Unwilling to give up, I decided to try MY method. It involved a simple, slow, lift and reel retrieve with a 5" blue rubber worm, Mr. Reliable. "You'll never catch a fish on that," James admonished. On the second cast I felt a little tap and swiftly lifted my rod to "cross his eyes." Suddenly, the smallmouth shot up out of the water, a remarkable 3', and splashed down as James looked on in amazement. A few casts later I nailed a second nice smallmouth as James mumbled while clutching the landing net. At 3:00 pm it was finally time to head in when I felt another strike, this time after a 60' cast beside some isolated weeds. There was no doubt about this one. I set the hook and the large fish barely budged. I yelled, "fish on" as the fish shook his head and James rushed to get the net. A zig-jag battle ensued and the fish 'boiled' to the surface. He must have spotted the boat and suddenly exploded from the water, sending a cascading spray of water in every direction. "Wow, it's a big one!", I shouted. The fish took the "scenic route" and went around the motor before surfacing on the other side while I frantically held on. The spinning rod was doubled over and the reel screaming as the large fish dove under the boat in a desperate attempt at freedom. Seconds later he surfaced and I finally guided the brute into the net.

I couldn't resist telling James that, "Sometimes these rubber worms seem to work." He didn't respond. I had him measure the fish; over 20" and pushing 5lbs!

After saying goodbye to James, Mark and I headed home. We didn't get the quantity of smallmouth we had hoped for but I was happy with the impressive size of the ones we caught. And, it could have been even better since we both lost a couple nice ones that threw our lures when they performed their aerial acrobatics.

On the way home James texted me and asked, "What size and color were those worms?" I had to laugh when he said he was going to buy some for the next day's trip.

I wish I could have heard his speech on how to retrieve that rubber worm!



## EICHER WOODWORKING LLC

CUSTOM KITCHEN & BATH CABINETS



See our cabinetry at Hochstetler's  
McKay Model Home!



522 CR 2575, LOUDONVILLE, OH 44842

419-994-1098

EICHERWOODWORKING.COM | INFO@EICHERWOODWORKING.COM