



Mill • Direct News

Living the Log Home Lifestyle

Spring 2018

VIEW FROM THE MILL

By Levi Hochstetler

This has been an interesting winter. It started off fairly mild but ended up somewhat colder than normal, although nothing that we couldn't handle.

Our wood-waste grinder is finally up and running. It grinds up our cut-offs and any scrap wood that we generate. Recently the Smurf-Stone, Coshocton paper plant had shut down. Since then we have had a problem finding a home for our wood waste. But now with this grinder we can grind them up fine enough to put into our storage silo along with our shavings generated from milling the log home logs, lumber and timbers. From our silo the shavings get loaded into trucks who then deliver them to horse farmers for bedding. The larger pieces of waste we continue to sell as firewood, "if the owners don't need it." At the Sawmill all the slab wood gets chipped, which then gets shipped to a manufacture that makes pressed-wood pallets. The bark gets sold for landscaping mulch. Out in the woods the tree tops are sold to the Glatfelter paper plant in Chillicothe, Ohio. Thus nothing is wasted; every part of the tree is used for something.

Don't forget, this is the year for Log Cabin Days! The dates are set for Friday, September 14th and Saturday, September the 15th. So save the date, it will be here before you know it. If you are a log home owner, live within 100 miles and would like to "show it off" and at the same time help out the American Cancer Society during our log home tour, then contact us and ask for Levi.

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Wood Architecture of Germany & Switzerland *Part 2 - Wood Structures of Switzerland - by Steve D. Lykins, P.E.*

In the last issue of Mill Direct News we took you on a tour of some historic wood structures of Germany. In this second part of the two-part series, you will discover some historic log and timber structures of Switzerland.

As with the wooden architecture of Germany, the wooden architecture of Switzerland carries with it an undeniable element of culture. While in Switzerland I visited one open-air museum near Brienz, Switzerland called Ballenberg Museum. I also visited several mountain villages in search of the authentic log and timber farm structures of the Bernese Oberland and the Swiss Alps. Specifically, I visited the villages of Grindelwald, Lauterbrunnen and Zermatt in Switzerland. The cultural experience of these mountain villages helped me to understand how the form and function of the architecture was shaped by the lifestyle of the local people over many generations.

After visiting Germany for over a week I had only seen a few log structures, but the timber-framed structures were plentiful. I began to wonder whether or not I would have any meaningful experience with the log structures of Europe. Then I drove into Switzerland near Baden through a fairly long tunnel. Upon emerging from the tunnel the panorama was breathtaking. I could see the snowcapped Alps in the distance with steep green foothills in the foreground. Immediately, I started seeing log structures. As I got closer and closer to the Alps the log structures became more numerous. By the time I reached Interlaken, Switzerland most buildings and structures of all types (restaurants, hotels, homes, cafes, etc.) were of log and timber construction. My first excursion into the high Swiss Alps took me to Grindelwald and Lauterbrunnen, where I spent two entire days walking the narrow streets and the rolling pastures. Grindelwald is a farming community which has become a tourist attraction due to its proximity to the majestic peaks of the Eiger, Jungfrau, Schilthorn and Wetterhorn. Near the edge of the village the sound of cow bells rang constantly in the air creating a symphony at times. Near the center of the village, tourists



Planting boxes, large overhangs, artful carvings and low broad roof lines on a personal residence in Grindelwald, Switzerland.

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Choosing the Right Builder - *by Levi Hochstetler*

With a little homework and some common sense assessments you should be able to steer clear of the above bad experiences. Here are a few tips in choosing your builder before you hand over your hard-earned cash.

Check and Balance- This is key; and 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 manufacturer 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 story from last issue) will contract with a builder on a promise of a no-hassle, we take care of everything project. This is very tempting as it sounds so easy; however, it opens you up to being taken advantage of. There

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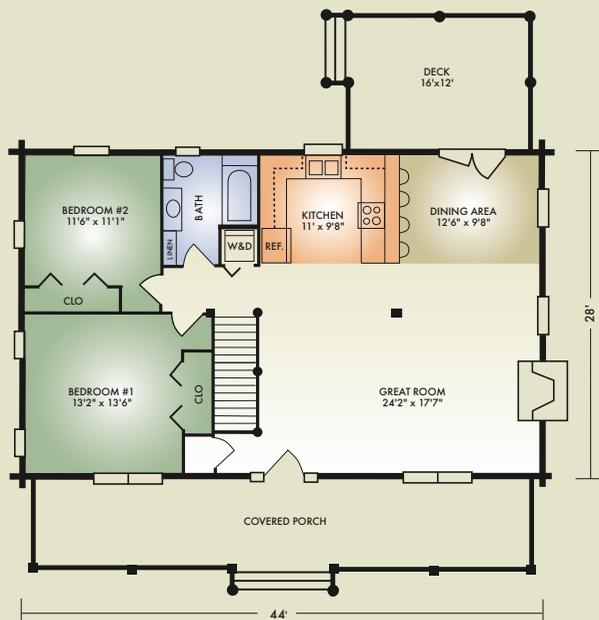
Honey Creek

Sq. ft. 1232

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The Honey Creek is a practical plan designed for those who desire a smaller, two bedroom home with the convenience of a single floor. Like the McKay, this plan features the popular open-concept great room with exposed timbered ceiling and fireplace, but instead of a master bedroom and master bath, this has two large bedrooms. The kitchen has a convenient raised bar and the dining area has French doors leading out to an open rear deck. Outside, a full-length covered front porch offers a relaxing area for both family and friends. So, whether this is your dream home or weekend getaway, you'll love the warm, cozy ambience of this charming ranch.



Choosing the Right Builder - *continued from page 1*

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.

References - Getting a minimum of 3 references is a must. While no builder will give out information on an unhappy customer as a reference, they are still worth your time to get.

Ask to see at least one home the builder has built. Keep in mind that just because that customer was happy with the builder and his craftsmanship, it may not be up to your standards. Try to find out from the reference a few more homes the builder has built. Those might be more valuable to check out than the reference the builder provided. Also, don't hesitate to ask the builder for supplier and bank references.

Remember to ask references if the job was done in a timely manner. A major temptation for some builders is to lure someone into signing a contract with them, knowing full well that they are too busy to do the job in the desired time frame. After you are committed and the time comes to start, they may bump you to fill a later empty time slot.

Integrity - This is probably the most important point of all. A builder may have built 100's of log homes, has a long list of references, the best warranty, a nice brochure, and the most thorough quote. But if they do not have integrity or honesty, then forget them. The question is, "How can you tell?"

Do they badmouth their competition? Do they talk down on past customers? Do they have a bad attitude toward the log home manufacturer or make negative comments about past blueprints? These are all hints that the builder may lack integrity.

Listen carefully to their stories. Quite often you can see through their talk. Ask references how the builder handled problems that arose. Did they come back and fix the problem, or did they pass the blame to the manufacturer of logs, doors, windows, shingles, etc.? It's not uncommon for builders to blame manufacturers for inferior products, when, in fact, the product was not installed properly or to the manufacturer's specifications.

It is good to ask references if they had any differences with the builder, and if so, whether or not the builder came their way at least partially.

Experience - Experience is important, yet I would prefer to work with someone that has never done a log home but is a conscientious builder that wants to follow our construction manual. This is preferred over someone that has built many log homes but insists to build it his way. Many of our customers have built log homes themselves. If they can, then certainly a good builder can, too. However, if you find a good, experienced, and conscientious log homebuilder; better yet.

Some log home manufactures, such as Hochstetler, occasionally have log home builder's workshops. If someone whom you trust is a builder and he would like to build your home, send them to one of these workshops.

Job Site - Visiting one of the builder's current job sites can tell you volumes about the builder. Look for neatness and tidiness. Do they have foreign objects lying around, such as pop cans or plastic bags? Do they keep bundles of lumber stacked neatly together and covered? While builders can't pick up every minute, the better ones will do so at least once a day.

Contracts & Documents - Avoid builders and contractors who say they can build your home from a sketch or an illustration sheet, and that they don't need a blueprint. Most log home manufacturers generate blueprints off your sketch for a very reasonable price. And, being the manufacturer, they know their material to calculate for structural integrity. After all, the blueprint is the most important document between you, the builder, and the manufacturer. It is your way to communicate to them what you want and expect, and what you envision your home to look like.

Never have a builder build off of another company's illustration sheets without paying for plans, as this could land you in a legal battle over copyright laws.

Contracts should clearly spell out what will and will not be done for a set price, but don't need to be anything fancy.

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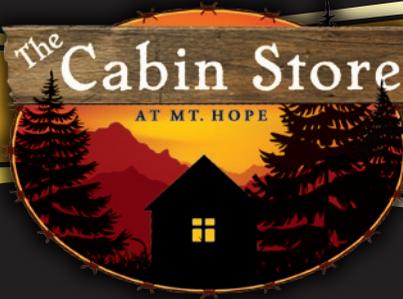


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Hocking Hills GETAWAY

by Bill Dinkins



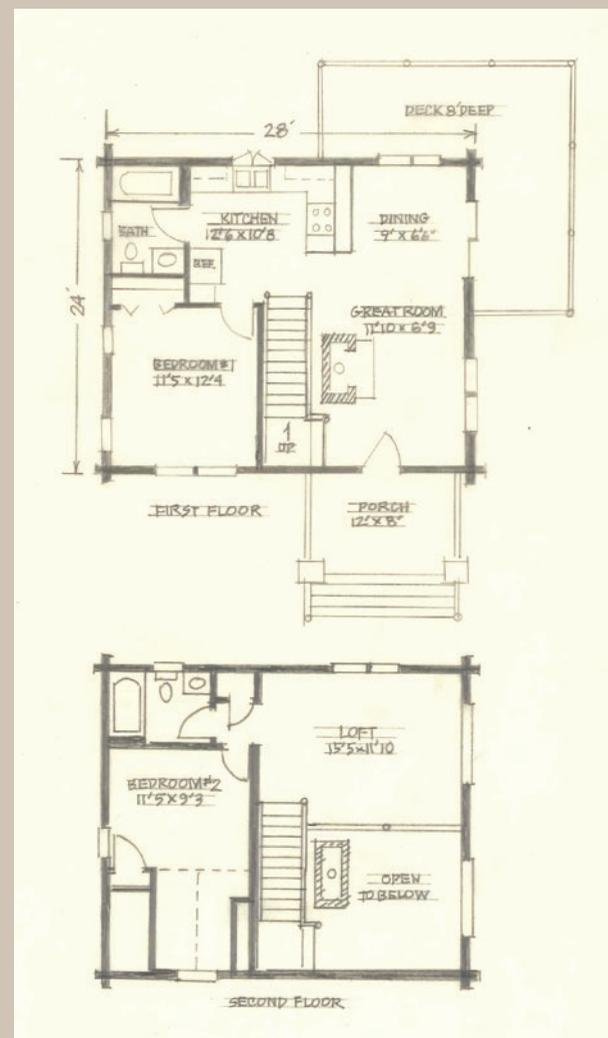
The Hocking Hills area of south central Ohio has always been a major tourist attraction because of its natural beauty. Visitors from all over Ohio and the Midwest travel to this area to see the spectacular landscape which includes cascading waterfalls, winding streams, and sheer cliffs at Old Man's Cave, Conkle's Hollow, Rock House and Cedar Falls. Its especially popular with outdoorsmen for hiking, hunting and fishing, and for families who like camping and picnicking.

Ron and Kathy Bell were frequent visitors to the area and decided to purchase 6 acres of wooded terrain on a secluded road to build a log home which they would rent out. They had already built a Hochstetler log cabin before and met with Hochstetler's designer before settling on the Fontana plan with some

changes, the major one being flipping the plan right-to-left to take advantage of the landscape. Nestled in the woods, this small 1115 sq. ft., 2-bedroom, 2-bath plan with the popular open-concept great room, dining area and kitchen with exposed timber roof and large stone fireplace seemed ideal for the surrounding landscape. Outside, there would be a covered front porch with timbered gable and log dormer; and in the rear, a large deck with hot tub. Samuel Mast of Cedar Creek log homes was chosen as the builder and started laying the foundation in the spring of 2016. Samuel and his crew worked most of the summer and finally finished up in November of '16. The cabin is now fully furnished and even includes a TV, microwave, coffee maker, toaster, and cooking supplies.

The “Northwoods” decor is evident throughout in the rustic furnishings and wildlife images, like deer and bear displayed on rugs, lamps, etc. (Relax: there are no bears in the area ... at least not now!). Their customers are quick to point out the charm of the cabin. It definitely reflects the casual, relaxing log home lifestyle. Comments like, “this has all the comforts of home but it feels like you’re a million miles away,” are frequently heard. His guest book lists some of the favorite activities at the cabin like soaking in the hot tub, feeding the deer, watching birds at the feeder, and just relaxing while sitting around the fire pit enjoying hot dogs and marshmallows. The centrally-located cabin is a convenient home base to the various parks, as well. Old Man’s Cave and Cedar Falls are only a 20-minute drive away and well worth the trip. There are numerous hiking trails and picnic areas in each location. In addition, a new visitor center and gift shop is due to open this fall at Old Man’s Cave.

The cozy cabin, named “Trail Ridge” can be rented by the day, weekend or week and is especially popular for couples and families, with a maximum of 4 guests. Ron has 3 rentals in the area and one in Estes Park, Colorado. Interested parties can get further details on line at naturespointe.com or via email at rbell@naturespointe.com 



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

Wood Architecture from Germany & Switzerland

- continued from page 1

from all over the world admire the beauty of the Swiss Alps. I don't think it would be a stretch to say that nearly every single structure in Grindelwald is of log construction (or made to look like it). The log construction in this region consists of almost purely rectangular shaped logs, ranging from 3 to 6 inches in thickness. The majority of log walls here are about 4 inches thick. In older structures, the log courses are joined using either continuous wood splines or wood pegs at regular intervals of about 2 feet. Newer log structures use a double tongue-and-groove system for aligning and



air sealing the log walls. Log corner construction is almost exclusively double saddle notch, where the top and bottom of each log receives a notch about one third the depth of the log. The wall logs are ALL boxed-heart logs, meaning the core of the tree is left at (or near) the center of the log. The wall logs of most structures appear to be of pine. Tamarack pine is plentiful in this region and to my eyes appeared to be the only species growing in sufficient size, quality and quantity to create all of these stunning structures. Structures in this village range from nearly 400 years old to contemporary, with little change in the type of construction. Of course, architectural styling has changed significantly in 400 years, which provides some interesting contrast from one structure to the next. The roofs of these structures generally have 4 to 6 foot overhangs, sometimes reaching 8 or even 10 feet! In most cases these overhangs are supported by fly rafters and/or fly beams with diagonal braces. Given this level of protection, nearly all logs are left untreated by paint and/or stain. Most buildings in Grindelwald are built on a mountain side and so the foundations are of either cast in place concrete or natural stone. Nearly all foundations are whitewashed. Clay tiles and wood shingles dominate as the roof coverings of choice. Many frieze and sill logs are artfully carved to differing degrees of complexity, with most structures having names of the owners and date of construction carved into a log somewhere above the front door. Nearly all structures (regardless of their use) had planting boxes on the balcony railings or underneath the windows or both. The decorative carvings and planting boxes provide a unique experience on a human scale, making the structures seem familiar to someone who has never experienced them before.

The final two days of my trip were spent in Zermatt, Switzerland which is a small tourist town best known for winter sports. This town is only accessible by train and lies in the heart of the Alps at the base of the Matterhorn, arguably the most recognizable mountain in the world. Although Zermatt is full of contemporary ski chalets and large hotels, at the center of town are the historic log structures that remain from Zermatt's days as a secluded farming community. These historic log structures (some dating from the 15th century) were mostly agricultural in their use, but many log residences and hotels have been renovated and are still in use today. Many of the log construction details and techniques in Zermatt are the same as those observed in Grindelwald and Lauterbrunnen with one exception: in Zermatt the roof covering of choice is stone. Many structures (old and new) have stone slabs ranging from 2 to 4 inches thick and 2 to 4 feet in their length and width. These stone slabs are laid shingle style to shed water. Older structures have only a system of log purlins or rafters supporting these stone slabs, where newer structures have an insulated and solid sheathed deck with tar paper underneath the heavy stone roofing. Stone slabs are held in place by wood pegs into the supporting purlin/rafter and located down slope from the stones. This type of roof covering lends a unique aesthetic to the structures in Zermatt.

My experience with Swiss Mountain Architecture and the culture that influences it has shown that the Swiss have a very different way of thinking about log structures. In The United States of America, the log structure is historically one that was meant to be a temporary structure for a frontiersman and his family and/or livestock. An Appalachian log structure with chinked joints, for example, could be built relatively quickly and efficiently using materials available on site, but was not considered to be a permanent structure. In Switzerland, local people have built permanent log structures for centuries using materials available on site. By taking the time and care to fit the logs together tightly, to protect the structure with large overhangs and to



give the structure character and charm with artful carvings and planting boxes, the log structure has become the preferred method of construction in Swiss mountain regions. In fact, the architecture itself has become a symbol for the region. With log construction practices such as precision-milled logs that fit together tightly, boxed-heart pine logs with closed corners (i.e., saddle notch or dovetail) and large overhangs gaining popularity in the United States, perhaps we are changing how Americans think about and experience log structures. Might there be a time when the sustainability, sturdiness and beauty offered by log construction becomes symbolic of our great country? 🏠

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Choosing the Right Builder - continued from page 2

Warranty - Most log home builders warrant their work for one year or more. While this is important, it is not as important as having the simple ability and financial resources to stand behind their work and come back to make corrections.

Ask them to build to the manufacturer's construction manual and specs to make sure there is no problem with the manufacturer's warranty. Manufacturers have invested in much more time and money in research, testing, and engineering than any builder would or could ever hope to do. Because builders seem to come and go, it's important to have a valid warranty from the manufacture.

Insurance - If licensing or insurance are required in your state be sure to check the validity of these documents including worker's compensation certificate. Also, most homeowners want their builders to carry liability insurance. If you decide to go with a builder who does not carry insurance, make sure you are willing to take the risk or buy insurance yourself for your project.

Professionalism - Look for estimates and proposals that are neatly spelled out and leave no doubt as to what is and is not included. Remember, an **estimate** is a "ballpark figure" and generally based on square footage costs, whereas **proposals** are an exact figure based on your final blueprints and needs. Normally, they have allowances for certain items such as cabinetry, floor coverings, etc.

The appearance and dress of owners and sales people will give you a hint on the professionalism of the builder. Promptly returning phone calls will give you an idea of their response when there is a problem or conflict. Safety programs and concern for employee safety are also good signs of professionalism.

Their vehicles don't need to be expensive, but it's better if vehicles, forklifts, tools, etc. are clean and in good repair.

Additional considerations - How long has the builder been in business under that business name? Check with the Better Business Bureau to see if there have been any complaints against them. Keep in mind that most people don't bother to report, so most companies have a good rating. Also, anymore you can check their reputation online with reviews from Facebook, Google, Angie's List and others.

When securing your loan, banks can be a safeguard by having had past experience with the builder. Dunn and Bradstreet can be helpful in determining their financial strength. A building license sometimes can be helpful if you are building in an area that requires one. Good building departments can be a safety measure as well by keeping builders from substituting with secondary material and taking shortcuts. Unfortunately, not all areas have a building department, or if they do, don't always bother to check the grade or species used.

Log home manufacturers normally keep a list of potential log home builders. This is probably your best source in finding a good builder. Not only are they used to the manufacturer's system but you can assume it's a fairly safe source, as in order to make the list they would have to have a good track record.

All-in-all, there are many good builders out there. Only a handful of bad apples make it difficult for the rest. If you take some precautions and follow some of the guidelines spelled out above, you should have the confidence that your job will go well. "Happy Building!" 🏠

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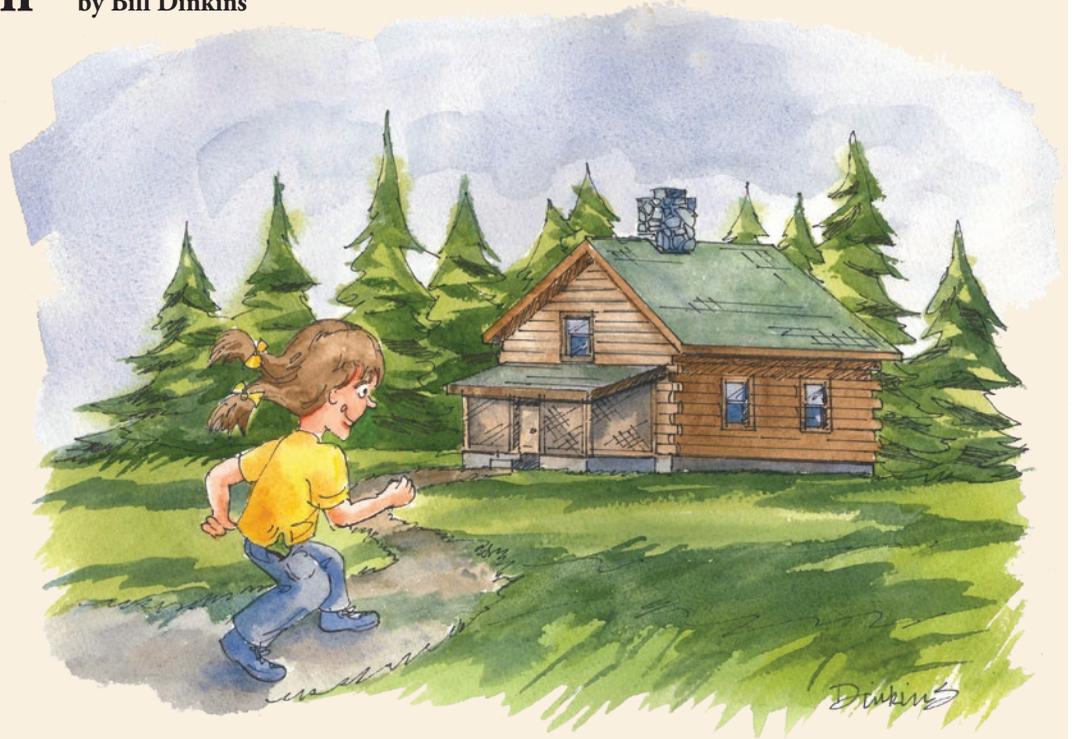
CABIN FEVER “Island Vacation” by Bill Dinkins

My wife, Sandy, and I were reminiscing about our trips to Canada and she mentioned her annual trips with her family to a cabin on Chandos Lake, in eastern Ontario. It was a perfect family vacation to a remote, pine tree-covered island: Rich, her dad, loved to fish for walleye, while Sandy and her sister, Charlene, would hunt for frogs and crawfish along the rocky shoreline, and her mom, Maybelle, would often read and sunbath on a large boulder by the dock. As they got older, they all went fishing and water skiing behind the old Lyman boat. Rich insisted it was the best walleye boat ever made since it drifted at just the right speed to “limit out” on his favorite fish. Something for everyone!

This idyllic destination was about 600 miles away from their home in North Canton, Ohio, but by leaving at night they avoided the heavy traffic around Toronto and arrived at the lake in the afternoon. Shortly after arriving they would motor out to the little island, carry their provisions for the week up to the cabin, then go over to the general store on the lake to get ice for the ice box. During the winter the owner would cut huge chunks of ice and haul them back to the ice shed with horses and place them on the ground under sawdust, which kept them from melting all summer long.

Mornings began with the sweet smell of bacon and blueberry pancakes on the old cook stove, followed by mom’s, “come and get it.” She never had to say that twice! Dad would usually already be out on the lake with his thermos of coffee in one hand and fishing rod in the other. At about 10, he would come in with his stringer of walleye and quickly fillet them for supper. Sandy fondly recalls those succulent evening meals; fresh, melt-in-your-mouth fillets, baked beans seasoned to perfection with brown sugar, and home fries with onions. Dessert was a smorgasbord of pies: apple, cherry, pecan - and her favorite, fresh blueberry.

One day, Sandy decided to go fishing and gathered her cane pole, a can of worms, and headed down the trail to the dock at the far side of the island. Soon after she “baited-up”, the little red and white bobber disappeared under water and she lifted her rod quickly, just as her father had told her. She swung the colorful, wriggling sunfish up on the dock, unhooked it and stuffed it headfirst into her jeans, and cast out once more. Another sunfish! She nonchalantly stuffed it into her other front pocket and raced uphill to show her mom and dad her prize catch. With pigtails flopping and smiling ear-to-ear she burst through the cabin door, “Look what I caught,” she proudly announced while pointing to her pockets. Her mom and dad burst out laughing, while trying unsuccessfully to remove the fish, whose fins had firmly imbedded themselves. Finally, Rich turned her upside down, shook her a few times, and while Sandy giggled with delight, the fish wiggled free and flip-flopped across the cabin floor. 🏠



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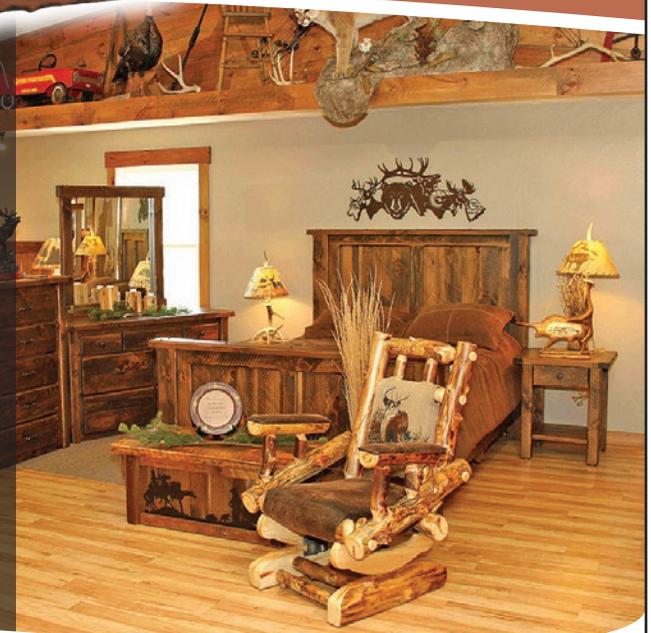
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