



Having plenty of boulders on the property has allowed owners Al and Kim Kortze to create a two-tier retaining wall that affords the couple and their guests an easy walk to the lake from the home's hilltop perch.

On the Rocks

A rocky start leads to a happy ending for one Pennsylvania couple.

story by **Suzanna Logan** | photography by **Allen Mowery**



For most, saying your home-building journey began on rocky ground wouldn't be a good thing, but for Kim and Al Kortze, it was the perfect start to their log home story.

After falling in love with log cabins at a home show, the couple had been combing Pennsylvania's landscape for years in search of the perfect spot to build a weekend getaway that would eventually serve as a forever home. "We weren't going to put the house on just any lot," explains Al. "Kim wanted to be near the water, and I liked being in the mountains and woods."

Then, while enjoying a weekend away in the Poconos Mountains, they happened upon a "lot for sale" sign. Following the sign (and their intuition), they discovered the property hit every mark on their wish list. "It was on the water, hilly, with lots of trees," says Al.

And, one more thing: There were rocks. Loads of them. "I think that had scared people away from the property," explains Kim. "It had been sitting there for years." But Al, an engineer by trade, wasn't fazed. "We knew we had a challenge in front of us, but it was exactly what we were looking for," Al says. The couple was later told by their excavator, who uncovered boulder upon boulder on the property, that it was the most "difficult" site he had ever worked on.

Having finally found the land, the couple spent the next five years paying off the property loan while perfecting their cabin's design. The

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The open-concept kitchen features soapstone countertops, slate floors and stainless steel appliances. Bursts of color come from the maple cabinetry (painted black and overlaid with red) and a Tiffany-style light fixture.



“Our home always has a golden glow,” says Kim Kortze of the rich honey-toned hue prevalent throughout the house.

Along with the vaulted ceiling and wall of glass, a clear stain on the white pine logs keeps the home feeling light and airy.



ABOVE: Delivering unbeatable views, the loft is Kim's favorite vantage point. "At night, seeing all of the stars and the moon through the windows is amazing," she says.

OPPOSITE TOP: The loft also gives you a closer view of the great room's impressive shed-antler chandelier.

OPPOSITE: An open-riser, switchback staircase is neatly tucked to one side of the great room and provides a buffer between the home's public spaces and the master suite's wing.

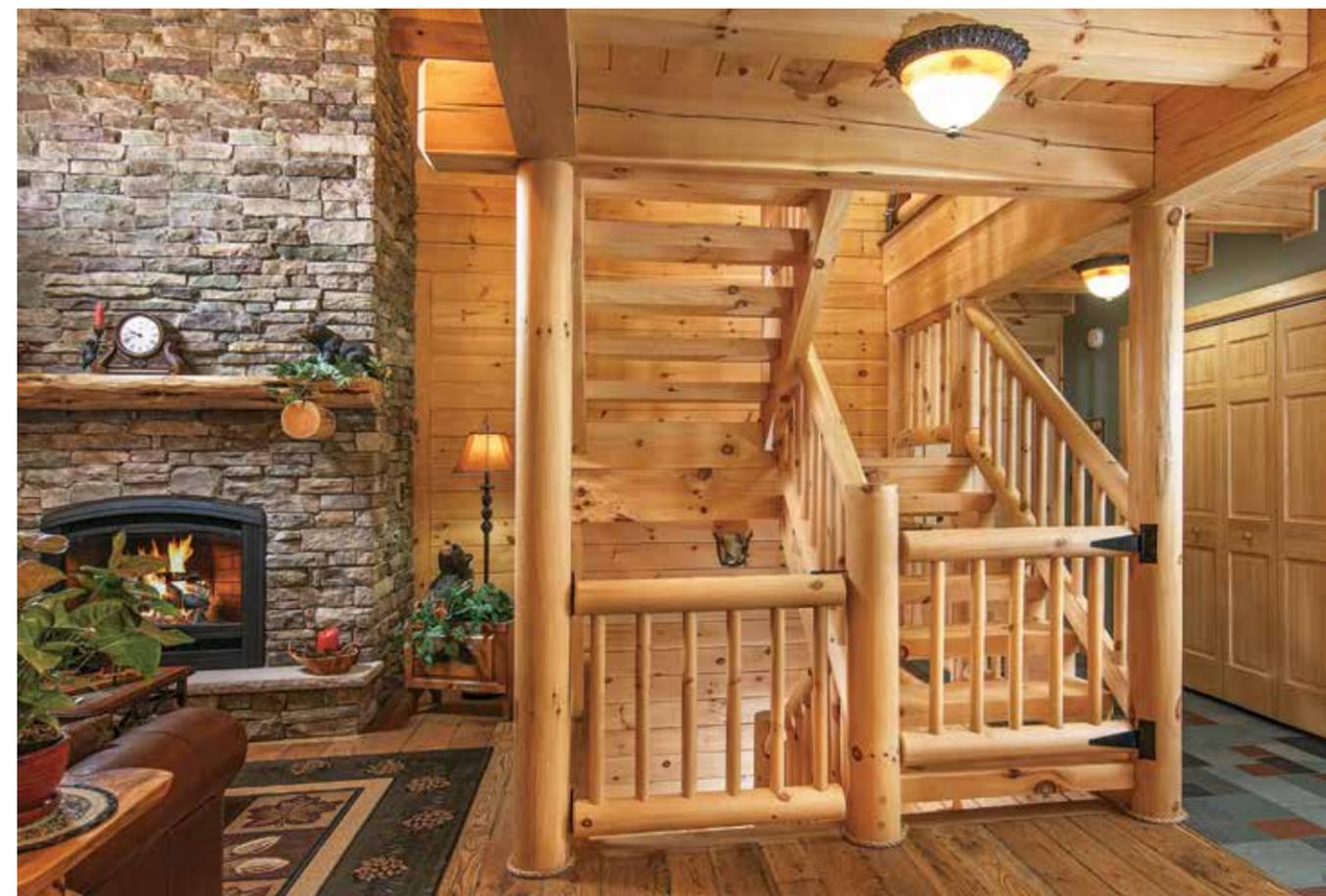
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three bedroom, two-and-a-half bath floor plan included a walk-out basement (a must for Al's woodworking shop), a roomy kitchen, a master suite and laundry on the main level, a loft workspace and, of course, show-stopping views of the lake and woods that had sold them on the site in the first place.

With their plans in hand and a lot of log home manufacturer research in their back pocket, the couple approached Timberhaven Log and TimberHomes. What initially drew Al to the locally based company was the choice between traditional or laminated white pine logs. "They're essentially white pine boards that are laminated together then milled into whatever

shape you want," Al says of the engineered-log system. "You don't have as many worries about shrinking, warping or checking." What made Al ultimately stay with the company, though, was the support and honesty he found in their sales representative, Bob Romano.

"When we first showed him the plans, he said: 'What you have right now is an 'okay room,' but I wouldn't call it a 'great room,'" recalls Al, laughing. Working alongside Bob, the couple boosted the square footage of the main living area and, as a result, the wow factor of the two-story fireplace and the beam-and-purlin roof system. "It really made those elements stand out," says Bob.





1: Private access to the rear deck gives the simple master suite a sense of luxury.

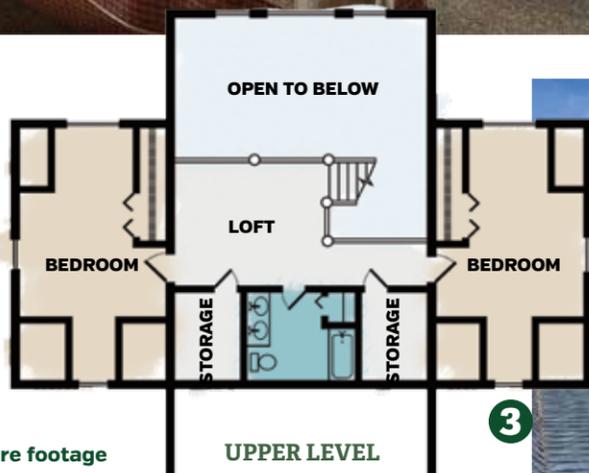
2: The master bath features dual sinks set into granite countertops, a large soaking tub and a separate tiled shower.

3: Dormers in the bedrooms increase usable square footage and give the exterior its cottage charm.

4: A combination of three types of stone acts as a defined focal point in the front facade and adds depth and character.



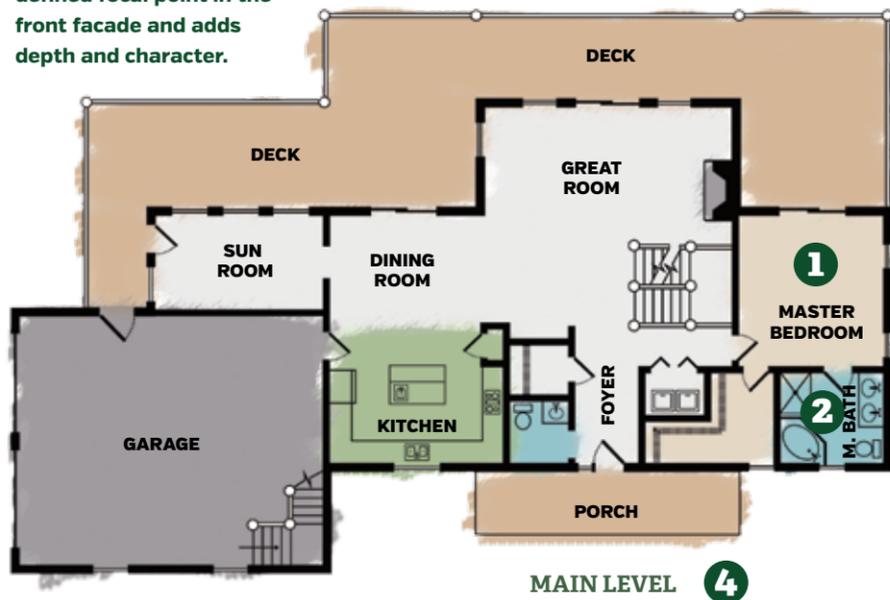
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3



3



4

Other eye-catching features in the couple's favorite gathering spot include the vaulted ceiling and wall of glass that look towards the lake views below. "The home has a rustic feel, but with all of the glass and the cathedral ceiling, it has a contemporary flair, as well," says Bob.

With a decade of searching, designing, excavating and building behind them, the couple now has time to enjoy that rustic-contemporary vibe and the water and woods that hooked them on the rocky plot. "We go hiking and kayaking on the lake. We make it our time away from the hustle and bustle of everyday life," Kim says. Al adds: "The minute I get here, I can feel my blood pressure drop. It's like we're on vacation every weekend." **1**



4



Square Footage: 2,910

Bedrooms: 3

Bathrooms: 2 full, 1 half

Log Provider:

Timberhaven Log & Timber Homes