

If Daniel Boone Could See Us Now!

written by: Mike Dawson

photography by: Lance C. Bell

There was a time when authentic log homes were only seen at historic sites and many were just small log cabins built hundreds of years ago. In fact, they seemed to be disappearing across the American landscape. But those days are over and log homes are more popular than ever, according to the Log Home Council (LHC), a national association that is made up of firms that build and design custom log homes. LHC says log homes are the fastest growing segment of the custom-home real estate market today with more than 8 percent of new homes built annually.

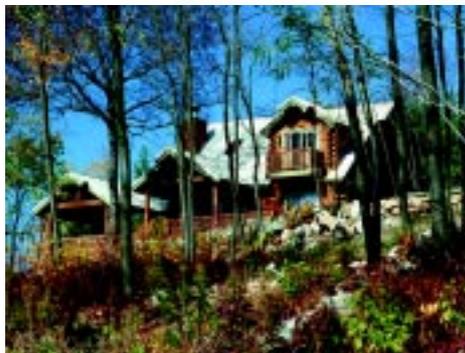
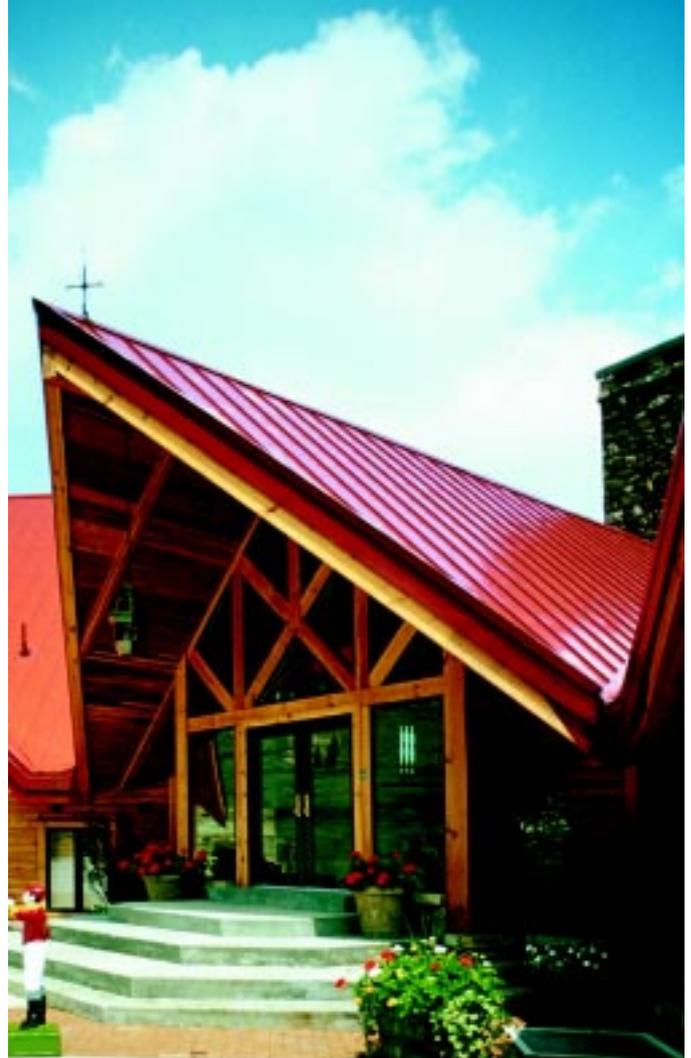
Deep Creek Lake area of Garrett County has become a magnet for people who are choosing to build homes that fit the natural surroundings. Local Realtors estimate that 3 out of every 10 new homes built around the lake are log homes.

Two of the companies based in Garrett County that have earned solid reputations for building high quality log homes are **Mountaineer Log and Siding Company** and **Yellowstone at Deep Creek Lake**. Both have model homes in McHenry and you can see examples of their work throughout the area.

Betsy Spiker from Mountaineer Log and Siding says they have been building log homes in Garrett County since 1979 and have seen the growth first hand. "Every year it seems we talk to more people who are deciding to build a custom log home in the Deep Creek Lake area," said Betsy. "They are looking for the warmth and beauty of wood in a log home and it's a natural choice for the lake environment."

There are several different types of logs to consider when deciding to construct a log home, but Mountaineer's most popular log profile is a D-shaped log. The unique design of these logs, which are shaped like the letter D, makes them flat on the interior and round on the exterior.

Betsy Spiker says, "We are proud of the quality construction of our logs and the insulation they provide. All of our logs are graded and feature a double tongue and groove system that prevents air and water infiltration. In addition, Mountaineer uses logs that are 7-1/2 inches thick



Shown here are two beautiful Mountaineer log homes that illustrate the Mountaineer motto "Cabins to Castles." Both homes are at Deep Creek Lake, Maryland.

to provide a natural thermal mass that retains internal heat in the winter and deflects external heat in the summer."

Mountaineer has constructed over 800 homes in this region that include Maryland, West Virginia, Pennsylvania and Virginia. The use of logs milled from white pine at its manufacturing facility in Bartow, WV enables the company to be competitive and capable of delivery of a log home in two weeks, after the order is placed. "They can be very rustic or very elegant, it all depends on what the customer wants."

These two Yellowstone log homes are built from full round logs and in the more traditional "Lincoln Log style." Both of these homes are at Deep Creek Lake, Maryland.



Yellowstone at Deep Creek Lake is building unique western lodge style custom log homes in Garrett County. They have quickly earned a reputation as a leader in the log home industry. Based in McHenry, Yellowstone was started over four years ago by owners Art Holland and Mike Cumerlato.

"We are crafting homes with logs ranging from 6 inches to 16 inches in diameter, harvested in the forests surrounding Yellowstone National Park and also in British Columbia," says Art. "It's an extraordinary type of log. We're harvesting standing, dead timber only, which is the most stable product to build a log home out of." Art says their company has carefully chosen to use standing dead timber in their log homes because of its stable nature. "One of the characteristics of wood is that there is always going to be a certain amount of movement, but we're harvesting standing dead timber that has reached its equilibrium. It is another way to ensure the stability of our homes."

The owners of Yellowstone are passionate about building log homes and it's been that way since they built their own log homes several years ago. Both Art and Mike bring extensive backgrounds in the construction trades to their partnership and when you view one of these homes you will recognize their dedication and quality.

"We are very hands-on," says Art of their style of management that involves being on-site to perform and supervise the work. "We're not a mass producer and we're not selling kit homes. We get very involved with the owner and the construction of their dream home." He says each home they build is unique and every one is crafted on-site, one at a time.

Yellowstone works closely with their clients to provide any special custom accents they might want included in their dream home. "If they want special logs or a particular feature we can incorporate it into the design," said Art. "What makes our homes special is that everything in the dwelling is designed to the owner's particular wants and needs. There are log posts, beams, log railings, log collar ties, log trusses and log stair systems." He notes that even the cabinetry is hand-crafted locally, which adds to the distinctive character of a Yellowstone log home. In addition to using the same wood inside and out, Yellowstone harvests those logs from the same part of the forest, which is yet another way to ensure a stable product.

Whatever type of log or style of custom log home you choose to build, you can be sure it's a decision that you won't regret. Because, according to the Log Home Council, log homes continue to appreciate in value and sell better than any other form of custom-made homes. With a strong performance in the real estate market, it is clear that log homes are a great investment. A log home is also a great investment in nature — one that will provide years of enjoyment and a very close connection with the wonder of the great outdoors. You can almost reach out and touch the rustic charm and natural beauty that only wood can provide in an authentic, custom-built log home. 🏡

Mike Dawson is an award-winning writer who has contributed feature articles for newspapers and magazines throughout the region. His work has appeared in the Cumberland Times-News, the Hagerstown Herald Mail and the Garrett County Vacation Guide. For nearly 20 years, he was a staff writer for the Voice of America and ABC Radio in Washington, DC. A native of Frostburg, he resides in LaVale with his wife, Beth, and their two children.

