

INTRODUCTION

This book grew from a series of presentations I began making at log-home shows around the turn of the century. These were three-day events, each attended by several thousand people. Until my speaking debut, my role was to staff a magazine booth near the exit and hawk “current and recent issues,” as we called them, at closeout prices. Folks leaving the show would gather and ransack the stacks, looking for anything they thought could possibly help them plan their log home.

Many browsers chatted about the magazines, the shows and log homes. Listening to them, I could tell many knew less on their way out than they thought they’d known when they entered. More precisely, they had been bombarded with so much information that they were confused and unable to comprehend any more. Instead of being enlightened, way too many had become discouraged. I concluded that many were never going to own a log home.

When not working the shows, I was edit-

ing *Log Homes Illustrated* magazine, helping fuel people’s dreams of owning one of these beautiful wood homes. Its mainstay was lavish photo tours of North America’s best log homes, accompanied by interviews with the homeowners. These people were gracious enough to share with me, and in turn our readers, why they wanted a log home in the first place and then how they made theirs happen. They had survived what for most was a trial-and-error process, since, until they built their homes, few had little clue how the process unfolded. Having accomplished what seemed to them like a minor miracle, they were thrilled with their choice of a log home and felt it had added a special joy to their lives.

I couldn’t help but wonder what if the people at the shows who were so overwhelmed and discouraged by what lay ahead only knew what the people who already owned log homes had found out and been through. I began poring over my interview notes and found some common threads. These became the basis for

my talk: “Planning for Success: 25 Tips to Make Your Log Home Dream Come True.”

I also saw that too many people coming through the doors at the shows wandered aimlessly around the exhibit hall. I presumed that everyone attending wanted a log home or at least wanted to see if they wanted a log home. Although log homes were the premise of these shows, as often happens whenever a crowd gathers, certain hucksters staffed booths and touted an array of impulse-buy items: cookware, ladders, magic brooms and super shamies (which, by the way, actually work as advertised, I can testify, having used mine during a storm to soak up rainwater seeping through the allegedly impenetrable tile floor of my den).

It amazed me how many people walked out the door with \$4,000 worth of cookware that they obviously hadn’t come to the show expecting to buy but did. When I worked up the courage to stop some of these people and ask why they had bought non-log items at a log-home show, the gist of their answers was that they could understand fast-talking cookware, ladder and magic broom sellers, but they couldn’t figure what the log-home salespeople were talking about and felt they had to leave with something to justify the time spent there.

I came up with a second presentation: “How to Get the Most from the Show.” It sug-

gested ways to make sense of the confusion on the show floor so that you stayed on track to get the information you paid for and not feel obligated to settle for a magic broom or cookware, at least not until you had first bought your log home.

That, in a long-winded way, is the origin of this book and my gratitude to the people who inspired me to write it: the hundreds of people who own a log home and the many, many hundreds more who wish they did. Both helped me make my magazine better.

When John Kupferer hired me in 1988 to help him launch *Log Home Living* magazine, he told me something that guided me through the next 22 years: Don’t play favorites. It was good advice but not always easy to follow. I knew nothing about log homes at the time, but as I became familiar with them, I found myself not only liking them, but also preferring certain styles and even certain log-home companies. Whenever I felt tempted to indulge my preferences in print, I remembered John’s advice.

Remaining objective helped *Log Home Living* and later *Log Homes Illustrated* present a bigger, truer picture of log homes to our readers. By exploring and revealing the many possibilities, we inspired a lot of people to discover for themselves the delights of living in a log home. Foremost was the opportunity to express their individual ideas of what a log home could be.

Since that eventful beginning, I've visited dozens of log homes and seen photographs of hundreds more. I've yet to see any two alike. Even homes built from the same standard floor plan turn out differently.

This uniqueness underlies the appeal of log homes. Sure, there's the wood, but that's a given. Being able to configure this wood any way you choose matters plenty. And once you begin exploring the possibilities, you find so many that your biggest challenge will likely be deciding which ones are right for you.

Choice is what log homes are all about. I hope this book will inspire you to explore the possibilities for yourself. Log homes have evolved considerably since the 1980s. When I page through back issues of all the log-home magazines that have been published since then, I marvel at how much greater the variety is now. People's tastes have changed, but so

have the companies that cater to those tastes. Architects, log-home companies, builders, decorators—all feel lots freer to flex their imaginations and challenge the expectations of their customers.

This book aims not just to help you succeed overall, but also to see you through the preliminaries by revealing what really matters so you won't waste time with what doesn't and can get on with making your dream home happen. For me, John Kupferer's advice not to play favorites worked. Don't apply it to your own quest for the perfect log home, however. Choose the one home you come up with that is your favorite and uniquely yours. Don't settle for anything less.

Roland Sweet
Mount Vernon, Virginia

A black and white photograph of a log cabin interior. The room features a high, vaulted ceiling with exposed wooden beams. A large, multi-paned window dominates the view, looking out onto a dense forest of tall trees and a body of water. In the foreground, a light-colored sofa with several pillows is positioned on the left. A large potted plant sits on the floor in the center, and a television is on a stand to the right. A small table with a fruit basket and a candelabra is in the lower foreground. The text "More than half a million American families enjoy living in their log homes. So can you." is overlaid in the center of the image.

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enjoy living in their log homes. So can you.**