

WHAT IS A LOG HOME?

Given the vast number of terms and phrases that are used to describe Log Structures, it is useful to review the different methods of using logs in modern day buildings and differentiate between the building styles. This exercise is meant to assist prospective owners in choosing a style that best suits their need as well as their budget.

The term "Log Home" is generally used to describe a number of different building methods that have in common, one main feature - they utilize round logs and or squared timbers as their main structural component. Log Home construction is not new. Log Homes are an important part of our Canadian heritage. A drive through rural Ontario will reveal many historic log structures that stand as testimony to the quality and endurance that log building represents.

There is now a return to this very natural and time-proven method of building. Utilizing modern methods and complimentary materials, Log Homes are aesthetically pleasing and energy efficient. They can be adapted to almost any conventional floorplan and the possibilities for interior amenities are unlimited. The long spans and structural efficiencies of these buildings create opportunities for open space interior design that may not be possible with other building methods.

ROUND LOG BUILDING STYLES

As the name suggests, this method utilizes a log in its natural form from the tree. The most aesthetically pleasing but more time consuming process is to hand peel the log and dress all knots close to the profile. Not only does this result in a naturally looking surface, it also creates the least amount of waste of the natural resource. The logs are then carefully matched for size and then placed on top of each other, with alternating taper direction, and notched joints at intersecting walls. The logs may be scribe fitted to each other (Scandinavian Scribed Log Construction) or a gap can be left which is later filled with insulation and a mortar filler (chinked). If a more uniform look is desired in the building, a milled log can be specified. These logs are rounded to a consistent dimension by a lathe to produce the building log. The same joining method can be used but the length of solid spans is limited by the length of the lathe that is available to mill the logs. This limitation can be overcome in the wall structure by butting the log ends where necessary.

SQUARED LOG BUILDING STYLES

The original method of squaring a log by use of a hand adze is very labour intensive. While the look of hand adzing adds character, a sawmill and planer can produce a squared timber more efficiently. Either method can be chosen depending on what is desired visually. Hand hewn squared logs are normally 10" or more thick and 16" or more high in the vertical wall dimension. Milled logs can be specified up to 8" wide and up to 12" in the vertical wall dimension. Various end profiles are available when the log is being milled. Edge chamfers and face shapes can also be specified.

SQUARED LOG BUILDING STYLES (Cont'd)

Milled logs that are meant for chinkless construction are normally grooved longitudinally top and bottom to provide an interlocking seal and a tighter fit. Corner styles can be either saddle notch or dovetail, depending on the look that is preferred. Hand hewn chinked with dovetailed corners was the most common style of squared log buildings used in early Quebec and Ontario.

TIMBER FRAME AND POST AND BEAM

These building styles have similarities in appearance and they utilize squared timbers and structural joinery methods that date back hundreds of years. The best example of Timber Frame is the type of wooden barns that are still standing in many rural areas. The timbers are jointed and fitted together into frames called bents which are hoisted into place and joined together to form a free standing framework of the entire building before the exterior is sheeted in. The geometric bracing incorporated into the structure provides the strength and integrity of the finished building. Finishing options allow for the Timber structure to remain exposed inside the home which creates a very secure and aesthetically pleasing environment. Since interior walls are not a structural component of the building, maximum use of open spaces can be incorporated into the design.

Post and Beam construction incorporates the same joinery methods in structures where a complete frame or bent is not utilized as the structural component. A Post and Beam truss or frame can be utilized to frame a roof on a log or conventional frame building where exposed timbers are desired. Wood decking is normally installed above the timber framework to provide an open or cathedral ceiling entirely of wood. Post and Beam construction can also be used to provide exposed structural ceiling beams that support a second story.

Timber Frame and Post and Beam building styles require considerable labour by skilled craftsmen to obtain tight fitting, functional joints. Those involved in the trade take great pride in their work. In most cases, the intricate wooden pegged joints remain exposed indefinitely. A mallet and chisel are still the most important tools involved in this style of building.

WHICH STYLE IS RIGHT FOR YOU?

At Timberstone Homes, we strive to offer you the maximum in flexibility designing your home. We have not locked ourselves into the constraints of a single style of building or a fixed set of floorplans. We hope to provide you with the ideas that will assist us in arriving at a design that suits you. Your home is a major investment that requires considerable thought and planning to result in the best possible product.