



A happy accident led to a stunning lakeside home in western New York State.

# *Finger Lakes* **RETREAT**

BY JENNIFER DONAHUE  
PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF TRUE NORTH LOG HOMES

**W**hen the opportunity to build a home in which to spend their retirement years popped up, Paul and Joy jumped at it. With two grown daughters and four grandchildren, Joy and Paul were looking for a place with a quieter pace of life that would allow them to welcome family and friends throughout the year.

Known for stunning scenery, the Finger Lakes region of western New York offers an abundance of year-round recreation opportunities. Nature lovers can spend their days exploring one of the area's 26 state parks, trekking to waterfalls, skiing, or hiking the rolling hills. "The area is beautiful!" says Paul. "We're adjacent to a 6,800-acre wildlife management area filled with ecological habitats, steep wooded hills, gullies, eroded cliffs, and wetlands. Beautiful!"

The region also boasts world-class wineries, art galleries, and museums—and plenty of community. "The nearby village is filled with wonderful, warm, welcoming people," say Paul and Joy. While they love the privacy of their 2,500-square-foot home, they also enjoy golf, pickleball, dining with friends, kayaking, hiking, or entertaining guests from out of town. "There's always something going on in the community, including opportunities for service and charity, and social events—like a good old-fashioned Christmas parade, and "Vintage Vines and Valentines" to celebrate Valentine's Day," says Paul. "And we have a great church."

Paul and Joy found their two-acre property by accident—a happy accident—and while it feels private, it's not remote. "We came up for a brief break from work five years ago," says Paul, "and literally stumbled onto the property." The property had been well maintained and had a quaint A-frame cottage on it. "We fell in love with it and made an offer 24 hours later," says Paul. Though not big enough to serve their needs in retirement, Paul and Joy decided to keep the cottage to use as a guest house and build a brand new home to live in once they retired.

Since they had never built a home before, Paul and Joy wanted to be sure they were in experienced hands. They were introduced to True North Log Homes, based in Bracebridge, Ontario, by a friend. After visiting some True North job sites and learning about the company's system, they knew they had found the right company to build their home. "Paul and Joy were very nice to work with," says Mark Wrightman, marketing manager for True North Log Homes. "It was rewarding to be able to take them from point A all the way through the process."

"It was the first time we ever built, so the whole enchilada was an experience!" says Paul. The process went smoothly, with a few lessons learned along the way. With just one construction entrance on the property and



A COVERED ENTRY WELCOMES VISITORS TO THIS FINGER LAKES HOME. OPPOSITE: THE HOME'S GREAT ROOM IS ANCHORED BY A STONE FIREPLACE AND SURROUNDED BY WINDOWS ON THREE SIDES.



**ABOVE:** THE KITCHEN ISLAND HAS COUNTER-HEIGHT SEATING FOR SIX, A BIG HELP WHEN PAUL AND JOY'S CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN VISIT. IT ALSO CREATES A MORE OPEN SPACE THAN AN ELEVATED BAR WOULD HAVE PROVIDED. **BELOW:** A SECOND-STORY LOFT, ADJACENT TO TWO GUEST BEDROOMS, OFFERS ADDITIONAL LIVING SPACE AND GREAT VIEWS TOWARD THE LAKE. **LEFT:** IDEAL FOR ENTERTAINING, THE OPEN FLOORPLAN ALLOWS THE DINING AREA, KITCHEN, AND GREAT ROOM TO FLOW TOGETHER.



### Design Tip From Paul:

We turned the pantry into a pass-through from the mud room to the kitchen. This enabled us to put the washer and dryer into one side of the expanded pantry and also allows easier access to the kitchen when we come in with the groceries.

room for only one truck at a time to navigate the steep hill to the building site, scheduling contractors was a delicate balance. "To get down to the property, you have to negotiate a switchback with two very sharp, downhill, hairpin turns," says Paul. "Not a problem in a car, but quite a different story in a tractor trailer hauling a 48-foot load of lumber!"

The couple had three main priorities for their new home's design: plenty of windows to make the most of the home's lake views, an open-concept floorplan to accommodate guests, and outdoor living space that could be enjoyed year round. They wanted it to be warm, welcoming, and centered on family. True North Log Homes took Paul and Joy's list of priorities and created an initial design. "We pored over that and made some changes here and there. That process went back and forth a couple of times, and then we had the plan."

The home was built from True North's 8x12 Northeastern white pine logs with a flat face on the interior and round profile on the exterior. "We have seven different profiles so you can choose exactly what you want for the interior and exterior of the home," says Wrightman. Ceilings are also white pine, and the timbers are all Douglas fir from British Columbia. "We use Douglas fir for timbers because it's a little bit stronger, so you can get a wider span without having

to add posts within the building," adds Wrightman.

Achieving the couple's first goal—plenty of windows—was easy, as many True North designs incorporate large windows. "They wanted lots of glass to capture the view," says Wrightman, so True North designed the great room to have windows and doors on all three sides. That includes the home's entry, which opens right into the great room. There's a trade-off with so many windows, in that it allows for less wall space for family photos and artwork, but it's one Paul and Joy are glad they made.

Thanks to the open floorplan, the windows can also be seen from the kitchen, giving the whole place a spacious feeling. The open design is great for entertaining, too. Guests can mingle and relax in the great room and Paul and Joy can still be a part of the action, even if they are setting the dining table or in the kitchen cooking. "It's the kitchen Joy has always wanted," says Paul. "It is very well laid out and is open to the main living space so she can be doing things in the kitchen and talking with guests at the same time." The kitchen island has work space and a utility sink as well as seating for six.

A loft area above the great room, adjacent to the home's two guest bedrooms, provides additional living space and is one of Paul's

favorite places to hang out. "The view is terrific!" says Paul. "It feels private even though it is open to the living and dining space below." The loft is a great spot for reading, watching TV, or playing board games—or just relax with family.

The feature visitors most often comment on is the home's outdoor living spaces, including two covered porches that run the length of the house and an open deck across the end of the house. A covered porch just off the dining area is also screened in, so they can dine outside whenever they choose. "We can be outdoors in rain or shine, summer or winter, and can just hang out with friends in the open air," says Paul.

Now that they've been in their home for over a year, Paul and Joy have had time to reflect and say they would not do much differently. With plenty of light, great views, and enough space for friends and family to gather, they are happy to call their Finger Lakes retreat home. 🏡

**Log Home Producer, Designer, & Builder: True North Log Homes, Bracebridge, Ontario, Canada**  
**Two-Story Home + garage in the basement**  
**Square footage: 2,500 🏠 Bedrooms: 3 Baths: 3**