

Living Is Easy on the Water

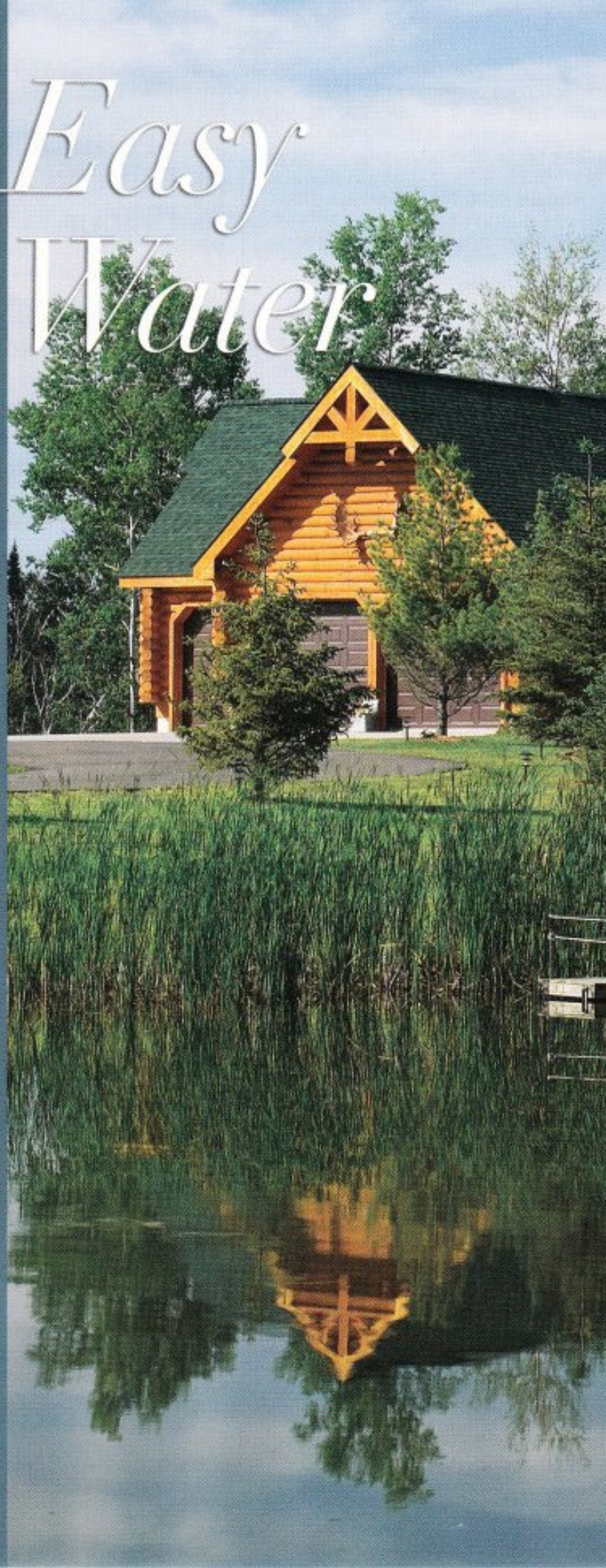
Whether they are on lakes, ponds, rivers, or streams, waterfront log homes blend beautifully with their surroundings.

BY BRIDGET MCCREA

When Rob Wrightman sits down to talk with clients about designing and building a new, waterfront log home, one of his first tasks is to explain how such abodes have more than one "face." Whereas a log home in a more traditional setting usually has one showcase side for passers-by to admire and comment on, the waterfront log home has at least two.

"This is a very important point when building on the water," says Wrightman, CEO at Bracebridge, Ontario-based True North Log Homes, Inc. "Our goal is to make the property attractive for someone who is driving up to the log home, as well as someone who is motoring or sailing up to it."

With about 80 percent of his firm's homes situated on the water, Wrightman has become somewhat of an expert at helping owners understand the need for multiple "faces," and he incorporates that philosophy into the design and building phases.





ABOVE: THIS ADIRONDACK-STYLE HOME WAS DESIGNED TO LOOK LIKE IT WAS BUILT AT THE TURN OF THE 19TH CENTURY. THE FANTASTIC RUSTIC BRIDGE IS THE PERFECT PLACE TO ENJOY THE WATER. RIGHT: THIS LOG HOME LOOKS LIKE IT GREW OUT OF ITS ROCKY LAKESHORE SITE TO BLEND WITH THE SURROUNDING FOREST. THE DECK RUNNING THE LENGTH OF THE HOME TAKES ADVANTAGE OF THE LIGHT AND SPECTACULAR VIEW, WHILE STAIRS PROVIDE EASY ACCESS TO THE WATER.

decks and stairs to create a more aesthetically appealing "face" on that particular side of the home.

"Particularly if we're dealing with steep slopes, we can drop the deck down a couple of steps right near the front door," says Wrightman, "so the walk-out basement becomes a thing of beauty, instead of an obstruction."

Creating a Masterpiece

When building on the water, it's all about the view. To help homeowners maximize their investment, Chris Webster, marketing manager at Heritage Log Homes in Kodak, Tennessee, says his firm incorporates conventional-



"Trying to maintain the aesthetics and beauty of a waterfront log home requires some creativity," says Wrightman, "namely because we're dealing with two different elevations [since most waterfront homes are built on slopes] while striving to maintain the beauty and aesthetics across multiple faces."

Inside the homes, True North uses a combination of wide-entrance systems, great rooms situated just off of those entrances, and glass to create "wow" factors and maximize the panoramic views. "People pay a lot of money for waterfront properties," says Wrightman, "so we try to try to capture as much of the view as possible."

First Things First

From early design tweaks to construction to long-term maintenance considerations, log home owners who build on streams, rivers, lakes, and oceans face some unique challenges, but also have opportunities that their landlocked brethren don't have.

Consider the fact that most waterfront homes are built on slopes that lead down to the body of water, for example. Wrightman says homeowners on any terrain address the issue by incorporating walk-out basements into the design of the foundation. Then, they can use elements such as

True North Log Homes

ly framed walls into its waterfront log home designs. "That allows us to install more windows," says Webster, "so that the homeowners can enjoy their surroundings."

Webster says homeowners should also contemplate cedar shakes, live-edge siding, and other elements that will help their log homes blend into the surrounding environment. Size also comes into consideration, he says, as fewer owners take the McMansion route, and more opt for "log homes that are of moderate size, and look like they organically grew out of the environment."

And speaking of the environment, it also comes into play when building on the water. According to Webster, environment even dictates the size and

Battening Down the Hatches

Lakes and oceans are beautiful and tranquil when the weather is favorable, but they can quickly turn problematic for homeowners when a hurricane, waterspout, or tropical storm rears its ugly head.

"If you're building your log home in a coastal area, you must take into account the extreme weather conditions that you may have to face," says Chris Webster of Heritage Log Homes.

Weather-related issues are often addressed during the construction phase. The fastening method for the logs, for example, is particularly important for owners who know that their homes may be affected by high winds.

Many times, builders will use thru bolts, says Webster, instead of the traditional lag bolts found in most log homes. Thru bolts feature a solid steel pole tied into the coastal home's foundation, thus strengthening its very core.

"If you get into a windy situation," says Webster, "the thru bolts can add strength to the home's walls and help it withstand the elements."

