

EDITORS' PICK: OUR FAVORITE FLOORPLAN

Timber Frame Homes®

Fall 2003

Plan, Build and Decorate Your Post & Beam Home

Stunning Dream Homes

- 15 Fiery Fireplace Tips
- 6 Arts & Crafts Decor Ideas
- 5 Stylish Kitchen Design Trends




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The living room's two-sided fireplace, fueled by propane and decorated with tumbled marble tile, is one of many energy-efficient features in this Vermont cape. Upgraded materials and extra-thick walls and floors qualify the three-level structure as an Energy Star home.





Energy-efficient construction and high-quality, low-maintenance finishes put a contemporary spin on this timber-framed cape.

Country Classic

Real estate agent Larry Tollen had looked at enough building lots to know that this one was special. Once part of a sheep farm, the parcel in southern Vermont was now overgrown with junk trees and the remnants of an apple orchard. But Larry could visualize the way the property would look after it was selectively cleared, he recalls. So when the owner mentioned the price he planned on asking for the land, he couldn't help immediately exclaiming, "I'll take it!"

"I could see where the house would sit on the land, how it could take advantage of the gently sloping site, and how it would have terrific views toward the south and east," he says. Soon, he and his wife Angela began sketching designs for their new house.

Story by Andrew Wormer

Photography by Carolyn L. Bates



Entertaining is a natural with this open floorplan that incorporates the kitchen and dining room. From there, it's a few short steps down to the living room on either side of the fireplace. Red oak, known for its warm classic look and ability to stand up to traffic, is the flooring choice for this room and most other areas of the home.

What to Build

As Larry and Angela developed the floorplan, they drew on their experiences living in other houses. "We've owned more homes than I care to admit," says Larry, "but none of them were what I would call dream homes. We were at the point in our lives where we could afford to build the house exactly the way we wanted it."

High on the list for Larry, a former executive chef who loves to entertain, was a large open kitchen and dining area. Another priority was the ability to take advantage of

the tremendous 50-mile views that the house would have toward Grand Mount Monadnock, the renowned 3,100-square-foot peak in neighboring New Hampshire.

While Larry and Angela knew what they wanted, they were wise enough to enlist help. First, they turned to local architect Rod Williams, who helped them refine their plans. Then, they handed the plans over to their builder, Ken Vilcins of Dover Building, who tweaked them into a buildable timber frame design.

The kitchen's custom-made cabinets are of solid maple with a crimson finish. A mix of high and low ceilings is used throughout the house to set different moods from one space to another. Here, the copper lights and low ceiling create a sense of intimacy.

Larry acted as his own general contractor. It's a job he wouldn't recommend casually. "I've been involved with real estate and building and have had the advantage of watching several timber frame homes being built," he says. "And I had the advantage of working with builders like Ken, and being able to occasionally call on their experience during the process."

As a result, the Tollens didn't have to look far to find a builder for their new home. The couple had first seen Ken's work in a handsome spec home. Angela recalls thinking, "Wow, this is really beautiful!" The beauty of that timber frame struck both her and Larry. "I think we both decided then," she says, "that this was the kind of house that we would eventually build."

Focus on Efficiency

Throughout the building process, the couple kept an eye on the details that make for a superior-quality home. As Larry puts it, "I was definitely looking for a certain level of craftsmanship."

Energy efficiency was also a priority. Extra-thick foundation walls and stress skin panels used in certain parts of the wall and roof provide a sturdier, quieter and more efficient home. "I'm an advocate for spending a little extra money up-front, then saving money year after year," explains Larry. "This house is a larger house than we've ever owned, but its utility bills are a lot lower than our last house, which was well-built."

In fact, their timber frame qualifies as an Energy Star home, a designation indicating that it meets federal and state construction standards for energy efficiency. The furnace, appliances and many of the light



AN ENERGY STAR HOME

To qualify for Energy Star certification, a home must be built with approved levels of insulation and meet specific standards for window performance, reduced air infiltration, and heating and cooling equipment efficiency. Besides lower utility costs, Energy Star homes are more comfortable to live in because they are less drafty, quieter, and more evenly heated from room to room. And home owners can enjoy other benefits, including interest-rate discounts, waiving of certain closing fees and product rebates and promotions on heating and cooling systems.

Builders are free to choose from a number of conventional building

technologies and construction practices to meet Energy Star guidelines. Timber frame homes clad with stress-skin panels are inherently energy efficient, usually meeting or exceeding Energy Star guidelines for insulation and air tightness. The cost of an Energy Star-qualified home is slightly higher than the cost of a conventional home but is more than offset by the savings in utility costs from year to year. The Environmental Protection Agency estimates that owners of Energy Star homes can save about \$200 to \$400 annually on their utility bills. For more information, visit the Energy Star web site at www.energystar.gov.



fixtures are also Energy Star rated. Many of Dover's clients don't bother with the certification process, explains Sharon Vilcins, Ken's wife and Dover's general manager. She says they balk at the lighting package requirement, which includes a certain percentage of fluorescent fix-

"We wanted the look of a classic older Vermont home on the outside, and I feel we've achieved it."

—LARRY TOLLEN, OWNER



tures. "Not all of the homes that we build are Energy Star-certified, but we build all of our homes to Energy Star guidelines for insulation and air tightness." (For more about the Energy Star program, see page 31.) To keep the air fresh, the Tollens installed a mechanical ventilation system that runs on a timer.

Blending Old with New

Despite its use of modern materials, the house doesn't look much different from the vernacular capes and Victorian-style farmhouses that are scattered throughout southern Vermont. "We didn't want to stick out like a sore thumb," Larry says. But they also didn't want to be saddled with a home that required a lot of care. So instead of wood clapboard or shingles, they opted for low-maintenance vinyl siding trimmed in wood. According to Larry, the secret to making vinyl look good is to detail the trim correctly. "Vinyl can be dressed up to look nice with the right window and corner board treatments," he explains. To further reduce maintenance, the wood trim is treated with an opaque stain instead of being primed and painted,

Top: The rear-facing master suite offers striking views. Some days, its occupants can catch sight of Grand Mount Monadnock in neighboring New Hampshire. **Above:** A rich medium blue wall color, carried through with 4-inch ceramic tile, gives the master bath a restful quality.

Home Details

which eliminates the tedious scraping and sanding when it comes time to renew the finish. An added touch of local style is the fieldstone facing on the concrete surfaces. "We wanted the look of a classic older Vermont home on the outside, and I feel we've achieved it," says Larry.

The home's interior features both vaulted spaces and intimate areas with lower ceilings and a lot of wood. Like most of the timber frames that Ken and his crew build each year, the Tollens' frame is crafted of hemlock. Ken treated it with a mix of penetrating oil finishes, giving the wood a lighter and more natural look than most stains. A large percentage of the house is covered with red oak flooring that has a warm look and handles traffic well. The exceptions are the living room and entryway floors, which are maple accented with a border of black walnut.

The modest entry, typical of most capes, opens to a living room with an 18-foot-high ceiling and a tremendous view out the back of the house. From the road, the house looks like a classic cape, but the sloping land made it possible to build three levels of rear-facing living space.

Living and dining areas are on the main level along with a guest bedroom, office and laundry room. The upper level houses the master bedroom suite and a second bedroom for the Tollens' college-age son. The lower level accommodates both a two-car garage and a mother-in-law apartment (which is, in fact, occupied by Larry's mother-in-law). Angela and Larry designed the basement space with plenty of windows for natural light. To keep it warm and comfortable, they installed radiant heat in the slab.

With their work in progress, the couple continues to fill in the pieces of their plan. Last year, they added a screened porch and a stocked trout pond, and they are terracing their yard. "Even though we enjoy traveling," Larry says, "we're always really happy to get home." ♦

Timber frame package price:

\$85,000

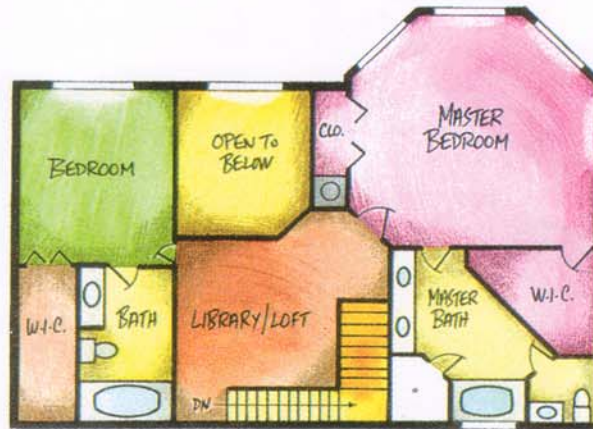
Square footage: 2,675

(not including basement)

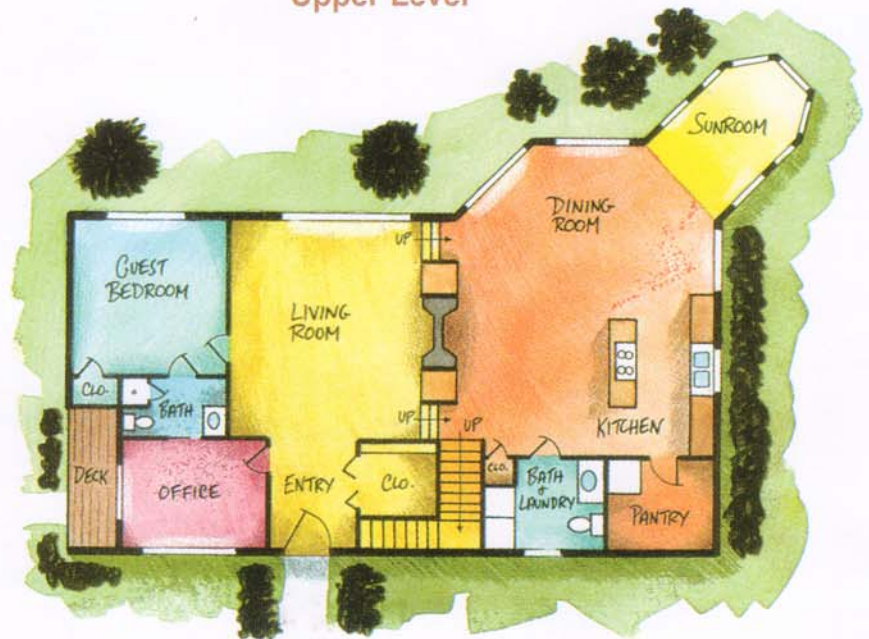
Timber frame producer:

Dover Building

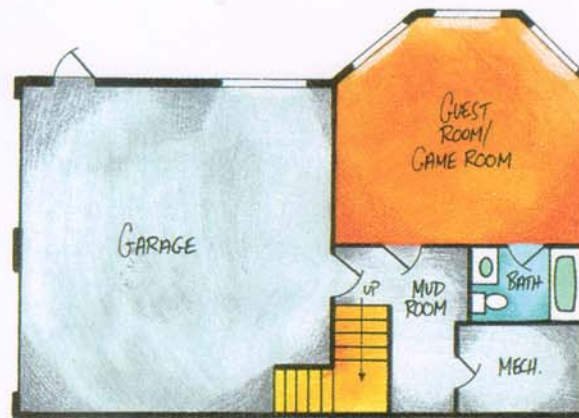
For more information, see Resources on page 58.



Upper Level



Main Level



Lower Level