



Northwest Lodging

BY PRISCILLA ZIMMERMAN

Site-milled timbers and local river rock transform a house with a simple floor plan into a rustic camp

The river-rock fireplace is built in the same fashion as the planters out front (photo above), solidly connecting the interior and exterior spaces. Photos taken at A and B on floor plan.



Living in a fishing lodge is many a man's dream but seldom a reality—unless you're Bill Omais. He wanted a simply designed, efficient home that borrowed its look from the fishing lodges where he had vacationed since he was a boy. The property, just over an acre on a sloping site, is insulated from the neighbors by towering Douglas-fir trees and has a commanding view of Puget Sound.

A generous entry that's in proportion to the house

The main entry blends Japanese timber-framing with a Greene-and-Greene-inspired, wide, low sloping roofline to create a uniquely Northwestern feel. The high gable breaks the monotony of a plain roofline and offers a generously spaced and protected entry.

The planters on each side of the entry are built from river rock. Bill and his sons gathered the stones, about 10 truckloads, after obtaining permits from the Forest Service. Bill says he could have bought stone and had it delivered: "It would have been a lot easier that way,

The wraparound cedar deck is accessed from the main living area (photo right) by a pair of transom-topped French doors. Like the house, the deck is supported by site-logged timbers. Photos taken at C and D on floor plan.



but you get a lot of waste, too. We went out in August and September because the rivers are at their lowest and the selection's at its best, and picked the rocks for both color and shape. And wouldn't you know, the stones we needed were always the farthest from the truck."

Making the best use of a sloping site

One of the finer aspects of lodge architecture, the model on which this house is based, is to build with respect for the scenic qualities of the area. To my relief, this meant that a grand and towering house, one that owned the site, was out of the question.

Instead, we used the slope and constructed the house with a daylight basement that delivered 1500 sq. ft. of living space at an economical price (photo above left). The downstairs living space—two large bedrooms, a full bath, a recreation room with a wood-burning fireplace, and generous storage rooms—literally spills onto a garden patio. But this living space is completely hidden from the initial approach to the house. Using the slope in this manner cut the perceived size of the house in half, which is in keeping with the scale and perception of lodge architecture.

An efficient fireplace adds character to the living space

The fireplace is of masonry-block construction around a 42-in. wood-burning insert (Superior Heat Form; \$900; www.lennoxhearthproducts.com) and is faced with hand-selected stone. The large granite mantel and hearth were installed safely using a car-engine hoist.

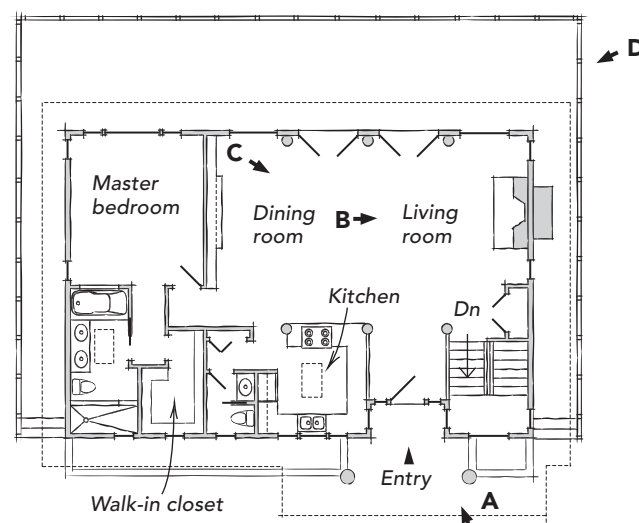
Designed not only to be an aesthetic focal point but also to work efficiently, the fireplace has outside-air vents that supply the com-



A custom home with a basic plan

North

Photos taken at lettered positions.



Being your own lumberyard

By Bill Omais



bustion box with fresh air. A pair of glass doors allows the firelight to be appreciated while keeping the room's heat from going up the flue. Fans hidden behind the granite grille draw cooler room air from vents on each side of the fireplace. The air then is heated by the combustion box and blown like a warm wind across the room.



The beauty of timber-framing is its strength

In the living/dining room, the dominant feature, aside from the view, is a layered gridwork of natural wood in the ceiling. Massive 6x14 structural timbers support the rows of 4x4 purlins, which in turn carry the alternating 2x6 and 2x8 tongue-and-groove ceiling boards. All of these pieces, from beams to boards, were milled from Douglas-fir trees right on the property (sidebar right).

The ceilings are a luxurious 10 ft., which makes for more comfortable rooms. At first, the design called for vaulted ceilings to make the spaces feel even bigger, but Bill said no. He wanted a simpler house and believed that vaulted ceilings would make the rooms more costly to heat.

The 6x14 crossbeams are structurally engineered to be connected to the vertical timbers with steel seismic straps that are nailed to the beams and lag-bolted to the timbers. These connections are engineered all the way through to the foundation. The heavy construction and the warmth of the wood provide strength and comfort to the home. This is intentional. On Feb. 28, 2001, the island was shaken by an earthquake registering 6.8 on the Richter scale. Its epicenter was just off the south end of the island, close to the site, but I'm happy to report the house sustained no damage. □

Priscilla Zimmerman is the principal of Zimmerman Architecture, based on Bainbridge Island, Wash. Photos by Mike Moore, except where noted.

I harvested the trees and milled the logs from the land where my house is today. Not all the trees were standing. The tree that provided the three large structural beams in my great room had blown down in a storm in December 1990. That tree was about 140 years old and more than 4½ ft. wide.

To cut these logs into lumber, I hired a local lumberman who owns a portable bandsaw mill and worked with him. The nice thing about using a portable mill was that we could bring the mill to the logs. Because of the logs' sheer size, we used a mill with a hydraulic log lifter.

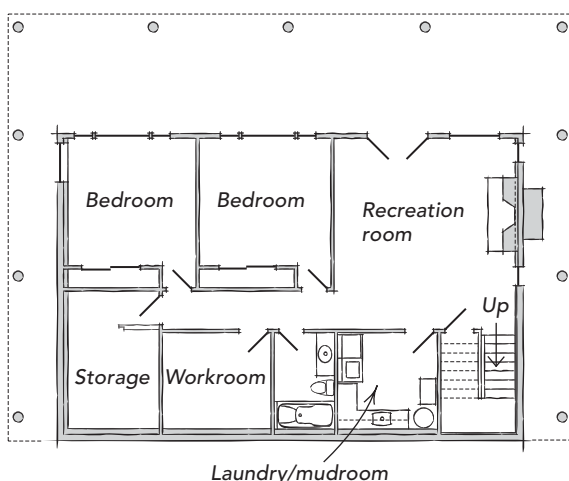
Once on the mill, the log remains stationary, and the saw carriage rides on a track, cutting even slices out of the log.

I spent countless hours milling 55,000 board feet of lumber. When the building inspector came out to inspect the lumber, he told me it was of export quality and far superior to anything I could have bought locally.

Lumbering my own land was an extremely rewarding experience. But even though I saved thousands of dollars doing it, I would not want to do it again.

—Bill Omais is an accountant and an amateur woodworker on Bainbridge Island in Washington.

The owner wanted a simple, economical plan, and that's what drove the design. The open floor plan provides ample flow between the public areas for a more comfortable house, and there's plenty of outdoor living space for both floors. The walk-out basement's garden patio is sheltered by the main floor's wraparound cedar deck.



0 2 4 8 ft.

SPECS

Bedrooms: 3

Bathrooms: 2½

Size: 3000 sq. ft.

Cost: N/A

Completed: 2000

Location: Bainbridge Island, Wash.

Architect: Priscilla Zimmerman

Builder: Monte Hall

Structural engineer: Paul Faget, Swenson Say Faget