



Above: The story-and-a-half log home features small but balanced window, a shady porch and a carport that links the main house with the garage, which houses Jeff's office.

Right: The wide porch is a favorite place to sit and watch the neighbors' Black Angus cattle.



Country's Best

A North Carolina home combines technology, tradition and an unconventional look

Linda Gaura loves the country. Now. When she first thought about leaving the city, however, she was skeptical. She certainly had no intention of living in a log home, reckoning that they were dark and dilapidated. But the wood and the woods have a way of winning folks over. Today, the former city dweller can't imagine another life than country or any home but log.

Her husband, Jeff, made the move enthusiastically. The self-described tech hound welcomed the opportunity to wire the couple's log home. He's so 21st century that when

you're on the phone with him, you can visit his website and watch him on your computer while you're talking.

When Jeff and Linda decided to buy some land after spending 10 years in Charlotte, North Carolina, they were uncertain where. Their friends, the Naders, touted New Salem, an hour away, having just moved there. While visiting them, the Gauras learned that a 20-acre lot next door was for sale. That was more land than they wanted, but after finding nothing they liked better, they bought it. They immediately sold 8 acres, leaving them 12. Seven acres are

The home is built with laminated logs, which are boards glued together to form timbers, then milled, in this case, to D-style profiles with double tongue and groove.





The roomy eat-in kitchen is a delight to work in or just look at. The cherry cabinets are from Artistic Cabinets, and the black quartz countertops are from Majestic Marble. The truss beams simplified lighting installation.

wooded; the rest is farmland with several creeks running through it. "Where we built must have been pasture because we didn't have to clear any trees to put the house on it," Linda says.

After buying their land, they began doing researching log homes. Jeff first raised the idea. "When I was growing up in upstate New York, a man came one summer and asked all the boys around to help him build a log home,"

he recalls. "He felled the trees, he scraped the bark, he dried them, he cut them, and we stacked them. I fell in love with log homes when I was 12 years old."

They were the farthest things from Linda's mind, until Jeff proposed more extreme dwellings, like geodesic domes. "Compared with them, a log home sounded like a good idea," Linda admits.

Coincidentally, the Naders were building a log home of



Right: The homeowners bought the dining set new for their log home. The dark wood contrasts with the whitewashed log walls and the hickory plank flooring.



their own. "I came over and saw what they were doing and said, 'OK, I could live in something like this,'" she says. "Then I picked up some log-home magazines, and that really turned the corner for me."

Inspired, Linda began designing the home. "I knew we wanted four bedrooms on one floor, so I started drawing layouts," Linda says. "Then Jeff got me 3D Home Architect software, so I transferred to that and revised it, it must have been 50 times," Linda says. They took their plans to their log-home company, which worked with architect Dion Volk of Green Bay, Wisconsin. He transformed the plan into construction drawings for a 4,750-square-foot home. That includes 1,800 square feet of unfinished basement.

Planning for smart-house technology was crucial. "It's very leading edge. We like to call it 21st-century log living," Jeff says. "It takes advantage of the same technology that corporate America is using. We just pushed it into a house. It's all 'gee-whiz' and 'wow' kind of stuff."

"Our poor electrician didn't know what to do with it," Linda recalls. "He's just a good old country guy who'd done several log homes, but I thought he was going to bust an artery listening to us talk about smart-house wiring."

The Gauras considered several log-home companies before choosing Anthony Log Homes of Arden, North Carolina. Anthony is one of a handful of manufacturers

whose logs are laminated. That is, they are formed by gluing dimensional lumber together, then milling the resulting engineered timber into a familiar log profile. The Gauras chose an 8-inch D-style log to give them the rounded log look on the outside and a flat, finished look inside.

The Gauras hired builder Real St. Laurent, whom they knew from church. Real had never built a log home, but his work impressed the Gauras enough that they felt confident he could handle the job. Representatives of Anthony Log Homes met with Real, showing him some of their homes and teaching him log construction. They also were

on site to help get him started and provided technical support throughout the process.

Construction began in fall 2003. The first glitch came almost immediately. While digging the foundation, the crew hit solid rock. Dynamite and two bulldozers were needed to move it.

The logs arrived in January and went up in three weeks, despite the crew's having to work through the worst snowstorm the county had seen in decades. "There were many days," Linda says, "they only shoveled the snow and ice from our subfloor."

The loft wasn't in the original plans, but the builder pointed out that adding it wouldn't cost that much more. The homeowners enjoy the space so much that they can't imagine the home without it.



Right, top: The living room centers on the wood-burning fireplace, made from manufactured stone by Arrowhead Stone. The decorative stair railings add an elegant touch, which the furniture grouping reinforces. Builder Real St. Laurent made the fireplace mantel from a leftover piece of ceiling beam.

Right, bottom: A steep-pitched, 30-foot-tall ceiling creates excitement in the great room. The rafters add to the vertical thrust, while the hickory floors, made from 3-inch to 5-inch planks, draw the eye downward. Jeff and Linda Gaura find the room "almost churchlike."



The roof was on by April. The couple and their two children moved in on Labor Day 2004.

As the plans were coming to life, Linda recalls that her biggest surprise was the ceiling. "I never had any vision of what the ceiling height would be," she says. "It wasn't until they stood up the poles that are 30 feet that I realized, 'OK, that's a tall ceiling.'"

Real suggested several modifications. "He and his brother-in-law, Johnny, said that for just a little Sheetrock and carpet, we could turn the space above our bedroom from attic storage into a great loft area." Linda recalls. "Today, it is one of our most favorite rooms. Every time I look at the loft, I say, 'I can't believe we almost didn't have this.' We use it all the time."

Another modification was the garage. The Gauras wanted a detached one, with a breezeway. "But we found out you can't have two buildings on one building permit, so we had to connect the two," Jeff says. They built a carport between them. Jeff uses the space above the garage for his office



Above: A cherry bed and nightstand highlight the master bedroom. In-floor radiant heat warms this room, as well as the great room and master bath, thanks to a solar-powered system that heats the water.

Left: The master bath features light and luxury, with a roomy whirlpool tub and glass-enclosed shower stall. The tops of the vanities match the kitchen countertops. Tile flooring with radiant heating enhances the pampered-spa feeling.



The home's most noticeable interior feature is the walls, which are whitewashed to lighten the rooms but still show the wood grain. The second prominent feature is the empty space. At first, it looks like the Gauras just didn't have money for furniture. The void is by design, however—"at least," Linda says, "until I can figure out what to do with it."

Linda did buy some new furniture to mix in with pieces they already owned. Jeff concentrated on the high-tech systems. "We added wireless technology throughout, a T1 line, smart-home technology lighting systems, an intercom, central vacuum and radiant-floor heating," Linda says.

Their neighbors made light of the project when it was going up, but once they saw the finished home, they were sold on it and built one of their own—their second log home. "Now three of the homes on our road are log," Jeff notes, "and two are

Jeff and Linda wanted four bedrooms, including one dedicated for guests, all on the main level.



Anthony log homes." Thinking that other people might be interested in the company's homes, Linda decided to sell them. She now runs PNC Homes, an authorized dealer for Anthony Log Homes

(www.pnchomes.com).

Linda is a convert not just to log homes, but also to country living. "Everything moves a little slower, but it feels good," she says. "It's a nice blessing." **L.H.**

To read more about the Gauras' solar-powered floor-heating system, turn to page 28.

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