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# The Lure Of the Country

A New York City couple embraces the log-home lifestyle

**A**s tried-and-true apartment dwellers in New York City, Gerry Murphy and Jacinto Jorge were just looking for an old house in the country to fix up for a weekend retreat. After touring several prospective properties and investigating the cost of renovation, however, they realized that new construction was the better buy. The first step was finding land.

Gerry's grandmother had once lived in New York's Catskill Mountains, and he and Jacinto liked returning there to ski. On one of their weekend ski trips, they happened upon a piece of property for sale. Twenty-four hours later, they had purchased the 5-acre parcel and were well on their way to building a log home.

Gerry and Jacinto agreed they wanted a log home. Having already fallen in love with a model home they had seen in an ad for Alta Log Homes, they selected Alta for their log-home package. Their home features Alta's Eastern white pine logs milled to the company's Classic log profile, with double tongue and groove logs and interlocking corners. It includes Alta's post-and-beam-style roof system with architectural appearance grade beams. "We loved the style, and Alta was very flexible," Gerry says. "They worked with us and let us change several of the details in the windows, railings, and stairway."

Accustomed to lots of light in their city apartment, Gerry and Jacinto specified larger-than-standard windows for their log package. To obtain the type of room configura-

tion they wanted, they modified Alta's standard plan by moving several interior walls. To accommodate wiring, pipes and ductwork, Gerry used Alta's Classic log siding, which matches the Classic log profile, to create soffits in the corners.

The plan called for 2,550 square feet on two levels, with an additional 1,000 square feet of livable space in the basement. Frank Mann, president of Alta Realty, the construction arm of Alta Log Homes, served as the general contractor, erecting the weather-tight shell.

Since Jacinto is a contractor and Gerry is the founder and owner of MGerard Interior Design, they planned to finish the interior themselves. This approach created some problems obtaining financing; 15 banks turned them down. "In



The patio offers an inspirational view of the surrounding Catskill Mountains.

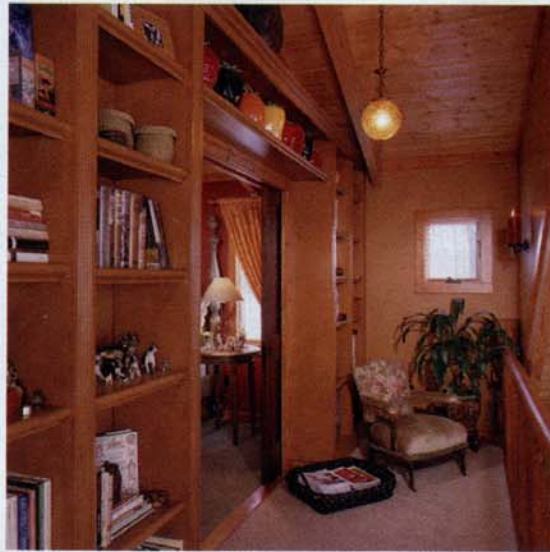
Story by Teresa L. Wolff • Photos by Roger Wade • Styling by Debra Grahl



**This mountaintop home in New York's Catskills region features Eastern white pine logs. Untreated cedar used for the deck and railings are supported by hemlock trees felled on the property.**

**Right: Gerry and Jacinto installed a wall to create a loft library. Pocket doors allow for an unobstructed view of the mountains and abundant light from the expanse of windows in the great room. Gerry's collection of large fruit and vegetable cookie jars is displayed on the built-in shelves.**

**Below: Gerry designed the furniture in the great room and commissioned Capri Upholstery to build it. The coffee table by El Paso Imports is from a shuttered door. An antique Oriental rug covers the oak floor.**



general, banks only allow one year for a construction loan," Gerry explains. "Since it would take us longer than that to complete the work ourselves on weekends, this was not an option. Fortunately, Walden Federal in Walden, New York, granted us the option to convert the construction loan into a regular mortgage after seven months, once the shell was erected and we had a kitchen sink, a toilet that flushed and a light fixture."

Over the next four years, Gerry and Jacinto spent every possible moment at the project site, gradually complet-

ing the interior spaces. Gerry served as the project coordinator.

Gerry and Jacinto liked the large, open spaces of their loft-style apartment in New York City, so they applied this same concept to their log home, positioning the interior walls to create an open main-level great room. Two guest bedrooms and a bath complete this level. They reserved the loft area for their master bedroom and bath and a home office.

Accessible to the front yard through two sets of French door, the basement contains a laundry, a bath and a two-

Expansive windows in the great room allow a view of the Catskill Mountains while two sets of French doors, each with a center opening and fixed side panels, provide access to the deck. The painting over the fireplace is one of many by John Hopkins in the homeowners' collection. The rusted iron chandelier is from El Paso Imports.



The stylish kitchen mixes antique pine reproduction furniture, maple KraftMaid cabinetry, tumbled marble countertops by Country Floors Inc. and stainless-steel KitchenAid appliances. Open shelves display treasured glassware and pottery. Gerry crafted the amber glass shades for the wrought-iron light fixtures.





**In the dining room, the pine table and buffet and two black chairs are reproductions and are paired with four antique wooden chairs for formal dining. The rusted-iron chandelier is from El Paso Imports.**

car garage. It has one other feature. "One of the disadvantages of living in rural America is the lack of many conveniences that the city has to offer," Gerry notes. "Our small community doesn't have a movie theater, so we included a media room in our finished walk-out basement. We love to host movie nights for our friends."

Because this part of New York state can experience upwards of 100 feet of snow in winter, Gerry and Jacinto made accommodations in their design for both their guests and two Boston terriers, Gabby and Martine. "The deck off of the great room serves as a perfect awning to protect the patio below," Gerry explains. "Thus, the French doors to the walk-out have become the main entrance to our home. We don't have to shovel snow off the deck, and we have a natural snow-free romping area for the dogs."

In decorating their log retreat, Gerry wanted it to be comfortable and rustic. To reinforce this theme, he even designed several pieces of furniture, which he then had custom made.

The home is equipped with a propane-fueled, forced-air furnace, but the Heatilator fireplace insert in the fireplace serves as the main source of heat. Every room has a ceiling fan to circulate warm air throughout the home. Although the hearth is made of river rock, the fireplace was covered with Sheetrock with a faux finish in the same brick color as the master bedroom.

Gerry and Jacinto landscaped only one acre, leaving the remaining 4 acres natural. Jacinto planted a lawn and added rock gardens and rock walls, then added perennials to the ferns that provide most of the ground cover. To the existing maple and birch trees, they planted blue spruce in order to have some green foliage in the winter.



**Left:** In the guest bathroom, a pine reproduction kitchen island, whose legs have been cut down to vanity height, provides additional storage space.

**Below:** The double bedroom, with its solid cherry sleigh-back bed by Grange, features a bedspread that Gerry's grandmother made when she lived in the Catskills. French doors open onto the deck and a view of the mountains.



Gerry selected a forest green theme to bring an earthy feeling to the twin guest bedroom, then added a Kilim area carpet and wrought-iron beds to brighten the dark-stained Eastern white pine log walls, and spruce ceiling.





Brick-colored walls set off the glow of the spruce tongue-and-groove ceiling in the master bedroom. Gerry selected a Ralph Lauren cut-pile carpet in the same tone as the four-poster bed.

Once they had completed their log home, Gerry and Jacinto discovered that they didn't want to live there only part time. They gave up their apartment and relocated their respective businesses to the Catskills. "Living here is absolutely fantastic. I wish I had done this 20 years ago," Gerry says. "I love the simplicity of country living. We built the house this size because we thought we would have friends coming up from the city. Although weekend guests are always still welcome, we have more friends here than we could have imagined. Now that we have moved permanently, all of our neighbors are calling to say how happy they are that we are finally here." **LHI**

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