

FARMHOUSE

BY CHARLES BEVIER

Fusion



Retiring high-school sweethearts create a masterful compound, blending log, timber-frame, and post-and-beam systems.

PHOTOS BY ALLEN MOWERY

Melinda and David Karchner are well acquainted with the joys of log home living and how their rustic elegance imparts a feeling of safety and sanctuary. For decades when they were living in Connecticut, they had a log home getaway in Maine, where they made many happy memories.



THE SOARING CEILING WITH POST AND BEAM TRUSSES OVERHEAD, MAKES THIS GREAT ROOM THE CENTER OF FAMILY ACTIVITIES FOR ALL SEASONS. THE KARCHNERS ORIGINALLY HAD A TRIANGULAR SHAPED WINDOW IN THEIR ORIGINAL DESIGN BUT SWITCHED TO AN ELEGANT CIRCULAR WINDOW HIGH ABOVE AND THEY LOVE THE RESULT. THE CEILINGS ARE MADE FROM RECLAIMED WOOD THAT ADD TO THE RUSTIC CHARM OF THE HOME.



AN ELMIRA ANTIQUE APPLIANCE IS THE FOCAL POINT FOR THIS FARMHOUSE KITCHEN. CABINETS WERE HANDMADE BY LOCAL AMISH CRAFTSMEN AND DISTRESSED BY HAND. A LARGE, RECLAIMED WOOD COUNTERTOP ON THE SIZABLE ISLAND ADDS BOTH FUNCTIONALITY AND ELEGANCE.

"It was around 3,000 square feet in size," David recalls. "It was on top of a mountain, next to a ski resort." Friends and family regularly visited for holiday gatherings, summer getaways, and Penn State football celebrations in the fall.

But after years of living in Connecticut, Melinda and David decided they wanted to return to their Pennsylvania roots for their retirement years. They wanted to be closer to their two sons' families and their five grandchildren.

A dream forever home needs the right setting. Melinda and David chose a 245-acre parcel near Troxelville, Pennsylvania. (Trivia note: Troxelville was home to Euell Gibbons, an author and popular television personality in the 1960s and 1970s; he authored eight books on how to forage and live off the land.) The land is teeming with wildlife, open fields, stands of timber, a trout

stream, and a four-acre pond. "We decided to build on the edge of the pond," Melinda recalls.

In Pennsylvania, the first day of deer season is an unofficial holiday. As hunters take to the woods in predawn darkness, schools and many businesses are closed. The businesses that remain open often have "Deer Lonely Ladies Day" promotions. In 2015, while David took to the woods to harvest a buck, Melinda stopped by the offices of Timberhaven Log & Timber Homes in nearby Middleburg, Pennsylvania. Melinda met with Lynda Thompkins, principal at Timberhaven, to discuss how she and David wanted to build their forever home. After perusing floor plans from Timberhaven's extensive catalog of designs, a vision began to take shape.

"Melinda and David chose a spacious farmhouse design that



BELOW: WHETHER THEY ARE COOKING FOR TWO OR 20, THE KARCHNERS WANTED A MORE FARMHOUSE-STYLE WITH PLENTY OF DINING SPACE WITH BENCH SEATING, ACCENTED WITH TREASURED ANTIQUES THAT THEY LOVED FOR YEARS.

BOTTOM: THE "KARCHNER GENERAL STORE" SERVES UP TREASURED ANTIQUES AND CANDY FOR THE GRANDCHILDREN IN EQUAL MEASURES, INCLUDING AN EARLY 1900S CASH REGISTER.





ABOVE: LOCATED IN RURAL SNYDER COUNTY, THE HOME FEATURES TRADITIONAL SOLID-LOG DOVETAIL CORNER SYSTEMS THAT SHED WATER EASILY, WITH CHINKING BY PERMA-CHINK INSIDE AND OUT. THE HOME'S DESIGN BLENDS LOG WALLS WITH TIMBER FRAMING AND POST-AND-BEAM-CONSTRUCTION.

LEFT: MELINDA AND DAVID KARCHNER CHOSE HAND-HEWN 6" X 12" KILN-DRIED (TO 19% MOISTURE CONTENT) EASTERN WHITE PINE FOR LOGS AND TIMBERS IN THEIR NEW HOME.

blended log, timber-frame, and post-and-beam building systems," Lynda says. "They also incorporated a lot of personal mementoes into the home as well. Timbers, reclaimed wood and sliding barn doors added even more rustic charm."

Instead of new vanities in the baths, for example, Melinda and David chose to use antique furniture from their past to be outfitted with sinks. In the master bath, they used what was once part of Melinda's grandmother's dining room, inserting a sink in its center. Likewise, an old ice chest from David's mother's home serves as a vanity, with a simulated ice lamp above. "We had a lot of fun antiquing for fixtures and features that were truly unique," Melinda says.

Melinda and David made the conscious decision to make their new home as eco-friendly as possible by choosing local suppliers and craftsmen whenever possible. The three gorgeous garage doors on the home were crafted by Buffalo Valley Doors in nearby Mifflinburg. For the handcrafted kitchen cabinetry, Melinda and David chose to use local Amish artisans, Martin Custom Cabinets in Port Trevorton. "We walked into their shop and there are no electric tools, just these old-fashioned hand tools," Melinda recalls. "They pull out some graph paper and ask us what we're looking for. So, we had them make these custom cabinets from alder that were then distressed by hand."

Melinda and David say their favorite spaces in their home tend to change with the seasons. The great room, with its woodstove-insert fireplace and soaring stone chimney, is the favorite space in winter. The front porch and rear stone patio are their favorites in spring and summer. Their five grandchildren love the general store in the lower level, with its generous jars of candy. "We find candy wrappers everywhere," Melinda says.

Melinda used her extensive interior-design skills to renovate a small barn into an elegant hideaway, calling it her "she shed," which is also one of her favorite



ABOVE: INSTEAD OF NEW VANITIES FOR THE HOME'S POWDER ROOM AND THREE FULL BATHROOMS, THE KARCHNER'S OPTED TO USE FAMILY HEIRLOOMS AND HAD THEM OUTFITTED WITH SINKS AND FIXTURES. THIS SINK IN THEIR MASTER BATH WAS ONCE MELINDA'S GRANDMOTHER'S BUFFET THAT WAS ONCE PART OF HER DINING ROOM SET. AN OLD ICE CHEST THAT ONCE BELONGED TO DAVID'S MOTHER WAS REPURPOSED AS THE VANITY IN THE HALF BATH, WITH LIGHT FIXTURE ABOVE IT THAT RESEMBLES A BLOCK OF ICE. THE NEARLY SEVEN-FOOT-LONG CLAW FOOT TUB PROVIDES PLENTY OF ELEGANT SOAKING SPACE FOR TWO.

RIGHT: WITH ITS POST-AND-BEAM TRUSSES OVERHEAD AND WOOD FLOOR UNDER FOOT, THE LOFT IS ONE OF MELINDA'S AND DAVID'S FAVORITE SPACES FOR READING, RELAXING, AND PLAYING BOARD GAMES, OR CARDS.

and most used spaces. "Our property also has a pole barn, which houses some ATV vehicles and David's shop," Melinda says. "There is also an old corn crib on the property that we will eventually restore. We store our wood in there right now. We'd love to restore that but keep the original integrity. We cleared out land by our pond and put up a pond shed there, as well. We also built a stone patio out back. Dave built a swing and installed a dock on the pond. The possibilities are endless around here for projects." ❄️

Home Producer: Timberhaven Log & Timber Homes, Middleburg, Pennsylvania
Builder: Scott Tice of S&M Construction, Middleburg, Pennsylvania
Three-story home
Square Footage: 5,985 (including walkout basement)
Bedrooms: 4 **Baths:** 3.5



A TIMBER-FRAME TRUSS IN THE MASTER BEDROOM ADDS ELEGANCE, EXTRA VOLUME, AND LIGHT FROM A LARGE WINDOW HIGH ABOVE THE BED. ANOTHER TIMBER-FRAME TRUSS IN THE HALLWAY OUTSIDE THE MASTER BEDROOM ADDS ARCHITECTURAL INTEREST.





The Journey from Old Out Building to Luxurious She Shed

Melinda used her extensive interior-design skills to renovate a small barn on their property into an elegant hideaway, her “she shed,” as she calls it, which is also one of her favorite and most used spaces.

“The she shed was previously an extremely old and run-down outbuilding from the original farmland,” Melinda says. “It had broken windows and was covered with vines. There were critters living in there too. It was a mess. We salvaged the roof and kept all the original timber framing, which is stained deep brown. We kept the interior of the tin roof as our ceiling. We found an old wood stove on our property and cleaned it up, refinished it, and placed a heater element into it so with a push of a button we can get some warmth in there. I just had it on today as I was taking down my she shed Christmas decorations. Christmas here consists of a lot of trees and decor. Too embarrassed to tell you how many trees I have. The she shed is filled with lots of my family mementos and is a peaceful place to hang out.”



TIMBERHAVEN LOG & TIMBER HOMES PROVIDED THE MATERIALS TO ENCLOSE THE ORIGINAL TIMBER FRAME AND CREATE THIS ELEGANT HIDEAWAY.