

BELOW: Custom cherry cabinets flank a manufactured stone fireplace in the great room. Clerestory windows above the hearth admit light but preserve privacy. OPPOSITE: A gabled porch meets angled rooflines to create an impressive entryway.



# Greater Than the



town & Country Cedar Homes photos/Styled by Debra Grahl

**A LOG HOME EVOLVES FROM  
ITS OWNER'S INSPIRATION—  
ONE DETAIL AT A TIME.**



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Anyone who has taken on a major project knows that it's a bit like working a jigsaw puzzle. Put all of the right pieces together in the proper order and, in time, a handsome picture develops.

The evolution of the log home that Pat and Debbie Seelye built near Kalamazoo, Michigan, is proof that the whole is often greater than the sum of its parts.

Debbie is a strong believer in intensive planning and thorough research. To create her home, she undertook a time-consuming process of design development and detail planning that would eventually lead to what she considers her ideal house. "I'm really into detail," Debbie says. "And I knew what I wanted in each room. It was just a matter of creating it."

# Sum of its Parts

A huge open space comprised of the kitchen, breakfast nook and great room remains comfortable thanks to full-scribe log trusses that scale down the volume of the ceiling. Warm textures and rich colors further the intimacy of the area.



## From Paper to Perfect

Debbie began with her recollections of mountainside log cabins near Lake Tahoe, where she'd spent many summers. She was particularly taken with the warmth, openness and casual living aspects of a log home, but wanted features that would make it more "Michigan" than Western.

Intensive investigation, plenty of magazine clippings and many visits to log home models helped Debbie to hatch her design ideas. She chose Town & Country Cedar Homes and Corrie Kirshman of Kirshman and Associates Kitchen and Bath Design Studio to help bring her ideas to life. Town & Country, which offers a full-service program from design and building systems to handcrafting, was able to work closely with Debbie on every step of the project.

The 5,200-square-foot home is fashioned from the heartwood of white cedar logs, sawn on all four sides, then rounded on the exterior surface with a drawknife to get a more circular, log-like appearance. Because this process removes the softer sapwood ring on the outside, the hardwood interior of the logs is exposed, practically eliminating maintenance. The wood is bleached, but not stained or sealed. According to Stephen Biggs of Town & Country, the exterior will only need occasional re-bleaching in a few areas to keep it beautiful.

Stephen credits the abundance of handcrafted touches in the home as one of its most appealing aspects. "Everything in this house is irregular round," he points out and goes on to explain that this aspect keeps the logs from having the "telephone pole" look common to some log homes.

The Seelye home is situated on a piece of property that Debbie estimates at about 300 acres. Included on the property are stables and paddocks to support Debbie's business and passion: a private facility for training and showing horses in the Hunter/Jumper class. She also teaches serious riders and works with horses she says, "have attitudes that need adjusting."



## A GRAND ENTRY

**H**orses dominate the artistic elements throughout the Seelye home with works from such well-known artists as Bev Doolittle and Judy Larson. The entry is filled with these special treasures—in fact Debbie says her foyer is dedicated to Judy Larson, whose work Debbie collects. What Debbie especially likes about both artists' paintings is what she calls the "mystery" in every piece: Each painting contains a hidden picture that can only be discerned by careful inspection. Larson is particularly renowned for

this technique. Debbie loves to invite her guests to find the "hidden spirit" (as Larson calls it) within the work.

The horse-themed entry table was handcrafted purposely to fit the entry wall. It was rendered in aged copper by local blacksmith Jerry Newton of Hand Forged Metals in Delton, Michigan. Jerry was also responsible for the iron posts on the staircase. The mirror above the table was a fortuitous furniture-store find—and a perfect fit for the massive wall.



**ABOVE:** A separate wing contains formal living and dining rooms—perfect for gatherings of any size. **ABOVE RIGHT:** Both the breakfast nook and the formal dining room feature log-scribed double radial bays that define their ceilings.

Since the acreage is heavily wooded, the angular design incorporates great views. And because the home has wide, wrapping decks rather than being buried in porches, it is bright, with each room maximizing window area.

### **It's in the Details**

Perhaps nothing about the Seelye home speaks more eloquently to meticulous planning and execution than the interior

elements. Debbie defined an Old World theme for interior spaces and, with help from Corrie, created a look that Stephen describes as “rustically elegant.”

The tongue-and-groove treatment on the interior walls is the first evidence of fine craftsmanship. Formed of random-width cedar, the boards include a rounded triple-bead pattern at each board joint. Debbie envisioned this pattern and left it to Town & Country to make it work.

They did so on a planer with special knives. It took several trial runs (with Debbie considering each sample), but the exact pattern she wanted finally emerged. Town & Country now calls it “the Seelye pattern.” What is especially unique about the pattern is that each board had to be carefully aligned at horizontal planes and corners—something that took a great deal of time and precision.

Stairwell posts were another idea of Debbie's. They look like massive natural timbers, which is exactly what they are. Because Town & Country has its own forests, they were able to convey Debbie's

*The kitchen and great room are open to one another so Debbie can work*



ideas to their forester, who found trees that would fit the vision. These trees were then harvested with part of the bottoms intact to preserve the natural look. It took a few tries to get just the right look, but the result is very natural looking and “tree-like,” according to Debbie. A local blacksmith made the iron stair posts with an antique-bronze finish. These replaced logs that were originally planned for the stairway because Debbie thought the overall effect looked too “loggy.”

Stephen is impressed with the mix of wood, timber, stone and drywall throughout the house. Use too much

**ABOVE:** The Old World theme carries through to the master bedroom, where classic reproduction furnishings and light fixtures enhance the plush ambiance of this open space.

wood, he says, and it takes away from its special feeling. Instead, he likes to create some contrasts. The massive fireplace in the great room, for instance, features manufactured stone—the same as that on the front entry wall and posts on the entry porch. Tumbled granite floors look aged and are very easy to care for. Granite countertops and cherry cabinets in the kitchen (designed by Bill Kirshman, CKD—Corrie’s husband) artfully play

off the stainless steel appliances. “I don’t like to clean,” Debbie laughs and therefore planned materials that would minimize upkeep.

The floorplan was essentially designed around the kitchen and the living area it overlooks: Debbie loves to cook. Since the kitchen and great room are open to one another, she’s able to work in the kitchen and stay connected with her husband and daughter.

*in the kitchen and still stay connected with her husband and daughter.*



**ABOVE:** The property dictated an unusual design with compound angles. To accommodate a gentle slope, the home includes a lower-level walkout with a covered patio. **LEFT:** Thoughtfully furnished wide cedar decks wrap around much of the home.

Stephen describes this area as “the core of the house” and says it has “the right coordination and pattern language of volume and space in a comfortable area.” Even though the great room contains a cathedral ceiling, the full-scribe trusses make it seem more intimate.

The home also has a formal living room, a bit more classically decorated than the other areas of the house. The Seelyes do a lot of entertaining and use it mainly for that purpose, so they like

the idea of having it separate from the rest of the house. Besides two bedrooms and two baths upstairs and a master suite on the main level, the home also boasts an exercise room on the lower level with full bath, steam room and hot tub.

Debbie and Corrie were persistent in ferreting out and procuring the home's furnishings. Everything had to fit perfectly and complement the overall Old World theme. According to Corrie, the choices were dictated by a mandate of "rustic, but not too rustic." She says, "The Seelyes didn't want a country atmosphere." Rather they took a more traditional style approach. The furnishings are new reproductions of antiques. Rugs are updated versions of older designs by William Morris. The details are authentic from soft leather upholstery right down to the fine-arts lamps and ironwork light fixtures. Debbie and Corrie handpicked each element and graphed out the pieces before the home was built. "When the house was completed, we had moving day," Debbie says. Everything was selected, purchased and ready to be brought in.

### Communication is Key

An intricately fashioned home, such as the Seelyes', is the result of finely tuned teamwork and communication between the home owner, the log home company, the builder and the interior designer. Debbie believes that she was fortunate in finding players who understood what she was looking for in a home and then worked hand-in-hand with her to build it. "It all went together like clockwork," she brags.

Stephen adds, "The Seelyes had an excellent vision in creating something unusual. The components that make it special are all handcrafted." Town & Country's ability to design and virtually "build" the home on computer mitigated surprises and made close collaboration with the home owners possible. The result is a home that Debbie says is undeniably her sanctuary. ■

## HOME DETAILS

■ **Square footage:** 5,582

*For more information, see Resources on page 109.*

■ **General contractor:** DeVries & Onderlinde Builders

■ **Log producer/designer:** Town & Country Cedar Homes

