



PECOS PARADISE

A common childhood destination by the Pecos River Canyon becomes a home for a New Mexico couple

ON THE COVER: Situated on a pond just feet from the Pecos River, Glenna and Mike's eclectic log home has become the talk of the neighborhood. It's complete with a kitchen reclaimed from an old Mexican market and a 213-year-old front door.

BY JOE BOUSQUIN | PHOTOS BY JAMES RAY SPAHN
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Glenna Goodacre and Mike Schmidt never met as children, even though they both grew up in the flatlands surrounding Lubbock, Texas. And they never crossed paths in the rolling hills of the Pecos River Canyon in neighboring New Mexico, where both of their families often headed on outings and vacations. It was there that Glenna would get in the saddle to ride for hours, and Mike would pick up a pole to fish the Pecos' plentiful waters.

So when they did meet as adults, years later, they found the common bond of the Valley between them. When they married, they knew they needed a place there to call their own, where their grandchildren would be able to experience the same wonders that the river gave them growing up.

"Our parents and grandparents had built log homes, and going to the mountains to stay in a log home was a great adventure. We

wanted to continue that for our grandchildren," Glenna says. "We wanted to recapture our youth," adds Mike.

What Glenna and Mike built on the banks of the Pecos is an adorable, 2,600-square-foot home of 12-inch-by-6-inch, hand-hewn Western hemlock logs in the distinctive, rectangular shape of a traditional Appalachian cabin. Intersecting at time-tested dovetail corners, the air-dried logs are sealed with a thick layer of chinking between them, ensuring chilly morning breezes and frosty, high-desert cold snaps don't find their way into the home.

Decorated by Glenna (a renowned artist whose works include the rendering of Sacajawea on the dollar coin issued by the U.S. Mint in 2000, as well as the Vietnam Women's Memorial in Washington, D.C.), the home has numerous eclectic touches. One of her bronze renderings, The Buffalo Dance, adorns the weathered pine mantel and corbels, reclaimed from an old barn, above the fireplace, while a



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LEFT: A massive reconstructed door originally built in 1793 is the hallmark piece in the home. BELOW: A teak railing borders an upstairs walkway and provides sturdy support while looking down into the great room below.



hardwood parquet of discarded end pieces and scraps was employed in a diamond-tile pattern on the kitchen floor.

An antique teak railing lines an upstairs passageway, while massive ceiling trusses designed with supportive king and queen bents provide a symmetric, telescopic view into the home from the exterior, through towering, full-length windows. White-washed ceilings, and the chinking between the logs, catch the light from those windows to brighten the home, and avoid the dark feeling that too much wood can create. The home's signature piece is its reconstructed sectional front door, dating back to 1793, from the Catalonia region of Spain.

"It had to be totally rebuilt, and it's heavier than you can believe," Glenna says. "It took about 10 men to lift it into place. It's just a remarkable piece."

"Glenna is an artist in every sense of the word," Mike says. "We literally built the entire cabin around that door."

After finding a lot within the Tres Lagunas community along the river where they made their childhood jaunts, Glenna scoured the internet to research log home companies and builders. "There were about 400 sites of log home companies from all over the country. But when I saw this company in Tennessee, I knew they had the look I wanted," Glenna says.

That company was Stone Mill Log Homes of Knoxville, a manufacturer founded in 1974 that builds approximately 80 homes per year. The six-inch-by-12-inch rectangular hemlock beams, manufactured from insect-resistant heartwood, are the firm's trademark. After visiting the company, Mike and Glenna picked Stone Mill because "we asked them about a zillion questions, and they just really seemed to know what they were doing," Glenna says. Another big selling point was Stone Mill's commitment to have its own consultants come to the remote site in New Mexico and make sure that the walls of the log home were erected correctly.

"We believe that our commitment to the customer goes past cutting a log package and sending it out to them," says Robert Cantrell, president of Stone Mill. "Our philosophy is to make sure that the houses are erected and dried-in correctly, as much as it is to make sure that it's designed and manufactured correctly."

Glenna and Mike then toured other log homes in the area to find a local contractor. They chose Michael Valdez, who owns Valco Construction Company in Sante Fe, based on the quality that they could touch and feel in his work. "We toured a lot of other homes, and his quality was just evident in comparison," Mike says. "You could see that he knew what he was doing."



The kitchen cabinets and cupboards came from an old Mexican market, while the hardwood of the floor was made of scraps to form a rustic parquet. Polished solid pine countertops provide for workspace throughout. "Granite's too fancy for a log cabin," Glenna says.

Chinking Provides Relief

While the use of chinking in a log home often comes down to a matter of personal taste, Robert Cantrell, owner of Stone Mill Log Homes, says chinking a home can provide an extremely sound weather-proofing system. Often, as logs dry and settle, they tend to twist and check, or produce large "cracks" visible from the interior of a home. While those checks aren't likely to produce gaps through an entire round, movement between the logs can.

And that's the advantage of the variety of chinking materials available today. With any number of synthetic chinking on the market, the material can be

used to help a home settle into its own.

"That chinking is a synthetic product that adheres to both sides of the log," Robert says. "It creates a very airtight joint. In this case, it's four inches wide. If you have a half-inch of movement in your logs, which would be an extreme case, this stuff still won't break, because it's resilient. If you're in a structure that has some shrinkage or movement, with chinking, the logs stay tight. You're not going to find ants running through the hole in the wall."

That's peace of mind.

— Joe Bousquin



The home, which was purposefully built without an art studio work space, provides plenty of room for lounging, especially on the 10-foot-wide covered porch.



ABOVE: An elk-horn mirror — a common find in the high-desert West — decorates a bedroom wall. A white ceiling brightens the room. **FAR LEFT:** Whitewashed ceilings and cabinets reflect light through the home to brighten the interior of the cabin. **LEFT:** River pebble tile in the master bathroom lends a rustic country look and good grip for wet feet.

Using Stone Mill's standard Elk River floor plan, Glenna and Mike went to work to put their own touches on the home. They liked the fact that the master bedroom was on the main floor, with the kitchen and living area adjacent to each other, with two other bedrooms upstairs. But the couple also had elements of their own in mind.

"We took one of their projected plans as a starter and then went from there," Glenna says, noting that they added an additional bathroom downstairs. "It was all part of the creative process, which is one of the things I liked." One of the biggest changes was moving the massive cultured stone fireplace in the great room from the gable end of the home to a side wall. That allowed Glenna and Mike to put in more windows on the south side of the home, with French doors below, and open up the view of the impressive trusses overhead. To achieve the look and feel that they wanted, they asked Stone Mill to design larger trusses into the home, which the firm's architects drew into the plan.

"When it came to the exposed timbers and trusses, Mike said the bigger, the better, so we developed a lot of the plan around that," Robert recalls. "They were both great to work with, because they knew exactly what they wanted. Glenna was very good at visualizing

the exact design details she was after."

One of those details was the whitewashed ceilings, which reflect more light and brighten the home. Glenna concedes her artistic training likely helped her make the connection. "You don't even notice the whitewash, but it does a great job at reflecting the light," she says.

Other design considerations included the covenants of the homeowners association in the community where Mike and Glenna built. The couple had to work within the prescripts that the home not be larger than 40 feet by 50 feet. They were able to get a bit more room of outside living area with a screened-in porch at the back of the home, and a 10-foot-wide deck that wraps around two sides of the home. A red tin roof, also a requirement of their community, extends over the porch to ensure livable outside space, even if the weather doesn't agree.

All the while, they made sure that the home was sited so they could have a view of the small pond out front while listening to the babble of the river close by. Primarily used as a weekend getaway and vacation spot from their main residence in Santa Fe, where she creates her art, Glenna consciously decided not to include any studio space at the home for her sculpture work.



Glenna and Mike sited their home within the prescripts of their community's homeowner association. While the home footprint couldn't be bigger than 40 feet by 50 feet, the couple extended their living space with a covered porch outside and a screened-in room in the back.

"We just like to go there and rock on the porch," Glenna says.

Building the home took about eight months, which was longer than the couple expected. "We built through the winter, and we had horrible weather," Glenna says. "It actually felt more like a year."

In the kitchen, Glenna used part of an old Mexican market as her cabinets and counters, which are topped out with an unusual two-inch polished pine surface. While granite counters have become quite en vogue with many luxury log home owners, Glenna simply says, "Granite's too fancy for a log cabin." A farm house sink and faux antique stove complete the simple, rustic look she was looking for.

On the parquet floors, Glenna and Mike employed a labor-intensive process to create a singular look. "After we put all the scraps of wood together, we painted it and scraped it, and then waxed it to give it a flatter finish. The effect is terrific, and it doesn't show dirt at all."

"We let the dog, grandchildren, whoever, just run around on it and don't worry about it at all," Mike says.

Another unique footing material was used in the master bath, where Glenna chose pebbled tiles for the shower floor. "It looks like I picked the pebbles up in the river," Glenna says. "I love it, but it also has a safety element, because you don't slip."

The completed home, with its unique elements, is a conversation piece in the couple's neighborhood, where other families come from near and far for their own vacations. "We were certainly the talk of the neighborhood during construction," Glenna says. "Everyone had to come by and see the door. And of course, we're the only house with the square logs."

With five kids and 10 grandkids between them, the home, like Glenna's artwork, will endure as a legacy for generations to come. 🏡

