



*pennsylvania*  
**peace**

**A homeowner returns to his rural roots to build a getaway that honors 18th-century farmhouses while offering modern amenities.**

story by Holly O'Dell | photography by James Ray Spahn | styling by Colleen Macomber



In the great room—one of Robert and Michelle's favorite spaces—West Wing Builders created a recess in the stone fireplace, hiding the TV within using two barn-style doors. "We love the exposed trusses and oversized fireplace," Michelle says. "It's such a warm room."



The kitchen's custom cabinetry features a painted, distressed finish, while hand-scraped, wide-plank white oak flooring is complemented by a tung-oil finish. Michelle particularly likes the kitchen's proximity to the great room. "I enjoy cooking, and it's great to be in the same room with my husband while he's reading or watching TV," she notes.



**R**obert Morse caught the log-home bug in his younger years after helping a friend build a log structure. Four years ago, a visit to a friend's log home on Virginia's Shenandoah River reignited his interest in constructing his own retreat. "From that day forward, I knew we would be embarking on an exciting project," says Robert's wife, Michelle.

The couple, who live full time in the Washington, D.C., area, wanted "a place to relax and unwind after a hectic week that was close enough to our permanent residence but still felt as if we were in an entirely different location once we arrived," Michelle recalls. They didn't have to look far: The Morses found a parcel of land with a large pond and rolling hills in Adams County, Pennsylvania—close to where Robert was raised and where he had fallen in love with log homes in the first place.

Robert and Michelle selected Knoxville, Tennessee-based StoneMill Log Homes as their log producer. They had become fans of the company's signature 6-inch-by-12-inch, flat-walled Western hemlock logs with dovetailed corner notches and 4-inch chinking. The Morses hired architect Jim Rill of Rill & Decker Architects in Bethesda, Maryland, to modify StoneMill's Prestwick floor plan, a layout that appealed to the homeowners. "It has that old farmhouse-style look to it, with two full stories in the front and an attached story-and-a-half rear section," says StoneMill sales associate Jim

Slaughter. "They also liked the openness of it, as well as the heavy timber roof system."

Adds Michelle: "We wanted a more traditional, rustic feel that was reflective of the log homes built in Pennsylvania during the early to mid-1700s, and StoneMill's product gave us that while allowing all the modern-day luxuries, too." A hand-hewn finish and a drawknife edge, which created a contour in the chink lines, further contributed to the classic look the Morses sought.

The pair hired West Wing Builders of Falls Church, Virginia, to bring their vision of an architecturally (and historically) appropriate log home to life. For their four-bedroom, three-and-a-half-bathroom structure, the Morses chose to forgo exposed drywall. "We used whitewashed hemlock over drywall to accent solid log walls," Michelle explains. They also used burlap on the basement walls and ceilings in between decorative vintage beams. "We saw that technique used as insulation in an old barn and adopted it for our interior application," says Michelle.

The mantels on the Morses' six fireplaces came from a log cabin that the couple discov-

ered underneath an old home on their property. Built in the mid-1700s, "the structure was uninhabitable, but we wanted to keep part of the home and incorporate it into our new structure," Michelle says.

The home's unique stonework—most prominent in Robert's office—showcases local rock patterned after a historic building in Gettysburg. At nearly 6,300 square feet, the three-level home is packed with contemporary amenities as well, including a sauna, exercise room and movie theater outfitted with a 118-inch screen and reclining seats. Robert and Michelle also added a three-car garage with a full workshop and a barn for hobbies such as gardening and crafts.

The Morses regularly host friends, family and business associates, who immediately embrace the log home's casual, authentic style. "Everyone says that their blood pressure drops once they arrive on the property, and the stress just melts away," Michelle says. "We have a 'blue jeans-only' policy, which adds to the relaxation. Our friends immediately feel at home and fall in love with our retreat." 🏡

**ABOVE:** A second-floor guest bedroom is decorated with linens, furnishings and artwork that complement the room's rustic logs.

**OPPOSITE TOP:** Architect Jim Rill added an office to StoneMill's Prestwick floor plan. "It was designed to look like an original stone home built adjacent to the cabin," says Jim Isler, vice president of West Wing Builders. Custom-made vertical grain fir doors flank three sides of the office, leading to the terrace, a second exterior entrance and the main house.

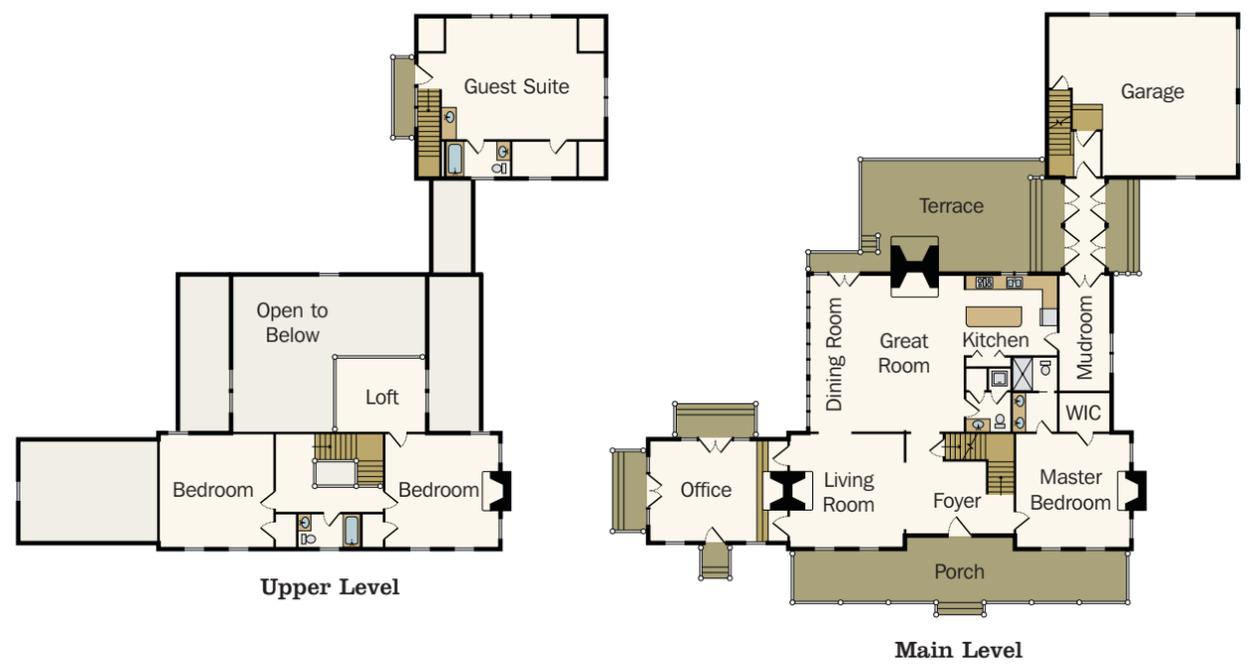
**OPPOSITE BOTTOM:** A massive bank of windows in the formal dining room overlooks the pond. The space connects to the kitchen and great room. "Whether you are dining, cooking or sitting by the fire, you really get that 'On Golden Pond' feeling," Michelle says. Michelle chose rustic-style furniture, hardware and light fixtures to complement the home's bucolic architecture.



The great-room chimney—layered in rock that mimics a nearby historic building—includes an outdoor fireplace and helps define the Morses' spacious terrace.

**home details**  
 SQUARE FOOTAGE: 6,300  
 LOG COMPANY: STONEMILL LOG HOMES

# design details



**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:** A mix of woods permeates the master bathroom, from a cob-blasted tongue-and-groove ceiling and whitewashed hemlock walls to a painted vanity; 4-inch-thick, end-grain butcher block covers the island, crafted to provide ample storage; a cozy living room encourages intimate conversations; an adjacent stone building housing Robert's office provides historical flair with its add-on appearance.

Surrounded by custom doors, the breezeway leads to the garage and guest suite housed above it. Milled flagstone tiles cover the floor, giving the appearance of real stone.

