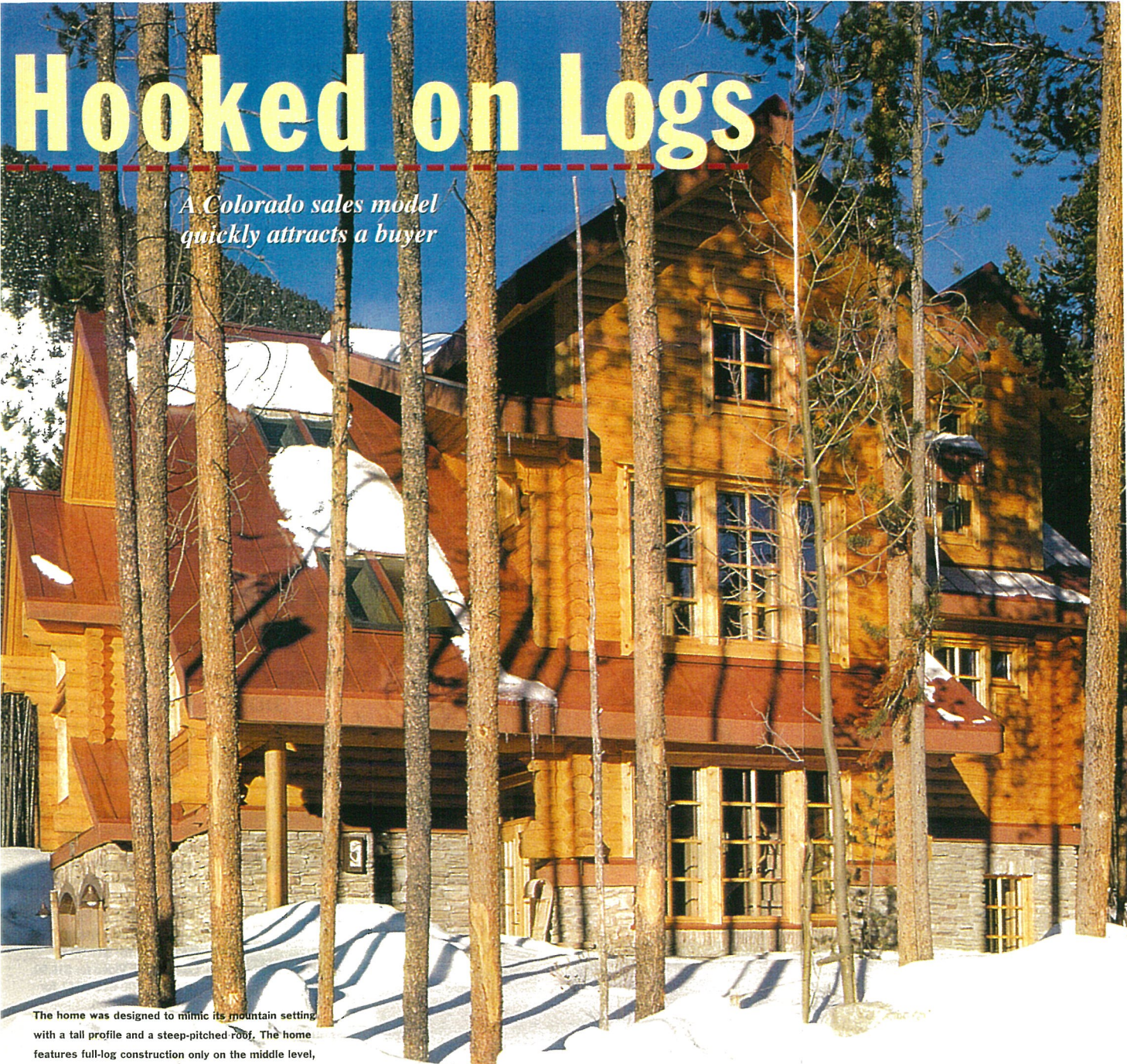


Hooked on Logs

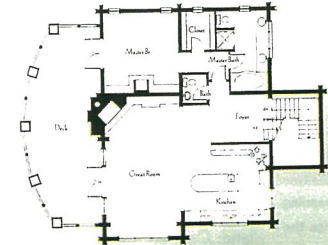
A Colorado sales model quickly attracts a buyer



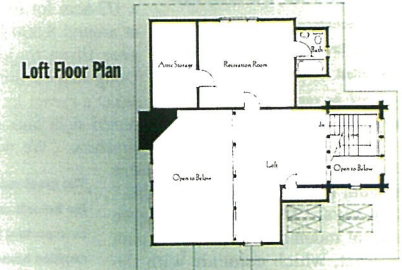
The home was designed to mimic its mountain setting with a tall profile and a steep-pitched roof. The home features full-log construction only on the middle level, which is the main living area.



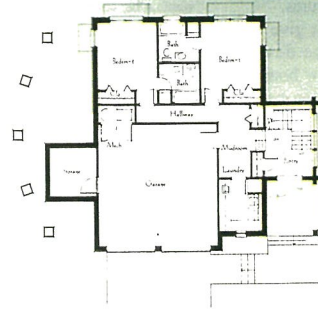
Although the home's lot is small, it is heavily wooded, providing appropriate surroundings for the home. Since almost every log home in Colorado has a green roof, the designers of this one specified burgundy so it would stand out.



First Floor Plan



Loft Floor Plan



Meadow Level Floor Plan

PEOPLE WHO BUY A NEW LOG HOME DON'T JUST BUY IT. They also have to build it. Before it can be built, it must be designed. This is the sequence almost every buyer follows.

The owners of this Colorado home avoided the usual route. Their brand-new log home was already built, and on a beautiful lot with spectacular views. They weren't even looking for a log home,

but when they saw this one, they couldn't resist.

The opportunity arose because Honka Log Homes, a Finnish company trying to increase its presence in the United States, had lined up Colorado Summit Log Homes to represent Honka in the Western United States. To introduce Honka's particular style of log homes, Colorado Summit decided to build a home it could use as a sales model.

Colorado Summit turned to Denver architect Doug Walters to design the home. The objective was to create a home that showcased Honka's building system with a look that appealed to a wide range of buyers.

The first step was to find land. Colorado Summit bought a 1/3-acre lot in a subdivision at around 8,000 feet elevation near three major ski areas. Doug helped the Honka reps select a corner lot with uninterrupted sight lines and plenty of sunshine. "We were trying to

get maximum sunlight into the house, a premium amenity in the mountains," Doug says. "There are 270-degree views of mountains to the east, south and west, which coincide with the sun's daily path. As a result, there is major glass on those exposures."

Having no buyer didn't give Doug unlimited freedom. "The development's architectural review board has a lot to say about what you can and cannot do," Doug notes. "They don't want Denver architects putting suburban homes up there. In keeping with the site, the home has a mountain vernacular. It could be described as lodge style. We were trying to hit a broad audience out there. It's

The great room is designed to be the home's central gathering area, an important feature of mountain vacation homes. After a day of skiing, everyone comes home and wants a big open space where they can relax in front of the fire and review the day's activities together. And since the living room faces south and west, it captures the afternoon light and spectacular sunsets. The window muntins and reveals were colored, according to the Finnish style, to contrast with the logs and make the details pop out.

Story by Roland Sweet

Photos by Phillip Wegener Kantor • Courtesy of Honka Log Homes



The dining area enjoys a cheery setting by the window next to the kitchen and across the great room from the fireplace. The wall projection creates a cozy nook and subtly separates it from the main living area.

The kitchen is a delight to look at and work in. "We wanted to create a friendly working kitchen," project architect Karin Taylor says, "without going crazy with big appliances. It needed to be nice but not gourmet. The kitchen is open so many people can access it from several rooms, and it's big enough so many people can help prepare meals."



designed as a vacation home, but someone could easily live there full-time."

Having lived in Colorado for 25 years, Doug knew how the home would likely be used and what features would appeal to someone buying a vacation home in the Colorado Rockies: at least three bedrooms, a full bath for every bedroom, the master bedroom on the main level, a central gathering room, light and views, a two-car garage and plenty of storage room.

The actual form that the house took was guided by what Doug terms the mountain vernacular. "It's knowing the way people have built in the mountains for hundreds of years and learning from it," he explains. "For instance, using large awnings over entries so that people don't get buried in an avalanche of snow falling off the roof."

Log generates its own aesthetics, Doug notes. "The technology allows you to do certain things," he says. "Scandinavians love wood. Everything above or below them, they either plank or make real log. But for my eye—and the American taste—that's too much of a good thing. We wanted to mix up log walls with drywall. If you do all logs, you can log yourself to death. A little drywall is a nice break."

Another building element was stone. "Stone was important to anchor the house," Doug notes. "When you bring logs down to the ground, they sometimes have an uneasy relationship with it. Houses want to have a solid base, and that base wants to be of the earth. That's usually a form of stone or a masonry product."

The resulting home features three levels and is just shy of 3,300 square feet. "This is not a Finnish log vacation home," Doug stresses. "In Finland, most log lakefront homes are under 1,000 square feet. Compared to Scandinavian prototypes, this is a very large and complicated structure. The roof is much more complex, the floor and roof spans are far greater, and the groupings of windows are more generous than seen in typical Finnish vacation cabins."

The use of windows caused some initial frustration because Doug had no technical manual or even a window catalog to guide him and his associate, Karin Taylor. "We were told to draw what we wanted, and Honka would try to come close," Doug recalls. "Later in the process, the factory inquired about methods U.S. window manufacturers use to equalize pressure in sealed-glass units manufactured at sea level and destined for installation at altitude. We supplied details for that technology, which they incorporated into these windows."

The steep-pitched roof isn't common in heavy snow country because the objective with flatter roofs is to hold the snow, which is a good insulator. But the roof peaks help enhance the mountain feel, according to Doug, who adds, "We did a gabled roof to make the profile more dramatic."

The biggest concern for the architect and builder was settlement. "The main thing to remember about logs is that they will settle as the moisture leaves the

log, and nothing you can do will inhibit that shrinkage, so you need to get out of the way and let it happen,” Doug explains. “For instance, there need to be large, insulation-filled cavities above all windows and doors that allow the logs to settle without crushing the sash.”

The crew devised one innovation to handle logs settling around the fireplace. The top 12 inches is really carved polystyrene block painted to match the cultured stone. “I wish I could take credit for the fireplace solution,” says Dan Pins, who was the general contractor, “but one of the trim carpenters came up with the idea. We used flexible caulk to install it. In two years, when the house is done settling, we will replace the foam with stone.”

To take advantage of views in three directions, the architect didn’t want to be limited to a gable only at both ends. “We wanted cross gables,” Doug notes, “which resist the natural settlement of logs, and not in a good way.”

Doug and Karin solved the problem by framing the upper story conventionally so that the roof pitch and geometry would stay intact, rather than flatten out, over time and settle evenly over the logs. The lower level, too, is conventionally framed.

There is a positive aspect to the settlement issue, Dan points out. “A stick-framed house is tightest the day it’s built. If the wood is green or there’s aging in the components or the ground, it’s going to loosen up. A log home is the loosest the day it’s built. It’s designed to tighten up as it ages.”

The design phase of the process took four months. Doug notes that having the log-home dealer as a client, rather than a specific home buyer, speeded up the process.

After the site was cleared and the foundation poured, the logs arrived in July 1998. Construction took six months.

When the project got under way, the original contractor found himself overcommitted and had to be replaced. Dan, who had been hired by Colorado Summit to sell homes, took over general-contractor duties for the project. Fortunately, most of the subcontractors had already been hired.

“I was trying to set up a sales network and work with Honka while facing this construction project,” Dan recalls.



ABOVE & BELOW: The stairway is a focal point. It has tall windows facing the trees. As you go upstairs, you have a nice vista. It’s built of log and seems to speak to the solidity of the materials. The stair is suspended on steel tubing. Rods go through the treads to allow for settling. The stairs not only function well but turned out to be an eye-catching design element of the home.



“The mind game for me was that there were no reference points. This was the first house I’d built, and it was the first of its kind in Colorado. I didn’t have an understanding of stick-built or log or anything. I had to visualize in my own mind when talking to the subs and hope that what they were telling me and what I was visualizing were pretty close. It’s like trying to build a home out of a cloud.”

The plan was to use the house to introduce customers to Honka’s line, then eventually sell it. But not five months after it was finished, a couple made an offer on it. At the time, the real-estate agent for the development was using it as his office. Every time the couple came in and looked around, they liked this home more than others they saw or anything they could imagine building on a vacant lot. And, instead of using it as a vacation home, the couple made it their primary residence.

Even though Colorado Summit didn’t get much use out of the home, it still proved valuable. First, it taught them how to work with the Finnish building system and suggested several adaptations for the American market. Second, several prospective customers who saw the home during its brief use as a model wound up buying Honka homes. “It especially appealed to non-traditional log-home buyers,” Dan notes. “Many women who wouldn’t like a log home like this because it’s not their typical image of what a log home is. It conveys tons of light, and has a mix of stone and dry-wall to complement the wood. It’s not a heavy home at all, and has an elegance that’s more refined than rustic.”

Evidence of its appeal is how quickly it sold. And although the owners hadn’t specifically wanted a log home, now they insist they can’t imagine living in anything else. **LH**

RESOURCES

Log Producer: Honka Log Homes U.S.A., 35715 U.S. Highway 40, Suite D-303, Evergreen CO 80439, (877) 874-6652. E-mail: info@honka.com.

Designer: Doug Walter Architects, 280 Columbine Street, Suite 205, Denver CO 80206, (303) 320-6916.

Builder: Colorado Summit Log Homes, 411 Main Street, Frisco CO 80443; (970) 668-9999.



This foyer setting shows off the warm color and intricate grain of the slow-growth pine logs, which were cut, milled and kiln-dried in Finland.