

This soaring addition to his old, log farmhouse is the homeowner's choice location to linger.

NEXT PAGE: The sparkling kitchen's marble-topped island provides ample food prep space while keeping the flow of conversation open with guests.

BELOW: Builder, Steven Vipond, in front of the courtyard and maple tree around which he built this country oasis.

A PERFECT PLAN

BY SAMANTHA MARTIN // PHOTOGRAPHY BY SANDY MACKAY



It was a search for the perfect plan.

Five architectural drafts, many detailed conversations and a dozen headaches had the homeowner of a quaint farmhouse in Dufferin County giving up on his renovation ambitions.

The simple, square, 19th-century log home was built in 1841 by land grant Irish settlers. Previous owners renovated the original structure, removing the second floor and adding a kitchen and great room as well as a bedroom wing. The current homeowner purchased the home, after having looked at more than 200 properties in the area, in 1982 and did some interior renovations. But he had other plans.

The first draft came in 1986, and he gave up in 2002, after more than a decade-and-a-half of attempts at a successful design.

"A maple tree that was planted in 1983 had grown to be a very nice, substantial tree at the south end of the pool," he says, noting that the key component necessary in the renovation was that the addition be planned around the tree. The tree was to remain, and the home was to fit into the natural surroundings, including the miles of forest and trails making up the majority of the property.

"The goal of the reno was to provide more living space, a new kitchen and generally more volume in the house," says the homeowner. But no one was willing to embrace his vision. He says there always seemed to be a disconnect and the plans just didn't reflect the home he pictured in his head.

After searching for years, he hit pay dirt. "I came across some work by award-winning architect Jamie Pearson (**Pearson Design Inc.**)," he says. The irony? Pearson, in 1987, was the draftsman working for another architect who submitted a proposed plan that would end up in the "failed attempts" pile.



But this time, Pearson wasn't taking direction from someone else. He drew up a plan for the homeowner that he thought accommodated every major requirement and fine detail requested for the renovation and build. Finally, success. "He did a great job integrating it with the environment," he says. "When you're in the house, you feel like you're outside."

In addition to preserving the tree, creating more space and crafting a designer kitchen, the homeowner also wanted the master bedroom to be located away from the guest bedrooms. Pearson specialized in just that.

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The homeowner's not done. He plans to extend the fireplace surround to create a stone wall.

NEXT PAGE: The original log structure, in the east wing of the completed home, is a comfortable escape from the hustle and bustle of the great room. The hall leads to the guest rooms.



"I like pulling houses apart so the parents have their area and the children and/or guests have their own area at opposite ends of the house," he says. Pearson planned for the great room to be the common meeting area where the family and guests of the house could eat, play and chat and then, in the evening, could retire to their separate wings.

Plans called for a U-shaped design with the tree and pool in the courtyard flanked on one side by the master suite wing and the opposite side by the original log cabin and 1951 addition. The great room comprised the bottom of the U, joining the two wings.

The single-floor construction, with basement, and the majority of the addition designed onto the back half of the house, has kept the home modest – another of the homeowner's wishes granted. The homeowner says builder, **Steven Vipond**, of **Kingpost Builders**, and Pearson "created an authentic feel that makes the whole house feel like it's always been there."

Driving up the long, curved driveway, past the pond and naturally landscaped acreage, the Indiana rubble limestone and British Columbia red cedar shingle exterior harmonizes with the great outdoors. The

winning plans have given this home its unassuming personality.

The front door is even humble, sunken into the façade with a flagstone pathway leading from the more popular side-door entrance. The front foyer features rough plaster walls and a corner fireplace with a painting covering the top half, brushed directly onto the plaster.

The home, with the main living space located on a single level, uses small staircases throughout to add interest and create distinct, separate areas. Each entrance leads to the kitchen and great room – an open, airy space in a striking peaked structure. The kitchen is a crisp, clean design with white, face-frame cabinetry, a generous, detailed range hood and a large, marble-topped island that faces the expanse of living space beyond to the stone fireplace at the opposite end of the room.

Natural twine reinforced with wire has been crafted into eight gorgeous woven loom chairs surrounding a striking dining table made from the salvaged logs of Toronto's old ferry docks, submerged long ago and unearthed to be crafted into fine furniture. Reclaimed ash floors give the space a rustic charm, carried beyond the art-clad walls to the soaring peaked barn-board ceiling. *Continued on page 34*



The west wing is a private retreat for the homeowner, sheltered under a white painted barn board ceiling. The white bedroom and en suite reflect the changing light of day, casting intriguing shadows and highlighting art.



is now the living room," says Vipond. Beyond is the guest wing with three bedrooms, two featuring en suites.

This past year the homeowner hosted both Thanksgiving, with 70 guests, and Christmas. "It was a great environment to enjoy Christmas in," says the homeowner, who has moved up from the city to immerse himself in his new custom surroundings.

It hasn't been all sunshine and parties though. "You find those things that you didn't expect," he says, aware that challenges are always present when renovating and constructing additions around old structures. "I went over budget but at the end of the day the builder and architect did very good work and were flexible."

The homeowner was pleased with how the builder stayed with the project through thick and thin, showing his concern for the end product. "A lot of design goes down the tube if you're thoughtless and careless about where you're working," says Vipond. He explains that natural obstacles are also very challenging. "Working around the old tree, you've got to be very careful with the root systems."

Along with the serene courtyard, shaded by the maple tree and natural landscaping, a river runs through the 150-acre property, surrounded in forest trails. "You would never know you were 47 minutes from Toronto," he says. "It looks like a picture postcard." **OH**

For the homeowner, his favourite space proves that years of planning were worth the wait. This great room, flanked on either side by nature with a screened-in porch on one side and the courtyard with the boyhood climb-worthy tree and pool on the other, is his choice space for relaxing, eating and entertaining in his rejuvenated home. "Whether winter or summer you feel like you're in the land but comfortably in the house," he says.

From here, the master suite wing branches out, lining the left side of the courtyard, while back near the entrances, the old wing lines the right side. "The log cabin, which was the original structure of the homestead,



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