



Building Big

114,000 SQ. FT., 104 Truck, Crew of 50 as Pioneer Log Homes Builds the Western Hemisphere's Largest Log Cabin Home

The age-old adage of "being in the right place at the right time" certainly holds true for a Williams Lake log homebuilding company. The right place was a home show in Denver, Colorado, and the right time was the spring of 1999. Add the right customer into the equation and you have the recipe for a project that resulted in the construction of a 114,000 square foot log home.

"Our client came by our booth at the Denver home show, met with my brother, Bryan Reid Sr., and he liked what he saw," explains Andre Chevigny, co-owner and general manager of the family business. "He had been looking for somebody to build his ranch house for over five years, but he just hadn't found a company that could offer the right combination of product quality, construction knowledge and attitude. He had been told by a number of other companies that it was not possible to build the home he envisioned, but almost immediately after meeting the client at the home show, we started working on the plans."

The project initially started out as a somewhat smaller venture for Pioneer as the client, who wishes to remain anonymous, awarded the company the contract to build a 27,000 square ft addition to an existing structure on their 7,000 acre ranch in the state of Colorado.

The 27,000 square ft project was started in May 1999 and was delivered to the client in October the same year. "After delivery of the log shell package and the related roof package, there was no turning back for the customer," says Chevigny. "Once our product arrived onsite, our client decided that he could not live with the existing home so we started building the new section, an 87,000 square foot structure, that would fit with the new 27,000 square foot addition to the original home."

Both sections of the project were constructed at Pioneer's yard in Williams Lake. They were built to the plans and specifications as outlined by Williams Lake designer and architect Don Gesinger, who,

worked closely with the client, Chevigny and Pioneer's master craftsman, Peter Arnold. Chevigny remembers every 2 - 3 days there was another detail or challenge to deal with. This structure presented opportunities for Pioneer to push the architectural and engineering envelopes for hand crafted log construction to new levels of intricacy.

The 87,000 square foot structure was started in May 2001. As the delivery date in June 2002 came closer, the 50-member Williams Lake crew ramped up their production working from dawn to dusk for 37 days straight in April to complete the intricate log work on schedule. Each individual component of the home was then tagged and numbered then dismantled and loaded onto 85 trucks that transported Pioneer's work to the Colorado home site in June 2002.

Between the two phases (27,000 square ft and 87,000 sq ft) a total of 104 truckloads of handcrafted log components were shipped. Once all the trucks arrived in Colorado, local crews consisting of 25 US workers, under the supervision of Bryan Reid Sr., Peter Arnold, Chuck Moore, and Carsten Heyer completed the re-assembly of the log package. The roof is currently being put on the structure and then the interior finishing will commence, a process that Chevigny says will take three to four years.

According to Chevigny, the home is not only the largest log home Pioneer has ever built, but it is also the largest log home ever built in the Western Hemisphere. Logs utilized in the home include three very large cedar logs. Two of the logs each supports one of the two subsection centers of the home. These two logs are between 700 and 750 years old and each tree weighs approximately 26,000lbs. And is approximately 6.5 feet wide by 60 ft long. The third cedar log, which Chevigny affectionately calls "The Special Log", is approximately 2000 years old and weighs in at 76,000lbs. Used with its root structure intact this impressive tree supports the 56 ft high ceiling in the homes library. "It was a real challenge to locate the "Special Log" as we wanted the log to be the main feature post in the structure," explains Chevigny. "It took six months to find and once we found the right tree, it then took three weeks to harvest the tree and move it to our yard in Williams Lake.

The first thing visitors to the home will notice after walking through a pair of six ft wide by 12 ft high

entry doors is one of 26,000 lbs., old western red cedar, which is the largest supporting structure log Pioneer has ever used. Twin staircases that occupy two 16 ft. by 32 ft. spaces and lead to an entry ridge above flank the log and the entryway. Log Beams, Purlins, and braces are mortised into the feature post. Opposite to the entry is the 25 ft. x 40 ft. Mountain Room, which features a 24 ft. high ceiling and a 30 ft. wide by 22 ft. high bay window to take advantage of the spectacular view of the 11,000 ft. high Colorado Mountains. The Mountain Room also boasts two Tulikivi fireplaces.

The Bar and Billiard Room provides an open plan space of 25 ft. x 68 ft. and is connected to the main living area of the home by a 14 ft. wide by 200 ft. long hallway. The main living space is on four levels and includes a 48 ft. by 70 ft. Great Room with a 38 ft. high cathedral ceiling that is supported by an impressive cluster of log posts, beams, valleys, and braces. In addition to two kitchens one is 1,200 square ft. and has an attached 400 square ft. pantry, while the other is 2,600 square feet and features a side-by-side walk in cooler and freezer the home also has a two-lane bowling alley complete with pin setter; a multi-level wine cellar with temperature and humidity control; a basketball court, an archery area; and a 32 ft. by 60 ft. fully equipped gym.

Chevigny says his favorite feature in the home is a covered look out at the roof level. "On the peak of the roof, there is a set of spiral stairs that leads to an observation area that is ideal for star gazing or taking in the beautiful Colorado Mountains. This covered area is situated 72 ft. above the lawn and includes a 10 ft. by 20 ft. platform and twin walkways that stretch 40 ft. in either direction," says Chevigny.

For more information on Pioneer Log Homes and the 114,000 square ft. Cedar Ranch showcase, view the company's web site at www.pioneerloghomesofbc.com, or call 250-392-5577.