

Lake *and* Home Magazine

A North Woods Experience

Loft-style lodge lets outside in
on Wisconsin's Namekagon Lake

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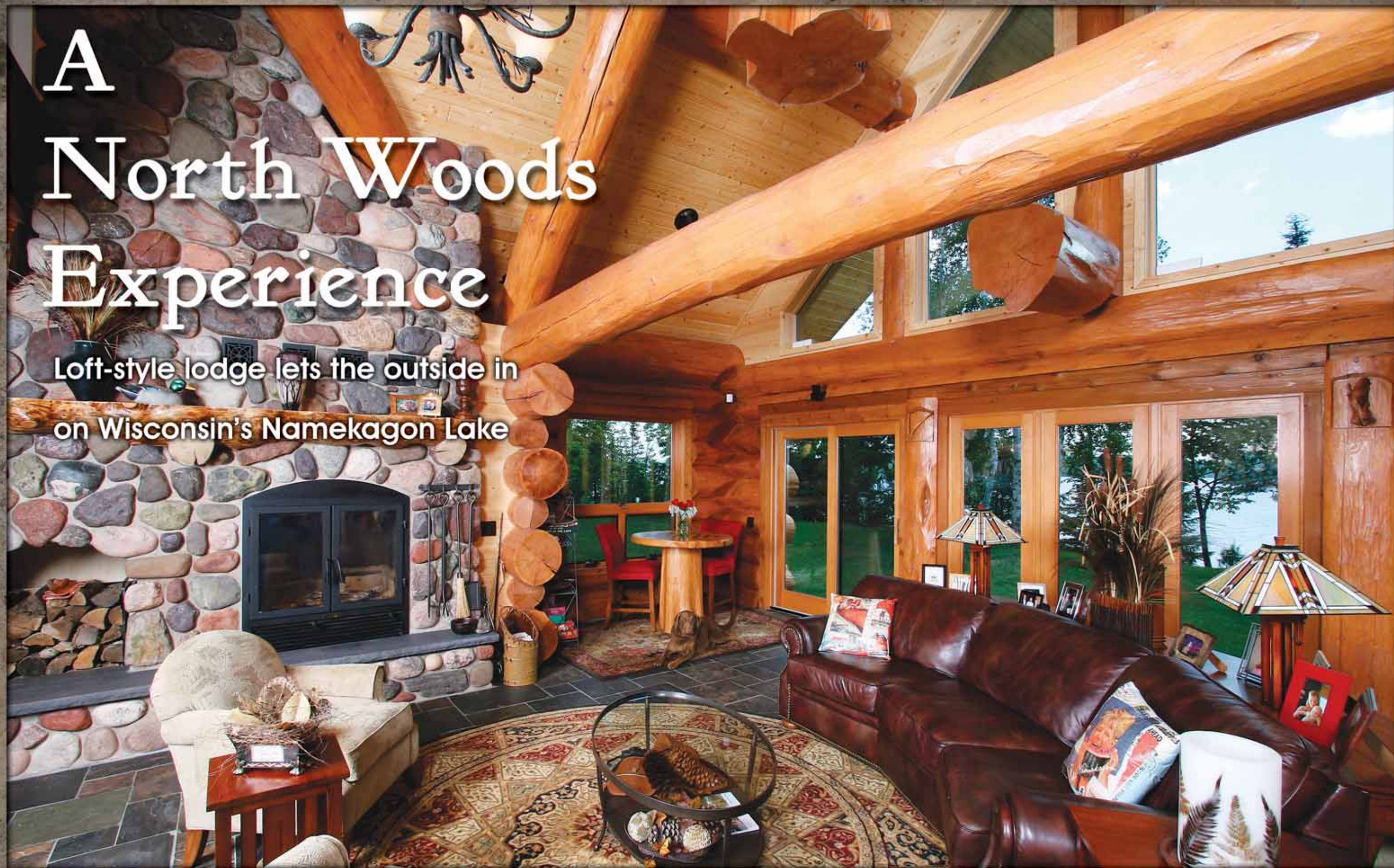
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Loft-style lodge lets the outside in
on Wisconsin's Namekagon Lake





by Heidi Kratzke — Photography by Bryan Wendland

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Brenda and Tom preparing lunch in their spacious kitchen, above. Visitors are greeted in the entryway with one of three large eagle head sculptures in the home.

hen asked to describe her lake home in just one word, Brenda Fake answers quickly, "Magical."

Her husband and the original designer of the home, Tom Rushfeldt, follows up her answer with his deep appreciation for the land on which their lake home sits. He explains how the property itself provided the primary inspiration for the vision of the home.

Nestled in the heart of the Chequamegon National Forest at the headwaters of Namekagon River in northwest Wisconsin, the couple's 3,250-square-foot cedar log home is a stunning addition to the area. The home's open design, complete with an upper loft area, helps to draw the outside beauty and light right into the main living area.

"A lot of lake homes have a whole series of little bed-





Each of the massive western red cedar logs was hand-peeled and then assembled in British Columbia. They were then disassembled, transported to Tom and Brenda's property in Wisconsin, and reassembled over a five-day period.

rooms and hallways. Our house is much more open. There are very few spaces that are isolated," Tom explains. The couple aimed for an open lodge ambiance, with the ceilings elevated 25 feet in the middle of the living room.

The property was originally selected in 1988 for its proximity to the Twin Cities, the year-round recreational area and the stunning views of both sunrises and sunsets over the lake. Tom and Brenda spend about four months a year at their lake home, three of those months in the summer time. They also make a few winter visits to snowmobile and enjoy the perks of a north woods winter.

Back in 1990, Tom completed the first cabin on the

property. This smaller structure, which now serves as the guest cabin, was built with logs from Tom's father's tree farm. Even back then, Tom said he had a sort of general floor plan in mind for the larger structure that would eventually be built on the property.

"It's a calling and a hobby for Tom," Brenda explains of the development of the property. "We still are tinkering with it."

To begin the building process for their lake home, Tom first sketched out his vision for a handcrafted log cabin. He then had his daughter, architect Laura Rushfeldt, turn it into a more detailed CAD drawing which they turned over to Pioneer Log Homes.

Based out of the Canadian province of British



The master suite is situated on the main level with stunning views of the lake. The second of three large eagle sculptures is a dominant feature in the master bedroom.

Columbia, Pioneer Log Homes crafts some of the most architecturally compelling and technically advanced log homes in the industry. John Leszczynski, president of Pioneer Log Homes Midwest, worked directly with Tom and Brenda to conform their concept to his company's method of construction. In October of 2008, the foundation was dug and the basement walls poured, preparing the property for the log home package.

Each of the massive western red cedar logs used to build the lake home was hand-peeled and then assembled in British Columbia. The logs were then disassembled, transported to Tom and Brenda's property, and reassembled over a five-day period in December of 2008.

"It took a little longer than it typically does, because

the vast majority of the home was reassembled when it was 25 below zero," John Leszczynski recalls of the harsh Wisconsin weather conditions.

This dedication to the job, even in the extreme cold, left a strong impression on Tom and Brenda. "John sells it and he builds it. It's not like you're getting a hand-off from a sales guy to a builder. He's in the whole process with you," Brenda says.

Once the logs were in place, John worked with Randy Bjork, the lead contractor on the project, as he and his crew put the rooms in and took care of the interior finishings. John returned to the lake home every three to six months to adjust the house and make sure everything was right.



The open stairway to the loft helps create the spacious and grand feel of the home.





Surrounded by wildlife, stunning lake views and the beauty of the Wisconsin north woods, Tom and Brenda's loft-style lodge is a bright and welcoming oasis for all who visit.

"I truly do love what I do every day. The highlight of my duties is being in the field and actually installing the logs for our clients. It's very fulfilling to personally assemble the homes," John says.

The home was completed by Labor Day 2009. To celebrate, Tom and Brenda hosted a contractor appreciation party for the families of everyone who worked to build their dream lake lodge. More than 100 people attended the party and open house event. "One of the contractors said he was extremely grateful for the opportunity to show his kids what he does," says Brenda.

"It was a good ride," John says of his experience working with the couple. "Tom and Brenda are two of the nicest folks you'd ever want to work with. Brenda

brought me and my crew in for lunches. Their hospitality made us feel very welcome."

With Tom's vision for the home actualized, Brenda then took over with many of the interior design and decorating decisions. One of the couple's favorite rooms in the home is the large, open kitchen. They use the space to cook with family and say they are thankful the area is spacious enough so people don't step on each others' toes.

Off the kitchen is a large family room, complete with a stone fireplace that runs the height of the room. Stunning cedar beams provide a dramatic view above. A wall of windows draws in the outdoors and creates a relaxing atmosphere.



The third of the large eagle sculptures is the focal point to the grand exterior of this lodge. The patio off the kitchen is a perfect place to relax and enjoy the cool breezes of summer.

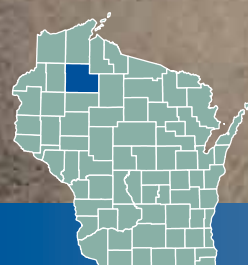
The lake house includes three bedrooms, with a den that can also convert to a bedroom. The master suite is situated on the main level of the home. It features an outdoor hot tub and an indoor endless pool. "Tom was a competitive swimmer in college and maintains his swimming discipline as part of his weekly workout regime," explains Brenda.

The house is also uniquely tailored to meet Brenda's business needs. The loft-style lodge is high-tech and wired to function as a home office for her international consulting business. Brenda acknowledges that some of her clients would be pretty jealous if they knew her office view was overlooking the natural beauty of Lake Namekagon.

Some of the most eye-catching additions to the home are the three cedar log eagle carvings etched into different areas of the home. The eagle carvings are positioned in the dining room and the master bedroom, in addition to one on the outside of the house.

"We try to put an eagle carving on every home that we do, if the homeowners don't mind," John explains of his company's unique thumbprint. "Tom and Brenda appreciated it, and we were happy to do some additional eagle carvings."

An outgrowth of the couple's sense of humor and appreciation for lake life, their summer home has one room that always captures the attention of visitors. Their "man bath" contains a urinal and a sign that reads



Namekagon Lake Sawyer County

Size	2,897 Acres
Max Depth	50 ft.





Tom and Brenda pose in front of the first cabin Tom built in 1990. Built with logs from Tom's father's tree farm, today it serves as a guest cabin.

"Where the Seat Never Rises."

"Every cabin has to have a urinal in it," Brenda jokes. "Log homes are masculine homes in and of themselves." It's practical too, especially when the five grandsons show up for a visit.

"The common theme is we have created a space to relax and enjoy the company of those who visit," summarizes Brenda. The couple hopes to continue to provide a wonderful north woods experience to their growing extended family, similar to the experience their parents

and grandparents provided to them.

Surrounded by wildlife, stunning lake views and the beauty of the Wisconsin north woods, Tom and Brenda's loft-style lodge is a bright and welcoming oasis for all who visit. As Brenda puts it, "At one point after we completed construction of the new lodge, it became very clear that this land was worthy of this home, and this home was worthy of this land."

Heidi Kratzke is a writer from Ottertail.

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