



Going
with the Flow

Mountain home built at the water's edge



As Fish Creek quietly meanders along a gentle arc on their property, Mike and Marne Roberts' home aligns with its path. "That was completely intentional," says Mike, owner of Habitat Construction in Steamboat Springs, Colorado.

The impressive hybrid home, which Mike began building in 2003 as a spec house, was originally squarely oriented on the half-acre property. Once the Robertses saw the creek, they tossed out the previous drawings and designed a home that would mimic the creek's subtle bend.

Fate Intervenes

Serendipity played a major role in the building of the house. "This lot was owned by someone else," Mike recalls, "but when they cancelled their plans to build, we felt it was right for us." The site offered plenty of benefits for the Roberts family: The lot is secluded, yet still close to town, and it sits just one mile from the ski mountain. "We've been long-time residents of the Steamboat Springs community so we didn't want to be way out in the wilderness," Mike says.

The perfect lot called for a carefully considered home. "I met with an architect friend, then brought the whole family in on the process for their two cents," Mike says. "Together, we mapped out the best of all worlds." The final design called for an 8,300-square-foot hybrid home featuring timber frame design blended with conventional construction. "As custom home builders, we had built log homes before but I appreciated the heritage a timber frame brought to my consciousness. Plus, for me, I had experienced issues with log building and wanted a more energy-efficient and cost-saving approach."

The construction process would start Mike's crew on a new course. "I'll have to admit, my company didn't know much about building a timber frame," he says. "So we decided to try our hand at building a smaller home on the lot next door. This, of course, gave us an idea of what to expect."

In the late 1990s, Mike met a representative of Canada-based Normerica who was in town. "We got together and built one of their timber frame homes for a client." It was a positive experience that Mike wanted to repeat; so he chose Normerica to supply his home's timbers.

A charming eyebrow dormer peeks over the entryway. Mixed roofing materials and a variety of dormers and gables keep the large home's roofline lively.









OPPOSITE: The family room's half-round window frames a wintry view. In the evening, attention turns to the see-through fireplace or the built-in television.
 LEFT: Cherry cabinetry lines the gourmet kitchen. Boxed beams in the ceiling echo the home's timber framing.
 BELOW: Off the great room, the dining room is the spot for elegant, yet relaxed, meals.



Breaking Ground

The concrete basement was poured in the fall 2002, allowing it time to stabilize until spring. Then, Normerica sent down a representative to oversee construction as the season warmed. The challenge was to incorporate the intricate timber design into such an expansive, open space. "Here's where the experience of having the Normerica rep was invaluable," Mike explains. "He recommended a double hammerbeam truss as the answer to avoid columns that would otherwise visually interrupt the great room area."

Mike continues, "There was no doubt this was a labor-intensive venture. All the timbers had to be sanded and lightly stained before erecting with the classic mortise-and-tenon joinery." It would take another nine months with no shortfalls or cut corners to finish the entire house inside and out.

The completed project has proved to be a wonderful home for the Roberts family. Now that Marne and Mike are empty nesters, the house is very quiet. But, when the kids and friends were bustling about, the walkout base-

ment or "Disco," as they call it, was an ideal recreation area. "In addition to a fitness room, this area also has access to a patio and the backyard," Mike says.

Before reaching the main level, a small landing midway up the stairs was designed for a wine tasting or sitting area. This charming space, reminiscent of a Norman castle, has a stamped-concrete floor and gothic vertical windows trimmed with faux-painted "quarried stone" lintels.

From Top to Bottom

In the foyer, a 3-foot-wide medallion imbedded into the travertine floor bids a striking welcome. "The copper, wood and marble design is a representation of Habitat's philosophy of the 'golden proportion' or merging the use of technology into the creation of beautiful natural dwellings," Mike says.

That viewpoint is demonstrated throughout the house with Mike's selection of sustainable energy sources and smart materials. Although the home was built to resemble a stately 18-century Norman manor

OPPOSITE: The design for Mike's turreted office inspired the home's Old World character.

RIGHT: The dramatic staircase wraps around a series of waterfalls splashing between small ponds. BELOW: A copper, wood and marble medallion set into the entry floor makes a striking first impression.



WEB EXTRA: See more, including a floor plan at loghomesnetwork.com/timber

house, its Old World exterior belies the modern amenities of its state-of-the-art interior.

"To equalize the temperature in the house, we used re-circulating ductwork to loop the radiant heat from top to bottom," Mike says. In addition, the great room, as well as others in the house, enjoys abundant solar heat from a variety of half-round, gothic and traditional French doors and windows. A moss-rock gas fireplace adds more warmth. Above, the ceiling soars to 36 feet, pulling all eyes up to the hand-hewn timbers.

The elegant dining room segues easily into the kitchen, situated at the rear of the house. Outfitted with handsome cherry-wood furniture-style cabinetry, a Tuscan beige travertine floor and dusty-colored sandstone countertops, the kitchen is welcoming and hardworking. Professional-grade appliances, a see-through fireplace and coffered-beamed ceiling with tin insets make this a cook's paradise. "Not only is this room efficiently designed," Mike says, "it also has an eating nook that overlooks the creek; pretty view, pretty comfortable spot, much like the smaller family room adjacent to the kitchen."

The family room is the spot for gathering to lounge, watch television or look out on the view through the half-round window.

The master suite, located on the opposite side of the house, "is pretty indulgent," Mike admits. A steam shower, whirlpool and see-through fireplace accent the

ample space. Just outside the door is an outdoor hot tub and garden patio.

To access the third level, a dramatic knotty alder staircase sweeps gracefully upward edged by a series of waterfalls cascading into small ponds. "Look closely: You'll find fish, reptiles and a small alligator," Mike says.

In addition to caretaker's quarters with a private entrance, this story accommodates three dormer bedrooms, a library with arched timbers and Mike's impressive turreted office. "I'd like to use my home office more since it's so dramatic," he says. The 16-foot-diameter room required a few creative construction techniques, but the end result is worthwhile. "From here, I can look up and down the entire creek bed," Mike says. "It's the epicenter of the house for me."

Challenges? "This home had some," Mike admits, "but we overcame them through a learning curve and help. I won't hesitate to work with Normerica again and I'm glad we used their product. I learned to appreciate the handcrafted nature of a timber frame and liked the entire process of learning how to construct a home with this time-honored building system."

Resources

Normerica Authentic Timber Frame Homes,
(800) 361-7449, www.normerica.com

Habitat Design & Construction, (970) 879-5371,
www.habitatconstruction.net

