

MANSION

Icon of Pioneer Life

Scandinavians were the first settlers to bring log cabins to America, in the 1630s, according to research by the late historian C.A. Weslager. The cabins became a symbol for pioneers because they could be constructed quickly. Log-home popularity increased in the 1880s as settlers swept westward and then experienced another revival in the 1930s, when President Franklin Roosevelt's Civilian Conservation Corps was deployed to build lodges for the National Parks Service after the Depression. Log homes have earned a recurring role in popular culture. Here is a brief sampler:

ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S BIRTHPLACE



In February 1809, Lincoln was born in a log cabin on his family's Sinking Spring Farm in Kentucky, about 60 miles from Louisville, above. He lived there for two years until his family moved down the road to Knob Creek Farm, where he lived in another log cabin until he was 7 years old. When Lincoln's family moved to Indiana, they built another log cabin.

**LOG CABIN SYRUP**

This brand was founded in 1887 by Minnesota grocer Patrick Towle, who named the syrup in honor of childhood hero, President Lincoln. Last year, Log Cabin syrup had retail sales of about \$75 million.

OLD FAITHFUL INN



Built during the winter of 1903-04, the iconic log hotel at Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming is nearly 700 feet long and seven stories tall. When it opened in 1904, 140 rooms were available for \$4 a night, 50 cents extra to bathe; today there are more than 320 rooms, starting at \$103 a night in the summer for an 'old house' original room with a shared bath.

LINCOLN LOGS

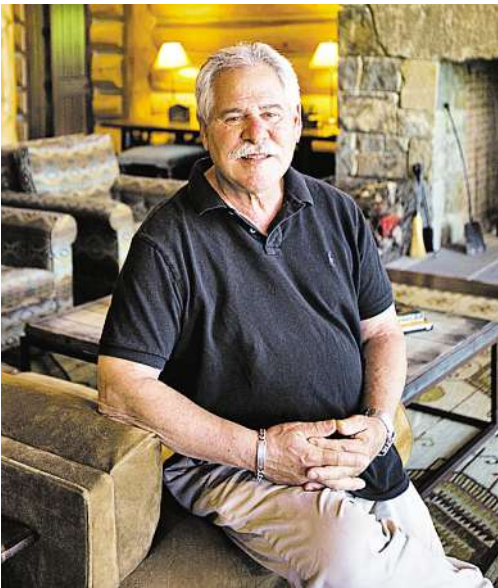


Created in 1916 by John Lloyd Wright, the son of Frank Lloyd Wright, Lincoln Logs were, once again, named after President Lincoln. K'NEX, the manufacturer and distributor of Lincoln Logs since 1999, says each log is made with real wood and then placed in a tumbler for a splinter-free, smooth finish. Since 2001, K'NEX has sold more than six million sets and this year has produced more than 34 million Lincoln Logs pieces.

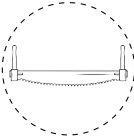
—Alyssa Abkowitz



**BEAMED UP** The living room of a log home in New York's Catskills by Ontario-based designer Murray Arnott.



**ON THE MARKET** William Raphael, left, put his 15,000-square-foot log home in Windham, N.Y., on the market for \$12.5 million a year and a half ago; after a price drop, it is now for sale at \$9.75 million.



The New Log Cabin: Large,

Continued from page M1

with the architecture. He then met with Jay Pohley, president of Pioneer Log Homes in Victor, Mont., and together, they came up with a design for the home, located in Windham, N.Y. The exterior features native stone and hand-peeled standing dead timber—trees that were killed by wildfire or disease and then harvested from their setting.

Once an icon of humble Americana, evoking images of Abe Lincoln, log homes are getting larger and more elaborate, with intricate truss work, expansive windows and even contemporary, curved elements. Instead of dark, low-slung cabins, homeowners are opting for airier, lighter versions with open layouts.

Advances in log-home building have also been driving luxury construction. The chinking, used to fill the gaps between logs, is commonly synthetic in the newer homes. The acrylic polymers adhere to wood better than the traditional sand-cement chinking, which pulled away from the wood as it expanded and contracted, allowing cold drafts, rain and bugs inside. As Mr. Pohley puts it, “synthetic chinking saved our industry.”

Some builders also use logs reinforced with steel rods to minimize sagging as the house settles over time—a common side effect of log homes. The technique also allows architects to create more complex designs.

And builders are increasingly constructing what are called hybrid homes—log homes with a traditional lumber framework that is covered by a veneer of half-logs, half-cut timbers or stone on the outside and inside. This method makes it easier to install electrical, plumbing and insulation in the home, says Ellis Nunn, an architect in Jackson Hole, Wyo. Mr. Nunn and his wife, Sharon, recently designed a 25,000-square-foot hybrid home for a client in Chattanooga, Tenn., with 10 bedrooms, 13 bathrooms, staff quarters, mood lighting and automated doggy doors. The 10-acre estate includes a log sports pavilion with tennis courts and an outdoor entertainment area where the owners host charity events, and a log guesthouse.

Still, the downturn in the economy has put a dent in the log-cabin market in recent years. Murray Arnott, a log-home designer in Ontario, says he saw a steep drop in demand starting in 2009. And even with the real-estate rebound, log homes remain a niche market.

Mr. Raphael put his log home on the market for \$12.5 million a year and a half ago; it has already had a price drop and is now listed at \$9.75 million. He says he “put his heart and soul” into the home, but that he’s selling because he’s ready to move on to another project.

John A. Burke Jr., a broker who sells homes in New York's Adirondacks, says there is a market for handcrafted log homes, albeit a small

one. That results in more inventory than demand. “Log homes have so many unique characteristics that sometimes people say, ‘Let’s just build our own,’” Mr. Burke says, which compounds the surplus.

Jim McKinney, an investment banker in Chicago, worked with PFB Corp.’s Precision Craft Log & Timber Homes in Meridian, Idaho, on his nearly 7,000-square-foot vacation home in Jackson Hole, Wyo., which cost about \$3 million. By using steel-reinforced logs, Mr. McKinney was able to get a 27-foot-wide floor-to-ceiling window framed between cedar logs, giving him sweeping views of the Grand Tetons in his great room. “It looks like the trees are coming out of the ground,” Mr. McKinney says of the logs that hold the window.

“I wanted it to be really, really old looking,” says Mr. McKinney, who built a master bath with wood reclaimed from Old Faithful Lodge at Yellowstone National Park and hung a “Bath 25¢” sign outside the steam shower.

He had the walnut floors on the main floor hand-scraped and the granite countertops in the kitchen torched and sandblasted to make them look rough. Finishing touches include a wood-paneled icebox, silver dollars imprinted in the bar with an old brass cash register sitting on top and a great room that has an 18-foot canoe perched in the corner.

Building a luxury log home takes about six to



SPREAD SHEET | BY SANETTE TANAKA

In the Spirit of 1776, Colonial-Era Homes

**SOME HOUSES** in the U.S. have been around longer than the U.S. As the country celebrates its 237th birthday on Thursday, Spread Sheet takes a look at colonial-era homes for sale across the country.

Only 850 homes built in 1776 and earlier are currently on the market, according to real-estate listings website Homes.com. Massachusetts has the largest share, with 20.82% of the listings for pre-1776 homes. There, the average list price for these homes is \$737,804. Connecticut and New Hampshire rank second and third for number of pre-1776 homes on the market.

Most of these homes have gotten better—or at least bigger—with age. In addition to plumbing and electricity, many have modern garages, large kitchens, basements and master-bedroom suites.

“It’s really, really rare to find an 18th-century house that has its original footprint. Almost all of these houses have been added to,” says Peter LaBau, a residential designer based in Charlottesville, Va., a state with 55 pre-1776 homes on the market.

Melissa Meister bought her 1705 house in Mill Neck, N.Y.,



**HISTORICAL** Melissa Meister, below, has listed her 1705 home in Mill Neck, N.Y., for \$3.275 million.



for \$1.63 million in 2003 and spent the next 10 months and \$1.5 million renovating it. The plumbing and electrical systems were updated, and central heat and air-conditioning were installed. She redid the kitchen and created a master-bedroom suite with walk-in closets.



Still, the original materials were preserved, when possible, including the pine floors, fireplaces, doors and plumbing fixtures.

True to colonial era, the windows are small, the stairway is steep and ceilings are low. “I didn’t come in here and

try to make it into something it’s not,” she says. Her family is moving to a home on the water, so she has listed the colonial home for \$3.275 million with Cottie Maxwell Pournaras of Daniel Gale Sotheby’s International Realty.

Linda Rosenthal, a New

London, N.H.-based real-estate agent with Four Seasons Sotheby’s International Realty, says she markets colonial homes on historical websites or publications to target buyers who are specifically looking for an older home. “The exposed beams, beautiful hard-

Old Glory

States with the most homes built in 1776 or before that are currently for sale.

State	Number of homes built in 1776 or earlier	Average list price
Massachusetts	177	\$737,804
Connecticut	165	\$743,135
New Hampshire	88	\$489,131
Pennsylvania	82	\$688,240
New Jersey	62	\$776,707
New York	62	\$1,116,669
Virginia	55	\$1,392,312
Rhode Island	39	\$644,574
Maryland	34	\$1,524,832

Source: Homes.com listings as of June 10; Note: Analysis based on each state’s modern-day borders

wood floor—you just can’t find that in other homes,” she says.

Ms. Rosenthal has a house on the market for \$4.75 million in Lyndeborough, N.H., built in 1751. The house sits on more than 286 acres that also includes a guest house, pool house and cottage.