

Cabin stats

Completed: 2006

Location: Henrys Lake, Idaho

Square feet: Main cabin is 2,400;

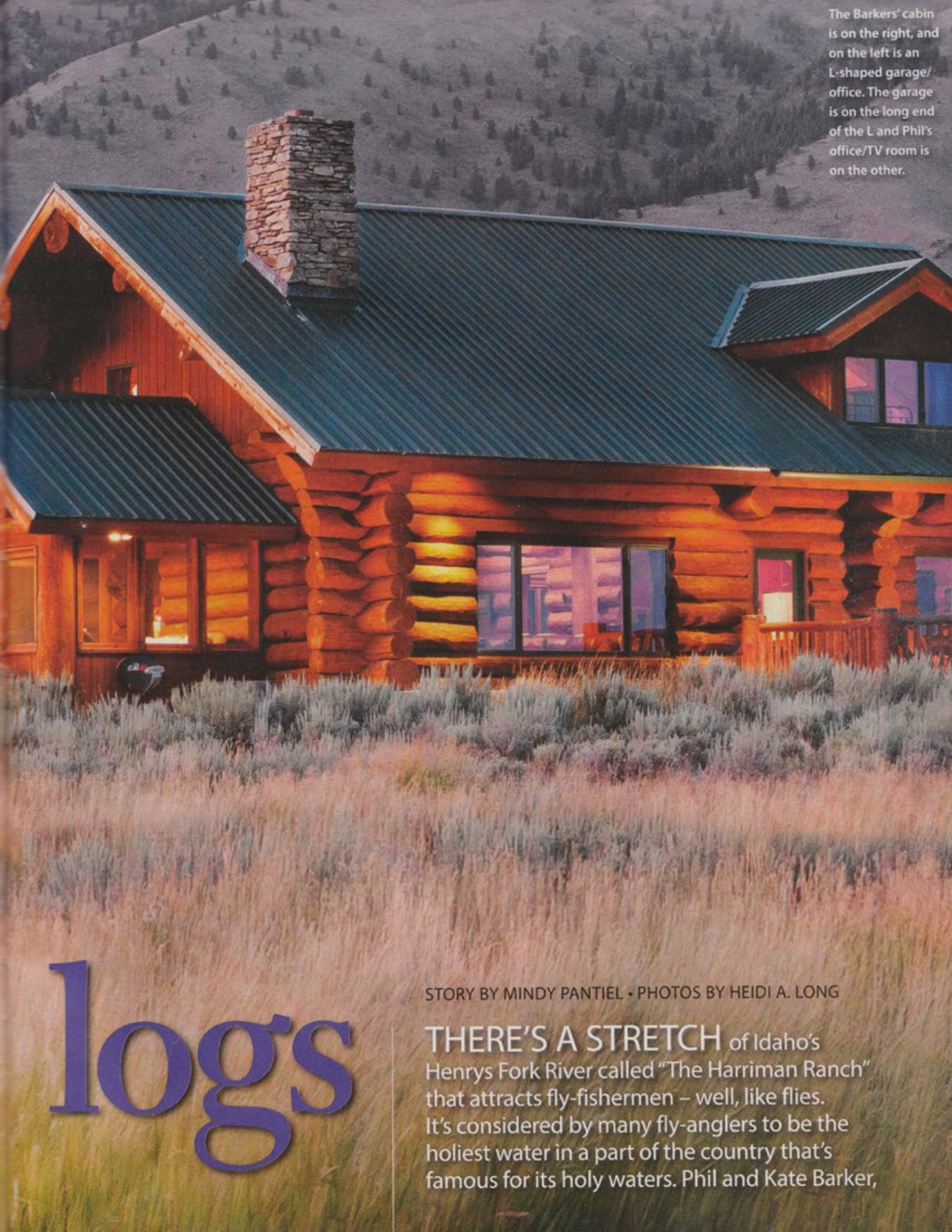
log garage is 800

Bedrooms: 2 (plus 2 sleeping berths in loft)

Baths: 2

Hooked on

A COUPLE TAKES A HANDS-ON APPROACH TO ACHIEVE
THEIR DREAM OF OWNING A FLY-FISHING RETREAT



The Barkers' cabin is on the right, and on the left is an L-shaped garage/office. The garage is on the long end of the L and Phil's office/TV room is on the other.

logs

STORY BY MINDY PANTIEL • PHOTOS BY HEIDI A. LONG

THERE'S A STRETCH of Idaho's Henrys Fork River called "The Harriman Ranch" that attracts fly-fishermen – well, like flies. It's considered by many fly-anglers to be the holiest water in a part of the country that's famous for its holy waters. Phil and Kate Barker,





OPTIMIZING SPACE – Phil and Kate Barker worked with their builder, Hilgard Log Builders, to use their space efficiently. That included placing a small fly-tying workspace beneath the stairs in the great room.

accomplished anglers, first came to the land of the Yellowstone cutthroat trout as newlyweds.

“We camped and fished at the storied Ranch and enjoyed it so much we ended up buying a piece of property there,” recalls Phil. “But we knew we’d have to work a good long time before we’d have the resources to build.”

Still, that didn’t prevent the enterprising software engineer and his wife, who now reside near San Francisco, from fishing. They returned to the region pretty much every year, and dreamed of building a place there.

Then one summer, a stop at Madison River Outfitters in West Yellowstone, Mont., provided the inspiration they needed to push their dreams

FABULOUS FIREPLACE – A local stonemason, Phil Cox, custom-designed this Rumford-style fireplace and built it out of 60,000 pounds of dry-stacked fieldstone.

toward reality. “The structure [of the shop] was constructed out of these beautiful massive logs,” says Phil. After inquiring about the builder, he received an introduction to Blair Anderson of Hilgard Log Builders. “I asked Blair if he’d be willing to work with us when we were ready. It took a few years, but in 2002 we started building.”

Phil’s desire for a cabin getaway was likely fueled by summers he spent at his grandfather’s cabin north of Toronto. “It was just beautiful and was on its own island,” he says. “He built it himself, hauling the logs across the ice in the winter.”

Hands-on experience

And while he never envisioned wielding a chain saw, Phil was determined to be as hands-on as possible when the time came.

During that interim period, he initiated many conversations with Anderson regarding best



Log savvy

FOR MOST PEOPLE, Lincoln Logs are the standard frame of reference for log cabins. And from the outside, the Barkers’ fishing cabin – with its simple rectangular form and metal roof – is iconic. But most people don’t think of the massive timbers as playing a key role in transforming the interior architecture into something truly special.

“I tried to use the structural elements to create visual and aesthetic appeal,” says builder Blair Anderson, who turned the beam supports that separate the living and dining rooms into sculpted curved arches that artistically frame the dining table on one side and breakfast nook on the other. He also extended three of those timbers to form the base of the breakfast bar topped with an 8-foot slab of curly redwood the Barkers found on eBay.

The perfect locale and angle of the staircase allowed adequate space for a cozy office area underneath, and it was *logs to the rescue* in the upper-level bunk rooms, where the 15-inch-wide western red cedar timbers frame the overflow sleeping quarters (see photo p. 32). “The beams also create a linear element to offset the ceiling,” says Anderson, who arranged the bunks railroad style for space efficiency.



PORCH – The three-season porch faces west so the Barkers can watch the sunsets. In the fall, the elk come right down out of the aspens to water at the lake. Phil says, “In the middle of the night, when they are grazing nearby, we quietly sneak out onto the porch and listen and watch.”

“The best projects are when the owners are significantly involved, and Phil and Kate were totally into it every step of the way.”

log-building practices. “Over the years I got quite an education,” says Phil. He rapidly learned about everything from paying attention to the length of readily available logs and not designing something that needs 60 footers, to placing the fireplace and chimney within the structure to avoid slip joints between stone and logs.

For his part, Anderson encouraged his eager pupil. “The best projects are when the owners are

significantly involved, and Phil and Kate were totally into it every step of the way,” he says.

When he felt he had adequate information, Phil called on his love of mechanical drawing and

background in fine arts to draft plans. “I went through a few iterations to get the sizing and scale right, and when we took the drawing to an engineer, structurally we didn’t need to change a thing,” he says.

Siting the cabin

Meanwhile, Anderson worked with his clients to develop a plan that suited the 20-acre property, located in a cabin subdivision. They took into consideration the prescribed building envelope determined by the subdivision to prevent people from obstructing each other’s vistas.

“We preserved the views of Henrys Lake to the south as well as protected the house from the prevailing winds,” says Anderson, who placed the kitchen, dining room and master bedroom on the east side where the rooms would enjoy morning sun.



SOFA – The Barkers furnished much of their cabin with bargains and antiques they found at antique shops and street fairs and on the Internet. But they bought new high-quality leather sofas so their guests would have comfortable seating.



DESIGN & DÉCOR

Something old, new, borrowed, ... red

Call it serendipity, but the very first thing Phil and Kate Barker purchased for their Henrys Lake fly-fishing cabin was a myrtle wood coffee table with a glass top that encased 400 museum-quality fishing flies. “We were making our way to San Francisco and only had \$500 to our names, but we just had to have it,” says Phil who paid \$125 for the item at a street fair in Danville, Calif. “Kate’s dad took it apart and turned it into a frame, and it hangs in the entry to our cabin.”

BARGAIN HUNTING

That table was the first of many items the Barkers would purchase at street fairs, in antique stores and from the Internet as they sought chairs, dressers, lighting and accessories for their getaway. Bargain hunting was part of the fun, but they also wanted there to be some cohesion to the interior design. “I’ve always loved the American Victorian, so dressers and nightstands with marble tops were in, as were glass door knobs,” says Phil who along with his wife hunted for items that worked well

together and made sense in the casual setting.

“We stumbled on deal after deal,” he says. The couple happened upon a \$400 wagon wheel light fixture from an antique store in Pleasanton, Calif., found a Belgian oak dining room table and six rush chairs that cost \$600 at a street fair in Fremont, Calif., and unearthed a \$900 kitchen hutch at an antique fair in San Mateo, Calif. “The hutch has the original rolled glass and is probably worth closer to \$10,000,” adds Phil.



COLOR SCHEME

When it came to color scheme, they let the textures and tones of the western red cedar logs lead the way. “We really didn’t see putting up drywall or using paint,” Phil says. “We wanted the natural grandeur of the wood and that reddish tone to shine through.”

The red thread starts in the living room where the shades on the wagon wheel chandelier sport the bold hue, continues in the kitchen where the cabinets are painted poppy, peeks out from the floral curtains and bedspread in the

master bedroom, and brightens the linens in the guest room.

READY TO ENTERTAIN

Their few new purchases included high quality leather sofas for the living room, selected for comfort as well as utility. “Entertaining is a big part of our lives, so adequate seating was important,” says Phil, noting that the sofas seat seven, the hearth can accommodate three and the overall layout is conducive to big gatherings. “Our largest party was for 35 people, and everyone had a seat.”



CHARACTER PIECES – (Left) The Belgian oak table and rush chair set were a \$600 bargain find at a street fair. (Above) The claw-foot tub looks great set against the log wall.





NICE FINDS! – The Barkers purchased this cabinet from an antique shop in Bozeman, Mont. The breakfast bar counter is an 8-foot slab of curly redwood that the Barkers found on eBay.

Design – best practices

Everyone was in agreement about keeping the cabin size and cost down. “We wanted a very simple design that was comfortable for Kate and me and our two children who were teenagers at the time,” says Phil, who also applied his drafting skills to the interior design. “In order to optimize the usage of space, I created a floor plan for each room by using a blueprint-size drawing of each floor with to-scale furniture cutouts. From there, we were able to orient the furniture and confirm adequate space.”

And because no cabin is complete without a fireplace, the cabin owner once again entered into a pursuit of best practices, but this time about stone. “We found Phil Cox (a local stonemason) through a book, and he came over and literally

RED – The Barkers used a lot of red in their cabin, including these kitchen cabinets, to complement the tones of the western red cedar logs.

sketched the Rumford-style fireplace in front of us,” he says about the two-story raised hearth design. “We needed to expand the size of the room to fit the 60,000 pounds of dry-stacked fieldstone.” *Editor’s Note: The book referenced was “Rustic Fireplaces” by Ralph Kylloe (Gibbs Smith, May 2007).*

Fun with furnishings

Like all Hilgard structures, the Barkers’ western red cedar cabin arrived on a flatbed truck with each log numbered and ready for assembly. Once the cabin was erected, the ecstatic homeowners wasted no time filling the rooms with the collection of antique furnishings and accessories they began acquiring long before they broke ground.

“Kate and I have always loved antiques, and we wanted the majority of the furnishings to be old, including the light fixtures, door handles and cabinet knobs,” says Phil. He and Kate spent



Trout country

HENRYS LAKE: It’s estimated that there are 1.2 million catchable trout in Henrys Lake. Located in eastern Idaho, the lake is surrounded by the Centennial Mountains on the Continental Divide. While recreational opportunities like skiing at nearby Grand Targhee Resort and hiking abound, most people come to the area for one reason and one reason only – to fish!

HENRYS FORK: This is a portion of the Snake River that begins in Big Springs (a large natural spring) and winds its way to Ashton, Idaho. It is “acclaimed by fly-fishing enthusiasts as the best trout-fishing stream in the United States,” according to the Idaho Division of Tourism Development.

HARRIMAN STATE PARK: Located on the Henrys Fork, the state park is part of an 11,000-acre wildlife refuge in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. This park is also known as “The Harriman Ranch” or “The Railroad Ranch” because the land was once owned by the Union Pacific Railroad and also served as a retreat for the Harriman and Guggenheim families. According to Island Park Reservations, 27 of the original ranch buildings are still furnished and maintained.

For more info

- www.islandparkidaho.com
- www.visitidaho.org



BUILT-IN COZINESS – These beds make great use of space that would otherwise be underutilized or wasted. The resulting sleeping nooks, complete with privacy curtains, look like cozy spots for a nap.

many months scouring flea markets, antique shows and eBay for the perfect items.

Outdoor play

Their getaway complete, the Barkers were ready to reap the benefits of life on Henrys Lake and wasted no time wetting their lines.

While they do occasionally partake in other activities – Kate is an active member of Women of the Wild, a local hiking group – they are mainly there to fish, like everyone else who comes to the area. “Everyone tries to catch the very big wild rainbows, and when you get one over 25 inches,

“Kate and I have always loved antiques and we wanted the majority of the furnishings to be old, including the light fixtures, door handles and cabinet knobs.”

that’s a real trophy,” says Phil, noting he’s never caught one but boasts that his wife did. “Kate became an instant local celebrity, and they gave her a pin that’s properly affixed to her fishing vest. I keep hoping she might let me wear it sometime.”

The kids – who are now grown and join their parents every summer – are good anglers too, but they break up the fishing with horseback riding.

On their occasional winter visits, everyone enjoys snowmobiling and taking ATV rides to Sawtelle Peak, which offers commanding views of Yellowstone National Park and the Teton Range.

Now fully retired, the Barkers have discovered retirement has its benefits, including extending the time they spend at their lakeside retreat, which has translated into more hours to kick back and entertain. “All of our friends at the lake are also retired, so get-togethers for dinner are pretty frequent,” says Phil, noting that the layout of the kitchen, breakfast bar, dining table and living room makes serving a buffet-style meal a breeze.

“It’s all very easygoing with no real defined schedule – except for when the fish are biting.” ■

Mindy Pantiel fondly remembers the day her four-year-old daughter caught a cutthroat trout with a Snoopy rod ‘n reel using cheddar cheese as bait.

DESIGN RESOURCE

Hilgard Log Builders, hilgardlog@aol.com, (406) 646-7234



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