



# BIA NEWS

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# TIMBER FRAME HOME RISES

BY LU ANN FRANKLIN

COOK BUILDERS WORK WITH CANADIAN FIRM ON \$1 MILLION LAKE HILLS HOME

**M**assive timbers cut from huge Canadian white pine trees lay on the ground in groups, brought to the scenic, sloping lot in two flatbed semis. At the end of each timber, a number indicates that piece of wood's place in a million dollar home being built at the upscale Lake Hills subdivision.

A crane with a 120-foot boom lifts individual timbers to workmen who fit the pieces together like a jigsaw puzzle to create this unique home. As the structure rises, the wood forms both the structure and support for this home, and the interior beauty of arches and open beams that will grace this dream home commissioned by a local couple.

"We wanted to build a log home, but that was not practical for this area (of brick estate-style homes in Lake Hills)," said the owner. "Then we started looking at Timber Frame homes. There are only two others in Indiana, both in Crown Point."

The couple called on a friend – Rich Cook of Cook Builders – to be the general contractor, and selected Pine Ridge, a Canadian company, to design the house and install the timber framework. The company has built two other homes in Indiana. There are other timber frame homes throughout Indiana constructed by different builders.

"I can trust Rich completely," the owner said. "We investigated a half dozen timber framers and we like the



quality of Pine Ridge's homes."

Pine Ridge Timberframe specializes in the design and construction of timber frame homes under the direction of owner/president Mike Mader. Established in London, Ontario, in 1990, the company has designed and built a wide range of timber frame structures, from small garden gazebos to large residential and commercial projects.

Mader and his other craftsmen travel around the world building these homes for clients. Just before arriving in St. John to assemble this timber frame home, Pine Ridge crews were in Nova Scotia. Earlier this year, they

assembled a timber frame home in Japan.

"Each member of our team has come from different walks of life and, as such, contributes his or her own unique vision to each of our projects," Mader said.

Timber framing is different than post-and-beam construction, he noted.

Timber framing generally uses larger dimensioned timber material than post and beam construction. Post and beam homes usually have less intricate joinery than a timber frame and rely heavily on metal fasteners to secure everything together. Post and beam construction is more piece by piece, while timber framing is assembled bent by bent - a bent being a series of posts, tie beams and rafters pegged together to form one unit which is lifted into place by a crane, Mader said.

Timber framing is the art of joining massive timbers into a supporting structural framework without the use of metal fasteners. The posts and beams are connected one to the other with a "mortise" (the hole) and "tenon" (the tongue) joint. An oak peg is then driven through the two pieces, fastening them together. To further strengthen the frame, knee braces are inserted on the diagonal between the posts and the beams, forming a structurally efficient triangle.

Once anchored together in this fashion, the joints cannot move, and the resulting frame provides the

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strength and stability that has for centuries made timber framing the strongest form of construction using natural materials.

As with all Pine Ridge Timberframe projects, this one began with Mader and Steve Sims, one of the firm's architects, visiting the Lake Hills site prior to design phase. They did this to view the site and design the home to take advantage of the lot's scenic views of a lake and mature trees in the home's orientation.

"The home is designed on a CAD (computerized-aided design) program and the timbers are cut with a computerized saw that was built in Germany. That saw has a blade that's 70 to 80-feet long," said Cook.

Although Pine Ridge will work with oak and some exotic woods, Cook said the choice of Canadian Eastern White Pine is preferred because it is a more stable wood.

The home's entire structure rests on 23 massive white pine logs that stand upright in the basement and will form a part of the rustic décor the owners plan for their recreation room.

As the timbers were being assembled, the beauty and intricacy of the framework could be seen, rising to a peak of more than 30 feet from the foundation. Through

the framework, the observer could see arches like those in cathedrals and beams that will form part of the ceiling in this two-story home. The year "2005", deeply carved into one long beam that runs along the home's back wall, will remain part of the house as long as it stands.

Once the timbers were in place, Pine Ridge craftsmen began installing the tongue-and-groove wooden ceiling that creates the "rustic elegance" the owners want. At this point the Canadian crews went on to their next project and Cook's construction crews took over to envelope the home in structural insulated panels, called OSB (oriented strand board).

"This is like Styrofoam. We use it instead of plywood," Cook said.

The exterior will be faced with brick, stone and stucco to be in harmony with the other houses in this portion of the Lake Hills subdivision.

"From the outside, it will look like other stick-built houses in this subdivision. It's not until you get inside that you'll see the timber frame structure," said the owner.

Other interior designs will complement that timber frame, he noted. An open wooden staircase will rise from the main level to two bedrooms on the second



floor. A wooden bridge on the second level will overlook the first floor while providing access to the upstairs bedrooms. And a two-sided stone fireplace will provide both warmth and a cozy atmosphere. Construction is expected to be completed in mid-winter, Cook said.

The owners take great pride in the home they are having built and spend part of almost every day at the site, accompanied by their small dog.

"This is fascinating," the husband said. "It's going together like Lincoln Logs we used to play with as kids."

And, although state-of-the-art technology makes this timber frame home possible, Cook said the arts and crafts concept has been around for years.

"This used to all be done by hand," he said.

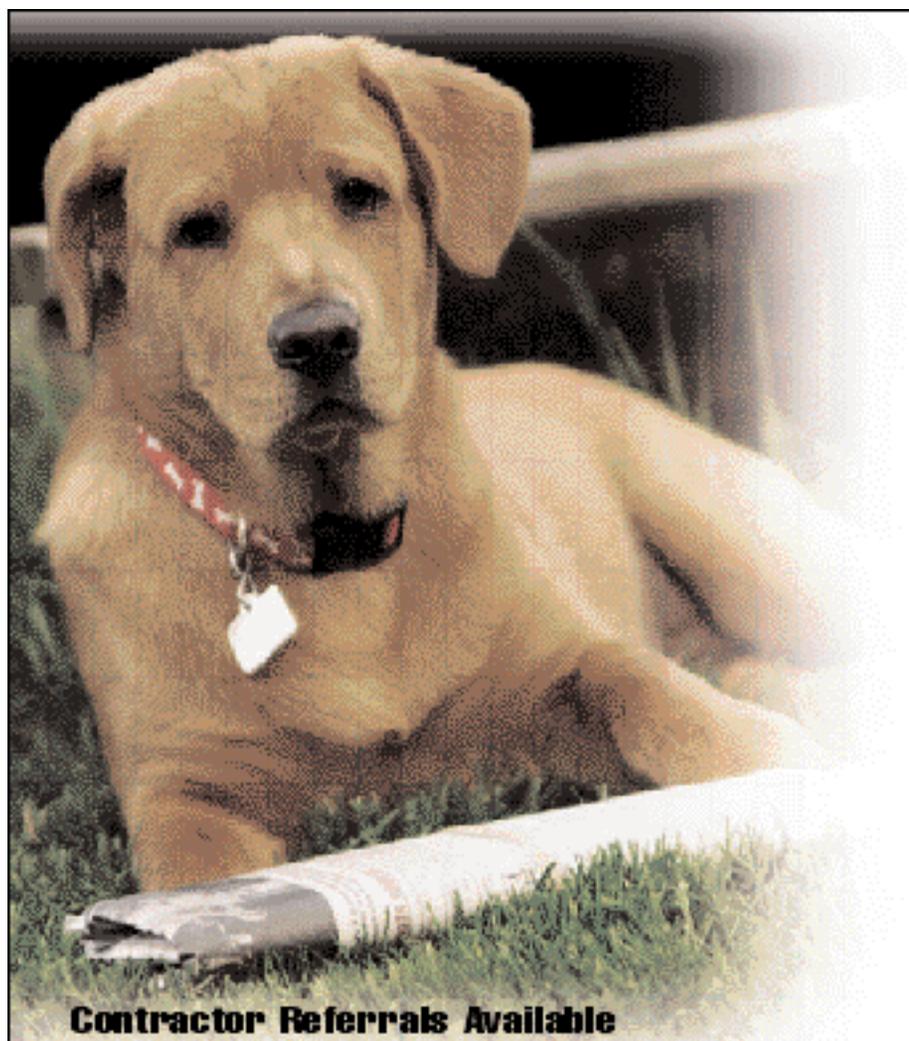
Lake Hills is the ideal spot to build this type of home, Cook added. Once a golf course, the subdivision features rolling terrain and stands of mature trees as well as the lake that is part of the area's name.

"You can see the developers' commitment to this subdivision," he said. "There's already a walking path around the lake, a playground and park for families and an outdoor amphitheater where community events will be held."

The home's owners will be able to view all of this from their sunroom, an idea that has them already anticipating morning coffee in a room with walls of windows set between pine timbers.

"We love this lot and this home," the husband said. "This is definitely our dream home."

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