



River's Edge Cottage



A Bowed-Roof Cape on the Saco

BY LAURIE LAMOUNTAIN

“When we finally found our little piece of land we decided we wanted it to truly reflect the work and traditions of the area. We wanted very much to have all local folks to work with us on this project, as we begin to put down roots here,” says Linda Pelletier of the river front property she and her husband, Gary, chose for the site of their vacation home on the Saco.

Linda and Gary have vacationed in Maine from the time they were married twenty-eight years ago. Each year, from Bailey’s Island to Rangeley to Sebago Lake, they searched for the perfect piece of Maine on which to build a waterfront home. When they finally found the land they now own in Brownfield, Maine, they felt

an immediate connection with it. Nestled among the trees on a piece of land that includes 500' of meandering river frontage, their bowed-roof Cape is reminiscent of an upturned boat come to rest on dry ground, which is why timber framers also refer to the roof style as a Hull roof.

Linda and Gary bought the design for their house from a timber frame company on the coast of Maine. When it came time to find a timber framer to cut the frame, they asked their general contractor, Roger LeGoff, Jr. of Little Pond Builders in Denmark, Maine, for a recommendation of someone local. Without hesitation, Roger recommended Andy Buck. For Andy, who has been cutting timber frames in the lakes region for years, this would be his first

bowed-roof design. An initial scan of the plans revealed they didn't provide precise details and specifications, a fact which suited Andy just fine because it gave him the latitude to make most of his own joinery decisions. The basic design was for a four-bent, 28'x36' main house, with a two-bent, 14'x16' attached mudroom. A bent is the structural arrangement of timbers and truss system that make up one cross-sectional wall section of the frame.

The Douglas Fir timbers for the frame arrived at Andy's shop in Naples in mid-February, and after taking an inventory, he immediately began laying out and cutting the 8"x10" principle posts for bents 2 and 3 of the main house. Once the timbers were cut, they were moved outside to be

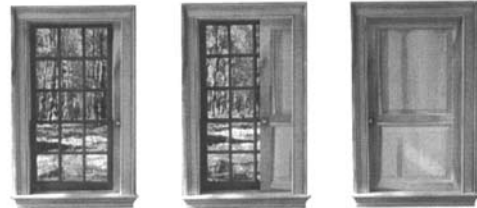
sanded, oiled and stored under tarps. Cutting, sanding, and oiling progressed over the next couple of months, with two old fashioned nor'easters thrown in to make things more interesting in the timber yard. By the end of April, the yard was clear of both snow and mud, and Andy was ready to begin cutting the curved rafters. He had saved the best for last.

The mudroom in the original plans was not designed as a bowed roof, but Andy and the Pelletiers felt it would create a nicer continuity of lines if both roofs were bowed. Because the bowed timbers in the main house serve as common rafters that are carried by the top plates, they were actually smaller than the principle rafters of the mudroom, which need to

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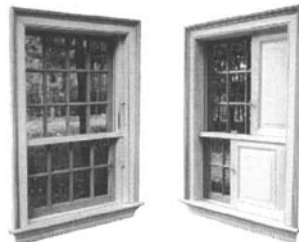
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accommodate purlins. The timbers Andy used to cut the curved common rafters of the main house were 6"x12"; the timbers he used to cut the curved principle rafters of the mudroom were 7"x18".

In order to cut the curved rafters, Andy first created templates by swinging a radial arc on wooden panels; 43' for the main roof and 24' 6" for the mudroom, from which he then cut patterns that could be placed and scribed on the timber. Andy had no trouble creating the template, but he needed a portable bandsaw to make the



long curved rips to the rafters. For this he went to Timberwolf Tools in Freeport, where he had bought his newest chain mortiser a couple of years ago. It didn't take him long to get the hang of his new German-built Hema bandsaw.

Andy test fitted the trusses at his shop before moving them to the site for raising day. On May 26th, the frame that took three months to cut was raised by a crew of eight people in about eight hours. Though beautiful to behold on their own, the "bones" of the house would require an enclosure system.

Originally, the Pelletiers had contracted with Andy for the frame only, but during the months spent cutting the frame, discussion of the enclosure system inevitably came up. The vertical walls were straightforward, and for that they contracted with Foard Panel of West Chesterfield, New Hampshire, but the roof was, well, bowed. Andy shared with the Pelletiers his ideas for a system using 8" tongue and groove boards, topped by three layers of rigid foam insulation and strapped with 2x4s using screws long enough to penetrate the framing, over which he would attach a layer of plywood sheathing. They decided to hire him, and approximately one month later the roof enclosure was finished. The roof has an R-value of 32, and the walls are R-28; staying warm will not be a problem.

By mid-August, the Pelletiers have a fully enclosed house. They've hired Andy to install the windows. "We don't want him to leave," says Linda. For some reason, timber

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framers seem to form more of a bond with their clients than other builders. Maybe it's because there is so much invested on either side of the exchange. Often it's a life-long dream that is being realized by the client, and it's a privilege for the timber framer to fulfill that dream. And then there's the fact that Andy is a really nice guy.

Not all owners are as involved in the building process as Linda and Gary have been, which is another reason they have formed such a bond with Andy and others working on their house. From designing to building to staining, they have invested themselves in the end-product, and have been rewarded with the satisfaction of a job well done. It's the difference between eating a meal you've carefully and creatively prepared with your family and friends, or ordering off the menu.

We will be following progress on the Pelletier's house over the next several months, and will feature a follow-up article in our spring issue.