



Photo courtesy of Cultured Log Systems.

Cultured Logs have the exact look and feel of wood logs.

CULTURED LOG SYSTEMS

The worry-free alternative to wood log homes

Ken Daniels wasn't looking to build just any house. With a prime plot of lakefront land on western Montana's pristine Flathead Lake, Daniels set his sights on developing his dream home, a place that would last generations, and something he could eventually pass down to his children.

"I had a log home," Daniels says, "and I loved the appearance, but there was a lot of maintenance and problems long-term. When I started building up in the Flathead I was looking for a way to avoid those things and still have a classic feel."

Daniels found the answer with Cultured Log Systems, a Missoula company that's patented a way to create authentic-looking logs out of a concrete composite. The logs have the look and feel of real wood—they're freakishly realistic, right down to knot rings and a natural texture—but none of the downsides.

"This will be here forever," Daniels says of his newly constructed house. "I know when I pass it down to my children, it will be the same as it is today."

Daniels is one of a growing number of customers attracted to the aesthetic of traditional log homes, but weary of inheriting the challenges that come hand-in-hand with the building method. For instance, log homes are susceptible to fire, mold and insects, and require costly maintenance, higher insurance and extensive construction. Cultured Logs avoid those issues.

"It's a worry-free solution," says Stewart Hansen, President of Cultured Log Systems. "There's none of the burden of up-keep. This way, you have the same home in year 30, in year 100, as on day one."

The idea for Cultured Log Systems originated during Montana's epic summer fire season in 2000. Dick Morgenstern, who had worked in the pre-cast concrete business for 30 years and also happened to love log homes, watched as the state—and many private residences—fell victim to the wide-spread flames. He realized homes built from concrete wouldn't burn, but nobody would live in one unless they maintained a warmer appeal. Then he got a crazy idea.

"I cut down a tree in my own front yard," says Morgenstern, Chairman of Cultured Log Systems. "My wife had a fit. She thought the whole idea was crazy. But I used that tree as a pattern for the very first logs we ever produced. She never forgave me, but at least now she's a believer."

Cultured Log Systems erected its first house in 2004: a simple, 1,000 square-foot box with no bells or whistles. Now, as the casting process has evolved and the applications for composite logs expands to features like decks and entryways, the burgeoning company works on custom homes upward of 10,000-square-feet.

"When we started we flew in architects, designers and builders and sat them down and asked if this was something they were interested in," says Hansen. "It became clear very quickly that we could accomplish everything they wanted with no problems. All of our work is custom, so we can create just about any type of log imaginable, and we can accommodate almost any design. There are no restrictions like with typical log homes."

Cultured Log Systems may appear to be a competitor of traditional log homes, but Hansen insists it isn't. In fact, since the company deals exclusively with exterior walls, it often partners with traditional log homebuilders for the interior finish.

The company is also popular among the growing contingent of environmentally friendly homebuilders. In addition to not needing to harvest trees, Cultured Log homes have better insulation and cut down on heating and cooling costs, lessening a home's "ecological footprint" or strain on natural resources. The company is also using recycled materials in its concrete mix, such as fly ash, a by-product of coal production, to reduce the amount of cement without weakening the product.



Ken and Jo Daniels outside their Cultured Log home on Flathead Lake, MT.



Superior performance against Mother Nature.



Cultured Logs are available in a variety of profiles: D- Log above



Photo courtesy of David Foxhoven.

Mountain Living - Natural Dream Home in Colorado. Entirely "green built" home.



Photo courtesy of Cultured Log Systems.

Cultured Log vertical posts highlight this doorway.

“And that’s something we’re continuing to improve as more and more people talk of building green,” Hansen says.

All of these benefits stack up to a sound investment, but Hansen and Morgenstern understand that their product is ultimately only as good as it looks. They both talk about concrete being perceived as simply “the stuff sidewalks are made of,” and moving beyond that preconception. It’s something Daniels is actually having fun with in his new home. He doesn’t tell visitors the logs aren’t real until after a couple days.

“When I first saw it I couldn’t believe it,” Daniels says. “Now anyone who comes up here and learns they’re not real, they have to go up and touch them, really run their hands over them. And they still don’t believe it. It’s an amazing thing. You really need to see it to believe it.” ■

**For more information on Cultured Log Homes:
877-257-5647
CulturedLogs.com**