

Dick Walker Sawmill—From Forest to Shelter

by Charles Sutton

For years Dick Walker has been sawing lumber for hundreds of square buildings, but when he built his own home he made it in the round!

"You'll be amazed at just how energy efficient this is", Dick said, giving us a tour of his hand-made round house in Hubbardton, VT.

Dick has been operating sawmills since 1972, cutting and air drying lumber from his own forest since 2007 into construct-it-yourself packages for cabins, barns, garages, sheds, sugar houses, hunting camps, horse barns, and saunas. The 8'x10' and 10'x16' sheds are pre-built; all the other lumber packages are assembly-ready.

Many of his buildings have been made into year-round homes, and he hopes future customers will consider the advantages of living in-the-round. On a very cold day this winter his entire home was heated nicely to 75 degrees from a single Vermont Castings wood stove. Part of the warmth was coming in through the windows on the south side facing the sun's path from east to west. He noted the windows let in the most sunlight when the sun is lower in there sky and much less in the summer. For air conditioning, vents at the floor line let cooler air in, and ceiling vents let the heat out in summer.

We noticed that there was about a foot and a half of snow on the roof, but no icicles. There's just no heat escaping through the roof, he said, thanks to a thick layer of exterior roofing foam.

No cold air comes up from the cellar because there is no cellar, the house being built on a cement slab. The exterior of the building is made out of 240 eight-foot cedar logs, cut D-shaped to allow for a smother interior wall. He harvested this cedar from the family property in Benson, VT, usually getting three logs out of one tree.

The round house is 38 feet in diameter and contains 1,134 square feet of space. The only permanent partitions are a circular core in the middle of the building which is used as a hallway with lots of shelving. Original plans called for three bedrooms; Dick divided the space into two. There is a full bathroom, utility room, and a kitchen area off the main living room.

All the lumber for the round house was harvested from Dick's 670-acre family property bordering Lake Champlain in Benson, VT. After his uncle died, Dick bought out his siblings' inherited shares and acquired the whole property which has now been in the Walker family 154 years.

This giant 'wood-lot' and open farmland support 37 varieties of trees of which the following went into the construction of the round house: cedar, black cherry, hemlock, spruce, pine, maple, butternut, red oak and white oak. Especially eye-catching was a bedroom floor made out of shiny butternut wood.

Mindful of the future, Dick Walker has planted many other



Dick Walker's handmade round house, built from his own lumber, in Hubbardton, VT. photo by Dick Walker

tree varieties (some southern) to see if they can do well in this climate. Among his successes: Ponderosa pine (now 10 feet tall), dawn redwood (called the dinosaur tree), ginkgo balsam, black walnut, white tupelo (famous for honey made from its blossoms), elm turkey tree, and American chestnut.

The trees are in a forestry management plan to become a registered Tree Farm this summer. This will enable him to tell his customers all his wood has been grown in an environmentally sound and sustainable manner.

At one time Dick's grandmother Mrs. Willard (Dora) Walker raised rabbits there. The farm was called Huntlot Farm and they sold rabbit meat, fur from three types of rabbit, and rabbit fur slippers. Celebrities like Jackie Kennedy were customers. Relatives still continue the business today.

Dora also put up and sold jars of wild fruits, preserves, and vegetables. She offered a five-vegetable boiled dinner with corned beef in a 32-oz jar for \$1. Prices for vegetables were from .40 to .75 cents a jar.

After serving in Vietnam, Dick returned to Vermont and

started his business in 1972, building his first sawmill using the rear ends from a Lincoln car and farm truck and operating the saw from the power take-off of an Allis-Chambers tractor. Today he still has his original hand-made sawmill but only uses one made by Calvin Macumber of Pittsfield. Dick does all the sawing and makes the lumber packages at his mill site at 825 Black Pond Rd. in Fair Haven, VT.

The sawmill's most popular lumber packages with more than 100 units sold have been log cabins, hunting camps, barns (especially for horses), and garages. Also available are hickory and pine post and beam frames, lumber for boat docks, and even tongue and groove hemlock for kick-proof horse stalls. The price for the round house which includes all lumber for the building and an attached deck and attached porch is \$15,000 to \$25,000. Sheds range in price from \$1125 to \$3,000; cabins from \$15,000 to under \$30,000, and garages, barns and camps, \$3,000 to under \$10,000. The sawmill also does custom orders.

Dick is an avid hunter and usually goes to Florida every spring to hunt turkeys. He always has had yellow Labs for hunting dogs, named after aircraft. He took Dauntless who lived 13 years on five trips to Kansas to hunt pheasants. His present dog is Martin Marauder, a two-and-a-half year old. Dick's slogan is "If you can dream it, we can do it!"

For more information Dick Walker can be reached at (802) 273-2077 (fax also). To view his products go to www.dickwalkersawmill.com.



Dick Walker and his yellow Lab, Martin Marauder. photo by Charles Sutton



A large tree in the process of being felled in Benson, VT for Dick Walker's Sawmill.



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West Pawlet Volunteer Fire Department Pancake Breakfast

Sunday, April 12th, a Pancake Breakfast, a charity fund-raiser event, will be held at the West Pawlet Volunteer Fire Department in West Pawlet, VT. Sponsored by the department's firemen, the breakfast is open from 7:30 a.m. to 11 a.m. All are welcome.

The breakfast menu includes pancakes of several varieties including regular, chocolate chip, blueberry and cranberry; Belgian waffles with fresh Vermont

maple syrup or strawberries and whipped cream; West Pawlet's world-famous home fries, scrambled eggs, sausage and bacon. The menu's beverages include coffee, tea, milk and orange juice.

Breakfast prices are \$8 for adults and children age 12 years and up, \$5 for 5-12 years and free to children under the age of 5 years.

Breakfast profits are dedicated for the department's equipment and training needs. The department is a

non-profit. Donations are appreciated and are gratefully received. New members are welcome.

The West Pawlet Fire House is located at 2806 Vermont Route 153 (Main

Street) in West Pawlet. It is a handicap accessible site.

For more information contact: Antonio Landon at (802) 345-4312 or email wp5801@yahoo.com. Breakfasts will continue starting monthly next September.

The Tinmouth Contra Dance

Friday, April 17
8-11 p.m.

(802) 446-2928
www.tinmouthvt.org

All dances are taught. Come on time if you are a beginner. Exuberant dancers of all ages welcome. Admission: \$9 adults, \$7 teens, free for 12 and under.



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