

"BUILDING A CEDAR LOG ADDITION"

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Faced with the need for additional space (two teen-agers tend to make a 2-bedroom / 1 bath-house unliveable), Lee and I began the process of planning an addition as a more cost effective and desirable alternative to moving from the FOREST.

After hiring an architect, producing drawings, and going out for bid, we were shocked that costs for a 1000 square foot "stick built" addition would range from \$70 to \$100/square foot. Our solid cedar addition with two decks and a green house is closer to \$60/square foot, but also required two years of our lives and many week-ends as our own general contractor, carpenter, electrician, etc.

The subcontractors included excavation and foundation (including brick work), plumbing, floors (refinishing, staining and polyurethane), and roofing. Erection of the walls was done with the help of two experienced carpenters plus brother-in-law and assorted friends. Finish carpentry was largely done by a college student with more patience and standards of perfection than I had.

Planning is critical. Solid wall construction does not allow hiding electrical, plumbing, heating and air conditioning in hollow walls. I did most of the electrical work in surface conduit myself because no electrician would give me a fixed bid. However, the advantage of using the solid cedar construction is the speed of erection and minimal interior finishing - not to mention the most obvious: the beauty and richness of the western red cedar.

Halfway through the work, we changed our minds about heating and air conditioning which caused some major retro fits and an unexpected cost of replacing a 10-year-old gas furnace with a more efficient pulse unit.

Plans for a cedar kit are very good with considerable detail and a very detailed manual. But I would not recommend undertaking such a project without an experienced carpenter familiar with post and beam construction. Assuring that foundation walls are level and plumb is particularly critical with this construction.

The County was very receptive and helpful; I received many good suggestions from inspectors despite the unusual type of building system.

Some warning are necessary:

- roofers will continuously put you off while summer rain storms leak under tarps and tar paper.
- a good plumber is essential. It also helps, with a new bathroom and kitchen, to bring him/her in early during construction for job planning and scheduling.
- brick masons are messy no matter how careful so have all brick, slate, and other mortar work done as early as possible in the process.

- don't cheat on power tools. A cheap power saw or drill will not survive a major project. Also, rental shops in the FOREST and A-R in Falls Church can reasonably rent professional quality tools which are safer and will expedite jobs.

NEIGHBORS' TIPS

- Is the tile in your bathroom screaming for replacement? But you can not face tearing out the current tile, especially since you heard it was cemented in place? Tile OVER the current tile. It has been done and you would never know it to look at it except it is now beautiful and shining new.
- Which way to turn something to loosen it? Right = tight, left = loose.
- Kitchen drain protector- have you damaged one piece too many of flatware in your garbage disposal? Buy an insert for the drain, like a plastic sieve, which prevents items falling into the drain yet allows free flow of water.
- Window cleaner — cheaper than "store-bought": 1 oz. sudsy ammonia, 1/4 pint of rubbing alcohol, « teaspoon dish detergent liquid, and water to make 1 quart total of all ingredients. Use newspapers instead of cloths.