

WOMA Log Cabin Owners Discuss Challenges of Properly Maintaining the Logs. Fall-Winter 2022

The Architectural Committee noted that over the past 12 months three log homes required some expensive restoration. We asked the owners to express what they encountered and any advice to others would be welcomed.

Shelvie Foust, Morning Ride Drive

In 32 years, I have had two very expensive 'rotten logs' problem. First time, I did not live in the house for the first ten years. Was unaware of the need for an annual inspection and for maintenance every three years. When I moved in, I had to replace all the logs on the front of the house.

Second time, ten years ago, I had the stain removed and the house painted. Since logs breathe, paint will develop small cracks and water gets in these cracks and is trapped there. The logs will start to rot. This time I had rotten logs on all sides of the house. First, the entire house had to be blasted to remove the paint; this took 8 days. Log and Timber Solutions has worked 7 weeks and still have about another week to go. The replacement logs are treated for insects, have two coats of stain and then a clear coat.

A log home requires annual inspections and maintenance at least every three years. If you can maintain your log cabin yourself, it was suggested that you do the annual inspection and start by doing the maintenance on one side of your house each year.

Kerri Franklin, White Oak Mountain Road

I love my cabin on White Oak Mountain, though I had no idea what I was getting myself into. This log home was painted with multiple coats of a lovely gray. This gray was on top of multiple coats of an awful brown. My Stepdad and I used 2.5" carbide scrapers to remove all the paint on each and every log only to find tons of rot. So many logs were literally falling apart. Some you could even puncture with your finger. I've read "Do not paint a log home because the logs need to breathe." There's no science in that because logs need to be smothered in something to keep insects and weather out. Painted logs only conceal damage. Stain and clear coat allow full visibility into your log home so you can catch and fix problems as they occur. I chose water-based stains and clear coats, all non-toxic, for my dog and the environment.

The rot on this log home occurred due to old chinking, caulking and lack of maintenance. The fog up here penetrates anything you give it access to. I also want to give a huge shout out to powderpost beetles and carpenter bees. When there are gaps in caulking the powderpost beetle will wreak havoc. They are only about 1/4" in diameter but literally turn your logs to dust. Carpenter bees tunnel, causing less damage, but will guard these nests in summer, causing psychological stress, especially on your pups. I had hundreds, maybe thousands guarding my cabin last summer, 2022. I had to literally remove the fascia boards they were living in. I placed the buzzing boards into the woods where the bees could still thrive and rebuilt the fascia with newly painted boards. All other carpenter bee holes were filled with diatomaceous earth, wood glue, wooden dowels and a fresh coat of paint.

WOMA Log Cabin Owners Discuss Challenges of Properly Maintaining the Logs. Fall-Winter 2022

Log homes aren't that difficult to repair when it comes to rot. People say it's an art but it's no different than replacing siding. It just requires a bit more muscle. Learn to scribe logs if you can so you can make trim to keep the mice out. You can make a scribe with some scrap wood and a pencil. I still haven't found a reliable source for half round logs. That would be the only complication to date.

Hal Fenters, Sunset Ridge Drive

We bought this cabin not knowing much about log homes. What we discovered was that our home had been painted and not stained. As we learned, this created issues with the logs retaining instead of shedding moisture. Since moisture is a real issue up here, some of the logs began to rot, especially on the more northerly side of the cabin, which receives more direct wind and blowing rain.

We found a company that specializes in log home repair and restoration (Pro Property Services out of Waynesville, NC). After offering us several options, we decided to have them sandblast off all the paint, repair/replace the damaged logs, and stain the cabin.

This was supposed to be about a two-three week job; but ended up taking longer due to the weather and having to special order the logs.

Overall, they did a great job.

My suggestions to anyone with a log home would be...

1. Don't ever paint the logs.
2. Keep up with the maintenance by putting on a maintenance coat of stain when needed.

-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-

White Oak Mountain Association, Inc.
Architectural Committee

Released: Jan 29, 2023