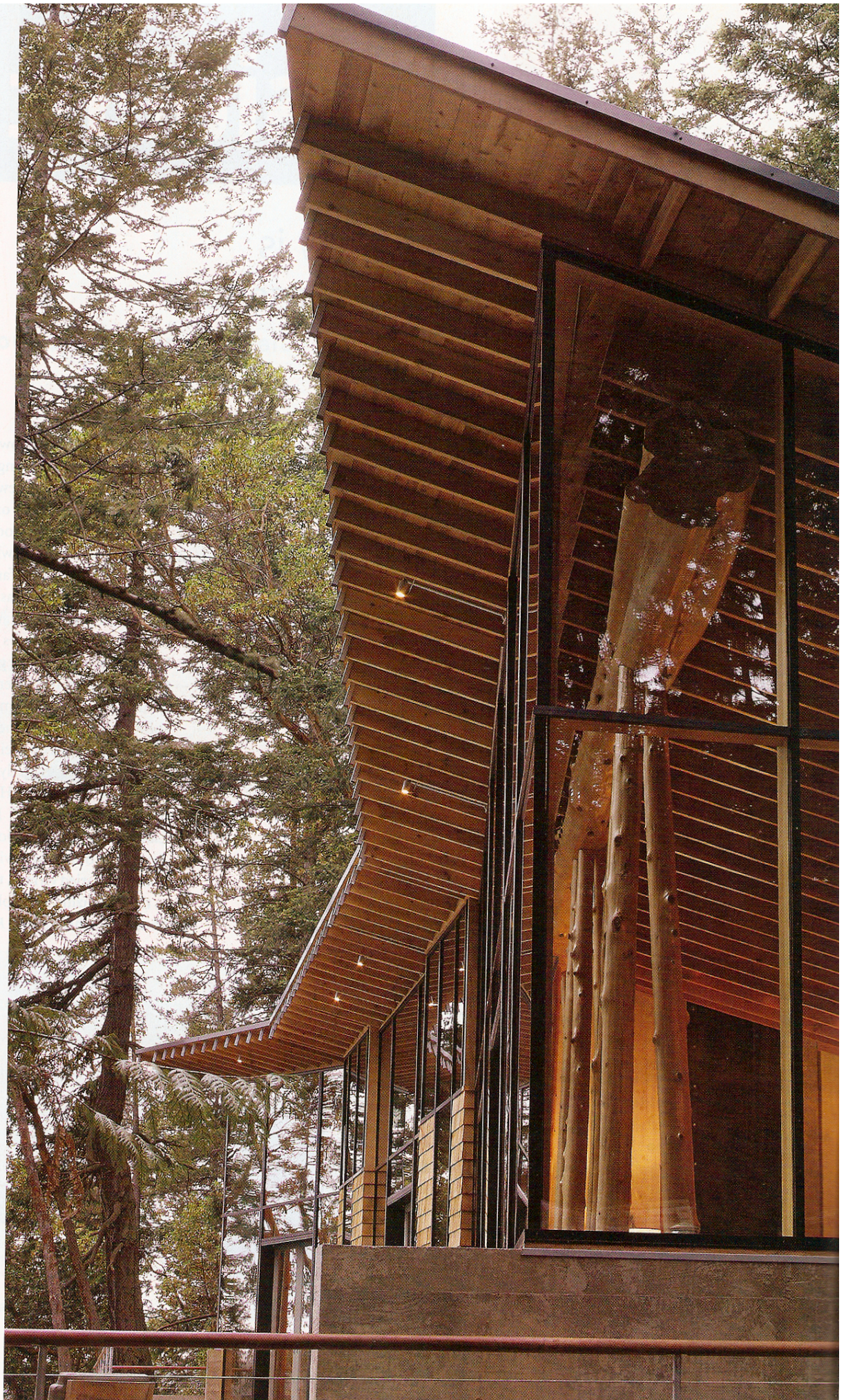


A modern version of the log cabin, the house perches on the side of a hill overlooking the Harney Channel in the San Juan Islands of Washington State. Tripod log assemblies and beams, prebuilt off-site, provide both structural support and aesthetic interest. A glazed front wall opens all the spaces of the house to the view.





# The elegant **Long Residence** embodies Cutler Anderson Architects' interpretation of a log cabin



By Victoria Medgyesi

If architect James Cutler, FAIA, had his way, Orcas Island would be nothing but blue and green—at least as seen from the air. Cruising by helicopter over one of the most serene spots in the Pacific Northwest's San Juan Island chain, he managed to get his message across despite the ear-splitting noise. "Look," he shouted, as we passed over a recently completed project. "Isn't that great? You can barely see the place at all."

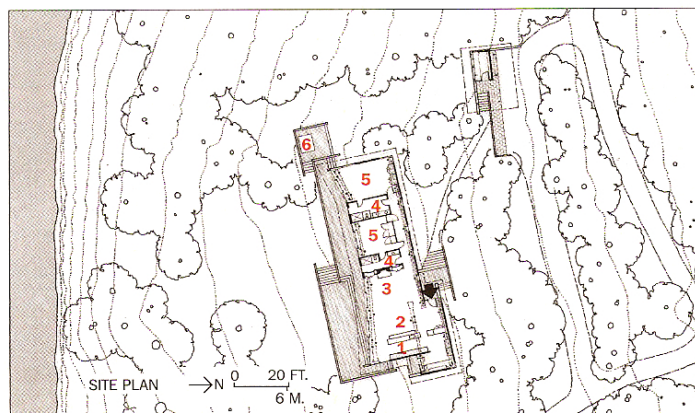
Honoring geographic conditions, responding to the integrity of natural materials, and staying true to a romantic vision have long formed the philosophic backbone of Cutler Anderson Architects. The firm's ability to translate that philosophy into sophisticated expressions of individuality was what brought one couple to Cutler's door.

Their site was steep but buildable, lush with second-growth forest, and in possession of a sweeping view that overlooked a wide salt-water channel and nearby Shaw Island. Just as fortuitous, says Cutler, was the couple's playful, experimental streak, which he shares. It was this set of particulars and the relatively simple programmatic desires of the client—a serious kitchen, truly private spaces, room for family gatherings—that shaped the design of the vacation retreat.

Writer Victoria Medgyesi lives in Seattle.

**Project:** Long Residence, Orcas Island, Washington  
**Architect:** Cutler Anderson Architects—Jim Cutler FAIA, Julie Montgomery, AIA, Chad Harding  
**Engineer:** Coffman Engineers

**Consultants:** Doug Rasar Interiors (interior designer); Robert Trachtenberg (landscape architect); Eastsound (landscape installation)  
**General contractor:** Alford Homes



- |                |            |
|----------------|------------|
| 1. Kitchen     | 4. Bath    |
| 2. Dining room | 5. Bedroom |
| 3. Living room | 6. Hot tub |







A deck, supported by a concrete retaining wall, runs the length of the house on the open, windowed side (opposite). The interiors continue the celebration of wood, where western red cedar logs (hoisted onto tripods) reveal their skeletal form, and rafters fit to the top of the log structures (this page). A metal roof tops the entire ensemble (below and opposite).







Responding to the steep, wooded site, Cutler supported the house on 18 sets of peeled-wood tripods engineered to provide enough lateral stability to dispense with conventional shear elements. The tripods were attached to western red cedar log beams by concealed steel plates and bolts. Each was then visually punched through the floor and extended down to a steel connection at the footing. A system of rafters graduated in size relative to span resists the pull of gravity.

Cutler wrapped the building's system of wooden bones in an exterior skin of glass, aluminum, and cedar shingle. He then topped the

## LIKE GOLDSWORTHY'S SCULPTURE, CUTLER'S WORK MAKES A STRONG STATEMENT ABOUT NATURE AND STRUCTURE.

shell with a layer of two-by-six spacers that support a large overhanging metal roof and create an insulated cavity below it. Given the clients' emphasis on privacy, the shed roof serves to visually insulate the structure from the road above.

Each room in the 2,035-square-foot house opens to the expansive cedar terrace through a set of 8-by-6-foot, custom sliding doors, providing multifaceted views to all the interior spaces. A corridor running the full length of the uphill side of the house provides access to all of the rooms—the main living area, bedroom suite, guest room, and two full baths.

Visitors to the house get their first peek of the building's dis-

tinctive wood tripods through low-to-the-ground windows along the uphill entry side. The structural elements reach their full 15-foot-high glory along the glass curtain wall facing the view. As was Cutler's intention, the tripods refer to the trees on the other side of the glass—an idea inspired by Scottish sculptor Andy Goldsworthy's installations involving fallen trees.

Cutler credits his contractor, Lowell Alford, for executing an unorthodox design that combines sophisticated engineering with ancient materials. Alford even harvested the logs from land owned by his father and hired a team of high school students to peel the logs prior to off-site assembly.

Like Goldsworthy's sculpture, Cutler's work makes a strong statement about nature and structure. It's a soft/hard balance echoed in the muted beech-wood floors, the whitewashed pine walls, and the clean lines of the custom wood furniture and cabinetry, much of which was designed by Cutler himself. ■

### Sources

**Metal roofing:** Taylor Metal Products

**Upholstery:** National Furniture Company

**Lighting:** Tech Lighting; Venzia Light Fixtures

**Windows and window walls:** Custom-designed by Jim Cutler

**Sliding doors:** Custom-designed by Alford Homes

**Cabinets and woodwork:** Custom-designed by Cutler Anderson Architects

For more information on this project, go to Residential at [www.archrecord.com](http://www.archrecord.com).