

This is a captured excerpt of a house building story posted in 2005 on the CountryPlans.com Owner-builder forum. That particular forum software is no longer running on the web site.

Here is a link to the current Owner-builder forum: <http://countryplans.com/smf/index.php?board=6.0>

Below is a link to the main Countryplans site and the 20' wide 1-1/2 story cottage plans that were used to build this house. (Click on Plans) www.countryplans.com

Design/build forum
General
General Forum (Moderators: Forum Admin, glenn kangiser)
Our 20x30 progress

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Author

Topic: Our 20x30 progress (Read 48986 times)

Larry
New member

Our 20x30 progress
« on: Feb 15th, 2005, 12:23pm »

Quote Modify

Building a 20x30 in south central Tennessee

We are finally far enough along that I thought I would post some pictures. We started with the 20x30 1-1/2 plan. I went with 12 ft walls and this gives us a nice amount of space on the second floor. Downstairs is the living room, kitchen and bathroom. Upstairs is two bedrooms and a small bathroom. I made a few other changes along the way that I have seen others asking about. We added two dormers on each side. We also added a wrap-around deck. www.home.bellsouth.net/personalpages/pwp-ourcabin

Posts: 19

We are right on the river and river level can change dramatically and quickly. If we get good rains it can come up 15 to 20 feet and back down in 24 hours. Based on local information (which varies widely) our land has been under water in the past, but not more than a few inches. Based on that I used a beefed-up pier foundation. The columns are 10 in. diameter, 6 foot above ground and another 5 foot down including a 2' x 2' x 1' footing. All the concrete was mixed a bag at a time (and it was a lot of bags).

We are too far from the road to bring in electric (at least at a reasonable cost) so everything has been done with a combination of solar and generator.

Some things I learned along the way:

I added a beam down the middle with the thought that it would help stiffen the floor. As it turns out I am not using it and the floor is very solid. Lesson learned: Trust John's plans - John is wise.

I used the I-joists for the first floor with 3/4 Advantek flooring. I had never used the I-joists before and was amazed at how easy they were to work with and how stiff the floor was. Based on that I used them again for the second floor. The space over the living room has LVLs on 4 ft centers and I-joists were used over the kitchen and bath. The Advantek has held up very well to the weather.

We used the roof trusses from the plans and they worked great. I put in the second floor joists and laid osb over them before starting on the roof and this gave us a nice open space to build the trusses and then we only had to lift them 3 ft to stand them up. My wife and I were able to build and raise all of the trusses with no problem (at least no big ones).

Other than the plans and this site I got a lot of good ideas from "Working Alone". I found that I used a good old-fashioned block and tackle alot. I also used quite a few blue tarps for everything from covering material to creating shade.

With a little luck the septic will go in this month and we will pass another milestone. I'll update the photos as we go and if anyone has questions - I may not know the right way, but I've learned a lot of wrong ways to avoid.

IP Logged

John Raabe
Administrator
★★★★★

Re: Our 20x30 progress
« Reply #1 on: Feb 15th, 2005, 12:43pm »

 [Quote](#)  [Modify](#)

Very nice job Larry!

I like the wrap around porch and the twin dormers.

Good work!



Whidbey
Island, WA



Posts: 929



A later photo!



« Last Edit: Nov 1st, 2005, 11:15am by John Raabe »

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None of us are as smart as all of us.

Epiphany

Re: Our 20x30 progress
« Reply #2 on: Feb 15th, 2005, 6:05pm »

 [Quote](#)  [Modify](#)

Looks great Larry. Can't wait to see more of the inside. The wrap-around porch certainly makes it look bigger than its 20x30 foot print.

Level 3 Member



I love YaBB 1G - SP1!



Posts: 94

IP Logged

JeffnTN

New member



Re: Our 20x30 progress
 « Reply #3 on: Feb 15th, 2005, 7:00pm »

[Quote](#) [Modify](#)

I like it! It looks like you did a great job!

Jeff



yada yada yada



Posts: 16

IP Logged

Shelley

Level 4 Supporting Member



Re: Our 20x30 progress
 « Reply #4 on: Feb 15th, 2005, 9:23pm »

[Quote](#) [Modify](#)

Proportions look sweet. Where are you? SE?

ShelleyinNM

Northern Chihuahua
Desert-Deming NM

Posts: 277

IP Logged

It's a dry heat. Right.

Jimmy Cason

Level 4 Supporting Member



Re: Our 20x30 progress
 « Reply #5 on: Feb 15th, 2005, 10:32pm »

[Quote](#) [Modify](#)

The pictures of your progress gives me a huge amount of motivation and anticipation toward starting my project!

Would you give us details on any problems you have had during construction?

Is there anything you would have done differently?

Great job! Please post more pics

from the North East corner
of Texas

Posts: 184

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If you build it.... They will come..... Build it..... Love it.... Live it!

Amanda_931

Level 5 Master Member



Re: Our 20x30 progress
 « Reply #6 on: Feb 16th, 2005, 9:36am »

Looks like a house!

One of the nice things about the river is that it ISN'T dammed. So the water goes up as fast as it goes up. But 8-10 inches of rain over a two day period is part of the country.

(Clifton Tennessee was isolated from the rest of the world for a couple of years because the Tennessee River IS heavily dammed, wouldn't have happened

I've been flooded in--briefly--a couple of times.



Posts: 873

Glamorous Middle
Tennessee

What are you doing for greywater/blackwater?


Not to mention potable water?

 IP Logged

[Larry](#)

New member



 [Re: Our 20x30 progress](#)

« Reply #7 on: Feb 16th, 2005, 4:25pm »

 [Quote](#)  [Modify](#)

Thank you everyone for the kind words and the support. The project has been a lot of fun and more importantly, it is still a lot of fun.



Building a 20x30 in south central Tennessee

JeffnTN: Thanks for the feedback. Between you and I and Amanda931 we may have the makings of the TN chapter of the CountryPlans fan club.



Posts: 19

Shelley: We are in south central TN - Lewis county - on the Buffalo River. The proportions were a combination of luck and planning. I'm more of a builder than a designer so I actually made a simple scale model of the cabin from cardboard to test the looks of things.

Jimmy: There are a ton of things I would do differently. Let me know if there is a specific area of interest and I'll fill you in. In general: I would have looked at spending longer chunks of time on some things. For example, because I was only working weekends I couldn't get enough of the holes dug and columns prepped to justify a redimix truck and did everything with bags of concrete a couple of columns at a time. If I were doing it over I would take a week off and do it all at once. Of course I was learning as I went. I did break down and buy an electric mixer which was a huge time and labor saver.

Along the same lines, look at how long you will need some things. For what I spent renting a backhoe a weekend at a time I could have leased one for a month or even bought one and resold it.

Find a couple of good local suppliers. For the first couple of lumber orders I got bids and the local hardware store/lumber yard consistently came in with the best price. Not only that but they would deliver my load with a forklift and set it up on the deck for me which saved a lot of lifting. These guys have also been a great source of informal local knowledge (like who has the best price on doing the septic system).

Make sure to have fun! I have given my wife something for the cabin every holiday for the past 15 months. She still tells the story of the toilet I wrapped up and put under the Christmas tree.

The best advice I would have is John's thought experiments. When I was doing something new, like standing the 16 ft 6x6s on end for the deck, I would plan out two or three different ways to attack the problem. Often the first way wouldn't work and I would step back and think about alternatives until I came up with a better idea.

I could go on, but you get the idea.

Amanda_931: You are right about the river. I have been told that it is classified as a "wild river" which means that no dams or other projects can be added. It's fun watching all the canoes in the summer and it's a great place to cool off after a long days work.

For black/greywater the ground perked great and I have a septic system being installed. The folks from the county were very good to work with and gave me some options to consider.

For water we plan to have a well drilled. I have been told to expect to go down as much as 200 ft. It seems a little strange being right on the river but I have had several people tell me that it is often difficult to hit water in river valleys.

For everyone: I am curious if you get the same question I always do: When do you expect it to be done? I generally tell the "I don't care, I'm having too much fun building it."

 IP Logged

[Amanda_931](#)

Level 5 Master Member



[Re: Our 20x30 progress](#)

« Reply #8 on: Feb 16th, 2005, 5:17pm »

I guess that all the water higher than 200 feet down has just ended up in I've heard too. My neighbors across the road with the ahem, "waterfront I

Glamorous Middle

Tennessee



Posts: 873

couple of hundred feet away from the river, down fairly low but not in a flood area. Don't know how far they had to go down, but they have a well uphill from their house. Nobody's seen them in a while, though, not even sure how to find them.

Have you considered rain water harvesting for everything, or everything except drinking water? Texas state government has a nice little booklet on-line.

The people directly across the road from where I'll be building--up on the ridge--sometimes get bad well water in the summer (my springs are way way down then too), so I'm considering rain water. I wouldn't be the first in the county to go that way. If I hit the same water vein, we'd just be fighting over a limited resource.

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Larry

New member



Building a 20x30 in south central Tennessee



Posts: 19

Re: Our 20x30 progress
« Reply #9 on: Feb 16th, 2005, 6:49pm »

[Quote](#) [Modify](#)

I plan on installing piping to allow for the use of non-potable water for the bathrooms and outside fixtures. It may be collected water or it may be river water. I mixed all of the concrete with river water by using a small utility pump and a garden hose. If we can't hit water at a reasonable level I may use some sort of storage tank and bring the water in by truck.

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JeffnTN

New member



yada yada yada



Posts: 16

Re: Our 20x30 progress
« Reply #10 on: Feb 17th, 2005, 1:27am »

[Quote](#) [Modify](#)

Larry,

Once again, NICE HOME!

I drove over the Buffalo River for the first time this weekend (twice)...

Keep us posted! I am still trying to get ready for sheetrock!.. Taking forever working alone!

Jeff 😊

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Jimmy Cason

Level 4 Supporting

Member



from the North East corner of Texas



Posts: 184

Re: Our 20x30 progress
« Reply #11 on: Feb 17th, 2005, 12:18pm »

[Quote](#) [Modify](#)

on Feb 16th, 2005, 4:25pm, [Larry wrote](#):

Jimmy: There are a ton of things I would do differently. Let me know if there is a specific area of interest and I'll fill you in.

What is your estimate on the cost of the foundation you built? Of course I would only build a foot or so above the ground so I would not use anywhere near the amount of concrete that you did!

I am still debating over pier and beam or slab.

P.S. I think giving your wife a toilet for Christmas was a great idea. Those are the same kind of gifts my wife and I exchanged for improvements on the house we are in now.

« Last Edit: Feb 17th, 2005, 12:47pm by Jimmy Cason »

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If you build it.... They will come..... Build it..... Love it.... Live it!

Larry

New member



Building a 20x30 in south central Tennessee



Posts: 19

Re: Our 20x30 progress« Reply #12 on: Feb 18th, 2005, 10:22pm » [Quote](#) [Modify](#)

I've been going back over my notes and the best estimate I can come up with is between \$2,500 and \$3,000. I can give you some general ideas of the breakdown.

The biggest cost was the rental of the backhoe. Because I was going so far above ground, I went down much further than I normally would have - 5 feet. That combined with the number of columns led me to rent the backhoe for 5 weekends - approx \$1,000.

Another item that cost me extra was the sonotube. Because I needed 10 in tubes 10 ft long these ran me about \$40 each. 13 tubes - \$500.

The final big expense was the concrete. As I said earlier I did it with bags of premix. This was probably the most expensive was to go. Each of the columns took about 15 bags. Add to this the fact that I had and extra 20 columns to support the deck and you get between 300 and 350 bags. Approx \$900.

Other costs include the rebar, some lumber for the footing forms etc.

If I were doing it again I would take enough time off to dig all the holes at one time and get a truck of redimix. If I couldn't get the redimix I would have gotten a load of gravel and sand and mixed my own concrete on site.

Hope that helps - Larry

IP Logged

Bill Ogden

Guest

**Re: Our 20x30 progress**« Reply #13 on: Aug 21st, 2005, 11:16pm » [Quote](#) [Modify](#) [Remove](#)

I have been drawing up my prints of the cabin I want to build and noticed that it is very much like yours. I am curious on what you did for you trusses. I am going to have a loft and a deck all around my cottage as well. It will measure 28 x 36 w/a 8' wrap around porch. Does the truss package cover all the way out to the edges of your wrap around porch or did you cobble the porch together after you set your roof on the main part of the cabin. I hope I am making sense.

IP Logged

n74tg

Level 2 Member



Posts: 22

Re: Our 20x30 progress« Reply #14 on: Aug 22nd, 2005, 9:48am » [Quote](#) [Modify](#)

Yes, I am curious about the trusses also. Did I hear right that you built them on location? If so do you have a sketch of the truss member layout that you could post? Did you use metal connector plates or wood?

Nice looking house; I really like the wrap around porch.

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Larry
New member
★



Building a 20x30 in
south central
Tennessee



Posts: 19

Re: Our 20x30 progress
« Reply #15 on: Aug 22nd, 2005, 4:43pm »

Quote

The roof was a combination approach. The section over the 20x30 portion was trusses based on the drawings in the 20x30 plan kit. I built the side walls with and then calculated the height of the ceiling joist to get the second floor height. The dormers were then stick built on top of the base roof.

The roof over the deck was stick framed with the outer edge resting on a beam the 16 foot 6x6s that support the outer edge of the deck. On the river side (the opposite the one in the picture) one of the dormers is a door onto a flat section a deck off of the master bedroom. This also gives me easy access to a lot of space over the deck.

One thing I did that helped a lot was to install the joists for the second floor as a simple osb floor. This gave me a nice big area on which I built a template for. This also put the top of the walls at about 3 foot height and made it very easy to get the trusses into position. My wife and I were able to build and raise all of the trusses with any special tools.

Hope this helps. Let me know if you have any other questions. I think it's time for me to post some new pictures.

Here's a shot of the roof going up.

