



A Colorado Timber Frame

Tim Van Riper

About this book

My goal with this book is to chronicle the building of my timber frame cabin in the mountains of Southern Colorado.

I became interested in this style of building in the early '90s.

I attended a weeklong workshop to learn the craft in April 2007 under the tutelage of Scott Stevens at Grand Oaks School of Timber Framing near Paris, Tenn. (see photo below).

It took a little more than three years of blood, sweat and a few tears to finally finish what is likely the biggest project of my life.

I'd also like to use this space to thank Kevin Madler for his expertise when parts of the project required an extra hand.

— Tim Van Riper



About the author/builder

Tim Van Riper has been a photographer, designer, editor and webmaster for a number of newspapers throughout his 35-year career.

Tim has had a passion for woodworking since his father helped him build a pine board stool at age 11.

When not working on the cabin, he builds chairs and works on other traditional woodworking projects in his spare time.

Chair projects include: three types of Windsors, numerous post-and-rung chairs and stools, an Appalachian-style rocker, two Welsh stick chairs and a settee among others.

Tim has also built most of the other furniture in his house.





Left: A dovetail loft joist mortise after being cut into one of the posts. | **Right:** The author poses for a photo after raising the main frame.

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I've wanted to build a cabin since graduating from college.

For many years, I had planned to build a traditional log cabin, and after spending countless hours reading many books on the subject, I was sure that's what I wanted to do.

Then, in the early '90s, I met Drew and Louise Langsner at Country Workshops in North Carolina, and was introduced to my first timber frame . . . it was love at first sight.

Fifteen years later, in the spring of 2007, I began work on my frame, doing most of the joinery on my back porch in Pueblo, Colo.

As the timbers were finished they were hauled with my old Toyota pickup to the cabin site near Westcliffe, where they were assembled.

The main part of the frame was erected in the fall of 2007, with rafters going up in the spring of 2008.

The past two years have been spent closing in and trimming out the cabin.

I figure I have close to 3,000 hours in the project, not counting shopping for supplies and travel to and from the building site.

I hope you enjoy the photos . . . I'm already thinking about my next project.

— July 2010





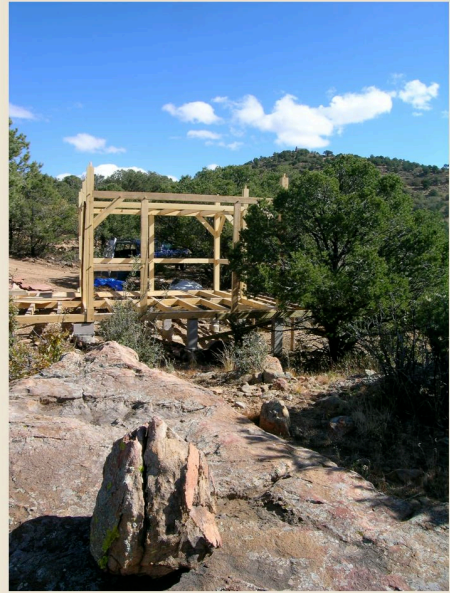
Facing page: Flooring timbers in place with first bent ready to be raised. | **Above:** First bent is braced into place. Detail of a brace joint.



The frame of the 500-square-foot cabin begins to take shape. A natural bowl in a rock (right) holds water after a late summer shower.



Another view of the frame (left) after raising the second bent. My son John poses after helping raise the first three bents of the timber frame.



Above: The frame stands ready for top plate beams. Rafters await installation. | **Facing page:** Complex corner joinery in detail.





An icicle hangs from a rafter during a winter 2008 visit. My burro-racing friend Hal Walter (right) pounds a peg into a beam.



A post turns golden after being treated with a boiled-linseed/tung-oil mixture.



Above: Rafters go up in 2008. | Facing page: Rafters stand out against the Colorado sky.







Facing page: View of the Sangre de Cristos from the diamond-shaped window. | **Above:** Kevin Madler (left) and John work on the roof.



Aspen tongue-and-groove roof decking (top) has a fiery grain. Roofing goes on in stages.



Kevin (left) screws a wall panel in place as closing-in begins. Pine siding (top) awaits installation. Cutout is ready for a picture window.



Rough-sawn pine siding goes on over fiberglass-reinforced wallboard and solid styrofoam panels. Most of the windows are home-built.



The interior of the cabin is starting to take shape. A stained-glass window I bought at a flea market in 1978 finally has a home in the loft (right).

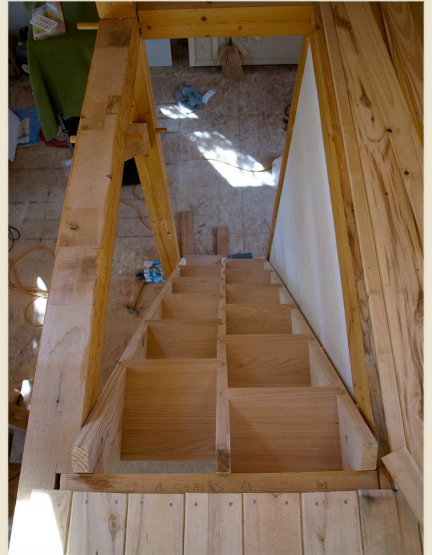


Above: Pine-panel front door under construction (the cherry handle is hand-carved). A view of the mountains from breakfast-area window.
Facing page: My daughter Sarah visits the construction site during Thanksgiving 2008. Kevin textures a wall. Siding almost done.





Kevin caulks the diamond-shaped window. Deck now in place. Bathroom walls (right) begin to go up in the area beneath the loft.



Because of space limitations, I had to engineer a set of Lapeyre alternating-tread stairs for access to the loft. They take some getting used to.





Facing page: Storm clouds at sunset. | **Above:** The gas heating stove, the loft and the bamboo flooring — all installed in 2009.



Porch / shower addition in various stages of construction during the winter of 2010.



The utility room, which is part of the porch / shower addition, houses batteries for the solar panels (right).

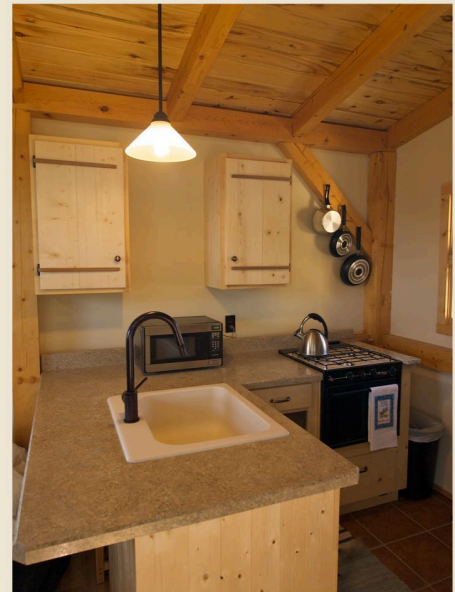


Above: Bathroom has hand-built pine cabinets, Talavera sink and an Italian tile shower. | **Facing page:** A inviting sitting area beneath the loft.





A wrought iron lizard adorns a post between the dining and living rooms.



A cowhide rug is the centerpiece of the living room. The kitchen features hand-crafted pine cabinets (top right). Pica makes himself at home.



Above: A black-and-white infrared photo of the cabin. | **Facing page:** A four-minute time exposure by moonlight (note star tracks in the sky).





Builder's best friend

Pica joined me at the Westcliffe building site on several occasions.