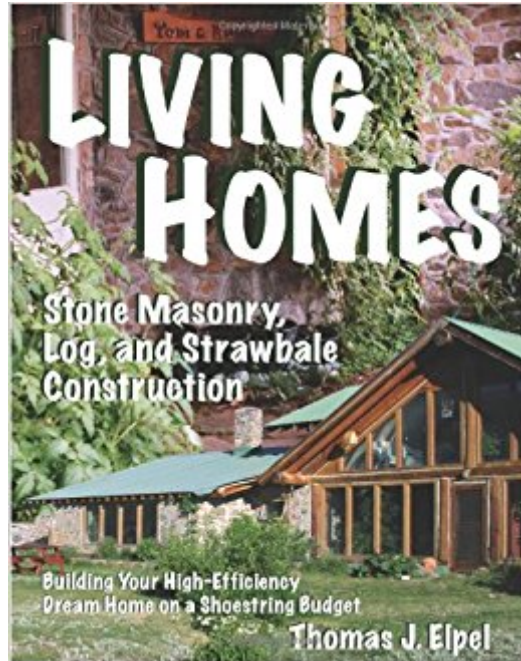


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# Living Homes: Stone Masonry, Log, And Strawbale Construction



## Synopsis

The house of your Dreams does not have to be expensive. The key is all in the planning. How much a house costs, how it looks, how comfortable it is, how energy-efficient it is - all these things occur on paper before you pick up even one tool. A little extra time in the planning process can save you tens of thousands of dollars in construction and maintenance. That is time well spent! Living Homes takes you through the planning process to design an energy and resource efficient home that won't break the bank. Then, from the footings on up to the roof, author Thomas J. Elpel guides you through the nuts and bolts of construction for slipform stone masonry, tilt-up stone walls, log home construction, building with strawbales, making your own terra tile floors, concrete countertops, windows and doors, solar water heaters, masonry heaters, framing, plumbing, greywater, septic systems, swamp filters, painting and more!

Table of Contents   Introduction:   Building a House on Limited Means:   The Elimination of all that is Unnecessary to Achieve a Dream   Part I: Dreams, Goals and Ecology   Integrated Design and Construction: Homesteading in the Twenty-first Century   Choosing a Location:   Planning a Thousand Years into the Future   Disaster-Proofing Your Home:   Preventing the Obvious. Preparing for the Inevitable   Building Codes, Permits and Inspections:   Exceed the Minimum Standards!   Defining Your Goals:   A Blueprint is the Sum of the Criteria   Part II: Principles of Energy Efficiency   Warm Houses for Cold Climates:   Insulation, Thermal Mass, Solar Gain, and Air Locks   Insulation and Insulation Systems   Many Choices, Most of Them Bad   Air Quality:   Finding Fresh Air in a High-Efficiency House   Part III: Building the Walls   Footings, Foundations and Floors:   Starting from the Bottom Up   Cement Mixing & Measuring:   Aggregates, Admixtures, Substitutes, and Reinforcement   Slipform Stone Masonry:   A Stone Masonry Primer   Tilt-up Construction:   A New Lift to the Ancient Art of Stonework   Log Building Basics:   For Builders with Little Time or Experience   Building with Bales:   It's Fast, Inexpensive, and Energy Efficient   Part IV: Closing It In   Putting the Roof On:   The Search for Better Solutions   Terra Tiles:   Hand-Made Tile Floors from Sand, Cement, Dirt, and Dye   Wood Frame Construction:   Building Interior Floors and Walls   Windows and Doors:   Putting a Plug in the Thermos   Part V: Plumbing, Heating, and Wiring   Water Supply, Management, and Recycling   Squeezing More Use out of Less Water   Practical Plumbing:   Important Tips I Could Have Used   Heating Systems:   For Backup Heat & Hot Water   Revival of the Masonry Stove:   An Old, but Efficient Heating System   Electricity:   Wiring the Alternative Home   Rethinking Appliances:   Energy Efficiency is the Path to Independence   Part VI: Finishing Details   Concrete and Fly Ash Countertops:   A Nice Kitchen Doesn't have to Be Expensive   A Primer on Paint:   Reusing and Recycling   Conclusion - Reinventing Housing:   The Road to Sustainability   Bibliography   Index

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

While the author is a knowledgeable on the subject, if you are looking for a book that covers the topic in greater detail then check out Tom Stanley's book "Stone House: A Guide to Self-Building With Slipforms". The material is covered in greater detail and in a well thought out manner.

Touches on a variety of "green" living homes. Not too many specifics on each type of construction. Good for an overview of options available. Not for the builder who has a particular form of construction already in mind. Good for starting the research process of green living.

The house of your dreams needn't be unaffordable: integrated design and construction methods can help in the planning process and can result in much savings, and LIVING HOMES: INTEGRATED DESIGN & CONSTRUCTION is the perfect guide to that process. Chapters cover everything from calculating energy usage and efficiency to considering water supply and waste system options, bonding walls, and more. Black and white photos throughout reinforce instructions on how to cut construction costs along the way. LIVING HOMES deserves ongoing recommendation as an excellent choice for any who would pay attention to cost-efficient design.

I have pored through many, any books on design, and I have spent the past seven years or so researching and planning the home that I will one day build in Alaska. This home will be mostly

made of earth, will stay warm 11 months of the year without any sort of exogenous heating source, will grow massive amounts of food indoors, will be very very inexpensive to build, and will just generally be pretty awesome. This book is one of the best and most useful titles on home design that I have ever come across. It deals with a huge variety of topics, and is packed full of wisdom and intelligent building concepts. I ordered it specifically because it has a step-by-step on how to build a Russian stove, but there are many, many more topics contained within. My favorite books on design include *The One Straw Revolution*, *Permaculture: A Designer's Manual*, *Passive Solar Homes*, *How to Grow More Vegetables*, *A Pattern Language*, *Natural Capitalism*, *Shelter*, *Earthships*, *Cradle to Cradle*, and now this. It has been a gem of a discovery. If you are interested in design and in building your own incredible home, this book would be a fantastic investment.

Most of the housing being built today is shoddy. Volume homebuilding corporations breeze into town, rape the land, slap up substandard cardboard-quality "houses" on postage stamp-sized lots and charge hundreds of thousands of dollars per unit. Many of these contractors get run out of the state, change their corporate name and then move on the next urban sprawl boom. If you're sick and tired of seeing beehive neighborhoods spring up in your town with siding walls you can put your fist through, do yourself a favor and take this crash course on alternative homebuilding. This book will give you an excellent starting place to learn about how you can build your own high quality, inexpensive home with low environmental impact. There is a lot of detail in this book on the methods presented. The "butt and pass" log home building chapter alone is worth 20 times the cost of the book. You won't easily find that information anywhere else outside of taking a log home building class from the Log Home Builders Association in Monroe, Washington, which is the only place I know of that teaches that method.

Most would-be home builders believe a dream house would cost a fortune to construct from scratch: that isn't true, maintains author Elpel, who built his dream house with his wife. The planning of such a home is the key - and is the key to *Living Homes: Integrated Design & Construction*. Chapters cover energy efficiency concerns, home construction basics, and water supply and management with an eye to revealing how design and construction can work together to fit into both a budget and a dream plan. From strawbale walls to interior finishing, *Living Homes* provides a gold mine of construction specifics for any neophyte builder.

Bought this book for research on building a masonry heater. While it did provide plans and some

guidance, the addition of the DVD (sold separately) really helped round out the words on the page. There's just something about seeing a person lay mortar or how they operated around a certain area that was helpful to see. Also, there seems to be lots of great information about other aspects of green living that I haven't been able to dive into as of yet, but looks promising.

This book is really great! Written by a homeowner who built a smart and beautiful house. Includes layer by layer instructions on how to build their super efficient brick chimney! One of my favorite parts.

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