

Colfax Svenska Stuga

I. Concept

When we were growing up, folks in the old Rockford neighborhood would talk about svenska stugas from their youths. Those svenska stugas had radically steep roofs and always that Swedish red paint, along with quite a variety in design, but it was always the same basic idea: a small log home in the woods that employed Scandinavian style log building.

From *The Scandinavian Scrapbook*, translation by Bertil Eklund.

The cutting edge of log construction methods is the “longlog” style of log building. These are the three basic features of Scandinavian longlog construction:

1. Scribing: The wall logs and structural joints are fitted together by using scribes (picture a combination compass / miniature level) to trace the contours of the top of one log onto the bottom of another.
2. V-grooving: The bottom of the logs are grooved out along the scribe lines in the shape of a “V” and packed with insulation.
3. Scandinavian Saddle Notch corners, a corner notch system featuring precisely angled surfaces which achieve an excellent long term tolerance and create an extremely effective water and air infiltration barrier.

The result is a house where all the pieces seem to grow out of each other with a feeling of solid integration that approaches sculpture.

II. Materials

- Logs selected and harvested from our back forty: Poplar (Big Tooth Aspen) for walls; Maple for post and beam construction and floor joists; Douglas Fir tongue & groove for bedroom floor.
- House footings – on bedrock.
- Foundation wall – oversized twenty-inch block, vertically reinforced rebar-concrete core at each corner and in each wall at stipulated intervals.

III. Upkeep

See our accompanying process description.

Process Description

This process description is the result of thirty years of working with logs, and, most importantly, watching and working with experts. I would be very pleased to give lessons for new log home owners of the Colfax svenska stuga. I would, in fact, enjoy it immensely!

We strongly recommend Sashco's series of Customer Support videos. Some of the following information consists of material from that series. The Sashco *How To* series for log home owners will make an expert out of you whether you're an experienced woodworker or not.

Also, the best and most straightforward home owner manual I have run across is "Keeping the Dream Alive: Sashco's Complete Log & Wood Home Finishing Guide":

http://www.sashco.com/log/pdfs/Keeping_the_Dream_Alive.pdf

A responsible log home owner should do a refinish job every five or six years. I have taken good care of this home, and the most recent refinish was this summer, and I'm sixty years old! You can do it yourself (about a week's worth of work) or hire a local painter with log experience. It's not difficult—just takes an eye for detail and a joyful attitude!

Ken's Process

Contents

- A. MASKING
- B. CLEANING
- C. PRESSURE WASHING
- D. FINISH WORK
 - 1. Penetreat / Insecticide
 - 2. Smoothing burrs (felting)
 - 3. Repairing checking
- E. STAINING

A. MASKING

- Do not take old caulking off prior to pressure washing.
- Temporarily block any places where old caulking has begun to peel with backer rod.
- Also, you can “pre-caulk” where necessary, using a temporary inexpensive product such as DAP SEAL ‘N PEEL that will protect during the blasting and peel off easily after.

B. CLEANING Scrub with Sashco CPR Log Cleaner and Brightener.

Specs: http://www.sashco.com/log/pdfs/CPR_Information_Sheet.pdf

- Apply with garden sprayer or brush.
- Start at the bottom and work up, totally saturating the wood.
- Don’t let it dry out before you do the pressure washing. Keep it wet. Mist it down if necessary.
- Use a stiff (but not wire) bristle brush and scrub, especially where the logs are grayed and weathered.

C. PRESSURE WASHING

- As you sweep back and forth, keep in mind 1) how far away you are and 2) that you want to keep in motion (don’t come to a spot and stop). A smooth motion all the way across the logs, feathering in and out (by backing away) at the ends. Eight inches to a foot is a good distance, so long as you keep moving.
- After pressure washing is done, back up four feet or so and rinse everything off.
- Washing and rinsing – go from top to bottom.

D. FINISH WORK

- Apply Penetreat
If determined appropriate, now is the time to apply Penetreat.
Specs/application: <http://www.sashco.com/log/products-penetreat.html>
- Prep surface (smoothing roughness, known as “felting”)
 1. Log scraping. Use a log scraper tool to get down a bit deeper to some of the brighter wood that’s available in your logs. One of the keys to a nice looking stain job is getting that feathered effect.
 2. Orbital sanding. Watch for over-smoothing the logs. Move fast.
 3. Fine sanding. Move fast.
 4. Hand buffing with 3M Blue Scrub Pad.
 5. Tack ragging.
- Repair checking. For checks ¼ of an inch or wider, fill with backer rod. Push in backer rod from a quarter to a half an inch below the surface. Sometimes you have to staple the backer rod in to get it to stay properly. Log checks can be very dirty, a lot of contamination. Get a knife blade or a scraper in there.

- Fill with caulking. Use a nozzle just a little bit narrower than the crack. Fill the crack about flush with the outside edge of the log. Make sure all the edges are pushed up tight (work with a foam brush and spray bottle). Finish off by cleaning with a wider foam brush.

E. STAINING

- Apply stain with brush or sprayer. A combination of both is the best.
- Spray to flood the stain on. Brush to back brush—to aggressively work the stain in, as deep into the wood as you possibly can.
- Start on the bottom with a brush focusing primarily on trying to get some good color back into the bare wood, really soaking it down.
- Don't go for a light coat. Do it to saturation point, making sure the wood is taking as much stain as it possibly can.
- If it starts to set up, go over it, mist it, and it will soften back up.
- To keep from getting too heavy a film buildup over the spots where the old stain is good, wipe it with a white rag after the first coat.