



Here, the Tiny Homes Company's Copper Top.

Since Jefferson built his honeymoon cottage at Monticello, Virginians have loved one-room houses. PAULETTE DININNY finds a new generation of little-house builders, with nary a double-wide flag in sight.

Tiny Houses Take Off

Maybe it's the tug of childhood tree forts, memories of huts in the woods, tents made of sheets stretched between chairs or attic play rooms that make small structures so appealing to adults. Invariably, owners of large homes find themselves drawn to the smallest, coziest rooms. These spaces offer the comfort and contentment that we all crave.

Virginia builders Patricia Foreman and Andy Lee are captivated by tiny houses too — architecturally beautiful, aesthetically appealing, upscale small houses made with quality material. Owners of Tiny Homes Company in the Shenandoah Valley community of Buena Vista, they build small structures that beg to become a private guest room, home office, workshop or hobby house, “pout” house or men’s cave, granny flat, weekend getaway or vacation cottage.

“There’s currently very little available in U.S. housing that’s small, yet high-quality, hand-crafted and built with individual class and personality. Tiny homes fill that gap,” says Patricia Foreman.

Andy Lee’s fascination with tiny houses began in childhood and continued into adulthood. “The first real tiny house that captivated me was the replica of Thoreau’s cabin at Walden Pond in Concord, Massachusetts. I first saw it with my two sons in the late 1970s and was just thrilled with it. It measures only 10 x 15 feet, but Thoreau lived there for two years. When Les Walker’s book *Tiny, Tiny Houses* came out in the 1980s, I just simply fell in love with the idea of building them,” he says.

Lee’s research into how small a house he could live in



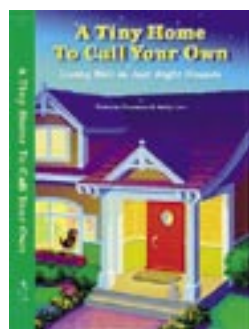
The Campbells' woodworking shop and garden shed.

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full time and be comfortable began with living in a travel trailer that had a living space of 7 feet 6 inches by 25 feet — less than 190-square-feet. He spent three months in the summer and three months during the winter there. His next experiment was living in a 352-square-foot apartment that he built. Lee concluded that 500 feet per person was adequate. “Anything smaller may turn out to be too cramped and unworkable,” he says. “Living well and graciously in small spaces demands that you have things to support you and your lifestyle. Not you supporting and storing stuff that doesn’t serve you.”

Lee and Foreman define very tiny homes as any full-featured smaller home from 350 square feet to about 1,000 square feet. Small homes are defined as 1,000-2,000 square feet; prices are around \$25,000.

Foreman and Lee’s charming “Copper Top” 10×22-foot cabin has a copper roof, bay window, octagon window, white cedar exterior shingles, window boxes, Anderson Thermopane windows and doors with screens. It’s fully plumbed and wired, ready to be connected to home water and sewer and power. The kitchen has a double-bowl sink, under-counter refrigerator, microwave oven,



cabinets and pantry. A sleeping loft is reached via a ladder. There’s a shower, toilet, sink and a 12-gallon hot water heater. The interior is tongue and groove Eastern White Pine that gives off a faint natural scent; floors are Red Oak. Walls and floors are insulated to R13. “It can be heated with a 60-watt dog,” quips Foreman. Last winter, they sold a 10×16-foot Tiny Grey Cabin to Ray Pealer, a stock trader who lives in the Catskills of New York and uses it for his office. Pealer, who works from home, had trouble concentrating.

“What father could say no to his little daughter?” he asked. The cabin is exactly the size he and his wife figured he’d need. “I have an L-shaped desk, four monitors, a computer and a TV. The dimensions are ideal, and the best thing is the quality ... hardwood floors, the silence, stability and fresh smell of the pine wall paneling.” In addition, he has a tax write-off since the cabin is his office.

Both the Copper Top and Tiny Gray Cabin are mounted on a trailer for easy relocation.

Cindy and Danny Campbell’s small Lexington ranch house didn’t offer dreamed-of space for their hobbies even after their children left for college. They turned to the Tiny Homes Co. to build a combined woodworking shop and garden shed. Cindy, a master gardener, says, “We can each be in our own little world, yet we can be there together while we’re working on our own projects.”

The design was partly dictated by circle-top windows returned by a customer of the home center where Danny Campbell is the warehouse manager. He was able to buy them at a discount while adding style, more natural light and solar heat gain.

“I can be very stressed after work. When I’m in the garden shed, I forget everything that has bothered me during the day. It’s a whole other word — an inward soul thing,” says Cindy Campbell.

“Tiny homes can be truly magical because you set your perception levels differently,” says Foreman. “You notice small things. You get a feeling of being closer to nature. The things we find most enjoyable are hearing birdsong at daybreak, the wind blowing and rustling the leaves, rain on the roof.”