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LINDAL CEDAR HOMES A VISIONARY'S LEGACY



PHOTOS: LINDAL CEDAR HOMES



Sir Walter Lindal, 1934

50,000 HOMES AND COTTAGES AND STILL GOING STRONG

By Toby Welsh

ALMOST 70 YEARS AGO, IN TORONTO, Sir Walter Lindal founded what would become Lindal Homes. His story reads like a best-selling novel and would make an Oscar-worthy movie, perhaps starring Robert Redford or Clint Eastwood in the lead role.

What sets Lindal Cedar Homes apart from the rest of the home-building companies out there? Not only is it the world's largest provider of custom cedar homes, the company has bragging rights to having built over 50,000 cedar homes. The actual figure surpasses that because records from the late 1940s and 1950s aren't as complete as documents kept today.

Classic Lindal Homes are earmarked by patented post and beam engineering strengths, which lend to long expanses of glass and wide spans. The prow design, a mainstay of Lindal Homes even decades after the A-Frame design was patented by Sir Walter in the early 1960s, continues to ensure Lindal homes have panoramic windows, vaulted ceilings and an unobstructed flow in the home's interior space.

One thing that Lindal Cedar Homes offers that no other builder in the field does is a lifetime structural warranty. That speaks volumes as to the company's confidence level in its product. Lindal has had no claims against the warranty from any country, including a home built at an elevation of 9,000 feet. The company's tagline—*Built to last*—is obviously an understatement. ▶



TOP LEFT: Lindal considers western red cedar “nature’s most perfect building material.” **TOP RIGHT:** Lindal designs have proven extremely popular as waterfront cottages. **BOTTOM LEFT:** Right up until his death in 2011, Sir Walter was looking for better ways to build homes. **BOTTOM MIDDLE:** Featured in many magazines, including *Popular Mechanics*, Lindal’s Aintree 21 x 29-foot A-frame set new standards for A-frame construction the world over. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** A classic Lindal prow design glows during a snowy dusk.

SIR WALTER The founder of Lindal Cedar Homes, Sir Walter (his name was legally changed to Sir, the English translation of his Icelandic given name, Skuli, when he became an American citizen; it’s not a knight-hood) was born in 1919 to Icelandic immigrants to Canada. His mother died when he was two years old. His Saskatchewan wheat farmer father tried to raise his six children but eventually lost the farm. At the age of five, Sir Walter and his twin brother, Jakob, were taken to a Winnipeg orphanage, where they grew up. Sir Walter graduated second in his high school class in the midst of the Depression. After school, he went to work for his uncle as a salesman in the retail lumber business, absorbing everything about an industry he immediately found fascinating.

When World War II hit, Sir Walter, like most men his young age, was expected to enlist. He wasn’t keen on the possibility of getting killed so he set out to become an officer, a role less likely to lead to an early death. He started out working with the

Canadian army’s engineer corps to redesign the Bren machine gun. The guns were bulky and heavy, almost impossible to fire standing up. Sir Walter re-engineered the weapon so that it was streamlined, the weight was redistributed to be heavier on the back end, and it had a shorter, narrower round—.25-calibre instead of .30. He also managed to drop the weight from 16 pounds to nine. Another modification allowed the magazine to hold more ammunition.

Around that time, Sir Walter met Isobel Mary Rendall and the couple married in 1941. (Isobel passed away in 1990 and Sir Walter remarried in 2007.)

Due to his success with the engineer corps, Sir Walter quickly became an officer. Six months later, he became a captain and spent the rest of the war doing research-and-development work. Jakob wasn’t so lucky. He was shot three times in Italy and, while he survived, Sir Walter believes the wounds weakened his brother. When Jakob had a small stroke and wasn’t able to recover, Sir

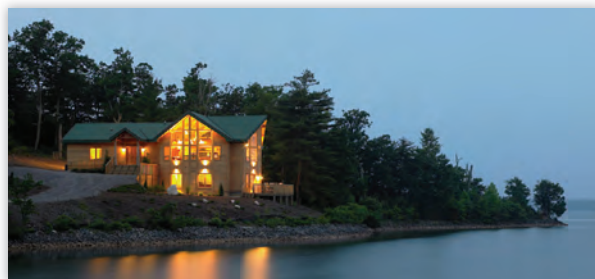
Walter attributed it to the war wounds.

Sir Walter’s time in the army ignited his fascination with prefab housing. Seeing the military encampments that went up in a month or two and housed 25,000-plus soldiers inspired him. From the get-go, he preferred the term “precut” to “prefabricated” as the latter denoted something cheaply built and inferior to Sir Walter, something he vowed to never create.

THE BIRTH OF LINDAL After the war, Sir Walter followed his passion for affordable pre-cut housing and founded Colonial Homes. He knew that by using one source for materials, it would save homebuilders money. Cedar homes were his focus and when it became challenging to build cedar homes in eastern Canada where he resided, he moved his family to British Columbia in 1962. That same year he renamed Colonial Homes to Lindal Cedar Homes. As Sir Walter himself often said, BC is where the cedar is. Why cedar for the homes? As Lindal pointed out



TOP LEFT: After the war, Sir Walter followed his passion for affordable pre-cut housing and founded Colonial Homes in eastern Canada before moving to BC in 1962 and renaming the company Lindal Cedar Homes. **ABOVE:** “Traditional” style Lindal designs like this feature post and beam construction with covered porches and storybook gables. **LEFT:** A custom solid cedar Lindal home with three soaring prowls of glass.



in a 2006 interview with *Inc.* magazine, “We felt cedar was the best wood. It had the attractive finish. Nice to work with. Didn’t decay. It had a reputation already. Fir is stronger and harder but it’s not as attractive as cedar.” Western red cedar is a prized commodity around the world.

As the company expanded, the Lindal family moved to Tacoma in 1966 and then to Seattle in 1970, where the headquarters of Lindal Cedar Homes remains to this day.

A VISIONARY Sir Walter was clearly a creative and innovative thinker; he holds nearly 30 patents. While one is for a type of machine gun, most of his patents are in the custom homes realm. His list includes patents for the A-frame roof structure, log-look siding corner blocks, a mortise and tenon joint, waterproof joints, sheet metal roof planks and prefabricated roof sections. He was an innovator to the end. In the days before his death, he gave his oldest son a handwritten patent application that he wanted filed.

Sir Walter passed away in 2011 at the age of 91 after a short battle with kidney failure. He is survived by his second wife, Lady Margrit Lindal.

Perhaps the most moving tribute of Sir Walter Lindal’s life journey took place after he died. An obituary on the Bonney-Watson website (a funeral, cremation and cemetery company) listed a lengthy assortment of comments. The outpouring of sentiments reflected how valued Sir Walter was by so many; he is a man who will be truly missed. A few of the comments include:

“Sir Walter was a visionary who left his mark on this world and inspired all who met him. He will be missed and fondly remembered.”

“Sir Walter’s long and productive life and

amazing accomplishments are a cause for celebration just as his passing is for sorrow.”

“Sir Walter was above the trivial, the negative, always logical and a fortress for his clan, numbering in the thousands.”

“Think now of the monument that remains. For every door that opens and closes in a Lindal Home is a heartbeat. It is not the measure of a man that he has lived, but that he is fondly remembered.”

The list of words about the great man is longer than this article; Sir Walter was clearly loved and admired by those whose lives he touched.

FAMILY TIES Sir Walter’s family plays a massive role in Lindal Homes’ success. As another person posted in his obituary tribute, “There is an old saying—look at a man’s family and you will see the man. Sir Walter’s family are a true testimony of an incredibly clever, forward thinking man with principles and a warm heart.” Sir Walter and Isobel had a daughter, Bonnie, and then three sons, Robert, Douglas and Martin. Robert Lindal is the current CEO of Lindal Homes and his two brothers and sister work in the organization, too. All three Lindal grandchildren also work in the business. In this day and age, a family-owned and -run company such as Lindal Cedar Homes is an inspiration to many.

LINDAL TODAY For potential clients looking to build a Lindal home, they’ll find hundreds of models to choose from, although ultimately every buyer can customize the home in any way desired. Lindal has three main product lines:

- **Classic Lindal:** the post-and-beam building system easily incorporates the aspects of a classic Lindal home; expansive glass, soaring ceilings and open spaces

- **Turkel Design Lindals:** this line of modern homes is the most successful product launch in recent history

- **Lindal Architects Collaborative:** renowned architects from across North America collaborated to produce a vast selection of warm modern home designs

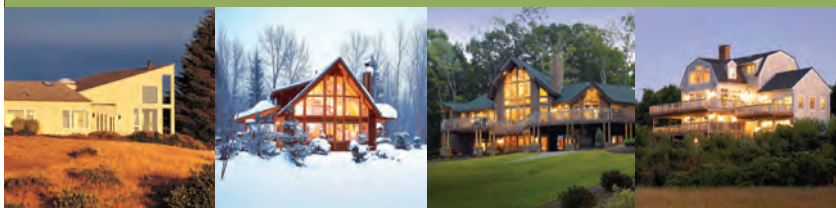
Lindal Cedar Homes has steadily grown for the last 70 years. The company has over 200 employees who work in two Washington state locations and one in BC. As well, over 180 independent dealers across the world sell Lindal Homes.

While the majority of Lindal homes are in North America—mainly the West and East coasts, the Toronto area and Canada east of Toronto—the list of countries the company has shipped homes to is longer than the list of countries it hasn’t shipped to. These days Lindal creates an average of 400 homes a year.

ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY Lindal Homes has been a part of the American Forests Global ReLeaf forest restoration program for over two decades. For every client who purchases a home, the company plants 25 trees. To date, more than one hundred thousand trees have been planted directly for Lindal. When Sir Walter passed away, American Forests helped to nominate the entrepreneur to the National Housing Hall of Fame for his lasting legacy of restored forests and the subsequent environmental effects—cleaner air, cleaner water, diminished carbon dioxide and improved wildlife habitats.

INNOVATIONS Another obituary tribute read, “Sir Walter has always been a motivation in believing in the future. His tireless search for a better house was inspiring to say the ▶

GREEN FROM THE GROUND UP.



The Lindal tradition of green building is deeply rooted in nature.

Lindal homes are magical extensions of nature, carefully taking into account the topography, the vegetation, and the path of the sun and the direction of the wind. What better way to minimize disturbances to nature's landscape.

Crafted of beautifully-honed sustainable materials, Lindal homes utilize the latest green building technologies. Your local independent Lindal dealer will guide you to an energy-efficient home with a deep, enduring sense of harmony with its natural surroundings.

LINDAL GREEN COAST TO COAST

Lindal and our clients are collaborating to showcase green building throughout North America. Lindal is proud to be the first system builder to be approved under the National Association of Homebuilders Green Building Guidelines. Contact your local independent dealer for more details.



Lindal
CEDAR HOMES
Independently distributed by:



Sir Walter (seated) with his sons Martin (back left), Robert (centre back), Douglas (back right) and daughter Bonnie (front right). Also pictured are Robert's daughters Trina (front left) and Christina (behind) and Martin's son Jake.

least. He didn't do it for money but because it was the right thing to do." One relatively recent example is Sir Walter's quest for a lighter yet strong wood to reduce shipping costs and speed up construction times. This quest led him to experiment with "controlled-decay wood." The process involves storing wood in a hot, humid environment similar to a rain forest. After three months, the wood loses half its mass and weight due to rotting from the inside. The wood is then roasted to get rid of the bacteria that cause decay. The resulting wood is lighter and more insulative yet still as strong as non-processed wood.

Another example is using waterproof planks on roofs and eliminating shingles altogether.

As only the heart of a log has wood that stays waterproof, Sir Walter figured out how to cut logs in jigged pieces so that over 90 percent of the wood from a tree would be used opposed to the typical 50 percent. Another benefit is that homes could be built from fast-growing tree hybrids instead of from a large timber source.

For those looking for a "green" home, Lindal has always been environmentally conscious. It starts by considering the location where a home is being built. Trees that will provide shade and other topographical issues are preserved where possible. Eco-friendly materials are used throughout the project. Energy-efficient windows and sustainable items are a mainstay. Lindal was the first home builder to be Green Approved by the US National Association of Homebuilders Research Center. And a Lindal home was the only single family home chosen for Time magazine's Green Design 100. Lindal dealers have to undergo special training to become Certified Green Professionals.

Lindal Cedar Homes is a classic example of a Canadian success story. How many custom home builders can claim an almost 70-year legacy that gets stronger every year? ☺