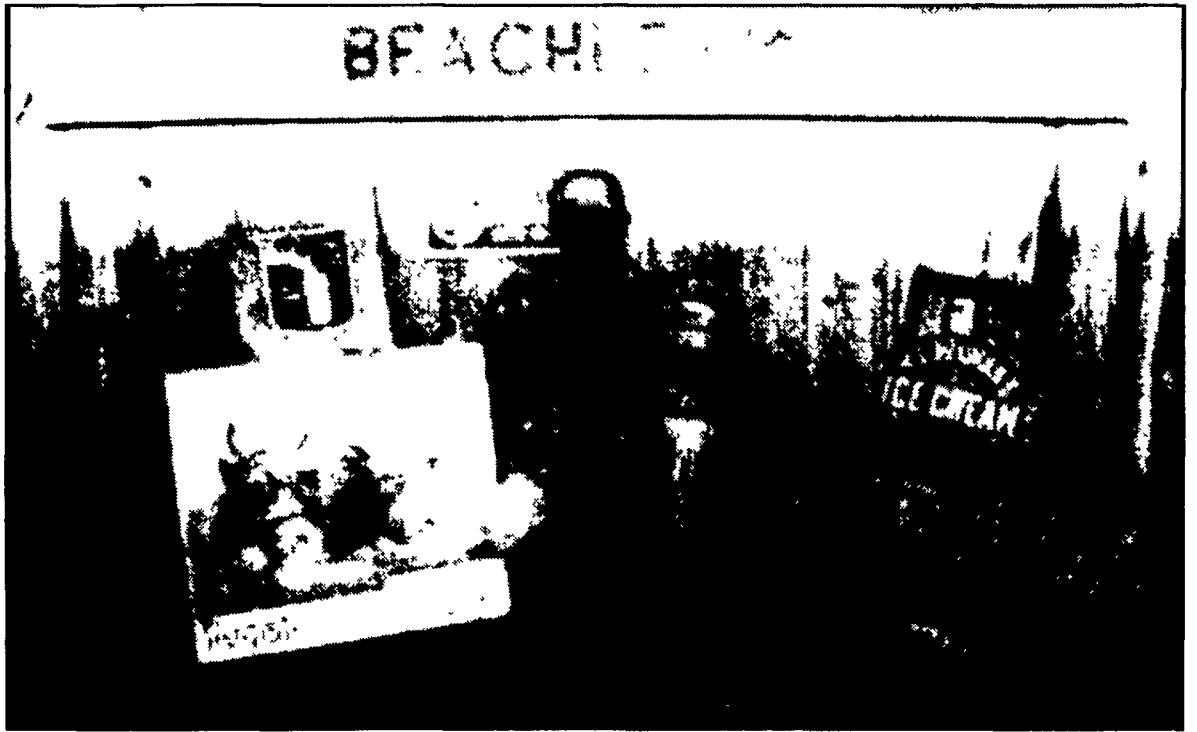


This 1840 barn was recently dismantled by Bixler, who said that he is amazed how every joint fits in craftsmanship found in barns from the 1800s.



"I guess I'm too much of an Old Dutchman," Bixler said of his reason for wanting to salvage old barns and buildings instead of seeing them destroyed. "I also believe we should be good stewards of the resources God has entrusted us with." Here, Bixler shows some of the interesting items he found while salvaging buildings.



Salvaged materials were used to restore this house.

Restoration Woods Salvages History

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YORK SPRINGS (Adams Co.) — Growing up on a dairy farm in Maytown, Lee Bixler developed a love for old craftsmanship. Later, when he was dairy farming on his own, a neighbor wanted to get rid of an old barn. Bixler hated to see it destroyed.

He offered to dismantle it. He salvaged what he could, sold some pieces to others, and saved some pieces for future use.

The satisfaction of salvaging something that would have been destroyed created a desire to continue the work.

That was in 1975. By 1983, Bixler and his wife moved to Cumberland County (later to Adams County) and registered the business name Restoration Wood, under which he operates several interrelated services.

He dismantles old barns, houses, and outbuildings. He will reconstruct them or salvage parts to use in his furniture-making business.

Bixler started out part time, but by 1991 had enough to keep him busy full time with the inter-related businesses.

Joists are sometimes used in new construction, and old beams for fireplace mantels and ceiling trusses. Beams are also sawed

into house flooring, hardware can be recycled, and weathered wood with original paint is in demand for crafts.

After dismantling 30 barns, 15 houses, and an assortment of out-buildings, Bixler has perfected his dismantling skills.

"The first time I did it, I ended up tearing too much up so that many of the pieces couldn't be re-used," Bixler said. "Now I do it in steps. I take it apart the reverse of the way it was built."

"But you can't buy new hand-hewn barns," he said of the reason to salvage history. "I'm amazed at the craftsmanship during the 1800s. The joints fit perfectly, and details such as beading on every piece of siding are astounding."

"The new lumber isn't as nice as the old."

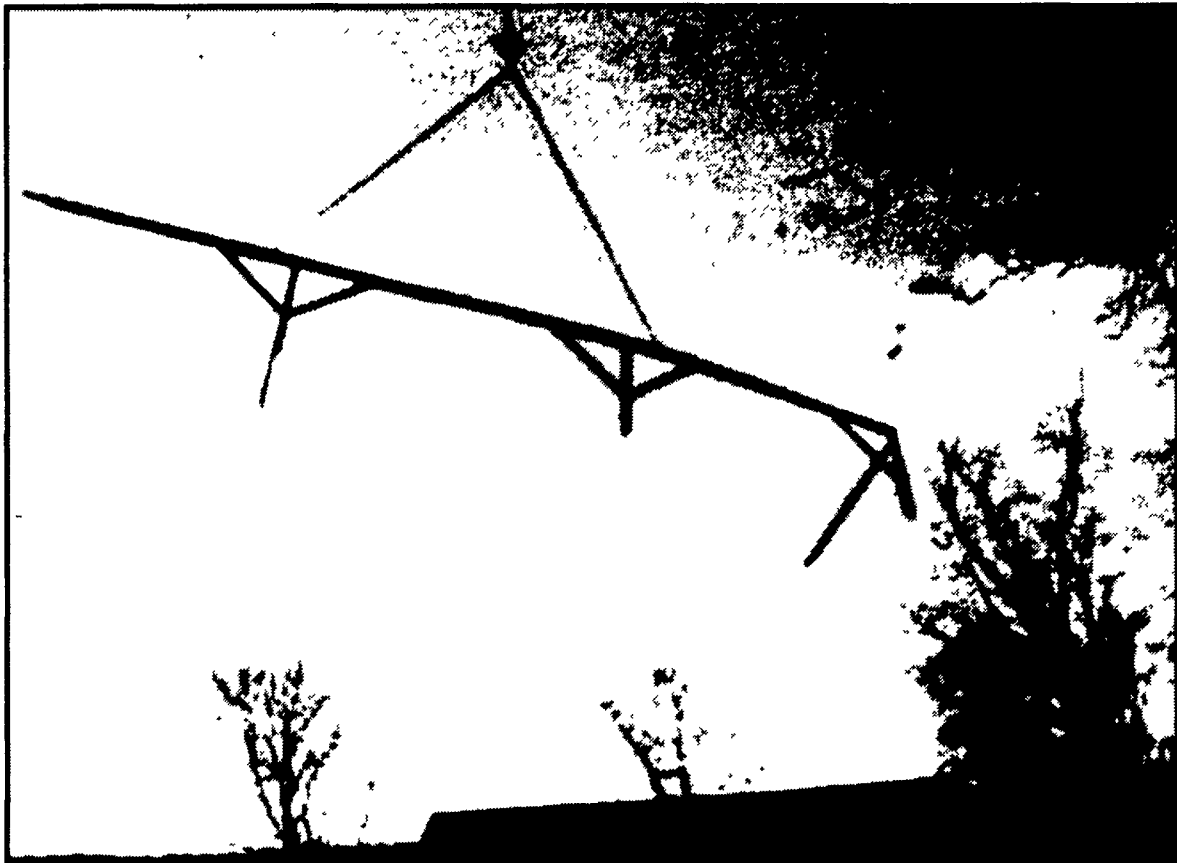
Bixler said it takes about three weeks to dismantle a barn and three more to haul out and clean it up.



Restoration Wood not only dismantles old barns but uses the wood for projects such as these.



Boards are salvaged for many different uses. Sometimes the project is reassembled on a different spot, other times recycled for other uses.



A crane is used to remove trusses and high, heavy pieces. Barns are dismantled the opposite way they were built in order to salvage as much as possible.

Bixler has removed barns throughout the state and in Virginia. He mostly works by himself, except during some stages that require an extra hand. Then he hires an independent contractor.

"But you don't find many people who want to work this hard," he said.

Bixler said dismantling barns ties up a lot of money until the material can be recycled or sold. He has a truck, skidloader, and gooseneck trailer, but needs to rent a crane for \$1,500 to use in large projects.

He also needs to separate the metal, aluminum, copper, tin, and hardware and keep things in storage until he finds customers.

Environmental restrictions have increased since Bixler began the business. Bixler must fill out Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) forms. DEP checks for asbestos and other items that require special handling. Most townships do not allow any burning, which makes cleanup much more expensive.

Reconstructing barns requires extensive labor. Bixler estimates that it costs \$50,000-\$100,000 to rebuild a barn.

Barns used to be worth a lot more money, but costs are much higher today, and in some cases materials don't cover the costs.

Despite the difficulties, Bixler said, "I guess I'm too much of an old Dutchman. I just can't see throwing this stuff away."

Bixler and his wife Mary live in an old farmhouse that he restored. He used old barn floor beams and recycled brick in the restoration.

"I believe that we should be good stewards of the resources God has entrusted us with, and I'm trying to do this through my business," Bixler said of the many different phases that have developed from dismantling barns.

"I work just as hard or more than in dairy farming, but I do get to take a couple days off here and their to visit our kids who live out of state," Bixler said. "This work isn't like an animal that must be fed everyday."

A Website showing a list of Bixler's services and an online catalog of the furniture he makes from salvage pieces can be viewed at www.restorationwoods.biz. Phone is (717) 528-8831.