

Their Barn Business Is Booming

Ginette and Eric Therrien are finding new homes for old barn wood, making and selling it as furniture, flooring, wall coverings and more. Their barn wood boards and beams have even found their way into European homes.

"We've sent boards and beams to France and Belgium because they're not allowed to demolish old barns there. So if you want to renovate one, you can't reclaim beams or boards from somewhere else," says Ginette.

While the business is only 5 years old, it already includes a retail store filled with furniture and what the couple refers to as "barn stuff". Four employees work with the wood in the company workshop. The Therriens also have plans for a mini-farm museum on site.

Even with all the growth, raw material is no problem. Demolition is outsourced to Ginette's father and a crew of 5. She reports that they are fully booked.

"When we take a barn, it is often because the insurance company has required it be demolished before insuring the home," says Ginette. "Most come from owners who contact us."

The Therriens are passionate about old barns and try to encourage barn owners to maintain existing barns. However, if one can't be kept up, they willingly turn the boards and beams into new uses. Once they even covered an old concrete block shed in

barn boards.

"It looks so beautiful now, like it is a living building," says Ginette.

The Therrien's first barn wood project was a table Eric made for Ginette from a barn she had played in as a child. Although he had never made furniture before, 5 out of 6 people who saw it ordered ones for themselves.

Those projects led to the full-time business La Vieille Planche (Old Plank) and more than 700 custom-made tables priced from \$750 to \$1,000. Other projects have included furniture of all kinds, including a freestanding, see-through fireplace.

Ginette reports that many of their customers are as passionate about the wood as the Therriens.

"People want to know where in the barn the wood used comes from," says Ginette. "They want the story of the wood."

She describes one customer who ordered a kitchen table, counter, and bench. He asked for a picture of the barn the wood came from before it was demolished.

"He has the picture hanging in his kitchen," she says.

Most of their wood and furniture have found homes in Quebec and Ontario, but other pieces are scattered around Canada and the U.S. While most customers visit the store and see the item before they buy it, about a fifth of their customer never see their purchase until it is delivered. Products from



Ginette and Eric Therrien operate a thriving business turning old barn wood into home furnishings. Examples include this see-through fireplace (left) and custom made table (top). Other furniture can be custom ordered.

one recently demolished barn have gone to Austin, Texas, Saskatoon, Sask. and Nice, France.

Their website (in French) and Facebook page (English translation available when searching) are full of photos of past work, including 10 named table designs they have developed. However, tables and other furniture can also be custom ordered. Readers interested in having a table or other item

made by the Therriens should send them an idea of what they want and the size.

"Today there is a 3-month waiting list, and it is getting longer," says Ginette.

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Old Barn Wood Finds New Life In Colorado

A Colorado company has gotten pretty good at building sliding barn doors for use in homes and businesses. It's one of the many items Story Barns makes out of lumber salvaged from old barns and railroad cars.

The original idea for the business started with Jason Channin, and family members kept it going. His brother, Ryan, took over ownership, and their father, David, (transportation and customer relations) organizes the barn removals around north and northeast Colorado.

David explains that most barns they work on were built between 1890 and 1900 when families homesteaded the area.

"They have awesome old growth Douglas fir that makes great furniture," David says.

Besides barns, many of the farmers purchased old 38-ft. long railway cars built from 1890 to 1910 to use for storage or turn into chicken coops or other useful buildings. The tongue and groove exterior wood is especially popular with restaurants.

Getting the wood is hard work and sometimes dangerous, David notes. Barn owners often want the barns removed because they are a hazard, while others need the site for constructing something they can use.

He learns as much as he can about the barns so that when customers select wood he can tell their story.

All the lumber is stored in a 400 by 40-ft. former turkey barn, and Ryan works hard to come up with ideas to use every scrap. Small pieces left over from the benches, tables and other furniture he makes become bottle openers and small shelves, for example. The sawdust goes to a composter.

Even the finish is made from a byproduct. "Vermont Natural Coatings are made from cheese waste," Ryan says. "It's completely natural and has no odor."

The former mechanic says he loves the challenge of figuring out what customers want and making it work. At the same time, the Channins try to preserve the wood



This sliding barn door is just one of the many items Story Barns makes out of lumber salvaged from old barns.

as it is and clean it by pressure washing and removing splinters. Many customers appreciate wood with character, such as beams horses have chewed on.

In addition to tearing down buildings and making furniture, Story Barns sells lumber to contractors and homeowners. The Channins appreciate opportunities they have to work with the National Center for Craftsmanship.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Story Barns, 1120 6th Ave., Greeley Colo. 80631 (ph 970 576-6222 or 970 978-8934; storybarns@gmail.com; www.storybarns.com).



Green Meadow Barn Company specializes in using century-old Missouri wood reclaimed from aging barns.



Owner Carolyn Linton creates both traditional and more modern pieces to suit a variety of tastes. "People like the combination of old wood and metal," she says.



She Preserves History With Furniture

For years Carolyn Linton has been reclaiming wood from barns and old houses to give them new life through the furniture she creates. Carolyn actually lives in a barn she took down and moved to her farmstead.

She also works in a restored 1894 barn that was originally located in Missouri on the farm where she grew up.

Carolyn didn't start out as a furniture builder. First she was a teacher and then she became a general contractor. She built furniture to show off the houses. It wasn't long before she realized she would rather build furniture than houses.

Green Meadow Barn Company specializes in using century-old Missouri wood. Timbers and beams are reclaimed from aging barns. The type of wood she finds varies, but most of the old barns she finds were usually built from either pine, oak or occasionally walnut.

To make each piece an original, Carolyn records the history of the barn on every item she makes so each piece of art is a reflection of the present and the past.

Carolyn creates both traditional and more modern pieces to suit a variety of tastes. "People like the combination of old wood and metal."

Some of the timbers she uses have quite a bit of age on them. "Some of the timbers on a couple of pieces are from barns built before Abraham Lincoln was president."

Carolyn feels a reverence for the early barn builders. "I'm amazed they could build barns like this without power tools," she says.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Green Meadow Barn Company, 1626 Quail Run, Carrington, Mo. 65251 (ph 573 592-0331; www.greenmeadowcompany.com).