

Round Barn Replica Has More Than 8,700 Pieces

"I made this replica as a tribute to the beautiful 96-year-old wood round barn on my dad's farm," says Ron Griffith, who copied the original in 1/27th scale down to every last detail. "I was concerned that the barn, which is not in use, would be damaged or torn down and its history would be lost."

Griffith's elaborate model of the barn, which still stands near Red Wing, Minn., took him almost 3,000 hours and nearly 6 years to complete. He made more than 8,700 wood pieces by hand. His experience at building dollhouses, ships and other small projects was helpful, but he says the round barn model was tougher than he had expected.

"I started the project by measuring every aspect of the existing barn, including diameter, circumference, height, rafters, wall studs, floor joists, windows, floor boards and last, but not least, the shingles," Griffith said. Planning required several trips to the barn from his Minneapolis home, and nearly 50 pages of notes. After numerous calculations he settled on a replica that would be about 2 ft. wide and 30 in. tall.

He cut some of the wood pieces for the model from scraps that were in the old barn; otherwise pieces were made from 3/4-in. pine stock. All the wood pieces were cut with his custom-built 3-in. saw. Every piece is to scale, including the 23 windows, 4 doors, 80 wall studs, 112 rafters, 344 siding pieces, 340 haymow boards, 450 roof boards, and 4,120 roof shingles. Even the 1,174 foundation pieces were made from real limestone that Griffith acquired from 'Barn Bluff', a landmark stone outcrop near Red Wing.

The interior elements reflect the barn's use as a beekeeping business, which his father, and later Ron himself, ran as Flower Valley Bee Farm. Ron remembered that in the mid 1980's he processed more than 40,000 lbs.

of honey into 62 barrels at the barn. "We'd bring the full hives in to the upper level of the barn, remove the frames, extract the honey and it would flow by gravity to the clarifier tank downstairs." His model interior includes replicas of 1,440 honey supers, 280 covers, 101 honey drums, and all the processing equipment.

After completing the model he displayed it at the Minnesota State Fair and won a Best of Show award for woodworking. The model was retired to his living room until he received a call from Robin and Elaine Kleffman, who were restoring the original barn and building a bed and breakfast on the farm. The model now sits in the foyer of the Kleffman's Round Barn Farm Bed and Breakfast. That's just a few hundred feet from the original 1914 round barn, which has been completely restored by the Kleffmans and is now listed on the National Register of Historic Places. "The old barn and the model are now bringing enjoyment to a lot of people," Griffith says with pride.

Griffith will be 80 years old this year, and he's still building. "It takes me longer now to finish a project," Griffith says, "but there's a lot of enjoyment that comes with knowing that I can still put together a nice looking model." He's working on an exact replica of a stagecoach that may be done in 8 to 10 months.

Contact FARM SHOW Followup, Ron Griffith, Robbinsdale, Minn. (ph 763 533-4591); or Robin and Elaine Kleffman, Round Barn Farm, 28650 Wildwood Ln., Red Wing, Minn. 55066 (ph 651 385-9250 or 866 763-2276; info@roundbarnfarm.com; roundbarnfarm.com).

The original round barn still stands near Red Wing, Minn.



Ron Griffith made this 1/27-scale replica as a tribute to the 96-year-old round barn on his dad's farm.



Tax Breaks For Donated Tractors

You've heard of donating automobiles for charity and getting a tax break. Now you can donate a tractor, get an even bigger tax break and have a big impact on a community in a developing country.

"If you have a tractor in a developing country, you have power," says Ron Buikema, founder of TractorShare. The goal of his nonprofit organization is to see that tractors get into the right hands.

Organized in 2008, TractorShare Corp. shipped its first tractor, a 35 hp Belarus with basic implements, to Limbe, Haiti, which is about four hours north of the area affected by the recent earthquake. Members of the organization had a long-standing relationship with Haiti and teamed up with Haitian firefighters, because they are renowned for not being corrupt and doing service work.

"They have trained mechanics to maintain the equipment," Buikema says. In fact, for safety reasons, firefighters always operate the tractor. Most "farms" are 3 to 5 acres and the tractor we donated is the only one within 30 miles.

"Tractors can be magic," Buikema says. Having a way to mechanically work the land helps farmers expand and make a living that allows their children to go to school instead of working the land by hand. With products to sell, producers need marketers and suppliers, which all help stabilize small communities. In turn, people don't need to move to large cities with high poverty and unemployment.

Buikema, a former Marine who works in

the National Security Analysis Department at Johns Hopkins University, came up with the idea for TractorShare in 2005 after a conversation with two ambassadors from Africa about the need for jobs and economic development.

On the organization's website, Buikema writes, "After conducting research and meeting with international relations experts, government officials, academics, and agricultural experts, it became apparent that there was a critical need for farm equipment and technical expertise in developing countries."

The five-member board, which receives no compensation and pays their own expenses, purchased the first tractor in like-new condition. The tractor they recently shipped to Port-au-Prince was a used Ford 4500 industrial tractor with a new engine and a backhoe loader that will be used for recovery and debris removal. Later it can be a dual use tractor for farming, as well as road improvement.

Because of the earthquake, shipping was taken care of by the U.S. Dept. of Defense for disaster relief. However, TractorShare needs cash donations to cover future shipping costs of tractors to Haiti and other developing countries, including Africa -- once the organization teams up with reliable contacts in those countries.

"We don't need 100 hp tractors. We're looking for smaller models," Buikema says. "We'd be happy to take an old Ford (or other model) that has been rebuilt. We hope for a service life of at least 5 to 10 years." Donors



You can help out people from other countries and get a tax break at the same time by donating a tractor to a nonprofit organization called TractorShare.

receive a tax deduction for the tractor's full value. The organization has teamed up with a nonprofit trucking company that provides free or discounted transportation to pick up tractors.

"An unused tractor parked in a North America shed can be an important tool to

improve not just one farm, but a whole community in a developing country," he says.

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