

## Barn Boards Given New Life As Flags

Old barns were typically painted red and white. A Springfield, Ill. reclamation company decided to add a little blue to make barn wood flags.

They are just one of the many items built from barns that Sangamon Reclaimed takes down in central Illinois, says owner Brian Frieze.

He tore down his first barn in 2012, and now has a crew of six, who are all firefighters. Four of them, including Frieze, are also veterans. The flags are a good fit, and initially started as a way to give part of the barn back to the owner. Other people liked them, so the company started making "Flags for Heroes" in 3 sizes ranging from 16 by 26-in. (\$100) to 32 by 53-in. (\$250). Prices include shipping, and part of the profit is donated to military and firefighting foundations.

Stencils and blue paint are used to create traditional flag stars, and the assembled flag is secured in a mitered frame.

Frieze and his crew are backlogged with barns to take down around Sangamon County and central Illinois. They're filling a 6,000 sq. ft. warehouse with boards, beams and other material saved from barns built in the late 1800's and early 1900's.

Social media such as Pinterest has increased interest in barn wood and gives people ideas about what they can make from the material, Frieze notes. DIY'ers and contractors buy material for all types of projects.

Sangamon Reclaimed employees also build a variety of items.

"We do a lot of kitchen tables and custom work such as wine bars and 'feature' walls for businesses and homes," Frieze says. Fireplace mantles from beams are also very popular.

The business's website includes photos of flags and the charities they support. Property owners in the area with old barns can also contact them for information about having



**Brian Frieze and the crew at Sangamon Reclaimed are using old barn wood to create barn wood flags, which they call "Flags for Heroes".**

barns taken down.

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Springfield, Ill. 62703 (ph 217 891-3030;

www.sangamonreclaimed.com).

## Farm Store Showcases Barn Wood

When Delite and Tom Ludvigson wanted to showcase their barn wood furniture and decorative items, they divided their farm store into rooms, each displaying different ways to use barn wood and beams in doors, ceilings and walls. Delite notes that every piece of wood is unique.

"The many years of use leaves really beautiful wood," she says. "The patina from wear and age when sealed produces vibrant colors."

Most of their wood and customers come from Minnesota and South Dakota. While the store showcases finished work, Delite says most of Tom's work is special order. The Ludvigsons offer wood and decorative items made from it in a variety of styles.

Tom, a farmer and woodworker, first added a barn wood ceiling in a new room in their house. A friend wanted one like it. Soon Tom was building furniture from the recycled wood, and the business grew. Delite added her interior decorating talents, and they now offer furniture and home decor in a store near their farm.

In addition to wood for ceilings, decorative

items and furniture, Tom also makes staircases, mantles and fireplace surrounds. Delite reports that barn wood barn doors are increasing in popularity.

"Tom has made quite a few barn doors to hang on tracks for restaurants and residences," says Delite. "In homes, the doors are used for closets and bathrooms."

No matter the popularity, the Ludvigsons aren't worried about running out of wood. They get more calls about available barns than they have time to take down.

The amount of work done on the wood depends on the shape it is in and its end use. Tom has his own heating process to "de-bug" the wood. It is then cleaned and sanded to take excess residue off before it's cut and sealed.

"How much he does depends on the customer," says Delite. "Every piece is unique."

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## He Sells Barn Wood Nationwide

There's a big market for barn wood, and Michael Maringer proved that with sales in all 50 states. Headquartered in a small southeastern Minnesota town, he generally knows what he'll find in local barns.

"Most barn floors in our area are pine," says Maringer. "However, if the frame and floor joists are oak, the floorboards may be as well."

Maringer notes that oak is the best for flooring as it stands up well. However, old pine is better for flooring than new pine, which is even softer. He describes the color of pine beams as honey color brown when lightly sanded. Reclaimed oak is typically a chocolate brown color. While pine beams and boards can have a 2 to 4 week lead time, the less common oak is special order only.

"In Wisconsin, you can find old tobacco barns that are solid oak," he says. "We resell oak boards from horse farms in Kentucky, too."

Maringer says there are a lot of things that go into the value of an old building, in addition to the kind of wood. The shape of the floor, holes and mold all come into play, as does age.

"Are the timbers sawn or hewn? Is it timber framed and pegged or 2 by 4 framed?" asks Maringer. "Hewn and timber framed are more

valuable, as are red-sided barn boards."

Every barn is different. Many are small, unlike what he refers to as his best barn yet.

"It had gray siding and was 150 ft. long and 35 ft. wide," recalls Maringer. "It had pinned timbers in the mow and 33 ft. long, 12 by 12-in. floor beams over the basement."

The work doesn't end once the wood from such a barn is harvested. Maringer runs most wood through a kiln to kill off any insects in or on it. Then he uses a metal detector and digs out nails or bits of nails.

"You can rip 3 feet out of a bandsaw if you hit just one nail," notes Maringer. "Digging nails out of pine isn't so bad. We just use an old fashioned nail puller for a lot of nails."

Maringer sells a lot of wood as flooring and wall covering, but the most popular item at this time is beams for fireplace mantles.

"I sell a lot of beams for mantles on Amazon," says Maringer. "The next most popular items now are sliding doors made with barn wood and after that comes flooring."

Maringer's website shows a number of furniture items he sells, as well as different types of flooring and other boards and beams. He also produces all types of custom furniture on request.

Prices vary by the piece and type of wood. A 5 ft., 4 by 6-in. pine beam is \$299. Prices



**Creative Hardwoods sells a lot of salvaged barn wood as flooring and wall coverings, but they say the most popular item is beams for fireplace mantles.**

increase based on size. Pine barn wood counter tops are priced at \$45/sq. ft., while oak counter tops are \$55/sq. ft. Sliding pine barn doors with windows start at \$800. Solid barn doors made with reclaimed red or grey siding start at \$400.

Contact by email or letter is preferred. Maringer notes that his is a small business

and voice mail is not always adequate. Business visits are by appointment only.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Creative Hardwoods, 324 2nd St. NW, Utica, Minn. 55979 (ph 507 951-0235; sales@creativehardwoods.com; www.creativehardwoods.com).