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BUILDING ON THE PAST RECLAIMED WOOD FLOORS

Written by Mike Caroll, owner of M P Caroll Hardwood
Photography by Mark Dellas and Olde Wood Limited

Early pioneers knew the strength and versatility of wood as building material. But wood as a finish material offers beauty, character and durability that is hard to beat. Hardwood flooring offers these same characteristics and, combined with the fact that it's renewable with sanding and refinishing, it has remained a leader in flooring options for hundreds of years.

One very popular and growing segment of the wood flooring industry is reclaimed hardwood floors. Today, some of the same timbers harvested for building material a century or two ago are being reused to make beautiful hardwood flooring. The raw material is recovered from the dismantling of older structures such as factory buildings, barns, homes and, in some cases, even retrieved from the bottom of lakes and rivers. The wood is then treated and re-milled into flooring with unique markings and characteristics that include knots, nail holes, worm tracks and natural patina from years of weathering.

As the green movement continues to gain traction, the sales and popularity of reclaimed hardwood flooring is on the rise, as well. The fact that no virgin timber is harvested for production makes it a great choice for the environmentally aware consumer.





Also, manufacturers of reclaimed flooring are usually dedicated contributors to green building practices. Their environmental commitment doesn't stop with the production of green flooring. Many of the manufacturing facilities conserve energy by heating and/or powering their mills with the byproducts (sawdust, wood chips and scraps) left over from the production of their flooring.

The use of environmentally friendly floors can also help reduce the millions of tons of construction and demolition waste the United States produces each year. Dismantling a structure and then reusing the materials, as opposed to demolition and disposing in a landfill, has become a popular option and is practiced more often. Everything we do can affect our ability to coexist with nature. Promoting recycling in construction, whether it's reusing old doors and windows or re-milling old wood into new floors, will help ensure we can "pass it on" to future generations.

My first experience with reclaimed wood flooring was in the mid 1980s and I still laugh about it today. I was in my early 20s, working with my older brother, Jim Carroll, who had just started a wood floor company, known today as Buffalo Hardwood. Neither one of us had any knowledge of reclaimed floors at the time. We were contacted by a gentleman named Marty, who sold this particular type of product. After meeting with Marty, we instantly fell in love with his beautiful reclaimed flooring samples.

The concept was very interesting and the idea of antique wood floors convinced us to make a purchase. I was the lucky recipient of our first reclaimed wood floor installation since I had just purchased an old farmhouse in Lockport, N.Y., and was renovating. Here's the funny part: When the shipment of flooring arrived, I looked at it and thought, "What the heck is this?" A portion of the planks had dime-size holes drilled right through the center of them and continued down the planks every few feet. I called Marty to complain and will never forget his response. He said, "Michael, your flooring is from an 1880s whiskey distillery in Tennessee. Those holes are from the threaded rods that passed through the beams that held the structure up."

After Marty's explanation, the holes didn't seem to bother me anymore. Knowing the history behind my new floor suddenly made those holes very appealing to me. I installed my Tennessee distillery flooring and have had a love affair with reclaimed wood



products ever since. In addition to flooring, beautiful furniture, wood moldings, cabinetry and staircases can be found, all made from timbers our ancestors harvested – some when settling the good old USA more than two centuries ago.

In the years that have passed since my first reclaimed floor project, reclaimed wood floors have become a significant part of the wood flooring industry. Whether they're salvaging wood from an old barn or recovering logs from a riverbed, the idea of taking what's old and making it new again – combined with the distinctive look of the past – continues to make them a popular choice for both environmentally aware and design-conscious consumers. **DESIGNNY**