

Bringing new life to old wood

An Ohio manufacturer recovers wood from forgotten structures and transforms it into antique flooring

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Imagine every time you step across your kitchen floor, you are literally walking over a piece of history. At Olde Wood Ltd., a manufacturer of vintage hardwood flooring, spending a weekend dismantling a barn once owned by a relative of Robert "Steamboat" Fulton and reassembling it as an antique floor in a customer's home is how it make such ideas a reality.

The Malvern, Ohio, company purchases dilapidated and unused structures throughout Ohio and several eastern seaboard states and then dismantles the buildings, shipping the wood to the Malvern mill yard where it is eventually crafted into a new product.

Rare hardwoods

Oak is the most common species found in old barns in the southwestern Ohio and Pennsylvania areas, while American chestnut is the hardest to find as it stopped growing in the early 1900s because of a blight.

"The barns we dismantle were originally constructed using hardwoods that were native to the region: oak, walnut, cherry, hickory, chestnut, white pine and beech," Tom Sancic, Olde Wood president, explains. "These woods were used because of their resilience and ability to withstand the forces of Mother Nature."

Although the bulk of its business in antique hardwoods is provided by the dismantling of barns, Olde Wood also harvests wood from abandoned log cabins, factory buildings, churches and even school houses. Undertaking such a time-consuming task requires skill and patience because the dismantling process can take a few days to several weeks to complete, depending on the size of the structure and the weather. From the roof to the basement, every salvageable piece of wood is removed and then de-nailed, stacked, sorted and custom-cut.

The lumber is then kiln dried, which brings the moisture content of the flooring to about six to eight

continued

Flooring is Olde Wood's specialty. This floor is made of recycled oak wood recovered from an abandoned barn.

percent and eliminates any insect infestation that may be present in wood of this age, although such occurrences are rare. Since Olde Wood is strictly a manufacturer, the wood is then installed, sanded and finished with a simple tung oil finish by installers who are familiar with wide plank products. Maintaining the antique flooring requires nothing more than warm water, dish soap and some elbow grease.

Recycled materials

Not only in the trade of giving historic wood another life, Olde Wood is also interested in the latest trend of green building that reduces energy consumption, uses recycled materials and eliminates waste.

"Flooring products make up 20 percent of all landfills nationwide," says Sancic. "If we can recycle these aging structures and reuse that material to enhance the beauty of a home, then we're helping solve problems."

Besides their flooring products,

This oak is in its second life as a hardwood wall. Wood is also recovered from old log cabins, churches and factories.



Olde Wood also has a selection of antique barnstone, antique slate, hand hewn timbers and vintage brick. Flooring is Olde Wood's specialty, but it also supplies materials for cabinetry, furniture, trim work, stair components, tables and doors, in both residential and commercial environments. The starting point per square foot of Olde Wood's antique wide plank flooring

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runs from \$9 to \$15, based on plank width, thickness, wood species and other variables. ●

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