

RETAINS CLASSIC BARN LOOK

Old Barn Converted Into Beautiful Country Home

Bob and Marge McKinnon, Dent, Minn., turned a dilapidated gambrel-roofed barn into a beautiful modern home. It's complete with a big window on one end where the hayloft opening used to be, an asphalt roof with two big cupolas on top of it, and a wood deck on both sides.

The McKinnon's barn home sits only 100 ft. off a lake, with large windows looking out over the lake. The house has three levels, including a 28 by 32-ft. "great room" with a loft above one end of it. One side of the room is covered with aspen paneling. There are five bedrooms and five bathrooms.

They removed everything from inside the barn except for the main support beams, tearing out the stanchions, concrete feed bunks, gutter system, and floor. They also removed the original cedar roof and galvanized tin siding.

"It turned out nice although we did put quite a bit of money into it," says Bob. "People love the barn look and came by to watch us work while I was building it. Now they drive by in boats on the lake during the summer and on snowmobiles during the winter just to get a better look at it.

"The wood used to make the barn, which was built in 1928, was cut on this property. The barn was in use until 1975. After we bought the property, we lived in a house on



The McKinnon's turned this dilapidated gambrel-roofed barn into a beautiful modern home.

the property until we were ready to move into the barn. The person we hired to put on the new roof discovered during the project that it was his grandfather who had actually built the barn. Once he found that out he wanted to do a lot more, such as the major interior work.

"It's a big barn so we hired an architect to help us get the most out of the available space. My wife fought tooth and nail to keep the cupolas. There's a silo still standing on the lake side of the barn which we plan to convert into a 40-ft. high gazebo."

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22 BY 44-FT. BARN SERVES AS A "GREAT ROOM" PRESERVES FAMILY'S HISTORY

They Put A Barn Inside Their House

Some people fix up old barns and live in them. Others cut lumber from old barns into pieces and incorporate them into their homes.

But Cameron and Jackie Raether, Good Thunder, Minn., took a different approach. They completely disassembled an old barn piece by piece and then put it up again at a new location where they built a big house around it.

The 22 by 44-ft. barn – which stands 25 ft. high – now serves as the central "great room" of the house. The hayloft was converted into a catwalk that connects the bedrooms on the second floor. The house has 7,500 sq. ft. with a white vinyl exterior with a green roof. From the outside it looks like an older Victorian farm house with a large wrap-around porch on all four sides. It has a cupola with a flying pig weather vane on it.

"From the outside you would have no clue that there's a barn inside," says Raether. "Some people thought we were crazy. They couldn't understand how we planned to build the barn into the house. We took this approach because we wanted to preserve the barn. It's a piece of our family history."

The 115-year-old barn was built by Cameron's great-grandfather, William Raether, a German immigrant farmer. The original farmstead is no longer in the Raether family, but Cameron was able to buy the barn from the current property owner and none too soon. "He was going to burn it down," says Raether.

About four years ago the Raethers enlisted the help of Richard Jeffries, who salvages old barns. Jeffries carefully deconstructed the barn right down to the wooden pegs that held many of the barn's joints together. Some 400 metal identification tags were affixed to the building's timbers. Then all the pieces were put into storage.

About two years ago the Raethers purchased 60 acres of land and began looking for an architect. They took their project to three architects before they found one who came back with a plan that used the barn to their approval.

The next job was to find someone who could put the barn back up. They contacted 10 builders over a five-state area who specialized in timber frame construction. "No one wanted to work with a frame that was more than 100 years old. They all wanted to build from new," says Raether. "Many of the beams in the barn were cut with an axe and still had the bark on them. Some of them were as much as 4 or 5 inches out of square. Some beams had to be recut in order to make a square frame that fit the design of the new house."

Finally, they found Mark Sandro of the Buffalo Ridge Beamery Co. in Hendricks, Minn., 200 miles away. His company specializes in reconstructing timber structures. Cameron and Jackie trucked the barn timbers to Sandro's shop where they were recut to fit the home. A local carpenter was then



House has a big window on one end, an asphalt roof with two big cupolas on top of it, and a walk-out deck on both sides. The silo that stood next to the barn is still there.



This photo was taken after the original cedar roof and galvanized tin siding had been removed.



Aerial view of the Raether's house was taken last October. The largest, center part of the house is the barn.

hired to build the house around the barn.

"We incorporated many unusual features into the barn such as a sliding barn door across an 8-ft. opening that leads to one of the bedrooms. The door rides on tracks from an old granary," says Raether.

They replaced the barn's original plank ceiling with 4,000 board feet of unfinished oak. "We installed the oak boards as tight as we could and let them shrink with no finish. By the time the boards were done shrinking they were about 1/2 in. apart so they look like they're from an old barn," notes Cameron.

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A catwalk - which is part of the old hayloft - connects the two upstairs bedrooms.

