

# Corn Crib Converted Into Beautiful Farm Home

All Mike Koopman could see was potential when he bought 5 acres of overgrown farm property with several fixer-upper buildings. Initially he planned to tear down the corn crib to salvage the wood. But as he gutted it, he realized the corn crib was in better shape than the run-down farmhouse.

So he drew up plans to convert the corn crib into a home. After 4 years living in a trailer and working on the building in his free time, Koopman plans to move into his new home at the end of this year.

"Structurally, corn cribs are very strong," the Kanawha, Iowa, resident says. The oak and pine lumber were in excellent shape. The 18 by 40-ft. corn crib had two 8-ft. wide bins with a 2-ft. alley. He tore out the two middle walls and removed the exterior 1 by 6-in. boards. He reused the 2 by 6-in. boards from the center walls for floor joists over the concrete slab, shimming them level where the floor sloped.

The walls were 14 ft. tall, and Koopman added 6 1/2-ft. lean-tos on both sides to widen the building to 31 ft. with 8-ft. walls.

"I wanted a cathedral ceiling in the living room area, so I added a dormer on one side," he adds. He had to cut some original roof joists to open up the 16-ft. wide section and was concerned about ruining the building's structural integrity. He had a neighbor watch as he cut the joists. The neighbor said nothing moved.

Koopman purchased double-paned, en-

ergy efficient glass at a discount warehouse to build a glass front.

"I'm trying to make it as unique as possible," he says. "The 26 by 16-ft. living room is two stories high. It's really impressive with the open ceiling."

Shingling the roof with its 12/12 pitch proved to be the biggest challenge. When he started shingling Koopman only had a few toenails, and he thought the roof was shaking. He realized he was shaking.

"I put a lot more toenails on it," Koopman laughs.

Another challenge was combining old lumber with new. The old lumber was 1/4-in. thicker and wider than new boards so he had to shim the newer boards to match up.

Koopman finished the exterior with OSB board and white vinyl siding. He insulated and covered most of the interior with new pine boards on the walls and sheetrocked the ceilings.

He bleached and stained some of the original 1 by 6-in. boards and spaced them 1 in. apart to create an 8 by 8-ft. section on a living room wall that looks like the interior of a corncrib. He has plans to coat ear corn with varnish and mount them in between the boards.

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Every year Montana ranchers show off their clever hay sculptures at the annual "What The Hay" event.

## Bale "Sculpture" Contest Stretches Over 21 Miles

Montanans recently showed off their talent for puns and clever hay sculptures at their annual "What The Hay" event held the first Sunday after Labor Day.

The 20<sup>th</sup> contest in 2009 featured 58 bale sculptures along a 21-mile stretch of state highways 239 and 541 between Windham, Utica and Hobson. More than 4,000 voters made the snail's-pace trip to view and choose their favorite creations and to enjoy a host of other activities in the small towns that have a total of 300 residents, or less, between them.

"This is a mega rural event," says Suzanne Aune, organizer and member of the Utica Rod and Gun Club, which sponsors "What The Hay" with support from local businesses and individuals. In 2009, they gave out \$2,100 in cash prizes to children and adults.

The event started as a joke between two ranchers and grew into the huge collection of mechanical and massive sculptures that begin to go up almost as soon as the hay is baled.

"The main rule is to let your imagination go wild," Aune says. "Contestants must use hay or straw but they can add any accessories they want. They also need a legible sign

so people can vote."

Hard-working ranchers spend many hours of their precious free time on incredible masterpieces: a 'bale' erina that spun, a Jack-in-the-box that popped, and an amazing Statue of Liberty, for example.

People who live outside the area are also invited to participate. Ranchers provide hay and a field to set up their sculptures.

"It's like a huge family-friendly thing, from building bale sculptures to viewing them," Aune says. There's no charge, but it has become an economic boom for the small communities.

Many locals avoid the main highway during the event and check out the sculptures later. Eventually they're taken down, and the hay and straw bales are used for feed or bedding.

"What The Hay" ties in with Lewiston's Chokecherry Festival in Lewiston the Saturday before.

"It's the last hurrah weekend," Aune says.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Utica Rod and Gun Club, 1555 Antelope Creek Rd., Hobson, Mont. 59452 (ph 406 423-5200).



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