

Scale-Model Barns Don't Miss A Detail

The first miniature building Lowell "Skip" Finley built made his sisters cry with tears of joy. It was a 1-in. scale model of the log cabin that Finley and his seven brothers and eight sisters grew up in. He based his design on one 1945 photo and his memory — including an askew window his mother had installed.

After seeing his sisters' sentimental reaction, Finley was inspired to build small-scale barns.

"I got the same reaction from others," he says. "So I kept on building and I can't seem to stop."

The Mansfield, Ohio, builder knows what he's doing. He's had his own construction business since 1972, often restoring full-size barns.

"I'm getting older so working on little barns is nicer than working on big barns," Finley laughs. "But just because they are smaller, doesn't mean they have less quality."

Finley has built five barns, a gristmill, a fort blockhouse and a log cabin. One barn is displayed in Lehman's Hardware in Kidron, Ohio, but the rest are stored in Finley's garage.

He uses ordinary shop tools — table saws and mortise and tenon joiners — to replicate the joints used in the real barns he works on. Instead of nails, Finley carves 1/8-in. square hickory pins to secure the joints.

The wood he uses comes from scrap wood from his big barn projects. He cuts it according to scale for the interior beams, making tight mortise and tenon joints.

"I'm using original wood that is 150 years old," Finley explains. "I take 12 by 12-in. timbers and rip the outside edge for boards for siding or floors. The siding is 1/8-in. thick, and floors are 3/16-in. thick."

When the wood is extremely checked and weathered, he uses glue with the wire nails his brad gun shoots to secure the siding.

Everything else is very authentic — even what can't be seen. Skip spends 300 to 400 hours on each building, accurately replicating details. One replica, for example, is of his neighbor's 1860 barn. It has all the pens and stalls, grain bins and haylofts, sliding doors

and ladders that are inside the big barn. The foundation is covered with sandstone, cut from rocks that came from the real barn.

Finley's wife, Pat, helps with some of the finishing touches — making miniature feed sacks and bales, for example. She also paints the exteriors. She painted a Mail Pouch sign on the end of one of Finley's barns.

After completely finishing the interior, Finley builds the roof — sometimes out of metal, sometimes with handmade cedar shake shingles. He doesn't hinge them to open like a dollhouse. He explains that he left one end open on one barn so people could look inside. But they seem less interested in that barn than they are in barns where they have to peer through doors and windows.

"I take them to many shows in the summertime," Finley says. "I enjoy talking to people about these old barns. Little kids love them."

When he hauled one barn to a show, wind blew off one corner, and he didn't have time to fix it. People at the show liked it because they identified with it and remembered real barns that had similar damage.

Finley has ideas for the future, such as a barn with a gambrel roof and maybe a timber frame church. He'd like to do commissioned small-scale barns (when he's not working on real ones), but notes he'd likely make them in 1/2-in. scale to make them affordable and small enough to display.

For now, he builds them for his own enjoyment and to think about something else besides the bad economy and other depressing news. He believes his buildings help others get their minds off the world, too, and the response from the public has its own rewards.

"One couple talked to me for about three hours," Finley recalls. "And then she said, 'I want to give you a hug, so I can say I hugged a famous guy.'"

Finley welcomes people who want to see his buildings. Call for an appointment.

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Lowell "Skip" Finley's collection of small-scale buildings includes five barns as well as a gristmill, a fort blockhouse, and a log cabin.



Ordinary shop tools — table saws and mortise and tenon joiners — are used to replicate the joints used in the real barns that Finley works on.

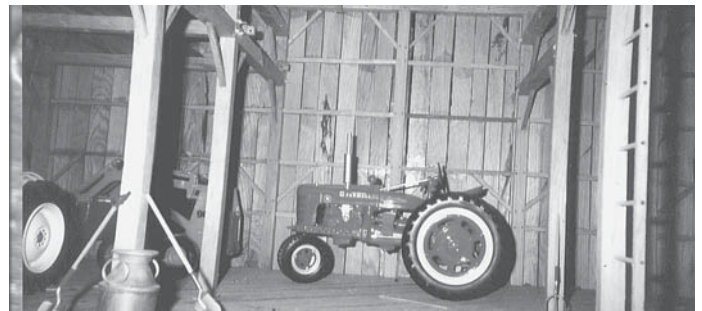


Photo shows timber frame interior of a model barn.

Tandem Tractor Built From Two Deere A's

We spotted these doubled-up Deere A tractors at the recent Husker Harvest Show near Grand Island, Neb. Two Deere A's — both equipped with dual wheels — were coupled into a single unit.

The front tractor is a 1937 model and the rear one is a 1938. The tandem tractors articulate. The front wheels on both tractors were removed and a heavy steel frame used to couple them together.

The two tractors were originally equipped with steel wheels, and the outside wheels on the doubled up tractor still have the spokes from the steel wheels.

"As far as doubled-up tractors go, this one is one-of-a-kind," says owner Brian Wolfe, Hastings, Neb. "I occasionally take it to shows and fairs. It sounds kind of neat when both tractors are running, with both tractors making a popping sound at the same time."

Wolfe bought the doubled up tractor last winter from someone who had bought it at a sale in Iowa in the early 1990's. "I was at the same sale, but I didn't buy the tractor then. At the auction, I was told the tractor had been put together in Canada in the late 1940's or early 1950's.

"I've never seen two unstyled Deere A's put together," says Wolfe. "I've seen newer tractors built in tandem, such as Deere R's, 820's, and 830's from the 1950's. They were styled and equipped with rubber tires, whereas

Deere A tractors were originally equipped with steel wheels.

"After World War II farms started growing in size and farmers needed more horsepower. Some farmers started building their own 4-WD tractors, and some machine shops built kits to hook two tractors together. But the farmer who built this doubled up tractor didn't use a kit. It was put together kind of roughly using a cutting torch. With some cosmetic work, I think it could be made into a really nice tractor."

All operations are controlled from the rear tractor. A hydraulic cylinder acts on the front tractor's clutch to engage or disengage it.



Tandem tractor was built from two Deere A's, both equipped with dual wheels.

A fender-mounted lever on the rear tractor is used to activate the cylinder. A hydraulic pump mounted on the rear tractor is used to steer the front tractor. The pump operates a hydraulic cylinder that acts on the tractors' articulation point.

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