



One-of-a-kind home is built from a 1940's 20-ft. dia. grain bin. The large, covered front porch is surrounded by beautiful landscaping.



Modern decor inside bin home makes it a popular bed and breakfast destination.

By Janis Schole, Contributing Editor

Grain Bin House Attracts Paying Customers

Most people can't believe their eyes when they get inside this grain bin home built from a 1940's 20-ft. dia. bin. The large, covered front porch and beautiful landscaping has made it a popular bed and breakfast destination for owners Ed and Billie Miles.

They call their business the "Gruene Homestead Inn" and it consists of a collection of historic houses dating from the early 1850's to the early 1900's. The buildings were moved onto their eight acres near New Braunfels, Texas.

The family currently offers 23 guest units in 11 buildings, each with its own outside entrance, private bath, cable TV, coffee service, and A/C controls. The property also offers a swimming pool with spa and a tav-

ern featuring live music and a full bar.

The Miles' purchased, moved and remodeled the 600 sq. ft. grain bin home in 2007. The previous owners, who had also been renting it out for a number of years, purchased the bin from a nearby German farmer who had used it as storage from the early 1940's until the 1990's.

"My parents spent a lot of money and indulged a lot of their ideas to make the bin house what it is today," says their son, Ed, who is the operation's general manager. "Including the foundation, the move, the renovation and the furniture, the cost was about \$45,000. We did as much of the work as we could as a family and we're lucky that we all have different talents that compliment each

other, such as construction, interior decorating, and hotel and tavern management. The project was more a labor of love than a strict business venture."

Rental of "The Silo," is \$210 per night on in-season weekends, and \$175 the rest of the time. It has a queen-sized bed, full sofa-bed, stand up shower, two sinks, wet bar, microwave, refrigerator, and a private porch.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Gruene Homestead Inn, Ed and Billie Miles, 832 Gruene Road, New Braunfels, Texas 78130 (ph 800 238-5534 or 830 606-0216; fax 830 625-6390; staff@gruenehomesteadinn.com; www.gruenehomesteadinn.com).



Curved stairway leads to second floor.

He Carved Tractor Out Of Wood

By Dee Goerge, Contributing Editor

When Bill Sontag's all-wood Allis Chalmers Model A tractor is parked next to other restored AC tractors, "Woody" blends right in. It's only on close inspection that passersby notice that pipes and curves are more octagon than round. That's because Sontag, 85, prefers working with a saw and router than a lathe. His tractor is made of wood, right down to the tires and the lettering on them.

"I could have sanded it all, and filled all the holes to make it look like metal," Sontag explains. "But I wanted it to look like wood."

The tractor has about 1,000-board ft. of lumber in it, mostly 1 by 6-in. treated tongue and groove pine. He used oak wood for the steering wheel and a few other parts; grapevines for sparkplug wires and pipelines; and basket-making wood from California for magneto wires.

Sontag isn't a stranger to big woodworking projects. He once built a 60-ft. miniature train including a 9-ft. long engine, caboose and dining car. The decision to build a Model A came from hanging around the shop of his friend Larry Lietzow, who restores tractors and makes and sells parts for old AC's. Lietzow had several Model A tractors, and — more importantly — parts that Sontag could take home to his workshop to measure and reproduce. He built and assembled the tractor one piece at a time. When finished, he disassembled and painted each piece before putting it back together.

Besides using his friend's parts for models, Sontag visited Lietzow's shop often to make measurements and sketches.

Sontag built nearly everything himself, but hired someone to laser cut wooden bolts and

nuts and lettering for the tires and tractor. Everything is wood except the metal rear axle, which supports the 1,980-lb. tractor and connects it to a transport frame powered by a golf cart motor.

When displaying the tractor at shows, Sontag plays a tape of a real AC Model A running.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Bill Sontag, 10828 Park St., Mantua, Ohio 44255 (ph 330 274-8244).

Bill Sontag "carved" this Allis Chalmers Model A out of wood, right down to the tires and the lettering on them.



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