

He Turns Junk Into Useful Art

"I only build stuff out of junk I have," says Don Canaday, who loves to create art and useful items.

Besides purchasing a new mailbox, his Deere tractor mailbox meets those guidelines. Following the regulations for mailbox height, he bolted his 1948 Deere D replica on a sturdy metal pipe with a plate that was once part of a patio table and cemented it in the ground.

Based on the medium-sized mailbox, Canaday found parts to match it to scale. The front tires are off a hand truck, and the back tires came off a tiller. The grill is from a barbecue grill, and the fenders are from an 8-in. farm disk cut in two. The seat is an aluminum frying pan that he cut to shape and drilled in holes, and the steering wheel is from a milling machine where Canaday once worked. When painted Deere green, a tin can and plastic bowl look like a power take-off and an oil filter.

Canaday purchased a Cabbage Patch doll named Patricia at a thrift store as a finishing touch. After a haircut and change of clothing, including a Deere cap and pipe, he put Pat in the driver's seat.

"The little neighbor kids like to spin the tires," Canaday says.

It's just one of his many creations. Bigger "kids" might be more impressed with the sandblaster he made to look like the R2-D2 character in Star Wars.

Canaday also makes snails out of gears and detailed farm toys. He recently finished



Canaday shown with a Deere mailbox he made using different scrap items.

a scarecrow and is working on creating a night out of spoons.

Canaday says he'll keep making things as long as he has "junk" to work with, including ideas he gets from publications like FARM SHOW.

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In its heyday, Hofmann Apiary had about 1,000 hives, and nearly 50,000 lbs. of honey was processed every year in this elaborate two-story production barn, built in 1924.

Restored Apiary Joins National Registry

By Lorn Manthey, Contributing Editor

Restored buildings on the 150-year-old Hofmann Apiary Farm near Janesville, Minn., are now listed on the National Registry of Historic Places. "It's an incredible honor," says Larry Hofmann, who, along with his wife Jan, now lives in the farmhouse where he and his siblings grew up, adjacent to the restored honey house and wax shed.

"The buildings were an integral part of the apiary founded by my grandfather Emil in 1903 and operated by my father Charlie until 1985," Hofmann says. "Then they sat empty for many years and were slowly decaying."

The impetus to repair them began in 2010 when Joan Mooney, Co-Director of the Waseca County Historical Society, was at the farm's 2010 estate sale. She toured the honey house with Larry and said, "This building has to be saved." Mooney acquired grant funds for evaluation and nomination documents so the buildings could be nominated to the National Registry.

Mooney says the listing application was significant because of how the buildings were originally designed and how the business was operated. The listing granted includes

the farmhouse, a reservoir, a pump house, a wax shed, a winter bee cellar, and the honey house. Larry says he was told it was a unanimous 13-0 vote, which is extremely rare for a nomination.

Jay Schmidt, a barn repair specialist, did the honey house and wax shed restoration. He followed the architectural plans and documented all his work per Registry requirements. It involved repairing and restoring the chimneys, replacing windows, repairing deteriorated wood, caulking joints in the sills, priming and painting the sashes, replacing the roof, and repairing the foundation and stucco. The exterior was primed and received two coats of paint. Larry Hofmann says the work was done over 4 years and completed in December 2023.

Larry's grandfather and Charlie's father, Emil, started the bee business in 1903, literally by accident. At the time, Emil was raising livestock and farming. One day, Emil noticed a large swarm of bees on a bush near the house. He set up a makeshift hive, and the bees crawled in. Within 4 years, Emil became a full-time beekeeper, and the rest is history.

Old German Owl Pigeons Have Personality

Bill Henderson has raised about 20 different breeds of showing pigeons for the past 40 years, but 15 years ago, he decided to raise just one—the Old German Owl.

"For me, they're perfect. They're relatively easy to house and maintain. But the standards (for showing) are strict, and I enjoy the challenge," he says.

The name comes from their country of origin, round head shape, and distinctive black eyes. Old German Owl pigeons are relatively small and naturally tame.

"They'll pull on my shoestrings, land on my shoulder, and peck at my finger," Henderson says of their pet-like and friendly personalities.

He keeps eight breeder pairs comfortable in a meticulously clean pigeon loft and pays attention to the birds' markings to follow the breed's strict standards. The body, head, and neck should be white, and the wing shield should be colored. When the wings are open, the furthest flight feathers should be white.

"It's a combination of the general shape of the bird, a crest on the back of the head, and the way the bird stands," he says of the breed's standards.

Though they have shorter beaks, Old German Owls don't have problems feeding their young like some pigeon breeds. They tend to be good parents and easy to breed.

Pairs typically sell for \$200, though he once sold a pair for \$500 at an auction. Henderson says that the National Pigeon Association (www.npaua.com) and Old German Owl Club (www.ogoc.org) are good sources for more information.



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The Old German Owl breed has become very popular in the last 10 years, though Henderson notes the hobby of breeding pigeons is declining in part because of the restrictions on pigeon lofts in some communities.

"It's truly a passion and has been a great hobby for me," Henderson says. "I've been to Europe twice, and some of my closest friends are pigeon raisers."

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The Hofmann Apiaries ran continuously for more than 80 years.

Larry Hofmann says the recently restored honey house was built in 1924 to serve as a new and modern facility. The two-story honey house was added to the old hog barn that Emil had converted into his first honey house. The new honey house was modern and efficient and was the focus of an article in a 1925 issue of the American Bee Journal. The writer called it one of the most extensive and perfectly arranged facilities he'd ever seen among the hundreds he'd visited. A later article in the same publication mentioned a 1928 beekeepers' meeting at the Hofmann Apiary, calling Emil one of the best, most successful, and extensive beekeepers in the U.S.

Hofmann's bees thrived on the large and fragrant blooms of alsike clover, which he grew on his farm beginning in 1906. He interested other farmers in the crop and even provided custom seed hulling services. The Janesville area became one of the largest hulling centers for alsike clover in the U.S.

The honey house contributed significantly to the apiary's success by allowing efficient extraction and packaging. In 1929, Emil shipped 50,000 lbs. of honey to a Minneapolis warehouse, only to see prices plummet during the stock market crash. His farm went bankrupt, and the following 4 years were chaotic because of drought, wind, dust, hail, and large secondary mortgages on his farm. Emil died in 1934, and his son Charlie, at age 26, took over and eventually paid off all his father's debts. He ran the business until 1985 and sold it to a new owner who kept bees there for another 10 years.

Larry Hofmann says that while preserving the honey house and wax shed is important to the family's beekeeping heritage, an added benefit is that when students and others visit, they can experience, appreciate, and understand the value of beekeeping to our society.

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Honey was extracted from hives on the upper level of the barn and flowed to packaging on the lower level.