

Old barn gets new life in Carrollton

By **MALCOLM HALL**
GateHouse Media Ohio

For more than four decades, Alan Walter has felt a loss with the fiery destruction of a barn in his neighborhood.

But through an arduous effort, Walter has filled that void by literally dismantling and transporting an antique barn a distance of about 25 miles to his home. The barn, which Walter took apart and rebuilt, was discovered in the Tuscarawas County community of Strasburg.

"I have 30 acres right here in the city (village) limits," said Walter, who operates tree farms. "An old barn on the property burned down. That would have been in the early 1970s. I just like the construction of the old barns. They just don't make them like that anymore."

Walter's property is in the 500 block of 11th Street NW. He was in his youth when the barn he remembers so fondly burned down. At the time, his family did not own the property. But he has since acquired the land.

It was through his sister that Walter learned of the antique barn in the Strasburg area.

"I had been telling people I was interested in obtaining a barn," Walter said. "It had been built in 1880 or something. It had sat empty for about 10 years."

And he was determined to bring it home to Carrollton. Walter purchased the barn from Dave and Bonnie Jones, who had no use for the structure.

BARN WENT FOR \$2,000

"It only cost \$2,000," Walter said. "To buy an old barn is not that expensive. You are probably going to spend more than \$2,000 tearing it down."

The Joneses desired to

build a new house on their property.

"We bought the property at auction," Bonnie Jones said. "It was a potato barn. It was the barn that they ran the business out of. That barn was in bad shape. We didn't just want to bulldoze it down because of its history. We wanted the barn to live on. Where the barn was is where our house sits."

The exterior was covered with tar paper. And the roof was in a state of deterioration.

But Walter "literally took it apart and put it back together like a jigsaw puzzle," he said. "The entire barn fit on one flatbed semi-truck trailer."

The project to dismantle the barn and move it to Carrollton began about two years ago. One of the first tasks Walter undertook was removing the tar paper which was fastened to the exterior of the barn with nails. He wound up with three five-gallon buckets full of nails.

"I recycled them," Walter said. "I kept a couple for conversation sake."

Walter, 54, is a former project engineer for the Timken Co. He also is a member of a preservation group known as Friends of Ohio Barns. That organization seeks to promote awareness and education about the historic and cultural significance of barns in Ohio.

"They are very historical," said Pam Gray of Mount Vernon, president of Friends of Ohio Barns.

"Barns that were built that early were built with wood that was harvested from the virgin forest. There are no virgin forests around anymore. They were built with great craftsmanship. We have gone from the beautiful timber-frame buildings to a pole structure."

NO ANIMALS INSIDE BARN

To erect the structure in Carrollton, Walter had to secure a building permit.

"I did have to get a zoning variance because of its size," he said. "I couldn't be raising animals in it."

What Walter is using the barn for is storing some of his farming implements. The structure is 2,556 square feet. The gable post is 22 feet high. That is the post which runs from the floor to the highest part of the ceiling.

When it came to dismantling the heavy components, such as the timber frame inside, Walter called on Myron Graber, who operates Sugar Creek Builders.

"His crew did the re-assembly," Walter said. "They put the structure back up for me. I did the painting and the caulking. It was late August before I was done with the painting. The new siding is eastern hemlock. It is kind of soft like pine, but it is more rot-

resistant."

The white oak beams and posts have been reinstalled inside the barn.

"Our company specializes in dismantling timber-frame structures," Graber said. "We re-erect them for a new venue. His was actually one of the more simpler ones because there wasn't a lot of interior finishes involved. The barn is pretty well historically accurate. On the interior, it is probably 90 percent what it was in the 1800s."

However, Walter discovered he did have to make some structural upgrades. For instance, the sheet metal roof is new. Also, new doors were installed.

"The old doors I threw away," Walter said. "They weren't really salvageable. They were not original to the barn anyway. The doors, I am thinking, were installed in the 1960s just based on the construction style."

In addition, he added some windows to the barn. "Just to give more natu-



Ray Stewart, GateHouse Media Ohio

Alan Walter took additional steps to preserve the structure for generations to come, including a pillar foundation, insulation wrap, new windows and hemlock walls on the outside.

ral light when you are inside the barn," Walter said. "Not so gloomy when you are inside the barn."

Despite the barn's historic and antique quality, Walter at the moment does not harbor ideas to offer it to the public as a novelty item, such as a museum.

"I am thinking that after

I am dead it will have a different use," Walter said. "I doubt it if anyone else will do any farming inside Carrollton after I am gone. It is becoming popular converting barns into bed and breakfasts, wineries. That did not interest me. I just wanted a place to store things."



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