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# An Antique Barn for a Modern 'Brady Bunch'

A blended family needed more space. The solution was to import an 18th-century barn.

By TIM MCKEOUGH

When John B. Murray bought 98 acres of rolling farmland in Kinderhook, N.Y., in 1997, he was thinking about building a house of his own there. There was one catch: A 19th-century Greek Revival house was already on the property, and Mr. Murray, an architect, could see that with some loving restoration, it would be a remarkable home.

So he dropped the idea of building a place from scratch and spent the next year renovating the three-bedroom house — although he had an inkling that it might be too tight as his three young sons grew up.

"It's a tiny house," said Mr. Murray, 64, the founder of a Manhattan architecture firm that designs contemporary homes rooted in classical principles. "It's just a hair over 2,600 square feet." By 2009, Mr. Murray needed more living space, so he began studying the stone remnants of a barn that had once stood on the property. If he could rebuild it, he figured, he could design it as a space for people, rather than for livestock and hay.

To make it look as authentic as possible, Mr. Murray turned to the New Jersey Barn Company to help him find an antique barn frame that could be dismantled, moved and reassembled on his land. As it turned out, the company knew just the structure: a dilapidated barn from about 1780 still standing in a field in Locktown, N.J., whose owner wanted it gone.

When Mr. Murray visited the barn with his sons, the interior was dark and dank, and he had to stoop to avoid hitting his head while walking between animal stalls on the



PHOTOGRAPH BY TONY DODD/OLGA PEREVA FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES



lower level. "There was a lot of reading between the lines," he said.

Nevertheless, he was able to see through the grime to the thing he really wanted: a hand-hewn, white-oak frame with unique "gunstock" posts, chiseled Roman numeral "marriage marks" indicating how the various pieces slotted together, and some timbers so rustic that they still had bark on them. "I had a certain amount of confidence that it could be really beautiful," he said.

But after he bought the barn and had it dismantled and moved to his property, it sat for about five years as he became busy with life and work. By 2014, he was preparing to marry someone with three grown sons of her own, Elizabeth Heitman Brooke Murray, 59, who later became the managing director of Mr. Murray's architecture firm. With a new wife and more children to create space for, he moved the project into high gear.

In May of that year, the New Jersey Barn Company reassembled the frame on a stone foundation that raised the structure about two feet higher than it had been in Locktown, creating a more generous ceiling for an expansive game room.

Mr. Murray's design wrapped the frame with new hemlock shiplap boards, followed by insulated panels and clapboard siding on the exterior. He found a 19th-century threshing floor in Pennsylvania, pock-marked by horse hooves and wagon wheels, for the main living level upstairs. He designed a kitchen with rustic white-oak cabinets and soapstone counters, and then a sleeping loft above it with a balustrade made of galvanized lag wire.

Inspired by Thomas Jefferson's weather vane at Monticello, he added a cupola to the roof with windows for light and air, along with a weather vane that indicates wind direction on a ceiling-mounted compass rose inside the barn. And drawing from the utilitarian simplicity of nearby Hancock Shaker Village, he and Ms. Brooke Murray took precise measurements of a large Shaker harvest table to create their own 16½-foot version, for a dining area that seats 14 people.

While the barn's 5,150-square-foot interior projects rustic country living, it conceals modern technology. Under-floor radiant heating delivers warmth in winter. There is no air-conditioning, but motorized out-facing windows in the cupola provide ventilation in the summer. And the main living space has a retractable screen and hidden speakers for family movie nights.

By the summer of 2015, hoping to set a deadline that would force them to finish the project, the Murrays invited family and friends to a celebratory dinner. "It was a way to make sure that we really got the doors on," Ms. Brooke Murray said. "And it was the first test of the space."

The doors were mounted, Mr. Murray turned up in his cowboy hat, and the disconnect of without a hitch, although some of the finishing touches and the landscaping weren't completed until early 2016. After

A functional touch of whimsy near a Greek Revival house.



Top, a weather vane on the barn's ceiling was inspired by Thomas Jefferson's version at Monticello. Above, the barn's "gunstock" posts.

spending about \$160,000 to buy, move and reassemble the barn frame, the remainder of the construction cost about \$300 a square foot.

Now the whole "Brady Bunch"-size family can gather at the barn (which will be included in Mr. Murray's new book, "Contemporary Classical Architecture," to be published in September by the Monacelli Press) without fear of stepping on each other's toes.

"It was a labor of love," Mr. Murray said. "But it's not precious. It's really meant to be used."

Left, John B. Murray and his wife, Elizabeth Heitman Brooke Murray, at their home in Kinderhook, N.Y. Top, they created more room by adding an 18th-century barn frame (right) near their Greek Revival house (background). Above, from left: the barn's loft, where guests can spend the night; and the dining area, with its Shaker-inspired custom-made table.



Above, the open living space in the barn, which connects to a dining area below left. Mr. Murray, who is an architect, turned to the New Jersey Barn Company to help him find an antique barn. As part of his design, the frame was wrapped with new hemlock shiplap boards, followed by insulated panels and clapboard siding on the exterior.