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# Northern Ohio Live



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a Heart**

**Cynthia Barnes,  
WOIO News Anchor**

## One People, Many Voices

**A Diversity of Opinions for the 21st Century**



northern ohio homes



Out to  
pasture?



# Barnstorming

Instead of putting an old barn out to pasture,

Tim Franklin turned it into his family home

by Diane DiPiero

Who would date a man who lived in a barn?

Designer-builder Tim Franklin must have asked himself that question when he thought about beginning a family, a woman in his home, a 180-year Old outbuilding in Bath Township.

Though Franklin had made miraculous strides in restoring the once-ramshackle residence, which he had bought in 1993, he hadn't done much with the interior.

"I was sleeping on a mattress on the floor," Franklin recalls. "I had a picnic table painted pea green for a dining room table."

Hardly the kind of interior design that would impress a woman. But Franklin had a plan. "I did the structural changes myself, but I wanted to wait on decorating the interior until I found someone, so we could do it together."

"I would start talking about houses, old barns and hope that special someone would appreciate big spaces with high ceilings and tall windows" laughed Tim.

Although the ceilings and windows weren't the problem. Franklin had spent years on his barn, replaced rotted-out exterior siding with sturdier wood. Inside, pig troughs were removed, as were a family of bats that had made the barn their home. The original floor beams were scrubbed with a wire brush machine and power-washed to make them clean and smooth. The structure's sturdy, 38-foot-tall support beams were restored to their original beauty.

Four-by-eight paned windows were installed so beams of sunlight could playfully bounce through the 6,600-square-foot loft space.

If he could keep that special someone's eye on the architecture and off the pea green dining table, he just might have a chance.

As it turns out, Tim eventually married and has recently become the proud parent of a baby girl.

Today, Tim's home looks — and feels — complete. As you enter through glass-fronted doors heralded by dried floral arrangements, you immediately notice the warmth of Mexican tile flooring. On the first floor, doors lead to exercise, laundry and sewing rooms, while the living areas and sleeping quarters are on the



second and third floors. Looking up from the first level to the time-worn rafters of the 27-foot lofted ceiling is like looking up into the sky.

Stairs made of recycled beams direct you to the bright, open second floor featuring a kitchen with a galley-style pantry behind it, dining and living areas and a massive fireplace that anchors the space. The kitchen is clean and white without being sterile. In the living area, pear wood furniture has a lustrous sheen.

In the opposite corner of the room sits Tim's office, his computer and other equipment cleverly hidden behind custom-designed wood cabinets.

Throughout the space, the large windows allow ample views of the Franklins' bucolic property, where halogen lighting casts a soft glow in the evenings.

The third floor accommodates a recreation room — complete with an oak pool table that Tim designed — and the master bedroom/bath, which is built into the eaves. The bedroom's pitched roof gets a bright boost from skylights.

The Franklins' house is a study in contrasts — open but very intimate; old architecture foiled by contemporary furniture (all of it, by the way,

conceptualized by the Franklins and designed by Tim). "The whole theme is old and new mixed," he says. "I wanted to show that the two can work well together.'

But the biggest contrast of all is the idea of taking a dilapidated barn and turning it into not just a nice family home, but a real showplace. Looking at a picture of the barn taken just ten years ago — with its deteriorating doors and gaping holes in the siding — and seeing it today, you can understand what an enormous undertaking this must have been. It takes someone with vision and an unsinkable spirit to accomplish such a task.

With his passion for renovation and restoration work, Tim rose to the occasion. Even in its horrible state of disrepair, he appreciated the historical and architectural significance of the structure, along with the structure's fine craftsmanship.

The two-acre property on which the barn sits was part of a vast tract of land bought from the Connecticut Land Grant by local settler Nathan Hale. When he arrived on the property, Hale discovered several German immigrants already living there, but he allowed them to stay. The German squatters built three family homes and this barn, which they shared. The mortise and tenon construction of the barn features massive pegs instead of nails.

The beams were hand-hewn with axes. Do you know how long that would have taken?" asks Franklin, clearly still in awe of the squatters' handiwork.

The barn continued to be used well into the 20th century, but by the time Tim bought it, the place had been abandoned and was a shell of its former self. Some of the original siding that was salvageable was used for a fence now surrounding the property. Ladders, pulleys and trap doors used by farmers to bring in hay bales had been kept intact.

"I took it down to its rafters and built it back up," he says. "I tried to recycle as much of the existing materials as possible. "

In his revamping, Tim had to accommodate the expansive square footage and the high ceilings. Doorways are eight feet high instead of the standard six-feet-eight-inches.



An entertainment center in the living area runs the entire length between the kitchen and the outer wall. A storage cabinet in the dining room is built into the beams so it looks as though it is floating.

How to heat such a grand structure without putting the checking account in a deep freeze?

Tim chose stressed skin panels — dense, compact particle boards that resemble Styrofoam — to insulate the walls and roof and installed radiant heat under concrete flooring in two loft areas. With the thermostat set at about 70 degrees in the winter, the Franklins' heating bill averages around \$170 a month.



For Tim, revamping the barn was rewarding, but starting his family in it was the most rewarding.

"I came up with the styles we liked, and I drew them up," Tim says. "I worked on the architecture and design the furniture to make it our house.

Now, the Franklin is sharing his converted barn with his cats and dogs and his new baby, with plenty of room for expansion.

"This is my home," says Tim.

"I am going to stay here forever."