



## *This Ole House*

This ole house once rang with laughter,  
this ole house heard many shouts  
Now it trembles in the darkness when  
the lightnin' walks about

This ole house is a-gettin' shaky, this ole  
house is a-gettin' old  
This ole house lets in the rain, this ole  
house lets in the cold

This ole house is afraid of thunder, this  
ole house is afraid of storms  
This ole house just groans and trembles  
when the night wind flings its arms

Ain't a-gonna need this house no longer,  
ain't a-gonna need this house no more  
Ain't got time to fix the shingles, ain't got  
time to fix the floor

Ain't got time to oil the hinges, nor to  
mend the windowpanes  
Ain't a-gonna need this house no longer,  
I'm a-gettin' ready to meet the saints.

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# This Old House

When last we left off with Tim & Cindy's story (*"From Lehigh to Lancaster," Winter 2010-11 Issue*), their yet-to-be house was safely stored inside their new barn. It still sounds odd....a house in storage. But that's exactly where their house was — in the barn! All the timbers, flooring, siding, trims, etc., etc.

Tim & Cindy had purchased a c. 1788 Connecticut house that had been saved from the bulldozer. (*see Cover*) Although it had been dismantled in 2002 for re-sale and stored in several tractor-trailers, Tim & Cindy — who had been searching for an 18th century house to reconstruct — stumbled across this house "package" on the internet six years later, in 2008. Now, I remember marveling at the fact that one of our clients had purchased all her bathroom fixtures — even the claw-foot tub — off the internet. But, an entire house?...basically in a million pieces....with only a few old photos posted on the web to indicate what the piles of old wood were supposed to represent. Talk about a leap of faith!!

Well, they took that leap, bought the package, and left it in storage in Connecticut. Then, armed with their packet of old photos and drawings provided by the seller, they contacted Cox Evans Architects in Lancaster to design a new, larger home using this dismantled house as the centerpiece.

While they were in the design phase, Tim decided that he needed to get the barn constructed prior to the house, and that's about when Restore 'N More came into the picture. (*see the Winter 2010-11 issue*) As the barn construction was winding down, Tim & Cindy asked our Don Delp to get the building package moved down here. Storage costs were a constant financial drain, and now that the barn was nearly complete, the house could be stored in their own barn at no cost.

Cox Evans had completed the drawings for the house, so Tim asked Gary to provide an estimate to reconstruct the house and build the new additions. Actually doing it was still several years out; they had a financial plan in place and the house construction had to wait a couple years.

Since there were no specifications drawn up yet, this house could be built a dozen different ways, with a multi-



tude of different finishes. Gary and Don decided to attack this massive undertaking from two different directions.

Gary came at it from the direction of the purely traditional or period way of constructing the entire structure — both the

original timber-frame house and the new addition — using mostly period or vintage materials. Don tackled it from a cost-saving way using as many modern methods and materials as possible without sacrificing the "period style" appearance. Tim & Cindy eventually chose to take the middle road, blending some of each.

And as luck would have it, Tim & Cindy found that they could afford to begin construction far sooner than they expected.

Now, we had built the barn according to where the house was thought to be situated, but that proposed area was pretty well overgrown with brush and poor quality trees. Tim & Cindy earmarked a few best trees to save so they wouldn't have to wait ten or twenty years to have shade around the house; however, that still left a lot of trees to be removed and a lot more limbs and brush to be moved and piled up. Dennis and Don undertook clearing all the trees. (**Photo #1**) As the trees came down, the stumps were left standing tall so the equipment operators could easily latch onto them and rip them out of the ground, roots and all. (**Photo #2**) The operators pushed all the limbs and brush into one pile for burning and all the sizable logs onto another pile for future firewood.





All the stumps got pushed into another pile, also for burning.

Once the building site was cleared, Don, Dennis, Tim & Cindy laid out the house footprint using spray paint directly on the ground. This exercise went on several times, taking into account elevations, the natural slope of the ground, the orientation toward the barn, the existing trees, and perhaps most important, the view of the Conestoga.



Before anything could proceed, we needed to provide erosion control. Since everything slopes towards the Conestoga, this was an important consideration of this project. River Valley Landscaping installed “silt sox.” (Photo #3) Looking like enormous fish-net stockings — large enough for an elephant’s legs — the mesh tubes were blown full with mulch and staked in place. Eventually the biodegradable silt sox degrade and you’re left with a string of natural wood chip mulch.

The excavators then moved in and carved out a huge hole. (Photo #4) ‘Til all the digging was completed, the back of the house’s foundation sits squarely on sandstone bedrock. This area near the Conestoga is made up of very sandy soil, but it’s highly compacted. The masons had to literally drill the soil just to get rebar inserted to form the footers. As you can see in the photo (#5), the footers had several offsets making this a little more complicated than usual. And, they had to form and pour a huge 12’ x 12’ x 2’ thick footer and pad to serve as the base for all the central fireplaces. (left of photo)



Once the footers were poured and set, the foundation crews erected aluminum forms for the poured concrete walls. (Photo #6) Although the forms go up very quickly, there’s a lot a preparation that goes into them beforehand. Every opening or hole for foundation level (basement) windows and doors, as well as plumbing and electrical portals,

must be incorporated into the forms prior to pouring the concrete. Then, just prior to pouring the concrete, the interior of the forms are sprayed with a petroleum product that prevents the concrete from sticking to the forms. (Photo #7)



The concrete is then pumped into the forms (Photo #8); one man feeds the concrete through an overhead chute, another vibrates the mixture with a long bar, assuring there are no air pockets in the wall. The forms are then stripped off several days later. Because of the cold weather, the forms were blanketed to trap the heat in until the concrete could harden slowly.

Most of the concrete walls had a built-in ledge at the base of the wall to accommodate the stone veneer. But some areas of wall had to have a ledge built into them; Sonny Weaver did that with block. **(Photo #9)** Sonny also laid up a 3-sided base for the central fireplaces **(Photo #10)**, full height of the basement, and then poured another reinforced concrete slab on top of that. The open side of the base would become a large alcove in which Tim could store firewood and also install a wood stove. Altogether, there would be three fireplaces on the upper floors, as well as a bake-oven, and the wood stove in the basement.

Even though it was still winter, this project couldn't sit still. The stone masons rolled onto the site ready to lay up the stone veneer. They spent weeks working inside and under heated tents built out from the walls.

Back-to-back snow storms also had everyone — masons, carpenters, everyone! — digging snow just so they could continue working. Thankfully, the weather gave them a break and they could work without tents. **(Photo #11)**

The masons laid up a fake vertical joint at one end of the house so that it would appear that the new additions were built at a later era than the old house. The masons also used smaller stones in that “new” section and incorporated gray



stones from the previous barn project; another way to make that section of the foundation look slightly different from the “old” house section.

While the masons were laying stone, Dennis and Don were in the barn busy assessing the “house package” and what they had to work with for framing timbers. They discovered that there were a large number of floor joists that were broken or rotten or had already been tweaked from a previous house move. (This is actually the third location for this old house.) The decision was made to use new timbers cut to the same

dimension as the original. Steve and Ryan Sload recreated the old timber joists using half-lap joinery. **(Photo #12)** The new “old” joists were then set in place with assistance of an all-terrain forklift — better known in the trades as a “pettibone.” **(Photo #13)**

With the joists set, the very tricky process of putting together the big puzzle — the timber-frame house — could commence. Tune in next issue for another episode of This Old Connecticut-Pennsylvania House. ❁



# Gary's Exceptional Excerpts

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## Clearing the Land

Most of the Germans who began migrating to America in the late 17th century were farmers. ...

The area the emigrants left was known as the garden region of Europe, and the newcomers were recognized for their efficient farming methods. .... In Pennsylvania they found the productivity of the soil and the topography similar to that of their homeland. .... Generally conservative, Pennsylvania Germans tended to live among themselves and to marry within their group (many were pacifists), retaining many of their own customs, traditions, and superstitions, as well as their native language, a dialect which persists to this day, particularly among older members of the community and among the Plain religious sects. Some of their farm and land-use practices were also employed by other ethnic groups, but many were attributed first to these frugal, dependable, and hardworking early German settlers.

### *Clearing the land*

After a site was selected and the title of ownership assured, the early Pennsylvania German settler's first priority was to clear the land of trees, brush, and stones. Clearing the forest proved to be very dangerous work, and many men were injured or killed by falling trees. The German practice of cutting trees, rather than girdling them as did the English and Scots-Irish, allowed them to put the land to the best possible use in the shortest possible time. With a team of horses or oxen and using axes, cant and brush hooks, chains, brush scythes, and perhaps a saw, the trees were felled, their branches cut off, and their trunks cut into lengths that could be handled. The wood was used for various building purposes or for fuel. There was little or no market for timber, but since the bark of the hemlock and certain other trees was used for tanning there was some demand for it, and it was peeled off with a chisel-like tool called a spud.

The brush, the smaller trees, the tree limbs, and any unsuitable logs (known collectively as "slashing") were piled up and allowed to dry. Then, when weather

conditions were suitable and enough family members available to control the fire and keep it from spreading, the piles were burned. (The ashes from such fires proved invaluable in improving the productivity of the soil.) The next job was removing the tree stumps, and this was done by chopping, grubbing, and burning — hard, grueling work. Teams of horses or oxen were also used in extreme cases. In later years there were many different kinds of stump extractors used, some operated manually, others by horsepower or steam engine. Stumps which were not removed deteriorated very slowly, many lasting from ten to fifty years or more.

Even after the ground had been cleared of trees, brush, and stumps there were still roots, stones, knolls, and hollows with which to contend, and many years were required to level off such areas and make them suitable for easy and proper cultivation. Referred to as "new ground," these acres of virgin forest cleared for cultivation would soon be reforested if not used for farming or grazing. This ground-clearing process was an extremely important one; the more farmland available, the more crops that could be grown and the more animals that could be kept to produce the fertilizer that made that farmland even more productive.

In addition to providing the early settlers with building materials and fuel as it was cleared for farming, the forest was also the source of meat, fur, fruit, nuts, and maple syrup, as well as many different kinds of leaves, barks, and plants which were gathered in season and used for teas and for medicinal purposes. Even today the woodlot continues to be an important consideration when buying or selling a farm. Except in some areas of intensive cultivation, almost every farm has one on or adjacent to the property or on mountain land nearby. The amount of woodland varies from farm to farm depending on location and size, ranging from one to many acres. Properly managed, such woodlots continue to provide logs for structural timber, fencing, and fuel.



*Gary*

# Animal Crackers



You know the old adage, "New house, new baby." Tim & Cindy and their three youngsters, now moved into their new-old house, have recently fulfilled that

old saw. Not that there's a new

sibling to add to their brood. Instead, there's a brood

of day-old peeps in the basement....probably just as fascinating for 4-year old Thomas. This little clutch of chicks is, perhaps, the very beginnings of what might become Old MacDonald's Farm along the Conestoga. (I have a feeling there may be a few goats in the future.)

Hearing of their recent foray into animal husbandry, it had some of us here thinking back to all the other animals that have made their way into our newsletters. This is supposed to be a newsletter dedicated to our clients' projects, but it seems that their 4-legged family members (and now their feathered friends) oft times get equal billing. And sometimes it has been the unwelcome antics of our area's wild creatures that demand space on these pages.

For whatever reason the animal kingdom manages to finagle its way onto these pages, it has never been without a good dose of humor. All God's creatures — domesticated and otherwise — tend to prove the point that we humans really are not in charge; we just think we are. The exploits of Elmer Fudd and Bugs Bunny are

not just the stuff of kids' cartoons. What gardener hasn't declared war on some persistent, offending raider of the vegetable or berry patch? Where is the homeowner that hasn't been frustrated at least once in an attempt to outwit or eradicate even just a little house-mouse? Critters can be confounding!

And the first confounding critter that made it onto these pages was, of all things, a fledgling pair of black vultures that were living in Rush & Phoebe's attic.

(Read about it on our website, Summer 2002 newsletter)

You want to talk about creepy critters? Vultures are definitely creepy! But it was Don's and the crew's job to herd them down the attic stairs, down the next flight of stairs, and out the door... that must have been comical. Who ever thought that herding vultures would be part of a job description?!

Then there was Alvin and his band of merry chipmunks that did a darn good job of outwitting Mike and Gary....well, until Gary finally decided

to sit down on the job. Literally.

(Spring 2008 newsletter, also on our website) Of all creatures great and small, I think chipmunks are the most adorable. I could spend hours watching them scurry about a stone or log pile, stuffing their cheeks to unbelievable proportions



*Vultures at home in the attic*



with food, their little tails straight up like a short antenna. They are cute. But they can be very destructive in attempts to gain entry to your house. That's when they ain't so cute anymore.

Of course, there are always the 4-legged creatures that we call our friends, even family members. Like, the six-hundred and twenty-five pounds of hounds that fill Steve & Mary Ellen's house. (*Spring 2009. Check it out.*) Certain aspects of Steve & Mary Ellen's project were driven by the need to accommodate the wear-&-tear of four monstrous Irish Wolfhounds running pell-mell through the house in their attempts to race each other to the door.



*625 pounds of hounds, plus their humans. From left to right: Rodeo, the clown & the youngest; Mary Ellen; Tierney, the sweetest & biggest (170 pounds!); Piper, the watchdog; Steve; and, Finn, the curmudgeon, beer-drinking male & the oldest.*



The very next issue — Summer 2009 — found another critter on the pages of our newsletter. A certain groundhog invited himself into the Old Leacock Presbyterian Church to listen to the organist while she practiced.

Unfortunately, he took a nap and didn't leave when practice was over. His efforts to escape his self-imposed imprisonment were daunting. As he scratched and chewed at the window frames, he must have been singing "Like a bird from prison bars has flown, I'll fly away.....I'll fly away, Oh Glory. I'll fly away!" I don't think he'll ever be invited back to Old Leacock.



*Toonces*

Most recently, royalty graced the cover of Fall 2010. Toonces (aka: Princess), Paul & Pam's cat — Duh, with a name like Toonces, it had to be a cat — left her mark, literally, on the final touches of this very beautiful project. Cats have been domesticated for thousands of years, but they still don't live by our rules. It's more like we live by their rules once we invite them into our homes. And, according to Toonces' rules, no room was off-limit, even if it did just have a fresh, new, sticky coat of polyurethane applied to the floor.

Yes, we've given animals their due credits — for good or for bad — in our newsletters, and will continue to do so. After all, animals weren't created as an afterthought. They're an important part of our world....even Restore 'N More's world.

What it boils down to is, Elmer Fudd just wouldn't be Elmer Fudd if it wasn't for Bugs Bunny.

Go to our Newsletter Archives at [www.restoremore.com](http://www.restoremore.com) and fish around for more animal anecdotes. While you're there, make sure you read Gary's Exceptional Excerpts, "Moving Stone," in the Spring 2005 issue. It still cracks me up. ☺

But they said,  
"slight chance  
of rain."



# Looking forward

“See! The winter is past; the rains are over and gone. Flowers appear on the earth; the season of singing has come...”

—Song of Songs 2:11-12a NIV

“February 2, Groundhog Day. If that mangy prognosticator sees his shadow, I’m calling Elmer Fudd!” Those were my thoughts a month ago. I don’t know about you, but this winter seemed to drag on forever. But here it is, the beginning of March, and the rains and strong winds (and one deliciously warm day) have given me back a sure sense of anticipation of spring. It also helps that I found some tulip leaves pushing through the mulch on the south side of the house. Thank you!!

I’m certain the guys were also eagerly awaiting the sure signs that winter is over. It’s been a long, hard one for them, too. Bad road conditions (Dennis can tell you all about that!), no breaks in the bitter cold, snow in the middle of the week, snow at the end of the week, and ice on top of that. One week was no different from the next. And yet, despite the adversities, the guys kept the projects moving forward. They are amazingly talented and tough men.

But now it is Spring! And we have some great projects to tell you about in upcoming issues. Of course, we’ll be continuing Tim & Cindy’s story throughout the year. What a fantastic story! Plus, stories from Historic Odessa (DE) and other points around Pennsylvania. And, we have our own remodeling project to show you in the months ahead....that of our website.

We all have a lot to look forward to. And we sure are looking forward to your next project.

Be joyful always... *Dennis*

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