



MARC
LANOUE

restorationist

'98

Preserving Our Heritage

Marc Lanoue '98 and his father David don't simply renovate old buildings—they are dedicated to seeking out and restoring New England's hidden architectural treasures for an entirely new generation to appreciate. The duo also hosts workshops at their complex in Great Barrington, MA, focusing on the development of local carpenters and students, and infusing old New England wisdom into every aspect of their teachings. While Lanoue Inc. has grown from humble beginnings into the highly successful operation it is today, Mr. Lanoue and his father have never forgotten just how important the local community will always be to their success. "We really take pride in building great buildings," admits Mr. Lanoue. "It somehow seems to add a lot to the collective good when someone builds a good building."

One of their most recent acquisitions, the "Connecticut River Valley Barn," which came into the Lanoues' possession via Historic Deerfield, is a powerful testament to that idea. The barn, originally built in 1789, is considered to be the oldest barn in the

Valley. Of course the rarity and age of this structure drew Lanoue Inc. toward the restoration project, but their foremost interest in the structure was the unique opportunity it offered to gain further insight into the techniques used by colonial carpenters. The buffs and scratches left behind by hand-forged tools weave a story across each wall of the centuries-old building. "The barn has many interesting features and markings from that time," explains Mr. Lanoue. "It is extremely unique."

As a for-profit business, renovation is only one stretch of the road toward success for the team. "We go out of our way to save early, significant, and special buildings, almost always on our own dime at first, before a customer is found," says Mr. Lanoue. "Actually, it is quite an investment." Attention to detail and loyalty to each structure's historic significance only compliments an already robust repertoire: "These buildings won't last forever and are often in need of repair; we do nearly everything in an historically accurate manner—right down to the methods

Courtesy of Marc Lanoue





*“The (Connecticut River Valley) barn is truly unique in that it features very large tie beams joined to plates with lapped dovetails and joined into very large gunstock posts via teasel tenons—classic English tying joints. The barn roof system is framed more like a meeting house than a barn, featuring principle rafters joined to the tying beams supported by raking struts, staggered purlins framed into the principle rafters, and pole rafters step-lapped over the plates and framed into a ridgepole with braces framed between the principle rafters and the ridgepole on the plane of the roof! The sidewalls feature vertical oak studs that support horizontal weatherboards, feather-edged and secured with early wrought nails. We even found remnants of the original sill system. This well-cared for barn must have been very important to someone to have survived to this day.”**

we use to make repairs—they’re the same as those people would have used back then—such as hand-hewing the timber and preserving most of the original boards and planking,” explains Mr. Lanoue.

Unfortunately, until a buyer is found for this particular project, the frame and major parts of the Connecticut River Valley Barn will remain in storage at David E. Lanoue Inc. headquarters, gradually receiving care whenever a rare chunk of free time appears. “Right now there is no set date for the preservation,” says Mr. Lanoue.

“The frame gets an initial cleaning in our shop and we will chip away at the repairs while we get the word out.”

Ironically, waiting is often the nature of restoration, but the team fully expects the barn to see the sun again, right where it belongs, somewhere in the Valley. “We’ve done projects as far away as California,” says Mr. Lanoue. “But in this case we’d love to set the barn up in a place where it could have stood when it was first built.” ■ ■