

Case Study Salvage Barn

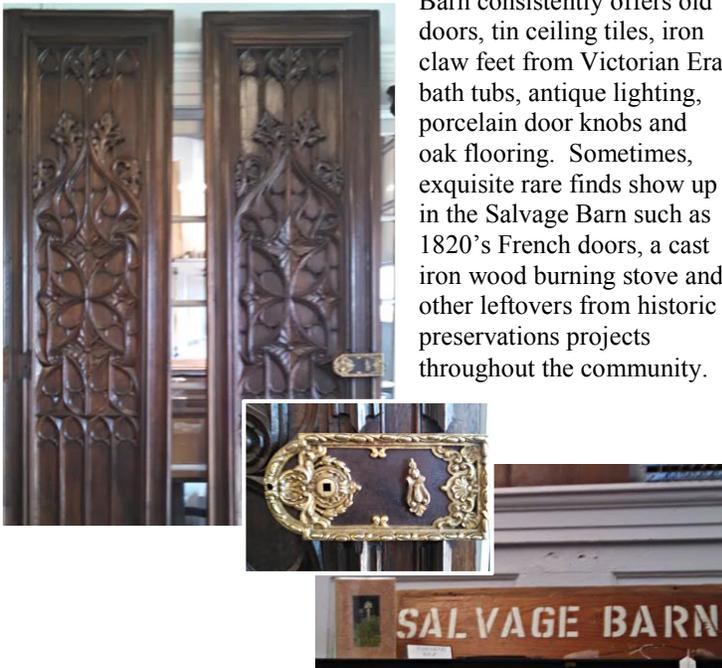
Iowa City

Overview

When accuracy of period design is a must in renovation, the Salvage Barn in Iowa City is the perfect place to find historical architectural items greater than 50 years old. The Salvage Barn got its start when contractor Roger Gwinnup struck a deal with Friends of Historic Preservation, a local Iowa City organization, and the City of Iowa City. Gwinnup had amassed a large collection of items from years of renovation projects and decided that the best place for them was in a resale shop where he donated many of his treasures. In 1993, the Salvage Barn began as a small endeavor located at the Iowa City Landfill in an effort to divert materials from disposal. In 2012, the success of the Salvage Barn warranted a change of location to Scott Boulevard where a bigger facility resulted in an increase of sales by 300%.

In 2013, more than 80 tons of material was diverted from the landfill through donations to the Salvage Barn from renovation projects at the University of Iowa and surrounding areas. One of the most sought after items purchased that year was Mediterranean clay roof tiles from 1928 that sold for a total of \$8,000. In addition to these rare clay tiles, the Salvage

Barn consistently offers old doors, tin ceiling tiles, iron claw feet from Victorian Era bath tubs, antique lighting, porcelain door knobs and oak flooring. Sometimes, exquisite rare finds show up in the Salvage Barn such as 1820's French doors, a cast iron wood burning stove and other leftovers from historic preservations projects throughout the community.



The Many Tasks of the Salvage Barn

The Salvage Barn employs two people who run the shop and take part in deconstruction projects. Alicia Trimble manages the Salvage Barn and states that during the last



year over 100 volunteers helped with deconstruction projects, mailings, bookkeeping, cleaning salvaged items and unloading materials. Volunteers generously give their time in helping support the goals of the Salvage Barn, the Friends of Historic Preservation and the Iowa City Landfill.

In addition to selling deconstruction historical materials, the Salvage Barn maintains a tool library where tools can be checked out for one week at a time. This benefit accompanies a Friends of Historic Preservation membership which costs \$25 dollars per year. Moreover, the Salvage Barn offers free workshops to learn DIY projects from creating rain barrels to installing salvaged hardwood flooring.

Once a year in April, the Salvage Barn also hosts a *Craft Your Environment* event where artists display and sell upcycled and repurposed items. As if that was not enough, the Salvage Barn also helps neighborhoods with conservation efforts in preserving historic homes and buildings to prevent demolition and new development.

Trimble, who also serves as Executive Director of the Friends of Historic Preservation in Iowa City, says that deconstruction for resale is a great use of materials that would otherwise end up in a landfill, however Trimble notes that there is a conflict of interest in removing items from a historic building or home. Although the Salvage Barn's success depends on architectural materials donations, the main mission of the Friends of Historic Preservation is to preserve the local architectural history by saving old buildings from demolition and new development.

The University of Northern Iowa and the Iowa Waste Reduction Center are an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Conserving a Neighborhood

The process of conserving a neighborhood to be protected as a historical district is as follows:

- The Salvage Barn assists neighbors that want their neighborhood declared as a historical district in Iowa City.
- The Historic Preservation Commission will review details about the neighborhood and take these details to the Iowa City Planning and Zoning Commission.
- The Iowa City Planning and Zoning Commission will review the details about the neighborhood to determine if designation of a historical district fits into the city's zoning ordinance and comprehensive plan.
- The designation of a historical district is put up for a vote by the city council.

Not Without Challenges

While the efforts of those at the Salvage Barn demonstrate an appreciation for historic preservation and landfill waste diversion, Trimble notes the main challenges faced. It can be difficult to staff the Salvage Barn with volunteers on weekends because this is when deconstruction projects typically occur and also when most people are available to do deconstruction work. Winter temperatures also hinder the progress of deconstruction projects. Finally, Trimble states the Salvage Barn is experiencing growing pains. There is far more material available than there is space, but this is a good challenge since business has been great!



A Possible Future Endeavor

Although the Salvage Barn actively engages the community with many projects and benefits, Trimble says it would be great to work with the Iowa City Landfill where whole ash trees that have been damaged by the emerald ash borer end up for disposal. Trimble would like to see these trees planed into wood flooring and kiln dried (to kill the emerald ash borer) to be sold at the Salvage Barn. This, in turn would add to diversion rates at the landfill and would turn a devastating situation into a positive and profitable adventure. Trimble, a preservationist at heart, has great ideas to make the Salvage Barn a unique and ambitious organization where do-it-yourselfers, contractors and people who love to repurpose old items can support both diversion of material from landfills and preservation of the architectural heritage in the community.