

Old Sherburn barn given new life by Johnson family

"Tear it down before it falls down" and "You could build a beautiful new pole barn for the money it will cost to restore it" were some of the comments heard by Corey and Angela Johnson regarding the old Sherburn barn on Rose Hill Road in Berrien Springs.

Fortunately they resisted, and saved the more than 80-year-old structure from the wrecking ball. It took several months and an investment of \$35,000 to repair the foundation, rebuild the addition, replace some siding, add new windows, create doors, and then top it off with a green roof.

"As a kid and young adult, I always admired that barn," said Johnson, a lifelong resident of Berrien Springs. "We started the project last fall and did it in shifts. We took the winter off and started up in the spring."

The Johnsons hired Terry's Barn Restoration of Three Rivers to spearhead the project with Scott Pastor as the lead construction worker.

The final touches of red paint and white trim went on during Youth Fair week and the original lightning rods now accompany a green cupola with an orange tractor weather vane atop the com-

pleted structure.

"I spent about 60 hours cleaning it up, and had help from friends and family, but Terry's Barn Restoration did all of the major work," Johnson said.

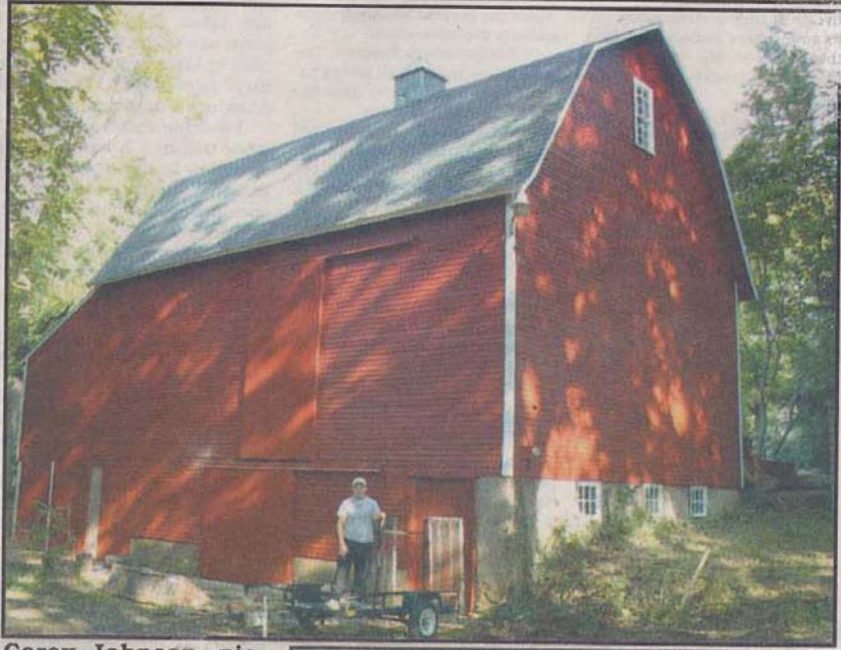
"I did not know that we would feel the amount of pride that we now do from the project," he emphasized. "We have a great sense of accomplishment."

All together they have used three 40-yard dumpsters (one weighed nine tons) to remove debris from the property.

He noted that he has found some odd items on the site, including 50 bowling balls, a lot of shoe soles, and an old light pole like the ones that used to be in downtown Berrien Springs. He plans to clean up the pole, get the appropriate top for it (unless he finds it while digging around), and put it at the end of their driveway. He has also found old pop bottles and an Emmanuel Missionary College milk bottle on the property, all of which are going to be displayed in the barn.

The Johnsons are not sure when the barn was built, but an engraved date of May 12, 1927 in the water trough in the basement

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Corey Johnson, pictured above, and his wife, Angela, worked together with family, friends and Terry's Barn Restoration in Three Rivers to save the barn.

(Kathleen Pullano Photo)

Johnsons save old Sherburn barn

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of the barn documents its minimum age. Johnson has been unable to further define the date through the use of old photographs and interviews with previous residents.

The original abstract information states the land was acquired from the United States government by George Kimmel, a well-known Berrien Springs pioneer, on June 26, 1831. Until the Johnsons bought it in 2007, it had been in the "Sherburn" family since Carl and Pauline Rudowski

acquired it in 1919. Carl died in 1944 and his surviving wife transferred ownership to their son, Loris Sherburn, in 1946. Loris and his wife, Helen, passed the land on to their son, Glen, and his wife, Connie. After Glen died, and Connie retired, the Johnsons started their tenure.

The Johnsons liked the land because it is close to his mom and dad, Mark and Helene Johnson, and because of the beauty of it and the barn. The Johnsons had to purchase the property as land only because the bank appraisers

did not acknowledge the existence of either the barn or the house due to their condition. They plan to build a home on the property beginning sometime next spring if everything works out. Unfortunately, estimates on restoring the farmhouse run between \$50,000 to \$60,000 so Johnson is considering selling it to someone who would like to renovate it.

Anyone who knows anything about the history of the barn or land, or who has any old pictures of the property can call Johnson at 471-5846.