



Furniture store chosen as

'Barn of the Year'

By Lisa Miller
News Journal

MANSFIELD — Rod Stober wasn't born in a barn, but he's been making a living in one.

More than four decades after his parents decided to literally bank on the barn, the Spring Mill Furniture Barn was named "Barn of the Year" by the Friends of the Ohio Barns.

"It's just kind of neat," Stober said of the building chock full of furniture amid yellow pine beams, a silo and double-thick floors. Couches, nightstands and coffee tables now sit where cows once were milked. Billiard tables are for sale in the former blacksmith area.

Friends of the Ohio Barns President Tim Mason goes beyond "neat." He calls "incredible" the dairy barn that Mansfield industrialist George W. Henne had built in 1916, reportedly at a cost of \$40,000. "We set the standards pretty high with this one," he said.

Twenty-three barns were nominated for the honor, with the local structure winning in the adaptive use category.

Adapt is what the Stobers did. Ned and Cecelia Stober manufactured chairs and sofas at their Shelby Chair Co. His father has died, but as his 86-year-old mother still describes it, they were driving on the north end of Mansfield when young Rod suggested they stop and go through the old barn.

It took a year to buy the barn where the rope and pulley system used for moving hay still hangs and big windows look out over the front lawn. Repairs had to be made before the family could start selling furniture.

Most of the interior is "pretty much original," according to Stober. No central posts support the soaring ceiling that features rib rafters, which he describes as looking "like a huge upside down boat."

Even though his family has owned the barn and



Spring Mill Furniture Barn was selected "Barn of the Year" by the Friends of the Ohio Barns. (Dave Polcyn/News Journal)



Friends of the Ohio Barns:
www.ohiobarns.osu.edu
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four acres since 1963, Stober doesn't define himself as a barn aficionado.

"I pay attention to 'em but no, I'm certainly not an expert on them by any stretch of the imagination," he said. The barn, which already had plenty of visitors before receiving the statewide recognition in April, is part of what Stober said makes his business unique.

At a time when much of the furniture sold in the U.S. is made in China and other countries, Stober said Spring Mill Furniture Barn sells mostly solid wood items made in North America.

"If we can make it different, we can survive," he said.

Barn survival is what Mason's group is all about. Mason heads the non-profit organization that works with the National Trust for Historic Places, the National Barn Alliance and BarnAgain, another national group, and is allied with The Ohio State University.

The St. Louisville man said the Mansfield barn was honored because, while it is surrounded by suburbia, it wasn't torn down,

Spring Mill Furniture Barn

More information:
1055 Springmill Rd., 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Thursday, and 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday, 419-747-6066

- BY THE NUMBERS**
- 1916: The year George W. Henne had the barn built
 - 1956: Last year cows were milked there
 - 12: Thickness in inches of the brick walls
 - 45: Number of feet from roof peak to ground level
 - 15,000: Square footage
 - 500: Acreage the property originally included

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"making way for strip malls or whatever." He praises owners who find new uses for barns that aren't big enough for today's modern farm equipment.

The Spring Mill Furniture Barn, Mason said, is a "prime example of what we can do. ... It holds on to the rural integrity ... (to) tie the roots between past and present."

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