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Dallas company reclaims old hardwoods for new lives as Dallas floors

12:00 AM CDT on Saturday, March 20, 2010

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Forget about walls talking. It's the floors these days that have the good stories to tell – especially the hardwood floors that Pat Hicks sells. There would be stories about spirited church sermons, raucous auctions and even tales from the chicken house. Of course, there would also be plenty of stories about life at home, dinners at the kitchen table, children playing. Hicks and his New Life Hardwood Floors find houses, churches, barns and other structures destined for razing and salvage the wood to mill into tongue-and-groove flooring.

It's not just floors that are salvaged; it's all kinds of wood: floor and ceiling beams, studs, joists, framing, ship lap. Hicks sees value in all of it.

"I love taking old stuff and refurbishing it so it can continue to be appreciated," he says.

Most of the North Texas salvage projects yield pine, Hicks says. But it's not the pine you're used to. "The old stuff was harvested from virgin forests that grew years and years ago and is as hard as redwoods," he says. "Today's wood is soft, wet wood that's cut before it's mature."

So rather than let the sturdy stuff go to waste, Hicks and his team pull it from houses, take it back to southern Dallas and complete the labor-intensive process of removing nails, cutting it down to size and milling it so it can start its new life as flooring.

"It's disrespecting God when you take the lumber from trees that were 400 years old and throw it away," Hicks says.

There's no shortage of houses and other buildings that have resources that can be reclaimed. "There are constantly things coming down to build new things," he says.

Hicks has gone outside of North Texas to find resources. Six barns from 1880 or so in the Ohio River Valley became 5,000 feet of flooring for a Preston Hollow home. Walnut planks from an Appalachian auction house turned chicken house in Tennessee found their way to a Dallas family's Palm Springs home.

White oak from a Pennsylvania barn now calls North Dallas home. Hicks found the material for the eco-friendly, sustainable home that Lara and Stephen Harrison are building.

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Photos by JIM MAHONEY/DMN

Roof decking, soon to become flooring, leans against a Lilac Street house being torn down by Dymomite Demolition and Salvage.

They've used reclaimed flooring throughout the home, which they hope to move into within the month.

"We wanted to use something that had already been used before," Lara Harrison says. "The wood has been through so much already, so it's hardier than new material."

Though the strength of reclaimed flooring appeals to her, it's the worn look of it that she loves.

"The fluff-it and flip-it mentality is gone." Hicks says. "People are worried about quality and value that last. The heritage of reclaimed floors goes with this new philosophy."

And it's unique.

Although the price of reclaimed flooring is determined by the scarcity of the material, it's competitive with new materials, Hicks said. New Life Hardwood Floors can run from less than \$3 to \$20 per foot. "We're creating custom flooring of all levels." **New Life Hardwood Floors**

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