

**TRADE EDITION**

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# **HOMES** **& COTTAGES**

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# Recycling History



## Historic Home Rebirth

A pioneer Toronto house is reborn in the country.

Formerly known as one of the oldest houses in Toronto, this one-and-a-half storey home is now enjoying a second life.

It was erected around 1817 in an area that was rolling country, but is now the heart of Toronto's prestigious Forest Hill. Originally a pioneer farmer's cabin made from hand-hewn, white-pine logs, its beginnings were humble. Through the years, renovations expanded the home and masked its original exterior under a coating of stucco.

The residence at 8 Ridelle Ave. was home to several well-known people over the years, most

notably Dora Mavor Moore, the founder of professional theatre in Toronto.

Moore (who lived in the house for 40 years until her death in 1979 at age 90) was instrumental in bringing Tyrone Guthrie to Canada and helping him establish the Stratford Shakespearean Festival. She also founded several theatre companies that launched the careers of notable Canadians such as Norman Jewison, Don Harron, Robert Goulet, Lorne Greene, Barbara Hamilton and Morley Callaghan. Moore



*By Susan Doran  
Photos by Wayne Houle*

Gable dormers replace shed dormers, added in the 1920s





(Top) Bob Slater prepares the front base log. The log had to be levelled to sit evenly on a new foundation.

received the Order of Canada for her work with the theatre.

Dozens of plays were staged in a barn/airplane hanger adjacent to the house when Moore and her family lived there. Earlier, 8 Ridelle Ave. was the childhood home of Jeanne Minhinnick, who became a leading expert in Canadian antiques. She curated and furnished historic Toronto-area sites, including Upper Canada Village and William Lyon MacKenzie House.

Minhinnick's younger sister, Mary Denoon, fondly recalls picnics under the chestnut trees at 8 Ridelle Ave., and summer evening dances on the veranda where pottery bowls brimmed with flowers that brightened the deep window sills.

(Above) Two 12' x 20' timberframe additions by Thistelwood Timberframes of Markdale, Ontario, were incorporated into the addition. Shown here is the master bedroom unit with the kitchen bay beyond. Logs, stacked and sorted, await reassembly.

(Right) Tagged and numbered logs await reassembly on the deck of the timberframe addition.



None of these memories softened the heart of Toronto City Council, which in 1994 refused to officially designate the home as a heritage property, despite pleas from the Toronto Historical Board. With this designation, there would have been no choice but to leave the house where it was.

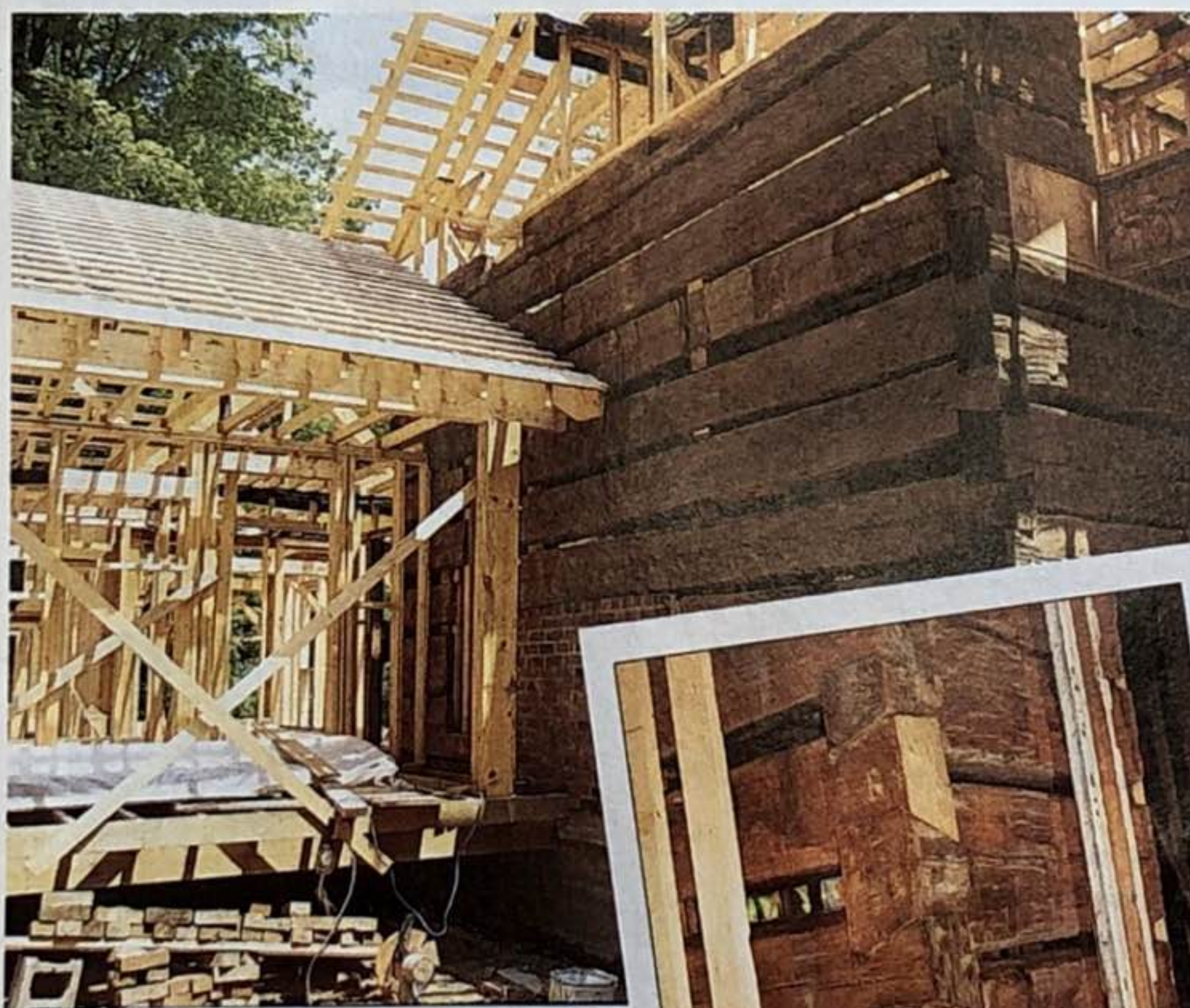
Without it, the developer, to whom the Moore family sold the property, was free to demolish it.

The developer donated the house (but not the property) to Habitat for Humanity, a charity that builds affordable housing. That organization auctioned the house off, and then, as *Toronto Star* columnist Michele Landsberg wrote in 1995, "Lovingly dismantled it, numbering every stick and plank toward the hoped-for day when the house would rise again."

Rise again it has—in Uxbridge, Ontario. Some people feel that since it has been moved, it's lost much of its historical relevance. However, the Toronto Historical Board and other experts took photos and notes as well as paint and wood samples during the dismantling for research and archival purposes.

Cheers for Catherine and Brian Daley and their two children, Nicole, 11, and Austin, 8. This is the family that, despite the fact





(Above & Left) The south-west corner view of the side porch and mudroom extension.

(Below) The inside wall of north-west corner. The fourth log from the bottom had to be chiseled and replaced from an alternate unused portion.

they were originally just looking for some antique logs with which to build a weekend hideaway, were so overwhelmed by the little house with the rich history, that they bought it at the Habitat for Humanity auction and have since invested all their enthusiasm and savings into the dream of putting it back together and making it their home.

When the Daleys first purchased the house, they had nowhere to erect it. So they sold their home in Stouffville and began searching for a suitable lot— one that fell within their limited budget, was wooded, (much like







the home's original location) and was within commuting distance of Metro Toronto.

After more than a year of intense searching (during which the home's logs were stored in various locations and had to be moved several times, with the result that one suffered carpenter ant damage) the Daleys found the perfect 10-acre lot in Uxbridge.

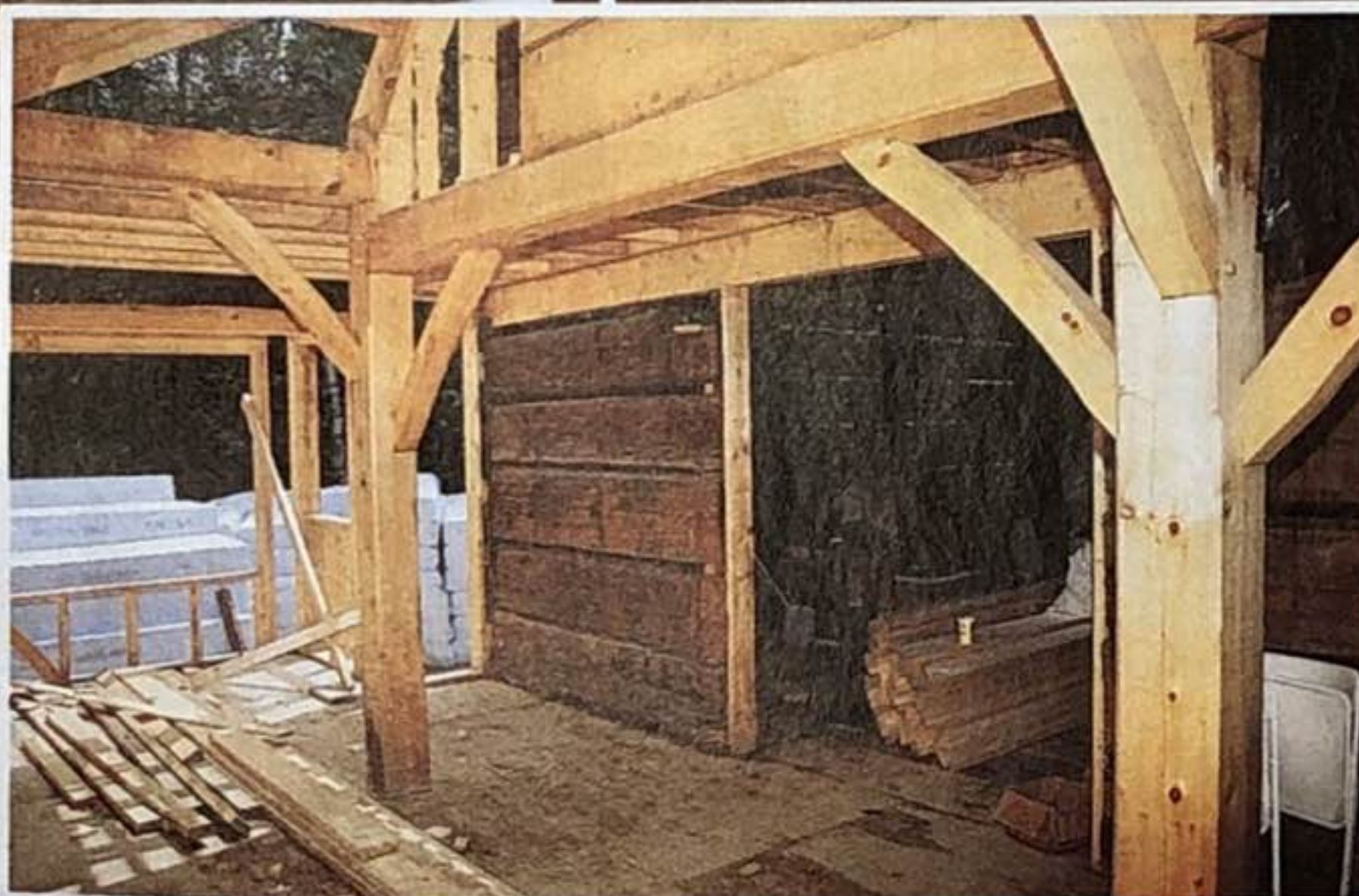
Acting as their own general contractor (Brian has an architectural drafting background) the Daleys chose to live in a trailer on site, until part of the house was habitable. The Daleys then put together a building team that included several people who had experience with restoration, antique logs and timber framing. In light of the home's historic value, they hoped to get financial help from the government, but eventually gave up.



(Top photos) The living room fireplace was built of reclaimed brick from the various additions of the original home.

(Left) Before and after shots of the west room fireplace. Exposed brick will eventually be trimmed out with wood, traditional to the Rumford fireplace.

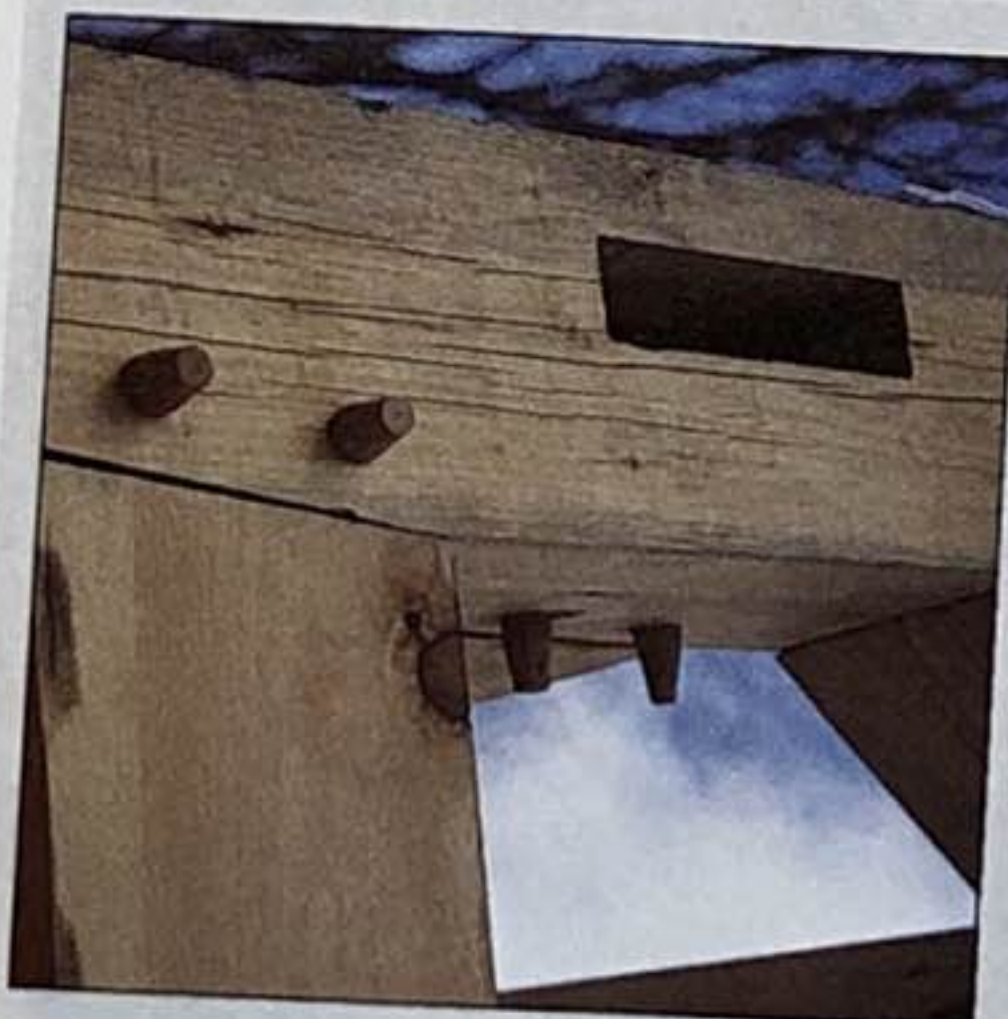




(Top) Two views of the new kitchen, a small timber-frame addition.

(Middle right) The view from the kitchen timber frame into the living room. This opening was enlarged to create flow between the two structures.

(Below Right) Timberframe construction erected on a beautiful winter day— typical of a barn raising with family and friends.



"We spent months writing letters. We even wrote to Jean Chretien. But everyone declined us," says Catherine.

The Daleys had more luck with private companies. The couple knocked on some corporate doors and were given discounts and sometimes even free materials and labour. In exchange, companies such as Canadian Gypsum Company; Westroc; Roxul; Dow Chemical; Dupont Canada; Peerless Faucets; Viktorian Sheet Metal; and Sherwin-Williams were given the opportunity to use the Daleys' story in advertising materials.





(Top Left) The new bathroom was outfitted with a clawfoot bathtub.  
 (Above right) The east wall of the log home. Wood spacers are evident for levelling and to carry the load of the log walls.  
 (Above) Owner Catherine Daley sweeps off sill-log for the dividing wall between the original home and the addition.

### A note from the owner....

This may be somewhat unorthodox, but I wanted to direct a statement to the reader.  
 One magazine that expressed interest in this historic project being brought back to life, told us to call them when we were finished. FINISHED? Today is my 41st birthday and who knows how old I may be when we can utter that word?

A recent reward for us was a visit from two residents who once lived in this house. One was Mary Denoon, who along with her sister, Jeanne Minhirnick, and her brother and parents, Scott, Minnie and William Gemmell, used the house as a summer retreat from 1920 to 1924, then moved to it permanently. Bathurst Street north of Eglinton in Toronto was then considered country, compared to their original home in the Beach. Mary's mother sold the house to Dora Mavor Moore in 1938, and her daughter Mavor also recently visited.

Both Mary Denoon and Mavor Moore were touched and overwhelmed to see their home come back to life. They may be able to hear the walls talk, but any ghosts associated with this home have lovingly approved of our choices. It is with them in mind that we persevere as time and funds permit. We invite you back at a later date for another look, because this is definitely a work in progress.

We have many people and companies to thank, who have helped make this dream a reality. Special thanks to Jim Adair and photographer Wayne Houle at Homes & Cottages for taking an interest and following us along the way.

Sincerely,  
 Catherine Daley





(Above) The bedroom in the southeast corner upstairs, and (below) the in-progress shot. The hip roof ties into the hip wall creating slanted ceilings. This, combined with the log, exposed brick, chimneys and drywall create a nice contrast of textures in all the upper floor rooms.  
(Left) A view of the sunny new dining room.







The couple remained passionate about restoring the old cabin in as authentic a manner as possible, while also making sure it met modern building code requirements and their own needs.

"We can't be historically correct; there were so many changes to the house over time. But we've tried to come up with a nice balance," Catherine says.

This meant painstakingly restoring and reusing whatever they could, including every possible scrap of wood, some doors, windows, fireplace bricks, light fixtures, and red-pine floor boards from the original 20-foot by 36-foot cabin.

The new house has a roomy living area and a library, as well as two small timber-frame additions at the rear. One houses the master bedroom as well as a shared mudroom and bathroom and the other the kitchen. Upstairs, the redesigned house has three bedrooms and two bathrooms. To help the new sections of their home blend with the old, the Daleys used materials salvaged from demolished buildings whenever possible.

Catherine says the building process "felt like a barn raising, with everyone working together." There has been support from the town of Uxbridge, and from the Moore family and other previous owners. But Catherine doesn't need the detailed journal she kept

during construction to remind her that the work was gruelling, particularly during the winter months.

"Seeing the old structure come back was an incredibly rewarding, at times emotionally overwhelming, experience," she says. "I'd never want to give up on it...or repeat it." ■

(Above right) The timber frame kitchen during construction and above left, the finished product.



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