

Chicago Tribune

# CHICAGO HOMES



## In with the old

Giving new life to salvaged architectural gems | PAGE 4

**INSIDE:** Being a board member is a thankless job, but somebody's got to do it. | PAGE 2



Steve Lecas of Gander Builders gave new life to these wooden ceiling beams after buying them from a salvage contractor in Idaho. The beams are featured in the Tuscan Timbers model home in Frankfort. Lecas says he combs the Internet for salvaged materials, then uses them in his new-construction houses.

# In with the old

By LESLIE MANN | Special to the Tribune

## Homeowners, builders recycling the past with architectural salvage

Anchor a stairway with an antique cast-iron newel post. Dress a window with vintage schoolhouse maps instead of shades. Turn a jettisoned apothecary cabinet into a bathroom vanity. Adorn walls with mantels from previous lives.

Use those tips and many more from "Extraordinary Interiors: Decorating with Architectural Salvage & Antiques" by Brian Coleman, and everything old is new again.

"You just have to use your imagination," said Steve Rioridan, who incorporated oldies but goodies into his new house in Flossmoor and his town house in Chicago. To give his house a Tudor look, he bought period lighting fixtures and had them rewired. To make the wine cellar in his town home unique, he used a wooden jail door from Ireland.



MICHAEL TERCHA/TRIBUNE PHOTO

New and old chandeliers are on display at Architectural Artifacts, 4325 N. Ravenswood Ave., in Chicago. Store owner Stuart Grannen says he buys and sells merchandise from all over the world. Especially hot now are theater artifacts for home theaters, he notes.

Riordan's favorite source is Architectural Artifacts in Chicago, which carries salvaged lighting fixtures, stained-glass windows, mantels (fireplace surrounds), doors, tiles, ironwork and terra cotta.

"It's like my candy store, but more expensive," said Riordan.

"We buy and sell things from all over the world," said Stuart Grannen, owner of Architectural Artifacts. "Buyers want them because it's green to recycle them and their neighbors don't have the same things.

"But mostly it's the quality. An old stained-glass window, for example, or piece of old ironwork just isn't like what's available today."

Grannen's recent customers have bought tiles for kitchen backsplashes, terra cotta for driveway pillars and ironwork for headboards or trellises. Especially hot now are theater artifacts for home theaters, he said.

Steve Lecas of Gander Builders in Frankfort combs the Internet for architectural scraps, then uses them in his new-construction houses. For instance, a model home showcased ceiling tiles from a church in France and flooring and beams from an 1870s barn in Georgia.

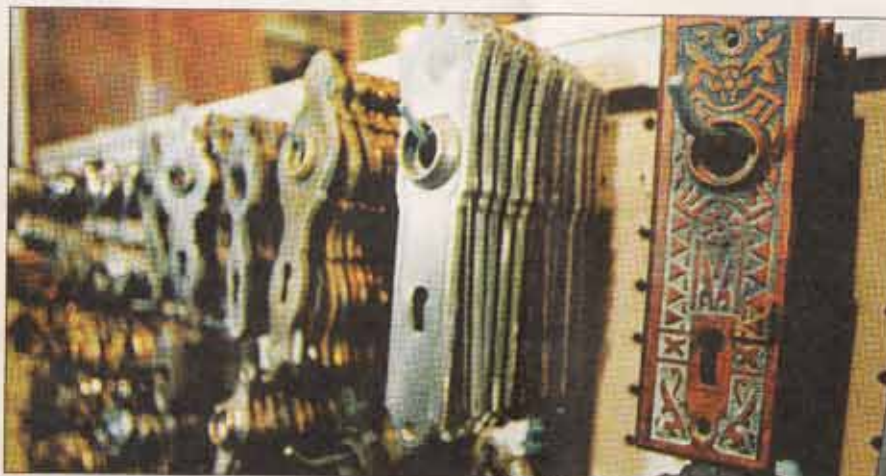
"It was the old stuff that sold the house," he said. "It was a slam-dunk for the buyer."

Lecas said he also has established relationships with out-of-state salvage contractors. He orders samples first to make sure the item is what the client wants.

Northfield-based Focus Development completely renovated the former DuPage County courthouse in Wheaton, an 1896 Romanesque building with turrets and a clock tower, and restored the exterior to its original grandeur. The landmark was converted into six luxury condominiums as part of the new residential community Courthouse Square.

In some areas of the gabled dormers, decorative terra cotta pieces were missing.

"We dismantled some of the terra cotta from dormers in places where it was intact, and we had molds made in order to make



JOHN MCCOY/LOS ANGELES DAILY NEWS PHOTO

Homeowners can find an extensive inventory of artifacts for their homes, such as face plates for doorknobs, doors, mantels and stained glass, at architectural salvage stores.

replacement pieces," said Anita Olsen, sales and marketing director for Focus.

Many companies that sell salvaged items field specific requests from homeowners. Kneen & Co. in Chicago, for example, locates antique European fireplace surrounds and keeps about 3,000 in its warehouse.

"Ideally, the client calls us before he builds the house," said owner Mary Jeanne Kneen. "Then, the firebox can be built the right size for the fireplace surround. There are no standard sizes, but the old fireplace surrounds tend to be smaller than the openings in today's new houses."

Many of Kneen's clients, she said, build their homes around the fireplace surrounds. "Often, they're the focal points of the whole house."

Some companies specialize in restoring vintage items. Al Bar Wilmette Platers in Wilmette, for example, gives old hardware and lighting fixtures makeovers. President Gregory Bettenhausen said missing parts can be as small as a set screw, but home-

owners will eventually realize it's missing.

"If you find something in a salvage yard, we can make sure it has all its functional parts," said Bettenhausen. "It may not sound like a big deal until you realize that the gem of a crystal knob doesn't have the proper set screw, rosette or spindle."

Oswego resident Bill Novak asked his homebuilder, DJK Inc. in Plainfield, to dress his new house with salvaged materials. The result: oak flooring from Europe and a massive beam from a dismantled barn in Elizabeth, Ill., for a mantel in the family room.

"That mantel must weigh 400 to 500 pounds," said Novak. "It really gives the room an Old World look. It's beautiful." The items give him a "greener" home, he added.

Many of the best-dressed homes in the area are those owned by the people who sell the salvaged goods. Kneen's Lincoln Park home is a treasure trove of antique fireplace surrounds, vintage lighting and marble scraps that became sills and



TRIBUNE NEWSPAPERS PHOTO

Pieces of tin ceilings can be used in a variety of ways to make distinctive decorations.

## Architectural salvage resources

Here's a sampling of Illinois sources for architectural salvage items:

- Airport Lumber Co., 6222 W. Plank Road, Peoria; 309-697-1106
- Al Bar Wilmette Platers, 127 Green Bay Road, Wilmette; [albarwilmette.com](http://albarwilmette.com)
- Architectural Artifacts Inc., 4325 N. Ravenswood Ave., Chicago; [architecturalartifacts.com](http://architecturalartifacts.com)
- Carlson's Barnwood Co., 8066 N. 1200 Ave., Cambridge, Ill.; [carlsonsbarnwood.com](http://carlsonsbarnwood.com)
- Habitat for Humanity ReStore, 2201 S. Halsted St., Chicago; for addresses of suburban ReStores, visit [habitatillinois.org](http://habitatillinois.org)
- Kimball & Bean Architectural and Garden Antiques, 3606 S. Country Club Road, Woodstock; [kimballandbean.com](http://kimballandbean.com)
- Kneen & Co., 399 W. Fullerton Parkway, Chicago; [kneenandco.com](http://kneenandco.com)
- ReBuilding Exchange, 2160 N. Ashland Ave., Chicago; [info@rebuildingexchange.org](mailto:info@rebuildingexchange.org)
- Salvage One, 1840 W. Hubbard St., Chicago; [salvageone.com](http://salvageone.com)
- Urban Remains, 1850 W. Grand Ave., Chicago; [urbanremainschicago.com](http://urbanremainschicago.com)

shelves.

In addition to repurposed hardware from his shop, Bettenhausen's Wilmette house has salvaged millwork and built-ins.

"No one says, 'I love the new lacquered table,'" he said, "but the 100-year-old built-in gets the looks."