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News Release

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Renovating Historic "Glen Eyrie" Homestead

Mr Randy Spillers, owner of the historic Glen Eyrie Homestead on his farm at the foot of the Blue Ridge Mountains in Virginia, is currently completing an extensive renovation.

As part of a high profile home renovation television special later this year, Mr Spillers commented—



“The 1883 Mountain Farm House we are bringing back to its former days of glory had not suffered much structural damage but the siding was in poor condition and the home had “0” insulation in the walls. Further, the only thing between the clap board siding and the interior plastered-walls was the actual lath itself. This means there was no sub-sheeting what-so-ever.

These three major problems had to be resolved before another invasion of tens-of-thousands of benign but pesky Asian Beetles (they look like ladybugs) invaded our walls again and made their way into our home daily from October to March..... meaning you vacuum daily (hourly if possible)! Also the home had so many coats of paint that a regular paint job alone just would not solve the problem of bugs, structure, howling winter winds and hot summer days.

There are many good stories attached to this Project. The main one is the fact that this home was originally sided with American Chestnut wood clapboard siding. The American Chestnut Tree used to make up one of every four trees along the Appalachian Mountains. The Chestnut blight that was discovered in New York City at the turn of the 20th century spread from Maine to

Georgia in a matter of thirty years! It still is the single biggest environmental disaster in the world. Billions of trees died. The American Chestnut wood has characteristics unmatched by any other hardwood today.

The good news is for some reason a couple of isolated stands of trees did not get hit by the blight and along with a few (very few) amazing trees in SW Virginia the American Chestnut Tree is not extinct but the blight still attacks new shoots from the stumps of the old stand trees to this very day.

In the late '60s some dedicated folks got together and started crossing these very special trees and have made it their goal to figure out why these trees did not get infected. There is an actual association with some pretty neat and enthusiastic people. www.acf.org

Replacing the Siding

The original Chestnut Wood was almost impossible for me to replace. As I learned more and more about the American Chestnut Tree it only made the decision that much harder. This beautiful tree that flowered in the mountains so full of white flowers in April that it was reported to look like a heavy snow fall. One tree, just one tree, could fill an entire railroad car full of quality lumber that was stronger yet lighter than any oak tree! How could I strip the home of this piece of history. Alas, there were other problems with the house I just



could not get around to justify saving the siding. So as you can see from the pictures the siding was stripped from the house.

Another very important issue to me was making sure the siding had that same profile that is derived from the original "clap board" shape. Most lap sidings today start at approximately 3/4" thick and narrow on the bevel to nothing. This gives the house a very flat appearance. True Clap board siding is, in most cases, about 3/4" at the thickest point but narrowed on the bevel to just under 3/8". There is a true difference to the discerning eye....especially from a historical point of view.

I also needed a durable, real wood product that was environmentally treated to give me lots and lots of years. Design Pine gave me that.

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Guaranteed not to rot for thirty years, this siding Product was perfect for our home. And, it had almost the exact profile as my 125 year old American Chestnut wood siding!!! It is distributed thru *Rocky Top Building Products*, www.rockytopbp.com, and I

found it at a place I never thought would carry such a unique product, *Home Depot*. There is a lot to read on the Design Pine™ website, www.designpine.com.

You can see in the pictures we used structural plywood (no cheap strand board for me) and the ever popular Dupont Tyvek for moisture and draftstop.



The other major challenge for me was what to use for insulation. I first purchased regular fiberglass batts but upon discovery of stud placement plus just the nature of this big, old wood house I really

the Tyvek, plywood, siding and the original plaster an R-20+ wall is the net effect! It is a renewable soy based product. Go to www.biobased.net and the installer is Anchor Insulation www.va-ais.com. They are doing an excellent job.



want to step up with my insulation Product. Once again, environmentally friendly and healthy to us played a major role in our decision making. This old house likes its' dust and eight legged critters so along with the other normal concerns that surrounds any insulation product....I needed to seal up a lot of bug trails and dust paths. The BioBased 501 was perfect for the job. It fills the entire wall area with a soft, toxic-free product that expands to just the right size as to not push windows out of plumb but fill every void. One inch is worth about 4 "R" value points so in addition to

I could go on and on but I may have already lost your attention. There is one more important thing. Remember the struggle I had in removing the mighty American Chestnut Tree clap board siding? All is not lost. I was so impressed with this tree (and its history/importance to the people of that day) and the people who are dedicated to bringing the tree back to its former splendor and range in the Blue Ridge Mountains, I am now actively involved in the restoration process. I am now growing these newly crossed trees on my farm just across the hollow from my farm house.

Who knows? Maybe, in some future year, someone can use one of my American Chestnut trees as clapboard siding on their home!" ❖

