

## project description

Type:	Farm House Fire Reconstruction
Contractor:	<b>D.L. Peters Construction</b> (see ad on p. 33)
Trade Partners:	Bomberger's Store (see ad p. 39) Greenbaum Structures (see ad p. 34) Haldeman Bros. Masonry (see ad p. 34) J. Hubler Landscaping (see ad p. 42) Keystone Vintage Lumber (see ad p. 38) Martin Appliance (see ad p. 40) Martindale Propane (see ad p. 42) M.J. Moyer Plastering & Drywall (see ad p. 36) Oakmont Enterprises (see ad p. 44) Robert H. Ranck, Inc. (see ad p. 35) Simmontown Demolition (see ad p. 37) Smucker Fencing LLC (see ad p. 42) Stan's Blacksmith Shop (see ad p. 36) Tileology (see ad p. 38) Yale Lighting Concepts & Design (see ad p. 44)
Scope:	As a result of two lightning strikes, this 18th century farm house sustained extensive fire damage to the roof and attic. The resulting smoke and water damage (from extinguishing the fire) helped the homeowner's in deciding to entirely gut the interior structure and do a complete rebuild (only the exterior walls survived). Salvaging much of the original timber, floor planks, and hardware, the new construction maintains many of its original features while benefiting from structural enhancements, proper insulation, as well as new and energy-efficient mechanicals.

# recovery

from Mother Nature's wrath

**O**n a Sunday morning in August 2009, two lightning bolts made contact with the roof of an 18<sup>th</sup> century farmhouse in Mount Joy. The strikes instantly knocked out the alarm system that should have alerted emergency personnel to the spreading fire. Thankfully, neighbors noticed smoke rising across the fields and quickly called for help.

Though firefighters raced to the scene and prevented the fire from reaching deeper than the third and second sto-

ries, the water and smoke damage resulted in total destruction. The interior walls, made from old horsehair plaster, simply couldn't withstand the humidity.

Tim and Kelly, owners of the farmhouse, were in South Carolina when they received the news. "My mother called," remembers Kelly. "She said, 'Your farmhouse is on fire!' I got on a plane."

Although they were understandably shocked after learning the extent of

the devastation, they also knew who could help them bring their residence back to life—Dale Peters, D.L. Peters Construction, Manheim, who had been one of the first people to see the aftermath. Dale and his crew had recently finished renovating the couple's carriage house that stood only yards away from the farmhouse.

"I found out after coming back from breakfast [that Sunday]," recalls Dale. "I had two messages—one from Kelly and another from a realtor friend. At

first, I didn't think it would be that bad... but then I saw. It was unbelievable. In my 25 years of doing this type of work, I have never run into an historic home that got hit [by lightning] like this."

Tim and Kelly had been overwhelmingly pleased with Dale's work on their carriage house; consequently, they requested that he immediately begin working with them—and their





insurance carrier—on how best to reconstruct the farmhouse.

Fortunately, the couple had updated their home insurance policy because of the carriage house renovation, a smart move for any individual, family or business that has recently had renovation or construction work done.

### Reconstruction Planning

After surveying the damage and spending time exploring options such as restoring the property using historic renovation methodology, Tim and Dale decided that the entire farmhouse would best be gutted to the basement level and carefully rebuilt. “We took

6-8 weeks developing reconstruction plans,” explains Tim. “We even hired a firm to do a reconstruction survey. In the end, we chose a ‘modified rebuild’ instead of a complete historic reconstruction. We wanted to maintain the look and feel of the property but do it as economically as possible while focusing on a structural safety standpoint.”

Tim and Kelly wanted to stay mostly true to the earliest architectural plan of the farmhouse; however, they did call upon Dale’s expertise to suggest better ways to add elements such as roomier bathrooms and closets to the existing space.

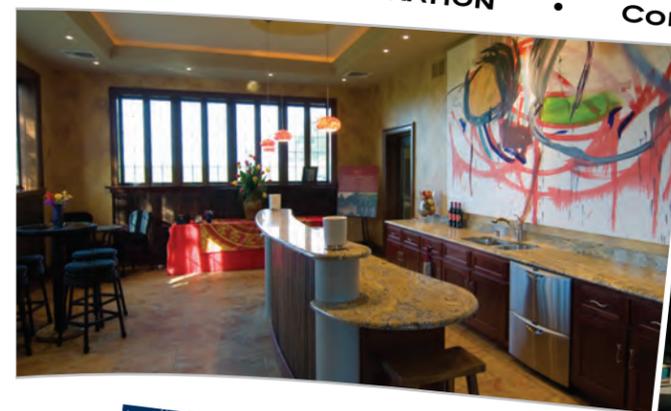
Throughout the tearing down process, Tim, Kelly and Dale agreed that original items such as doors, beams, mantles, risers, stairs, bricks and windows would be salvaged whenever possible to be used later during the rebuilding. “Everything behind the walls is modern,” says Tim. “Everything you can see is historic. If we couldn’t salvage something, we tried to locate it [elsewhere] so it would be ‘new’ to the house, but still old.”

Before any construction could begin, the stone that remained on the outside of the home had to be cleaned... piece by piece. This arduous process took time, but the results can be readily

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seen today when one looks at the spotless building that catches the glint of the sun in broad daylight.

Dale's team also had to build a temporary gravel "road" to get close enough to the farmhouse to facilitate an efficient work pace. With the expertise of J. Hubler Landscaping, Elizabethtown, there's no longer any sign of that transitory rocky channel through the lush, green lawn.

As time went on and decisions had been made, the interior of the house began to take shape.

All the while, Tim, Kelly and their children lived in their previously-renovated carriage house next door. Laughs Kelly of the unexpected twist to their living arrangements that left them a little more cramped than they had anticipated, "We made it work!"

**Rebirth—with Updates**

One of the biggest problems with any reconstruction of an historic property is bringing it up to code without losing the essence of its bygone-era charm. Thus, Dale's workers used creative methods to mingle the modern with the aesthetic appeal of traditional building practices.

"We took the opportunity to take the home up to date in terms of the energy code, size all the piping correctly and



update everything," Dale says. "Before, the house didn't even have insulation."

As a result, visitors to the farmhouse will never notice the following elements that are carefully hidden from view but incredibly important in terms of safety, code compliance, comfort and convenience:



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"Kelly and Tim didn't want the house to look like a new house," states Dale. "So we deliberately didn't plumb all the windows. We left a few things 'imperfect' to add character."

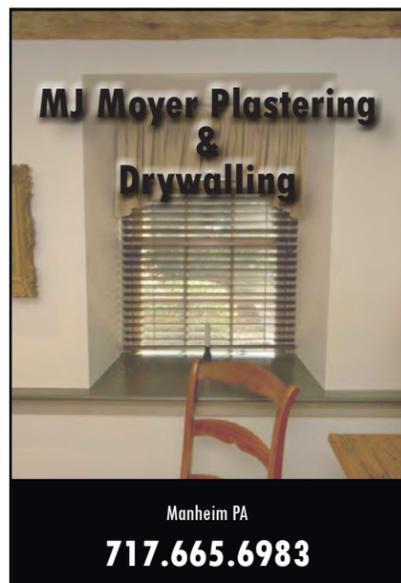
**What Was Old Has New Life**

Upon visiting the farmhouse today, it's difficult to believe that its interior was once razed (though photos taken at the time leave no doubt as to the state that farmhouse was in post-fire.) The ambiance of the 1700s still pervades the home, thanks to careful planning and Dale's attention to detail.

In the basement, a rough-walled area that survived the fire, there's now a rustic wine cellar ready for bottles of Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Merlot. Tin lanterns dot the walls, giving an historic mood to the subterranean room.

On the first floor, the layout of the rooms has stayed true to the original design. Not surprisingly, most are modestly-sized but sprinkled with the appeal of yesteryear—an enormous fireplace in the dining room, working fireplaces and rustic flooring.

The second floor contains a bathroom with modern appeal though the cabinets have been custom-crafted using wormy chestnut, a nice method of merging the past with the present. The master bedroom—featuring a headboard that matches



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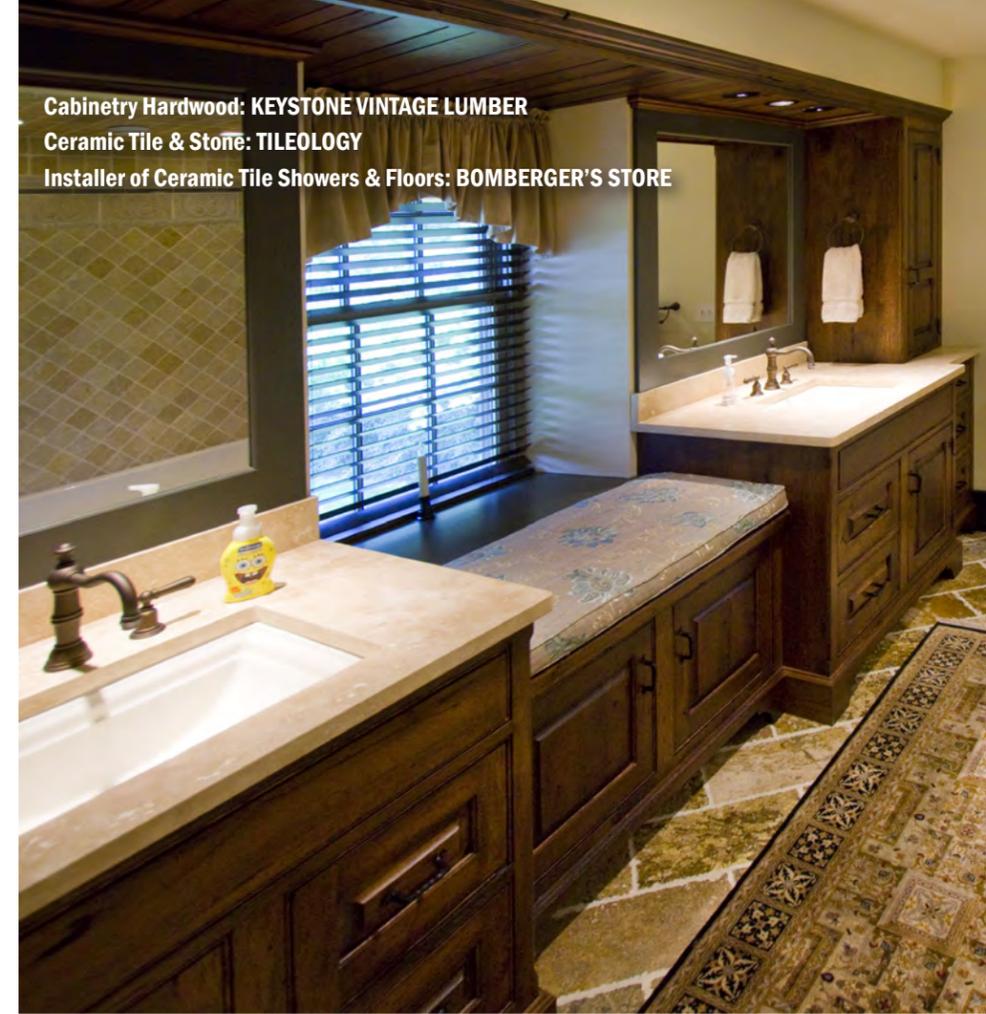
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the bath's chestnut theme—has been reshaped to include a coffee server with refrigerator and hammered copper sink, washer/dryer space and walk-in closet.

The third floor is the most changed from the initial architectural design. A




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bathroom with steam shower and geometric tiles; large cedar closet; and roomy guest bedroom area encompasses most of the livable space.

Easily accessible through sets of double-doors on the both eaves' knee walls is additional space for storage and housing for air-conditioning equipment.

"The house is 'tight'," maintains Dale. "There are dehumidifiers that take the outside air and bring it into the house. There's a new slate roof. And, of course, we have lightning rod systems in place!"

### The Silver Lining

With the help of Dale, Tim and Kelly have made the best of a difficult situation. And they're exceedingly pleased with the results. Dale, too, is thrilled that he's had the opportunity to work with the couple again and that he was fortunate enough to work



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takes ownership. [And] Dale's people are like family to us... they are all so helpful."

She concludes with a smile, "I feel like the house is more his than ours!"

R&A



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