

COMMENT

Everything old is new again, and again

By Ted Brown
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A Ted Bit

The Sidekick and I watch a lot of programming on HGTV, also known as Home and Garden Television. Many shows deal with renovation, lawn and garden and home style programs. We watch, and casually dream about making changes to our own house.

(Dream is the operative word here.)

As with anything, trends tend to change. The latest seems to be the Tiny House Movement.

Tiny houses are usually in the 200 to 600 square foot range. They incorporate a multitude of space saving construction features, and I find it entertaining to see how they fit the contents of a 1,000 sq. ft. bungalow into a 250 sq. ft. tiny house.

So what is a tiny house?

Well, most are built on a trailer frame. Isn't that a glorified house trailer?

Okay, let's NOT put it on a set of wheels. Let's just build a small house without a basement perhaps on a concrete slab, somewhere off the beaten track. Isn't that a cottage? Or a garden shed?

Some people on the programs have built their tiny home using an old school bus. That seems a lot like a recreation vehicle to me, you know, an RV?

The ones who blow my mind are those embracing the Tiny House Movement and have a bunch of kids. I really question their sanity, trying to pack two parents and three kids into 300 to 400 sq. ft. (After a few weeks, I'm pretty sure the parents would be questioning their own sanity.)

Small, portable residential buildings are not new. In the early days of our country, hundreds of settlers headed to the western provinces of Canada, with all their worldly possessions in a horse-drawn covered wagon. Years later, that same mode of travel was replicated in a tent trailer one hauled behind the car, while on summer vacation.

In Europe and the United Kingdom, nomadic people once lived in horse-drawn caravans, in which they slept, as they visited various commu-

nities. They too were tiny homes.

For centuries, shepherds across the UK and Europe, employed shepherd's shacks, where they lived right out in the fields with their sheep, while the sheep gave birth to their lambs. Yup, those were Tiny Homes of a sort too.

Geez, even during the cold winter season, lots of people go out on a frozen lake, in a version of a tiny home it's called an ice fishing shack.

As I said, it's a trend, and some people across North America, are embracing the concept. There are some benefits it would certainly be cheaper to live that way.

But there are also downsides.

The beds are usually on a loft, so one must climb a ladder to go to bed (under limited head room), or pull down a Murphy bed.

Most municipalities will not allow a tiny home to be parked on a concrete pad, or on a trailer they tend to become trailer parks.

And the most challenging part tiny homes have an equally tiny bathroom, and often employ a composting toilet... nuff said for me.

I realize there are instances where the concept could be used, perhaps to a more feasible end. I know of a farmer who converted a small outbuilding, originally used as a hen house, into a guest house. They gutted it, and insulated, rewired and drywalled the interior. When family comes to visit, it's used as extra sleeping quarters.

A businessman I know has taken a former stone ice house, and it is now his office. It's a tiny building but makes great use of an existing structure that had otherwise become redundant.

I truly think the tiny house movement will fizzle out in time, as families realize the lack of practicality in living with four or five people in a house which is less than 300 sq. ft.

But of course, some will continue to reside in a box, at least until that final slap of reality hits.

Because, like the old saying says, everything old, is new again.

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