

# The Natural

In the modern world of timber framing, 59-year industry veteran Andrew Miller brings things back to basics.

Some might say Andrew Miller was born to be a timber framer. After helping raise Amish barns as a boy and getting his official start building a machine shed at age 16, one would think he was practically raised with a wood chisel in his hands. But ask Andrew what he was meant to do, and he'd probably give you a different answer.

"I've always loved to work with nature and plants. For a while I grew thousands of butternut tree seedlings and sold them. Then I moved on to hickory, writhing shingles and pickets — I did that for 17 years. I also did a lot of farming," he explains. "The most important thing in our culture is to provide for a living, and that's what I've always done."

But as it turns out, it was one of his first interests that wound up giving him the training he needed for his career later in life. "My dad was a farmer and a handyman, so he took on almost anything when I was a kid. He eventually wound up building mortise-and-tenon furniture, and at 19 years old, I made a dresser for my girlfriend using the same method," he explains.

And the rest is history. Now, at age 75, Andrew oversees quality control and production at OakBridge Timber Framing in Howard, Ohio (his son Johnny is co-founder of the company), and relies on his back-to-basics, traditional schooling to bring classic post-and-beam homes to the masses.

"I was 50 years old when I was hired by my son. At the start, I just wanted to do something to stay physically fit, but I ended up — because of my life experience — knowing a good many things about how we could improve," Miller says. "Together, my son and I have improved the company and advanced with the times over the last 25 years."

And that challenge of keeping up with the changing times has been particularly trying as a member of the Amish community. "Because we try to keep our work as basic as possible, we've had to seek to produce perfect homes without all the new technology. We treat each beam like a person with a unique personality, and we have to try and figure out how it's going to move and react after it's been installed and dried, exactly the way we did all those years ago."

59 years ago to be exact. "It's pretty incredible," Miller says with a laugh. "I never dreamed that I'd be doing this for so long, and I feel so great that my son claims I'll be doing it another 20 years. That would bring me up to 95! I guess you never know." \*

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