

NELSON COUNTY LIFE

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**PRICELESS
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german
engineering

No lumber yard
to start a tree
house? When
your dad is Jens
Müller, you head
to the woods.

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It starts with a log.

And in the town Jens Müller grew up, there were plenty of them. Somplar, Germany. Population: 400 or so.

“It was set kind of like Nelson in the country; woods everywhere and fields and farms,” said Jens of his hometown, a German city about an hour and a half north of Frankfurt. “I always grew up in the country.”

As a child in Somplar, Jens grew up playing in the woods, building forts and tree houses. So when he was 15 and had to choose what field to go into after finishing school, carpentry was an easy choice.

“I like the feel of it,” said Jens. “I like to create things; it’s fun to go out and make something new every day. It’s kind of an art. The possibilities are endless of what you can do.”

These days, Jens lives in Schuyler with his wife, Catherine (who he met in Ohio while volunteering there in the late 1990s) and their 8-year-old son, Wyatt.

From their property, Jens runs Old World Carpentry, which specializes in historic renovations, special





Based in Schuyler, Jens Müller operates a carpentry business utilizing a portable band saw that can cut logs. His son, 8-year-old Wyatt, is no stranger to his father's craft. At right, Jens bears down to form a mortise.



pieces for residential homeowners, as well as custom cabinetry, garden structures, and all these years later he's still got those tree houses going.

"So, it's kind of like I do anything with wood," said Jens, but he prefers renovating the very old or creating something completely new. "I don't like to build a new house; it's not very interesting to me. There's nothing there – you just nail 2x4s together. I rather work with what you already have; have something there. The more of a challenge, the more I like it. If no one else can come up with an idea, I will."

Jens' son Wyatt is also into the old – at the ripe old age of 8, he's decided that he wants to be an archeologist.

"He likes many things," said Wyatt's dad. "I'm not going to force him into anything so he can pretty much do whatever he wants."

Since Wyatt was three years old, he's been traveling to job sites with his dad. This summer during the weeks he doesn't feel like heading to camp, he's been spending more time with dad.

"He just helps loading wood, he pushes the button on the sawmill, helps steer the tractor," said Jens. "I think he kid of enjoys it, being outside and doing something."

Jens said that he can see in Wyatt things he



doesn't always see in other second graders – Wyatt knows how things work and how things come together. He can use a hammer and nail.

"It's kind of cool to see that develop," said Jens. "And maybe someday if he still enjoys it he can work with me."

Together, Wyatt and Jens have been using the best of German engineering to work on their projects this summer. In addition to the German flag on his tractor (Note that he is wearing adidas. That's German, too.), Jens said he often wears the traditional German carpentry attire.

He said that in Germany, every trade has its own type of clothing.

"You see people in their clothing and you can see what kind of trade they're in. Carpenters usually wear corduroy boot cut pants and the belt with the carpentry symbol," he said – not to mention the hammer holder is a lion's head with a chain on it and the double button vest and jacket.

"I got trained in Germany, so I'm trying to incorporate the knowledge I have with the tradition that goes on over there in Germany," said Jens. "I try to bring it over here and try to set myself apart from your other carpenters and companies my size." **NCL**

"BEFORE" PHOTO: COURTESY: JENS MULLER



"AFTER" PHOTO: VIRGINIA HAMRICK PHOTOGRAPHY, COURTESY: JENS MULLER



To many, this cottage in Gordonsville would have been a tear-down. But Jens Müller was able to breathe life back to it using carpentry techniques he learned in Germany.