



2017 TFG
Conference

Historic Joinery of the Midwest

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Knoxville, IL

Settlement of the Midwest began in the late 17th century by the French, along the Mississippi River, mostly by coming up, and settling along, the Mississippi River from New Orleans. The buildings they constructed remained stylistically consistent during the period from 1690 to 1810.

Around 1810, the Americans came from the East and brought their own style of building, which continued until about 1860, although waves of new immigrants came to the Midwest over the course of the 1840s from Scandinavia, central Europe, England, Eastern Europe, and Italy. These new immigrants became a much larger portion of the population than the Americans and traditional frames were often built, especially by German and Polish peoples. Often the American style was imitated, but the frame typology or layout methods were from the builder's country of origin. By the late 19th century most timber frames had become homogenous with the American styles of framing, though I have found holdouts to original methods and styles up until the 1930s.

Cordwood, Fachwerk, piece en piece, Scandinavian log buildings, stave log, vertical log, and others were side-by-side with the classic American square rule canted queen post. Due to the proximity to the Great Lakes, timber frames were not only built by house carpenters but ship carpenters as well.

My presentation will be a discussion of the beginning and final days of timber framing in the Midwest, a period that began in the late 17th century and lasted until the late 1930s, until the revival of timber framing by locals in the 1970s. I will include a presentation of photos of not only our work but the work of others. Over the last 25 years I have had the privilege of working on thousands of buildings (mostly timber frame and log buildings), sometimes as a consultant to fill in on restorations and general contracting of those projects, from dismantles to in situ projects.

About the Speaker

Rick Collins

Rick Collins has been involved in the construction industry for 17 years, beginning as an enlisted Marine combat engineer. Over the last decade, he has grown Trillium Dell Timberworks through various iterations, and is now co-owner in a strong 16-person company. Between military service and business, he attended the University of Illinois and received a BS in Wood Science/Forestry. He has been an active member of the Timber Framers Guild for seven years and on the Board of Directors for the last four.