

# Real Estate

THE BALTIMORE SUN | SUNDAY, AUGUST 30, 2009

Alfredo Rodriguez and his brother, Juan Rodriguez, bring down floor joists from an old house in Upperco. So far, the disassembly has gone smoothly, except for some stings from bees that had been the house's most recent inhabitants.



## Building on the past

### Partially burned cabin built 200 years ago provides materials for new home

By Meredith Cohn | MEREDITH.COHN@BALTSUN.COM

**A**longside a winding country road in Upperco in northern Baltimore County is a humble log cabin that partially burned last year. County officials say it is unsafe and must come down.

But the logs and stone foundation put there some 200 years ago, as well as the metal roof and oak boards installed later as part of an addition, will not go to the landfill. They will get a new life about three miles down the road in a new house.

Three men have been working for days with crowbars and hammers and sweat to disassemble the building. They've been separating the chestnut logs from the horsehair-and-mud mortar. They've been gently stacking the wood. They've been prying each hand-hammered nail and saving them in coffee cans.

This is why Robert T. Pierson bought the cabin. He builds custom houses, and all the old parts will go to the 6,000-square-foot environmentally friendly home of Jennifer and Jeffrey Rynbrandt and their three kids. They hope to move in next February.

"We fell in love with the idea of conserving materials," said Jennifer Rynbrandt by phone from her cur-

rent home in Ohio. "You can't buy materials that look like that because they're too expensive or not available. The idea of any of it, the chestnut, going to a landfill is horrible."

Pierson will mix old materials with new technology, such as wind and solar energy, a tankless water heater and recycled counter tops to complement the recycled house. But the main features will come from the little cabin down the road that didn't even have indoor plumbing until 1987.

The Rynbrandts, who are relocating because of work, found Pierson in a Web search after a disappointing house-hunting trip through cookie-cutter subdivisions. They saw one of Pierson's other recycled houses — he's done five or six at a pace of one a year — and had him begin the hunt for some old materials. Jennifer Rynbrandt wouldn't reveal how much they will spend but said it will be less than the million-dollar houses that they originally toured.

Andy Rhoten of A.R. Excavating Inc., the man hired to take down the house, heard of Pierson's search. And because he didn't want to see good old See **HOUSE**, page 3



Robert T. Pierson, a builder, developer and real estate agent, is using about 70 percent of the cabin's parts, from the logs to the nails to the stone foundation, in the new dwelling.