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G. Little Construction First in Washington to Use Exterior Bark Panels

posted by G Little on September 3, 2013

G. Little Construction has always been interested in sustainable (green) building practices. Recently, we were introduced to a building product that is truly green. Or should I say brown?

Bark House, based in North Carolina, began manufacturing poplar bark shingles in 1990. The bark shingles are all-natural, sustainable, reclaimed, maintenance free, and can last up to 80 years.

Bark shingles were originally designed by Henry Bacon, best known for designing the Lincoln Memorial. Bark shingles were first used in Linville, NC in 1895. Bacon's design was the first to use only bark for shingles rather than slabs of wood with bark still attached.

American Chestnut bark was used due to the abundance of the tree in North Carolina. When a blight devastated the American Chestnut species in the 1940s, bark shingles essentially disappeared.

More than sixty years later, bark shingles are gaining momentum after Bark House reintroduced them to the building industry with poplar bark shingles.

When poplar trees are harvested for furniture and plywood, Bark House is able to save the bark from becoming waste. When the trees are cut, Bark House craftsmen use antique tools to loosen whole cylinders of bark from the trunk. The cylinders are flattened and cut by hand into shingles or panels, placed in a kiln, and dried. The carefully cut shingles and panels are then stored in a climate controlled warehouse until they are ready for use.

Each project using Bark House shingles is unique. The process of designing and creating the shingles or panels to fit an individual structure is an intimate process requiring the builder to work closely with Bark House. The collaboration is what we enjoyed the most.



Bob Little holding a Bark House poplar bark shingle

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building, the ship yard in Port Townsend is connected to the mountain town of Spruce Pine, NC.

Our local culture is connected to the sea and the culture of Spruce Pine is connected to the Blue Ridge Mountains. This project brings the cultures and crafts from two communities, on opposite sides of the country, together to create a beautiful home that will be the first home in Washington State to use poplar bark panels for exterior siding.



Exterior Bark Panels installed on a floating home.

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