

## Photography

## Not Just Any Barn Photography

March 4, 2018 | Charles T. Low, Photographer

### Balleycanoe & Co. Nineteenth Century Architectural Salvage Dealer

From the outside, this barn looks like just a barn.

But once I had seen inside it, I knew that I would be approaching the owner, John Sorensen, about doing a photography project there, and luckily for me, he readily agreed.

My first question, what does "nineteenth century architectural salvage" even mean, didn't take long to answer.

The second question, how did John get into this line of work, needed a bit more explanation, but suffice it for now to say that the path meandered.

Nineteenth century architectural salvage means that John, through his business Balleycanoe & Co., buys and sell pieces of old buildings. Apparently, although completely new to me conceptually, the market for this, although niche, exists, in enough numbers to make a business of it. John says that, over the years, the line-ups at his sales counter would surprise me.



-just a barn!

I had recently become acquainted with John, because he co-manages Before the Rush, an Autumnal art sale at which friends of mine exhibit. So that's how I heard about an open-house at Balleycanoe, attended, and, after marvelling at how very many *doors* were in the barn, I marvelled further at how very many *other* things were in the barn - windows, stained glass, newel posts, shutters, hinges and other ancient hardware of every description. I found for example old lighting-rod conductors.

I did not make any photographs on the day of that open house. I bumped into some friends there who were surprised to hear from me that I wouldn't do that without permission. But no: I have looked into this, and advise not doing that on private property without the owner's assent.

I marvelled at the visual cornucopia inside this barn. So when I returned a week or two later, and was about to start working, John mentioned that "photographers here have tended of course to find some similar scenes".

What? Other photographers?!? How *dare* they precede me!?!

Well, apparently, life didn't start with me, but I knew that I wanted to find something not only beautiful, but new, which others wouldn't have seen.

As of this writing, I have no idea how well I succeeded at finding a novel approach. I only know that I absolutely revelled in the few hours I spent in that barn, and have come away with some images which, over the following days, please me more and more.

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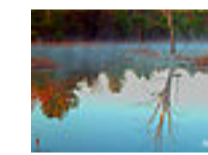
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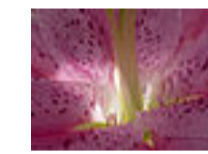
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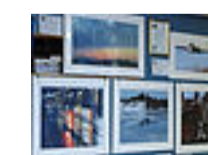
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Almost everywhere I looked, I saw doors - in arrangements which I liked! I personally interpret these as more *nuanced* than "wow" - but this sort of arrangement continues to grow on me.

(A few please me less and less. I won't be discussing those ones!)

Doors - I'm guessing that doors comprise a third or more of the stock in that barn. Upon entering, I saw doors, by the score, and then wandering into the back rooms, more doors - hundreds and hundreds of doors.



-not even close to all of the doors in that barn! (-and no: not warped; fish-eye lens)

John leaves these doors, like all of the stock, rough. Although he knows how to refinish antique furniture, the salvage stock in the barn remains as found, and he says that although some purchasers do refinish their merchandise, others follow a growing trend to leave it, letting it show its age and history.

Not entirely by coincidence, I discovered recently that another friend of mine has one of his doors on her house.





Doors!

Prior to starting, I also discussed with John that I would naturally approach the project as a photographer, looking to make art, cognizant that his approach might be as a business-owner, wanting to highlight services offered. John expressed complete flexibility, and - perhaps influenced by his own artistry - said just to proceed and to make photographs of whatever I wanted, however I wanted.

And then John returned to his shop, leaving me to photograph on my own inside the barn.

Fortunately, I had fantastic light that day. I might have thought that, once inside the barn, it would just be dark, requiring long exposures on a tripod, and it was dark, and it did require long exposures on a tripod, but the *light* ... well, have a look at the photographs, and see.

A few hours later, I thought of saying to him, in jest, "And I hardly broke anything!", but then reconsidered, and uncharacteristically kept my thoughts to myself. (And John - I didn't break anything. I also hardly *moved* anything - well, one little thing, only temporarily. It all turned out fine! Really.)



The Balleycanoe & Co. store, with owner John Sorensen

It might happen that something would release in my nascent artist's brain on a third shoot, and I would really start to see; then a deeper magic might happen. If that prompts you to wonder when the *second* shoot happened, it hasn't. I haven't even broached it, and might never.

But clearly I would have to get through a second shoot before a third. I'm just saying: sometimes the creative juices flow more freely on the third shoot. More proficient artists than myself have described working a subject to visual exhaustion, only to have new horizons open up to them if they remain receptive to the possibility. The break between shoots could be twenty seconds or twenty years.



Apart from the story which the photographs themselves tell, I don't have much more to say about it, except you can tell how thankful I am to John Sorensen for his cooperation and generosity.



Balleycanoe & Co. barn (showing ... doors!)



barn ceiling (notice the light!)





wagon wheel and chain



child's chair hanging in rafters





door



windows and shutters (for variety!)





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Photography

doors and shutters

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## While you're here:

Remember that I make photographs and that I sell photographs.

Almost everything which you see on this web site is for sale. Prices at the time of writing, for example, for an 11x14" fine-art print with a generous white border would be about \$40, and you can go up or down from there. Check the [rates](#) page. More importantly, check out my [gallery](#).

Book a portrait-sitting - the right frequency with which to commission formal [portraits](#) is a bit more often.

Remember also to leave a comment, or to [contact](#) me. Note that on the main [blog](#) page you can sign up for new-blog notifications. I am very careful and respectful with your privacy.

Thank you so much for reading.

**Charles T. Low**  
Photographer









Tags: Balleycanoe architecture salvage photography art

