

Recognizing Addiction When You've Got It

My addiction to buying and restoring very old houses started off nearly 50 years ago when I moved to Long Island and bought my first house – a small farm cottage built about 1810-20 and in rather run-down shape. Bringing that back to life in my spare time, I developed a modicum of carpentry skills – enough to persuade me to buy a second old house about a dozen years later, again from the same 1810-20 period, on land contiguous to the first, and again a small farm cottage, but this time with various larger additions - and in much worse shape. This second one was literally near collapse. It has taken the better part of 30 years to slowly rebuild, again in my spare time, as well as to do a great deal of



landscaping. It also polished my skills in installing wiring, plumbing, and heating systems. This past December (2014) I finally had to recognize my addiction, when I bought my *third* old house, this time a large one, dating from about 1700-1710, which appears to have a few beams and paneling incorporated into it from a prior (1670-1680 ?) house. Again, this one has many problems, having served as a warm, comfortable home and source of food for innumerable generations of termites and wood beetles over the past 300 years, but it is a magnificent old place with two gigantic black walnut trees about 6 feet in diameter near it, old stone foundations, and retaining walls, a small barn, etc. [For

those who don't know it, Long Island is not *all* Levittown. What makes this one even more interesting is its historical connections to the local community, Setauket, which was the center of George Washington's most successful and enduring spy ring, as depicted in the AMC Television series "Turn" – also the fact that I am only the third owner in the past 300 years not to be a direct family descendent of the original Smith who built the house.] The cumulative age of my three houses is now about 700 years. I have finally had to admit I am a total sucker for old houses. Having just passed 83, I know this one will probably consume the rest



of my life, but for me it beats, hands down, retirement to Florida to play golf, or heeding the the seemingly inescapable ads for Viking River Cruises along all the world's navigable rivers. Fortunately, my wife half-heartedly agrees. But having faced my addiction, I swear I won't do this again. Ever... I think....



Best wishes to all, whatever your addictions are.
Bob de Zafra