

BY JEFFERSON KOLLE



Lively Live-Edge Floor

Gary Horvath began installing floors in the 1980s. About five years ago, he and his wife, Lisa, started Real Antique Wood (realantiquewood.com) in an industrial property in Irvington, N.J., once owned by a flooring mill he used to purchase from. Real Antique Wood sells vintage lumber and building parts from structures he's taken down as far away as Ohio.

When Hurricane Irene felled a massive black walnut tree in 2011, Horvath milled it into planks and stickered them for air drying. For several years, the lumber lay stacked behind the couch in the Horvaths' living room. "We knew the wood was knock-out beautiful, but we didn't know what to do with it," Horvath says, "until a friend of ours saw it and wanted it for the floor and stairs in his house."

For the flooring installation, Horvath and crew glued the live-edge boards to the subfloor with full-coverage Sikabond T55 adhesive (usa.sika.com). Adjacent boards were scribed to fit and the occasional gaps were filled with ground walnut bark, wood-flour cement (glitsa.com), and pulverized coffee grounds.

The staircase was more complex, mainly because the customer wanted the appearance of a single board running up to the second floor. "Like a carpet runner," Horvath says. To make the nosing for the treads and maintain the look of continuous grain, the boards were run long, then cut to the correct overhang dimension. The cutoff was "folded under," then glued and clamped to the tread above. To fill in on each side of the walnut runner, Horvath and crew scribed and fastened pieces of white oak. After lots of filling, edging, and orbital sanding, the staircase and flooring were finished with Bona Traffic water-based polyurethane (bona.com).

Horvath figures the whole job took about 300 man-hours. "But you can add another 100," he says, "if you figure in the time to mill the tree, stack it in our warehouse, then take it to my house, then to the final jobsite where it acclimatized for two weeks before installation. Since photos of the floor were posted on Horvath's company's Facebook page, it's gotten more than 1.95 million hits.

Jefferson Kolle is a senior editor at JLC.

Photos: Gary Horvath