



Photo by Guillaume Nolet

Barry Silverthorn, built his home in the style of a Grand Trunk Railway Station, facing the current CN railway tracks on Geddes Street in Belleville.

Train house fulfills man's dream

By Solana Cain

Barry Silverthorn wrote a list of what he wanted in his ideal house. He wanted to be in town, to be able to walk to the post office and the bank, and he wanted to be near train tracks.

"I've always entertained the idea of living in a train station," said Silverthorn, who has only a railing and some trim to finish before construction on his dream home is complete.

Silverthorn lives in a Grand Trunk Railway Station replica home in Belleville. He built the house from the ground up and patterned it exactly after a model train station kit he has in his basement.

The low-pitched roof, wide overhanging eaves supported by ornate wooden brackets, the shade of red brick with stone across the lower third of the wall, separate entrances for passengers and baggage (leaving the house void of a proper front door), transoms above the doors and an antique cart once used to transporting luggage, are all historical features Silverthorn has designed into his house.

It's supposed to give the impression of a well-cared-for train station that's been around for many years and was possibly renovated recently.

In 2008, Silverthorn spent his weekends driving along roads that criss-crossed the tracks, looking for property for sale, with a tent in his backseat. The first trip he took was to Niagara Falls and he found nothing.

Then he went to London, and then out towards Kitchener. At night, he slept in his tent in a park or on the side of the road near the tracks. The steady chug of trains rolling by outside his tent might have irritated or scared most, but Silverthorn finds the sounds of engine chuffs, rail clacks and whistles blowing in the distance tranquil.

After viewing a failed prospect in Trenton, Silverthorn decided to drive through Belleville, a city he had never visited before. When he came to the train crossing south of College and Geddes streets he saw something: notice of severance stuck to a tree near an empty blue house.

"I've had an interest in trains since I was four years old and got a train set for Christmas," he said from his dining room table surrounded by big bay windows.

While the train theme does not overtly continue throughout the interior of Silverthorn's home, there are details such as the bay windows that are accurate to how the station would've looked hundreds of years ago.

Many mornings, Silverthorn will lift open one of the bay windows and stick his head out to watch approaching trains, sometimes he waves at the passengers and crew. In the mid-19th century, the bay windows in a train station would have served the dispatcher with a clear view of arriving and departing trains. Tickets might have been sold out of the window or telegraph equipment would have been housed there.

There are other details in and around the house that would surely be recognized by other people belonging to Silverthorn's subculture.

He muses over the idea of having other hobbyists over to sit on the porch, have a drink and watch the trains go by. He likens the gathering to a Super Bowl party.

Recently, some neighbours knocked on his door to say they liked his house and from a historical point of view, appreciated the traditional architectural details he included.

"If you can get maybe a third of the details correct," said Silverthorn, "then what happens is people walking by or visiting will fill in the rest themselves. In a way, it's very theatrical."

As an adult, Silverthorn has carried his enthusiasm for trains into a career as executive producer of TrainMasters TV and freelancer for Model Railroad Hobbyist magazine.

It's only fitting that his abode should also be a reflection of this passion.

"Most people live in someone else's idea of what a house is or supposed to be," said Silverthorn, who doesn't plan on living in a museum for trains.

He has several antiques he's collected over the years from shades to mantels to lighting fixtures



Photo by Solana Cain

Barry Silverthorn designed his house to replicate an old Grand Trunk Railway Station, "I've always entertained the idea of living in a train station," he said, but because there are so few of these buildings left, Silverthorn built his own.

and there's a clock above the sink in the bathroom that once told time in his grandparents house. He believes the memories created in their home stirred his influence for older buildings.

"I think what makes it warm here for me is that feeling of visiting," said Silverthorn about his

home.

While he has no immediate plans to climb aboard a steam locomotive from his window, he welcomes the dramas his mind creates every time he hears the bells toll and sees the arm lower to mark a train's impending arrival.

Winter or all-season tires: which are safer?

By Justin Greaves

Winter is here, and the decision to buy all-season or winter tires is an ongoing dilemma for residents in Ontario.

The name and the price of all-seasons lead many drivers to use them all year long.

But information provided by Transport Quebec contradicts this decision.

"In 2005, 38 per cent of the accidents that occur during the winter involve at least one vehicle that is equipped with all-season tires."

In 2008, Quebec introduced a law that states certified winter tires are mandatory between Dec. 15 and March 15 for owners of taxi or passenger vehicles registered in Quebec.

Fines in the province for not getting certified winter tires range from \$200 up to \$300 with no demerit points.

In Ontario, there are no requirements for winter tires.

Peter Cowan, owner of Arbuckle's Auto Services in Belleville, knows the importance of winter tires.

"I always use winter tires, whether it's going to work or driving to Quebec.

"People get frustrated in the winter, and with snow tires on, you won't have that frustration level."

"I've had friends in accidents that lost their lives and they didn't have snow tires on. I'm pretty certain that if they did have snow tires on, the accident would have been avoided," says Cowan.

A study by Transport Canada says that all season-tires are good until temperatures drop under -10 C.

Cowan said he suggests to all his clients that they get their tires on before Thanksgiving and off after Easter. Even

people who drive all-wheel drive vehicles are now coming in for winter tires, despite the extra traction that comes with them.

"There are many days in Ontario that all-season wouldn't be suitable. Winter tires have large treads designed for wet

control surface and heavy winter snow," said Kenny McBrien, mechanic at Arbuckle's and coworker of Cowan's.

There are varied amount of snow tires that meet the Quebec transit rules. Some types include Nordic snow and ultra traction winter. All of the

tires have to have the icon representing a mountain with a superimposed snowflake.

Cowan said that winter tires will still help prevent accidents, no matter how good a driver is, and that every vehicle should have winter tires.



Photo by Justin Greaves

Al Dussault grabs a winter tire from the back of Arbuckle's Auto Service on Moira Street West. Dussault has been working at Arbuckle's for over 10 years.

Smoking...

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Contest planned to help encourage giving up cigarettes

"There is help out there and people should take it. It's a good program to help young people quit," said student Phil Lawr. Lawr participated in the campaign and did not quit completely but cut back quite a bit with the free gum and patches provided.

The Leave The Package Behind campaign is also planning a contest called Wouldrather (WUR). It is six-week contest designed specifically for young adults, and is open to any individual between the ages of 18 and 29 who is living in Ontario as well as students in post-secondary schools.

This contest is not just for smokers who want to quit. There are also categories for people who smoke but just want to cut back, people who are non-smokers and want to stay that way, as well as a team category.

Prizes range from \$250 to \$2,500.

"I think that the contest is a good motivator," said Deans.

The nurse said she liked the fact that you don't have to smoke to win and if you want you can enter with someone else. Wouldrather registration is open now and ends Jan. 26. The contest runs Jan. 27 to March 10.