



## Jefferson Recycled Woodworks Erika Carpenter & Richard McFarland

McCloud, CA



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Partnership supporting  
Small Business

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## Reclaiming and Saving Forests

When Richard McFarland and Erika Carpenter began to remodel their McCloud home in 1990, little could they have known where the search for some foundation timbers would lead them. It led them to a founding of a wood reclaiming company that now spans the globe, from its McCloud headquarters to Southeast Asia, and has reclaimed more than two million board feet of old growth timber. From old growth heart redwood to Thailand teak, Jefferson Recycled Woodworks combs the world to reclaim valuable and rare wood that would otherwise have rotted where it lay or been taken to a dump.

The birth of Jefferson Recycled Woodworks began when McFarland's search for foundation timbers took him to the old McCloud mill that was being demolished. Salvaging some appropriate pieces, McFarland said he realized that the clear, vertical grain Douglas-fir he was putting under his house was a rare and valuable wood. Thus began the mission to found a business that would reclaim wood and, as a consequence, save the forests.

“This is far more than a business,” said McFarland. “Erika and I want to save forests and educate people to understand that wood is a reusable resource.” Reclaiming wood from structures slated for destruction is very different from swinging a wrecking ball. The process known as deconstruction involves carefully pulling the wood from the structure with the goal of leaving as much usable board feet as possible. “We use chain saws and pry bars,” said McFarland. Once the wood is salvaged, the process of turning it into usable lumber is also time consuming and labor intensive. First the wood must be run through a metal detector to find bolts, nails and other impediments that must be removed before cutting the wood into timber. Along with pry bars and hammers, McFarland has developed several one-of-a-kind tools to aid with the metal extraction.

Sawing the wood also requires a special process. “Old wood has warps and curves in it,” said McFarland. “We can not just run it through a saw like the mills do. Our operator is specially trained to run the wood through the saw to get the best results for that particular piece of wood.” To create usable timber from condensed buildings and tossed lumber has taken McFarland and Carpenter literally around the world. Through their worldwide contacts they heard that Thailand was replacing old hardwood railroad ties with concrete. After a long and complicated process that had Carpenter spending eight months in Thailand setting up manufacturing, 50,000 railroad ties made of teak, rosewood and other rare old growth jungle hardwoods are now for sale as flooring in their AsiaRain line.

Jefferson Recycled Woodworks has gathered wood from other unusual places. The Blitz brewery in Oregon, buildings in the Presidio in San Francisco, a water tank, the old saw mill in Fort Bragg and a California barn built in 1853 have all undergone the deconstruction process at the hands of the Jefferson Recycled Woodworks experts.

From meager beginnings with a new untested idea, Jefferson recycled Woodworks now has architects and builders designing structures around the Jefferson Recycled Woodworks inventory which includes thousands of board feet of many rare woods at the McCloud Yard.

For McFarland and Carpenter, however, there is always the mission. “It's as much about education as about selling wood,” said Carpenter. McFarland said the waste of wood in the past has been appalling. “A lot of Mc Cloud was clear cut to get ponderosa pine to make fruit packing boxes,” said McFarland. “We just can't afford to cut down trees and waste wood like that anymore.”

For more information or to inquire about the complete line of Jefferson recycled Woodworks products, call 530-964-2740 or visit the website at [www.ecowood.com](http://www.ecowood.com).