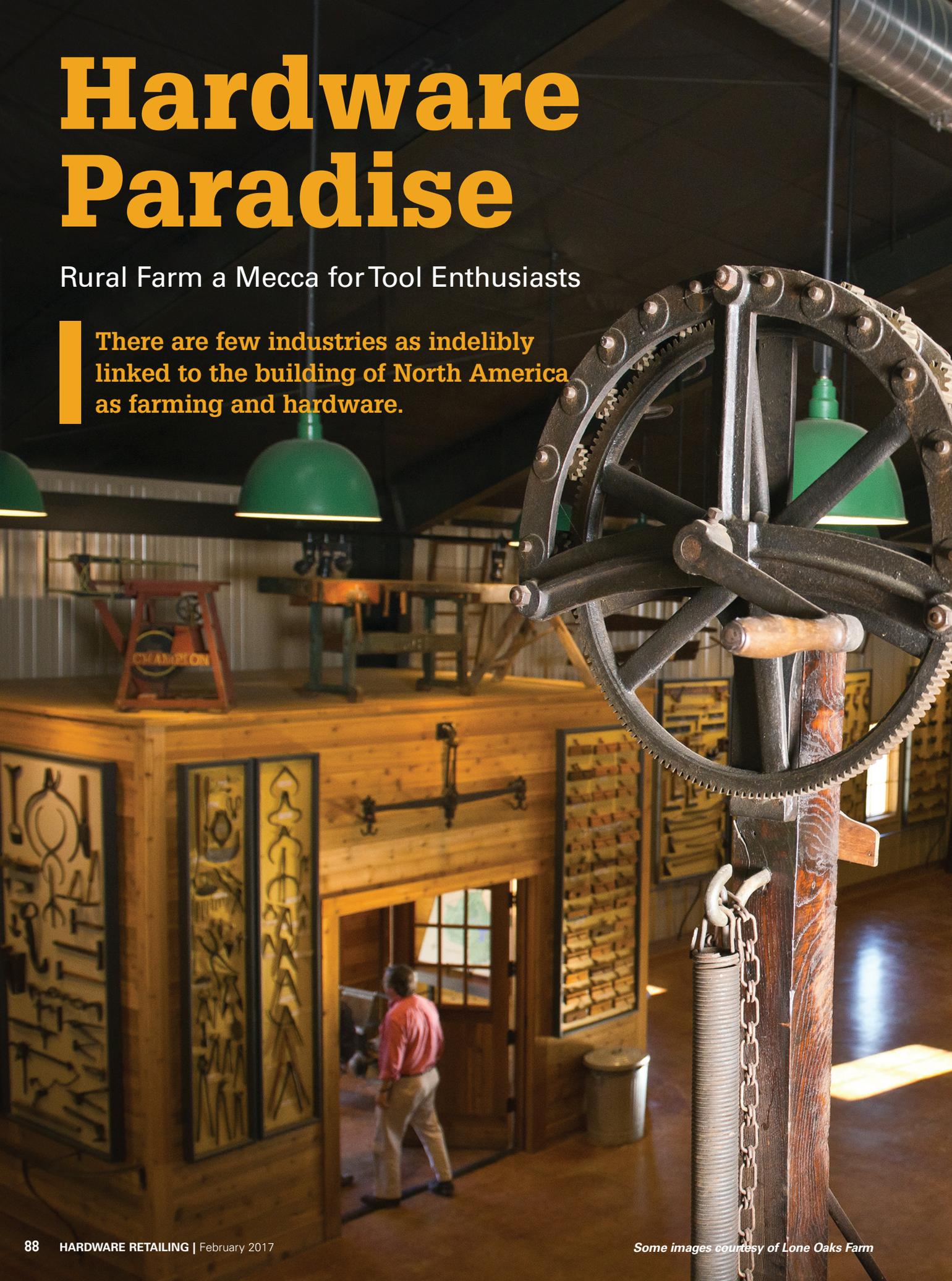


Hardware Paradise

Rural Farm a Mecca for Tool Enthusiasts

There are few industries as indelibly linked to the building of North America as farming and hardware.



These two pursuits go hand-in-calloused-hand with one another when it comes to forging a new nation. Early pioneers literally bet their lives on their ability to raise cattle and crops, and the tools they used to support these pursuits were indispensable.

Perhaps it is because of this industrial synergy that it is particularly apt to find what is arguably the nation's largest tool museum tucked away on an idyllic farm in rural Tennessee.

Anyone with links to either farming or hardware should be drawn to this unique location, where both the agriculture and hardware history of the pioneers are honored.

For the average hardware store owner, who carries on the proud tradition of the tool peddlers that came before them, this hidden gem is as much a tribute to their trade as it is a curiosity.

Hardware Retailing recently got the opportunity to visit this beautiful place, and in the following pages we will share some of its breathtaking scenery with you.

The Farm

This rolling 1,200 acres of prime pasture, grass and woodlands carries the somewhat beguiling name of Lone Oaks Farm and is located about an hour and half east of Memphis.

Lone Oaks Farm is many things—a working cattle ranch, a corporate retreat, a wedding destination and a place for college students and local youth to study agriculture.

The farm, in its current state, was borne from the minds of developers Scott and Kathy Ledbetter. They originally acquired the property as a rural retreat from their busy lives.

Slowly, they began developing the rough-hewn property into more of a living homage to the rural lifestyle, agriculture and, yes, tools.

The Ledbetters, together with local land management experts and planners, added facilities to the land, developed a road system so the area could be easily traveled and forged a long-term vision for what Lone Oaks Farm could become.

Every tool a hardware junkie could imagine has a place somewhere in the sale barn at Lone Oaks Farm.



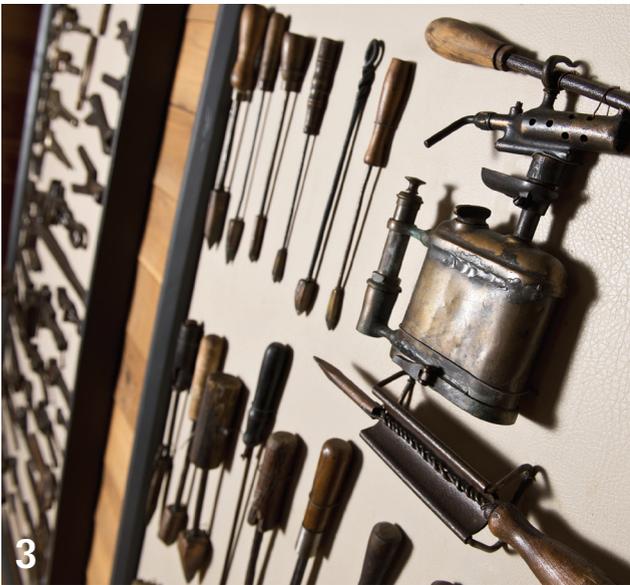
In addition to functioning as a working auction center for cattle and a tool museum, the sale barn is also available for corporate functions and meetings. It features a sleeping facility and a full kitchen.



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1. This antique scale arm hangs above the entrance to the sale barn at **Lone Oaks Farm** and is dated 1776.
2. The sleeping facility located above the main floor of the sale barn is dubbed the “plane room,” and in addition to luxury accommodations also houses a collection of, yes, antique planes.
3. The range of antique tools on display at the Lone Oaks Farm tool museum is truly staggering. From iron workers’ tools and barrel-making tools to stone-cutting equipment, it is a visual history of the tools that helped forge North America.
4. Most of the tools were originally owned by an employee who collected tools as a hobby. The current owners later purchased the collection from the farmhand’s family.
5. The upper floor of the sale barn houses many of the bench-tools, and everything from jigsaws and coffee grinders to a rope braider can be found on display.



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Lone Oaks Farm provides a tranquil retreat about an hour and a half east of Memphis.

Several years ago, the Ledbetters sold off the majority of the property to the University of Tennessee Extension, a unit of the school's Institute for Agriculture. The school was looking for a suitable site for a world-class 4H Center in Western Tennessee. One could hardly imagine a more fitting destination for young people to learn about agriculture than Lone Oaks Farm.

According to the UT Extension website, they see the property becoming "the national model for connecting youth and adults to the land and using the outdoors to encourage a deep appreciation for the land, conservation and agriculture."

The Tools

Every building you walk into at Lone Oaks Farm holds its own set of surprises for visitors. From an antique stained-glass church window that now provides light to poultry in a working chicken coup to the reclaimed wooden floors from a 17th-century church that were used in the Farm's log cabin, there are discoveries to be made at every turn.

But of all the shrines housed within the facilities at Lone Oaks Farm, by far the most impressive is the tool collection that covers the walls within the "sale barn."

This sale barn is a working facility where cattle are brought in for auction, but it looks far more like a rustic lodge than any cattle barn.

Honey-colored wood walls provide a fitting backdrop to the panel after panel of tools that dot the walls.

Above the entrance to the facility hangs a scale dated 1776, and that's just one of the thousands of tools and implements on display.

Electricians' tools, barrel making tools, cobbling tools, stone cutting tools; every tool a hardware junkie could imagine has a place somewhere in the sale barn at Lone Oaks Farm.

According to the Ledbetters, the tools were originally owned by one of their employees who had a penchant for tool collecting.

He would buy the tools from various sales, and eventually he put them on display panels and traveled around with these panels to show off his collection at various tool and implement shows all around the country, according to Kathy Ledbetter.

When their devoted farmhand passed away, his family wasn't quite sure what to do with their father's collection of thousands of tools. At one point, they even considered selling the pieces off individually on eBay, Kathy says.

That's when the Ledbetters stepped in and decided to purchase the entire collection and put it on display at Lone Oaks Farm. Here, this tool collector's life's work would have a suitable home—a home where it could be shared for generations with visitors passionate about hardware, farming and building.

The tools on display in the sale barn are just part of the collection, though, according to Kathy. The couple is still considering how to show off the other tools that are currently being kept in storage. —

For more information about Lone Oaks Farm, please go to www.loneoaksfarm.com or call 731-376-0882.