



SCANTLINGS

Magazine of the Timber Framers Guild
Number 243 ∞ Dec 2025/Jan 2026



Little Frame with a Big Heart in Meadville, Pennsylvania



DAVID YASENCHACK

I suspect our project became just the sort of experience the Guild hoped to instigate with the 40-for-40 initiative. Many in the town of Meadville now know something about the Guild, and what was once a blighted downtown lot is now a small park with a compelling little timber frame pergola. That frame has provided a lot of stories for those involved. The “40-for-40” led me to meet and work with many folks who care deeply about their town’s future. I could joyfully expound on each of the 13 volunteers who showed up for two September weekends of milling, joinery, and finishing, a brisk October raising, and a celebratory picnic with our families (complete with a trebuchet firing). All were fascinating folks, aged 17 to 71, with a wide range of skills and experience, and all eager to play a part in this community-building venture.

For this midwestern timber framer, the year was an awakening of sorts to the Guild, with a tour of Japan in the spring, followed by the Wayside community build near Boston. And both experiences influenced this raising. We modeled our two-weekend workshop on the Wayside

build—from its application process, lunches provided by local sponsors, and balancing the goals of teaching with the timely production of a finished frame. Sharing photos of boldly painted Japanese shrines with Amara Geffen, a long-time public artist and my primary collaborator with the city, led to staining our park frame a robust reddish-orange with black-painted accents.

Posts, girts, benches, and braces are cherry; plates are eastern hemlock and white pine; and plate caps and rafters are pressure-treated yellow pine. Weep holes will hopefully drain brace mortices of rain. We’ll see how long it endures without a roof—and in the public domain of teenage pocket knives and cigarette lighters. But more than a dozen people from in and near the town have stories and memories of laboring with new friends on the timbers, and of lingering around a barrel fire into the Halloween evening of its raising. Having memories like this in play make it a bit more likely this little frame will receive fresh paint and care when needed.