

Barn Tours Teach and Tempt

Barn enthusiasts attending the annual conference in March and the U.P. barn conference in July learned firsthand how old barns can creatively be given new lives.

Editor's Note: Do you know of restored or unique barns that deserve recognition? Do you have a barn project that MBPN-led workshop attendees could accomplish in a day? The MBPN can provide you with resource people for planning a successful barn tour or hands-on workshop.



Above: A 36' by 110' gambrel dairy barn was moved intact down a road and across a field to become a horse barn for Farnum's Four Season Farm on DeWitt Road near Lansing.



Above and right: Photographs depicting the process by which the 32' by 96' Lonier dairy barn near Lansing was lifted, repaired, lowered and resided are displayed in the finished barn.



Left: A 100-year-old, 46' by 68' post and beam barn from Frankenmuth has a new home with Dan and Gail Crane. The barn was dismantled and reassembled as if it had always been a Lansing resident.



Above: U.P. conferees learn from barnwright Steve Stier, the steps needed to make this Escanaba-area barn good as new.

Legal Aspects of Barn Rehabilitation

A 2004 Conference Report

Attorney Paul M. Ross told participants at the annual conference of the MBPN that the Michigan Right to Farm Act helps preserve heritage barns by protecting farmers against nuisance lawsuits that threaten farm operations. The Act is broad, preempts local laws that might interfere, and no local unit of government can enact or enforce any ordinance that interferes with it. Additionally, the Act protects both traditional farm activity and the conversion of a farm operation from one type to another, including nontraditional farming such as bee products, aviaries, and "any other product which incorporates the use of food, feed, fiber, or fur as determined by the

Michigan Department of Agriculture."

What does this have to do with barns? According to Ross, the repair, remodeling, or construction of a barn is protected by the Act. However, he said, the local unit of government may require the farmer to comply with the state building code.

Farm activities according to the Right to Farm Act, "may not be zoned or regulated away in their entirety."

You, as the landowner, need to understand the law and know your local assessor. There seem to be different interpretations of the law from area to area,



Attorney Paul M. Ross speaks with MBPN conference participants.

Be aware of what is happening with other properties in your locale.