

“Isn’t That a Barn Coming Our Way?”

It’s a good thing it wasn’t April Fool’s Day or Halloween when a Clare-area barn was moved last August. Quite a surprise to see a 36’ x 82’ barn, 46’ to its peak, traveling down Business U.S. 127 and crossing an expressway overpass!

Tom Kunse, a local businessman, purchased 200 of the original 240-acre John Bicknell farm, along U.S. 127 for commercial development. The Bicknell farmhouse was moved by a couple who will renovate it as their home. Kunse purchased the barn for \$1 as part of the land deal, paid another \$18,000 for the moving, (Williams House Moving, Alma), and \$6,000 for the work needed to temporarily disconnect electricity and trim trees along the route. The project required 3 Consumer’s Energy crews totaling 14 to 16 linemen, supervisors, and engineers and workers from Northern Logistics to assist with signage, mailboxes, and fiber optic cable. Charter Communications, the Clare County Sheriff Department and businesses along the way temporarily without power also cooperated.

Photo Credit: Judy A. Grant



U.S. 127 was closed at the Surrey Road overpass as the barn passed overhead.

During its peak years, the Bicknell Barn, built by Mark and Audrey Bicknell about 1938, housed about 100 registered Hereford cattle, calves, and horses. Kunse had planned to build a metal barn on his residential property and had the site prepared in the fall of 2004. But that winter he purchased the farm. At first he thought the barn was too big to be moved, but after working with the Michigan Department of Transportation and the Clare County Road Commission, the plan was found to be feasible.

“Once my wife saw the barn she agreed we needed to save it,” Kunse says. “I am ecstatic we were able to save the barn. To build a metal structure of this size would cost about 125 percent of the total cost of moving the barn, but a pole barn doesn’t have one percent of the character of this barn. It is a known fact that it is better to store equipment on wood than on cement.

The barn was set on a 10” poured wall foundation. Support cables have been added to keep the roof rigid. Weak flooring has been replaced. A new roof will be put on next year and with that says Kunse, “It can be around for another 100 years.” The barn will be used for storage and an occasional barn dance.

“I encourage anyone who sees a barn in the path of development to contact its owners. Anyone can slap up a pole barn, but who gets a chance to save a piece of history?” Kunse advises.



Photo Credit: Clare County Review

John Bicknell, son of the original owners of the barn, was quoted in the Clare County Review, August 19, 2005: “I told my granddaughter, when I am gone, you will be able to take your children by there someday and say, ‘My grandpa kept his horse in that barn.’”

For more information: www.clarenortherngroup.co

Tom Kunse will share details of his project at the MBPN 2006 Annual Conference.

Judy A. Grant, Tom Kunse, and the Clare County Review contributed to this story.

Distinguished Macomb County Farmstead Captures Neighbors’ Hearts

Two barns on the grounds of the famous Octagon House, 57500 Van Dyke, Washington, in northern Macomb County are being renovated to the delight of neighbors.

The barns, the unique house, and five acres are all that remain of a once 300-acre farm that had seven barns and a history unlike any other. Loren Andrus settled the farm in 1860, raising dairy cattle and sheep. The barns later provided shelter on the Underground Railroad leading to the use of the property for an Underground Railroad Restaurant in the 1930s. From 1945 to 1960, as part of the Albert H. Schmidt Foundation Farm, it became a Wayne State University agricultural training site for men returning from World War II, a Parke Davis and Company research center for dairy vaccines, and a U.S. Rubber testing ground for tires. Still later, the barns were shops for “Apple Barrel Farm.” Few farms can boast

“...our connections to the past are being torn down... It’s important that our kids have a place to go where they can see how things used to be... see it with their own eyes, rather than reading about it in a book.”

Kim Sikes, Octagon House volunteer, Detroit News, June 29, 2005.

such a distinguished and diverse background, including being home to the top producing dairy herd in the state. Ag production ceased in 1984.

Friends of the Octagon House (FOTOH) launched the “Save the Barns” campaign in early June. The first priority is to stabilize a two-story cinder block and wood barn and replace its cedar shake roof (to begin in spring 2006). Old

shingles will be purchased by supporters, signed and displayed.

A companion metal building is in use for events that bring people together to share community spirit, heritage, the arts, family celebrations, and youth education.

“Save the Barns” committee chairwoman, Tammi Graber says this project has won the hearts of many in the community and in the subdivisions that have grown up just 20 feet behind the barns where animals once grazed. “People are thrilled that we are able to save these barns, she said.”

Historical research is being done by Jon Williams of Shippert & Associates, Saginaw. Barn restoration is being directed by David Ciolek, Williamston.

For information, hours, events, rentals, and to purchase “Save the Barns” lapel pins: www.octagonhouse.org. or (586) 781-0084.

ReinBARNation

Barns can enjoy new lives at a fraction of the cost of new construction. Check the credentials of contractors. Get multiple opinions.

A barn contractors guide is available from the MBPN and online at www.mibarn.net. There is no charge to place an ad but a donation to the MBPN to support newsletter expenses is greatly appreciated.



Image Courtesy: The Arts, Over/Under



Dismantled Hay Barn for Sale
Oak 7x7 timbers, gambrel roof, 30'x40' - Tagged on skids, ready to go - \$10,000. Excellent condition. Call Ken or Val - (616) 868-7174

FW05

1840 Barn for Sale

Superb condition - 30'x 60' and 40' to peak hand-hewn oak, walnut * 12'x12' beams gambrel roof, custom workshop
Excellent home potential
Nine Mile and Beck Road, Novi
Eudora Adolph - (248) 496-1808

FW05



Wood Stave Silo for Sale

circa 1900 12'x30' cypress, good condition
12321 Keefer Highway • Sunfield, MI 48890
Luke Sandborn • (517) 566-8865
luke.S@centurytel.net

FW05

Free Barn

20'x45' with workshop • metal roof
Davison, MI • Venae McTavish • (630) 365-6283

FW05



This doghouse was built in Tekonsha in 1903 by Claude Wagoner when he was 14. Wagoner went on to become a barnwright in the area, building and restoring many barns, some of which are still standing. The doghouse is owned by Wagoner's daughter, Nettie VandyBogurt, Battle Creek. It is for sale. Contact MBPN NEWS editor, Jan Corey Amett at coralan@net-link.net.

FW05

Wedding Barns Needed!

Barn near Greenfield to seat 200 for a wedding reception August 2006. Couple will provide catering and restroom facilities. Email MBPN editor.

Barn two hours from Royal Oak area. Need to decide by Feb. 2006. Contact Jennifer Wengig at (248) 548-1126. If your barn or one in your area is available for events, please notify any member of the MBPN board with details.

FW05

Barn History Sought

My great-grandfather, Henry C. Bates, a native of Michigan, built a barn on his Kansas farm about 1880. It is not a typical Kansas barn, so we would like to know if it has features similar to other barns of the 1870s-1880s in Michigan. Features that are not typical of Kansas barns in the Butler County vicinity in this era include gable roof line with matching lean-tos, board-and-batten siding, window trim, and sliding door. Bates was born in Washtenaw Co., Michigan in 1837. He homesteaded in Butler Co., Kansas about 1872. He and his brother Charles owned and operated a saw mill in Dexter, MI, before Henry moved to Kansas. Email Janice Patterson, jpatterson@juno.com.

Twice-Moved Barn Becomes Part of Living History

A freshly-painted gable roof barn stands among white houses in Battle Creek's Historic Adventist Village as if it had always been there. But, in fact, this is the barn's third home.

Built by Francis Snow, it began its life as a hay barn in the 1880s south of Battle Creek and was moved in 1987 to a pioneer homestead recreated on the grounds of nearby Leila Arboretum on the west end of the city. It was moved to its current and likely permanent home within the city in 2003, to become a part of the recreation of Battle Creek's important Seventh Day Adventist history. Both moves were handled by Conti Building and Restoration of Kalamazoo, using a process known as "flaking."

During flaking, the permanent pegs that hold heritage barns together are replaced by temporary pegs. Then, the barn is taken apart in sections. In this case the roof was divided into eight sections. The end walls were divided into pieces 17' x 50' and the side walls into 16' x 40' sections. A crane lowered the pieces onto a truck. Each section was marked to indicate its position on reconstruction, as were individual boards, posts and beams. Flaking can be done when a barn is simply too large or geography makes it impossible to move intact, or as a matter of preference on the part of the contractor or owner.

At the time of the most recent move, Historic Adventist Village Director, Stanley Cottrell was quoted in the Battle Creek Enquirer (October 7, 2003) envisioning the barn's future use: "People can be sitting on the hillside and we'll have the barn as a backdrop or stage."

2006 Michigan Barn Calendars Available

"The Days and Dreams of A.D. 2006" is produced by The Bowne Township Historical Society, Alto. It is a full-color, spiral-bound calendar featuring barns throughout the township, a different barn each month. The "cover barn" is the only round barn in the township and was built in 1907. The Society hopes to preserve the barn, which was built by a Mr. Bouldard and designed by his son. Local and national dates of importance are noted throughout the calendar.

Sally Johnson, Society president notes, "Our little town struggles to keep from becoming a ghost town as so many small towns have. We are still one of few agricultural communities striving to keep urban growth from encroaching and taking over all our farmlands." Calendars are \$10 plus \$3 postage. Email

The Snow barn is "flaked" in preparation for moving, 2003.



Reborn as a part of Historic Adventist Village, 2005.

Last June, those words rang true as President Abraham Lincoln (Chet Damron) delivered a stirring address beside the barn as people gathered on the hillside.

For more information: swcottrell@juno.com, (616) 965-3000

charter.net or janevanw@aol.com, for details.

"Barns of Barry County" is produced through the Barry Community Foundation. It is a full-color calendar, noting dates of key events in the county. Photographs featured become part of a permanent collection of art to be displayed initially at Pennock Hospital, Hastings, and later at nonprofit organizations, in memory of Louise Ann Stockham. Proceeds from the sale of the calendar benefit the memorial fund. Calendars sell for \$5 plus \$1 shipping. Contact the Barry County Community Foundation at (260) 945-0526.

Bonnie Hildreth, Foundation president says it is tragic that so many barns, particularly along M-37, are threatened by neglect or sprawl. Capturing them on film may help to inspire preservation.