

Bus Tour, Annual Meeting and Conference Set the Tone for 2017

On May 5th and 6th, the 2017 MBPN Annual Meeting and Conference visited the Kalamazoo area with a well-received Barn Tour and Conference festivities at Niko's Landing in nearby Comstock, Michigan. Speakers and panel presentations provided valuable and timely information to attendees, and the coveted 2017 Barn of the Year Awards were announced (see below).

The Friday Barn Tour included diverse and intriguing examples of preservation and re-use of area barns. A special treat this year was a visit to the Gilmore Car Museum, the largest auto museum in North America, with its own unique barn structures re-constructed on the site. The tour also visited a working dairy farm and a beautifully restored barn near Marshall. Photos from the tour and more about the stops appear later in this newsletter. Upon returning from the tour, participants enjoyed dinner and viewed a special screening of the long-awaited movie, *The Barn Raisers*. The creators of the movie, Mid-America Emmy nominated filmmakers Kelly and Tammy Rundle of Fourth Wall Films, were in attendance to introduce the movie and receive acclaim for an outstanding tribute to Midwestern barns.

The MBPN's conference and annual membership meeting was held on Saturday morning, May 6th, at Niko's Landing, and speakers and the awards program followed the lunch that day. The pre-

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Speaker Highlights
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Photo by Keith Kehlbeck

Conference attendees gather at Niko's Landing for presentations and Annual Meeting

senters were knowledgeable and provided valuable perspectives on topics including barn contracting and preservation, agritourism, artistic renderings of barns, and an important effort to save an area granary, aided and assisted by the Network. Kudos to all involved in organizing an informative and enjoyable Annual Conference!

—Vera Wiltse, MBPN Program Chair

Steve Stier and Julie Avery awarded prestigious MHPN Lifetime Achievement Award

With great pride, we announce that MBPN leaders Steve Stier and Julie Avery were selected to receive a Michigan Historic Preservation Network 2017 Lifetime Achievement Award, which is presented to outstanding and



Steve Stier and Julie Avery

deserving individuals, "who through personal effort and/or involvement in historic preservation have made a significant contribution to the preservation of Michigan's heritage." The awards were presented during the MHPN's annual conference, on Friday evening, May 19th at the Crooked Tree Arts Center in downtown Petoskey.

The audience included Tom and Marilyn Irrer, Chuck and Janine Saputo, and State Historic Preservation Officer Brian Conway. Crooked Tree Arts Center was a lovely venue, and the presentation was followed by a nice reception. We were a bit prejudiced, but Steve and Julie stole the show. They graciously accepted their awards and were very pleased so many people greeted them and wished them well.

As the presenter of the shared award noted, "It's nearly impossible to condense the scope of Julie's and Steve's accomplishments to a few short minutes. Separately, they are each highly accomplished in their fields. Together, they have been a quiet, but strong partnership for the preservation of Michigan's rural cultural heritage."

Congrats to Steve and Julie! You make us all proud!

—Janine Saputo

Officers

Clare Koenigs knecht, President
clarek13@gmail.com
(989) 593-2351
Fowler

Tom Irrer, Treasurer
tomirrer@mintcity.com
(989) 640-1868
St. Johns

**Steve Stier, Vice President and
Technical Committee Chair**
stephenstier@gmail.com
(517) 648-2933
Empire

**Wendy Shank
Secretary**
shankamuffin@gmail.com
(810) 957-0194
Coldwater

Board

**Julie Avery
Communications Chair**
averyj@msu.edu
(517) 927-1958
Empire

**Jim Mulvany,
mulvanyj@hotmail.com**
(517) 676-5859
Mason, MI

**Vera Wiltse
Program Chair**
vera@wiltse.com
(989) 465-1216
Coleman

Communications

**Tammis Donaldson
Technical Committee**
tammis@ekocite.com
www.ekocite.com
(248) 561-4248
Royal Oak

**Chuck Saputo
Webmaster**
cjsaputo@comcast.net
Harbor Springs

**Keith Anderson
BoY Awards Chair**
klanderson42@gmail.com
(616) 540-6701
Sparta

**Keith Kehlbeck
MIBARN Editor/Coordinator**
keith@k2consulting.net
(269) 317-3771
Marshall

**Steve Rademacher
Nominations Chair**
rademachersteve22@yahoo.com
(517) 202-1443
Fowler

**Robert Slocum
Newsletter Design**
Designworks
bob.designworks@gmail.com
(269) 425-0486
Battle Creek

www.mibarn.net



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Photo by Keith Kehlbeck

The *Barn Raisers* producers (Kelly and Tammy Rundle) at the podium, and film participants (Chuck Bultman, Steve Stier, and Rudy Christian) as a panel answer questions from MBPN members.

The Barn Raisers comes to the MBPN!

This year, the long-awaited documentary by Mid-America Emmy nominated filmmakers Kelly and Tammy Rundle of Fourth Wall Films came to the Network's Annual Conference! On Friday evening, following a day-long bus tour and a great dinner prepared by Niko's Landing, the lights dimmed and the *The Barn Raisers* played to an audience of supporters. The acclaimed movie tells the story of barns in the Midwest by examining them through the lens of architecture.

The film brings to life vintage barns in Iowa, Kansas, Wisconsin, Michigan and Ohio. But *The Barn Raisers* isn't just a lesson in Midwestern folk architecture. Through interviews with barn owners, writers, historians, craftsmen and preservationists, plus historic photos, vintage film reels and new footage taken at historic barns, the film weaves together stories of the barns and the people that built them. The high-definition documentary is 80 minutes in length and features a number of MBPN stalwarts, including Steve Stier, Chuck Bultman, and the late Don Staebler. Conference presenter Rudy Christian also appeared in the film.

For more information on the movie, visit
www.BarnMovie.com

—Keith Kehlbeck, Newsletter Editor

Get Your Copy of *The Barn Raisers*

The MBPN is pleased to have helped support the production of this movie—one that frames the continuing relevance of historic rural icons that are still prevalent in the Midwest.

The MBPN has secured a supply of *The Barn Raisers* DVDs for sale to its members. Get your copy today by sending your check for \$25 plus \$5 postage to: MBPN, P.O. Box 614, Mt. Pleasant, MI 48804.

President's Message

On May 5th & 6th, 2017, we had our Barn Tour & Annual Conference at Comstock, MI, near Kalamazoo. Our Conference Center was Niko's Landing on the banks of the Kalamazoo River. Our conference attendees were a happy and enthusiastic group of barn lovers.

The barn tour was once again very unique. One stop was at Tillers International, which has the tools our forefathers used to build old buildings and to grow food. Tillers International also travels the world to teach people how to use these tools. The Lockshore Farm has restored barns and has 2000 dairy milk cows. This stop also included a very complete tour of their dairy operation. Our last stop was a brief tour of the Gilmore Auto Museum. The museum had many restored barns filled with restored antique cars

The Friday night dinner and *The Barn Raisers* movie was a heart-warming, emotional event for everyone. The filmmakers and many barn contributors that have a part in the movie formed a panel after the movie to answer questions. Many conference attendees purchased *The Barn Raisers* movie DVDs to share with family friends and other organizations. I thought a comment from Kelly Rundle, one of the filmmakers, was very special. He said that this movie is not about barns; it is about people. Order yourself a Barn Raiser DVD through the MBPN to hear the barn love stories of many wonderful people.

Our Saturday morning started with an enthusiastic and informative annual meeting with lots of good questions from members. From 10AM to 4PM, we had great presenters who spoke to an attentive audience. I asked our newest members or first time conference attendees, "How was your experience?" Everyone I spoke to said, "Thank you, well done, and see you next year!"

Thanks so much to everyone who had a part in organizing the barn tour and annual conference.

Yours,
Clare Koenigs knecht



Clare Koenigs knecht

MBPN Board Welcomes Newest Member

At the 2017 Annual Meeting, nominations for Board vacancies were solicited. This year, there were two vacancies, as longtime Board member Dan Creyts and past president Tim Wiles left the Board. Barn enthusiast Jim Mulvany was elected to fill one of those vacancies, and Board incumbents Julie Avery and Tammis Donaldson were also re-elected.



Jim Mulvany, our newest board member

The Board will especially miss the contributions of Dan Creyts, who has served in many capacities over the years, including organizing and leading bus tours and managing our popular calendar project (which he'll continue to work on this year). Look for a retrospective of Dan's involvement with the MBPN in our fall newsletter!

Welcome, Jim!
—Keith Kehlbeck,
Newsletter Editor

My Journey with Barns

I was raised on a 160-acre farmstead in Penfield Township, Calhoun County, Michigan. My earliest recollections of the family barn were when I was four or five years of age. The farm had missed the opportunity to gain electrification before World War II. Therefore, carrying the lantern for Dad to do some of the chores was maybe a first task. The main barn was a 40 x 60 gable roof barn with Tamarack rafters. Later, as a teenager, I spend many days in the summer helping to fill the mow with loose hay. The barn had been built under the ownership and direction of my great-grandfather sometime in the 1880s. Its format included three horse stalls, eight wood stanchions for Shorthorn dairy cows, and an open area for feeding out cattle.

In 1960, my interest with barns continued as I became a County Agricultural Agent in Ingham County. My main work was with dairy based programs including overseeing the DHIA program that reached numerous farms and involved 15,000 cows on test. I was in and out of many older barns as dairy farmers began to build milking parlors and add buildings for freestall housing.

In 1975, I became the manager of the MSU Telfarm program. The promotion and development of this program throughout Michigan gave me the opportunity to travel both lower Michigan and the UP to visit farm families and teach significant tax law and good management accounting practices. Once again I got into a good many barns and discussions of what to do after fires and windstorms and personal tragedies had uprooted the entire farm business.

In retirement, I became interested in photography. After encouragement from a very good friend and barn enthusiast, I developed a photo program of the barn history. I have done many hours of study in the MSU library reading old *Carpenter and Building* magazines that were issued between 1869 and 1918. Much can be learned about the individuals who developed barn building techniques that resulted in the Shawver Truss system that became the standard by 1905. *Michigan Farmer* issues dating back to the original issue are still housed in the library open stacks and make for great reading.

—Jim Mulvany

Sleeping Bear Dunes Holds Successful Annual Workshop

The annual Sleeping Bear Dunes barn workshop was held at the Dechow Farm in the Port Oneida Rural Historic District, June 21-26. There were 30 participants on site to work on projects that included pouring a new concrete threshold into the barn, repairing animal pens, repairing and building doors into the barn and garage, stone masonry tuck pointing on the interior of the milking parlor of the barn, and installing a new wood threshing floor in the barn.

Park carpenter Terry Ryan was the instructor for the week. Attendees came from as far away as Kentucky, and members of Friends of Ohio Barns stopped by to see the work that was being completed.

The barn will be open for tours and on display during the Port Oneida Fair, August 11-12, 2017. Farm animals can now be housed in the pens restored during the barn workshop for the annual fair. For more information on the fair, visit the fair's website at: <https://www.nps.gov/slbe/playourvisit/pofair.htm>

The MBPN has been supportive of this annual workshop over the years, and we are thankful for that support, which has allowed the event to continue to thrive.

—Kim Mann



2017 Barn of

At this year's Annual and Conference and Meeting on May 6th, the MBPN announced its 2017 Michigan Barn of the Year Awards.

This is the 21st year the Network has presented Barn of the Year Awards. Including this year's awardees a total of 76 barns from across Michigan have been recognized for their unique qualities and/or preservation efforts.

The Barn of the Year program annually honors existing Michigan barns that exemplify outstanding character in our state. Nominated barns must have been built before 1957 and continue in use, either for agricultural purposes or, as is becoming increasingly popular, adapted to some other useful purpose. Barns, though used for other purposes, must retain their overall appearance—both interi-



Kelly Lehto, daughter-in-law of the barn's owners, along with her daughter Grace, accept the barn of the Year Award at Niko's Landing in Kalamazoo at the Michigan Barn Preservation Network's Annual Conference on May 6.



David & Sandra Noonan accepting the Barn of the Year Award for their barn which continues as a family farming operation into their 4th generation.



Continued Family Agricultural Use
Lehto Family Barn, Old Mission Peninsula, Grand Traverse County
Owners: Carl & Suzanne Lehto

This beautiful 105 year-old barn is situated in an equally beautiful location on Old Mission Peninsula between the two bays which make up Grand Traverse Bay. Constructed from lumber that was cut from nearby timberland and hauled to the barn site by horses, it has served in the past as both a dairy barn and housing for migrant cherry pickers. Today, its brightly-red-painted exterior is a favorite stop on Old Mission's Barn Quilt Tour. The family uses the gambrel-roofed three-bay interior primarily to store equipment and family possessions.



Continued Family Agricultural Use
Noonan Family Barn, Maple City, MI; Leelanau County
Owners: David & Sandra Noonan

This 107 year-old barn, dating back to its origins in 1910, continues to serve its original purpose, as a family-owned and operated dairy operation. With the family name "NOONAN" painted in large white letters on its brightly painted red siding, the fourth generation of the family are part of this original 80 acre farm which has doubled to 160 acres. Today this barn is home to 180 Holstein steers and several thousand round bales produced to feed them. The barn survived a 1979 roof-collapse due to wet snow and rain. Three cement silos hold corn and grain which is manually fed twice daily using a shovel and wheelbarrow.

the Year Awards

or and exterior characteristics. Nominations, which are open to the public, are reviewed and determined by MBPN's Awards Committee members and awarded to the barn owners at the MBPN annual conference in the spring.

For 2017, four Barns were recognized in three categories; Continued Family Agricultural Use, Private Adaptive Use, and

Commercial Adaptive Use.

Congratulations to these fine examples of Michigan barns! Do you know of a barn that should be nominated for the MBPN Barn of the Year award? Check our website at www.mibarn.net for information on how to nominate a barn for this prestigious award.

—Keith Anderson, Barn of the Year Awards Chair



Tom & Lori Brubaker, received the Barn of the Year Award for their work in relocating and restoring the historic Taft Barn.



Accepting the Barn of the Year Award are Steffens Orchards' owners Robert & Christine Steffens, along with Rob's parents John & Sharon Steffens.



Private Adaptive Use

Taft Barn, Bruce Township, Macomb County, MI

Owners: Tom & Lori Brubaker

Few barns constructed as far back as 1835 have survived the ravages of time, weather, and changing culture, especially in a part of the state that has undergone urban development. Thanks to the truly heroic efforts of Tom & Lori Brubaker, the historic Taft Barn is a survivor. It lives today as a beautifully restored treasure. Moved to its new location in 2010, it underwent a complete restoration. It was originally built as a 30 x 40 gable-roofed structure of hand-hewn beams covered with cedar-shake roof and plank wood sides, and a rubble stone foundation. The Brubakers added a milkhouse and white picket fence to complete its beautifully finished and landscaped look.



Commercial Adaptive Use

Steffens Orchards Barn, Sparta Township, Kent County, MI

Sometime during the last decade of the 19th century, around 1880 to 1890, this barn was built and fitted with stanchions to serve as a dairy barn. Measuring 40 x 60 with a gambrel-roof, the barn later became a beef barn, visible in the community with a previous owner's name, BARKOW, stitched within the roof's singles. Since 1981, a part of Steffens Orchards, the 80 acres have been planted into apple trees. Today, the fully restored barn serves as a farm market, open during the Fall Season for apples, pumpkins and related items. Its original white-painted doors open up to a 40 x 24' addition and sport a colorful mural of a big red and yellow apple.

Award Photos by Keith Kehlbeck; Barn Photos courtesy of MBPN

Conference Speakers Tell Stories of Barn Preservation and Promotion

On Saturday, this year's Conference presenters represented a unique blend of history, culture, and contemporary preservation efforts. MBPN Vice President **Steve Stier** recalled the highly successful **Granary Project** from last year, when the MBPN facilitated the dismantling of a timber frame granary structure gifted to the MBPN by the owners to save it and help find a new home. The granary was subsequently sold to MBPN members Tom and Lori Brubaker of Bruce Township, Macomb County. Last July, the structure was re-assembled as a MBPN Workshop. Almost 25 volunteers from all over Michigan worked on the barn framing or spectated. Steve provided many insights into the challenges and successes of the project.

Speaker **Michele Walk** from Michigan State University Extension in the Eastern Upper Peninsula regaled attendees about the phenomenon of agritourism—the business of establishing farm destinations that provide pleasure, as well as recreation, information and education. Tours, tastings, dinners-in-the-field, farm stays, vineyards, breweries, ranches, workshops, festivals, and the direct sale of fresh and local food products through “pick your own” are just a few examples of agritourism. Michele has worked in the community development field for more than 20 years, including 12 years with MSU Extension. In her current role at the Extension, she focuses primarily on business development related local food systems, but continues to do some programming in the area of tourism.

Ken Brock of Legendary Timberworks is an energetic businessman and a hands-on craftsman with a passion for old and new timber. He is a journeyman craftsman, accomplished rigger, licensed builder, idea man, and troubleshooter with engineering and business degrees. Legendary Timberworks is a company with a passion for old barns and historic structures. They take heart in repairing, moving, restoring and/or converting structures for adaptive reuse. Ken's goal is to provide excellence in workmanship and a balance in historical authenticity. As one of our members and a premier barn preservationist, Ken captivated Conference attendees with stories about iconic agricultural structures that smatter the Michigan landscape, including in growth areas such as Ann Arbor.

Rudy Christian, an Ohio preservationist, is featured in *The Barn Raisers*, and he offered his perspectives on barn preservation, restoration, and philosophy.

Artist **Gwen Gutwein** has painted for many years and has won numerous awards. The Heritage Barns of Indiana Project is a painting project of Gwen's which involved paintings of at least two old and/or historic barns from each of Indiana's 92 counties.

Extended comments from Rudy's and Gwen's presentations follow.

Rudy Christian

“One of the things that's important to remember about barns is not only are they a part of our heritage, but they also have a history that goes beyond ours. And if you think about it, when was the last time that you were involved in a barn restoration, barn moving, barn salvage project? Well, the barn was wondering where you were. They're older than you are and they deserve some respect. They deserve a lot of respect. They need us to understand that what we're doing is that we're increasing that longevity. We want to be a part of making sure that we not only save those barns that have been around for a century or more than we have, but also when we're done being involved with them, we want to make sure that they'll be here for a century more later. In order to do that, we have to think about why we're doing it in the first place.



Photo by Keith Kehlbeck

Conference speakers (l. to r.): Ken Brock, Rudy Christian, Michele Walk, Gwen Gutwein, Steve Stier

What's the difference between preservation and restoration? Every single building that you work on, every single building that you walk into on a barn tour, every single building that you drive down the road and you see has been influenced by time. Every single one. The day you build it, tomorrow it's a day old. A year from now it's a year old, 10 years from now it's 10 years old. And guess what? Things change. All buildings are affected by time and all buildings are affected by people's intention to take care of it. One way or another, modifications are made, decisions are made about maybe a different type of paint should be used. They decide what should be repaired, what should be replaced. They decide that the foundation wasn't good enough and they replace it with a different foundation. Buildings change over time.

Restoration means trying to determine how that building was built originally or during a period when it played a very significant role in our history and then working the clock backwards and taking apart all of the things that have happened to that building until that point in time. *Then* you restore it to what it was during its period of significance. That is also conservation. So we have preservation, we have restoration, and then we have rehabilitation. I think rehabilitation is actually the most common form of conservation work in this country today. Rehabilitation means that we actually are going restore the historical aspect of the building. We're gonna respect the history, but we're gonna do the things that we need to do to this building so that we can keep it useful.

Luckily I've been doing this for over 30 years and I have begun to understand how builders thought 100, 150, sometimes 200 years ago. So by combining the knowledge that I have of the way that the old builders thought—I call it getting into the boots of the builder or getting into the brains of the builder—I try to understand the way they were thinking and combine the standard practices that the builders used with the historic evidence that I have of the pieces itself. I put those two things together and come up with my best guess, which I think is more than often pretty accurate.

How long does it take you to get in the mind of the builder? I'm still working on it. But I would say, quite obviously, I began to understand how timber framers think when I started traveling back to Europe. And I realized that what I was seeing was the physical manifestation of the way that they thought and the way that they worked. And when they came here to build, they did it the same way that they did it there. They brought that knowledge with them. That made me realize

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there is more to it than just figuring out what you're working on; it's figuring out why was it done this way in the first place. But I'm still working on it. That's one of the things that I love about my work. I will work until I just can't anymore and I will still have things to work on. It makes you want to get up in the morning and go out there."

Gwen Gutwein

"In 2004, I decided I needed to give myself a project. I wanted to do a number of things: I wanted to practice my skill, I wanted to hone my ability as an artist, I wanted to paint something that I was passionate about, and I wanted to take those elements and give back to the community—my community, my city, my state.

So I developed this project of painting historic barns. I focused mainly on Indiana, because I live there, but I've also painted paintings from other states. I wanted to develop a set of criteria for myself to follow to see this project through. I decided that I would select two historic barns from each of Indiana's 92 counties; I thought that would take me six years.

I wanted to travel around the states and find the beautiful barns and then I wanted to do paintings of those barns, on location, and then I wanted to get the information from the barn owners about their barn.

My goal was to bring into the public awareness the fact that we are losing all of our beautiful old barns. I thought, being an artist, that would be the best way to do it. I was raised on a farm, and that was the foundation for my project. I would research a county at a time, and sometimes I would just drive around a county. I'd come to a corner and see a barn and I'd think, 'Oh, that's it. That's the barn.' I wanted to always maintain a sense of respect for all the barn owners. I never went up to the barn or approached it at all until I spoke to the owner and got permission. Then I would try to get the history of the barn, of the owner and family history.

Once I got that, then I could determine when would be the best time to paint. I paint outside with a plein air easel. I like to paint, as many plein air painters do, either first thing in the morning with the long light, or late in the day again when the light is long. Usually I could get a good amount of the painting done in four hours. Then I would go into the barn and I would measure the barn, take photographs of details, of old latches or hinges or the interesting joinery inside the barn, because I wanted to have those documents with the painting and with the history of the barn. Then I would take everything back to my studio and I would finish out the painting.

A lot of people ask me, 'Well, why didn't you just go photograph them and then go out and make a big run and do four or five counties in a run and then go back and paint them in your studio?' Well, the camera doesn't see like our eye sees. The camera doesn't see mood or character, and that, to me, is why I was painting a barn. Because I wanted to show the beauty that was there, not only in the historic structure, but also the character that the barn built over the years.

I painted well over 200 barns, and over a period of 12 years, I got the project finished. I'm happy to say that I am just finishing up compiling all that information into a hard drive that I can submit for publishing. The last thing I'm doing is 43 pages of journal notes that I wrote as I went along through this project. My goal is to publish a book with the photographs and the history and detail photographs. I just felt so honored to be able to get all that information. I have met the most wonderful people during this project.

To me, it's really important to show the magnificence of the barn. And really, the paintings are portraits. I really want people to see the barns and read the history and go, 'Wow, that's a great old barn! I'm going to save Uncle Bill's barn!' That's what I want to happen."

View Gwen's artwork at www.gwengutwein.com

—Keith Kehlbeck, Newsletter Editor