



Join us at the MBPN Annual Meeting and Conference, May 31-June 1, 2019



It's once again time for the annual spring **MBPN Conference and Tour**, which this year will be held on May 31-June 1, 2019 in Washtenaw County, Michigan. As with last year's conference, Friday will be the bus tour, with Saturday featuring speakers, auctions, and presentations, as well as the awards luncheon, when the coveted 2019 Barn of the Year Awards will be announced. For more details on the Tour and Saturday's program, see information provided inside. The MBPN's own Chuck Bultman, President of the National Barn Alliance (www.barnalliance.org) is our host.

With something for everyone, the Annual Conference is an event not to be missed! In addition to camaraderie with fellow barn enthusiasts, the conference provides a wonderful opportunity to share information and to inspire barn preservation efforts throughout the state.
—Vera Wiltse, MBPN Program Chair



Photo by Ashley Hutchinson

Dawn Farm, site of the 2019 Annual Meeting and Conference.



Barns... in Three Acts



We all know the structure of a classic three-act play. Act One introduces us to the characters and setting and orients us to the "dramatic premise". Act Two is where the play presents an obstacle: something that prevents the characters from achieving their "dramatic need." The climax then occurs in Act Three, where the conflict is resolved and equilibrium is restored.

With respect to our barns we are in middle of Act Two now—deep into the conflict of what to do with our aging barns. To put this in perspective, there is some evidence that there are about 600,000 agricultural buildings older than 50 years still standing in our country, which is a lot of buildings... or is it? In 1900, the census counted the United States as having *six million farms*. If one assumes that each farm had only one barn, then we have lost 90% of our barns in 100 years. But we all know there was more than one barn on most farms. In that light, 600,000 barns do not seem to be so many, and we know that those that remain are under threat.

So, if the First Act was building barns and establishing agrarian lifestyles and practices, the Second Act is considering the fate of

those agrarian buildings following the industrialization of farming. The theme for the 2019 Michigan Barn Preservation Network conference and tour is to consider the Third Act—resolutions for these valued structures.

On Friday, the conference will begin with a tour of a number of barns in western Washtenaw County. Some of these barns have been restored for a future use and a number of others are being planned for future uses. Some are just holding on. All are old timber framed structures that date back to the middle to early 1800s, when this part of Michigan was being settled.

On Saturday the conference will continue with discussions and presentations about finding new uses for these old structures, sharing both successes and failures for all of us to learn from. We will also discuss a new cutting-edge development that will be using a nineteenth century barn as its focal point. And we will get in the weeds over what we can all be doing to help shape a future for these great buildings!

—Chuck Bultman

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Scan our QR code with your
smart phone and visit the
MBPN website!

President's Message

Active people are the backbone of our Michigan Barn Preservation Network. Founding members Vera Wiltse and Steve Stier have done every task imaginable in their 24-year involvement with the MBPN. We owe them a big "Thank You" for their passion and hard work! They have influenced many people to take the steps necessary to save many barns.



Tom Irrer

Other board members presently serving with long-term leadership include Tammis Donaldson and Julie Avery. Both are doing an excellent job with our Communications Committee. Julie has also taken the lead in establishing our endowment fund. A more recent addition to our active leadership is Keith Kehlbeck, who puts together our quarterly newsletter.

For the last few years, Keith Anderson has spearheaded our Barn of the Year awards, arranging for a team of barn experts to perform the difficult task of picking winners among the beautiful barns that are nominated. Jim Mulvany has taken over our Barn Calendar project and has increased its circulation to over 3,000 copies. Steve Rademacher has volunteered to be the lead with our Teamwork and Timbers project that provides a hands-on experience raising a model timber frame barn.

Just in the last year, Marcia Danner and Stephanie White have stepped up to help with the electronic side of our Communications Committee.

Many other members have been active and continue to be instrumental in the continued success of MBPN. Thanks to all of the barn lovers who have shared their talents with MBPN. The need for volunteers is ongoing, and we hope you will consider volunteering.

It looks like our spring meeting and tour should be a great one. I hope to see you there!

Tom Irrer, President

Sleeping Bear Dunes to Host 2019 Barn Restoration Workshop

The park will again be hosting its successful barn restoration workshop **June 17-22nd** at the Miller Barn four (4) miles north of Glen Arbor, Michigan on M-22 (turn onto Port Oneida Road and follow the signs). This year marks the **23rd year** that Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore has hosted and developed this series of "hands-on" workshops which started in 1997. The park maintenance staff is providing the skilled labor to put on this workshop.

The workshop will address repairing "Hewn Wood Sills, Concrete Door Threshold, Loft Structural Repairs." The course will include 1) preparing hewn sills including the detail notching to assemble, 2) forming and concrete pour door threshold, 3) repairing structural decay at a small loft area, and 4) tool safety while completing the task presented. This workshop is again able to provide a unique experience for all participants.

Interested parties should contact the park historical architect, Kimberly Mann (231)326-4771, to sign up for the workshop. To sign up by email: kimberly_mann@nps.gov

MBPN Annual Membership Meeting and Conference Schedule

Friday May 31st

The bus tour starts at 8:30 am and returns to the hotel at around 5:30 pm. A block of rooms is being held for the event.

Holiday Inn Express & Suites Ann Arbor West
323 North Zeeb Road
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48103
Reservations 888.233.9450
Front Desk 734.827.1100

The barns are being selected on the west side of Ann Arbor, a

short ride from the hotel. Lunch will be served at a barn that was on the fall tour in 2013.

Saturday June 1st

Annual Meeting and Conference starts at 9:00 am and runs until around 5:00 pm. The Conference site:

Dawn Farm
6633 Stony Creek Road
Ypsilanti, Michigan
734.485.8725



Saturday Conference Presentations and Annual Meeting

We will gather on Saturday for discussions and presentations about finding new uses for old structures –and share both successes and failures from which to learn.

- MBPN updates will be shared.
- Learn about new changes to the Barn & Farmstead Survey project. See and experience the new online survey. With this new web-based survey, the public will be able to enter information about barns they have photographed! You won't want to miss this exciting, new venture of the MBPN.
- Help to shape the new MBPN Endowment (See article on page 7).
- Barn of the Year awards will be presented after lunch.
- Silent Auction treasures, too!

Keynote Speaker: Matthew Grocoff, Esq. LEED-GA, LFA

An Ann Arbor-based environmentalist and sustainability advocate, Matt Grocoff received national acclaim for rehabilitating his Victorian home to achieve net-zero energy. His current project is to save a rare pre-Civil War barn from a nearby farm and turn it into a community and educational building to promote responsible building, environmental stewardship, and noble agrarian buildings.

Cynthia Stiles and Eric Kaldjian A 21st Century Organic Farm: Giving Old Barns a New Home

Cindy Stiles shares her vision for a new organic farm. This includes incorporating four unwanted timber-frame barns as the primary structures. One will be used for animals; the second for her private house; the third as a work building for her staff; and the fourth for an educational building and kitchen. Hear about her goals for this property, her research into the kind of farm she wants, the many issues with the buildings, and the challenge of going through the municipal process.

Technical Round-Table Discussion

A panel of experts in the field of construction and building re-use will address issues that face us when we want to re-use old barns differently (or not differently). We will have experts in: zoning, environmental law, construction, and timber framing.

Bring your questions, concerns and experience to share. Learn about what has been tried here and elsewhere!

Join us for an informative and fun weekend with presentations and visits to some very old and special barns!

*You can register online at www.mibarn.net or by mailing your check, payable to MBPN at:
PO Box 614, Mt. Pleasant, MI 48804-0614*

Member registration:

* Tour - \$80. * Conference - \$85. * Full weekend - \$135.

Non-Member registration:

* Tour - \$100. * Conference - \$105. * Full Weekend - \$155.

Include name, phone, and email. Please note if special dietary needs.

NOTE: To be eligible for the Member rate, go to our Membership page to join first. Dues are \$40 annually. A spouse or family member can be added to an individual membership for only \$10, which will provide greater savings.





MBPN Barn Tour 2019



Let's be honest, going in a barn for the first time raises a lot of questions. What am I looking at? How old might this be? Why is it configured this way? Are there pieces missing or what? That is why it is good to do this together.

On May 31st, the MBPN will hold its annual tour of barns in Washtenaw County, home to Ann Arbor. You are all invited, and bring your friends, as this tour will feature six or seven old timber framed barns, three of which are unusual and rare finds for this part of our country.

And that raises another question: what makes a barn rare and/or unusual? Is that because it is round or another unusual shape? It can, but it does not in this case. In this case we have found some of the oldest barns in the county that clearly have connections to other barns, built in other places. That is to say, their builders were highly experienced individuals who were probably exposed to timber frames outside of southeast Michigan.

Back to questions, and still being honest, when someone refers to a dropped tie beam, do you understand what that means? Do you ask, "Dropped from what?" You should, as it is the right question, but no one ever asks. Similarly, when someone says, "This is pre-Civil War," do you take their word for it because you are not sure why they have come to that conclusion?

These are just some of the questions that will be answered—and so many more—so that you too can read what you are seeing inside an old timber frame. And this is how you, too, can be better able to look at a barn and declare it special... or rare... or unusual... when it is not round. And this is one of the first things to do before you decide what should be saved...sooner, rather than later.

—Chuck Bultman



Helber-Thrive Barn

Just another older three-bay... you might think. But hiding inside this barn's siding is very rare construction for the area—construction that one must go to central Ohio or further east to find. Come and see why this is a singular find. OK, it actually had a sister too; we think they are twins and will be looking to confirm that as we go. Join us and we will catch you up on the story.



Frey-Stiles Barn

Of course, you saw the pair of doors and immediately said, "Oh, this is four bays and a gable barn! How unusual for this part of Michigan!" If you did or did not, that is only one of the very special aspects of this barn. Inside are quite a few other singular details that have only been seen in a handful of barns in SE Michigan.

Narrative and Photos courtesy of Chuck Bultman, 2019 Conference Host and Tour Curator. Chuck is an architect, MBPN member, and current president of the National Barn Alliance.



Cox Barn

This is more like it. This is a common Midwest gambrel barn... or is it? Along with being our lunch destination, come and learn how this is not a 'common Midwest gambrel barn.' Or at least, wasn't.



Helber-Thrive Barn interior
Hmmm. Just another barn...???



Gautz Barn
So that's a long one. Why was this built so long? I am sure we can discover that, too. So many questions to answer!

Join us on May 31st for our barn tour in Washtenaw County, where these and all of your barn questions will be answered.

Barn of the Year Awards 2019 Nominees

This year, we received six excellent applicants for the prestigious Barn of the Year Awards. This year's candidates are scattered across six counties—all in the Lower Peninsula: Grand Traverse, Ionia, Isabella, Macomb, Washtenaw, and Wexford. Five are family-owned; one is a non-profit. Two are continuing to be used for agriculture, three are adapted to other uses, and one claims both.

A panel of seven will evaluate the applications according to these criteria: (1) Completeness of the information presented in the application, (2) the sensitivity and integrity of repairs or modifications made to the barn, (3) visual appeal, (4) creativity, (5) the thoroughness of the work, and (6) the degree of efforts expended to repair and maintain the barn. The 2019 Barn of the Year Award(s) will be presented during the luncheon at the MBPN Spring Conference, Saturday, June 1, 2019 at Dawn Farm in Ypsilanti.

—Keith Anderson, MBPN Awards Chair

2019 Barn of the Year Nominees

Monroe "Achers"

Pre-1900
Continuing Agricultural Use—Family
Beverly Monroe—Owner
Wexford County
Manton, Michigan

Herren Place

Construction Date Unknown
Adapted to Other Use—Family
Colin & Amy Herren—Owners
Isabella County
Mt. Pleasant, Michigan

Pawlusiak Farm

1880s
Continuing Agricultural Use—Family
Robert & Lois Pawlusiak—Owners
Washtenaw County
Manchester, Michigan

Mt. Bruce Farm

1937
Continuing Agricultural Use—Family
Adapted to Other Uses—Family
Peter Uhlianuk—Owner
Macomb County
Romeo, Michigan

Prairie Bells Barn

1900
Adapted to Other Uses—Family
Jim DeYoung—Owner
Ionia County
Belding, Michigan

Samels Barn

1896
Adapted to Other Uses—Non-profit
Samels Family Heritage Society—Owner
Susan Hall, Secretary—Applicant
Grand Traverse County
Williamsburg, Michigan

We look forward to honoring these applicants at our upcoming Annual Meeting!



Why Are Barns Red?

Ever wonder why barns are painted red in color? Red is (or, perhaps, was) a popular color for older barns, due not to its color shade, but for its usefulness.

Many years ago, choices for paints, sealers, and other building materials did not exist. Farmers had to be resourceful in finding or making a paint that would protect and seal the wood on their barns.

Hundreds of years ago, European farmers would seal their barns with linseed oil, which is an orange-colored oil derived from the seeds of the flax plant. To this oil, they would add a variety of things, most often milk and lime, but also ferrous oxide, otherwise known as rust. Rust was plentiful on farms, and because it killed fungi and mosses that might grow on barns, it was very effective as a sealant. It also turned the mixture red in color. As European settlers came to America, they brought with them the tradition of red barns. In the mid- to late 1800s, as paints began to be produced using chemical pigments, red paint was the most inexpensive to buy. In fact, red was the color of favor until whitewash became cheaper, at which point white barns began to spring up.

Speaking of whitewash, just as barns were not originally painted red, neither were farmhouses painted white. They were whitewashed. Whitewash is a mixture of lime, water, and salt, which made it easy to make at home, thus making it cheaper than paint. The lime and salt in the whitewash kept wood-eating fungi from growing, which kept the wood from rotting. Plus, it was safe for animals since it did not contain lead as early paints did.

There are some myths that are associated with red barns. One belief was that the red color would help the farmer's cows find their way home. That of course is not true, considering cows are colorblind to the colors red and green. Others believe red barns came from copying Scandinavian farmers who painted their buildings in rusty-colored hues so that they would appear to be made of brick—a material they considered to be a sign of wealth.

Ultimately, red barns (and whitewashed farm houses) spread in popularity due to functionality and convenience, but they quickly grew into an American tradition common across the countryside, and the pattern of white farmhouses and red barns is a tradition still found today.

—Keith Anderson, MBPN Awards Chair

Facebook Group Focuses On Michigan Old Barns

Though I've never minded being even a decade behind the social media times, I have developed a bad habit of spending a lot of time looking at Facebook. Awhile back, I stumbled upon a Facebook "group" called "Michigan Old Barns." I was immediately drawn in, because it **really is all** Michigan old barn photographs.

It seems that most of the members are passionate professional and avocational photographers, and they all share my passion of trying to preserve old barns.

In particular, they are saving the images of barns, which needs to be done, especially since, regrettably, our Michigan barns cannot all be saved physically. I love this group because they all appreciate the color, texture, and variety that old barns add to the rural landscape. Many comments with the photos express regret and sadness that we are losing barns every day.

I was simply astounded to learn that there are over three thousand (yep, over three thousand) members to this group. Knowing

that there are that many Michiganders who look for and appreciate old barns makes me feel good. Since our beginning, the MBPN has been trying to reach out to like-minded "barn people" in Michigan to support our efforts to promote barn preservation—actual barn preservation, that is. We are working to support and to encourage barn owners to spend their hard-earned dollars to invest in the maintenance and upkeep of their barns.

Having made a study of Michigan old barns for over twenty years, I find it amazing to be able to see literally hundreds of barns of every size shape and color from every corner of the state on this Facebook group page. I would not be able to do this type of exploration in any other way. Thank you "Michigan Old Barns" and keep up the good work!

Join up and contribute at:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/MichiganOldBarns/?ref=bookmarks>
—Steve Stier, MBPN Vice-President and Technical Committee Chair



A Barn Worth Remembering



Loss and remembrance...inevitably, two sides of the same coin, and something we usually think of in terms of a death in the family. Sometimes, however, the loss we remember may involve something tangible—say, an historic barn—that almost feels like a member of the family, and it carries nearly as much heartbreak as the loss of a loved one.

When Gary Higgins talks about such a loss his family suffered, he understandably gets emotional. “It was my pride and joy,” he says of the barn that had seen decades of agricultural history and family use, only to succumb to mother nature last fall. The Higgins barn was a gambrel roof barn, which had added a steel roof twenty years ago. It stored thousands of bales of hay and farm tools. Cable and foundation work had been done to make it last. Locals saw the Higgins Barn when they were growing up. People came to see it and asked to have tours. Some came just to sit in it and to smell the hay.

On September 26th of last year, Gary and his wife Carol had come home from repairing an old chicken coop on their property, when the doorbell rang. It was their neighbors, who told them that the iconic family barn was afire. The Higginses had no idea how the fire started, but a storm was in the area that night, and the local fire chief later indicated that lightning was to blame.

The barn, located on N. Vernon Road in Venice Township, was fully engaged when firefighters responded to the initial call after 10pm. Firefighters from Venice, Hazelton, Vernon, and Owosso townships responded, as well as from Corunna-Caledonia and Durand. Authorities estimated that 115,000 gallons of water were used to fight the fire, to no avail. “I’ve never seen so many fire trucks and firefighters...volunteers...They were rotating because it was so hot,” Gary says. “I can’t thank them enough for trying to save the barn.” The fire also damaged farm and tractor equipment that was parked some distance from the barn. The heat of the fire was so intense that tires and hydraulic hoses were melted, and recently moved harvest equipment also was damaged. Son Eric, who lives on the farm, was a hero the night of the fire for his efforts in getting the pole barn machinery out, preventing an even greater disaster with the combine and other equipment.

Watching the structure burn, and thinking that he might be having a heart attack, Gary Higgins had to be taken to the hospital. Everyone in the family felt the loss. The Higgins’ daughter, Kelly, who lives in Wisconsin, was devastated, and she later sat in the family’s driveway crying when she came to visit after the fire. Many in the community were also touched. Young people volunteered to help clean up, and many friends provided support and offered condolences.

Ultimately, life goes on. The township fire chief wrote up the incident, and two days later, an insurance adjuster came to settle up



Higgins Barn.

Photo by Gary and Carol Higgins

with the Higginses. The adjuster was sympathetic, and he recognized that the barn was essentially irreplaceable. A prompt settlement did little to assuage the sorrow the Higgins family felt. “I want my barn back,” Gary remembers saying to the adjuster. “You can have your check...” If only it were that easy.

As for remembrance, the Higgins family continues to deal with their loss by recalling the barn and its history. At Christmas, Carol—an educator who taught first graders for over 30 years—made a framed photo collage celebrating the barn. A disabled Vietnam veteran, Gary has served as National President of the Veterans of the Battle of the Bulge Association, so he knows the role history plays in our culture. By supporting the Michigan Barn Preservation Network over the years, he has recognized the importance of celebrating and preserving Michigan’s rural heritage.

When asked to articulate his thoughts about the barn and the fire, Gary has a message for barn owners everywhere. “Please make sure you have good quality insurance...in enough value to replace any old standing structure if it comes to that.” Although the Higgins Barn was insured, it was not insured at a level to fully replace it. “Update your coverage!” he urges. And that may be the most important part of the story.

Many barn owners have their own stories to tell, but for Gary and Carol Higgins, the sense of loss is still fresh...and painful. A bittersweet appreciation for memories and for family and local support still leaves them with regrets over the loss of a structure that was so important to their family and to the community. “It was one of a kind,” says Gary. And that is worth remembering, even if remembrance doesn’t bring back the barn.

—Keith Kehlbeck, Newsletter Editor

MBPN Endowment Update

Through 2019, MBPN’s Finance and Endowment Committee is planning to learn from others about how endowments work, why they are valuable, and how disbursements from the interest will grow the principal and benefit the organization’s work in perpetuity.

We will be seeking information from members and stakeholders to help set goals for the future. The first brainstorming discussion will be at the upcoming conference - please join in!

Team members include: president Tom Irrer, treasurer Clare Koenigsnecht, chair Julie Avery and past board members Brad Brogren and Jerry Damon. The MBPN Endowment is hosted by the Capital Region Community Foundation. Contact any of us for more information.

Make a Gift from Your IRA

Did you know that you can reduce your taxes by making a gift from your IRA to MBPN or any other nonprofit?

Spring is a good time to discuss 2019 tax planning strategies with your tax advisor. The IRA charitable gift rollover permits individuals who are 70 ½ to roll over up to \$100,000 from their IRA to a charity, free from federal income tax. An IRA rollover gift also qualifies for your required minimum distribution, permitting you to lower your income and taxes for the year, while helping MBPN. The key administrative requirement is that the distribution check must be made payable directly to the charitable entity from the IRA company.

—Julie Avery, Julie Avery, MBPN Finance/Endowment Chair



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BARN
PRESERVATION
NETWORK**

P.O. Box 614
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www.mibarn.net

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MBPN Board Gathers for Spring Meeting

Reurink Roofing and Siding Sales offered to allow us to have our April 6th MBPN Board meeting at their new location. Their business uses flat pre-painted metal, and they shape it for roof panels and all of the assorted shapes used in metal roof and siding applications and cut it to the inch. Reurink is located at 1243 W Lincoln Avenue in Ionia.

Last year, they came to us and wanted to purchase an ad for our calendar. Jim Mulvany sold them the first ad on the January page. They seem to be interested in the MBPN, and they provide a cost effective product that preserves the rural scene and many timber frame barns

It was great for Reurink Roofing and Siding Sales to offer us the use of their showroom for our April Board Meeting. In the world of barn maintenance it is very good to see a business that is expanding and getting new computer controlled equipment to help save the many "ordinary" barns that dot our countryside. The metal products that they provide were not available at the time that most timber frame barns were built and hence were not used. Metal roofing and siding requires less maintenance and provides a cost effective solution to preserve the traditional look of rural Michigan.

On our own barn I remember helping to build wooden barn doors when I was in high school, and even though we kept them painted, we are replacing them again. They lasted only 60 years. This time we are using metal.

—Tom Irrer, MBPN President



Photo by Tammis Donaldson

MBPN Board Members get a demonstration of semi-automated equipment at Reurink Roofing and Siding Sales