

Mt. Bruce Farm - A Grand Barn with a Storied Past



Sheep farm barn at Mt. Bruce Station in Romeo, Mich.

No expense was spared constructing a large brick barn in 1937 for a Class A dairy farm in Romeo, Mich. The plans called for 12-inch beveled cedar siding outside, oak tongue-and-groove walls and floors for the interior, and a tiled milk house.

The owners of Averill Farms, as it was called from 1930 to 1962, could afford to be extravagant. The wife was an embezzler. The husband engaged in bootlegging during Prohibition and selling black market beef during WWII. It seems their milk routes to Detroit and suburbs delivered more than dairy products.

By the time Peter and Yvonne Uhlianuk found the property in the late 1980s, the barn was in serious disrepair due to the negligence of the most recent owner -- a wealthy industrialist, but hobbyist farmer, who didn't realize the upkeep required.

The Uhlianuks, nevertheless, saw the potential for a sheep farm for her and a place for him to start a peach orchard and grow produce to sell at farmers markets. The couple renamed the farm Mt. Bruce Station after the New Zealand mountain near where Yvonne grew up.

Although the barn's brickwork was intact, the siding, roof and 82 four-paned windows had to be replaced or repaired. In the restoration of the farmstead buildings, "most came through the refitting well, a testament to the original craftsmanship," says Peter. "We gave the whole place a new lease on life -- new roofing, wiring, water lines, fencing, gates and driveways."

Yvonne used the barn for lambing and other farmstead buildings for a butcher shop and woolen goods store. The Sheep and Wool Festival was a September tradition at Mt. Bruce Station for more than 20 years.

With Yvonne's passing in December 2017, the farm is quiet now. Peter says the Barn of the Year award is a fitting tribute to her.

"There is nothing more satisfying than seeing a once-grand farm become a beautiful place again for both us and others to enjoy. I am very lucky to call Mt. Bruce my home."

- Peter Uhlianuk, owner
