



2019 Barn Tour attendees gather to celebrate hidden potential in old barns.

Photo by Jason Miller

MBPN Annual Meeting and Conference Shines with Tour and Speakers

On May 31-June 1, 2019 the Michigan Barn Preservation Network convened for its Annual Meeting and Conference in Washtenaw County, Michigan. Dawn Farm in Ypsilanti served as the conference site and home base. As with last year's conference, Friday offered an exceptional bus tour, and Saturday featured speakers, auctions, and presentations, as well as the awards luncheon, when the coveted 2019 Barn of the Year Awards were announced (see article on page 4).

Conference Highlights

Saturday's discussions and presentations helped attendees focus on the challenge of finding new uses for old structures, sharing both successes and failures for all of us to learn from.

- We learned about new changes to the Barn & Farmstead Survey project. With this new web-based survey, the public will be able to enter information about barns they have documented.
- Silent (and live) auctions provided fun for all!
- A discussion was held about helping to shape the new MBPN Endowment (see page 8).
- Presenter **Cindy Stiles** shared her and her husband Eric Kaldjian's journey towards the creation of a new organic farm in Ann Arbor Township (see article on page 7).
- Keynote Speaker **Matthew Grocoff**, an Ann Arbor-based environmentalist and sustainability advocate, talked about his current project to save a rare pre-Civil War barn and turn it into a community and educational building to promote responsible building, environmental stewardship, and noble agrarian buildings.

At the Annual Membership Meeting, the Board reported many exciting accomplishments and projects to the members, among them:

- MBPN updates were shared with members attending.
- Charles Bultman was recognized with a President's Award for his continuing and outstanding efforts supporting the work of the MBPN. (See photo on page 2).
- New Cupola (lifetime) members were recognized: Linda and Keith Anderson, Marcia Calkin and Richard Harvey, Cindy and Jeff Nussdorfer, and Marcia and Gerald Danner. Thanks to these important supporters of the MBPN!
- MBPN finances are in good stead, committees are active, over 3,000 calendars have been distributed, Teamwork & Timbers demonstrations are being scheduled, and plans are already being made for next year's Annual Meeting and Conference.

If you missed this year's event, we hope to see you at an upcoming one, and we value your continued support through your membership, which help underwrite our continuing efforts to appreciate, preserve, and rehabilitate Michigan barns, farmsteads, and rural communities. Visit our website (www.mibarn.net), join us on Facebook, and talk about the organization to friends and family who might enjoy participating. We welcome your comments and questions!

—Vera Wiltse, MBPN Program Chair

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President's Message

It's a small world...

The Michigan Barn Preservation Network has many active volunteers. I would like to share my experience of an event that was prompted by one of them.

Chuck Bultman, an Ann Arbor architect who specializes in adaptive reuse of timber frame barns, had volunteered to use our "Teamwork and Timbers" model barn to demonstrate timber framing techniques at Gordon Hall Days in Dexter, Michigan, a few miles west of Ann Arbor. Because I happened to have the "Teamwork and Timbers" trailer containing the barn at our farm near St Johns, I volunteered to take it to Dexter.



Tom Irrer

Being curious about the event where I was taking the barn, I went to Google. I learned that Gordon Hall was built about 1843 by Judge Samuel William Dexter, founder of the village of Dexter, the first Chief Justice of Washtenaw County, and an elected U-M Regent. It is considered one of the best examples of Greek Revival architecture in the state. It is a timber frame building built the same way as our old barns and it is now owned by the Dexter Area Historical Society and Museum.

Googling further led me to an account of Judge Dexter leading a colonizing party to present-day Ionia from Dewitt, an Indian Village. They enlisted the help of an Indian guide to get them to Muskrat Creek, at which point the colonizing party (including about 20 cows) cut a path through heavy timber to arrive at the location soon to be called Ionia. As the party neared Muskrat Creek, Riley Dexter, the two year old son of Judge and Mrs. Dexter, succumbed to scarlet fever. He was buried in a small trunk that had been used for carrying food and dishes in May of 1833. The grave was located near a large Elm tree on the banks of Muskrat Creek.

About 1957, when I was in high school, my uncle and my father farmed together. They owned a property on Dexter Trail that was crossed by Muskrat Creek. One of my cousins showed me a spot in the pasture near a large elm tree where four stones had been placed in the form of a rectangle. They told me that Riley Dexter, the first white child to die in Clinton County, was buried there.

Now that I have visited Gordon Hall in the town of Dexter, I have learned more about the Dexter family and how a part of their life is connected to a spot where our family once pastured cattle. Dutch Elm disease claimed the tree, and I assume that the resulting cleanup claimed the four marker stones. When volunteering to take the trailer to Dexter, I never dreamed that I would visit the home that Riley Dexter's parents would later build.

It's a small world...

Tom Irrer



Photo by Jim Mulvany

President Tom Irrer presents Chuck Bultman with the President's Award for outstanding efforts supporting the work of the MBPN.



Washtenaw County barns on the 2019 Barn Tour

Photos by Jason Miller

2019 Barn Tour: Reading Old Barns for Hidden Potential



Photo by Julie Avery

2019 Barn Tour curator and conference host Chuck Bultman

The barn tour provided powerful examples of the uniqueness and beauty of many barns that may be assumed from a highway view to have little value or use. Tour curator and conference host Chuck Bultman wrapped up the weekend's experience reminding us that one of the most successful ways of preserving barns is through adaptation and re-use. The way for many farms and barns to be saved may not be in using them for the purpose to which they were originally built. Chuck's work as an architect has included saving timber frames and adapting them into residential and small commercial uses. Today's buildings often pale in comparison to the beauty, quality of the materials, and craftsmanship found in 19th & 20th century structures. Adapting and re-using such structures is an important part of what the MBPN strives to accomplish, and the tour was an excellent opportunity to remind attendees of this approach. During the tour, Chuck

shared details about the barns we visited, as well as the barns being restored and adapted for Cloudberry Farm (see article on page 7).

The best-seller *Blink* by Malcom Gladwell focuses readers on assumptions we make, often in an instant. Often assumptions made in the "blink of an eye" are not grounded in understanding and prove to be false. During the conference and particularly during the tour, Chuck connected this concept to how we make assessments of the worth of barns as we drive by. Someone with no knowledge of a barn's value will make one assumption. On the other hand, if we *have* knowledge of barns and know a bit about timber-framed structures, we are able to "read" the structure and to know more about its condition and potential. It may not be in ruins or beyond repair. We saw some of this firsthand during the tour: beautiful structures with detail and wood on the inside contrasted with what appeared from the outside to be abandoned and lost. The potential for these hidden treasures? Unlimited, with hard work and vision. Sometimes "good and true" and can lead to "innovation and creativity."

As Chuck pointed out, the water is rising and the time is ticking for many of these old barns. It is up to us to be educated and to be aware so that when we can, we can help to make the difference.

—Julie Avery, MBPN Communications Committee

❖ Barn of the Year Awards 2019 ❖

At the conference awards luncheon on Saturday, the Michigan Barn Preservation Network (MBPN) announced their 2019 Michigan Barns of the Year Awards.

This is the 23rd year the Network has presented Barn of the Year Awards. Including this year's awardees, a total of 84 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 at least 60 years ago and continue in use, either for its original purpose in agriculture, or as is becoming increasingly popular, adapted to some other useful purpose. Barns, though used for other purposes, must retain their overall appearance—both interior 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 2019, three Barns of the Year were recognized in three categories:

Continued Agricultural Use

Mt. Bruce Barn – Romeo, MI in Macomb County.

Owner: Peter Uhlianuk

Private Adaptive Use

Prairie Bell's Barn – Belding, MI in Ionia County.

Owner: Jim DeYoung

Non-Profit Adaptive Use

Samels Barn—Williamsburg, MI in Grand Traverse County.

Owned by Samels Family Heritage Society

We are pleased to note that the Michigan Farm News, in its electronic edition, highlighted barns awarded Barn of the Year at our June conference. Congratulations to all of our Award recipients!

—Keith Anderson, BoY Awards Chair

Peter Uhlianuk accepts the Barn of the Year Award from MBPN's President Tom Irrer at the Dawn Farms Conference Center in Ypsilanti, MI at the Michigan Barn Preservation Network's Annual Conference on June 1st. Also pictured right is Keith Anderson, the Awards Chairman.



Susan and Bob Hall accept the Barn of the Year Award on behalf of the Samels Family Heritage Society from MBPN's President Tom Irrer and Keith Anderson, BoY Awards Chair.

Jim DeYoung, along with his wife Julia, accepts the Barn of the Year Award from MBPN's President Tom Irrer and Keith Anderson, BoY Awards Chair.



Photos by Jim Mulvany

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

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.

By the time Peter and Yvonne Uhlianuk found the property in the late 1980s, the barn was in serious disrepair.

The Uhlianuks 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.



Prairie Bell Barn

Prairie Bell's Barn: Deteriorating Barn Gets New Life as Event Space

Prairie Bells Barn in Belding, Mich. stood in shambles when Jim and Julia DeYoung decided to save the more than 100-year-old barn they had owned for 20 years. In 2018, they hired Chad Stitt of American Heritage



Mt. Bruce Farm

Barn Preservation to undertake the restoration so they could turn it into an event space.

The exterior walls were replaced with cedar planks and all new battens. The original monitor-shaped, shake roof was roofed over with a new metal roof and a new cupola and lightning rod were added.

The interior, with its logs, 8x8 timbers and great daylight windows, required extensive cleaning. All rotten beams of the timber framing were removed and replaced with timber consistent with the original structure.

A new wood floor was installed as well as new windows and doors. Basement walls were repaired and patched. The finished space can accommodate up to 300 guests.

Prairie Bells Barn is now ready to serve the greater Grand Rapids area and nearby communities of Belding, Greenville and Ionia. The DeYoungs are taking bookings for weddings, showers, reunions and other special events at <https://prairiebellsbarn.com/>.

Samels Barn: Historic Farm and Archaeological Site Saved

In 1889 Frank and Mary Samels bought 64 acres on Skegemog Point near Traverse City, Mich. from a lumber company that had harvested the timber. Left with the stumps to remove, it took seven years before Frank and his four sons – Amos, Dennis, Ben and Rob – could get around to building the barn.

The Samels Family Heritage Society was formed in 2002 by neighbors who wanted to continue the Samels' dream to keep the farm intact and preserve it for educational purposes.

Along with programs for the community, the Society partners with the Elk Rapids school system to introduce students to the barn, house and gardens, blacksmith and woodworking shops and granary, as well as the site's archaeological significance.



Samels Farm

New Board Members and Officers Announced

Please join us in welcoming our newest MBPN board member, Nichole VanBlaricum. At the Annual Meeting, Nichole was elected to serve the remaining term of longtime board stalwart Steve Stier, who is taking a step back while continuing to lead our Technical Committee. Here is what Nichole wrote on her application about her interest in serving:

“Ever since I was a little girl growing up in rural mid-Michigan, I have been fascinated with barns. My grandma had an old barn on her property and my uncle was a farmer, so I passed many hours playing in barns. As I got older and began pursuing my degree in historic preservation, my passion for barns grew as I learned more about them. For my final project at Eastern Michigan University, I conducted a barn and farmstead survey for the MBPN, and spend hours driving around my home county, documenting the old barns that were still standing. When I was approached to be a possible board candidate, I was thrilled. I would be honored to serve the MBPN and help spread an excitement and love for barns.”

Steve Stier noted, “I am certain that Nichole will be an active and valuable board member and welcome her to the board.” Congratulations, Nichole!



Nichole VanBlaricum



Stephanie White

Stephanie White to Serve as MBPN Secretary

Wendy Swank recently resigned as Secretary and MBPN Board member because of family priorities. We are sorry to see Wendy leave the Board, but thank her for her many hours of service to the MBPN. Detroit architect Stephanie White has volunteered to serve as Secretary and at the Annual Meeting was elected to fill the remainder of Wendy's term on the Board.

Stephanie noted, “As most of you know, I've been an active member with the MBPN for almost a decade, serving on the technical and communications committees. I've been wanting to get more involved and now the timing is just right! I am honored to serve and contribute further to our preservation efforts.”

Welcome, Stephanie!

In other Board-related news, Julie Avery, longtime MBPN Communications Chair, was elected MBPN Vice President. Congratulations, Madame Vice President!

—Keith Kehlbeck, Newsletter Editor



Photo by Tammis Donaldson

MBPN Board tours Stony Creek Essential Oils farm and spearmint harvesting.

MBPN Board Gathers for Summer Meeting

On Saturday, July 20th, the MBPN Board gathered for its summer meeting at president Tom Irrer's home in St. Johns and at nearby Stony Creek Essential Oils farm headquarters. Spearmint harvest was going on during the time of the meeting, with harvesting commencing at daybreak and running until midnight daily (unless it rains significantly).

The Board was treated to watching the spearmint distillation process and also toured a renovated barn about a mile south of Tom's house. The barn behind Tom's house has been the temporary home to about 400 tons of fertilizer that was delivered by truck and later spread on the surrounding fields. During the mint and wormwood oil harvest, it will also be the temporary home to over two million dollars of farm product. In the off-season, it provides storage space for some of the farm's smaller equipment. Both barns are busy barns and are great examples of adapting old barns in a modern farm operation.

—Keith Kehlbeck, Newsletter Editor



Photo by Tammis Donaldson

Mark doing what he liked best—inspecting a Michigan barn on a winter day.

MBPN Loses a Friend

We are deeply saddened to hear of the loss of a committed friend of Michigan barns. Mark Stitt died in an accident while in the area of Freeland where he was dismantling a barn that he was to reassemble.

Mark was the founder, owner and operator of Stitt Barn Preservation in Hesperia and followed his father and grandfather's footsteps into the barn restoration business. Mark was of the current working generation of the widely-extended Stitt family of barn preservation businesses that included in-laws, uncles, and cousins. Having worked at barn preservation nearly all his adult life. Mark had gained a great storehouse of skills and knowledge that will be a tremendous loss to the Michigan barn community.

Our most deep and sincere sympathies go out to Mark's immediate and extended family.

— Keith Kehlbeck, Steve Stier, and Tammis Donaldson



Photo by Charles Bultman

One of four barns being dismantled, repaired and to be re-erected at Cloudberry Farm.



Photo by Jim Mulvany

Cindy Stiles tells Conference attendees the story of Cloudberry Farm.

Cloudberry Farm: A 21st Century Organic Farm is Giving Old Barns a New Home

In 2016, after a long search for a special piece of land, Cindy Stiles and Eric Kaldjian purchased a 120-acre property, close to Ann Arbor, not farmed since 1959. A standing silo and stone foundations remained from a fire when the property was a dairy farm. Later the land was used for pigs, but there was no power. It was nearly two years before poles and electricity could be brought into the middle of the farm. This land—desirable from a development standpoint with woods, marshland, and open space—has been protected with a Conservation Easement. As a result, the Cloudberry Farm property is now a part of a green belt surrounding Ann Arbor.

The vision: a farm where animals are raised without pesticides and chemicals, and horses and cattle are used for the work entailed in growing a range of crops traditional to this part of southeast Michigan. So far, the results are impressive and innovative. Goats are helping to clear the land. Cindy wants to try her hand at cheese-making to sell cheese at a small farm stand, and a small goat-milking parlor is a start. The next goal is to begin to grow grain in traditional ways. To this end team of French farm workers is coming to Cloudberry Farm in 2020 to help get this operation started. Heirloom grain varieties will be planted, so that Cindy can use her expertise with bread making in using these grains.

Through her work with Chuck Bultman, Cindy has come to know that she can apply her values and vision for a new organic farm to the buildings that she has built on their property. Cloudberry Farm will incorporate four unwanted timber-framed barns (found within 12 miles) as primary farm structures: one for her animals, a second for their home, a third as a work building for her staff, and a fourth as an educational building and kitchen. The first, fully restored and repaired for her animals, was raised in April. Because of continuing issues with regulations and the municipal process, this could not be a public raising, but Cindy is determined to tackle these processes and believes that the second raising will be a public one.

The three barns being dismantled, repaired and moved to the property are from the 1850s and 1860s. Reusing and adapting beautiful historic structures is really important to Cindy and Eric. The learning curve of dismantling, moving and rebuilding these buildings and dealing with local governmental bodies has its challenges. Now, almost two and a half years into the process of permissions, there are still challenges in process and in simple imperatives and understanding (“Even if we are using old buildings, we still need utilities!”) Neighbors can observe the progress and are glad and supportive of what is happening. The long-range plan is for the farm to be available and open to the public. One of the barns will be sited near the entrance and will provide opportunities for education as well as sales.

During the process, Chuck Bultman and crew proved to be skilled, knowledgeable, and informed, as well as being able to take quick action. One example cited a previously-scheduled and secured barn that suddenly needed to be removed from its site within a week, or it would be torn down and burned. Chuck and his team were able to successfully move the barn within the timeframe specified!

Cindy and Eric have embraced the idea of adaptive reuse and of honoring the craftsmanship and work that originally went into building these structures over 100 years ago. As they noted, “It is definitely worth the effort to save these barns for future generations and people of our community.”

Now there are a couple of goats helping to clear shrubs from 15 of the 120 acres. In addition to dismantling and moving one of the barns, Cindy and Eric also brought along stones from the foundation. They plan to dress the stones, now in a pile at the farm, and use them for retaining walls and perhaps for a bridge over a stream. A building inspector wanted to be sure they would not be used to build a building foundation. Their answer: “We will work to rebuild the relationship with this building inspector!”

—Julie Avery, MBPN Communications Committee



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MBPN Endowment Update

MBPN's endowment committee is taking time to carefully investigate how to create a fund raising campaign for our Endowment. We are benefitting from volunteer fundraising professionals' advice and have a one-year plan in place to: gather lists of our stakeholders and seek ideas to inform our decision about the use and purpose of the MBPN Endowment. Key stakeholders for MBPN include, of course, our members, as well as past Board and committee members, Barn of the Year awardees, barn workers, and donors. A feasibility study will help the committee to finalize our financial goal. We are considering a goal of \$200,000, but we have been cautioned not to set our sights "too low."

At the June Conference and Annual Member Meeting, we held a brainstorming discussion with attendees. Lots of ideas were generated about activities to strengthen MBPN's work promoting the preservation of Michigan barns. Education, communications, and program ideas topped the list. Other topics raised included: grants, internships, apprenticeships, more technical assistance, networking with related groups, support of tax credits for historic structures, and activities to strengthen membership and attendance.

MBPN's Finance & Endowment Committee team members include: president Tom Irrer, treasurer Clare Koenigsnecht, vice president and 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.

—Julie Avery, MBPN Finance/Endowment Committee

What are your ideas?

Your suggestions are very valuable to this planning process and are needed as we plan for the future. Let us know!

- What should MBPN use the Endowment to fund?
- What are areas of barn preservation that MBPN should focus on?
- What efforts would make the most difference to our mission: . . . *promoting appreciation, preservation, and rehabilitation of Michigan barns, farmsteads, and rural communities* . . .

Please share your ideas with an email to averyj@msu.edu or by mail to MBPN, P.O. Box 614, Mt. Pleasant, MI 48804. You may also send a message through the website (www.mibarn.net).