



Winter 2019-20 – No. 88

MI BARN

PROMOTING APPRECIATION, PRESERVATION, AND REHABILITATION OF MICHIGAN BARNS, FARMSTEADS, AND RURAL COMMUNITIES

Happy New Year!

Join Us at the 2020 Annual Conference and Member Meeting

Returning to East Lansing in February
February 29, 2020 at MSU's Kellogg Center



Each year, barn enthusiasts gather to network, share stories, learn, and be inspired...at the Michigan Barn Preservation Network Annual Conference and Member Meeting. In 2020, we've decided to again stage the conference in East Lansing at the MSU Kellogg Center during Agriculture and Natural Resources Week (ANR Week, and formerly Farmers Week).

Michigan State University, the nation's pioneer land-grant college, was founded more than 150 years ago, guided by a philosophy to serve all the people of the state, an idea that still prevails today. Agriculture and Natural Resources Week (ANR Week) continues to be one of the largest events of its kind in the nation. Foundations for the week were laid by the Farmers' Institute more than a century ago. In 1898, Michigan Agricultural College hosted the first

see Annual Conference, page 4

Calling All Barn of the Year Applications

With the date of MBPN's Annual Conference and the announcement of the Barn of the Year Awards being moved up to **Saturday, February 29**, the deadline for submitting applications for the award is being moved up to **Saturday, January 25, 2020**.

That deadline will allow for processing the applications through a distinguished committee of barn devotees and for preparing the awards for presentation at Kellogg Center in East Lansing.

see Barn of the Year, page 5

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



President's Message

Thank you for your previous support of the Michigan Barn Preservation Network. Each year, your support allows us to showcase our rural history. This support helps us convince a few more barn owners to save their pieces of Michigan history. These barns symbolize the positive qualities of American Character: strength, honesty, security, and family stability. They remind us of our heritage and help tell the story of rural life.



Tom Irrer

As you look over our different levels of our membership, please give thought to supporting us at a higher level. Once a barn is gone, it is gone forever. Your continued support makes it possible for us to promote appreciation, preservation, and rehabilitation of Michigan barns, farmsteads, and rural communities.

—Tom Irrer



Photo by Jim Mulvany

MBPN President Tom Irrer and Calendar Chair Jim Mulvany present Vera Wiltse with the first copy of the 2020 MBPN Calendar (see also Board Member Profile on page 3)

2020 MBPN Calendars Are Here!

The 2020 MBPN Calendars have arrived, and copies have been mailed to dues-paying members. If you are interested in additional copies, we printed 4000 calendars this year, and they are available upon request. Calendars may be ordered in any number at \$5.00 per copy to cover postage and handling.

Find and order calendars online by going to our website (www.mibarn.net) under "Store" products. Or, if you prefer, by mail contact: Jim Mulvany, 1006 Carom Circle, Mason, MI 48854. Payment of \$5.00 can be made by check draft to MBPN. Credit cards may be used through PayPal online, although fulfillment will be quicker if a check is sent directly the address above.

Start the new decade with something that will remind you all year long of the beautiful historic barns that can be found throughout our state. Or get a few to give to fellow barn enthusiasts. You won't be sorry!

— Jim Mulvany, Calendar Chair



MBPN board members and friends gather at the Bullock Farm in October.

MBPN Board and Committees Meet to Plan for 2020

It is often the important behind-the-scenes work that goes unheralded to the general membership of any organization, and the MBPN is no exception. The Board meets quarterly in various venues across the state, reviewing finances and programs and planning for the future.

Because communication is so important in today's info-heavy world, our Communications Committee has also begun meeting in person during the year, and outside of Board meetings. For example, the Committee met in mid-November in St. Johns, Michigan at Stoney Creek Essential Oils farm headquarters, hosted by MBPN president Tom Irrer. The exciting innovations discussed at that meeting, including a state-of-the-art Client/Customer Relationship Management (CRM) database tool—Hubspot—will enable us to communicate and interact at a high level with MBPN members. Thanks to Eric Grates for taking the time to “school” the Communications Committee in what's called a “cloud platform.” Our membership database and contact information will be managed through this versatile tool, and it will provide flexibility and better messaging on a host of topics and initiatives. Who says old farmers and barn enthusiasts can't learn a few new tricks? This and other planned communications innovations will be previewed at the upcoming Annual Conference in late February, so stay tuned.

The Board itself also met this fall at a beautiful farmstead owned by Matthew and Jana Bullock, in Lapeer, Michigan. The Board extends a huge thank you to the Bullocks for hosting our quarterly board meeting. Your home is beautiful and a fine example of a visionary idea and of your loving care of what a barn can become. Everyone attending truly enjoyed being in your home.

—Keith Kehlbeck, Communications Chair and Newsletter Editor



Photo by Keith Kehlbeck

Communications Committee working session at St. Johns in November.

Board Member Profile

We believe that it is important for the Network membership to get to know the leaders of the organization—those volunteers who take the time to organize events, manage our finances and outreach, and promote our mission. In order to acknowledge these somewhat unsung “barn heroes,” we will be doing a series of profiles on various board members during the coming year. For the first such profile, it seemed only right to feature a founder of the MBPN to whom our 2020 calendar is dedicated: Vera Wiltse.



Vera Wiltse

A farmer herself and a retired MSU Extension educator, Vera Wiltse was thinking about Michigan barns before the idea of a barn organization ever emerged! Between 1992 and 1993, she was one of a team of four that developed the Michigan Barn & Farmstead Survey to bring 4-H youth and adults together to learn about and document traditional barns and farmsteads. Thanks to their pioneering efforts, the survey has become a model for other state projects.

In the early 1990s, MSU Extension hosted a series of workshops on barn history and the potential of rehabilitation and adaptation to save barns. The large attendance and growing interest led

Vera and others to explore additional ways to network. Vera was among the team that developed a foundation for a state organization, and in 1996, the MBPN was launched at MSU's “Ag & Natural Resources Week.” 149 attendees became members and adopted bylaws and a mission: “promoting appreciation, preservation, and rehabilitation of Michigan barns, farmsteads, and rural communities.” Vera was elected the first president!

Since then, Vera has continued as a mainstay and as the soul of the MBPN. In addition to serving two three-year terms as president, she has significantly shaped and coordinated MBPN annual conferences, in recent years mentoring guest organizers. Currently serving as Program Chair, Vera works across many MBPN programs; she truly is the “institutional memory” for our organization. Today, she is leading an effort to update and adapt the barn survey so that details can be entered directly into the database, making research inquiries within the database more effective.

When you want something done – ask a busy person! Vera exemplifies this adage. She is a farmer and is active in her community and church (where she is a pianist). She sews and tailors and is a crafts educator (specializing in leather crafts). She is involved with a Japanese sister city and loves to travel. Family is paramount. With her partner Ken, Vera is very involved with her children, Vicki and Vincent, and with her grandchildren. MBPN is proud and very fortunate to have Vera Wiltse as a co-worker and friend!

—Keith Kehlbeck, MBPN Newsletter Editor

2020 Annual Conference and Member Meeting Schedule

"Rural Arts and Culture"

8:00 amCheck-in & registration
8:30 amMuffins, donuts, and coffee
9:00 am – 2:00 pmProgramming in the Lincoln Room; lunch
3:00 pmSpeakers
4:30 pmProgram will end

Program

9:00 am – Membership meeting starts

Morning Keynote: 10:15 am,

Lincoln Room, Kellogg Center, MSU.

"Old Barns as Art" – Port Austin's Plan for Cultural Tourism

Carl Osentoski, executive director of the Huron County Economic Development Corporation, will discuss and showcase a Thumb Area rural arts and tourism project focusing on area barns that sheds new light on adaptive reuse possibilities. In this community, artists have reconceived barns through mural art, sculpture, and environmental adaptation.

Pre-lunch Presentation: 11:30 am to 12:30pm

"Barn Art and the Paranormal"

MBPN Board member, Calendar chair, and retired MSU Extension educator Jim Mulvany will entertain us with a lively presentation on hex signs on barns. Barn Art has become increasingly popular with signs, hex signs, quilt signs, etc. Jim will talk about interesting signs and ideas, the history of hex signs in the Pennsylvania Dutch area, the meaning of hex signs, how to make hex signs, and more. You'll hear a spooky story of a farmer on a windy farm, one man's bad experience with getting what he asked for in a hex sign, why barns have white over doors and windows...and the true value of two witches in every dairy barn. Should be fun!

Lunchtime for fun & networking

MBPN Annual Auction Benefit

Williamston auctioneer Chuck Chestnut returns

No silent auction this year.

Live Auction

Interested in donating items for the live auction? Contact Jeanette Routhier at jrouthie@umflint.edu or 810-287-5634

Barn of the Year Awards Presentation

Afternoon Speakers: 3:00 pm – 4:30 pm

"Saving our Family Barn"

Colin Herren will share his family's journey to save a barn in the Mt Pleasant area.

"Duplicating the Walt Whitman Barn – Good Intentions Gone Awry"

Jim Bowes inherited his grandfather's property – 20 acres of unimproved woodland in Midland County. To honor his grandfather, Jim wanted to erect a post and beam building as a vacation home. The inspiration for his design was Jeanette Routhier's model of the Walt Whitman barn. Jim and Jeanette will tell their tale of the process - from the vision in their hearts to the standing structure they enjoy today. Rest assured, vision rarely equals final outcome.

Conference Registration Fee: \$60.00 (members)

Is your membership current? Non-member registration is \$100.

Online registration is available at www.MiBarn.net

Kellogg Center Housing

Room rate: \$125 + 13% = \$141.25.

Call 800-875-5090 and refer to the *Group Code: 2002BARNPR* or *Block Name: MI Barn Preservation*

On-line: 24-hour access to on-line booking

- Go to www.kelloggcenter.com
- Click on the "Reservations" link at the top of the page
- Select "Book Now Online" link
- Enter arrival, departure, rooms, and number of adults / children
- Select "More Options" and enter your Group Code: 2002BARNPR
- Click "Check Availability"

—Vera Wiltse, Program Committee Chair



Annual Conference, continued from page 1

statewide Farmers' Institute "Round-Up." Agriculture Hall was completed in 1909, and a fourth floor auditorium provided the meeting place. Five years later, the round-up combined with farm association meetings to become the first Farmers Week. In 1982, Farmers Week was renamed Farmers' Week and Natural Resources Days followed in 1985 by a name change to Agriculture and Natural Resources Week, better known today as ANR Week. With more than 50 programs and annual association meetings, ANR Week has developed into a late winter gathering of minds deeply concerned and involved in the today's world of Agriculture and Natural Resources.

For many years, the MBPN met at the Kellogg Center during ANR Week, and it seems only fitting that we start a new decade by returning to that tradition. The date: Saturday, February 29, 2020. Our meetings and presentations will be held in the Lincoln Room of the Kellogg Center. We have an exciting schedule of presentations and programs, which are outlined later in the newsletter.

Please note that the annual Bus Tour, which recently has been paired with the conference, will take place in the late summer or fall...stay tuned for updates. In the meantime, we hope that you'll join us for what is certain to be an informative and fun day in East Lansing!

Barn of the Year, continued from page 1

This year—as you may have seen through local press releases, e-news, and other alerts—there was a three-month period for accepting applications for the 2020 Award, beginning in October. While we are near the end of that cycle, there may yet be time to nominate your barn for this prestigious award. The application form is available for download from the MBPN Website. Hard copy applications can also be made available through the Board of Directors or by contacting the Awards Committee Chairman at klanderson42@gmail.com or (616) 540-6701.

Over the past two decades, 84 barns, and their owners, have been recognized for their efforts in preserving Michigan's historic barns. In order for your barn to become #85, you need to go to www.mibarn.net and download the 5-page application form (or call or email for a hard copy to be sent to you). Complete instructions on the information and photos we need to consider your barn are found within the application. Don't wait.

The feeling of spring may come early for a lucky someone who stays inside during winter's chill and takes advantage of a warm fire-side to tell us about their barn. The gloom of mid-winter will give way to sunshine and flowers for a lucky winner of the coveted Barn of the Year Award. When it is announced and published as MBPN's Barn of



Photo by Jim Mulvany

Peter Uhlianuk accepts the 2019 Barn of the Year Award from MBPN's President Tom Irrer. Also pictured right is Keith Anderson, the Awards Chairman. Your barn could be a Barn of the Year!

the Year for 2020, the barn you saved can inspire others throughout the state to become barn stewards. As time is running short, please contact us if you have a barn you wish to nominate!

—Keith Anderson, Chairman Awards Committee



Photo by Catie Newell

Secret Sky, Catie Newell's recently completed barn art project on Pinnebog Road just south of Port Austin.



Photo by Catie Newell

When lit from inside at night, the Secret Sky barn has a dramatic effect.



Photo by Scott Hocking

Detroit sculptor Scott Hocking created a barn boat, called The Emergency Ark," out of wood from a collapsing 19th-century barn on the Goretzki's farm.



Photo by Port Austin Art

A 35-foot pigeon is one of the murals painted by Steve and Dorota Coy on the Ziel barn, south of Port Austin.

Barn Art in Port Austin: Adaptive Reuse for Cultural Tourism

When Detroit artist and architect Catie Newell approached Michael Schoenhals in 2017 with a proposition to give his old barn new life as an art installation, he gladly donated it to the cause of cultural tourism in Port Austin.

The small community on Lake Huron at the tip of Michigan's Thumb now displays three major art pieces on surrounding agricultural land. The barn art collection is the brainchild of Jim Boyle, a Detroitier with Port Austin roots, who enlisted urban artists to translate their work into a rural environment.

A two-sided barn mural completed in 2013 at the corn and livestock farm of Hank and Jeanette Ziel was the first project. Artists Steve and Dorota Coy painted a 35-foot-high pigeon on one side and a startling version of Grant Wood's iconic American Gothic painting on the other. In 2015, sculptor Scott Hocking built a boat barn out of beams and boards from a collapsing 1890s barn at the Goretzki Farm. Called "Emergency Ark," it denotes the idea of sanctuary and safety.

A Feat of Re-engineering

Newell's "Secret Sky" project, a barn with a dramatic triangular slice cut through it, was completed in July 2019 after two years in the making. The artist is known for exploring architecture artfully and chasing the effects of light and darkness.

Tammis Donaldson and Stephanie White, architects on MBPN's board, visited with Newell and structural engineer John Gruber to find out what it took to transform the deteriorating barn into a stable art installation and curate the streaming light.

Newell not only had to take measures to preserve the already rickety structure, but also needed to support the slice she cut out. A concrete ballast was installed in the barn to anchor it to the ground. Adding new structural beams allowed the slice to direct the light.

With these reinforcements and the east-to-west orientation of the void, Newell accomplished the visual effect she was going for. The "sky" enters and cuts through the slice and porous exterior, creating a different effect day and night, sunrise or sunset. The visual effect varies by season, too, with the light constantly changing based on the sun's angle.

Cultural Tourism

For Carl Osentoski, executive director of the Huron County Economic Development Corporation, the Port Austin barn art projects create an environment that will invite people into the area and increase the tourism base.

He also says that it's an opportunity to repurpose barns in a creative way -- to save them and help preserve a piece of local history.

—Marcia Danner, Communications Committee

Endowment Update: Preserving our Heritage – Investing in our Future

MBPN has contracted with an outside consultant for a feasibility study to determine if we have the capacity to raise significant funds for our future. The Endowment Committee and the Board of Directors have identified small groups of members and others who know about MBPN to be a part of this study.

John Cauley (East Lansing) is experienced with nonprofit leadership and fund development. He will conduct a series of confidential interviews to determine MBPN's readiness to conduct an endowment campaign. The study will not be an early solicitation of gifts, but will seek information on a) the strength and reputation of MBPN's leadership, b) the value and appeal of the work we do, and c) the perceived inclination of potential donors to support our cause.

The results of this anonymous study will help us to set a financial goal and to develop a plan to begin the public phase of the campaign to significantly grow our endowment fund. As a result of our Cupola lifetime memberships and directed gifts, our fund, which is held at the Capital Regional Community Foundation, has now reached \$33,289.

Your ideas and questions are welcome. Do not hesitate to contact committee members:

Julie Avery, Vice President • averyj@msu.edu • 517-927-1958

Brad Brogren, Former President • bbrogren@yahoo.com • 517-349-0867

Jerry Damon, Past Chair-Barn of the Year Awards • Runningbuds@aol.com • 428-345-4080

Tom Irrer, President & Past Treasurer • tomirrer@mintcity.com • 989-640-1868

Clare Koenigsknecht, Treasurer & Past President • clarek13@gmail.com • 989-593-2351

Or contact our host: The Capital Region Community Foundation (Lansing) manages the MBPN Endowment Fund

along with 400 other charitable funds created by individuals, families, businesses, and organizations. Having the MBPN Endowment Fund at the Community Foundation gives donors confidence that their gifts will be well managed financially, with a consistent focus on the growth of principal and generation of income for our future use. Contact the Foundation at (517) 272-2870.

—Julie Avery, MBPN Vice President and Endowment Committee

Consider MBPN in your charitable giving!

We invite your gift to the Michigan Barn Preservation Network – in support of our ongoing work or dedicated to our endowment fund.

A gift from your IRA to MBPN can reduce your taxes. If you are . . . my age . . . and have Required Minimum Distributions to take, it is not too late to save money on your 2019 income taxes. The IRA charitable gift roll-over permits individuals who are 70 ½ or older 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 this year while supporting a charity or nonprofit organization. Consult with your tax adviser regarding these options. MBPN is a 501 ©3 charitable organization.

For more about our MBPN Endowment:

- Contact our treasurer, Clare Koenigsknecht: clarek13@gmail.com or 989-593-2351

Such a gift can be given either to MBPN or to the Capital Region Community Foundation in our name.

Read more about MBPN's Endowment at the website (www.mibarn.net) under "support."

Reminder: 2020 MBPN Membership Join us and support the MBPN's mission!

Tempus Fugit. It's a new decade! The work of the MBPN goes on, however, and we need your monetary support in order to continue the Network's work. If you haven't already "re-upped" your membership for this year, please do so today! An organization like the MBPN doesn't thrive—as we have for more than two decades—without help and commitment from dedicated supporters.

The MBPN is recognized nationally as a premier barn preservation organization, thanks to the hard work and support of many individuals. The board of directors continues to follow an updated strategic plan that keeps barn preservation in the public eye through awareness and hands-on education for youth and adults. Your membership also supports our quarterly newsletter, which is distributed to over 500 people with each printing.

Do you know a friend who would enjoy receiving our newsletter or attending our events? Encourage their membership. Are you ready to provide long-term support in the form of a Cupola Membership? We need your help to build on our endowment fund!

Your membership supports MBPN's work of promoting appreciation, preservation and rehabilitation of Michigan barns, farmsteads and rural communities.

For more information, visit us online at www.mibarn.net.

\$40 Fieldstone – 1 person

\$50 Mortar – 2 people

\$1000 Cupola – lifetime/two people

\$50 – Affiliate – nonprofit

\$100 – Contractor/business

If you haven't already done so, please choose the membership level that suits you best, and mail your payment to:

MBPN

P.O. Box 614

Mt. Pleasant, MI 48804-0614

Thank you in advance for your support!



Papa teaching Michael (age 6) to use an impact drill - 2019

Photos by Tony Koenigsknecht



Michael (age 4) climbing a ladder – straightening a barn - 2017



Papa Work Weekend



After each day on the job, my mom would ask the same question, “So, what did you have for lunch?” She already knew the answer. But like a kid recounting what Santa brought for Christmas, I was always happy share, “Burger, fries and a pop!”

My siblings and I grew up working with my dad from a young age. On summer mornings one or two of us kids would load up into my dad’s red, Ford flatbed and join he and his crew for a one-day adventure on the job.

Even as a six or seven-year old, my dad would find a way to

include us in the project and make us feel useful. And as a mid-day reward for our hard work, we could order ANYTHING we wanted at the restaurant for lunch (also known as a hamburger).

As summers went by, my four siblings and I graduated to middle and then high school. We were no longer tag-alongs but rather the crew itself. We were a competent and efficient team forged from years of experience working together. Instead of Dad giving us small tasks, we were asked for our opinion on the best way to complete the project and weren’t afraid to provide an alternate approach to Dad’s.

This experience and the skills I learned shaped who I am today:

- problem solving and the value of hard work – ultimately put to use in earning my engineering degrees
- effective project management – essential to my journey in starting my own business
- ability to collaborate with others – if you can learn to work with your siblings, you can learn to work with anyone

And lastly, my dad gave me an appreciation for historic buildings and the craft of restoration –because of him, I can look at an old house or rundown barn and see its potential.

Now living in Chicago with a family of my own, I find myself thinking about how to create these types of memories and experiences for my own children. One way I have found to do this is an annual trip to Michigan for a “Papa Work Weekend”, where three generations of Koenigsknechts spend time together and bond over hard-work, and the satisfaction of a job well-done.

see Papa Work, page 8



My brother Roger (age 8) and my dad Clare - 1989



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Papa Work, continued from page 7

For my Dad and I, this gives us a chance to relive our experiences working together those summers long ago. And for my son, this is a chance for him to learn the skills I found so valuable directly from the man who taught me.

I realize now just how challenging it is to teach children life skills like these at such a young age. It takes significant effort for a parent to teach in a way that doesn't lead to the child feeling frustrated and wanting to give up. I see now just how patient my dad was with my siblings and I and how he continually prioritized giving us a chance to learn over just getting it done.

My son and I always have a great time on these "Papa Work Weekends". My son leaves with a sense of pride and accomplishment. I see this in his eyes when he tells his grandma and mom about everything he did that day and what tools he learned to use "all by himself".

I like to think he will look back on these trips and appreciate the time spent together with his dad and Papa. I hope that one day he will put these the skills and experiences to use in a way that is unique to him. If nothing else, he'll have a deep appreciation for a well-made hamburger.

—Tony Koenigsnecht



Resources and News on MiBarn.net

The Michigan Barn Preservation Network website – www.MiBarn.net – is your go-to place to find information about the organization and resources for barn preservation.

Our Q&A section, contractors' directory, and expert articles will be of help to anyone with questions about barn maintenance, repair, and rehabilitation.

The programs tab highlights the annual conference, barn tours, workshops and other events of interest to barn owners and enthusiasts. Learn about programs such as Barn of the Year, Michigan Barn & Farmstead Survey, and Teamwork and Timbers.

You can sign up online when registration opens for MBPN activities and download forms for Barn of the Year nominations, the Michigan Barn & Farmstead Survey or Mini Workshop Grants. You'll find contacts for requesting the MBPN exhibit, a speaker, or a Teamwork and Timbers demonstration.

Webmaster and editor Marcia Danner (with technical support from Eric Grates) is continually updating and adding to the site. Please submit event information for the calendar to her at marciadanner@comcast.net.

—Marcia Danner, Communications Committee