



Photos by Tammis Donaldson

Spring 2016 Barn Tour, Eastmanville Farm (Ottawa County Parks and Recreation Barn)

Spring in a Time of Uncertainty and Social Distancing

As we go to press, the world is in the midst of a crisis that few anticipated would bring the rhythms of normal life to such a dramatic pause. In recent weeks, we all have encountered new terms—pandemic, novel coronavirus, social distancing, ventilators, etc.—and we have learned the value of adequate hand-sanitizer and toilet paper. Our newfound personal isolations seem ironic, since spring, with its warming weather and blooming foliage, usually means a time of renewed social interaction, energy, and re-birth. Instead, we are in a period of uncertainty.

As with just about every situation, however, there are silver linings. Many are finding new routines with family members. Some are honing their cooking skills (and mine need much honing!). We are catching up on television, reading new books, and reflecting on life and personal goals. Yoshida Kenko, a Japanese author and Buddhist monk writing in the 1300s, noted, “Life’s most precious gift is uncertainty.” At first glance, this seems counterintuitive. Shouldn’t uncertainty be a bad thing? Upon reflection, however, it may be one of those silver linings—something that helps us think about the importance of constants in our lives...and the opportunities that await when we make it through these health and economic challenges.

As you’ll see later in this newsletter, and just before the state-wide

coronavirus crisis took hold, the MBPN was fortunate to be able to stage its Annual Conference and Member Meeting. The camaraderie and sense of purpose at the conference was palpable and exciting. From the always entertaining live auction led by our friend Chuck Chestnut to the Barn of the Year Awards and the intriguing presentations about barn preservation and restoration, there was something for everyone. Yes, as a society, we are now in a period of uncertainty, but our mission remains. When the societal isolation of this pandemic lifts, new ideas and old friends will make the Michigan Barn Preservation Network’s commitment even more important and relevant.

The observations of a 14th century Japanese monk about uncertainty can be dovetailed with a more modern thought from a contemporary blogger turned best-selling author, Mandy Hale, who urges, “Embrace the uncertainty. When nothing is certain, anything is possible.” And so it will be—as we move forward with our Endowment, new communications platforms, a fall barn tour, and more. Thank you for your commitment to the cause, for your unbridled enthusiasm and participation, and for the hope I know you all share for the future—while celebrating our rural and agricultural past.

Stay well and embrace the uncertainty—and the possibilities!
—Keith Kehlbeck, Communications Committee Chair

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President's Message

Who doesn't have a hobby? Just about everyone has one or another. Some people like to spend family time at their cottage or on one of Michigan's many lakes or rivers. Others enjoy golf or follow sports. At our Annual Conference, we always hear attendees (with great pride) tell stories of their individual barn restoration projects—for many, their own personal hobby. Many of these folks also maintain old tractors or older automobiles as their other hobbies.



Tom Irrer

Those of us who spend our time and efforts with old barns have a hobby that produces permanent results that we can see in the presentations at our conferences and during our barn tours. Our "barn hobby" draws compliments from our neighbors and helps preserve something that is very important—our rural and agricultural heritage. Often, it is a family project. It makes our children and grandchildren appreciate the fact that we—their parents and grandparents—did what we could to save these Cathedrals of the Countryside. For all of these reasons, preserving our barns and our history may be one of the most rewarding hobbies of all.

Thank you for sharing my love of barns...and for making our mission one of your own personal hobbies!

—Tom Irrer



Photo by Julie Avery

At the MSU Autumn Festival, MBPN's Clare Koenigs knecht and Jim Mulvany show MSU's SPARTY the correct way to use a barn building tool — the beetle.



MBPN President Tom Irrer welcomes conference attendees



A packed room of barn enthusiasts at the 2020 annual conference

Photos by Stephanie White and Keith Kehlbeck

2020 Annual Conference and Member Meeting One of the Best Ever

In late February, enthusiasts from around the state gathered in East Lansing at MSU's Kellogg Center for the annual celebration of all things barn-related. Held during MSU's Agriculture and Natural Resources Week (ANR Week), the conference was well-attended and produced a wealth of important information. The meetings and presentations were held in the Lincoln Room of the Kellogg Center, and the theme of the conference was "Rural Arts and Culture." Some of the highlights include:

- Board Member Tammis Donaldson presented an informative power point regarding the genesis of our interest in Port Austin's barn art and cultural tourism (see article in the last issue of the newsletter, archived under "resources" on our website at www.mibarn.net).
- In the morning keynote, "Old Barns as Art—Port Austin's Plan for Cultural Tourism," Carl Osentoski, executive director of the Huron County Economic Development Corporation, discussed and showcased a Thumb Area rural arts and tourism project focusing on area barns and that sheds new light on adaptive reuse possibilities. In this community, artists have reconceived barns through mural art, sculpture, and environmental adaptation.



Carl Osentoski

- Subbing for Cathy McCune, MBPN Vice President Julie Avery provided an overview of the origins of Michigan Barn Quilt Trails. Quilt trails involve barns displaying creative giant quilt blocks celebrating our rural life and heritage in Michigan. It is noteworthy that there are now such trails in every state, and Michigan has been a leader in promoting self-guided driving and cycling tours that are open year-round.
- Prior to breaking for lunch, MBPN Board member, Calendar chair, and retired MSU Extension educator Jim Mulvany entertained attendees with a lively presentation on hex signs on barns. Barn Art has become increasingly popular with signs, hex signs, quilt signs, etc. Jim talked about interesting signs and ideas, and the history of hex signs in the Pennsylvania Dutch area. When you next talk to Jim, ask him about the Distlefunk!

After a lovely buffet lunch, perennial favorite auctioneer Chuck Chestnut of Williamston—an auctioneer since 1958 ("When will I retire? Never!")—with the assistance of a number of willing helpers like Jeanette Routhier, cajoled our generous conference attendees to new heights, auctioning items large and small to benefit the MBPN's bottom line. Awards Chair Keith Anderson then recognized the 16 barns that were nominated this year for the prestigious Barn of the Year Award, and presented this year's six recipients with their plaques (see article on page 5).

Capping an enjoyable and informative day, the afternoon presentations by Colin Herren ("Saving Our Family Barn") and by Jim Bowes and Jeanette Routhier ("Duplicating the Walt Whitman Barn") told riveting stories of perseverance and creativity when it comes to renovating and creating new memories through barns. Excerpts from the presentation on the Herren Barn follow on page 4.



Jim Mulvany



Jim Bowes/Jeanette Routhier

Thanks to all who attended, and we look forward to seeing you in the fall at the annual Bus Tour, which recently has been paired with the conference, but will tentatively take place on September 26th in Northeast Michigan...stay tuned for updates.



Colin Herren presents at the annual conference



Before



After

Photos courtesy of MBPN

Saving Our Family Barn: the Herren Barn Restoration

Colin Herren, a 30-year builder of commercial and residential buildings, provided an extraordinary gift to conference attendees when he shared his family's journey to save a barn in the Mt Pleasant area. It's worth sharing a few of his more interesting observations from the presentation; his narrative contains a number of words of wisdom for others planning to renovate a nearly-lost barn.

"Long story short, we bought it at auction and we had no idea what we'd do with it," says Colin. "We had no intention of doing anything serious...but it was next to our home and we bought it to make sure that somebody else didn't just let it go to heck." The barn had been extremely dilapidated; there was no floor, it was falling, and was in really bad shape. A couple of years later, during a bad winter, it started to lean, which motivated Colin and his family to do something. "It was an old, old building, (but) we fixed it up first so it could be habitable and we could rent it out." Later—and serendipitously—it turned out that the barn had at one time been owned by his wife Amy's great-uncle, Roy Adams.

The Herrens jokingly often said, "Someday we'll fix it up," and began to call the place "Some Day Farm." "Some day was coming, whether we liked it or not; we had no choice," says Colin. And so began a long process of sweat equity: jacking up, installing footings, foundation work, cables, concrete to hold the west side of the building in place...and so much more. "I never seemed to have time in the summer, and many of the pictures show electric blankets made necessary

to thaw the ground during winter months.

Over a period of almost six years—with "a lot of breaks in between"—the Herren family persevered and worked on the barn. "It takes thousands of hours to do one of these barns if you do it yourself, and three of our five daughters who were at home were the hard workers who always seemed to be around," says Colin. "It wasn't like it was a company doing this crazy stuff. It was us in the evenings." Building a driveway, pouring a concrete ramp, replacing windows, installing a beautiful wood floor, and fixing the roof were just a few of the tasks. Wherever possible, they used original timber on the walls and siding. Because of the years of bird droppings and petrified raccoons, they needed to power wash, hand-scrub, and treat the floor with enzymes to eliminate odors. The barn is pristine now.

The end result was a structure in which one of the Herren daughters decided to get married, which occurred in October of 2018. Starting small, over the years the investment in the property—in time and treasure—was immense. Was it all worth it? "I had no idea what I was going to do; I had no idea when it was going to get done, and I had no idea what it was going to cost," says Colin Herren. "If you tried to figure those three things out in advance, I really don't know if you'd do it. (But) we love our barn, and I'd like it to last for generations and hopefully hand it down. If it doesn't make economic sense, you just have to find another reason to do it." We're glad the Herren family did!

—Keith Kehlbeck, MBPN Newsletter Editor

2020 Barn of the Year Awards Announced

Over the past two decades—and including this year's awardees—90 barns and their owners have been recognized for their efforts in preserving Michigan's historic barns. Our committee consisted of: Mara Braspenninx, Ina Hanel-Gerdenich, Keith Kehlbeck, Tom Nehil, Rose Putnam, Nichole VanBlaricum, and Keith Anderson. Thanks to this dedicated group who spent hours evaluating the 16 barns nominated for the award. Six of the nominees were chosen to receive the award during our recent conference, and representa-

tives of all six barns were on hand to be recognized. Those not chosen this year were provided Certificates of Appreciation and a complimentary one-year membership in the MBPN. I wish to emphasize that all of the barns nominated this year were great barns with great stories. We applaud all in their efforts to rehabilitate their barns, and all are worthy. I hope you will enjoy the stories of the six 2020 award recipients, as told by Marcia Danner on the following pages.

—Keith Anderson, Awards Chair





Don Buck and his brother Gerald accepting the award for the Buck Barn in Ludington.



Buck Barn — This 1900 gambrel-roofed barn in Ludington, MI (Mason County) has been in the Buck family for 63 years.

Buck Barn: Family Adaptive Use

A Tribute to Dad: Son takes on stewardship to rehabilitate 1900-era barn

When ownership of the family farm passed to Donald Buck, he decided to finish the rehabilitation of the “Old Barn” that his dad had started. Both father and son had an appreciation for its architectural significance and for the familial history it held. As Don began accessing the buildings and traversing the land, he recalled fond memories of growing up on the farm and was reminded of how much his father loved farming. According to Don, the structure was in a state of disrepair from a generation of neglect. Don hired the team at American Heritage Barn Preservation to do the job with emphasis on keeping

barn’s original architecture. Key components of the restoration included replacement of windows, the roof, interior beams and flooring damaged by leaky roof, repair of wood on all four sides and repainting, extensive restoration work on the fieldstone foundation and fieldstone earthen ramp, building stairs to the loft area, and capping off the job with beautiful landscaping.

Now that the task is completed, the barn will be a place where the family can have a chat in the loft or play pool and ping pong below. The first floor will be used for storage and seating for large dinner parties when the family traditionally unites for the 4th of July celebration. And thanks to the barn rehabilitation, the saying, “everything old is new again” will come full circle as the Buck family tradition is not only maintained, but flourishes.



Barn restoration specialist Dean Sutton of JDS Historical and his wife Lori accept the award on behalf of Rochester University, home of the Gierok Barn.



Gierok Barn in Rochester Hills, MI (Oakland County) -- This 30 x 60-foot gambrel-roofed barn at Rochester University has newly installed asphalt shingles matching a historical shingle, a connected silo and tongue and groove wood planking sides

Gierok Barn, Rochester Hills: Adaptive Use – Nonprofit Sears & Roebuck ‘Kit’ Barn: College decides to preserve, not tear down early 1900s barn

Like many farm buildings erected between 1911 and 1932, the barn at Henry Gierok’s farm in Avon Township (Rochester Hills), was ordered from a Sears & Roebuck catalog. The kit for a modern bank barn with trussed roof construction came with the wood boards already cut and fitted, as well as everything else that was needed — building plans; nuts, bolts, screws and nails; oxide red paint for two coats and white window trim.

When Rochester University acquired 54 acres of the Gierok property in 1964, the farmstead was mostly intact. The barn had been fairly well taken care of throughout its history and the new

owner took on an extensive restoration in the early 1990s. But by 2018, it had fallen into disrepair with several catastrophic structural failures and a severely degraded roof. At that time, Rochester University considered preserving the old barn as a maintenance facility.

While some traditional contractors recommended demolishing the unusual barn, Dean Sutton of JDH Historical proposed a plan for restoring it without any major changes. Restoration work centered on repairing severe structural failures, restoring siding, roof deck and trim, rebuilding dormers, a new asphalt shingle roof, replacing the concrete floor, building new doors, and finishing with barn red paint and trim. By restoring the barn, Rochester University maintained the history and structure of the farm and created a useable building fitted to today’s needs.



The entire Brandt Family turned out for the award presentation at the 2020 MBPN Annual Conference at Kellogg Center in East Lansing.

Henry Brandt Barn: Continuing Agricultural Use – Family Sesquicentennial Farm: Stately double barn remains centerpiece of farmstead

With 150 years of continuous land ownership, the Brandt family celebrated the farm’s sesquicentennial in 2019. Current owners Rebecca and Jennifer Brandt are the great-great-great granddaughters of Henry W. Brandt, a German immigrant and early pioneer in Portsmouth Township (Bay City), who bought the land in 1869.

The barn was built in 1929 by William F. Brandt and his sons to support an expanding dairy operation. It’s actually two separate barns side by side that were joined together with a common roof. One half is made of new material and the other half is fashioned from an older adjacent barn with hand-hewn beams, deconstructed and reconstructed to create this magnificent 130-foot-long building.



Brandt Barn in Bay City, MI — Most noticeable feature of this 130 ft barn is the gothic style roof covered in asphalt shingles in a color nearly matching the exterior blocks’ dark brown glazed tile.

Features of the two-part barn include hand-hewn beams with mortise and tenon connections, joist with original bark remaining, original hay trolley, glazed tile block silo, well-preserved granary and impressive curved, engineered roof trusses, and original windows that have been maintained. Since its construction, the barn has been continuously used for agricultural operations – transitioning from dairy to cash crops — wheat, corn, soybean, navy bean and sugar beets.

Much of the barn was adapted in the 1980s to accommodate larger, modernized farm equipment, including removing the stanchions and portions of the loft. Recent renovations have included a complete roof replacement, a compacted StoneCrete update for the floor and replacement of the upper barn windows with vinyl windows to match the original design.

“We are fortunate to have had generations of family and friends to share our barn with and by preserving it, we hope to continue our connection far into the future,” says Rebecca.



Eric and Barb Winkelman, the Glen Arbor neighbors who advocated for the barn’s preservation, accepted the award on behalf of the Park Service, nonprofit preservation groups and community volunteers who made it happen.

Brunson Barn: Adaptive Use – Nonprofit Port Oneida Rural Historic District: National Park Service, preservationists and volunteers save barn

The formerly tattered barn on Thorson Road in Glen Arbor, MI was once dubbed “Grace” because it was only “by the Grace of God that she still stands.”

Built around 1900, the 40 x 60 gambrel roof barn is the only remaining structure in the original farmstead of Joseph and Margaret Brunson in the Port Oneida Rural Historic District. The Brunson Barn and more than 300 other historic farm buildings were acquired by the National Park Service in 1970 when Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore was established.

Local residents witnessing the barn’s decay (as well as extensive scavenging) implored the Park Service to repair and stabilize it.



Brunson Barn in the Port Oneida Rural Historic District of Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore

Advocates for the barn challenged park management to live up to its stated mission of preserving historic structures.

The restoration came about through a cooperative effort made possible by generous donors, federal grants, public volunteers and repair workshops (including some offered by the MBPN). The National Park Service secured funds to install a new roof and re-side the hemlock boards. Teams recently reinforced and upgraded the barn’s floor.

The entry for Barn of the Year was submitted by Kimberly Mann, NPS historical architect, who leads annual volunteer barn restoration efforts in the Port Oneida Historic Rural District.

Currently the Brunson Barn is being used to store materials needed to restore other farmsteads within the Port Oneida Historic District. “This barn that was saved is now helping save other structures throughout the National Park,” notes Eric Winkelman, the neighbor who championed the cause.



Samuel IV and Jennifer Stitt were honored in the commercial adaptive use category for the creation of Heritage Wedding Barns in Shelby.

**Heritage Wedding Barns: Commercial Adaptive Use
Wedding Venue Business: Timber framing experts relocate and rebuild a barn of their own**

Coming from a long line of timber frame barn restoration specialists, Sam Stitt IV and his wife Jennifer decided to use their knowledge, craft and expertise to create a beautiful space for weddings. They took on a massive multi-year project to disassemble, relocate, reassemble and restore a dream barn. In 2013, the team from their family business, Great Lakes Barn Preservation, dismantled a very weathered barn at Fischer Tree Farm in nearby Rothbury (Oceana County), including its attached lean-to and original shed. It was relocated to property in Shelby that has been in Jennifer's family since 1921 and is home to another venue space, the Patriot barn, which they also relocated and restored.



Built in 1892, this gable-roofed, mortise and tenon timber frame barn is now a West Michigan wedding venue in Shelby.

Since the barn was not maintained for decades, it required major rehabilitation, including work done to tenons, increasing head room, adding new rough-sawn white pine siding, sliding doors, and roofing. In addition, interior finishing for a commercial event space involved adding modern amenities and making the barn compliant with ADA and building codes for entertaining.

During its first 121 years, the barn was home to the normal activities of Michigan historic barns – sheltering animals, storing straw for bedding, supporting crop production and hosting social activities like the Junior Farm Bureau's corn husking bees. In its new iteration as a state-of-the-art venue, it is called the Legacy barn. Likewise, the name of their business, Heritage Wedding Barns, reflects the deep heritage they have in both the land itself and their family trade of restoring timber frame barns. "After many years of working on other peoples' barns," says Jennifer, "we can now enjoy our own barn and having others enjoy our family heritage as well."



The Langenderfer Family

MacKenzie Farm Barn: Continuing Agricultural Use – Family Labor of Love: DIY projects give new life to family barn

Maintaining and repairing the barn and other farmstead buildings on their property has been an ongoing priority for Virginia and Allan Langenderfer, who acquired the MacKenzie Farm in 1994. In addition to the early 1900s 26 x 48 gambrel-roofed barn with attached lean-to, the farmstead includes a granary, corn crib, windmill and farmhouse. The structures were spared by the 1965 Palm Sunday Tornado that destroyed an additional similar barn, chicken coop and silo.

Now into the fourth generation, the MacKenzie Farm in Adrian, MI has been in Virginia's family since 1927. The landscape is still graced by the well-preserved iconic red barn with white trim.



This early 1900s 26 x 48 gambrel-roofed barn with a 26 x 12 lean-to has been in the MacKenzie-Langenderfer family since 1927.

Displayed inside are nostalgic farm artifacts commemorating family heritage.

Over the past 20 years all of the restorations have been Do-It-Yourself projects, including new stonework on the concrete foundation, new barn siding, priming and painting, re-roofing the lean-to section of the barn, and building new steps to access the lofts. The former horse barn area now serves as a tool room, machinery storage area and workshop. The barn also has an event room for family gatherings.

"All our projects of the barn, home and other buildings have been a true labor of love," says Virginia. "We realize how important this barn and farm has been to all our generations, and we plan to continue to maintain them to preserve our awesome heritage. Our family is truly blessed."



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Share, reuse, recycle this newsletter

MBPN Needs You! Share Your Time and Talents to Grow MBPN.

MBPN is improving how we do business, and we need your help! Upgrading our website (www.mibarn.net) is also making it possible for MBPN to keep membership records more effectively and communicate with members. Investigating an endowment fund is pointing out the need for more and better communications with members and others. Being a state-wide organization is very different than being a community group—connections are not as easy, and yet they are critical to spreading the word and feeling a part of the cause!

MBPN is seeking more member engagement. What are your skills – experience – abilities? We could use your help! Join us with some committee work – and get to know us – maybe you would like to be a board member! Here is where you can help. In all of these examples MBPN has experienced folks who will mentor new volunteers as they learn these tasks.

- **ARTICLES** Draft copy for the website, print newsletter and e-news messages (don't worry; we'll help edit!). Help MBPN reach out to other organizations and state-wide press to grow our visibility.
- **ASSESS BARN IN MI** Assist the Technical Team doing assessments of barns-in-need for owners. Do you have construction knowledge? This work is based on an overview training with our "Barn School" program and checklist.
- **CALENDAR** Work with the annual calendar project – identifying barns, keeping records, and mailing/distribution of calendars.
- **MEMBERSHIP** Assist the Membership Committee in keeping the membership database up to date and recruiting new members.
- **YOUTH ENGAGEMENT** Teamwork & Timbers ¼ size barn model provides youth (of all ages) with a real experience and understanding of traditional barns. Presenters are needed to work with youth. Drivers are needed to transport the T&T trailer to and from program sites.
- **CONFERENCE, TOURS & WORKSHOPS** Work with the program committee organizing and implementing the annual conference and regional barn tours. A specific need is for someone or a small team to coordinate a Fall 2021 barn tour.
- **PROMOTIONAL ITEMS** Maintain an inventory of promotional items and work with a budget to obtain items and make sure information on them appears on our website. (Check out the 'store' at www.mibarn.net).
- **SOCIAL MEDIA** Help us spread the word and be present in these 'younger' venues.
- **ENDOWMENT & FINANCE** Do you have experience with campaigns or recordkeeping?

Interested? Send a note or email to info@mibarn.net and tell us about you and your interests! Thanks!

—Julie Avery, MBPN Vice President