



MI BARN

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



Fall colors frame a structure in the Pioneer Log Village



Board member Tammis Donaldson in front of the Octagon Barn Museum in Gagetown



Secret Sky Art Barn in Kinde



Pioneer Log Village barn in Bad Axe

Photos by Tammis Donaldson

MBPN Adapts (Creatively) to the Pandemic

As all of us deal with the need to social distance and to be safe during challenging times, the Michigan Barn Preservation Network is being proactive in order to further its continuing mission of “promoting appreciation, preservation, and rehabilitation of Michigan barns, farmsteads, and rural communities.”

Probably the most exciting effort along these lines is a prototype drive-by tour of barns in Michigan’s Thumb. Board Secretary Stephanie White, who spear-

The Map-N-Tour app is easy to use.



headed the effort, describes the program in the article below. On another front, our showcase program—the annual Barn of the Year Awards—will also take place this year, despite the potential for restricted in-person gatherings in the coming weeks and months. Later in the newsletter, MBPN Awards Chair Keith Anderson outlines the process and timetable for the 2021 Awards.

Finally, now more than ever, we need your financial support. Please take this opportunity to “re-up” your MBPN membership for 2021, as we urge later in the newsletter. Can you consider becoming a Cupola, life-time supporter and thereby helping us build our endowment? Thank you in advance for your continued generous support. We can’t do it without you!

—Keith Kehlbeck, Communications Chair



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with your smart
phone and visit the
MBPN website!



Photo provided by Keith Anderson

The Buck Family Barn of Ludington, Michigan

Barn of the Year Applications Now Being Accepted

The beautiful barn pictured here became the 90th historic Michigan barn recognized by MBPN over the past quarter-century when it was one of six to receive the coveted Barn of the Year Award for 2020 earlier this year. Each year, one or more barns, and their owners, have been recognized for their efforts in preserving one of these icons of Michigan's agricultural heritage. In order for your barn to become #91, you need to go to mibarn.net and download the 5-page application information (or call or email for a hard copy to be mailed to you). Complete instructions on the information and photos we need to consider your barn are found within the application. Don't wait. Soon, winter's hard grip will envelop our state. Your best photos may better be captured before the relentless snow buries all that is green.

Application Period for 2021

There will be a three-month period for accepting applications for the 2021 Award, beginning **November 1, 2020**. To be considered for the award, applications must be postmarked by **February 1, 2021**. The application form is now 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. The barn you saved can be an inspiration to others throughout the state to also become barn stewards when it is announced and published next spring as **MBPN's Barn of the Year for 2021**.

—Keith Anderson, Chairman Awards Committee



Michigan Barn Preservation Network Kicks-off a Do-It-Yourself, Drive-by Barn Tour into Michigan's Thumb

Do you have “cabin fever” amidst the Covid-19 pandemic? Do you enjoy Michigan's brilliant fall colors and its historic rural landscapes? If so, we have something for you! We are pleased to announce a DIY, drive-by barn and color tour into Michigan's Thumb using a free app—Map-N-Tour—that participants download to their phone or tablet and that can also be viewed on computers.

This pandemic, and the importance of participating in experiences in a safe manner, has the MBPN continuing our annual traditions and exploring new approaches to keep Michigan barns on our radar. The Thumb Tour (under “Story Road Michigan Tour”) will continue to be available into the future and may show us how to incorporate technology into our programs, even after the pandemic.

The tour is comprised of twelve suggested stops that include drive-by private barns and public venues such as museums and markets for participants to get out and explore. Participants can experience the tour at their fingertips through the Map-N-Tour App or on the MBPN website. Descriptions, photographs, directions and near-by sites of interest are provided.

- Take the tour! More information and step-by-step guidance is available at the MBPN's website: <https://mibarn.net/>

Here are some comments from MBPN President Tom Irrer, regarding the Drive-by Barn Tour:

“On Sunday October 18th, Marilyn and I used the Map-N-Tour for the MBPN Thumb Barn/Color Tour. It was easy to use. We had a great time with a late start, but an early start would have been better. Using the satellite map allows us to see farmsteads, fields, and forests, much as in the same way we use the same technology that is so handy in navigating the big city. Like the iceberg, this tour shows only a teaser for all of Michigan's great barns, but we are looking forward to using the Map-N-Tour app for other tours in the future.”

- The Map-N-Tour app is a free download, and there is no charge to participate.
- Check out the possibilities and explore the app at home on your own computer: www.storyroadmichigan.com

As of the date of this newsletter being printed, the MBPN is already garnering media and community attention for this innovative approach to a barn tour. Through the good auspices of Denny Henson of Map-N-Tour, Carl Osentoski, executive director of the Huron County Economic Development Corporation, and Jim McLoskey, director of the Tuscola County EDC and Small Business Development Center, the tour is being covered in various outlets throughout the state and on radio tourism updates. After an area and statewide press release, several news outlets picked up on the story, and near-

by public venues and points of interest have also been notified. The tour is featured on the MBPN web landing page, with a direct link to the Thumb Tour page and details.

It was a scramble, but we are learning! Thanks to everyone, and in particular the entire MBPN Communications and Program teams who have worked to make this happen—and a special thanks to Board member Tammis Donaldson, who was our first “guinea pig,” driving the tour on a bright October day—and enjoying every minute!
—Stephanie White, MBPN Secretary and Thumb Tour Chair

Great Michigan Barns

Those 10 barns not receiving the highest award this year, Barn of the Year, were nonetheless designated as Great Michigan Barns and received a framed “Certificate of Appreciation” along with a year's membership in MBPN.

Diane Schmitigal is very proud of the barn she and her family have owned since it was built in 1900 in the small community of Stalwart in the far eastern UP—now into the fifth generation. The “Hanna” Barn is named after her great-grandfather who founded the community after hacking his way through the wilderness all the way from the Soo in the late 1800s. The barn, not really “restored,” but instead, lovingly maintained for a hundred and twenty years—its weathered-wood look is striking. Diane is pictured here after being presented her certificate which reads “The Michigan Barn Preservation Network Awards this Certificate to The Schmitigal Family in recognition of your efforts to faithfully rehabilitate and maintain The Hanna Barn.” Diane is a member of the Pickford Area Historical Society and a primary driver in having established and operating the Pickford Museum—a wonderful collection of artifacts celebrating the history and culture of the area.

—Keith Anderson, MBPN Awards Chair



The Hanna Barn

Diane Schmitigal receiving MBPN's Certificate of Appreciation for the Hanna Barn at the Pickford, MI Museum in July.

Photos provided by Keith Anderson

President's Message

Barn preservation may be one of the few winners in the current pandemic! With the Covid-19 situation going on, it has been a great year to live in the countryside! As we travel less, we turn our attention to the things that we can do around our farmsteads. We feel a stronger sense of security by remaining in familiar surroundings, and we feel fortunate to be able to care for our individual part of rural history.

As one would expect, the normal activities of MBPN have been affected by the pandemic. Virtual meetings now seem to be the norm, although we all miss the in-person social time spent with fellow barn



Tom Irrer

lovers. We also miss the opportunity of taking a group inside barns to experience the feelings that can be experienced only by being there. It has often been said that a picture is worth a thousand words, but I think that experiencing the grandeur of these country cathedrals is easily worth more than a thousand pictures.

We will get through this pandemic, and we will emerge with a renewed focus on our organizational mission. When we come out of the other side of this global health challenge, I hope that preserving barns and our rural history will be on your short list of priorities.

—Tom Irrer

The State of Barn Preservation in Michigan

Last summer I received a question about the State of Barn Preservation in Michigan from Lorna Baldwin who is with PBS NewsHour in Washington, DC.

In response, I wrote a very positive letter that addresses this important topic.

— Tom Irrer

Dear Lorna: Periodically people ask us how things are going in the Barn Preservation world.

The state of barn preservation in Michigan is alive and well! We prefer to concentrate on the positive things that Michigan barn owners have accomplished. We have found that this inspires others to take a second look at saving their own barn. We view most standing barns as candidates for preservation. Our mission is to inspire action from these barn owners.

Our website at mibarn.net provides all sorts examples of barn preservation. It has a list of barn people including architects, timber frame experts, masons, painters, roofers, and contractors who do metal roofs and siding. Our website and Facebook page showcase the beautiful barns that have had great caretakers. Both feature other barn activities such as the barn quilt trails in Michigan.

Our quarterly newsletter and website show what is happening in the barn world and provide information about past and future events. Each year we have workshops where barn owners can get their hands dirty learning from experts about the finer points of barn repair.

The Barn of the Year program has had over 200 entrants over its history and has saved not only the barns of the entrants but has inspired many more barn owners to save their barns. The awards recognize barns restored for continuing agricultural use as well as those adapted for other purposes such as wedding venues, community centers, museums and residences.

Our annual Barn Calendar, with 4,000 copies, showcases barns and rural structures from all across our great state. All of these are very well maintained and a great source of pride for their owners.

This fall we announced a self-driving barn tour that provides an activity that can be done while social distancing. Look for it on our website. We believe that showcasing successful barn preservation is the best way to convince barn owners that they can do it also. You can help us with your membership contributions. We look forward to your support of Barn Preservation in Michigan.

*Sincerely,
Tom Irrer, MBPN President*



Photos by Joanne Rasmussen

The Rasmussen Barn along the Old Sauk Trail (now Michigan Ave) in Clinton, Michigan



Joanne Rasmussen accepts the Certificate of Appreciation for her efforts in restoring and maintaining the Rasmussen Barn from Keith Anderson, Board Member of the Michigan Barn Preservation Network (September 29, 2020)

Great Michigan Barns—The Rasmussen Barn

As you know, each year we recognize exceptional barns through our Barn of the Year program. While not every barn that is submitted receives the award, all nominations are worthy of recognition for their unique characteristics and history. This barn from the 2020 nominations, certainly one of the oldest still standing, is part of a farmstead whose history is one of the most extensively documented in the state.

Great Barns are not necessarily measured by the amount of heroic efforts or finances poured into making them a spectacle to dazzle us as we drive down their road. Joanne Rasmussen's barn, situated in rural Washtenaw County a short ride south of Ann Arbor, is a rather modest looking 3-bay gable roofed barn, pretty standard for the period and the place where it stands. Joanne has, however, created one of the most detailed historical records of the barn and the farmstead on which it sets as we have seen.

While we don't normally dwell on mastodons as we discuss barns, you can't talk about where this barn stands and why it was built where it was without mentioning those furry, prehistoric creatures. Michigan Avenue (US 12) which traverses Washtenaw County was the route of the Old Sauk Trail. In the early years of Michigan's territorial history, the route of settlement for pioneers seeking new fertile farmland, the Sauk Trail had existed for eons as populations of mastodons traveled to reach the salt springs near Saline.

The Rasmussen Barn is on a 62-acre farm on that now well-traveled avenue that connects Detroit to Chicago. Joanne's parents purchased the farm in 1948, but she has documented the ownership of the property to 1831, six years before Michigan even entered statehood. That original owner, Grove Barker, was one of many "elected" by the township to contribute their time as Overseers of the early Highway to maintain the roadway before governments assumed that responsibility.

Marcus Wood from Vermont was the third owner of the farm and builder of the gable barn, original to the 1850s, as a two-bay English-style with ramp and side doors. One can see the addition of the third bay in the upper floor where the hand hewn posts and beams contrast to the newer 1870s machine sawn posts and beams.

He also built the accompanying Italianate farmhouse.

Ownership of the farmstead changed over its now 170 year history, but the importance of the barn to the farmers who toiled the land is demonstrated by its consistent upkeep so that it continues to stand proudly today. Changes made to enlarge and redefine the uses of the barn can be seen in the wood timbers and siding. Albert Rasmussen bought the farm in 1948. Albert and his wife, Jessie, were the first commuters to own the farm. He drove to Monroe daily and she was a nurse at the University of Michigan Hospital. Sheep, pigs, chickens, geese, rabbits and gardens were used to feed the family. Joanne Rasmussen, their daughter who now owns the farm, counts the 4H Youth Club as an important part of farm life for her.

Joanne is justly proud of the historical record she has compiled and is eager to show the changes and significant restorative repairs that she has overseen over the past 70 years to keep the barn standing and still viable today. Joanne was an early member of MBPN and served on the steering committee that created the famous MBPN Logo.

While the future of these iconic structures throughout our state is at some peril, particularly as we have seen in fast-growing urban areas like Ann Arbor, it is important that the stories of their connection to our origins be known. As Joanne says,

"This barn represents 190 years of visible agricultural history and of the people who had stewardship and built and maintained this farmstead from 1831." Thank you, Joanne Rasmussen.

—Keith Anderson, MBPN Awards Chair

A surviving "out" building on the farmstead is this gable-roofed "two-seater".



One Man's Persistence and Strength Have Given Our Barn a Future

When Tom and I fell in love with and bought an old farmstead north of the village of Bear Lake, we first put our energies into restoration of the house. We were cold and miserable that first winter (if you remember 2013), but the place shaped up pretty quickly, one room at a time. We moved Tom's woodworking tools into a newly renovated tractor shed, and then turned our attention to the old barn. One of our first phone calls was to Steve Stier. I know Tom was secretly hoping Steve would tell us



Photos by Sylvia Duncan
Tom Duncan and his "labor of love"

the building was past saving: holes in the roof, unsafe flooring covered with wet and rotted hay, raccoons and pigeons in residence, iffy supports on the bottom level, etc, etc. A little pole building would have been easy and cheap to erect in its place. All of you in the MBPN can sympathize with the mess we faced and the temptation to call in the bulldozers, but Steve gave us a thorough tour of the structure, pointing out all the positives: hand hewn beams, wide pine siding from virgin trees, how the small milking parlor and the granary would have been used for 120 years, the existing hay track, and the wisdom of someone in the past to do interior cabling to give the building added stability.



Replacing floor boards



An old barn again made new.

As career educators, we both have a blessing...and a curse...to see potential in everybody and everything, so we hired George the Barn Guy and his intrepid crew to put on a new roof after patching didn't work...an unexpected big expense off the bat. Then the dirty, hard work of clearing out the rotten wood and replacing every floor board began. Tom did this whole project singlehandedly, working for months to pry out the old floorboards and replace them with new wood bought, loaded, and hauled, trip after trip, in our pickup truck from a lumberyard up by Lake Leelanau. He shored up the timbers and replaced a number of rotten floor joists, turned the granary into organized dry storage, built a staircase from upstairs to the lower level, restored the wooden windows and added two on the upper level, and repointed the stone on the east side. The overwhelming task Tom started out begrudgingly has become a labor of love for the people who touched these same beams and stones when it was built and respect for the six farm families who have called this land home for 147 years.

Work isn't done on the barn, but the contribution Tom continues to make will ensure it stands for a long, long time.

Tom has figured it out as well as he can with mortar we can buy...and we are satisfied with his progress. There is a lot of repointing to do inside, as well...and down through the years lots of attempts to repair and patch. He and I dug a french drain on the high side (north) in front of the big barn doors that solved a longstanding foundation issue, so we have solved almost all of the emergency issues to keep the barn stable...also added extra supports down below where needed. We had an Amish crew come in and add metal siding on the upper level where the boards were spaced for hay drying because we want to use the building to house organized dry storage and needed to keep the rain and snow out. We like the result. Tom is replacing the old broken and patched windows with other old windows that came from the house. Come visit!

—Sylvia Duncan

Reminder: 2021 MBPN Membership

Join us and support the MBPN's mission!

The new year is almost upon us! Many will welcome turning the page on 2020, which has been a challenging time for all of us. 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 renewed your membership for the coming year, please do so today! An organization like the MBPN doesn't thrive—as we have for more than two decades—without financial and volunteer help.

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 or to give an MBPN membership for the holidays? 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!
The MBPN Board of Directors

Endowment Update: Preserving our Heritage – Investing in our Future

Since our last quarterly reports to the board our MBPN Endowment Fund has increased to a current total of **\$49,497.99**. This balance does not include allocated funds from the September investment gain/loss or recent donations of an additional \$11,000.

Campaign Planning

The committee has agreed to wait until we are past pandemic restrictions on in-person meetings before moving forward with a public endowment campaign. We believe that it is important for MBPN board members to hear directly from consultant John Cauley, on the information, results, and findings of our "feasibility study." Now is

not the time to mount a public campaign.

It is heartening to observe that we are continuing to receive Cupola memberships and endowment donations.

Thanks to our Endowment Committee members, who include current and past board members: Myself, Past-President Brad Brogren, Past Barn of the Year Chair Jerry Damon, Tom Irrer, MBPN President and Past-Treasurer, and Clare Koenigsknecht, Treasurer and Past-President. We look forward to the time when we can get together again and move forward on our planning towards a public campaign.

—Julie Avery, MBPN Vice President and Endowment Chair

Social Media, Website, and E-News Help the MBPN Keep in Touch

During these times, the MBPN Communications Team continues to find new ways to reach out to our membership. Tammis Donaldson and Julie Avery continue their excellent work with Facebook (2,500+ "follow" us on Facebook). Stephanie White heads up our Instagram efforts—sharing photos, gaining followers, and providing a pathway for direct inquiries on "all things barn-related." Webmaster and Editor Marcia Danner has brought new energy and creativity to our website, www.mibarn.net, with added content on the home page and inside pages that address topics such as "Barn Preservation Funding" and "Finding Someone to Fix Your Barn." Past newsletters are also posted on the site, under "Resources."

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Julie Avery has done yeo(w)man's work in providing valuable exposure through our e-news online blasts to members. In 2020, our e-news was given a

facelift, with a new masthead, and we are producing more such blasts in order to "fill the gaps" between print newsletters. Twice in 2020, we also have done an e-news alert to promote programs our readership might be interested in, for example webinars by the National Barn Association (NBA) and the Michigan Historic Preservation Network (MHPN). Internal HubSpot reports show a significant "open" rate of more than 40% among those receiving the e-news blasts—twice the normal rate for most nonprofits. For all of these efforts, we extend many thanks to our dedicated Communications Team: Julie Avery, Marcia Danner, Tammis Donaldson, Stephanie White, and Vera Wiltse!

—Keith Kehlbeck, Newsletter Editor and Communications Chair





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www.mibarn.net

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2021 MBPN Calendars Are Here! Every Barn Has a Great Story...

The 2021 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.

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 as holiday gifts. You won't be sorry!

2021 Calendar Cover Story:

Creston Farms and Home of Buth Family Dairy Farm

Just go barn hunting and you will find great barns, great people and great stories. This will hold true if you happen to find Creston Farms, home of the Buth Family of Comstock Park, Michigan. Turning in the driveway at Creston Farms and seeing these great old barns, strikes you with the rich history of past dairy farms in



Buth Family Dairy Farm

Photo by Tom Irrer

Kent county and across the state. Susan Ayres, a daughter of Anna Buth Campau, now lives in the historic Buth Family home, and she will proudly tell the story of the barns and the Buth families that made them important. It all starts with a story of five Buth brothers who immigrated from the Netherlands in the mid-19th century. All became successful in either dairy farming or milk processing.

—Jim Mulvany, MBPN Calendar Chair

***Stay tuned for an e-news blast about the upcoming
Virtual Barn School 101 launch hosted by the Michigan
Historic Preservation Network on December 10th!***