



2022 Annual Conference and Member Meeting— A Celebration of Michigan Barns

At long last...barn enthusiasts from around Michigan gathered in person for a full day of presentations at the 2022 Annual Conference and Meeting on Saturday, March 5th at the Kellogg Hotel and Conference Center in East Lansing, Michigan!

The membership business meeting included a testimonial about the MBPN Endowment fund by past president Brad Brogren (see article on page 7). The business meeting also included Membership Chair and founding member Vera Wiltse's update on the Michigan Barn and Farmstead Survey (see article on page 7.) Vera demonstrated how the program works and encouraged members to get involved locally.



Photo by Keith Kehlbeck

President Tom Irrer presents the President's Award to longtime MBPN stalwart, Dan Creyts

Before the business meeting adjourned, MBPN president Tom Irrer took a point of personal privilege to present a well-deserved President's Award to long-time MBPN activist and past board member, Dan Creyts (see photo below).

The day's keynote presentation by Perry Neumann and Tonya Boening (and family) recounted the ambitious restoration of the Yellow Horse Barn, which the family purchased in 2017.

Richard Beringer from the Romeo Historical Society and Jana Bullock, organizer of the 2021 Hadley Homestead Harvest Day farm hop, told attendees the "ins and outs" of how their barn tours were organized. Some excerpts from their presentations are featured on page 3.

A delicious lunch was followed by the traditional live auction. As usual, a nice number of contributions to the MBPN were received, and participants took home books, farm implements, and a model barn.

A highlight of the day was the presentation of the 2022 Barn of the Year Award recipients. Our premier program recognizing Michigan's exceptional barns is now in its 27th year! Keith Anderson, MBPN Awards Chair, announced the entries receiving the Barn of the Year designation for 2022. Keith welcomed Award recipient owners who told stories behind their individual barns (see pages 3 and 4).

The afternoon finished with two outstanding presentations: Steve Stier, a past MBPN president, educator, barn

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President's Message

We lost our dear friend, Jim Mulvany, on Good Friday morning. Jim joined the Michigan Barn Preservation Network Board of Directors in 2017 and immediately used his love of history, photography, and barns to put together our barn calendar for the last four years.

He told me that he just liked to drive country roads enjoying well-kept farmsteads. When he came upon an exceptional farmstead, he would stop at the house and compliment the owners on their well-preserved buildings. After explaining his affiliation with the MBPN, he would ask the owners for permission to take pictures of their barn for use in our newsletter or on our barn calendar. Frequently, the owners would invite Jim into the house and explain the history of their farm. Jim really enjoyed hearing the history of many farm families. Often, Jim was not content with the first pictures that he took and would revisit the farm to catch the barn in perfect light for a great picture.

We have different levels of membership in the Michigan Barn Preservation Network, with the Cupola lifetime membership being the highest level. Cupola membership money is placed in our endowment at the Capital Region Community Foundation to provide perpetual earnings for the activities of MBPN. A Cupola membership also provides recognition to those members forever. We are establishing a Cupola membership for Jim Mulvany to honor the work that he has done for the MBPN, and especially for our great calendar. This way, Jim will always be remembered by the organization. Contributions to honor Jim may be sent to MBPN by mail or PayPal.

—Tom Irrer



Tom Irrer



IN MEMORIAM

James E. Mulvany, age 88, of Mason, MI, passed away with his family by his side on Good Friday, April 15, 2022.

Jim grew up on his family farm and developed a love for agriculture. After graduating from Bellevue High School, Jim went on to study agriculture at Michigan Agricultural College. He graduated from Michigan State University in 1955 and obtained a Master's in Agricultural Economics in 1959. Jim held many positions in agricultural economics, including extension agent and director, and he retired after 30 years of service to Michigan State University as the manager of Telfarm.

After retiring, Jim developed a strong interest in studying the history of Michigan barns and architecture. He was an instrumental member of the MBPN, especially in photographing barns around the state for the annual calendar and teaching others about the history and importance of Michigan's barns to various groups around the state. His daughter Cheryl noted, "You at the MBPN were all such a big part of his life in recent years!" Jim's great sense of humor and gift of storytelling—and his contributions to the success of the MBPN—will be missed.



Richard Beringer

"Over the last 40 years, we have been giving home tours. About a decade ago, we decided barns are also part of the architecture of the area, and maybe we ought to celebrate these old barns because we still have a bit of a farming community just a little north of us.

The people go out in their private car and they see a site, and on that site, they

might see two, three, four, five outbuildings. It could be barns, it could be all kinds of farm properties. I'm estimating that we have celebrated in a neighborhood of about 60 sites over the eight years and probably at least 120 structures in the eight years. What did it do? It did two things. It made people appreciate the barns in their community, and two, it helped the owners to appreciate what they had.

We're just searching constantly (for barns to include in tours). I put a sign on the side of the car on the side that most people would see that says, 'Barn tour.' If no one's home, we leave brochures and we try to return. Then, once you convince somebody to let several hundred people into their house or their barn, which is kind of a good sales job, it's scary for them. We work with them constantly, I'm always on the phone with them saying, 'Hey, listen, this is going to happen. Can we come over and talk?' We want to constantly, at least once a month, talk with them and reassure them.

Another trick I use is as soon as I've got a list of owners, I prepare a poster and I deliver it to their house as early as possible before the tour. I want them to put this laminated poster on their refrigerator or somewhere in their kitchen so they will not forget that they are on tour in September the third Saturday.

On the day of the tour, visitors drive their own car, they've got GPS, so they've got the address, and they've got a map. We know people are people, mistakes can happen, so we have a troubleshooter that goes out and patrols the area. If there's trouble, if there's trouble, we send a crew out there to solve the problem. We have a pre-tour also, that's a real savior because people could be too relaxed about this, and so five days before we give a pre-tour, only we bring 20 people there from all of our museums, a lot of our museum members.

We constantly go in these barns in March or April and see a mess, and then on the day of the tour, you wouldn't believe it. They've got displays up, photographs, they've got everything in place, and they've got everything swept out. It's like we lit the fire for

them and they say, 'Wow, I have something really valuable here.' We know that we're being successful in encouraging barn preservation. We know the people in the community are now enjoying that old barn."

Jana Bullock:

"Ours was a self-guided tour. We provided a map that had a description of all of the different properties, how to get there, and a little bit of information before they got there.



All of our hosts were lovely; they typically had family members out there with them and I think were so honored and proud to be able to show off their homes and their barns. We kept our inaugural event at a very nominal cost. The goal was not to raise money; it was to get people out.

The other thing I would say is reach out to service groups. We talked with our local fire department that was looking to restore a

property, and we said, 'Listen, we'd love for you to be a part of this. One of the goals of our event is to support community endeavors if we raise any money.' And those firefighters, boy, can they sell tickets! Anytime you can partner with groups—4-H, Boy and Girl Scouts, for example—their volunteers will come out and help be on-site and give tours or help direct traffic, and help create a buzz.

Our first year, probably 70 local businesses gave us things for our swag bag, and every participant or carload got a bag that was donated. That was a marketing opportunity for all of those local businesses. Our attendees were thrilled when they showed up and got this wonderful bag of goodies. Come up with a budget and a marketing game plan; use postings on social media. Another thing that was probably the most successful approach was going on radio. Go to the Lions Club, to Rotary meetings, and talk about the event. There's lots of ways to promote your event without spending a lot on an ad budget.

In our small town, we set our sights small, but we ended up having approximately 370 people (and 170 cars) on our first tour. We also added members to the Historical Society as a result. Most importantly, we raised awareness in our community and got people talking again about old barns, renovation, and restoration. We're hoping through our event that we contributed in some small way to the great cause of preservation and restoration...like this great organization (the MBPN) here today!"

Annual Conference (continued from page 1)

consultant and preservationist, showed us Dutch style barns in West Michigan (Ottawa and Allegan counties) and discussed their cultural heritage, architecture and history. Using examples from his past barn rehabilitation work, MBPN Treasurer and past president Clare Koenigsknecht explained how the Network tries to help barn lovers answer the question, "Can this barn be saved?"

After a day filled with information, exhortation, enthusiasm, and gratitude, the multitude of MBPN supporters left for home—re-energized for the tasks at hand: promoting the appreciation, preservation, and rehabilitation of Michigan barns, farmsteads, and rural communities.

—Keith Kehlbeck, MBPN Communications Chair and Newsletter Editor



As usual, the live auction proved a valuable benefit to the conference bottom line. The scale barn model was a popular bidding item.

Photos by Keith Kehlbeck

101 Barns: Awards Program Reaches Milestone

Six barns, including two complete farmsteads, took top honors at the Michigan Barn Preservation Network's Annual Conference held March 5, 2022, bringing the number of "Barn of the Year" designations in the program's 27-year history to 101.

The program recognizes preserved Michigan barns of the state's great agricultural past that have survived and continue to thrive either in their original roles or in use for other purposes.

Thanks to the 2022 Barn of the Year Committee: Ina Hanel, Keith Kehlbeck, Mara Lancaster, Tom Nehil, Rose Putnam, Jeff

Thompson, Nichole VanBlaricum, Keith Anderson. These volunteers spent time examining applications, looking at narratives and pictures, working with spreadsheets, and helping us evaluate all of the outstanding barns submitted for recognition. Special thanks to Mara Lancaster for her work in organizing and preparing all the documents for review by the committee and for coordinating the compilation of feedback from the committee.

—Keith Anderson, MBPN Awards Committee Chair

2022 Barn of the Year Winners

American Boy Farms Barn—Cheboygan, MI

Owners—Toni & Josh Johnson

This Gothic-style barn with the unique arched roof was built in the early 1940s and was recently acquired by the Great-Granddaughter of the builder. Last year, the barn's odyssey continued with a 2-mile journey to a new location. Though slated for "dozing" by the previous owner, Toni Johnson's stubborn persistence, along with the cooperation of barn movers, utility contractors, the electric and cable companies and dedicated family members all combining to make this move happen. The giant, hand-crafted American flag hung from the gable end of the barn is an inspiration to the fourth generation's "labor of love" in saving this barn for the 5th and 6th generations of the family.



Weisberg Barn—Milford MI

Owners- Matthew & Joan Weisberg

Thought to date back to the 1870s, this barn actually resides within the village limits of one of SE Michigan's upscale communities. Though the "city" couple who acquired the old house and barn in 2014 had little interest in preserving the barn, over time the idea of preserving it grew on them. A complete rehabilitation, including restoration of its original 'barn red' paint and cupola was under the direction of professional barn restorer JDS Historical. Mark Weisberg says that he no longer views himself as the owner of the property, but rather as "the current 'caretaker,' during the fleeting moment of history that my family lives here. I truly believe the property has a life of its own."

Griffin Barn—Ogemaw County Fair Grounds, West Branch, MI

Donated by Gob Griffin, Jr. in honor of his father

This barn involves an inspirational story of a son dedicating the family's preserved and relocated barn to his recently-deceased father. Originally built in the early 1900s, the 60' x 40' gable-roofed bank barn was acquired by the family in 1982. Only last year, the condition of the barn and its unfavorable location led the son to determine that disassembling, relocating and re-assembling the barn made the most sense. The entire transformation—dismantled, repaired, transported, re-erected—led to a new showpiece relocated and donated to the Ogemaw County Fair Association where it now resides on the fairgrounds in West Branch, and dedicated to the memory of Bob Griffin of Griffin Beverage of West Branch.





The Olde Stone Porch Barn—Ionia, MI

Owners—the Conley Family—Warren, Sharon and Kiel

This barn involves another inspiring story of an owner not particularly interested in a barn, but acquiring one and becoming passionate about saving it, rehabilitating it, and preserving it for future generations. Built in two phases, the earliest in the 1850s and the latest in the 1880s, it had fallen on hard times by the time the current owners acquired this gable-roofed barn (and its unique brick & granite stone house) in 2021. The Conleys bought the property with the intent to do basic fixes to the house and barn and then resell it. Once renovation began, however, they “fell in love with the old barn.” After a substantial investment, the restored barn will begin its new life during this year’s season as a wedding barn venue. “The barn is now in a condition to last for generations to come, and we are very pleased to have been a part of saving this old barn”—glowing words from Warren Conley

Historic Farmstead Preservation Award

Rochester Hills Museum at Van Hoosen Farm— Rochester Hills, MI

Patrick McKay, Museum Manager

This is a story of a member of the fifth generation of the Van Hoosen Family who built an entire dairy operation and farmed it from 1927 until 1954 employing scientific techniques and raising pure bred Holsteins cows. At her death in 1972, Dr. Sarah Van Hoosen Jones willed her entire farm to MSU, which unfortunately re-sold it to private developers 7 years later. Ten years later, the City of Rochester Hills re-acquired the farmstead and over a 15-year period, initiated a far-sighted plan for creating a local museum complex, with the centerpiece of that museum the farm’s Dairy Barn, built in 1927 of glazed block including its featured two glazed block silos. Today, over 60,000 guests per year visit this museum which includes the entire restored farmstead’s multiple buildings (calf barn, milk house, bull barn and farmhouse). MBPN featured the barns and its story on the cover of its 2022 Barn Calendar. The Van Hoosen Museum was presented the *2022 Historic Farmstead Preservation Award*.



Historic Farmstead Preservation Award

Maxwell Farms—Macomb County, Washington, MI

Owners—Drs. Case and Peg Hoonhout

The Maxwell Farms included in its history a period from 1931 to 1948 the operation of a beautiful Grade A dairy with milk pasteurized and bottled on site. Succeeding owners continued a bulk milk dairy operation, but the buildings declined over the next 25 years. Then along came our heroes... the two brick barns, a farmhouse and all the outbuildings were in “a very sad state of repair and needed a lot of work” when a veterinarian couple finally succeeded in acquiring the farm in 1982. Over the succeeding 40 years, the Hoonhouts worked diligently to rehabilitate and re-purpose the Maxwell Farms—including converting one of the barns into their home (picture a silo bedroom) and the other into their veterinary clinic (picture a silo operating room). The Hoonhouts were presented the *2022 Historic Farmstead Preservation Award* as its owners and stewards.

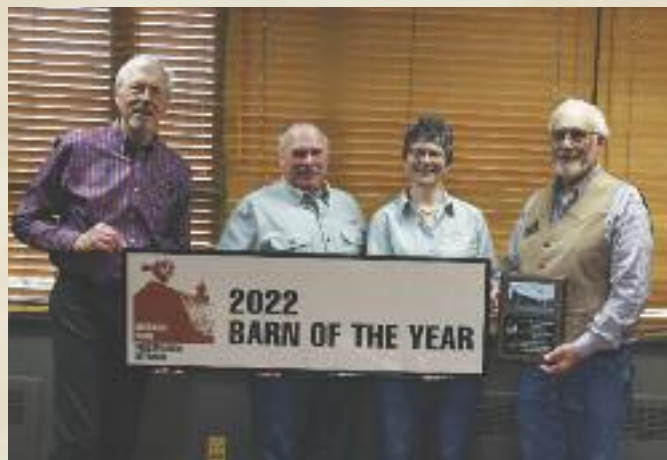
Note: All nominees for Barn of the Year Award are worthy of recognition. The remaining 8 nominated barns were declared “Great Michigan Barns”. Each received a framed *Certificate of Appreciation* for their preservation efforts and complimentary membership in the Michigan Barn Preservation Network.



Presentation of the Barn of the Year Award to the Johnson Family for their American Boy Farms Barn is (L-R) Awards Committee Chair Keith Anderson, President Tom Irrer, Toni & Josh Johnson along with their children Olive and Waylon.



Being presented the Barn of the Year Award for the Weisberg Barn are (L-R), President Tom Irrer, the barn's restorers Lori & Dean Sutton, and its owners Matt & Joan Weisberg, and Awards Committee Chairman Keith Anderson.



Presenting the Barn of the Year Award to the Conley Family for their work on rescuing the Old Stone Porch Barn are (L-R) Keith Anderson, Awards Committee Chairman, Warren & Sharon Conley, and President Tom Irrer.



Shown (L-R) with the Historic Farmstead Preservation Award presented to the Rochester Hills Museum at Van Hoosen Farm are Keith Anderson, Awards Committee Chairman, Patrick McKay, Museum Manager, President Tom Irrer and Kris Ismail.



Presenting the Award for Historic Farmstead Preservation for the Maxwell Farm are (far left) Keith Anderson, Awards Committee Chairman and (far right) President Tom Irrer. Receiving the Award are its owners and long-time stewards, (left and right) Dr. Case and Mrs. Peg Hoonhout



Photo by Jim Mulvany

Jeff and Michelle Thompson were one of five recipients of last year's Award for their Concordia Hills Barn (Jeff served on the Barn of the Year Committee this year). Pictured are Jeff and Michelle as they receive their Award on a beautiful Spring day last May in front of their preserved barn. The lilacs provided a beautiful and aromatic backdrop.

What is the Future of Michigan Barns?

All of us barn lovers today are concerned about and hope to preserve the dwindling number of barns in our great state. But what happens down the road when many

of us will not be around to fight for the remaining barns? Who will carry out the mission of MBPN? These are questions we don't usually ask, but which warrant consideration.

Let me start my story by saying what MBPN means to me and why the organization must thrive into the future. We purchased our Okemos farmstead with a barn, granary, and



Brad Brogren

chicken coop in 1993. I had wanted a barn, but now that I had one, I knew little about maintaining it. The internet was in its infancy and offered little help. Finally, I came upon the Michigan Barn Preservation Network and started attending conferences, barn tours, and workshops. I learned about timber, plank and balloon framing, gambrel, gable, and hip roofs, paint and stains, plus stone, block and concrete foundations. More importantly, I became friends with a great group of barn lovers, linking me up with a wealth of knowledge. In return for all of this knowledge, I agreed to serve on the Board and eventually became Board President. Currently, I serve on the MBPN Endowment Committee.

My love of barns continues to this day. But how can I (or we) assure interest in barns for coming generations? Short of buying all our kids and grandkids life memberships in MBPN (which may not be a bad idea), the answer lies in funding the Michigan Barn Preservation Network Endowment Fund. To me, this fund will assure that the MBPN exists into perpetuity. While the MBPN Board of Directors has yet to define the fund's use, we can all be assured its use will be to fulfill our mission.

Our endowment fund at the Capital Region Community Foundation began when the Board decided to invest Cupola Membership proceeds, and the fund has grown in a few years to over \$100,000. We are currently at the start of our endowment campaign and will be asking the membership and corporate sponsors to make a pledge to the endowment. My wife and I have made ours. I hope you can do the same to assure the future of the MBPN and the preservation of Michigan Barns.

—Brad Brogren, Past MBPN Board President

Michigan Barn and Farmstead Survey

MSU's MATRIX, the Center for Digital Humanities and Social Sciences, has implemented a new format for this index and documentation of Michigan's barns. The Survey has evolved tremendously in the last five years, working with MATRIX, which is a group that does web programming development for the university and other organizations. I am so happy to be able to say that it's up and working.



Vera Wiltse

Dating back to the early 1990s, the original idea for the project began as a project for the MSU Museum and 4-H. Eventually, the MBPN took on the survey in order to continue it, and we support it today. The manual is online and it is an excellent teaching tool, especially for our younger generation—to teach them what happened on our farms fifty years or more ago. Identifying the types of buildings on the farm and uploading pictures on a tablet or computer is really quite simple. If you have a group of people (a historical society group, for example) that really wants to do a systematic survey of their area, it can be a wonderful opportunity to connect with folks and to expand our documentation of our barns and farmsteads throughout the state. We've been at this for a while, but we need your help to continue to build on this important work. If you have questions or are interested in working on the Survey in your area, please email vera@wiltse.com.

—Vera Wiltse, MBPN Membership Chair



MBPN Welcomes a New Board Member

The Network is pleased to announce the addition of a new Board member, Danielle Schrader, who is taking the place of Tamis Donaldson, who remains involved through her participation in the Technical and Communications Committees.

Danielle brings a wealth of talent and energy to the Board. In her own words, she describes her professional and personal journey(s) and the path that has brought her to us:



Danielle Schrader

"I moved back to Michigan after living in Florida for six years. Throughout my time in Florida, I was the co-founder and lead environmental educator at Laurel Oak Nature School. This experience allowed me to acquire certifications in environmental education, gain experience in event planning, and to get my feet wet in grant writing.

In the summer of 2017, I was fortunate to have spent five

months in Montana managing and overseeing a Lions Club youth camp. In the course of overseeing the youth camp, my passion for environmental stewardship continued to expand, and this led me to numerous short-term volunteer opportunities.

Through these experiences, I discovered my passion for networking, nonprofit management, and event coordination. After moving back to Michigan in 2018, I met my now husband and planted roots in Fowler, where we are raising our two young daughters. I work full-time as a marketing liaison for a Fortune 500 healthcare company. In our spare time, my husband and I established the Fowler Village Market. Our seasonal market hosts a variety of local farmers and crafters and will be kicking off its third season in May."

The MBPN welcomes Danielle to the Board, and we look forward to the valuable contributions we know that she will bring to our organization!

—Keith Kehlbeck, MBPN Communications Chair and Newsletter Editor



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Save the Date(s)!

The MBPN is planning a **Barn Tour in Northeast Michigan** on October 15, 2022. Barring another Covid surge, we'll have a reception and showing of the movie *The Barn Raisers* on Friday the 14th at the Alpena Library and the Barn Tour on the 15th. More details will be announced in an upcoming MBPN e-news. Additionally, details will be posted on our website (mibarn.net) and will be discussed in more detail in the next Newsletter. Mark your calendars now for what should be a great event during fall color season!

—Steve Stier

Sleeping Bear Dunes will again be hosting its successful **barn restoration workshop** June 21-24th (**Tuesday – Friday**) at the Ole Olson farm five (5) miles north of Glen Arbor, Michigan on M-22. This year marks the 27th year that Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore has hosted and developed this series of “hands-on” workshops which started in 1997. The Park maintenance staff is providing the skilled labor to put on this workshop. The project provides a good means to spread out the group over a large number of structures of various sizes.

The workshop will address repairing the whole farmstead—the large barn floor, as well as a variety of outbuildings from sheds, rabbit hutches, to chicken coops and a granary. This is a good workshop for families and novice carpenters, as well as more seasoned carpenters. A wide selection to keep everyone interested and socially

distant if needed in smaller groups.

This workshop is again able to provide a unique experience for all participants with park staff who will show you how to make the repairs with the materials and tools provided.

The workshop begins on site at 9:00 a.m. There is no cost to participants. Participants should wear boots, gloves, and bring a sack lunch for each day that they attend. Participants can sign up for any number of days.

Workers are not required to be skilled in the building trades, though experience will be helpful and appreciated. The purpose of the workshop is to teach the techniques and train owners and those interested how to do restoration work on timber and frame structures.

Camping will be allowed on site at the Ole Olsen Barn during the barn workshop for all registered participants interested in doing so. Amenities will be provided on site, including access to showers at park campgrounds.

Interested parties should contact the park historical architect, Kimberly Mann (231) 326-4771, to sign up for the workshop. To sign up by email: kimberly_mann@nps.gov

So organizers can determine an approximate number of participants please call or email your intent to participate by June 12, 2022. (If you need extra time, remember late registration is always accepted. Day of the workshop drop-ins and observers are also welcome.)

—Kimberly Mann