



Summer/Fall 2022 - No. 98

# MI BARN

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



Photo by Julie Avery

*Fall is a many-splendored season in Michigan, particularly if you're a wild turkey touring an historic barn framed by trees in glorious color... Ben's Barn — Ben Brown has a small organic farm with turkeys, cattle, a few pigs and produce in Leelanau County.*

## Join Us For a Fall Barn and Color Tour on October 14-15th!

Northeast Michigan is a beautiful place in the fall—and there's no better time to explore our rural heritage and to see Michigan barns up close! The Michigan Barn Preservation Network is pleased to once again be doing one of its acclaimed Michigan Barn Tours, this time in "The Other Up North" on Saturday, October 15th. Join us for a day of touring with fellow barn enthusiasts and visit with owners at the featured sites.

You'll learn about barn styles and architecture, timber framing and other traditional construction methods as we explore the current use of old barns and the potential for saving or repurposing traditional structures.

And if you are wondering how to fix up your barn, you can get plenty of ideas on our barn tours. Many old barns have the

same problem areas and you can talk to builders, preservationists, and barn owners who have solved these problems.

The October barn tour begins with a showing and discussion of the critically-acclaimed film *The Barn Raisers* at the Alpena County George N. Fletcher Public Library at 6 pm on Friday, Oct. 14th.

Alpena is the starting point for the MBPN's all-day bus barn tour on Saturday, October 15th in Alcona, Alpena, and Presque Isle counties bordering Lake Huron on the east side of northern Michigan.

The itinerary features a variety of barn styles and examples of historical preservation for either agricultural or adaptive uses. Highlights include stops at AJ's Berry Farm and the Elowsky Grist Mill.

*registration info on page 2, story continued on page 3*



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## President's Message

### Home is where the barn is...

People are trying to resume a more normal life now that the Covid pandemic seems less severe. For many, that means more travel. For example, riverboat cruises have become a popular way to explore the world and its history.

For members of the MBPN—and for barn enthusiasts generally—travel sometimes can be focused on Michigan's rural heritage. In October, you'll have an opportunity to venture forth and enjoy one of our always-popular barn tours, this time in "The Other Up North" near Alpena. We hope that you'll take advantage of the more open travel situation by joining us for a showing of the critically-acclaimed movie, *The Barn Raisers*, and a celebratory tour of area barns described elsewhere in this newsletter and on our website at [www.mibarn.net](http://www.mibarn.net).

Some of our members also happen to own a piece of rural history—an historic barn. For these lucky souls, preserving that history often gives more satisfaction than traveling the world to get glimpses of other peoples' histories. If you happen to own a piece of history, we urge you to preserve it for future generations. You are the only one who can pass it on. Like many of life's adventures, tackling a preservation project is fraught with many unknowns. Plan carefully, and you will be rewarded with a sense of accomplishment and pride for the rest of your life. Your legacy is where your barn is. These preservation efforts will greatly be appreciated by future generations.

Finally, another method of investing in preserving our rural heritage is to give serious thought to participating in the Michigan Barn Preservation Endowment Fund. The interest money earned from this fund will be used by our organization to continue our rural preservation efforts forever.

Enjoy the rest of our beautiful Michigan summer and the upcoming fall.

—Tom Irrer



Tom Irrer

## Barn Tour Registration

We look forward to having a full bus for the Barn and Color Tour on Saturday, October 15th. Please register as soon as possible in order to secure your spot on the tour (bus capacity is limited to 56 spots). Registrations will be "first come, first served" in order of receipt.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Seats on the tour bus for the Saturday tour (@ \$60 per seat\*)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Number of attendees for Friday evening's showing of *The Barn Raisers*. Please RSVP to aid in facility preparation.

\*includes box lunch

Please make checks payable to "MBPN" and remit to:

Michigan Barn Preservation Network  
P.O. Box 614  
Mt. Pleasant, MI 48804-0614

Registration and payment may also be made on our website ([www.mibarn.net](http://www.mibarn.net)) using PayPal.

Thanks to our sponsor Griffin Beverage Company who will be supplying soft drinks for the film and tour.

We are looking forward to having you join us on the side of the state known as the *Sunrise Side*, as well as the *Other Up North*!

[www.mibarn.net](http://www.mibarn.net)



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



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Photos provided by AJ's Berry Farm and Julie Avery

AJ's Berry Farm and pumpkin patch near Alpena and Elowsky Grist Mill on the north branch of the Thunder Bay River are among the stops on the all-day bus tour planned for Saturday, Oct. 15th.

**AJ's Berry Farm**, 15 miles west of Alpena on M-32, is a popular U-pick site and pre-picked farm market for seasonal fruits and vegetables as well as maple syrup, jams, and baked goods. Autumn activities include the corn maze, pumpkin launch, and hayrides. AJ's has been in operation since 1997 when AJ, at the age of 14, had a passion for farming. He started out with 1/4 acre of strawberries and a lot of faith. Since then, the farm has expanded to include, raspberries, pumpkins, squash, a variety of seasonal fruits and vegetables, an on-farm market.

**Elowsky Grist Mill**, just south of Posen in Presque Isle County, is on the property of Hemlock Hills at Mill Pond event venue. Inside, you'll see 150 years of grist milling history, with generations of equipment used to convert the grain grown on local farmland into flour. The Elowsky Grist Mill has been operating on the North Branch of the Thunder Bay river since 1870. The mill incorporated many technological advances investing in two modern Leffel turbines which dramatically improved efficiency. A young Thomas Edison helped create a water powered generator and full lighting for the mill, years ahead of its time. By the 1900s, the mill operated 24 hours a day. The Mill weathered many changes, and the flood of 1923 washed the dam away. Still, the Mill operated into the 1950s then part-time until 1963 when Emil Elowsky sold the property. Today the Mill has been renovated with most of the original equipment in place and is open for tours by special arrangement—such as the MBPN's fall barn tour!

Over the years, many a beautiful spring or fall day has been spent touring with members and barn enthusiasts. In 2018, the Network visited mid-Michigan for a bus tour of Clinton and Ionia Counties. In 2019, it was a spring tour in Washtenaw County near Ann Arbor. And, of course, during the pandemic, we created a Fall Color Tour in Michigan's Thumb—an anytime, self-driving tour with the "Map-N-Tour"

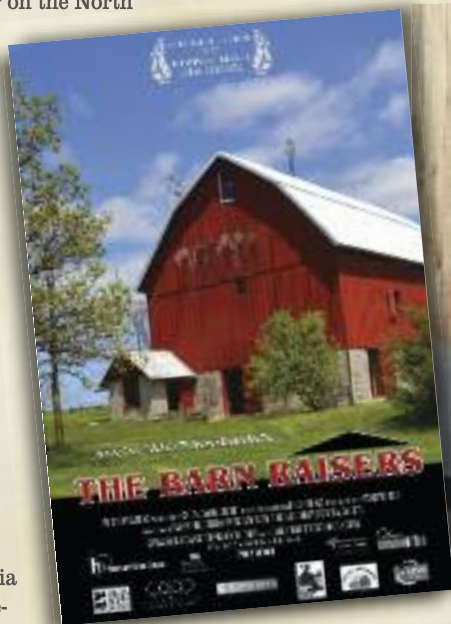
phone app serving as your guide and featuring 12 rural sites (working, quilt, and art barns, as well as museums and a farmers market).

The "Other Up North" tour is one more in a long line of tours for which the MBPN has become known. Board members Richard Harvey and Steve Stier visited Alpena to scout locations for the tour. You'll want to join us to see what they discovered...

Please plan to join us for this celebratory weekend of Michigan barn appreciation!

MBPN membership gives you priority registration for barn bus tours. Visit our website at [www.mibarn.net](http://www.mibarn.net) for membership information (and other great resources for barn lovers).

—Keith Kehlbeck, MBPN Communications Chair and Newsletter Editor



Photos courtesy of The Barn Raisers.

The critically-acclaimed movie, *The Barn Raisers*, included participation by several Michiganders. The movie will be shown to kick off our fall tour on Friday, October 14th in Alpena."



# Bowne Township Finds a Creative Way to Preserve a Barn...as a Museum!

What do you do when you have an historic barn and are not sure how to preserve it? Bowne Township, a civil township of Kent County with a population of a little over 3,000 located about 20 miles southeast of the city of Grand Rapids, has found a way—by creating a museum of agricultural history.

The Bowne Township Historical Commission, partnering with the Township, is endeavoring to create a unique agricultural history museum to highlight the area's rich agricultural history and to enlighten visitors of the industry's vital importance in our modern world.

The centerpiece of this new historical treasure for Bowne Township and the surrounding areas is a relocated circa 1900 barn. This museum will be a drive-through barn with numerous agricultural exhibits on display. The barn will also feature an enclosed educational room to inform groups about the agricultural history of the area. It will be located next to the current museum and township offices. The museum is part of the Tri-River Historical Museum Network, and as such will attract visitors from all over Michigan.

The museum will work closely with local youth-focused groups to ensure maximum attendance, and it will also host special events throughout the year to encourage visitors to view its permanent and rotating exhibits. To ensure the future success and upkeep of the new museum, a portion of the funds raised will be used to begin an endowment fund for the operations of the museum. Karen Hendrick, Bowne Township Clerk, reports that the Commission has already received two large in-kind donations to begin the project—a significant lot of antique farming equipment and implements, as well as the barn itself for use as the museum structure.

The MBPN has played an important role in encouraging this ambitious project. MBPN Vice-President Julie Avery and Technical Chair Steve Stier began speaking to Kim Culbertson about the



project nearly two years ago. Steve and Kim explored what to look for in a structure and discussed the basic stages of development. Past President Clare Koenigsknecht, who has experience with this type of project, reviewed two potential barns. In her letter of support for the project, Julie Avery noted that the partnership between the Historical Commission and the Township "is remarkable in many ways...(and) speaks of longevity and commitment. Adaptive re-use of a barn reflects their interest in building on symbols of the past to illustrate their history and culture, to educate (and interpret) regional heritage." All in all, and as Julie Avery notes, "The MBPN is in a unique position to be aware of what is happening across the state with barn rehabilitation, especially with adapted-use examples."

The Historical Commission is currently engaged in fundraising efforts to rescue the barn. The Commission is now at the stage of writing and submitting grants for this physical work, which includes dismantling, repairing, set-up, and some internal work, currently planned through Chad Stitt's company, American Heritage Barn Preservation of Onondaga, MI.. Designed to highlight the township's history and to explore the importance of farming today, the museum will be established completely without taxpayer dollars. This is why individual donations are important and appreciated.

—Julie Avery, Keith Kehlbeck, Kim Culbertson, and Karen Hendrick

*Contributions may be sent to:*

Karen Hendrick  
Bowne Township Clerk  
PO Box 35, 8240 Alden Nash SE  
Alto, MI 49302

*Please make checks payable to Bowne Township & include a reference to Agricultural Museum on the memo line of your check.*



*Photo by Kim Culbertson*

*The future home of the Barn Museum of Agriculture in Bowne Township.*

## Dear Michigan History Fan,

"Well, here it is. The 60 x 36 gabled roof barn that will house the Barn Museum of Agriculture is in the background. John William Stone built the beautiful structure in the 1860s or 1870s after he mustered out of the Civil War in 1862. Born in Ohio in 1839, he moved to Michigan after being wounded and discharged. He married and had a son in 1874. The property first appeared on the Land Ownership Maps for Kent County, Caledonia Township, in 1876. These records show him owning 80 acres in section 33. John William Stone died in 1921, and the farm was sold to Edward Herman. In 1949, Robert Finkbeiner and his wife, Amy Yeiter, became the new owners. They are buried at the cemetery in Bowne Center, across the street from where we hope to relocate the barn. Knowing the barn's deep ties to the community, I could not send a picture without the story!"

—Kim Culbertson



## Hadley Township Historical Society

# The “Farm Hop” is Back in Hadley Township

Last year, the MBPN encouraged its membership and the general public to attend a wonderful self-guided tour put on by the Hadley Township Historical Society in Lapeer County: the “Farm Hop.” Tour organizer Jana Bullock was kind enough to speak at our spring annual conference in East Lansing, describing how the tour was organized and how it became a great success. We are pleased to inform our members that the Historical Society is once again putting on the Farm Hop, returning for a second year on September 17th.

The event is designed for families, history buffs, and those who simply want to revisit old America. Equipped with a map, guests on this self-guided tour will enjoy an engaging perspective of six area properties integral to the agricultural heritage of the Hadley area. Highlights include a scavenger hunt and demonstrations. Attendees will get an up-close look at the local farms and historical sites that hold stories of this community’s past.

About the tour: Begin your self-driven FARM HOP tour between 10:00 am to 2:00 pm from the Hadley Mill Museum or Le Fleur Décor Festival in Hadley, MI. Start at either location to purchase tickets, get maps and obtain rules for the scavenger hunt. The FARM HOP STOPS (venues) close at 4:00 pm. The scavenger hunt check-out closes at 5:00 pm at the Mill Museum or the Festival. The FESTIVAL is at Le Fleur Décor from 10-5p at 3442 Hadley Road, Hadley, MI and includes Antiques, Plants, Art Fair, Music, Food and More. Admission is free. Look there for the Historical Society booth. The HADLEY MILL MUSEUM at 3633 Hadley Road, Hadley, MI will be open from 10:00 to 5:00. Admission is free. New this year is the PORK & PLAID KICK-OFF event to be held on Friday Night, 9/16. This is a free community event.

**FARM HOP TICKETS** for the self-guided tour are \$20.00 per car regardless of the number of passengers. The number of tickets is limited, so purchasing in advance is advised.

Tickets may also be purchased the day of the event at the HADLEY MILL MUSEUM and the FESTIVAL from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm. Members of the Hadley Township Historical Society may purchase discounted tickets for \$10 per car.

**ADVANCE TICKET SALES** will be available after Aug 1 at:

1. HadleyHistorical.Eventbrite.com - small fee charged
2. Hadley Township Historical Society Events – see HadleyHistorical.Eventbrite.com
3. The Pork & Plaid Kick-off event in Hadley on Friday September 16 from 5:00-8:00pm

Net proceeds go Hadley Township Historical Society community projects. No refunds. Rain or Shine.

—Keith Kehlbeck and Jana Bullock

Image courtesy of Hadley Township Historical Society and Jana Bullock

Details about the second annual Hadley Homestead Harvest Day Farm Hop and Fall Festival.cutline







Photos by Sylvia Duncan

(left): The restored Duncan barn. (above): Steve Stier and Board member Richard Harvey (right) presents a Great Michigan Barn Certificate of Appreciation to Tom Duncan.

## Another “Great Michigan Barn”

When Tom and Sylvia Duncan fell in love with and bought an old farmstead north of the tiny, crossroads Village of Bear Lake (17 miles north of Manistee on US 31), they luckily placed a phone call to Steve Stier, MBPN founding member and President Emeritus, for advice on what to do with the old barn which had been long neglected.

Secretly hoping Steve would tell them the old barn was past saving, given its sad shape (to say nothing of the raccoons!) instead, Steve, during a thorough tour of the structure, pointed out all the positives: hand-hewn beams, wide pine siding from virgin trees, the existing hay track, and the interior cabling that someone had wisely placed in the past.

As career educators, Tom and Sylvia had the blessing, and a curse—to see potential in everything and everybody, and the long and arduous work of restoring the barn was undertaken. Inspired to save the hundred and forty year-old barn, the couple says, “We want to honor the farm’s heritage and make it useful again.”

Given his ties to this barn’s renewed lease on life, Steve Stier con-

sidered it a special occasion when he returned to the Duncan’s barn last month with a special award and a special thanks to Tom and Sylvia Duncan for their work in saving this piece of history. The Duncan Barn was declared a “Great Michigan Barn” for 2022, and its owners, Tom and Sylvia, were presented a framed Certificate of Appreciation for their efforts as well as complimentary membership in the Michigan Barn Preservation Network for the year.

Saving their barn became a labor of love for the current generation, as well as for the people who touched the same beams and stones when it was built and for the farm families who have called this land home for nearly a century and a half. We can all be grateful for all the “Duncans” throughout Michigan who have worked tirelessly to save our barns. May their efforts be an inspiration and an example to others to look for similar opportunities. Sometimes, you need only look out your back door.

—Keith Anderson, MBPN Awards Committee Chair

## Summer Board Meeting Produces Ambitious Plans

The MBPN Board gathered earlier this summer at the Waterloo Area Historical Society tour and meeting site (Waterloo Farm Museum) to discuss ongoing plans and efforts to increase the visibility and membership of the organization.

The grounds of the site were opened to the board, and volunteers provided a tour of the museum grounds before they opened to the public. A delicious lunch from the Lakehouse Bakery fueled all-day discussions about a variety of issues facing the Network.

Among the actions taken during the meeting was the approval of the Executive Committee and Officers for 2022-23. Those were approved by unanimous consent:

President: Tom Irrer	Treasurer: Clarke Koenigs knecht
Vice President: Julie Avery	Recording: Secretary – Vera Wiltse

Committee Chair and members were also assigned and approved:

Finance & Endowment: Julie Avery  
 Communications: Keith Kehlbeck  
 Programs: Vera Wiltse  
 Calendar: Kristine Ranger  
 Teamwork and Timbers: Steve Rademacher

Barn of the Year/Awards: Keith Anderson

Technical: Steve Stier

Nominations: Steve Rademacher

Other discussions included brainstorming on how to increase membership, plans for a fall pledge campaign for the MBPN Endowment Fund, and ideas on how to help meet the increasing number of inquiries to the Technical Committee for barn restoration contractor referrals. In the first quarter of 2022 alone, Steve Stier reports 67 inquiries from all over the state. A workshop on how to provide consistent communication to and from contractors may be scheduled during the upcoming fall board meeting and event.

Thanks to all of our board members and volunteers who make the work of the MBPN so enjoyable and productive! And stay tuned for new initiatives as we turn the corner after a challenging couple of (pandemic) years.

The MBPN remains committed to its mission of “promoting appreciation, preservation, and rehabilitation of Michigan barns, farmsteads, and rural communities.” Please join us in promoting the organization and recommend us to a friend or family member!

—Keith Kehlbeck, MBPN Communications Chair and Newsletter Editor

## Calendar Committee Matters

With the loss of Jim Mulvaney earlier this year, new board member Kristine Ranger from Clinton County has been appointed as Chairperson of the MBPN Calendar Committee. She will be coordinating the selection of barn pictures, solicitation of advertising, and other responsibilities associated with completing the annual calendar, which has become a valued marketing piece for the organization. The 2023 calendar will be dedicated to the late Jim Mulvaney, who spearheaded the calendar project for a number of years. Jim is missed, but his spirit and enthusiasm for Michigan barns live on in the MBPN calendar!

If you have a picture of a barn that you'd like to have considered for the 2023 calendar, please reach out to Kristine Ranger, km-ranger11@gmail.com.

## E-News Continues to Shine

In today's digital age, online contacts with our members are increasingly important, especially as a bridge between our printed newsletter. Under the auspices of our Vice President Julie Avery, more than a half-dozen e-news email blasts have been distributed since the beginning of the year. We are able to track the percentage of recipients who open the emails, and we are currently tracking open rates of between 32% and 43%, which in industry standards are high rates. The e-news goes to all contacts for which we have emails in our data management tool Hubspot. This includes all members with an email on file and those who sign up for the free e-news on the website. If you haven't received the e-news—and would like to—you can go to our website ([www.mibarn.net](http://www.mibarn.net)) to register (see the link on the home page under "Resources to Help You").

While our numbers and coverage area may seem small at this point, our e-news population is very specific to barn ownership and appreciation, so it is a very focused group. Help us build it by recommending to a friend!

Haven't seen an e-news? Go to our website at [www.mibarn.net](http://www.mibarn.net) to review, subscribe, or re-activate your e-news subscription.

## Teamwork & Timbers is back!

Committee chair Steve Rademacher reports that the Network's quarter-scale timber frame model is back in circulation. With the guidance of MBPN experts, students raise a quarter-scale timber frame model of an English barn – the first European barns built in New England. The model barn has the same joinery as a full-size barn, requiring the students to fasten the joints with oak pegs.

Steve also reports that the new cart, sign, and racks for the exhibit are complete, and they will be in attendance at November's Association for Preservation Technology (APT) conference in Detroit. Contact Steve Rademacher ([rademachersteve22@yahoo.com](mailto:rademachersteve22@yahoo.com)) if you have interest in Teamwork & Timbers.

For more information, visit [www.mibarn.net](http://www.mibarn.net) under "Programs."

## In Memoriam

We recently learned that MBPN member Margaret Seargent has passed away. Margaret was a leader who made the Gage-town, Octagon Barn into what it is today. She will be missed!

## Before...and After

We love receiving reports of barn restorations being pursued by barn enthusiasts. Galien, Michigan's Angela Sokolowski and her husband did the painting and repairs on a barn in need, and they hired a local roofer named Scott Dennison of Dennison Exterior Solutions from St. Joseph, MI to manage the roof. Great work!



*Photos by Angela Sokolowski*

*Work in progress on the Sokolowskis' barn*

## Poor Farm Barn Project Update

Steve Stier, Leelanau County Historic Preservation President wants us to see what has been happening with the Leelanau Co. Poor Farm Barn Project, previously chronicled in our newsletter(s). An excerpt from the Poor Farm Project's Accomplishments Report includes this update from Steve:

"The Leelanau County Historic Preservation Society (LCHPS), was formed and began its work about five years ago in response to the County Commissioners' advertised wish to have the County Poor Farm Barn removed. Believing that the barn could and should be saved, our work began toward that goal. Many generous donors proved that we were right. Five years later we can now say that the barn has been saved! It is in good structural and visual condition, and ready to serve the county again. Despite the restraints and uncertainty posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, we have continued to make great strides rehabilitating the Leelanau County Poor Farm Barn and reviving its history as an important cultural asset and example."

For more information and to view the entire report, visit <https://lchp.org/about-us/progress-report/>





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Mt. Pleasant, MI 48804-0614

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[www.mibarn.net](http://www.mibarn.net)

*Share, reuse, recycle this newsletter*



MBPN Awards Chair Keith Anderson recently forwarded a message from Pat McKay, Museum Manager of the Van Hoosen Farm. The Farm was recognized at our spring meeting and conference with the Historic Farmstead Preservation Award. Pat was in attendance at the conference and received the sign designating the complex as an award recipient. He notes, "Thank you for a wonderful afternoon at MSU with the Michigan Barn Preservation Network conference. I was honored to receive the Farmstead Preservation award, and the 60,000 visitors who annually tour the farm museum will be greeted by the sign. I appreciate the hard work that the MBPN does every day and every year! Keep up the good work!"

*The MBPN Farmstead Preservation Award sign proudly displayed at the Van Hoosen Farm.*

*Photo by Pat McKay*