

MICHIGAN BARN PRESERVATION NETWORK

NEWS

SPRING 1996 - VOLUME 1

Promoting appreciation, preservation and rehabilitation of Michigan barns, farmsteads, and rural communities

Michigan Barn Preservation Network; Strong Interest Creates Organization

submitted by Julie Avery

Throughout 1995, a group of dedicated volunteers have been working to create and organize the Michigan Barn Preservation Network, a non-profit organization. Bylaws and working committees have been created.

The Michigan Barn Preservation Network will become official at the March 2nd Annual conference held during Michigan State University's annual Agriculture and Natural Resources Week at Kellogg Center in East Lansing.

Since 1991, a series of barn rehabilitation workshops held across Michigan fostered a groundswell of interest in preserving and adapting timber-frame barns to today's uses. Terry Shaffer, agricultural history specialist and retired MSU

Extension, community development specialist, Bill Kimball, organized regional workshops with county extension offices, local contractors, architects and barn owners. Over 800 individuals attended these workshops; surprisingly, even those without barns also came.

Barn owners sought information on how to repair an existing barn, or to learn how to adapt a structure to store today's large scale farm equipment. Others come because they enjoy seeing barns, for nostalgic reasons and/or photograph or paint barnscapes. These workshops were funded by the Michigan Humanities Council and the National Trust for Historic Preservation. 🌻

Find Michigan History via the Web:

<http://www.sos.state.mi.us/history/museum/explore/explore.html>

First Annual Conference

All interested persons are invited and encouraged to attend this First Annual Conference of the Michigan Barn Preservation Network. Join us for this historic event and become a voting member. Be an active partner for rural preservation in Michigan. Please see the insert in this newsletter which contains a complete agenda of activities for the day, and the slate of candidates for officers of the First Board of Directors and Trustees for the unique organization. Probably the first of its kind in the United States, the organization's mission is presented on the masthead above. Note the workshops offered and this will set the stage for many such workshops and seminars offered to interested members or community groups. All presentors for the workshops will be available for discussion. Bring pictures of your barn and share your experiences with others who ♥ barns. 🌻

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Tax Issues
Practical How-To's



Renovated barn near Clinton, ...can you find the Clydesdale?

Did You Know?



This barn roof shape is easily recognized as a symbol of rural life. Although everyone recognizes the gambrel shape, it is almost always **incorrectly** called a hip roof. The word *gambrel* was originally used to describe the angled joint in the rear leg of a horse.

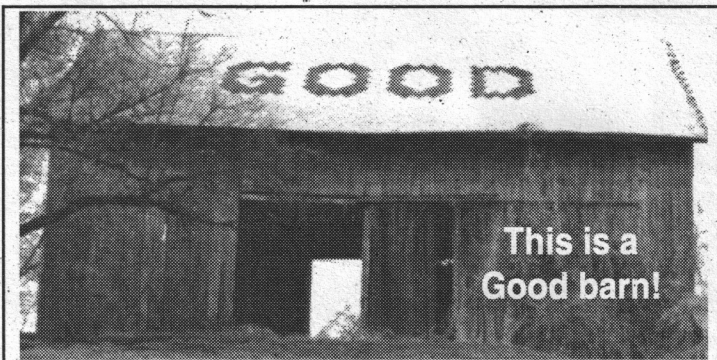
BARN AGAIN!

Has New Offering

BARN AGAIN!, the national barn preservation program launched in 1987 to encourage the recycling of older buildings for modern uses by the National Trust for Historic Preservation and Successful Farming magazine has begun a series of "Barn-Aid" publications. The first in the series, **Barn Foundations** analyzes the major problems of stone, concrete and concrete block foundations, and shows how to remedy them. Future "Barn-Aid" publications will address increasing interior space (available Spring, 1996) and siding and exterior finishes (available Summer, 1996). To order *Barn-Aid #1-Barn Foundations*, send \$5 to: National Trust for Historic Preservation, 910 16th Street, STE 1100, Denver, CO 80202. 🌻

Using Preservation To Make Your Community Stand Out

The Michigan Historic Preservation Network, Michigan's statewide preservation organization, presents its 16th Annual Preservation Conference on Friday and Saturday, April 19-20, 1996, in Ann Arbor. "Good Places To Live And Work: Using Preservation To Make Your Community Stand Out," features two concurrent tracks - one "How To," the other more advanced - with over 50 speakers. The conference is ideal for owners of property, students and educators, government officials and other interested persons and professionals. One can tailor the conference to meet one's own needs by following one track or a combination of sessions from both tracks. Conference fee: \$125, with discounts available for single day attendance as well as for seniors, students, groups and Upper Peninsula residents. For information and conference brochure contact: MHPN, P.O. Box 398, Clarkston, MI 48347-0398, or (810) 625-8181. 🌻



BARN SURVEY

submitted by Vera Wiltse

Since 1993, approximately 45 Isabella County residents have been involved in a project which is documenting the rich agricultural heritage of this mid-Michigan country.

The Isabella County Barn Survey project began with the organizational efforts of Evelyn Leasher, Steve Stier, Vera Wiltse, and Jack Worthington. While the survey has focused on barns, other farm buildings are also being documented with photographs and in writing.

The organizers of the project developed a handbook which would assist volunteers with a windshield survey of designated areas of the county. At an orientation for surveyors, sections of townships were assigned to individuals and teams and the process of doing a windshield survey was renewed.

Some of the individuals interested in helping with the project did not have a background in farming, and most of them had limited knowledge of barn styles and features. The orientations and the handbook provided valuable information for a successful survey.

In general surveyors have generously donated their time, mileage, and film to make this survey happen. One township was surveyed by a FFA chapter as a class project. College students, 4-H youth and parents, and interested community members, have all been surveyors.

The goal is to survey the entire county and organize the information by townships. The information will be kept at the Clarke Historical Library at Central Michigan University and be accessible to students and the public.

(Handbook is available from Isabella County Cooperative Extension office for a copying and mailing fee, please call (517) 773-7431.)

Searching for the "Grange" Barn

The mysterious Grange Barn is reported to be a unique set of plans available at one time through the Michigan Grange Organization. This barn was described as smaller and proportionally narrower and taller than other barns. The idea was that these special plans were developed to make better use of the smaller timbers remaining in farm woodlots.

Michigan State University Museum researchers have found evidence suggesting these Grange Barn plans existed. Julie Avery, Assistant Curator of history, did research on Michigan barns and barn workers through which was revealed some information about the Grange Barn. "We are looking for individuals who have information or memories about Grange Barns." If anyone has an old set of plans they would be willing to part with or from which copies could be made and if anyone has knowledge of a standing Grange Barn, please contact Julie Avery at the MSU Museum, (517) 432-3358. 🌻



The NEWS

is an authorized publication of the MBPN.

Information herein contained is disseminated for informational purposes only.

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Sharing Our Network

Readers, this is your column to help you find answers to your questions!

"Why do they paint those white arches on barn doors?", "What is the old paint formula using linseed oil and iron oxide?", "How can we fix the foundation on our barn?", "I really would like to know just where that round barn is so I could take a drive by it some Sunday afternoon."

If you have a question, another reader may have the answer. What activities about barns are going on in your area? Is a new barn being raised or an old barn being moved? What about festivals or historic events involving barns. Send us that interesting article about barns you read somewhere. Tell us about a unique barn in your area; size, use, shape, paint treatment. Send us a photo!

If you find something of interest, it will probably be of interest and delight for most of us. After all, we are all barn lovers and this is **our** newsletter. Help promote interest in barn preservation by sharing your questions, answers, ideas, and interests.

Send items to Barb Phillips, 11811 Laird Road, Brooklyn MI 49230 or call her at (517) 467-7122. 

Reference Corner:


"Preservation is a somewhat passive policy, one that usually involves maintaining a structure as it is and halting further deterioration without making major alterations in design or function. Unless you own a historically valuable structure in fairly good condition, this is unlikely to be the best approach for you."

Restoration Is a studied attempt to return a structure to the way it was or might have been.

Renovation, or rehabilitation, is a present-minded plan that relies on contemporary standards and techniques to make an old building usable or livable

again. Renovation should not be confused with wholesale remodeling. A good renovation will try to preserve or restore important architectural features as long as they don't seriously compromise the building's new found practicality.

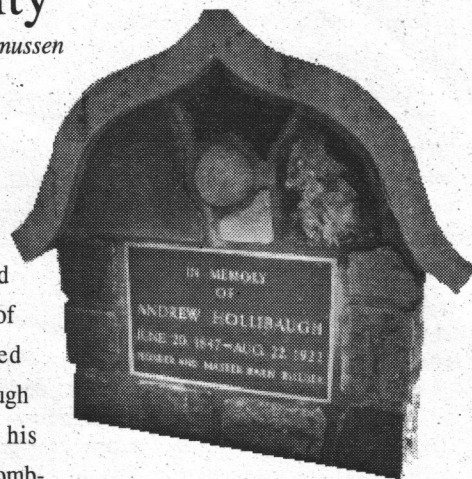
It is often possible to combine elements of each solution, for example, preserving or restoring a building's exterior and renovation of the interior".

From Better Homes and Gardens "Renewing An Old House", Meredith Corporation, 1984, Des Moines, Iowa, p. 46. 

For Eternity

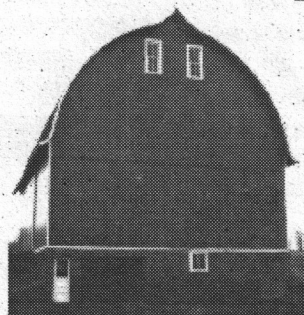
Written by Joanne Rasmussen

Photos by Steve Stier



Recognition of craftsmanship and design, the hallmark of an artist followed Mr. Andrew Hollibaugh into eternity when his family erected this tombstone to celebrate his contribution to the art of barnbuilding. Due to the distinctive style of roof line seen in the photo of one of his "ogee" roofed barns, the interpretation in stone is also unique

and distinctive. Therein lies one of the intrinsic love of barns; the individual's imprint on the handbuilt buildings, standing years and years because of the ingenuity and skill of the farmer/craftsman.




Owner of this "Ogee" roofed barn is Ursula Lennon, Tustin MI 49688




Membership Form

Please send this form (to join or receive the quarterly newsletter) to
Communications Committee
4220 Stabler, Lansing, MI 48910
(517) 394-5578

I own a barn ☐
I  barns ☐
Find me a barn ☐

Name _____ Phone (____) _____ Date _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

- ☐ I want to be a full voting member of the MBPN: (includes the MBPN **NEWS**.....or, \$25.00 Annually per person or Group
- ☐ I want to receive the MBPN quarterly **NEWS** only: \$10.00 Annually
- ☐  Special offer, a commemorative coffee mug only \$4.95 \$ 4.95 with membership. Hurry, limited number available.
- ☐ Please consider this a donation for your greatest need: \$ _____

Total Enclosed: \$ _____



From the Land and Back

By Curtis K. Stadtfeld

Charles Scribner's Sons, New York 1972

Excerpts from his book about his boyhood farm experiences in Michigan.

"It would be nice if those of us who find ourselves confused by urban living and think it would be better to go back to the land could remember exactly how it was. This is an attempt to remember.

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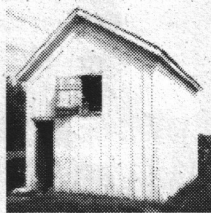
..I now go back, not in a physical sense but in a recognition, which I hope is a mature one, of how important this life was to me and to many of us. None of us can go back in time or space, but if we are lucky, we can use the things we learned to help us understand what we have become and why.

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By fall the big barns were full of hay and straw and corn fodder. Hay was hauled loose in those days and piled high in one or two mows. The ponderous thresher was parked on the floor in the center of the barn, and the straw blown into another mow, if possible one from which it could be poked down directly over box stalls or stanchion rows.

The need for space to store so much was the reason for the huge barns, but they also came

Not all
barns
are big!



Thumb Area Barn Calendar

The Friends of the Octagon Barn have a perfect gift that keeps giving twelve months a year. The calendars feature pictures of 12 area barns done by local artists. The sale of calendars is just one of several fund raisers hosted by the Friends to raise money to preserve the unusual eight-sided barn.

The farm of the late James L. Purdy, who built the unusual eight-sided barn, was a showcase in the 1930's. The barn has about 300 windows, several gables and dormers and is topped by a cupola. It covers 12,000 square feet. The barn is located at 6948 Richie Road, east of Gagetown, near the border of Tuscola and Huron Counties.

The calendars are \$9.50 each, including shipping and handling. Contact: Pat Chisholm, 233 W. Bush St., Caro, MI 48723 or for \$7.50 from the Tuscola County Extension office and from some local merchants.

to be measures of the size of the farmer's dreams. They had individual character that expressed their owner, and their state of repair was an index of a man's success and the quality of attention he paid to his work. The barn was more important to the farm than his house, it received more of his attention, was the focus of more of his thoughts. In that part of the country, there were few fine houses but many great barns.

Thus the big barns were a necessity at first, a redundancy now. They were less economical, but more fun for boys to play in. There was a thrill in raising a big barn; it was a social event, a time when a man put his mark upon this land. And there was a personality, a permanency, about them not found in the present-day pole structures with steel roofs.

Nature is reclaiming the old wooden barns, recycling them. They stand abandoned, like great

sailing ships stranded in a world where there is no more wind. They fall in or burn away. The weathered old boards are stolen or bought to sheath houses or panel family rooms where people seek to borrow a mark of endurance from the past. The barns that remain are atavistic relics, victims of change as surely as the decaying tenements of an inner city. They were built well out of pride, a quality that held a larger share of man's attention in less prosperous times. They were the mark of the man who built them. They were not designed with the tax advantages of accelerated depreciation in mind. They had spacious elegance about them, and, like the mansions of the rich, they became too expensive to afford. The factory-designed sheds that have succeeded them are more efficient, more economic, but there is no kinship for them, and they have no space for a man's spirit. Progress has diminished the soul for the sake of the pocketbook."



Michigan Heritage Barns

An Artists Study

Nearly forty of Mary Keithan's photographs of Michigan heritage barns will be exhibited at the Michigan State University Museum in Lansing, beginning February 1, 1996 through May 31. This exhibition coincides with the first annual meeting of the Michigan Barn Preservation Network. Visiting hours are Wed-Fri., 12-5 and Sunday 2-4. Small admission charge.

Photographing barns since 1990, Mary has a portfolio of over 100 Michigan barns. Says Keithan, "Some of the barns I have photographed are now gone forever, which is sad...because nearly all of them are classic originals, built by hand and refined by use."



Artist/Photographer Mary Keithan.

Please post or circulate



Michigan State University Museum
East Lansing, MI 48824-1045

Address Correction Requested

FIRST ANNUAL CONFERENCE-MARCH 2

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