



# MI BARN

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



Photo by Keith Kehlbeck

The MBPN Annual Conference—a day filled with informative presentations and camaraderie

## Join Us for the 2024 Annual Conference and Member Meeting!

Happy New Year! With the holidays now behind us, 2024 is in full swing, and that means it is nearly time for members to celebrate another year of barn preservation.

On Saturday, February 24th, Michigan barn enthusiasts will gather for the Michigan Barn Preservation Network's Annual Conference and Member Meeting. This year, the conference will once again be held at MSU's Kellogg Center in East Lansing. As previous conference attendees will attest, the day will be filled with camaraderie, informative presentations, awards, and inspiration—reinforcing the MBPN's mission of “promoting the appreciation, preservation, and rehabilitation of Michigan barns, farmsteads, and rural communities.”

Twenty-eight years ago, the Network held its first conference—also at the Kellogg Center. As reported in the second volume of our newsletter (in the summer of 1996), 200 people attended the confer-

ence, which featured “awards, exhibits, networking!” Building on the success of the event, a second conference was slated for the following March...and the rest, as they say, is history. For a few recollections on these early days of the organization, see the sidebar on page 4. The Network is primed to build on its nearly three decade track record with a strong lineup for what has become an annual “must attend” day of shared enthusiasm for our cause.

The theme of this year's event is “Adaptive Use: Memories, Events, and Museums.” To that thought, a quartet of exceptional presentations—all by MBPN veterans (and past Barn of the Year recipients) will keynote the conference. The day will also feature a lovely buffet lunch, an auction, and, of course, the prestigious annual Barn of the Year Awards (for more information, see page 6).

We hope you can join us!

—Richard Harvey and Keith Kehlbeck

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## President's Message

### Saving one more barn...

With my years of experience with the Michigan Barn Preservation Network, I can see how the vision that our founders had back in 1995 has had major results. While some people have saved their barns in remembrance of their forebearers, and some have done it to keep up with the neighborhood, the MBPN has inspired even more through the examples that we have illustrated from all parts of Michigan. *Each well-preserved barn inspires another.*

Saving our history is a continuous process. Our Barn of the Year program and the annual Barn Calendar continue to showcase many Michigan barns. Our quarterly newsletter, website, and Annual Conference provide examples and resources to assist barn owners with their own projects. In 2018, we established an endowment to allow those who appreciate our goal of preserving rural history a means to provide financial support. The earnings from this endowment—currently at \$160,000 and growing—will be available to help support the viability of MBPN and its goals forever.

We believe that well-preserved traditional barns and farmsteads will become more appreciated and more valuable in the future because of the values that they represent. Our Board of Directors has continued to look forward by recently updating our Strategic Plan for our future. Our aim is to inspire barn owners to *save one more barn*. To do this, we will continue to use and improve existing programs and explore new opportunities to convince barn owners of the importance of saving their own pieces of history. Saving our history will always be a continuous process. Please think about how you can do your part, as we begin a new year with respect for our organization's past and with eyes on the future.

Wishing you the best in 2024.



Tom Irrer

### We are greatly saddened to report a death in the MBPN "family."

Linda and I were stunned to learn that three weeks after we met with April and Mike Petersen in Greenville (to present them with their Certificate of Appreciation and take the photo which we published in the most recent newsletter)



Photo by Keith Anderson

April died suddenly of an apparent heart attack. We visited with them on Sept. 10th, and she died October 5th according to her obituary. April was very energetic and creative and was the driving force behind the purchase and restoration of the decrepit barn that was transformed into a very successful venture. As noted in the "Great Michigan Barns" piece in the last newsletter, the refurbished and restored barn has drawn large crowds for weekend events, concerts, and weddings, and encompasses a church, a barber shop, and a cidery. April was only 51 years old. On behalf of the MBPN, we share our sincere condolences to her husband Mike and their family.

—Keith Anderson, MBPN Awards Committee Chair

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



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





The Kellogg Hotel and Conference Center is once again the site of the MBPN Annual Conference and Member Meeting

## “Adaptive Use: Memories, Events, and Museums”— a Conference and Member Meeting You Won’t Want to Miss!

**MBPN Annual Conference & Member Meeting**  
**Saturday, February 24, 2024**  
**MSU’s Kellogg Center, East Lansing, Michigan**  
**Tentative Schedule**

February 24, 2024

Kellogg Hotel and Conference Center, Lincoln Room

- 9:00 Welcome and Announcements (Coffee and Refreshments)
- 9:10 Annual Membership Business Meeting
- 10:15 **Presentation** – Ruth Stahl, Stahl Event Barn (Missaukee County)
- 11:15 **Presentation** – Bob Griffin, Ogemaw County Barn (Ogemaw County)
- 12:15 **Lunchtime** for fun and networking and MBPN Annual Auction Benefit
- 1:30 **2024 Barn of the Year Presentations**
- 2:15 **Presentation** – Sharon and Warren Conley, Olde Stone House Farm (Ionia County)
- 3:15 **Presentation** – Pat McKay, Van Hoosen Farm Museum (Oakland County)
- 4:15 **Wrap-Up**

To register for this year’s Annual Conference and Member Meeting, please copy and fill out this form and send with your check (or go to our website, [www.mibarn.net](http://www.mibarn.net) to register and pay via PayPal),

Note: For those who wish to stay overnight for the conference, you have until January 24th to reserve an overnight room at Kellogg. The cost is \$128 + tax and fees of about \$16. The phone number for reservations is 800-875-5090. Network members should use the code: 2402MIBARN

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Attendees \_\_\_\_\_  
 (\$75 per member, \$115 non-member)

Dietary Restrictions? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Please mail registrations  
 (must be received by February 22nd) to:

MBPN  
 PO Box 614  
 Mt. Pleasant, MI 48804-0614.

*Checks should be payable to MBPN. Registrations may also be made on our website, [www.mibarn.net](http://www.mibarn.net) (using PayPal).*

## And now for a little history...

### From the 1996 MBPN newsletter (Volume 2):

#### "200 attend First Conference — Awards, Exhibits, Networking!"

Mary Humstone, director of BARN AGAIN!, a joint program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation and *Successful Farming Magazine*, provided the keynote address at our first conference, held during AG and Natural Resources week March 2 on MSU's campus.

Two hundred enthusiastic individuals from three states attended the first conference of the MBPN. The unexpected numbers of walk-ins stressed the registration process; special thanks to all for their patience and participation. Attendees browsed exhibits ranging from barn paintings and photography to exhibits of vintage haying equipment and timber framing demonstrations. The morning business meeting included reports from the working committees and introductions of candidates for MBPN officers and directors.

Agricultural administrator and humorist, Maurie Williamson, Director for Agricultural Science, West Lafayette, Indiana, was luncheon speaker. His talk brought out some of the more humorous aspects of living on a farm. A legislative tribute saluting the MBPN organization and signed by Governor Engler, Senator Schwartz, and Representatives Fitzgerald and Middleton was presented by Representative Tom Middleton.

In the afternoon, attendees chose from four workshops on various barn-related topics, and finished the day with an announcement of the election results and a wrap-up planning session.



The day was a resounding success and everyone departed anticipating a bright and effective future for this growing organization."

A later issue of the fledgling organization's newsletter (volume No. 5), noted that the second Annual Conference would occur on March 1, 1997. Over two decades later, we are still gathering to share stories, information, techniques, and friendship.

## Additional information on the Conference Presentations

### Ruth Stahl, Stahl Event Barn (Missaukee County)

In the late 1990s, Ivan and Ruth Stahl turned their attention to re-viving the "vintage" old barn that had been part of his family's farm for decades. Over the following years, they eventually made improvements including new vertical beams, major structure work, new utilities, and landscaping. In 2014, they officially opened the barn under the name of Stahl Event Barn. Since then, the barn has hosted dozens of events, including weddings, retirement parties, graduation open houses, and family reunions, to name just a few. The Stahl Event Barn's history shows how some barns survive and find new life as part of the culture and landscape.

### Bob Griffin, Griffin Barn (Ogemaw County)

This barn, now located on the Ogemaw County Fairgrounds, 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. The condition of the barn and its unfavorable location led Bob to determine that disassembling, relocating, and re-assembling the barn made the most sense. He will tell the story of the derelict barn being disassembled, transported, and re-assembled. He also will discuss the multiple additional barns that he has restored, including three during the past year (and he is not even a builder).



### Sharon and Warren Conley, Olde Stone House Farm (Ionia County)

The Olde Stone House Barn is an excellent example of "Before and After." This barn involves another inspiring story of an owner not particularly interested in a barn, but interested in acquiring one and then becoming passionate about saving it, rehabilitating it, and preserving it for future generations. Built in two phases (the earliest in the 1850s) and the second in the 1880s, by 2021 it had fallen on hard times. After intending to only make rudimentary "fixes" to the barn, once renovation began, Warren, Sharon, and their family "*fell in love with the old barn.*" After a substantial investment, the restored barn began its new life as a wedding barn venue.

### Patrick McKay, Museum Manager, Rochester Hills Museum at Van Hoosen Farm (Oakland County)

Dr. Sarah Van Hoosen Jones, renowned dairy pioneer and educator was a member of the fifth generation of the family who built an entire dairy operation and farmed it from 1927 until 1954 employing scientific techniques and raising pure bred Holsteins. At her death in 1972, Dr. Sarah Van Hoosen Jones willed her entire farm (including four barns) to MSU. Some years later, Rochester Hills re-acquired the farmstead and over a 15-year period, initiated a far-sighted plan for creating a local museum complex. Today, over 60,000 guests per year visit this museum which includes the entire restored farmsteads multiple buildings (calf barn, milk house, bull barn and farmhouse).

# Conference Memories in Photos

Sharing only a few photos from relatively recent Annual Conferences gives you an idea why these meetings are so important for the MBPN. Friends, old and new (and some who are no longer with us)...remind us of how far the organization has come over

the years. With the MBPN Endowment growing—and with every new barn saved—we are inspired to continue this important work begun so many years ago. Thank you to all who have led us (and who will lead us)!



Past MBPN President Brad Brogren and current President Tom Irrer



MBPN Vice President Julie Avery talks about our Endowment



The late Jim Mulvany in fine form (2019)



A model barn at the 2015 Conference, flanked by the late Jack Worthington (middle), Charles Leik of the National Barn Association (right), and Pennsylvanian Andy Eversole (left), who built the model barn and brought it to the Conference.



The annual Barn of the Year presentations are always a highlight of the conference



MBPN Treasurer Clare Koenigsknecht networks with MBPN members in 2019

Photos by Keith Kehlbeck



## 2024 Barn of the Year Awards

The MBPN's most prestigious awards, the Michigan Barn of the Year Awards, are presented annually to honor barn owners who have made the extra effort to maintain or restore traditional barns. Photos and histories of the more than 100 barns that have been declared recipients of the Barn of the Year are found on MBPN's website at [www.mibarn.net](http://www.mibarn.net).

Submissions for the 2024 Barn of the Year Awards were accepted for a period of three months, ending earlier this month. Prior to the conference, the Barn of the Year Committee will have spent many hours evaluating submissions for this year's awards.

Every year, a number of exceptional Michigan barns are nominated for the Barn of the Year Award, and 2023-2024 was no exception. All nominated barns have stories...and they enrich us by telling those stories of tradition, family, diversity, and pride in our history. For those barns nominated but not awarded, we recognize their exceptional stories with Certificates of Appreciation as "Great Michigan Barns."

Despite the fact that Michigan's barns, symbols of our great agricultural heritage, are disappearing at an alarming rate, there is reason to be optimistic—a reason to celebrate. The prestigious Barn of the Year Award is highly sought after by barn owners who have made the extra effort to save a Michigan barn. Join us on February 24th to honor those awardees who, every year, make us proud!

—Keith Anderson, MBPN Awards Committee Chair

## It's Not Too Late to Renew Your 2024 MBPN Membership

We continue to need your support to pursue our organizational mission and programs. Your membership says that you are an advocate for preserving our old barns and the rural character of Michigan. With your financial support, MBPN has continued to bring together a network of people dedicated to sharing knowledge and a desire to preserve a crucial part of our rural heritage. *If you haven't already done so, please help continue that momentum by renewing today for 2024.*

Dues are for the calendar year and your expiration date will appear on the newsletter mailing label. You may pay for more than one year if that is convenient for you. You may also want to consider supporting the MBPN with a Cupola lifetime membership. In recent years, many of our members have used this vehicle to support our growing Endowment Fund.

The most important thing to do is to renew your own membership. Renew by mailing your information with a check to the address below or go to [www.mibarn.net](http://www.mibarn.net) and find the Membership page under the Support tab. You can pay with a credit card if you use this option.

Do you know someone who loves barns and who should be a member? Show them this newsletter or send them to our website for more information.

If paying dues as an organization or business, please include its name along with two representative names. Correspondence will be sent to the address you provide.

Thanks to all who provide the wherewithal for the MBPN to accomplish its goals!

For more information, visit us online at [www.mibarn.net](http://www.mibarn.net).

\$40 Fieldstone – 1 person

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\$100 – Company Contractor/business

Check your mailing label for when your membership expires! Memberships are calendar year, expiring December 31st. Please choose the membership level that suits you best, and mail your payment to:

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You can also renew online at [www.mibarn.net](http://www.mibarn.net).

**Thank you in advance for your support!**

The MBPN Board of Directors



Barn of the Year Award (2022), The Olde Stone Porch Barn (Ionia County)



Barn of the Year Award (2022), Interior work on the Griffin Barn (Ogemaw County)

## Teamwork & Timbers Updates

On Sunday October 8, 2023, Clare Koenigsknecht and I took the Teamwork & Timbers Barn to the Waterloo Farm Museum south of Stockbridge for their Fall Harvest Festival. There were probably over 1,000 people who came to view agricultural life in the “old days.”

Bob Richards, the Stockbridge FFA advisor and ag teacher, brought five students to erect the barn. They arrived at 11:00am, and Clare discussed the tools used to build timber frame barns. The students assembled the floor and laid out the first bent on top of the floor. They went for a short lunch at 12:30 and returned at 1pm. They then finished erecting the barn, and it remained in its completed stage until about 2:30 that day. Then, the students loaded the barn back on the carts, and we were finished about 3:00pm.

The entire process took about four hours, and that length of time seemed appropriate for the project. By having the barn erected at an event where a number of people are passing through, events like this provide the opportunity to involve not only the students, but also the general public in our mission of barn education.

The Octagon Barn will be using the T&T barn on August 24, 2024. They will keep it there through their Fall Family Days, Sept 7-8, 2024.

Teamwork & Timbers is the “gift” that keeps on giving for the MBPN and for the barn enthusiast public!

— Tom Irrer, MBPN President



*The Network's Teamwork & Timbers model continues to help educate young people about how timber framed barns are constructed.*



## Quick Takes



*The Baxtressers, Keith Anderson, and Tom Irrer in 2023*

### Newest Cupola Members

Earl and Judy Baxtresser are shown as they accept the 2023 Barn of the Year Award for their efforts in preserving the Maple Woods Farm Barn. The Maple Woods Barn is a handsome double gambrel-roofed barn connected by a third barn and situated in what is now the highly developed southeast Michigan community of Farmington Hills.

The Baxtressers recently joined the Cupola Club (\$1,000 life-time members) of MBPN. Their decision to make this significant contribution in support of the organization reaffirms the impact the Barn of

the Year Program has on barn preservation in Michigan.

Cupola membership funds contribute to the growth of the Endowment Fund, so the principal remains permanently. Thanks to the Baxtressers and others who show this level of support for the MBPN.

### A Great Way to Start the New Year

MBPN Treasurer Clare Koenigsknecht recently passed along a greeting from Bonnie Willyard, an MBPN member who made a generous contribution to the organization. Bonnie commented, “I chose to donate to MBPN because I am thoroughly impressed with what this organization has done and continues to do to support historic Michigan barns. I have an old barn on my property that is in need of rehabilitation and wasn’t sure where to start, but found the MBPN website, and it has already been very helpful to me in seeing the path forward and what resources are available in my area. Thank you!” Thanks to Bonnie for the kind words...and the donation, which helps with our mission.

### Strategic Planning Update

As reported in the last newsletter, in early November, a dedicated group of board members and volunteers took time to meet for a Strategic Planning session at Board President Tom Irrer’s farm office in St. Johns.

That effort produced an outline that will be taken up by the MBPN Board soon. The last such planning effort took place back in 2016, and topics to be addressed in the next iteration of the strategic plan include our mission and vision, organizational timelines, activities, and action plans. Stay tuned for more on this important organizational effort.

—Julie Avery, MBPN Vice-President  
and Endowment Committee Member



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## 2024 MBPN Calendars Promote Awareness of the MBPN



2017



2018



2023



2024

*MBPN calendars continue to showcase the variety and beauty of Michigan barns...and help promote our organization.*

One of the great successes of the Michigan Barn Preservation Network in recent years has been the annual calendar we produce each fall for the coming year. For nearly a decade, the calendars, filled with iconic photos and stories of Michigan barns, have provided valuable visibility for the organization. This year, the calendars again have been distributed to members and stakeholders, including many sponsors in the industry.

Thank you to our loyal, longtime advertisers, Cupola members, and six new advertisers who supported the printing of our 2024 calendar. These advertisers represent many types of barn and farm maintenance, supplies, and related agriculture services. More information on each one can be found in your calendar and on our Facebook page. We encourage you to support these organizations.

The new advertisers are Co-op Elevator, Knowledge Navigators (Kristine Ranger), Leelanau County Historic Preservation Society,

Lifetime Metal Sales, Michigan Bee Company, and Rochester Hills Museum.

Special recognition goes to our returning advertisers, including Barn Works, Inc., Caledonia Farmers Elevator, Eaton Community Bank, Greenstone Farm Credit Services, Kaleidoscope of Times Antique Mall, Pung Foundation, Steiner Tractor, Sugar Bush Supplies, The Salvage Yard Antiques, Theis General Store, Reurink Roofing, and Westphalia Milling. Also thanks to the Koenigsknechts and the Stuckmans, who provided additional financial support for the Calendar.

The MBPN Calendar is successful because of the generous contributors, advertisers, and others who help underwrite its production costs.

—Kristine Ranger, MBPN Calendar Chair