



MI BARN

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



The Ivory Barn and three other exceptional Michigan Barns await you in Lapeer County on October 15th!

Photo by Elaine Copeman

Fall Barn Tour is Just Around the Corner

Fall is a special time for the Michigan Barn Preservation Network. In past years, the Network has often presented a fall barn tour, showcasing the many wonderful examples of Michigan barns throughout the state. We are pleased to announce that this year—on October 15, 2024—the MBPN will once again host a barn bus tour.

This time, the tour will take place in Lapeer County, a picturesque county in Michigan's "thumb." Lumber was the principal industry of the Lapeer County area from the 1830s until 1870. Lumber was in demand with development throughout the Midwest, and there was the expectation that clearing much of the county's forests would attract farmers as settlers. Eventually, Lapeer County's economy shifted to become primarily agriculturally based.

The tour will kick off at Stonegate Farm (2681 Hadley Rd, Lapeer, MI 48446) at 9:00 a.m. sharp (with check-in at 8:30), and the bus should return to the Farm around 5:00pm. **The cost of the barn tour is \$70 for Michigan Barn Preservation Network members.** The tour currently will be limited to the space on one tour bus, so **make your reservations** now by going to the MBPN website, www.mibarn.net, to register, pay, and to reserve your space on the tour bus. Registrations (with name, phone, and address) may also be mailed to our P.O. Box 614, Mt. Pleasant, MI 48804. Registrations are first-come/first-serve. If registrations exceed the 56-seat capacity of the bus, we will begin a wait list, in case we can substantially fill a second bus.

This year's barn tour will feature four (4) examples of barns



Photo by Laurie Sisco

Stonegate Farm will be the starting and finishing point for the Fall Barn Tour.

that were part of this agricultural history and tradition. All four has been beautifully maintained, restored, and adapted.

Stonegate Farm (Lapeer)

The tour will begin and end at Stonegate Farm, which is currently owned by Charles Schneider. Built in 1909, Stonegate originally was a cattle farm. Approximately 25 years ago, it was adapted by the Amish and was turned into a private car/tractor museum and event venue. 2024 is the second season that Stonegate has done weddings, for example. The fields around the property are all rented out to farmers where they grow corn/soybeans.

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President's Message

Summer is Fair Time

Late Summer and the early part of Fall bring us a multitude of agricultural events. County, state, and regional fairs, for example, offer young people the opportunity to learn about livestock. At such seasonal fairs, steam-powered and early petroleum-fueled tractors are often featured performing activities related to the harvesting of crops or a variety of other tasks familiar to farms and rural communities. The tractor parade is the highlight of the day.

Many other agricultural events, while not called fairs, offer the public the chance to learn about our agrarian history. Displays often focus on farm life in the early 1900s. This was the period of rapid mechanization in agriculture.

One thing that most of these celebrations include is an old timber frame barn that sits silently as the hub for all of the exhibitions' activity. At some event locations, the organizers have gone to the effort of moving an old barn to their museum grounds. This not only saves the structure, but also puts the barn in a location where it can be appreciated by the general public. New timber frame structures have also been built at some museums as part of their permanent facilities. As you can tell, there is a wide variety of ideas about saving our history!

I urge you to attend these events and to say "Thank You" to the volunteers who continue to save, interpret, and articulate our rural history. Better yet, get involved with one of the local organizing groups or with the Michigan Barn Preservation Network. Personally, I have gained many friends through my involvement with the MBPN. Perhaps you have, as well. I am sure that those involved with other groups have also enjoyed the feeling of accomplishment and camaraderie that comes with being involved with a noble cause (that coincidentally mirrors our mission)—the "preservation, appreciation, and rehabilitation of Michigan barns, related farmsteads, and rural communities."

I hope to see many of you at our fall Barn Tour in Lapeer County!
— Tom Irrer, MBPN President



Tom Irrer

Save the Date

In 2025, we will be unable to have our Annual Conference and Member Meeting at the Kellogg Center during MSU's ANR Week. We have determined a date for our 2025 meeting, however—Saturday, March 15, 2025—as well as a location (where we've convened before): AgroLiquid in St. John's. Please mark your calendars and stay tuned for more information on the Annual Meeting in future newsletters.

On a related topic, Richard Harvey is looking for presenters for our next conference. If you have any thoughts or ideas or suggestions please let him know. He would like to know about their area of expertise or experience as well as any contact information you might have. Many thanks!

Richard's email is rhhav@gmail.com.

— Vera Wiltse, Program Chair

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Photo courtesy of The County Press

Gregory Dairy Farm, a Centennial farm

The Huntsman Barn (Dryden)

Owned and managed by Jonah Tebbens, the Huntsman Hunt Club (a private shooting preserve on 900 acres) includes several historic barns that are beautifully maintained. We will be seeing one of the larger barns built in the late 1870s. Originally a cattle farm, it is still a working farm, where corn and wheat are grown as feed crops. The timbers of the barn are “unprocessed” tree trunks, with the bark still on, which was common in that era. The siding boards in the barns are varied in size, with some of the largest being over 18 inches wide, a size unheard of today. Some of the wood is chestnut.

The Gregory Dairy Farm Barn (Hadley Township)

The Gregory Dairy Farm was a Centennial Farm property that includes a large L-shaped barn and a wooden silo used by several generations of the Gregory family, who farmed approximately 160 acres to raise feed for dairy, and later beef, cattle. The dairy farm was founded in 1849. The farm was recently sold by the great-great-granddaughter of the original family founder.

The current owners, Johann and Joanne Odermann, note that the barn is a classic old dairy barn. The tour barn is the second barn on the site, having been built in the 1920s on the site of the original barn. The barn has recently been refurbished and painted, and the stanchions inside the gambrel roofed barn are particularly noteworthy. In addition to the big dairy barn, there is a detached milk house, converted into a chicken coop at one point, as well as a pole barn that was used as a tool shed. The farm house dates to the 1890s and had been lovingly restored before the recent sale.

The Ivory Barn (Hadley)

Six generations of Ivories have lived on the land between Stewart and Pratt roads near Hadley, Michigan. According to a 2017 article in the local County Press, making a go of it on 160 acres is, at best, challenging. Back in 2005, Pete Ivory came up with a long-term plan — a really long-term plan — to keep the farm going. That year, Pete planted 100 chestnut trees behind the barn his family built in 1886. Not knowing much about chestnuts, he planted 20 varieties on the rolling countryside behind the house where Ivories have lived in since 1865. In the years since 2005, the family has battled deer, disease, and the cold to grow chestnut (and later, Christmas) trees to supplement revenue from other sources. And the Ivory Barn has been at the center of the family's efforts to preserve their legacy.

Among other events, the Ivory Barn recently hosted the Hadley Township Historical Society Farm Hop. The Ivories are proud to be part of the Hadley community, and they are happy to show and tell a little bit of their history with neighbors and visitors to the area. Tour participants just might get to sample some roasted chestnuts, as the Ivories sometimes take people out to the field/orchard on a wagon to pick and roast them. They will have some old photos enlarged and lots of info for their farm displayed in the barn when we tour.



Photo provided by Laurie Sisco

The Huntsman Barn: The original (center) part of the larger barn was built in the late 1870s. The wings were added in the late 1920s. The metal roof was put on in 1979 by Paul Hagemeister to protect the barn.

Lunch and a Speaker

Lunch (and goodie bags) will be provided at the Metamora Old Town Hall. Built in 1888, the Old Town Hall/Opera House has been the scene for many dances, plays, graduations, weddings, baby showers, and wakes. The old Metamora Union School used it for school events, including indoor sports. In 1979, the Township chose to lease the little building over to the newly formed Metamora Historical Society (MHS), and a major restoration project began. Thanks to the inspiration of the community and the many volunteer workers, the building was brought back to life. The restored hall now sits as an integral part of the Village. It has been preserved as a very important player in Metamora's History.

During lunch, Wendy Lange will speak. Wendy was an Engineering Group Manager at General Motors and recently retired from there after 36 years. Though she was a scientist, her creative side always loved photography. Nature and the outdoors were her passion. When she moved to Dryden, Michigan in 1999, she became interested in all of the beautiful old barns in the area. She began photographing them and learned their history from the families that owned them. We look forward to her presentation. The tour will resume after lunch.

The barn tour should be a great day of learning 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 old 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.

MBPN membership gives you priority registration for barn bus tours. If you have a friend who might like to join (or if you need to renew your membership, become a Cupola Member, or donate to our Endowment), visit our website at www.mibarn.net.

For those who want to stay overnight for the tour, here is nearby hotel information:

Best Western Lapeer Inn 810-667-9444

Holiday Inn Express Lapeer 810-245-7700

Both hotels have a block of 10 rooms reserved under Michigan Barn Preservation Network at a discounted rate through September 14th.

Special thanks go to our newest Board member, Laurie Sisco, and emeritus Board member, Tammis Donaldson of Ekocite Architecture, as well as tour committee member Melissa Jaskiewicz, for organizing this year's tour. We hope to see you on October 15th!

— Keith Kehlbeck, MBPN Communications Chair and Newsletter Editor



Board Members Make the Difference!



Get To Know Your MBPN Board: Leadership Profiles

From time to time, we have highlighted the dedicated individuals who comprise the MBPN Officers, Board of Directors (present and Emeritus), and key committee participants. In this issue, we would like to recognize those volunteers—each of whom brings a unique perspective and talents to our leadership cadre. Some may be familiar to you; others are new. Of particular interest are insightful quotes from several of these extraordinary volunteers. Thanks to all for their service to the Network!

— Keith Kehlbeck, MBPN Communications Chair and Newsletter Editor

Tom Irrer, Board President

Tom has been on the MBPN board since 2014, served as Treasurer in 2017-2018, and was elected president in 2019. His experience with the St. Johns Area Community Fund led him to assist with establishing the Michigan Barn Preservation Network Endowment held at the Capital Area Regional Foundation. After graduating from MSU and Purdue, he returned to the family farm. Now, his son Doug has developed it into the largest mint farm in Michigan. Currently Tom balances his time between MBPN, doing odd jobs around the farm and goofing off.

“We need to inspire another person to save one more barn. As timber frame barns become scarcer, each one becomes more valuable. MBPN has influenced many to save their barns and to make their barns and farmsteads iconic pieces of the neighborhood.”

Julie Avery, Vice President and Endowment Chair

Julie has been a volunteer since inception of the organization. Her early work for the Network was in communications (newsletter, website, exhibits, and conferences). She has been an elected board member since 2011, serving with communications and programming committees. She currently is Vice President and chair of the Endowment Committee.

Until retirement from MSU in 2013, Julie had joint appointments as: curator/historian of rural life and culture with the MSU Museum and as an Extension educational specialist for cultural economic development. Julie provided linkages and partnering between MBPN and MSUM with programs, exhibits and shared resources. She has a Ph.D. in community arts management and cultural heritage.

Vera Wiltse, Recording Secretary and Program Chair

Vera Wiltse is a founding member of the MBPN and is retired from Isabella County (4-H program) MSU Extension. She lives on a farm in Coleman and is active in the community and in her church. She has served in many capacities for the MBPN and is currently the Program Committee chair.

“I hope that the MBPN will continue to be an inspiration to barn owners to save their barn. Our educational resources need to continually grow and be updated to meet the needs of those who are looking for help. People who are willing to share their knowledge and experiences with others are our strength.”

Clare Koenigsnecht, Treasurer

Clare was born and raised on a dairy farm. He worked in the auto industry for six years, and owned and operated a farm and commercial building repair company for 40 years. This experience has proven invaluable to the Network, as he is often consulted when inquiries on barn repair come to the MBPN. Clare has been a member of the MBPN for over 20 years, and has served as Past Chairman and (currently) as Treasurer. He also is Pledge Chair for the organization’s ambitious Endowment project.

“Please think about your own interests in supporting MBPN through your memberships and our Endowment! The joy and wonder of giving is endless!”

Keith Anderson, Awards Chair

Born into a dairy farming family in West Michigan with 15 brothers and sisters in the early ‘40s, Keith Anderson learned and appreciated the importance of our agricultural heritage as he was growing up. After graduating from Central Michigan University with bachelor and master’s degrees in education and American History, he taught high school in the Detroit-area suburbs before returning to Grand Rapids and a career in Human Resources Management. Following several years raising two children as a widower, he was fortunate to return to life on a farm with his marriage to his wife Linda, owner of one of the largest dairy operations in Kent County. Having restored two barns on their home farm, Keith and Linda joined MBPN in 2009. As Awards Chair, Keith oversees the coveted Barn of the Year Program for MBPN.

*“Head out on any road in Michigan for a leisurely drive and you won’t go far without encountering a sadly-neglected barn. Losing too many of these symbols of our great agricultural heritage is a reality of our changing economy and changing culture. That is one reason it is so gratifying to be part of a team that seeks out and recognizes success stories, and, to be sure, there are success stories—stories of barns and people passionate about saving barns here in our state. Over a hundred have been recognized with the MBPN’s flagship program, the Barn of the Year Award. Perhaps most importantly, we’ve seen the evidence of hundreds more that have been saved. **Barn preservation is at work in Michigan, and MBPN is at the forefront of that movement.** You can’t help but be proud of the little part we might have played in inspiring someone to save that barn. What better legacy can a person leave.”*

Laurel Sisco

MBPN’s newest Board member is Laurel (Laurie) Sisco. Laurie is an MSU grad and has worked in the medical laboratory field for close to 40 years. She and her husband Keith have two adult children and more recently two grandsons. She likes to travel, garden, spend time with friends and family, especially up north, where she hikes and gets to know her inflatable kayak better. While not a barn owner, she grew up playing in barns as a kid and felt the reverence of a barn at a young age.

“The success of MBPN is crucial so younger generations get to play in barns and feel the stories they have to tell. We need more people of all ages to listen to those stories.”

Kevin Kirk

Kevin is a native of Michigan, raised on a small dairy farm in southern Michigan. He and his wife Dana Sue purchased their first farm in St. Johns in 1977. Since then, they acquired another small farm and land in Lenawee County where they built a retirement home. Kevin worked for Michigan Farm Bureau for 20 years in various capacities, finally ending that career as a Livestock and Right-To-Farm Specialist. His career objective has been to be an agricultural leader providing assistance and guidance to Michigan farmers and Michigan citizens as they approach an era of accelerating change.

“Michigan Barn Preservation Network provides an insight to agriculture’s past and the importance the old barn played in making agriculture succeed and grow. In the old days, without the barns, farmers and their families would not have been able to increase their farm operation, which was often centered around animal agriculture. Preservation of the barns in Michigan is a method of preserving Michigan’s agriculture for the next generations. These barns are no different than a museum—something many people enjoy today.”

Keith Kehlbeck, Communications Chair and Newsletter Editor

Keith has been producing the MBPN newsletter since 2011, after having been chosen to take up the mantle of newsletter editor. Since then, he has written and edited nearly 50 newsletters, as well as various communications pieces on behalf of the Network. He is an author, historian, and marketing consultant with clients in the hospitality, nonprofit, and publishing sectors. He has a passion for studying history, and his love of history dovetails nicely with the mission and focus of the MBPN!

MBPN: ‘Promoting Appreciation, Preservation and Rehabilitation of Michigan Barns, Farmsteads, and Rural Communities since 1995.’ We should be proud that we continue to raise public awareness of this important segment of our history and culture.”

Steve Rademacher

Steve lives in Fowler, MI with his wife, Courtney, and one of his four children, Olivia. He grew up on a farm and has worked 20 years as a union carpenter. As the economy slowed, he turned his attention to barns. He has a strong appreciation of the heritage they represent, their construction, and the effort that went into building them. Steve has been mentored in barn repair by Claire Koenigsnecht and has been working steadily at barn repair. He currently serves as Nominations Chair for the organization.

Nichole VanBlaricum

Nichole joined the Board in 2019 and brings a wonderful enthusiasm to her participation with MBPN. With a law degree and a degree in historic preservation, her skills are well-suited to our organization. For her final project at Eastern Michigan University, she conducted a barn and farmstead survey for the MBPN. She continues to help spread her excitement and love for barns.

“Ever since I was a little girl growing up in rural mid-Michigan, I have been fascinated with barns. My grandma had an old barn on her property and my uncle was a farmer, so I passed many hours playing in barns. and spend hours driving around my home county, documenting the old barns that were still standing.”

Richard Harvey

Richard has been on the Board since 2017. He has been part of the Technical Committee and recently has been providing yeoman’s work on the Annual Conferences and Member Meetings. With long-stand-

ing family ties to Cadillac, Richard developed a keen interest in the history of the area. He credits a Michigan Historic Preservation workshop by Steve Stier for developing hands-on skills that helped him in his career and in building and maintaining his own log home.

Emeritus Board Members and Key Volunteers

Stephen Stier, Past President and Technical Chair

Steve grew up on a farm in southern Michigan. Following achieving two master’s degrees Industrial Arts Education and Historic Preservation, he has spent the majority of his working life in different facets of construction including barn work (repair, rebuilding, moving) and teaching timber frame construction. Steve is a founding member of MBPN.

Through his work on the Technical Committee, he helps barn owners understand conditions and make decisions about barn repair and rehabilitation. Since 2017, Steve has organized and lead the Leelanau County Historic Preservation Society in their effort to save the Leelanau County Poor Farm Barn by rehabilitating and preserving it and working with County Parks Commission to find future uses.

Kristine Ranger, Calendar Chair

In the past 40 years, Kristine has coached start up and growth phase businesses and organizations in people skills, team and leadership development, organizational development, business planning, and HR systems and practices. Her consulting focuses on developing high performing work teams; family/farm succession planning; human resource management; and organizational health, culture, and strategy. After Jim Mulvany’s untimely passing several years ago, she has admirably shepherded and managed the MBPN’s calendar project, which provides valuable visibility to the organization.

Marcia Danner

Since Marcia and her husband Gerry attended the 2018 MBPN Conference, Marcia has taken on the role of web-manager “extraordinaire.” She is the go-between that enables MBPN to share our work with the world at www.mibarn.net.

For the MBPN, she follows our internal communications and anticipates what needs to be updated and created. She is a problem solver! Although she spent most of her writing and editing career managing print publications, she eventually transitioned to online media and in retirement, learned how to do websites.

Tammis Donaldson

Tammis has been involved with the MBPN for many years and was a board member beginning in 2010, serving on the Technical committee. Since becoming an Emeritus board member, Tammis has served on the Communications team. As a licensed architect and founder of the firm Ekocite Architecture, Tammis has been interested in residential and vernacular architecture. The firm was the architect of record for the Meadow Brook barn rehabilitation, the carriage barn reconstruction, and the Best View Farm barn stabilization project. Additionally, she was the on-site architect for the relocation of the Ellis barn. This year, she has worked with Laurie Sisco to plan the upcoming fall Barn Tour in Lapeer County.

Great Michigan Barns: Stories to Tell

Every year, many exceptional Michigan barns are nominated for the Barn of the Year Award. All of the 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 routinely recognize their exceptional stories with Certificates of Appreciation as "Great Michigan Barns."

The Gleason ("Gray") Barn

On July 19, MBPN President Tom Irrer and Awards Committee Chair Keith Anderson presented a "Great Michigan Barns" Certificate to John Gleason and Renee' Burton in appreciation for their preservation of the Gleason Family's barn in Spring Lake.

The barn, aptly named the Gleason "Gray" Barn, referencing its distinctive paint job, is a modest gable roofed, timber-frame former dairy barn, dating to the late 1880s, sitting on corner piers. The interior features its original hand-hewn wood beams in its three bays and a mezzanine loft. In the peak of the barn is a relatively rare wood track for the hay trolley that still sits attached.

From its beautifully manicured surroundings to its immaculately clean interior, it is easy to see why the Gleasons love the useful-



Photo provided by Keith Anderson

Left to right in the photo, Tom Irrer, Renee' Burton, John Gleason and Keith Anderson.

ness and nostalgia of their simple gray barn. Currently, the barn is used for the family's woodworking hobby shop.

— Keith Anderson, MBPN Awards Chair

Stephenson Barn Finds New Life as Museum Piece

The climax to the story of the Stephenson Barn could have been like one we so typically hear—yet another iconic early 1900s timber frame barn slated to be torn down to make way for a housing development.

Only in this case, this historic barn ended up being the centerpiece of a pioneer village in the lakeshore community of South Haven. The very owner of the property that had been sold to the developer felt the barn had too much history to be demolished. Spearheading a drive for community support, the 36 x 60 foot former dairy barn was moved to its new home, the Michigan Flywheelers Museum, in 2006. After some major renovations, it is now the backdrop for rustic weddings, museum events like Farm History Day, educational workshops, as well as use by local groups and businesses. One of the unique features is a stamped concrete floor with narrow grooves that accurately represent a traditional wood barn floor. This floor is easy to maintain while preserving the traditional look of a wood floor.

Built by John Stephenson at the beginning of the last century, the barn had been used by his family for years as they raised cattle on their farm. It sat on field stones placed at the corners, had wooden stalls for livestock and a hay loft—plus plenty of dings and gouges. Though thought by many to be a lost cause, with rotten boards in the sides, decay at the sills, holes in the roof, and a number of supporting timber beams needing to be replaced, the daunting task of returning the barn to its former self was successfully undertaken. Much of the work was accomplished by museum members, including cladding the exterior with Southern Yellow Pine—5,000 square feet of the boards produced in a sawmill in Charlotte, Michigan replicated from a piece of the original siding.

In keeping with the farming theme, the interior has been decorated with items like old wooden grain separators, fanning mills, steel milk cans, pitch forks, and an old hay wagon that now sits in the former hay loft.

Its popularity in the community commanding more space, additions to both the east and west sides of the barn now also provide bathrooms and a warming kitchen. A 40 x 64 outside pavilion completed earlier this year now sits adjacent to the barn and is a perfect complement for warm weather use at picnics and music events.



Photo by Keith Anderson

The Stephenson Barn in its new location.

On May 10th, the Flywheelers Museum held their annual Farm History Day, which is a hands-on community educational event open to area schools, homeschoolers, and the public. This year, over 1,200 school children and over 800 adults learned about the lives of early Michigan settlers who lived on farms. Clare Koenigsknecht and Tom Irrer, along with their wives, enjoyed the event. At the conclusion of the activities for the day, a potluck meal was held for over 60 volunteers who had made this special day possible. Keith Anderson, Awards chair for our Barn of the Year program, presented a plaque to president Pat Ingalls and the volunteers in recognition of their accomplishments.

The Stephenson Barn is a perfect example of finding new uses for old barns. Barns that in the recent past were thought to be useless nuisances only standing in the way of "progress." Now, they are treasures to be savored.

For more information on this barn and the Museum, check out their website at: www.michiganflywheelers.org.

—Keith Anderson and Tom Irrer

Quick Takes

Calling All Owners and Photographs for the 2025 Calendar

Each year, the MBPN produces a high-quality calendar that acts as an additional promotional and marketing piece for our organization. We couldn't produce these calendars without the enthusiastic participation of barn owners, who provide photographs and information about their remarkable barns. This is a request for unique barn photos...and for information on the owners of those barns. If you have a photo that you would like considered for the 2025 calendar, please visit our website at www.mibarn.net/calendar to fill out "barn owner info" in order to facilitate submissions of photos for consideration for the coming year's calendar!

— Kristine Ranger, Emeritus Board Member and Calendar Chair



Photo provided by Keith Anderson

The Dickerson Barn receives well-deserved recognition with a state Historical Marker.

Dickerson Barn Receives Michigan Historical Marker

The Dickerson Barn, of Salem Township in Washtenaw County, which was named 2021's Barn of the Year for its Non-Profit Adaptive Use is one of only three barns awarded a State of Michigan Historical Marker in the Statehood Era (1815 to 1860). The other two are the Leelanau County Poor Farm Barn and Gagetown's Octagon Barn.

On July 14, 2024, the Salem Area Historical Society dedicated this Historical Marker Plaza with a replica Tower for the former School Bell to all of the students, teachers, parents and administrators of the South Salem Stone School District #3, and to John Dickerson and all of the settlers who infused this wilderness with the Spirit of Salem.

— Keith Anderson, Awards Chair



Photo by Katelyn Bosch VerMerris

The kids' activity stations were a big hit at the Farm the Zeel event.

Farm the Zeel Event Highlights Barn Preservation in Zeeland

At the Zeeland Historical Society, we have designated 2024 as the "Year of Agriculture!" Our major exhibit at the Dekker Huis Museum, titled "Cultivating West Michigan," celebrates our region's rich agricultural heritage.

On June 22, 2024, in the parking lot of First Reformed Church of Zeeland, we held an event called "Farm the Zeel: Tractor Show and Farm Festival." With over 300 attendees, this event served as an excellent touchpoint for people of all ages to connect with Michigan farms and agricultural heritage.

Featuring 31 tractors, the show offered a fantastic glimpse into farming from the 1950s to the present. Greenmark Equipment even brought a current model to demonstrate modern farming equipment. Sitting on a tractor was a highlight for many kids who participated!

Family engagement was further encouraged through various kids' activity stations. The Zeeland Girl Scouts ran an activity where kids could get their hands dirty, make a newspaper pot, and plant a seed in it. They also learned about the Pigeon Creek Barn Quilt Trail and how to make their own barn quilt. Jaime Johnson from Wheel in the Wild brought her spinning wheel and shared insights on yarn making.

The event also highlighted barn preservation through the Michigan Barn Preservation Network's pop-up exhibit. This exhibit provided an additional educational opportunity for attendees to connect with agricultural preservation issues. With agricultural land and properties being rapidly developed in Ottawa County, the exhibit raised awareness about the value historic barns bring to our community and sparked an interest in preserving our local agricultural heritage. We extend our gratitude to the MBPN for loaning these exhibit panels!

— Katelyn Bosch VerMerris, Director of Zeeland Historical Society



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www.mibarn.net

Share, reuse, recycle this newsletter

Membership Matters! Club or a Cause?

“What do I get for my membership?” My short answer PRIDE!

There are clubs and there are causes. We join clubs . . . to use the golf course, to socialize with a select group of folks or to get special deals on merchandise. I would rather invest in causes. For me, MBPN is a cause that is much larger than a reduced fee. And, because of barns, our members come together from a wide range of interests and experiences. Together we make a huge difference for our families and communities across Michigan. This work increases possibilities in many ways.

Our family invests both time and money in Michigan Barn Preservation Network because we want the outreach and information and awareness around saving and preserving traditional barns to be available and continue into the future. Twenty – thirty – fifty years from now the work we do through MBPN will keep many barns both visible and useful!

This world is better when I can observe around-the-bend and down the street, people working to maintain, preserve, and keep these old barns as a living part of our lives. Doing this we show others how it is possible to repair and adapt historic structures for the original agricultural use as well as for business, homes, nonprofit and community gathering and recreational places.

Your continuing membership is significant because it provides MBPN with a base of reoccurring funds to do the things we do. Your gifts and donations to the general fund and to the MBPN Endowment assist this effort and provides a revenue stream for the future! We cannot imagine today what amazing things we can enable for the future of Michigan’s barns.

MBPN’s 2024/25 goals include:

- growing outreach and membership – with farmers, contractors and preservationists
- partnering with organizations around youth programming
- encouraging contractors to work with barn rehabilitation through awareness and training
- showcasing success stories of saving barns
- strengthening MBPN’s financial endeavors and board development

Get more involved! MBPN needs you and we appreciate your continuing membership and contributions too!

— Julie Avery, MBPN Vice President and Endowment Chair