



*Fall foliage, friends, and barns...What more could anyone want?*

*Photos by Tammis Donaldson*



## Lapeer County Barn Tour— A Lovely Day in the Thumb



On October 15, 2024—the MBPN once again hosted a barn bus tour showcasing the many wonderful examples of Michigan barns throughout the state. This time, the tour took place in Lapeer County, a picturesque county in Michigan’s “thumb.” A full bus of eager barn tour-goers took advantage of a crisp fall day to explore a variety of barns amid fall colors.

This year’s barn tour featured four examples of barns that were part of Michigan’s agricultural heritage and tradition. All four have been beautifully maintained and restored.

### Stonegate Farm (Lapeer)

The tour began and ended 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 completely remodeled 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. The fields around the property are all rented out to farmers where they grow corn/soybeans.

### The Huntsman Barn (Lapeer)

Owned and managed by Jonah Tebbens, the Huntsman Club near Lapeer includes several historic barns that are beautifully maintained. One of the larger barns was built in the 1870s. Originally a



*Lapeer County Barn Tour Committee—Laurie Sisco, Tammis Donaldson, and Melissa Jaskiewicz*

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 this era. The planks 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.

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## President's Message

# Death and Taxes

They say that these two things are inevitable—death and taxes. Personally, I know that death is inevitably getting closer, but there are ways to avoid certain taxes.

As members of MBPN, we are in the forefront of preserving our agricultural heritage. The current activities of MBPN allow us to do that during our lifetimes. There is a way that our individual efforts can bring results after our passing, however. Our endowment offers us that opportunity. Many of you have already contributed to our endowment, making it what it is today. Elsewhere in this newsletter, there is an update on our Endowment Fund. More remains to be done, and there are ways to help our endowment after we are no longer here.

We all have (or should have) an estate plan prepared with an attorney and a tax advisor. We probably will have some assets that will go into our estate. What should we do with them? I have provided for part of the remainder of my estate to be invested in the MBPN Endowment Fund. Many board members have indicated that they have made a similar commitment. As stakeholders in the mission of the Network, I urge you to consider doing the same.

I sometimes wonder what the results of my time on earth will be. What will be my legacy? Did I make a difference – to my family – to my work environment – to my community? I am sure that we all have these thoughts. We want to feel that we have made our part of the world better.

Our endowment will help ensure the future of MBPN. Think about your situation and talk with your family, attorney and tax advisor. Most importantly, think about what you wish to be your legacy.

In the meantime, from all of us in the Michigan Barn Preservation Network, we wish you and yours a Merry Christmas, happy holidays, and a bountiful New Year!

— Tom Irrer, MBPN President



Tom Irrer

## Save the Date:

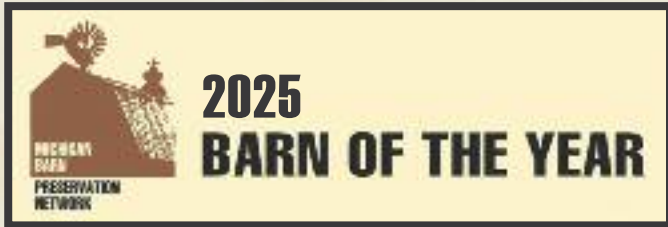
# 2025 Annual Conference and Member Meeting

As reported in our last newsletter, 2025 will be the first time that 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: AgroLiquid in St. John's. Please mark your calendars and stay tuned for more information on the Annual Meeting in the next newsletter and on the website.

As a reminder, 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

# 2025 Barn of the Year: The Search is On!



Calling all Barn of the Year nominations!!

The search for the 2025 Barn of the Year has begun, and we are in the midst of a three-month period of receiving applications (through January of 2025). We request your submissions for these prestigious awards, which are presented annually to honor barn owners who have made the extra effort to maintain or restore historic barns.

This is the 29th year the Network has presented “Barn of the Year” Awards. Over that time period, 110 barns from across Michigan have been recognized for their unique qualities and/or preservation efforts.

The Barn of the Year Program annually honors existing Michigan barns that support the ongoing mission to preserve our agricultural heritage exemplified by its barns. Nominated barns must be in-use, either for continued agricultural use or adapted for other uses. Barns must retain their overall appearance—both in their interior and exterior barn characteristics. Nominations are open to the public, and are reviewed and determined by MBPN Awards Committee members.

The categories in which awards are presented are for barns or farmsteads in use for:

- Continuing Agricultural Use
- Family/Private, Non-Profit or Commercial
- Adapted to Other Uses
- Family/Private, Non-Profit or Commercial

Barns will be judged for (1) completeness of information presented in the application, (2) sensitivity and integrity of repairs or modifications, (3) visual appeal, (4) creativity, (5) thoroughness of work and (6) effort expended to repair and maintain.

Four items are required for the submission:

- A completed one-page application form
- A written narrative of the barn’s history and restoration efforts
- Photographs
- A completed Michigan Barn & Farmstead Inventory

Applications may be reviewed and printed from our website at [www.mibarn.net](http://www.mibarn.net). Completed applications must be postmarked or emailed by January 31, 2025.

**For photos and stories of barns previously recognized as Barn of the Year, also visit our website.**

Each year, Michigan barns and their owners have been recognized for their efforts in preserving icons of our state’s agricultural heritage. The barns these individuals have saved inspire others throughout the state to also become barn stewards, and we thank all of those who participate in the Barn of the Year program.

While only a select few preserved barns have been officially recognized with the Barn of the Year distinction, literally hundreds of preserved barns have been identified as qualified candidates—proving again that barns are valued and worthy of being preserved—not only because of what they meant to those who built

them and regarded them as key to their livelihoods, but also to those who today admire and honor those forebears. While we mourn the increasing loss of these important icons of the past, we rejoice at the fierce dedication of those who are determined to save a barn.

Is your barn worthy of a Barn of the Year Award? We look forward to your nomination!

— Keith Anderson, MBPN Awards Chair

## A Little Barn of the Year History...

The Michigan Barn Preservation Network was founded in 1996 with its mission to promote the “Appreciation, Rehabilitation and Preservation of Michigan’s Barns, Farmsteads, and Rural Communities.”

During its first year, the Barn of the Year Award was created to recognize exceptional examples of Michigan’s barns that have been preserved through regular maintenance or restoration. The first recipient of the Barn of the Year Award was the iconic Octagon Barn located near Gagetown in Michigan’s Thumb area. This very unique style of barn which was built in 1924 was saved through the efforts of the Friends of the Octagon Barn through restoration efforts it began in 2017. Today, it is known throughout the state, draws huge crowds for its Fall Family Festival, and stands as a monument to community commitment to barn preservation. The barn’s Centennial was celebrated in 2024, and it was featured on MBPN’s 2024 Calendar.



Since that first acknowledgement of the special nature of Michigan’s barns in 1997, the Barn of the Year has become a coveted prize to be sought after. In the 25 years since its inception, a total of 110 barns have been recognized for either their unique character, their historic stories, or the heroic efforts toward saving them for future generations to respect and enjoy.

This time of the year begins the search for worthy applicants for the 2025 Award. The Barn of the Year for 2025 will be selected and the Award bestowed on March 15, 2025 at MBPN’s Annual Conference to be held in St. Johns, Michigan. Applications and instructions for nominating a barn are found on the Network’s website found at [www.mibarn.net](http://www.mibarn.net).

*Continued from page 1*

### **The Gregory Dairy Farm (Hadley Township)**

The Gregory Dairy Farm is a Centennial Farm property that includes a large L-shaped barn and a wooden grain 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, noted that the barn has recently been refurbished and painted. 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 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 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.

Among other events, the Ivory Barn recently hosted the

Hadley Township Historical Society Farm Hop. Fresh roasted chestnuts were a particular favorite of tour participants.

### **Metamora Old Town Hall**

Lunch was 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. 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. The restored hall now sits as an integral part of the Village. During lunch, Wendy Lange, a retired scientist with the Engineering Group at General Motors, spoke to the group about all of the beautiful old barns in the area that she has photographed and documented.

The barn tour was a great day of learning about barn styles and architecture, timber framing, and other traditional construction methods as we explored the current use of old barns and the potential for saving or repurposing old structures.

Special thanks go to our newest Board member, Laurie Sisco, and emeritus Board member, Tammis Donaldson of Ekocite Architecture, for organizing this year's tour. Tammis posted extensively about the Barn Tour on our Facebook page, and the Tour booklet can be found on our website.

— Keith Kehlbeck, MBPN Communications Chair and Newsletter Editor

## **Comments from Tour Participants**

"The tour went very well and provided participants a look at four wonderful barns with a lot of history. It is always great to have planners who live in the area and are able to share some personal glimpses of the community. It is also encouraging to hear the story behind each barn and why it still is standing. These aspects of the tour are not always covered in the information found in the tour program, but should be heard by all barn owners."

**Vera Wiltse, MBPN Program Chair**

"I knew Metamora was horse country, but I had no idea of the amazing amount of barns in Lapeer County. I also did not know about how many wealthy Detroit families came up to 'the country'... and who still are! On the bus, I got to know a skilled trades person working at Pontiac, who may have met my father during his tenure at the assembly plant. It's a small world, and MBPN barn tours prove that adage!"

**Tammis Donaldson, MBPN Emeritus Board member and 2024 Barn Tour Co-coordinator**

"From my perspective, I hope all attendees had a good time and felt that they got their money's worth. As we were planning the tour, I blindly knocked on a barn owner's door, which led to them being on the tour. It was also a bonus for me to meet people in the community who I would not have met otherwise. I think tour participants appreciated not having a lunch that was rushed, but maybe they might have wanted time for another barn, smile! My first MBPN Barn Tour was, for me, a safe, educational, and fun experience."

**Laurie Sisco, MBPN Board member and 2024 Barn Tour Co-Coordinator**

"This was our first barn tour. We had a great time. It was a well-organized, stress-free day on the back roads. Fall is a great time for this event, and it was wonderful to meet individuals and to



*Photo by Julie Avery*

*Charlie and Susie Green of Elsie, Michigan are MBPN Cupola members, and this was their first Barn Tour.*

hear stories from those who appreciate our rural history."  
**Charlie Green, tour participant**

"We enjoyed the tour very much, as usual, and we would like to give a 'shout out' to those who organized it. It was a beautiful day and fall foliage galore. We really enjoyed eating lunch in the old town hall. There was an excellent selections of barns, and we really enjoyed the trip to the chestnut farm...where the lesson on chestnuts was very informative. The Hunt Club was awesome!"

**Jeff and Cindy Nussdorfer, tour participants**

## 2025 Barn Tour Images: Camaraderie and Rural Heritage on Display



*Stonegate Farm, the first (and final) stop on the Barn Tour*



*Stonegate Farm owner Charles Schneider addresses tour participants*



*Tour attendees Julie Avery, Clare Koenigsknecht, Ruth Stahl, and Judy Koenigsknecht enjoy the day*



*Tour participants at the Huntsman Barn*



*A day for barn enthusiasts of all stripes*

*Photos by Tammis Donaldson*



*Wood silo roof (interior) at the Gregory Barn*

# Please renew your MBPN membership today!

With a new year comes the opportunity to renew your support for the Michigan Barn Preservation Network...and we need that support! Your continued membership indicates 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 part of our rural heritage. Help continue that momentum by renewing today for 2025.

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. You may renew by mail by sending this form 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.

— Clare Koenigsknecht, MBPN Treasurer

## Please renew your MBPN membership today!

1st Membership Name \_\_\_\_\_

2nd Membership Name \_\_\_\_\_

Business/organization Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_

Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

email \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ \$40 per year - Fieldstone (one individual)

\_\_\_ \$50 per year - Mortar (two individuals at one address)

\_\_\_ \$50 per year - Non-profit (two individuals)

Mailings will be sent to one address.

\_\_\_ \$100 per year - Contractor or business

(indicate 2 names representing the business)

\_\_\_ \$1000 Cupola - lifetime membership (one or two individuals )

\_\_\_ Donation to General fund - Amount \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ Donation to the Endowment fund - Amount \_\_\_\_\_

Send completed form and check or money order to:  
MBPN, P.O. Box 614, Mt. Pleasant, MI 48804-0614

# Sustaining our Future

MBPN's endowment fund is different than most. Often these funds are for immediate and tangible things—a building, land, equipment, or staff. MBPN's is conceived as an investment in the future of our work. In this way, our endowment serves as a sustainable long term asset and an ongoing revenue stream to sustain MBPN's capacity forever. The development and the growth of an endowment fund is a long-range venture. We will always be able to donate in order to build the fund and to utilize its interest for MBPN activities.

Keith Anderson—our board member who coordinates our Barn of the Year program—likes to remind us, “A gift to an endowment fund is a permanent contribution that never goes away! Unlike donations to most charities where the money gets spent, contributions to endowments are secured in perpetuity; the corpus never gets spent. These gifts become a base to generate more funds through investment and interest. Only the earnings on those gifts are available to fund activities and programs that are rooted in the mission of MBPN!”

Our goal is to raise \$500,000 through donations. Donors can feel secure in knowing that their money will always be there, always working for the mission long after they are gone. Now is the perfect time to join us, because...

**We recently received important news: We have a \$25,000 matching fund challenge that expires on December 31, 2024.**

**In other words, the next \$25K in donations will be matched. What a deal!**

Would you like more information about the MBPN Endowment? Visit our website, under “Support”: <https://mibarn.net/support/endowment-fund/>

For additional questions, please contact MBPN treasurer Clare Koenigsknecht at 989-593-2351, or the Capital Regional Community foundation at 517-272-2870.

— Julie Avery, Board member and Endowment Co-Chair

## Endowment History

In 2007, a special committee comprised of board members and fundraising professionals investigated what an endowment could mean for MBPN. We moved slowly and thoughtfully. MBPN established the Cupola lifetime membership option and set those memberships aside as we anticipated establishing a fund.

In 2018, the MBPN Endowment Fund was established at the Capital Regional Community Fund (CRCF) in Lansing, using as the initial investment \$25,000 from lifetime Cupola memberships. The CRCF, which is noteworthy for its efficient fiduciary policies, holds and manages special funds for non-profits across Michigan, generating investments and interest revenue for these organizations.

Since the Endowment Fund's inception, eight current and past MBPN board members' families have contributed \$80,000, and 14 members have contributed gifts totaling an additional \$34,000. Many smaller gifts are received each month, as well. And, Cupola memberships continue to support the endowment.

Currently, MBPN's Endowment Fund stands at \$210,681.

MBPN will be initiating a broad campaign to raise our goal of \$500,000. When reached, this will provide us with \$20,000 annually to support unique activities encouraging and showcasing barn preservation in Michigan.

We urge all Michigan barn lovers to join us as we build the Endowment Fund for our future!

## Centennial Farmers Challenged to Save Their Iconic Barns

MBPN Board Member Keith Anderson brought the message of “Saving Michigan’s Barns” to the annual meeting of the Michigan Centennial Farm Association in November. The event, held at the Meijer Center for Michigan History in Lansing, was the Centennial Farm Association’s first since it became an affiliate of the Historical Society of Michigan earlier this year. Members of the Centennial Farm Association represent families that have owned farms through several generations—at least 100 years. The Association also recognizes farms that have been in the same family for over 150 years—Sesquicentennial Farms!



Anderson brought the message to the 50 or so attendees during his morning keynote that the family farms that started a hundred or a hundred and fifty years ago nearly all began with barns and other agricultural buildings in addition to the acreage they tilled. While all have retained the land for posterity, unfortunately too many of the 100 to 150 year old barns have been allowed to languish and fall. The attendees were challenged to give attention to those barns that are still standing. Tips were given on assistance and resources provided by MBPN in ensuring these pieces of our agricultural heritage were saved for next generations, so that they could still be standing 100 years from now.

Anderson’s presentation was supported by several additional board members able to answer a number of questions from the appreciative audience. Board President Tom (and Marilyn) Irrer, Treasurer Clare (and Judy) Koenigsknecht and Richard Harvey (who is coordinating the search for speakers for next spring’s annual conference), as well as Keith Anderson’s wife, Linda Bradford-Anderson, who happens to be a Centennial Farmer, as well.

Access to a list of the many resources that MBPN can offer barn owners who are in need of guidance on how to maintain or save their barn can be found on the network’s website at [www.mibarn.net](http://www.mibarn.net). Whether it’s a question on where to start, who can do the fixing, or “How do I evaluate my barn’s condition?”, these and other questions can be explored through the website or by contacting members of the Board of Directors.

## “Dickerson Barn Receives Michigan Historical Marker” Correction

Terry Cwik, President of the Salem Area Historical Society, recently offered a small correction concerning the article about the Dickerson Barn in the MBPN Summer 2024 Edition (Quick Takes, “Dickerson Barn Receives Michigan Historical Marker,” page 7).

While both are ‘near and dear’ to the MBPN, the Leelanau County Poor Farm Barn and Gageton’s Octagon Barn are not from the Statehood Era (1815 to 1860). Both were built after 1900.

Other than the Dickerson Barn, the previous two State of Michigan Historical Markers for barns in the Statehood Era are: 1) The Finney Barn that no longer exists, and 2) The Old Stone Barn that was converted to a City Hall and no longer looks like a barn. Here are brief descriptions of those noteworthy barns:

**Finney Barn:** Seymour Finney conducted one of the principal passenger depots of the underground railroad in the Detroit area. Finney, a tailor by trade, later became a hotel-keeper, and it was in this capacity that he assisted fugitive slaves in the era prior to 1861. In 1850, he purchased a site where in later years stood the Finney Hotel, and he also erected a large barn that he operated along with his tavern. Strongly sympathetic with the abolitionist cause, Finney employed every means to assist escaping slaves across the river into Canada. Detroit was one of the most important “stations” en route to Canada; if a fugitive reached this city, he was comparatively safe. The Finney Barn served as a hiding-place for runaways until they could reach the river bank and freedom. Unfortunately, this barn no longer exists.

**The Old Stone Barn:** Built by William Prindle in 1857, this Marshall landmark served as a livery stable for over sixty years. It also saw brief use as a stagecoach stop for the lines connecting Coldwater with Lansing. By 1928, it had become an unsightly gas station. Purchased through the efforts of Mayor Harold C. Brooks, its conversion into a city hall by architect Howard Young was completed in time for Marshall’s centennial celebration of 1930.

Thanks to Terry Cwik for adding context and for correcting the Summer newsletter’s story about the Dickerson Barn’s worthy Historical Marker designation!

## The Cupola Program: A Lifetime of Membership Supporting the Endowment and MBPN

In rural architecture, cupolas were originally a necessary ventilation system for keeping livestock cool and dry. Today’s cupolas come in all shapes and sizes, depending on the architectural features of the barn. No matter what style of barn, cupolas bring balance and style to the structure, and they appear on many barns as a reminder of functionality and as decorative additions to these timeless agricultural icons—which is why MBPN has chosen to name one of its most important programs “Cupola Memberships.”

Barn enthusiasts and supporters of MBPN are increasingly choosing to participate in our Cupola Lifetime Membership program. Since 2010, these memberships have provided the foundation that established our MBPN Endowment Fund, which is an investment in the future of barn preservation



in Michigan and in the stability of the organization. More than 60 individuals and couples currently have Cupola Memberships, which cost \$1,000 (for one or two individuals), and which replaces annual dues renewals—while providing the Network with additional resources to pursue our mission.

As the annual membership renewal period is upon us, we hope that you will take the opportunity to become a Cupola Member. Your check or money order can be mailed to: MBPN, P.O. Box 614, Mt. Pleasant, MI 48804-0614, with a notation that you would like the payment to be designated as a Cupola Membership. Thank you for considering this important MBPN program!

— Keith Kehlbeck, MBPN Newsletter Editor



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*Share, reuse, recycle this newsletter*

## 2025 MBPN Calendars Promote Awareness of the MBPN

One of the great successes of the Michigan Barn Preservation Network in recent years has been the annual calendar that 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 and marketing for the organization. This year, the calendars again will be distributed to members and stakeholders, including many sponsors in the industry.

With silos as the theme, the 2025 MBPN calendar features Wild Pumpkin Farm in Gladwin County on the cover. Its barn has two concrete stave silos with whimsical murals by artist Zach Curtis. Inside is an article by architectural historian Ina Hanel-Gerdenich about the history of silos on Michigan farms.

Thank you to our loyal, longtime advertisers, Cupola members, and new advertisers who supported the printing of our 2025 calendar. The MBPN calendar program wouldn't be successful without the generous contributions that help underwrite the production costs for the calendar. MBPN calendar 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, on our Facebook page, and on our website.

Thank you to the many owners who have allowed us to feature their barns and their stories! The barns have been selected to represent various geographical areas around the state and various uses of the barns and property. We also want to thank all of the photographers for their entries.

Finally, we hope that the MBPN calendars reach barn enthusiasts who perhaps have not heard about the

Network or its mission. If you

come across such individuals, please pass along this message: "You can help us achieve our mission by becoming a dues paying member. Visit our Facebook page or [www.mibarn.net](http://www.mibarn.net) to learn more about our advertisers, barns and restoration efforts, tours, membership benefits, events, and programming."

Have a great 2025!

— Kristine Ranger, MBPN Calendar Chair