

2000 Michigan Barn Preservation Programs and Related Activities

Collaborative efforts in barn and rural historic preservation remain at a high level in Michigan. The chief collaborators in these initiatives continue: the Michigan Barn Preservation Network, the Michigan Centennial Farm Association, the Michigan Historic Preservation Network, the Michigan Humanities Council, the Michigan State Historic Preservation Office, MSU's Extension Service, MSU's Museum and the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

The following four new joint activities were undertaken in 2000 and are generally a transition from barn preservation to broader rural historic preservation considerations.

1. The Michigan Department of Transportation Agricultural Heritage Project

A grant was finalized for a two and one-half year project at MSU for developing an historic context of agriculture in Michigan. A team of more than 20 professionals from several units at MSU is developing guidelines for recognizing structures and landscapes in various agricultural areas. One of the strengths of this project is the linking of broad humanities and social sciences with traditional agriculture.

2. Farm Preservation Efforts

A review of a group of farms outside Petoskey is underway to determine their eligibility as individual farms and as a collection for the National Register of Historic Places. A special effort is being made in this project to use their significance in agricultural production as a basis for their nomination.

3. Value Added/Cultural Tourism

Two new efforts are underway in Michigan to link agricultural heritage with tourism development. These efforts will bring attention to barns, farms and rural heritage. One of the projects is in Michigan's Thumb area and the other in the Peach Ridge area north of Grand Rapids.

4. New Class Opportunities in Agricultural Heritage at MSU

New learning activities at MSU are focused on historic resources such as barns, centennial farms and heritage livestock. Two new courses are underway: *Michigan Agricultural and Natural Resource Heritage* and *The Land Grant System*.

5. Major Study Being Considered

A study of the impact of sprawl—with emphasis on school abandonment has been proposed by the Michigan Land Use Institute with cooperation of MSHPO and the Michigan Historic Preservation Network.

The support and expansion of the Michigan Barn Preservation Network also continues. Program highlights and related activities of the Barn Network for 2000 are here with listed:

Smithsonian/Barn Again exhibit in Michigan very successful. Seven locations. Still receiving comments and inquiries as a result of the exposure.

Michigan's Governor declared 2000 as The Year of the Barn in Michigan.

Membership in Michigan Barn Preservation Network (MBPN) in excess of 300.

MBPN Newsletter mailing to over 1800.

(Policy: free to members, Legislators, Extension Offices, government offices, and sister organizations.

Free to general public for first year. \$10.00 per year after that if not a member.)

Barn Surveys. Two grants awarded to continue with the county windshield surveys. This is handled through the 4-H program and the MSU Museum. Copies of the survey manual are available through the Museum for \$7.00.

Barn Contractors list updated early in 2000. Looking to supplements for next printing.

MBPN membership surveyed at time of renewal. To date largest numbers are from urban or high-density counties. Some from out of state. Most remarks are about their barns. Large percentage does not own barns. Request more on-site, hands-on workshops.

Public Barns. Concern that parks and DNR don't know what to do with barns on public land. They would like to see them go away. We are seeking progress working with them on preservation through alternative uses. Most success is through local concern and involvement.

Notable Specific Barn Situations. (1) **Gagetown Octagonal Barn** working out 25-year agreement with DNR. (2) **Lake Orion** moved private barn to Township park. (3) **Haven Hill** (Edsel Ford Estate) on DNR land. (Local group working to save the sheep barn of approximately 60x230 ft.) (4) **Sleeping Bear Dunes National Park** working to restore several farmsteads on park property—barns included. (5) **Pentwater barn**, built by Charles Mears, a lumbering pioneer, is being repaired and painted. It is on DNR property. (6) **Alpine Township**, North of Grand Rapids (apple country) a barn moved to a centennial farm with country school to be added later for a township living history museum. (7) **First barn in Salem Township** (built approximately 1827) dismantled to be re-erected on lot with one room school as part of a museum/exhibition area. (8) **Historic barn in Oakland County** to be moved to Youth Activities Center.

Where to from here: MBPN is evaluating for future directions. A foundation is being studied. What specific services should be offered? A more active member participation is needed. How do we get this? Are grants and tax breaks needed? Closer work with SHPOs and state agencies is needed—but how? What are some new alternative barn uses?

The Michigan Barn Preservation Network is looking forward to even more successes in 2001.

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