

BARN PRESERVATION PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES (WISCONSIN '03)

Brief History: The Wisconsin Barn Preservation Program began in the fall of 1993, as the result of an invited presentation by Bill Kimball to a number of individuals representing UW-Extension, the SHPO Office, WI Ag-Tourism representatives, agri-business and heritage tourism organizations. The focus of this presentation was on the various and ongoing barn preservation activities in the state of Michigan.

Program Focus: Modeled after Michigan's successful program, the focus of the Wisconsin initiative is as follows: 1) to build public awareness and interest in preserving and protecting historic farmstead structures, 2) to provide technical education workshops where barn owners can interact with other barn owners and seek advice from technical experts, 3) to provide support materials that can assist the barn owner with a preservation project, and 4) to develop an organizational and program infrastructure that can carry out a strong barn preservation program.

Program Collaborators: The Wisconsin program builds on the strengths of four distinct agencies and organizations; the University of Wisconsin-Extension, the Wisconsin Historical Society, the Wisconsin Trust for Historic Preservation (WTHP) and the most recent collaborator, Barns N.O.W! (Network of Wisconsin), a state-wide membership operating under the auspices of the WTHP as a special interest group.

Workshops: The 16th in a series of regional barn preservation workshops which began back in 1994 was held on April 25 and 26 at the Stonefield State Historic Site in Cassville. Just over 100 participants registered for this 1.5 day program, several from nearby states. This workshop differed from previous programs by offering a specialized hands-on instructional seminar utilizing the expertise of a local stone mason. 68% of the participants stated the workshop "met all" or "exceeded" their expectations. Nineteen or approximately 20% of those attending reported that they will use the information in working on their own barn or another preservation effort. Few negative comments were received.

Publications: A number of support documents are regularly updated and distributed as part of workshop materials or are available for downloading from the program's Internet website (see below). Included in this information is a listing of contractors and consultants that are experienced in barn preservation work, a summary of the costs generally associated with rehabilitation work, a bibliography of barn literature, and a summary of adaptive reuse projects involving barns.

Other Activities: Not only did Wisconsin host the Smithsonian travelling exhibit BARN AGAIN!, but 2003 was officially proclaimed the "Year of the Barn" by former Governor Scott McCallum. The Smithsonian exhibit was customized to help tell the story of Wisconsin barn preservation activities and visited 7 different communities around the state. UW-Extension also coordinated a special photographic "barn raising" which asked interested parties to simply send electronic or print photographs of Wisconsin barns along with basic information about the barn. Response has been so overwhelming (over 1000 responses) that the deadline for submissions has been extended to the end of January, 2004. All of these photographs will be combined into an online photo album to be posted on the website. A CD-ROM with all of the images will hopefully be deposited in a time capsule for viewing by future generations. In an additional attempt to capture some of the year-end enthusiasm, a special "package" discount was offered on all four UW-Extension publications in the series titled "Giving Old Barns New Life."

Membership/ Support Organization: Barns N.O.W! (Network of Wisconsin) has been struggling with identity issues for the past year and a half. No new members have been added to its operating board and several board members have become inactive. The organization has failed to request membership renewals in over a year and is currently working with the Wisconsin Trust for Historic Preservation to determine its future either as a working committee or as an independent organization.

Internet Site: In the fall of 1996, the Wisconsin Barn Preservation Program established a World Wide Web site that can be accessed at the following Internet address: <http://www.uwex.edu/lgc/barns/barns.htm> This website was recognized by "TopTenSites" as one of the most helpful websites in its area of interest.