

**ILLINOIS**  
**Illinois Barn Alliance**  
**Annual Barn Preservation Activities Report - 2004**

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**BACKGROUND**

The Barn Alliance grew out of a group of 11 Illinois residents who met at the 2003 National Barn Alliance annual meeting in Chicago. After some quick caucusing following the NBA meeting, the group realized that there was a need to organize in order to share information more effectively. The first full-scale statewide workshop was held in September 2003 in Bloomington, with Chuck Law, NBA President, as the keynote speaker. Nearly 100 people from over 20 counties participated in this first workshop and the work of the group caught the eye of the Rural Affairs Coordinator in the Lt. Governor's office, as well as staffers from DNR and Openlands.

**CONTINUED ORGANIZATIONAL EFFORTS**

In 2004 a core leadership group met three times in person and conducted numerous teleconferences. Initially, the group hoped to run a second barn-related event early in 2004 in the Springfield area, but there was considerable difficulty in locating suitable, affordable space. The **Second Annual Workshop** was eventually held in Bloomington in September, with the kind assistance of the Illinois Agricultural Association.

The Workshop included an entire morning of barn-related success stories: activities, surveys, conversions, rehabs and tourism were all highlighted. Following lunch the group discussed the next steps needed to formalize our organization. Rick Collins from Trillium Dell Timberworks wrapped up the day with a wonderful slide show of barn rehab work his company has undertaken. Our publicity and mailing were not as effective in covering the state this time and, unfortunately, the workshop was very lightly attended.

By the time of the September workshop the group had hammered out a Mission Statement, Goals and draft Bylaws (see attached). These were approved by the workshop attendees.

In October 2004 several committees were formed with organizational responsibilities: Communication, Resource, Finance, Membership and Programs. It is hoped that we can formally incorporate in 2005.

**WEAKNESSES**

Because we have no official sponsor and our membership is widely scattered, we have been challenged to keep the organizational and programmatic efforts moving forward.

To date, most barn survey and/or identification efforts have taken place through local volunteer networks or as part of the planning process in counties with Historic Preservation Ordinances. We have fewer than a dozen barns and/or farms listed on the National Register of Historic Places (compared to 225, for example, in Iowa). Because we are a farm state, the continued existence of farms and their associated work buildings is assumed, despite all of the evidence showing the continued endangerment of these often-obsolete structures.

The Barn Alliance has been offered a spot at the Statewide Preservation Conference in June, but this option is still being discussed. We have had no attendance at our workshops or recognition from the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency. The Extension Service, through the efforts of Wes Winter, has offered considerable clerical and logistical support.

Because we have no official sponsor and our membership is widely scattered, we have been challenged to keep the organizational and programmatic efforts moving forward. We have been offered a spot at the Statewide Preservation Conference in June, but this option is still being discussed. We have had no attendance or recognition from the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency. The Farm Bureau has been only lightly involved.

The Illinois Barn Alliance will need to build more and stronger relationships in order to continue its mission.

### **STRENGTHS**

There is a relatively long list of barn-related activity occurring in Illinois each year (see attached).

This year, a group formed called the Illinois Agricultural Tourism Partners. Their focus is central Illinois and they are a large and active group.

The problem of barn preservation is a statewide issue, with barns threatened equally by urban and rural sprawl and neglect. As in other states, Illinois residents who have a love of barns are passionate about their preservation.

*Submitted by Jean Follett on behalf of the Illinois Barn Alliance, January 2005*