

# **WISCONSIN**

## **Annual Barn Preservation Activities Report – 2008**

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### **BRIEF HISTORY**

The Wisconsin Barn Preservation Program (WBPP) was initiated in the fall of 1993, as the result of an invited presentation by Bill Kimball representing the Michigan Barn Preservation Network. Bill spoke about the various ongoing barn preservation activities and programs in the state of Michigan. This presentation was attended by a number of individuals from the University of Wisconsin- Extension (UWEX), the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) as well as representatives from the Wisconsin Ag-Tourism industry, agri-business and heritage tourism groups.

### **PROGRAM FOCUS**

Modeled after Michigan's successful program, the focus of the WBPP has been: 1) to build public awareness and interest in preserving and protecting historic farmstead structures; 2) to provide peer learning experiences among timber-framed barn owners and access to the advice of technical experts through educational workshops; 3) to provide support materials that can assist the timber-framed barn owner with preservation efforts; and 4) to develop and support an organizational and programmatic infrastructure that can sustain ongoing barn preservation activities.

### **PROGRAM PARTNERS**

The WBPP operated for several years on the strengths of four distinct agencies and organizations including: UWEX; the Wisconsin Historical Society (WHS); the Wisconsin Trust for Historic Preservation (WTHP); and Barns N.O.W! (Network of Wisconsin). The last year or so has been a time of dynamic change for the various WBPP partners. The WTHP experienced significant budget shortfalls and is all but defunct. As the parent organization to Barns N.O.W!, this created some challenges to this organization's functionality as well. At some point in the future, it is assumed that either membership-based organization will be reincarnated. In the meantime, WBPP support continues through the partnership between UWEX and the WHS.

### **WORKSHOPS**

With the organizational challenges faced by both the WTHP and Barns N.O.W!, the last formal educational workshop was held in 2004. Since then there have been a wide variety of related programs including localized barn tours, historic preservation EXPOs, hands-on demonstrations and work-day experiences. Announcements of these events occur regularly on the WBPP website (see below). UWEX and the WHS are poised to support any local planning body interested in coordinating a formal workshop.

### **PUBLICATIONS**

A number of support documents are updated regularly and made available primarily through the WBPP website (see below). Included in these publications are a listing of contractors and consultants experienced in barn preservation work, a set of publications under the "Giving Old Barns New Life" series heading titled the Ethnic History and Beauty

of Old Barns, Wisconsin Changing Farmsteads, Barns and Barn Preservation, and Silos: An Agricultural Success Story, as well as a set of case studies of successful adaptive reuse project involving barns. Another publication in the "Giving Old Barns New Life" series titled "The Repair and Preservation of Windmills" is being planned.

## **OTHER ACTIVITIES**

Much of the work of the WBPP in 2007 focused on the redevelopment and enhancement of its website (see below). An emphasis has been placed on documenting examples of barn preservation efforts underway or that have been completed around the state.

Through interviews with barn owners, a number of projects have been documented in a consistent case study format that will soon be posted on the WBPP website. This type of documentation generates even more interest in barn preservation activities and results in publications like "Historic Barns: Working Assets for Sustainable Farms" released during the year from the National Trust for Historic Preservation that highlighted two different Wisconsin barn "stories." An online "slide show" illustrating a recent barn relocation effort is already available for viewing on the WBPP website. In previous annual reports, the WBPP's efforts at documenting the breadth of architectural styles and construction of Wisconsin's barns through a photographic "barn raising" was noted. Over 3000 photographs were submitted to this effort and are being systematically added to the WBPP website for public viewing. UWEX discovered a number of unrelated private and public collections of barn photographs in going through this process. One of the more significant collections was owned by the Wisconsin Agricultural Tourism Association (WATA) that gathered barn photographs as part of a photographic contest they sponsored in 1995. Almost 900 photographs of Wisconsin barns were received as a result of their efforts and through a cooperative partnership with WATA these photographs will also be added to this online collection. Another interesting initiative by the Green County UWEX office builds on similar efforts underway in Ohio, Iowa and the Appalachian states. Traditional fabric quilting patterns are painted on large blocks of wood (typically 8'x 8') then hung on barns and related farm buildings as a way to promote the agricultural area to tourists. A website supporting this effort ([www.greencountybarnquilts.com/](http://www.greencountybarnquilts.com/)) has been developed which includes information about the initiative, how to apply for a quilt to be located on a property, as well as a map showing the location of those farmsteads with barn quilts.

## **INTERNET SITE**

As noted above, much of the effort during 2007 focused on the WBPP website found at: <http://www.uwex.edu/lqc/barns/> Not only does this site have a new appearance and layout but the website address is shorter than that previously used.

*Submitted by Chuck Law, UWEX Contact for the WBPP*