

The Barn Door



New Uses for Old Barns

By Jerry R. Davis (Extraordinary octogenarian and long-time member of the NBA and MBPN)

In a speech to the Saginaw Historical Museum in early August, author and artist Jerry R. Davis highlighted a number of successful adaptations of historic barns. Born on his family's farm in the Thumb Area of Michigan, Jerry knows a thing or two about barns.

After receiving both a Bachelors and Master's degree in History, and 31 years teaching in various secondary schools, Jerry's artistic talent is just a bonus on his lengthy resume! In 1997 Jerry moved to Albuquerque, New Mexico, and shortly thereafter began his second career—that of writing and illustrating. Gleaning from several of the books he has authored and illustrated on the subject of barns ("Michigan Barns, Et Cetera: Rural Buildings of the Great Lake State" and "Barns From the Land Of Enchantment"), his presentation included examples from two places he knows best.

CASTLE FARMS, CHARLEVOIX, MICHIGAN

This former dairy barn was built in 1918 and 1919 on a 1,600 acre farm owned by Albert Loeb from Chicago, Illinois. Mr. Loeb was the acting president of Sears Roebuck and Company and he established the working farm as a showcase where Sear's customers would be able to see some of the farm equipment sold by Sears, actually in operation.

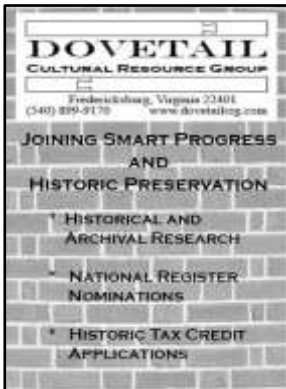
The barn originally housed two hundred dairy cows and it provided the major income for the enterprise.

Unfortunately, the model farm only operated for seven years before an agricultural depression forced its doors to close. Over the next forty years the property was used for a variety of purposes including a casting foundry, an arts and crafts center and even a setting for rock concerts. Sadly, during that time the various structures fell into serious disrepair.



At the turn of the new century, the farm buildings, and some of the surrounding land were purchased by Linda and Richard Mueller. Under their sympathetic, skillful and artistic vision, the buildings were completely renovated. Now Castle Farms has a new persona. It has become a very popular entertainment venue and its various buildings are rented out for weddings, anniversaries and many other formal functions. This drawing appears in my book about Michigan barns and depicts the former dairy barn in its new guise as a party house.

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2013 Annual Meeting: A Celebration in CT!

In early June, a number of NBA members traveled to Old Saybrook, CT, to join the Connecticut Trust in celebrating their state’s beautiful barns and the culmination of their hard work—producing the country’s first State-sanctioned Barn Tour!

The Trust’s event kicked off with a soggy, but incredibly informative tour of several featured barns and wrapped up with a “Boots-n-Bling” hoedown Friday night. Things heated up on Saturday as speaking sessions covered topics like the history of barn construction and farming practices in CT,

zoning and farmland conservation, barn repair, and the rehabilitation of other agricultural buildings. The NBA would like to thank Charles Leik, Jeff Marshall, and Mike Woodford for the time and effort they put into making presentations on behalf of the organization. Additional thanks to Bob and Kathy Sherman, Rod Scott, Michael Spencer, and Cindy Woodford for their assistance during the event and the NBA’s Annual Membership meeting. Highlights of the Annual Membership meeting included the approval of our new membership rates to take effect in 2014, as well as the election of Gina Drew and Danae Peckler to the Board of Directors for a three-year term. Thank you to everyone who participated in the meeting and to Todd Levine, Kristin Young, Helen Higgins, and others at the CT Trust for being terrific hosts!



NBA Past President, Charles Leik, spoke about his work rehabilitating the Red Mill in Portland, MI.



NBA Board Member Spotlight: Pam Whitney Gray

Pamela Whitney Gray spent most of her career in commercial art and the printing industry. In later years she enjoyed her position as an assistant librarian in a small library in Colorado. After twenty years in the Rocky Mountains, Pam returned to Mount Vernon, Ohio to spend time with her parents in their golden years.

Pam and her father, Chuck Whitney (1918–2009), spent many days traveling Ohio and the surrounding states doing barn inspections and helping barn owners to understand and save their barns. Pam’s first book, *Americanization of the Family Barn*, released in 2009, discusses the cultural influences from the Old Country and environmental influences the settlers faced after they arrived in the New World. Her second book, *Ohio Barns Inside and Out with the Barn Consultant* was released in 2011 and was written with the novice in mind. It is a result of Chuck’s dream of writing a book on barns. Although he passed away before it could be completed Pam finished the project.

Pam continues to travel the state spreading the word on the history and historical value of family barns giving Powerpoint presentations. She also continues to do barn consultations and working with families to help them to understand and help to preserve their agricultural heritage. Pam sits on the board of Friends of Ohio Barns and regularly volunteers her services to the Knox County Barn Tour held every two years.

You can learn more about Pam and view her website at www.barnconsultant.com.

New Uses for Old Barns (Continued from Front Page)

**THE ROUND BARN – OJO CALIENTE,
NEW MEXICO**

This barn, in north central New Mexico, was constructed in 1924 to house a fifty-cow dairy herd which supplied milk for the nearby Ojo Caliente Mineral Springs Resort. We learned that this structure has several claims to fame. First, it is the only round barn in New Mexico and, second, it is the only round barn in the United States built of adobe bricks.

This dairy barn has served several functions during its lifetime—including that of a horse barn and it was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1985. During the early 2000s the barn underwent a total interior and exterior renovation which accounts for its present pristine condition.

Presently the barn is used as a banquet hall for seminars, retreats, small concerts and other special events. It has more than 4,500 square feet of area in its two floors and the towering second story hay loft serves as a dramatic and unforgettable dining room.



**THE OCTAGON BARN – GAGETOWN,
MICHIGAN**

This enormous barn was built in 1924 by James Purdy, a banker in the tiny Michigan village of Gagetown. In addition to banking, Mr. Purdy was interested in farming. On a trip to Iowa, he saw his first eight-sided barn and was immediately intrigued by it. When he returned to Michigan, Mr. Purdy hired two local builders to design and erect a duplicate octagonal barn on his property. The result was a structure 102 feet across and seventy feet tall at its center. It has nearly 15,000 square feet in its hay loft and threshing floor areas. Once I was fortunate enough to climb the central ladder nearly to the top. What a thrill it was to look down at the octagonal threshing floor far below!

During the 1990s, the Octagon Barn seemed to be headed for destruction. At the time it was owned by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. The department offered the barn for sale, with the stipulation that the new buyer would be required to move the structure—an almost impossible task.

A small group of people, who later came to be called The Friends of the Octagon Barn, leased the farm buildings and the small plot of land surrounding them. The “Friends” organization grew and eventually was able to purchase the barn as well as the adjacent property. Since that beginning the group has accomplished wonders—including restoring the barn, the house and the garage. Plus, they have moved a number of other historic rural buildings on to the property.

The barn and its outbuildings are now used as a rural museum and the organization invites groups, including school children, to the site for educational seminars, tours, demonstrations and other activities. The Octagon Barn complex is now a valuable educational tool for the entire Thumb Area of Michigan.

**Great Care Taken to Preserve a Rare Barn Type in Ohio:
The Testimonial of Reid Curtis**

I have been a city guy my entire life: Seattle, San Francisco, Boston, Columbus. But I grew up country: camping, farming, and square dancing. My father had a job with the government. He worked in downtown Seattle and wore a suit each day (a suit with a cowboy hat and cowboy boots). So inherently, as I have grown older, my urge to return to my country roots has gotten stronger and stronger.



Northwest oblique of Curtis' barn before rehabilitation, Somerset, OH. All photographs by author.

About 2 years ago, I had an itch to find a weekend retreat. Somewhere to escape from my hectic week at my corporate job with Limited Brands. I searched high and low for my dream property. I drove for hours on end each weekend, looking at properties I had found online. I was a firm believer that the property would find me versus I finding it. And then it happened. I was meeting with my financial advisor (seeking his thumbs up on my dream purchase), and as I described what I was looking for, he started smiling. Just the day before, another client of his had told him about a property that he had just listed: 7 acres in Somerset, Ohio, which is about 45 miles outside of Columbus. On the property was a stone farmhouse built in 1803 and a huge barn of some sort. I knew nothing about barns. I was more excited about the house and the land. He sent me the link that afternoon and I knew it was the right place for me. I drove out the next day to look at the property from the street. I grew more excited. I immediately called the realtor and arranged a walkthrough for the following day. Even more excited. Within 24 hours, an offer was made and accepted. It was mine, finally.

What I realized quickly was that although the home was in remarkable condition, the barn was not. Its foundation was crumbling, the roof was rusted. No drainage. In fact the entire barn was wired up to several trees (apparently trying to keep it from falling down the hill). Over the years, previous owners had "band-aided" its issues. It was such a beautiful, historic piece of architecture, and I loved taking guests inside of it. To me, it felt like I was entering Noah's Ark. The logs were so giant. All hand hewn. Grand in every way. Safety was a giant concern of mine. I didn't want it to collapse while friends and family were inside of it. And to all that entered, it certainly felt like that moment of collapse was moments away. I had a new goal: save this barn. I had options. Tear it down, sell the logs, and make some money on it. But my gut told me that this wasn't the right thing to do. It needed to be preserved. It needed to look the way it did when it was built. The estimates of its "birthday" ranged from 1793 to 1836. I haven't been able to confirm that date.



At left, southwest oblique of barn before rehabilitation and, at right, interior view of crib and threshing floor.



View of southwest corner during work..

Great Care Taken to Preserve a Rare Barn Type (Continued from Page 4)

Before I made my ultimate decision to restore, I needed to do some research. What type of barn was this? How may it have been used? How long had it existed? As I mentioned before, still haven't landed the exact year it was built. What I did learn after reading through nearly every barn book out there, is that it is a Pennsylvania Double Crib Sweitzer Barn. It is even shown in the book, "Pennsylvania Bank Barns" by Robert Ensminger.

The barn is massive in size. A stone foundation, built into the hill with a dramatic cantilevered forebay. Threshing and storage took place on the main floor with animals stored below. The original mangers still existed. Only 2 of the original barn doors were still intact and they were in bad shape. Unfortunately, due to poor maintenance of the water drainage systems (none), the foundation was crumbling or missing in about 20% of the perimeter. Through my reading, I learned that keeping water off the foundation and the logs was the number one priority in barn sustainment. I had no drainage. My roof was rusted and missing portions, and the foundation a mess.

I had worked with Matt Wolf from Centennial Preservation, based in Columbus, on some stone work that needed to be fixed on the house. He was so easy to work with, he understood historical preservation, and his quote was a lot more digestible than some of the others I had received. We came up with a plan in October of 2012 and began the execution of that plan in November. For the next 9 months, through snow, ice, rain, sun, his team worked tirelessly to complete the job. On the list of "to-do's" was: Foundation repair, new roof, new drainage, and new siding. Replacement of all doors (11 in total, 2 of which are 660 pounds each).

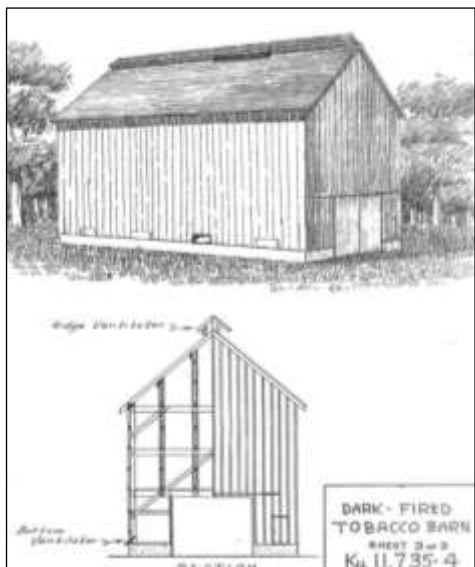
There is no intent for the barn other than to preserve it for others to explore and enjoy. I have no farm animals and I don't grow wheat or hay. My only goal for the bottom floor, where the animals were once held, is to clear it out. Years and years of past owners doing baseline work to keep the barn from collapse. Makeshift support columns were everywhere. At the end of the day, I wanted as much cleared out of the basement as possible to allow space to store for firewood, my lawnmowers, and a car potentially. Matt was able to execute all of the above. I struggled with the decision on barn color for some time. Go red, or leave as is? Ultimately, I have decided to leave as is. I would like it to weather naturally. Electricity may be added in 2014, but it is not a priority right now.

I am so happy with the work that Matt and his team did. A big undertaking and an amazing outcome. It is truly a historical showpiece.

There isn't a weekend when a local stranger doesn't drive up the driveway to check out the progress, to compliment the work, or to just say thank you for preserving a piece of Somerset history; well worth the time and dollars put into the project!



View of southeast oblique of barn after rehabilitation work was complete.



Dark-fired tobacco barn plan developed by Agricultural Engineering, University of KY College of Agriculture, May 1, 1926.

Fire-cured Tobacco Barns in Western Kentucky

By Janie-Rice Brother, Architectural Historian, University of KY

Although white burley tobacco transformed the landscape and agricultural economy of central Kentucky in the 1860s, farmers in western Kentucky have traditionally grown a variety known as dark tobacco. This strain requires fire or flue curing, which is more labor-intensive than the air-cured burley.

Though the growing season of dark tobacco differs little from that of burley, the two months of curing after the tobacco is housed bears no resemblance to air-cured tobacco. Once the tobacco is spiked or tied onto the tobacco stick and hung in the barn, the firing process begins. Rows or “runs” of lumber are laid out along the floor and covered with sawdust. The fire is started and is kept smoldering, producing smoke that cures the tobacco leaf to its desired level of color and texture. A firing might last for 5–7 days. Depending on the size of the barn, a typical curing requires 5–6 firings.

Once the firing process is completed, the barn is opened to allow air to circulate. This particular method of curing resulted in a unique structure that appears little changed from its 19th century roots. Either rectangular or square, fire-cured tobacco barns are usually as twice as tall as they are wide. Unlike air-cured tobacco barns, these barns are tightly sheathed, with horizontal siding over vertical board boxing. Openings are carefully placed to allow the proper amount of ventilation as well as the desired path of circulation through the barn. The windows are hinged and fit snugly against their jambs. A monitor roof might be located on the ridgeline, working with vents near the bottom of the barn to draw air up and through the hanging tobacco. Doors are located on the gable end; either a single sliding door, or a hinged door (or doors) leading onto each cross aisle.

Demand for dark tobacco, primarily used in snuff and chewing tobacco, waned in the late-19th century. At that time, the American Tobacco Company bought tobacco at a fixed price, ensuring no competition in the market. Decreased demand and low prices stoked the discontent of farmers across the state. Because dark tobacco was produced in 28 counties of western Kentucky and Tennessee, this area became known as the “Black Patch.” The “Black Patch Wars” lasted from 1904 through 1911 and pitted groups of farmers, most notably the Planters Protective Association (formed in Guthrie, KY) against tobacco companies. These groups, or cooperatives, held farmer’s crops from the market until an agreeable price could be reached—yet their success depended on cooperation from growers to join the pool. Violence erupted across Western Kentucky as masked “Night Riders” rode across the countryside to intimidate farmers into joining the cooperative. On December 1, 1906, Night Riders seized control of Princeton, the county seat of Caldwell County. Approximately 200 men burned tobacco warehouses and caused more than \$75,000 worth of damage. A similar attack occurred in Hopkinsville, KY.



Northeast oblique of dark fire-cured tobacco barn in Crittenden County, KY (CN-43). Photograph by author.

In 1911, the federal government broke up the American Tobacco Company. Only a few years after the Black Patch Wars, dark fire-cured tobacco production peaked, and by 1950, 13 farms in Crittenden County were producing dark fire-cured tobacco. Since then, the number of farmers cultivating dark tobacco has decreased and no farms in Crittenden County currently grow dark fire-cured tobacco.

Pennsylvania Barn Stories

Submitted by R. Thomas Berner

Mr. Berner is a professor emeritus of Journalism and American studies at Pennsylvania State University who is spending his retirement time working on a documentation project he's dubbed "Pennsylvania Barn Stories." Berner photographs barns throughout the state and gathering oral history associated with them plans to publish a book with the information he collects. With help from the Historic Barn and Farm Foundation of Pennsylvania and local news media, he has tracked down a number of great barns, but we found this one particularly eye catching!

A barn down the road from me is painted with what I thought was an advertisement for Red Man chewing tobacco, complete with the Native American chieftain. Actually, it's a mural commissioned by the owner of the barn who was nostalgic for a piece of Americana and remembered a time when a barn from his youth had a Red Man advertisement painted on it. (The tobacco company no longer advertises on barns.)



View of Red Man Barn from Warriors Mark Township in Huntingdon County, PA. Photograph by author.

The "Art of the Barn Weekend" in Bucks County, PA

Submitted by Jeff Marshall, President, Pennsylvania Historic Barn & Farm Foundation

The 2013 Art of the Barn tour held in July was sponsored by the Bucks County Audubon Society and the Heritage Conservancy. It began Friday with an art preview and lecture, then tours on Saturday and Sunday. Each property had artists showing their work and donating a portion of their sales. The effort was a great success!



The Honey Hollow Visitor Center barn was designed by R. Brognard Okie in 1936. Okie was a well-known architect that specialized in the Colonial Revival style, and his designs incorporated elements of original structures into his own artistic vision. Bucks County Audubon Society renovated the barn in 1996 as a Visitor's Center using earth-friendly construction techniques and materials, radiant heating, straw bale insulation and insulation made from recycled jeans.



The core of this barn on Ash Road in Holicong is a large, full stone, barn mirroring those found in the English Lake District. Unlike the traditional Pennsylvania German barn, this building had no forebay extension on the barnyard elevation. However, like many Pennsylvania barns, this structure is large with the stabling on the lower level and threshing area and hay storage above.

NBA is Racing to Indianapolis for the National Trust’s 2013 Conference!

The NBA has maintained a presence at the National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP) Annual Conference for many years now as it allows the opportunity to reconnect with old barn friends and make new ones with an interest in preservation. At least four NBA Board Members will attend the event and expect to join up with members from the Kansas Barn Alliance, Illinois Barn Alliance, California-Nevada Barn Alliance, and Michigan Barn Preservation Network, as well as staff at Indiana Landmarks—the non-profit preservation organization partnering with the NTHP to host this year’s conference.

The subject of “barn preservation” was recently highlighted in one of the NTHP’s publications entitled, *Ten Ways to Save Your Older or Historic Barn* (available on the PreservationNation website). We are thrilled to see that NBA made the cut—rooted firmly at [Tip No. 5!](#)

Connect with the National Barn Alliance. The National Barn Alliance is a nationwide, nonprofit organization coordinating efforts to save America’s historic barns. They offer a wide array of barn preservation resources on their website, plus newsletters, conferences, barn tours, and meetings. It’s a direct way to connect with barn enthusiasts around the country.

We thank all of the NBA members and barn friends, past and present, that have supported our presence at the conference, and we look forward to celebrating another year of growing interest in barn preservation with the NTHP! Hope to see you in Indianapolis!

A Barn Poem by Jan Corey Arnett

Jan is a long-time NBA member and Michigan author dedicated to preserving heritage barns. She recently published a book on the subject entitled, “American Barns.”

Like a great whale
beached and dying
not knowing why
the great barn is dying

I sit inside this wonderful living thing, this barn
gazing in rapt adoration at its skeleton-like form
beams, braces,
purlins, posts

The barn cries
each time whining wind whips
through murderous holes in its roof
stabbed by errant limbs of a devilish tree
whose roots suck at its very soul

The barn cries

Like the
great whale, beached
the great barn, bends
both are dying
their souls and mine
intertwined

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