

The Barn Door



A Traditional Marriage: Historic Barns & Barn Quilts

By Suzi Parron, author of “Barn Quilts and the American Quilt Trail Movement,” published in 2012.

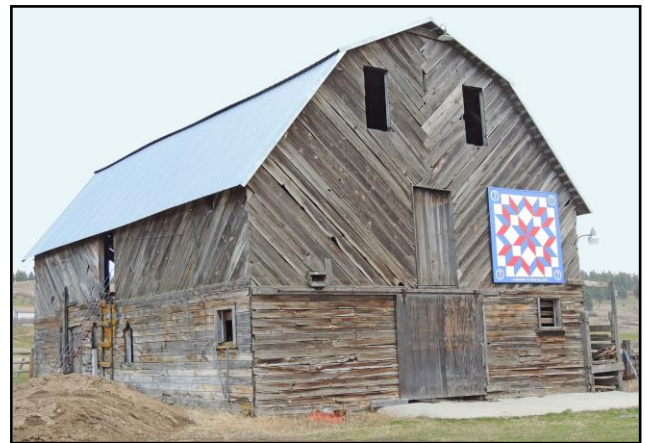
The historic barns of Kittitas County, Washington, are receiving quite a bit of attention these days. Several local barns have been decorated with barn quilts—quilt patterns painted on wood and mounted on the barn surfaces for passersby to see. The effort marks the beginning of the state’s first quilt trail, which encourages visitors to travel the rural countryside and creates renewed appreciation for the area’s barns.

Half of the forty barns that make up the first phase of the trail are more than 100 years old, and the remainder date to the 1960s or earlier. One of the most notable is the Ballard barn in Cle Elum, built in 1900 by the original homesteader, Miles Clinton Ballard. Ballard was a skilled carpenter whose barn is unique among those in the area, designed to survive the valley’s spring winds that often gust up to 60 miles per hour. He designed the barn with lateral boards on the first story and diagonal bracing on the upper half.

The barn was originally used to store hay and to shelter draft horses and also housed calving cows as needed. It is still in active use to store hay and farm equipment. Current owner Chuck Ballard is the sixth generation of his family to occupy the farm, which still has all of its original homestead acres intact. The Wagon Wheel quilt block was chosen because it reminded Chuck of the wagons and buggies that were used on the farm when he was a child. He and wife Bev decided upon a patriotic color scheme to honor their late son Greg, a well-loved and respected firefighter in Cle Elum.

The Barn Quilts of Kittitas County are part of a movement that began with Donna Sue Groves in Adams County, Ohio. Groves and her mother, Maxine, moved to a farm in 1989 that included a tobacco barn.

The circa 1950 barn, like most built for drying tobacco, was plain in appearance—a very simple gable-entry design. Groves was struck by the idea of adding a painted quilt square above the sliding doors to honor her mother’s renowned quilting and the family’s Appalachian heritage. When it came time to complete the project, Groves suggested that twenty barn quilts could be painted and placed along a driving trail that would invite visitors to travel through the countryside. In 2011, an Ohio Star was painted by local artists and installed on a small barn nearby, and the trail of twenty quilt blocks—including one on the Groves barn—was completed over the course of three years. The Ohio Star is one of the most popular barn quilt patterns in its home state and beyond. In Urbana, Ohio, this pattern marks the barn owned by Todd and Jill Michael. The Michaels have owned the property for nearly fifteen years and spent a lot of time researching its history. The 1850 Pennsylvania bank barn and late-19th century, 12-sided addition were present in 1896, when Chauncy Glessner received the farm as a wedding gift from his father.



*Ballard Barn and “Wagon Wheel” Quilt Block,
Photograph by Jacqueline Fausset*

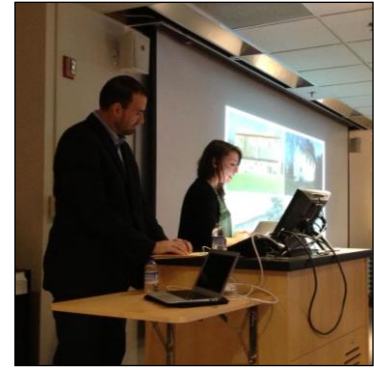
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2013 Winter Meeting: A Great Collaboration

Barn preservationists from around the country convened at the University of Mary Washington in Fredericksburg, Virginia to discuss the current state and future of the NBA and its activities. The two-day meeting highlighted cooperation and collaborations between a number of individuals and organizations with common goals to preserve historic barns.

NBA members and representatives of several state barn organizations attended the meeting, including California/Nevada Barn Alliance, Dutch Barn Society, Friends of Ohio Barns, Historic Barn and Farm Foundation of Pennsylvania, Illinois Barn Alliance, and the Michigan Barn Preservation Network. Presentations were made by students and professors from the University of Delaware and Mary Washington’s Historic Preservation programs, as well as Tom Chapman, the Executive Projects Manager at James Madison’s Montpelier, and our very own Jeff Marshall, who is also the President of the Heritage Conservancy in Bucks County, PA. Other highlights of the meeting included revisions to our Action Plan, updates to our mission and value statements, and a review of responses to our general survey. Many thanks to everyone who participated in the survey and meeting!



Catherine Morrissey and Michael Emmons, Preservationists from the University of Delaware, discussed the development of barns in DE

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NBA Board Member Spotlight: Jerry Damon



Jerry Damon is native of Michigan, born in the town of Howell, who was elected to the NBA Board in June 2012. He currently serves on the Education/Survey and Fund Development Committees. Jerry received a degree in Product Design from Ferris State College and an Engineering degree from Lawrence University. He worked 40 years for Eaton Corporation receiving 13 patents as a product designer, and serving twenty years as an Engineering Manager at two Michigan research facilities.

Outside of work, he is an active outdoors enthusiast and enjoys running, hiking, and bicycling. From 1989 to 1999, Jerry logged over 30,000 miles training and riding triple century rides!

Jerry retired from Eaton in 2002, and has been pursuing a number of ventures, many of which are related to historic barns! Over the past several years, he and his wife, Carole, moved and converted a 150- year-old barn into an energy-efficient retirement home in northern Livingston County. His goal with “the Barn Project” was to live in a building that was standing when Lincoln was President and had a view of farmland and nature. He and Carole have recently added a vineyard to their property and are truly enjoying rural life. This may be partly the result of their neighbors—the Damons one son who lives on the farm next door along with his wife and their two wonderful grandchildren!

In addition to his work for the NBA, Jerry also serves on the Board of Directors of the Michigan Barn Preservation Network, and The Brighton High School Alumni Association. He spends one morning a week at the Brighton Historical Society doing historical document restoration and research.

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****NEW!****

Happy Marriage: Historic Barns & Barn Quilts (Continued from Front Page)

Each of the 12 sides corresponds to a stall below with an interesting feature—round, polished stanchions. According to Michael, broom handles were manufactured in Urbana and were commonly used in barns nearby. Restoring the barn was a project for Michael. The barn’s current appearance belies its age, and the Michaels regularly find visitors pulling up their long driveway to get a closer view of one of Ohio’s treasures.

From its beginnings in Ohio, the barn quilt movement has expanded to 44 states and Canada. Over 4,000 quilts are part of organized trails; hundreds more are scattered through the countryside, not part of an organized effort. A drive along the quilt trail appeals to barn enthusiasts and to those who appreciate the iconic quilt patterns.

A quilt trail near her home in Callaway, Kentucky caught the eye of Posy Lough. Lough creates needlework patterns that celebrate American heritage, so barn quilts were a perfect addition to her “Posy Collection.” The Redwork Quilt Kit features 12 barn quilt patterns from across the country. Included are the Ohio Star, the Snail’s Trail pattern that graces the Groves barn, and an unusual design called LeMoyne with Swallows, which is found on a Century Farm in Johnson City, Tennessee.



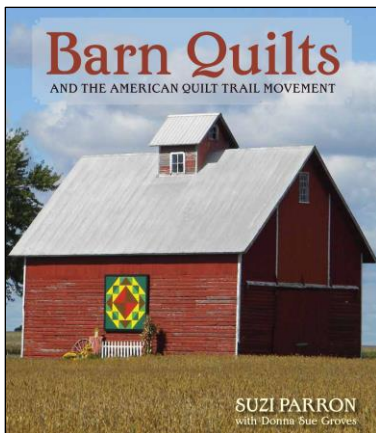
Michael Barn and “Ohio Star” Quilt Block

LeMoyne with Swallows is a reproduction of a cloth quilt sewed by the grandmother of farm owner Marcella Epperson. Epperson’s grandparents, Isaac and Barbara, inherited the property acquired by the family in 1848. Epperson recalls the barnyard in the 1940s and 50s: “There were horses, cows, mules, hogs, chickens, ducks, and guineas—pretty much everything. It was like Old MacDonald’s farm!” The 1898 gable-roofed barn housed livestock until the late-20th century and now sits mostly empty, a hidden gem enjoyed by those who seek it out along quilt trail.



Epperson Barn and “LeMoyne with Swallows”

One of the most well-traveled quilt trails is in Kankakee County, Illinois. The Kankakee trail includes a couple of corn cribs like the 1934 structure on the Larson farm. Dean Larson and his sister Beverly are proud of the hard work that the crib represents. Dean recalls, “The corncrib was the mainstay of our working farm, especially since our father raised livestock. The crib not only stored his entire harvest of corn and dried the ear corn on the vented sides, but also stored smaller grains such as beans in the overhead bins. Our father ground his stored ear corn for cattle feed in a hammer mill contained in the corn crib. Since our corncrib was a valuable asset to our family farm, we decided to honor it with a barn quilt entitled “Corn and Beans.”



The Larson corncrib was selected for the cover of “Barn Quilts and the American Quilt Trail Movement.” The book traces the trail to its beginnings in Ohio and takes readers to 29 states from New York to Colorado with over 80 photographs taken along quilt trails across the country. It also includes dozens of interviews with barn owners, who relate the significance of their chosen quilt patterns along with stories about the barns on which they are mounted.

Each of the 150 known barn quilt trails celebrates a community’s farming heritage. Although quilt squares are the main attraction, barn enthusiasts may find quilt trail maps to be invaluable guides in their travels through America’s countryside. *Information about Parron’s book, The Posy Collection, and the nation’s quilt trails can be found at www.barnquiltinfo.com.*



Barn Image Above is of the Town Farm, Litchfield, CT

Join the NBA in a “Celebration of Barns”!

*Submitted by Helen Higgins,
Executive Director of the Connecticut*

The Connecticut for Historic Preservation will launch a trail of historic barns in the state at its Celebration of Barns event on June 7 and 8, 2013 at the historic Bushnell Farm in Old Saybrook. For information and tickets, please contact barns@cttrust.org.

The Barns Trail will consist of seven drivable/bikable trails across the state. Each trail will feature barns that are open to the public; routes from one of these barns to the next are designed to bring the traveler along scenic roads filled with privately owned barns, not open to the public but visible from the road. Starting points can occur at any point on a tour. Barns that are open to the public include those with local produce farm stands, cider mills, tree farms, wineries, and also blacksmith shops, tool collections and dairy farms. The barns along the route from one agri-business or historic site to the next are private. Some of these are active farms, others are examples of the iconic barns structure that defines the rural Connecticut landscape.

The seven trails are: The Northwest Hills; Fairfield County; New Haven and the Central Valley north and east of it; the Connecticut River Valley South to Glastonbury; the Connecticut River Valley North to Enfield; Southeast Connecticut. The scenic drives will be available using a map from a print brochure or downloading a free iphone app.

Michigan Barn Preservation Network (MBPN) 18th Annual Conference a Success!

The Michigan Barn Preservation Network (MBPN) hosted their 18th annual conference on March 8th and 9th in East Lansing Michigan on the campus of Michigan State University. The two day event started on Friday with a tour of 9 barns in the counties west of Lansing. At each stop the host families present the story of their farmstead and insight into history of the barn. Six of the barns were very similar in size and construction, but their histories were very different and the approach to maintaining them was very different. This comparison was very informative to those in attendance and provided a great insight to options for the maintenance and preservation of a barn.



Image of MBPN Annual Conference Barn Tour

The evening of March 8th was the Annual Awards dinner. Five barns were awarded in four categories. The highlight of the evening was when 17 members of a family were present to receive the “Barn of the Year” Award. The fourth generation of dairyman from the same family work that farm today. Saturday March 9th started with the MBPN Annual business meeting, followed by 9 sessions being offered all around the theme of “Friend a Barn”. An example of a session was “We are Friends of Barns” where stories of successes and challenges of community groups providing stewardship of a barn was presented.

Good Repair: Bank or Bridge Barn by Jeffery L. Marshall

The function of a bank, or earthen ramp, in a traditional Pennsylvania bank barn is to allow wagons to enter on the upper level of the barn above the stabling level which is traditionally below grade. This is either because the barn is constructed into a hillside, or because the barn builders constructed an earthen ramp.

There are many examples of barns where the basement level wall upon which the ramp is constructed is either bowed or has shown signs of failure due to hydrostatic pressure. Farmers often put buttresses on the interior wall to hold back the wall.



Interior Image of Typical Failure in Basement Wall of a Bank Barn



Image of Bowed Wall: Evidence of Structural Failure at Eaves on Opposite Side of the Bank

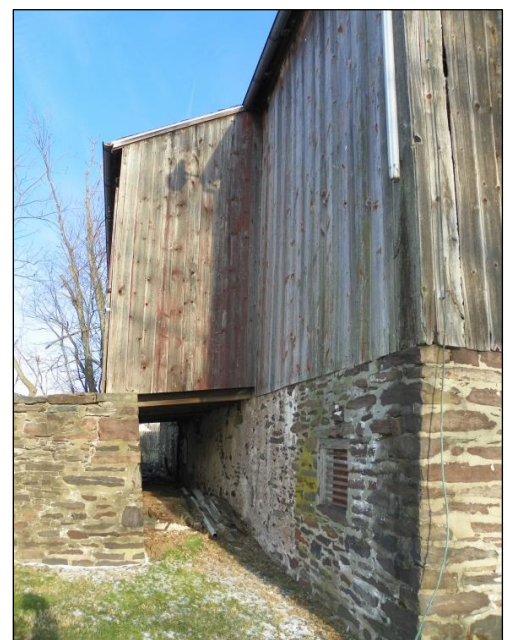


Interior Image of One Method for Repair: Construction of a New Cinderblock Wall to Support Failing Bank Wall Foundation

Another modern-day option to prevent the problem is to create a bank that does not touch the barn wall. The gap between the ramp and the barn must be bridged by either a stone arch, or more commonly a wooden deck. In order to prevent the weathering of a wooden deck, a bridge house is often constructed.

*Far Right:
Bank Wall
Repair and
New Bridge
House*

*Right:
Dramatic arch
on bank side
of a “double-
decker” barn
(note door to
storage area
under bank)*



Relocation & Adaptive Re-Use Success Stories!

Nilsen Barn Becomes New Education/Event/Music Space at Historic Site

Submitted by Keith Cramer on behalf of the Dutch Barn Preservation Society

When the Mabee Farm Historic Site, in Rotterdam Junction, New York, first planned to become an educational center, there was a shortage of space in the original 1706 house and late 1700s additions. The farm’s barns and outbuildings had burned or been removed long ago.



Historic Photograph of the Nilsen Barn Prior to its Relocation

Owner, the Schenectady County Historical Society, partnered with the Dutch Barn Preservation Society (an organizational member of the National Barn Alliance) to find a 1700’s Dutch Barn that was facing demolition. The chosen barn was donated by the Nilsen family of Johnstown, NY, when the family farm was sold to its commercial neighbors. It was fully disassembled, had extensive repairs to the original timbers, with about 20% of the timbers replaced, moved and set on new foundation piers, and had a completely new wide plank floor installed.

The barn measures 50 x 52 feet, providing 2600 sq. ft. of exhibit and event space on the first floor plus another 1100 sq. ft. of storage in the side aisle lofts. Its most useful feature is its wide center threshing floor, measuring 30 x 50 ft, allowing 1500 sq. ft. of unobstructed floor area for weddings, dances, concerts and conferences.

The Nilsen Barn is still a barn, no plumbing or insulation, it is used from May to October, as exhibit and demonstration space for festivals and the Farm’s school field trip programs for up to 2500 students per year. For more information visit our website: www.mabeefarm.org



Interior Image of Nilsen Barn in Use at Mabee Farm Historic Site, Rotterdam Junction, New York.

Photograph by Geoffrey Gross



Left: Interior Image of The Barns at Wolf Trap

Below & Inset: Detail of Re-Used Barrack Pole



Character Wanted! Historic Barns Re-used for Performance Venue

Submitted by Keith Cramer & Danae Peckler

In 1981, Catherine Filene Shouse, gave the federal government “its first and only national park dedicated to the performing arts,” known as the Wolf Trap National Park for the Performing Arts in Vienna, Virginia—a place she had a hand in crafting. Fulfilling her desire to re-create the quality acoustics she once heard in a historic barn in Maine, Shouse “commissioned Richard W. Babcock of Hancock, Massachusetts, a master craftsman and barns historian, to identify two barns for relocation at Wolf Trap. He found the barns in upstate New York and restored and rebuilt them on their present site using only the 18th century ‘block and tackle’ methods, gin poles, ropes, and manpower” (www.wolftrap.org).

These two late-18th century barns enchant thousands of people every year who come to enjoy premier concerts organized by the Wolf Trap Foundation. But perhaps one of the more intriguing components of The Barns at Wolf Trap is hiding in plain view. Close examination of re-used timbers at the interior reveals the re-use of an even earlier farm structure in this barn’s construction: the hay barrack! The inset image above is the top of a barrack pole. Be sure to look for this small wonder on your next visit.



The NBA *Teamwork & Timbers* Dutch Barn Model is part of the exhibition “Architecture of the Farm” at the Franchere Education Center in Rotterdam Junction through May 2013.

Plan a Visit to the Mabee Farm Historic Site for a closer look!

Share Your BARN and FAMILY FARM Stories with the NBA & Smithsonian!

A recent update from the National Museum of American History’s Agricultural Innovation & Heritage Archive (AIHA) project reveals that roughly 40 stories from individuals and families across the country have been accepted into the archive as of mid-April 2013, and by the end of the month, anyone can browse all of the stories that have been collected thus far. When asked “What kind of stories are you looking for?” Curator Peter Liebhold responded:

We want to understand agricultural innovation and many people have responded with stories of change sparked by innovations, inventions, and new processes. Stories about insect proof sprinklers, cow waterbeds, self-propelled sprayers, and crop tracking systems are a testimony to the diversity of American innovations.

Within the theme of innovation, I am less interested in stories that celebrate a particular product or service. Instead, we are interested in the personal experiences related to these innovations. How did they change life on an American farm or ranch? What was the motivation for a new idea? We don't want just new products but how those changes affected people, your community, and you individually.

What about sharing stories about how innovation and technology changed the way we used the extant architecture of our barns and farms? Some of us are probably aware of the ways in which technology and science changed the practice of dairying in this country, but it also impacted other traditional activities like putting up hay in the barn and loading corn into the crib, not to mention the new buildings it brought to the farm. We would love to hear and share your stories on our blog and in our newsletter, but we would also like to share them with the AIHA. You may also submit them directly to the archive by visiting: <http://americanhistory.si.edu/agheritage/share-your-story>

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