

The Barn Door



Restoring the Draft Horse Barn at Rancho Omochumnes

By James Prager, California-Nevada Barn Alliance

James Prager is a man of many talents who spends much of his time in southern California these days, but has traveled with the NBA for many years as one of the founders of CA-NV Barn Alliance. Jim continues to be a strong supporter of barn preservation across the country and certainly practices what he preaches.

The Draft Horse Barn at Rancho Omochumnes was built around 1890 to house and feed the working or draught horses at the home farm of an 1844 Mexican Land Grant known as Rancho Omochumnes. The barn is located on a hill above the farmed fields and out of the winter flooding of Deer Creek and the Cosumnes River. Originally built with a total of 10 draft horse stalls—five on each side aisle—the barn has a central hay storage and feeding area, and a total of five sliding barn doors.

The farming operation moved to tractors, instead of draft horses, beginning in the 1920s, and by the 1940s the draft horses were no longer used. After the last draft horse died in the 1950s, the Draft Horse Barn fell into disrepair. It was used only for the storage of hay and sparingly in connection with the farm's cattle operations.

It stood vacant and in severe decay until the preservation and restoration work began in 2010. An amazing amount of original historic fabric remained to be preserved, including the draft horse tack hanging on the walls! What was missing or damaged beyond repair has been restored, including the wood roof and the wood plank floor. The stalls, doors, and original hay trolley have all been put back in working order.

Paul Oatman, owner of Sherwood Forest Timber Frames and a member of the Timber Framers Guild and TTRAG worked with Jim Prager on the restoration. The ranch itself has been used for farming continuously by the original family.



Top to Bottom: 1910 and 2015 Photographs of the Draft Horse Barn at Rancho Omochumnes, Courtesy of J. Prager.

Restoring the Draft Horse Barn... (Continued on Page 3)

Barn Advocates Come Together in Indianapolis for Indiana Barn Foundation/NBA Conference!

The 2015 NBA Annual Meeting was held in conjunction with the Indiana Barn Foundation (IBF) in July at the Normandy Barn of the Indiana State Fairgrounds. The conference's featured speaker, NBA Board Member, Chuck Bultman was one of several well-seasoned barn preservationists on hand—including NBA Treasurer, Mike Woodford, Past President Charles Leik, Duncan Campbell and Marsh Davis, President of Indiana Landmarks—among others who discussed common barn repairs and took questions from interested barn owners and preservationists in the crowd.

Printing for this Issue of The Barn Door Sponsored by: Bag End, Cazenovia, New York (page 7)

Later that weekend, the NBA held its annual meeting discussing important issues from the past year as well as those leading into 2016. Members also elected a new Board Member, Jennifer Ryall, an architectural historian from Kentucky, and named Chuck Bultman as Vice President. Don Truax and Mike Woodford were re-elected to their positions as President and Treasurer, respectively.



Board Member Spotlight: Emily Anderson, a Young Preservationist from the Blue Ridge Mountains!



Emily Anderson is a recent graduate of the Historic Preservation program at the University of Mary Washington. She is currently employed at Dovetail Cultural Resource Group in Fredericksburg, Virginia where she works as a Preservation Technician documenting and researching old buildings. Emily joined the NBA board in the fall of 2014 and has enjoyed expanding her barn knowledge.

Growing up in the agriculturally rich Shenandoah Valley instilled in her a great interest in and appreciation for buildings associated with farming. Her interest further developed when an opportunity arose to document a barn in Keswick, Virginia, for the Leicester B. Holland Prize through the National Park Service. Through this experience she gained knowledge of barn construction methods and techniques. Emily is eager to increase her knowledge about historic barns and looks forward to the prospect of learning from individuals well versed on the subject. She has a particular interest in the adaptive re-use of barns to determine new and innovative ways to keep these buildings maintained and in use.

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Restoring the Draft Horse Barn at Rancho Omochumnes (Continued from Front Page)

Editor’s note: This past summer, the NBA wrote a letter of support for the nomination of the Draft Horse Barn project as one of the California Preservation Foundation’s 2015 Preservation Design Awards. It’s no surprise to us that it won, of course! As we stated in our letter, “Today, many historic barns are being re-adapted to suit new purposes—a must if we are to conserve these icons of our agricultural heritage—but this makes it all the more striking when someone restores a heritage barn in keeping with its original design and use.”

*Left: Hayloft Pulley.
Top right: Pyramidal bracing extends from the corners to the roof ridge.
Bottom right: Side stalls in the Draft Horse Barn at Rancho Omochumnes.
Images courtesy of J. Prager.*



Michigan Barn Preservation Network (MBPN) Working to Save Historic Granary

Over the past month, volunteers from the MBPN have been working to document and dismantle a two-story granary in Oakland Township, Michigan. The structure measures roughly 20' x 20' x 20' and is in need of a new home. According to MBPN’s Facebook page, “Most of the framing is white oak and the majority of the larger timbers were hand-hewn. Many of the smaller timbers (studs & bracing) were cut on a sash saw... Other than the roof rafters there is hardly any place that will need repair prior to raising this building at its new site.” Visit the MBPN Facebook page for more images and information on this well-built historic granary!



Replacing a Barn Roof—Issues and Options

By Charles Leik, NBA Past President

I'm fortunate to have a medium-sized (30' x 46') barn in good condition located on the 80-acre central Michigan farm where I was born and raised. Although the house dates to 1858, only 22 years after the period of settlement, and the farm has been in our family since 1893, the gambrel roof barn only dates to circa 1936. It is constructed of dimensional lumber, from the Pacific Northwest and South, and replaced an earlier timber frame structure destroyed by fire.

The original roof was of cedar shingles on $\frac{3}{4}$ " x 5.5" roof boards separated by 2.5" spacing. That roof served until the mid-70s when asphalt shingles were installed over the cedar shingles. This was a usual sequence as wood shingles were seldom used in most areas after the 1950s.

In the last several years I found increasing number of asphalt shingles on the lawn east of the barn. They were blown from the upper pitches of the roof (the barn's long dimension faces west and east) by the prevailing westerly wind. Obviously, the roof was going to need attention and this was confirmed by dampness in several areas of the loft floor after rain. What to do?

One cost saving measure would've been remedial work even complete replacement of the roofing on the upper pitches that in my opinion would've avoided re-roofing the entire barn for another ten years. This option wasn't seriously considered as the funds were available for a complete re-roofing and my goal was to leave the farm buildings in a good state of repair for the next generation of the Leik Family. However, I do believe a partial repair is a viable option when the barn requires other urgent attention, e.g. the foundation, and finances are a major consideration.

Several contractors advocated leaving the two layers of shingles and installing 2 x 4s the length of the roof with 2' spacing on which metal panels would be screwed. This seemed to be an economic alternative and I initially valued having the weight of the old shingle layers remain on the barn. This was because my barn like most others is no longer loaded with hay and straw each summer and I reasoned the extra weight would help to ballast the barn against strong winds.

A barn wright and member of the Michigan Barn Preservation Network countered that no amount of weight will protect the barn from the uplift of strong winds. I finally concluded that my intuitive reasoning was probably wrong. A neighbor had steel roofing installed directly on top of multiple layers of old shingles and said this was possible because his 1915 barn stood straight and level without any settling. Some contractors would recommend that a small area be maintained between the new and old roofing for air circulation.



Above: View of workers removing asphalt-shingled roof and revealing original wood-shake roof underneath.

Below: View of roofers installing new steel sheeting on the Leik Family's circa-1936 barn.



Double-Decker Barns: Castles in the Fields



The farm barn is one of the largest in the township, built of stone, with double floor.” Newtown Township, Bucks County described in an 1871 newspaper advertisement.

Jeffrey L. Marshall, NBA Board Member & Historic Barn and Farm Foundation of PA President

“The Barns in Pennsylvania are perhaps the finest in the world” is a quote from S. W. Johnson’s *Rural Economy* (1803) proudly cited in an article by Don Yoder in *The Pennsylvania Barn* (1955). As a Pennsylvanian, I submit that this observation holds true today. Certainly, Pennsylvania barns are among the most dramatic in the country. Even in regions where large barns dominate the rural landscape, the kings of these “castles in the fields” are the double-decker barns.

Double-decker barns are actually three-level barns. This unique form typically consists of a three bay plan. Like typical Pennsylvania barns, there was a bermed basement level used as stables. A double-decker incorporates a third level in what would be a typical two-level banked, basement barn, except it is even taller because of an additional level above the basement level. The third level creates a two-level loft above the basement stable. The two side mows are open on both levels doubling storage capacity by creating deeper lofts. The two levels in the center bay are separated by a ceiling. The center bay of the middle level was enclosed for purpose of storing grain and side mows were open to the upper level. The third floor, arranged in a three-bay composition, consists of a central threshing floor and two side hay-mows, referred to as “sink-mows,” which descend below to the bottom of middle level floor.

The threshing floor is on top of the ceiling and is therefore raised and additional level above the hay mows on either side. This level is reached from the outside by a tall ramp. The granary is usually located under the threshing floor and above the stable level in a closed area. Before the advent of a mechanized hay hoist and trolley this resulted in easier gravity filling for the increased volume of hay *without increasing the height to which grain had to be pitched* as well as providing, a large protected granary. As noted in an 1847 description of such a barn in the *American Agriculturalist*, “It will be perceived that by the arrangement adopted (now commonly followed), the hay and grain when unladen from the wagon, are cast down, rather than pitched upwards, an advantage of the greatest moment, at a season when time and help are of double value”.

These barns are found throughout the counties surrounding Philadelphia. Examples can also be found in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, Montgomery County, Maryland and Warren County, New Jersey. The National Register of Historic Places includes examples in New Castle County, Delaware.



Two very similar barns, one barn in Warren County, NJ (left) and Montgomery County, MD (below) show the outward extent of the double-decker Pennsylvania Barn.

In his classic *The Pennsylvania Barn* (1995) Robert Ensminger notes that this type of barn dates from 1800-1880 and that the double-decker in Pennsylvania is associated with the Quakers practice of continually expanding their "Lake District" bank barns, eventually resulting in a three-story structure standing three-stories high and classified as a "double-decker."



Barn Question Featured in 2017 “Trial” Agricultural Census

An update for those familiar with the NBA’s efforts to get “the barn question” (does your farm have a barn built before 1950?) in the 2017 Ag Census: Last Fall, the NBA urged its members and other barn preservationists online to lobby the USDA and give us a better idea of the number of barns lost on working farms in the past decade. Rod Scot, our NBA volunteer spear-heading this effort, recently spoke with a member of the Senate Agricultural Committee and has learned that the question will be included in a “trial version” of the 2017 Census rolled out this winter. This does not guarantee that it will make the final cut, but stay tuned. We will keep you posted on this development!

Uniquely Beautiful, Circa-1795 Antique Barn Home Makes Great Retreat in New York’s Finger Lakes!

In the 1980s, Randy Nash of the New York Barn Company moved two threatened barns to a scenic piece of property on Route 20-W and began one of his pioneering barn conversions with a circa-1800 English threshing barn. An experienced timber framer and preservationist, Nash has continued to save barns in a number of ways since and was even a featured speaker at the NBA’s 2014 annual conference in Tully, NY.

This particular English threshing barn is now known as “Bag End” to its owners, the King family, who made it their home for over 20 years. Five years ago, the Kings moved into a nearby condominium, but they have kept the property, renting it out for short term stays using HomeAway.com (just visit the website and search for “Cazenovia”—Bag End pops right up with a consistent 5-star rating!). The beautiful barn house has four bedrooms and two bathrooms, accommodating up to 12 people. A charming retreat, it appeals to families who love the informal, private atmosphere in a natural setting, with a special draw for people that dream of restoring a barn! Mr. King has observed, “Once they have driven up our long driveway, guests are in their own private world—even though Cazenovia Lake and Village are only a mile away. Bag End is also adjacent to 9.5 miles of nature trails administered by the Cazenovia Preservation Foundation.”

The Kings support barn preservation in many ways, including the sponsorship of this issue of the Barn Door. NBA sincerely thanks them for all they have done, and continue to do, to help save our barns!!!



An enchanting of view of Bag End, Cazenovia, New York.

Photo: Elisabeth Groat

NBA's Dutch Barn Model Travels to IL, NY, and VA for Raising at Fairs, Festivals, and Universities!

The NBA's Dutch Barn model has had a busy 2015! In the past few months alone it has travelled from the Indiana Barn Foundation conference in Indianapolis to the Illinois State Fair! In October, the model got a lot of attention at three different festivals in New York: the Woodsmen's Festival in East Meredith, the Tractor Fest in Cooperstown, and at the Mabee Farm in Rotterdam Junction for the Schenectady County Fall Foliage Festival. Only fitting as our model is based on such an iconic barn type of that region!



In early November, the Dutch Barn will travel south to Fredericksburg, Virginia, where Historic Preservation students at the University of Mary Washington will raise it repeatedly. Stay tuned to NBA's Facebook page to see more as this great educational tool makes it way to a few more Midwestern states!

This photo of the model is from one of six raisings inside a relocated English threshing barn at the Farmer's Museum in Cooperstown, New York.

Fourth Wall Films Travels to Michigan for "The Barn Raisers" Documentary!

For a number of months now we have been hearing the buzz; there's a movie being made about Midwest barns. The movie is titled 'The Barn Raisers' and earlier this month the filmmakers, Tammy and Kelly Rundle of Fourth Wall Films, joined our Michigan Barn Preservation Network (MBPN) friends and colleagues on their fall tour in Leelanau County; a barn-rich, picturesque county in the northwest corner of Michigan's lower peninsula.

The NBA is an enthusiastic supporter of this movie, along with several other state barn preservation organizations. And to participate further in this endeavor, NBA Board Members, Jeff Marshall and Chuck Bultman, spent a few days with the Rundles on that MBPN tour.

The filming during the tour was quiet and discrete with the filmmakers acknowledging that they are not barn experts, but were relying on the tour participants' and hosts' expertise to shape the discussion. It was fun and interesting to watch them work, to see what they were attracted to, as well as to see them light up when certain barn truths were explained. Teasers from their trips to Ohio and Iowa can be found on their Facebook page ("The Barn Raisers") which tells us that we can expect something quite special come late 2016. Can't wait!



Kelly and Tammy Rundle filming "The Barn Raisers" in early October. Photo credit: Charles Bultman.

The NBA Goes to Washington! Readies for the Past Forward 2015 Conference in D.C.

The NBA has maintained a presence at the National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP) Annual Past Forward Conference for many years now as it allows the opportunity to reconnect with old barn friends and make new ones who have already demonstrated an interest in preservation by attending this national event! 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!



To help pay for our booth fee each year, we coordinate a t-shirt campaign using monies collected from sponsors listed on the back. This year's slogan "Nice Cribs" is a play on words that be lost on some extreme urbanites. Still, we hope it will be a big hit as we sell our shirts and hats in the Exhibitor Hall this year. But we always have a few left over! Both items sell for \$15/each, plus shipping. If you are interested in purchasing either, contact us at info@barnalliance.org while supplies last!

At right: Kansas Barn Alliance mascot, Barny, keeping watch over NBA's booth at the 2013 Indy conference

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