

The Barn Door



A Foray into Historic Barns and Farms

By Michael Spencer

Michael Spencer has taught graduate and undergraduate courses in Historic Preservation since 2006. He is currently teaching as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Historic Preservation at the University of Mary Washington (UMW) in Fredericksburg, Virginia.



UMW Students at Weston Farmstead, Southern Fauquier County.

The Department of Historic Preservation at UMW offered a new elective for the first time this year—a course entitled “Agricultural Preservation.” The objective of the class was to introduce undergraduate Historic Preservation students, and those of several other disciplines, to the specific vocabulary, typologies and surveying techniques as they are related to historic agricultural landscapes. Focusing largely on barns, students began by studying common farm buildings and significant patterns in the history of American farming. With assistance from National Barn Alliance President, Danae Peckler, the course was designed to be field intensive, with many weekend visits to historic farmsteads in Central Virginia. Throughout the Fall semester students have been exposed to various barn types and outbuildings, different methods of construction, and witnessed a multitude of ways in which historic barns and other farm structures have been re-adapted for changing conditions. These site visits has allowed UMW students to better understand the rural patterns of our built environment. Coinciding with the various fieldtrips were class projects involving surveying, research and contextual development for historic agriculture in the area, and many lessons in field documentation for the purpose of producing measured drawings.

While each project involved certain challenges for the students, the contextual development of historic regional agricultural practices in Central Virginia and its impact on the tangible environment proved most difficult. Previous research on the subject in the region was for the most part scarce and involved intensive investigations of archival sources like the Fredericksburg Court Records, which in certain instances provided information relating to 18th century farmsteads within the surrounding counties of Stafford, Caroline and Spotsylvania. Mutual Assurance Policies dating to the same period were also discovered for select farmsteads in the area noting barn size, materials and even proximity to the farmhouse. Due to time constraints within the class the contexts were left at present unfinished but with good foundation material for the next class to build upon.

Through the assistance of Tom Chapman, Executive Projects Manager at James Madison’s Montpelier, students were also given the opportunity to document, through archival research, measured drawings and photography two barns on the estate. The Houseworth barn, a three bay English Barn, located north of the main house, dates to circa 1870 and proved to be an excellent example of late timber framing. This late date provided the students with the opportunity to see a structure which combines both traditional building techniques with more modern methods. The second barn on the property which students documented was located south of the main house on

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Happy New Year Barn-Loving Friends!

Danae Peckler, NBA President

As the new president of the National Barn Alliance, I would like to take just a few paragraphs in this exciting newsletter to introduce myself and share a little bit about my thoughts on ways to continue growing the NBA in the upcoming year. To begin, I was born and raised in the Central Bluegrass Region of the great state of Kentucky, and my identity is firmly rooted in the agricultural landscape that engulfed my small hometown—tobacco, beef cattle, and horses, oh my!

I majored in History as an undergraduate student at Transylvania University and began taking my love of the past beyond the *people and events* to study the *places and spaces* that remain to illustrate history during my graduate studies at the University of Kentucky’s Historic Preservation Department. In researching what remains of the historic built environment, I started to see barns and historic farm properties as the most endangered and overlooked assets of the American landscape. Heritage, by definition, is the lot we inherit from our predecessors; it is the past that shapes our present. As tangible assets of our heritage, America’s historic barns and farms are a reminder of our ancestors’ hard work and of our dependence upon the natural world and its renewable resources—something that we simply should not do without.

Today, I work as an architectural historian within the sector of professional preservation known as Cultural Resource Management (CRM). On a regular basis, I document, research, and evaluate the historic built environment that illustrates the heritage a given area. And to my great delight, this job often gives me the opportunity to survey old barns and assess the historic patterns of agriculture that significantly impact rural landscapes!

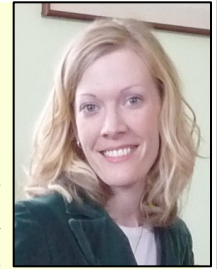
Before moving to Fredericksburg, Virginia in 2009, I had a lot of great jobs in Kentucky that gave me opportunities to study its historic barns and farmsteads. I most recently worked at the Kentucky Heritage Council (State Historic Preservation Office) reviewing federally funded projects for potential impacts to significant historic properties. Prior to that position, I was on staff at the University of Kentucky’s Center for Historic Architecture and Preservation and completed a \$150,000 grant to establish a historic context for agricultural properties in Central Kentucky and framework for evaluating these properties for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. In 2007, I worked as survey consultant for the Rural Heritage Development Initiative, a pilot program of the

National Trust for Historic Preservation. In this position, I documented nearly 1,000 rural historic sites in two Kentucky counties in accordance with SHPO requirements, collected oral history, trained and organized volunteer and student groups, and gave presentations on the project’s findings. And much of this experience informed my Masters project, “The Settlement Period and Diversified Agriculture in the Bluegrass (1770s–1820s).”

I have been involved with the NBA since May of 2009, when the organization partnered with Preservation Kentucky to hold their annual conference at the Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill in Central Kentucky. I was elected to the Board of Directors the following year in Atchison, Kansas, and served in the position of Secretary from 2010 until this past summer, when I was elected President of the organization. And I could not be more excited about the job!

I truly believe that the NBA’s mission and purpose will only gather more support from a broader group of Americans as time rolls on and more barns are lost to history. And in the meantime, my vision for the NBA is simply one of widening our appeal and creating greater opportunities for participation in the barn preservation movement and, by extension, the NBA.

As a national organization, the NBA already acts a platform that illustrates a variety of responses from farmers, citizen groups, and businesses with an interest in saving America’s historic barns. It is my hope that we can engage a broader audience by placing more educational resources on our website, creating an online forum where people may ask questions to fellow members, and by building relationships with the people who love historic barns the most—our membership! So I encourage you and anyone else you know who wants to share their experience to check out the website and become more involved at a local, state, or national level in the barn preservation movement. We at the NBA want to encourage participation at any level: from the folks that are looking for DIY information to keep a roof on the barn to the citizens who want to highlight their area’s barns or nominate a rural historic district for the National Register. At any age and at any stage, the NBA seeks to promote American’s love for historic barns and to preserve them for both present and future generations to cherish!



A Foray into Historic Barns and Farms

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UMW Students Investigate the Houseworth Barn at Montpelier.

the Arlington farmstead. This barn was built circa 1920 for the stabling of horses as well as the storage of a carriage. Structurally, the barn used plank frame construction rather than more traditional timber framing helping to further illustrate to students the technological changes within even the most traditional building practices.

A third agricultural structure, located on Flintshire farm in Caroline County, Virginia, was also documented by students. This early 20th century granary and corncrib provided a number of mysteries as many of its structural elements were re-used from previous structures on the farm, which dates back to the 17th century (Figure 1). The structure also stood in sharp contrast to the Arlington barn at Montpelier as in this instance traditional timber-frame building practices were continued, despite technological advances, including down bracing complete with tree nails (Figure 2). Further illustration of traditional construction is seen in much of the hardware used in the building that is made of hand-wrought iron, including hinges and door latches. These elements were created by the farm's long-time resident blacksmith in the early-twentieth century.

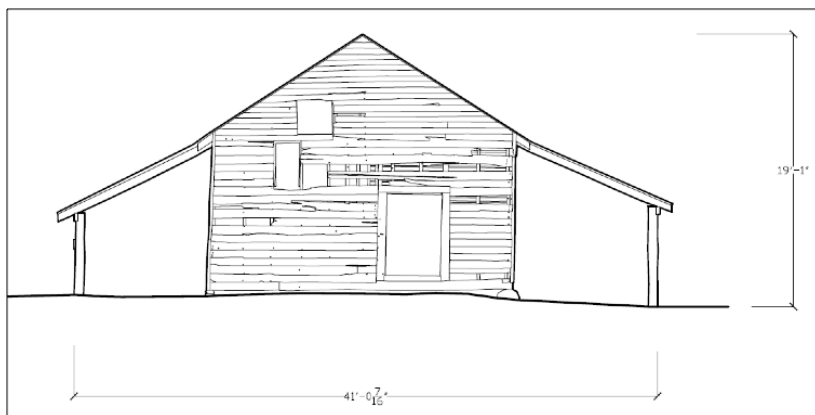


Figure 1: East Elevation of Corn Crib and Granary at Flintshire.

While the semesters has ended, the Department of Historic Preservation at the University of Mary Washington hopes to build on this initial class and to engage further organizations like the NBA. As a follow up to this specific class, students have been given the opportunity to present their final projects—a group-authored report on one of the barns documented during the course to the NBA Board of Directors for review with the intention of creating a short publication promoting the joint effort of the Department and the NBA.** Through such cooperation and joint efforts increased awareness as well as documentation of quickly vanishing historic resources is possible. I as well as my students look forward to discussing such possibilities as we host the upcoming Winter Board Meeting of the NBA on February 15–17th, 2013.



Figure 2: Detail of Interior Elevation of Corn Crib and Granary (with historic graffiti!) at Flintshire.

***The UMW/NBA publication has been funded by a private donation received by the Preservation Department at the University, and it is hoped that NBA can find a small donor who is willing to cover the costs mailing this publication to our full membership. If you, or someone you know, is interested in making a donation to offset this expense, please contact Danae Peckler (president@barnalliance.org).*

Things will be Warm and Bright at the NBA's 2013 Winter Meeting!

As some of our members may already be aware, we are holding our Winter Board Meeting in Fredericksburg, Virginia, in partnership with the University of Mary Washington on February 15th-17th, 2013. The focus of this year's meeting, building mutually beneficial partnerships, could not be timely given the economic climate. And we dare not think about what would happen if we lose the benefit of charitable tax deductions!

Special guests at our Winter Meeting include undergraduate and graduate students, many in Historic Preservation programs, who will present their work to research and document historic barns and farms in Virginia, Maryland, and Delaware. Additional speakers, as well as a roundtable discussion, is planned to elaborate on the work that results in successful partnerships with interested stakeholders in the barn preservation community. The Board will also conduct a few work sessions to review our mission statement and action plan to ensure the NBA's continued growth and relevance to the barn preservation movement.

We will be sure to provide you with additional information and updates on our efforts to build upon on the success of the past few years – so please stay tuned.

You can like us on Facebook, follow us on Twitter, watch us on YouTube, and visit us anytime you want at www.barnalliance.org!

Postcards from a barn....



Winter scene at Dr. Dacelle Peckler's farm in Bourbon County, Kentucky.

The Doncaster Barn or Bayers Barn

By Jill Hotchkiss



The old round barn just outside Twin Bridges, Montana was built in 1882 by Noah Armstrong, one of the lesser known Copper Kings, who was at that time superintendent of the Glendale smelter and discoverer of the Hecla mine in western Montana. Being from Kentucky, Armstrong had a love for horses and horse racing. He purchased the ranch in 1882 calling it the Doncaster Ranch after one of his favorite race horses. He then built a magnificent three-story round barn in which to raise and train race horses. One of the reasons he built it round was so the horses could be exercised in the winter on the indoor track on the ground floor. The ground floor also had box stalls for the horses as well as a saddle/tack room, veterinarian's room, grain bins and office and living quarters for the jockeys or stablemen. The second story housed hay which could be fed to the horses on the ground floor, through openings or chutes on the second floor. The third floor had a large water tank which was pumped there from the well which was underneath the barn and a windmill which was atop the barn. Water could then be pumped anywhere in the barn, under pressure. There was also a freight elevator to transport the hay, grain and anything else to the second floor. This was quite a fancy barn for the day. There was even a carved horse scene above the front doors of the barn. The barn's claim to fame, however, was raising Montana's only Kentucky Derby winner, Spokane, who won the race in 1889. Actually, at that time in history he was the equivalent of a Triple Crown winner, the slate of races being different than they are now.

In 1933 the ranch and barn were purchased by Hereford breeders A.C. "Art" and Elizabeth Bayers and family. After Art's death in 1960 their son Byron Bayers, wife Pauline and their family (Rich, Kathy and Jill) operated the ranch and used the barn for registered Hereford bulls. For over 50 years an annual bull sale was held in the old round barn with a magnificent display of bulls tied on the ground floor where race horses used to train. Over 100 bulls were sold each year and a sale barn which was added to the back of the old round barn. The barn eventually became just as famous for its Hereford bulls as for the race horses for which it was initially built.

In the late 1980s or early 1990s, the barn was sold to Hamilton Ranch, which owns it today.

Teamwork & Timbers Update

By Jerry Damon & Keith Cramer



Teamwork and Timbers, is aimed at teaching timber frame construction methods to everyone, in particular Michigan school children. In 2012, the Teamwork & Timbers barn models went to over 50 events and school programs. It has been seen by over 1500 people, of which about 600 have physically participated in the raising.

A barn within a barn at the Maybee Farm in New York. The Dutch Barn Model pictured.

The Midwest and Dutch barns are quarter-size model barn frames for educational programs. In the past, barn raisings were community gatherings where work was accomplished, traditions maintained, knowledge shared and community celebrated, Teamwork and Timbers does the same with youth of today and the young at heart.

Thanks to the volunteers of the Michigan Barn Preservation Network and the Dutch Barn Preservation Society. It has taken many volunteer hours by dedicated volunteers to make this flagship program successful!

Speaking of volunteers, both the Michigan Barn Preservation Network and the Dutch Barn Preservation Society would welcome additional volunteers to assist with this program. Contact the NBA for more information.



Students from Portland Middle School in Portland, MI, relish their accomplishment after building the Midwest Barn Model.

Photos by Keith Cramer & Charles Leik

Crazy For The Barn Quilt



Quilt Barn in Warren County, Nj. Photo by Jeff Marshall

An interest in barn quilts has grown throughout the USA for this beautiful and unique art form. Through barn quilt squares, many farmers have found a way to draw people to their historic farm properties. Barn quilt trails are springing up throughout the countryside as passers-by admire the artwork of our rural heritage. The promotion of quilt squares as a reflection of women's work has a natural partner in our historic barns--farm buildings which generally reflect the work of men. We are looking to connect with organizations focused on barn quilts and barn quilt tours to see how we can partner by integrating/promoting the history of the canvas -- the barn -- into their tours! Please contact us if you are interested in volunteering for the NBA by partnering with any Barn Quilt Tour groups. We hope to unite the history of rural women's craft with that of their agrarian counterparts, but know that it will take more "hands in the field" to get it done!

Our regional partners:

- Dutch Barn Preservation Society
- Friends of Ohio Barns
- Friends of the Thumb Octagon Barn
- Michigan Barn Preservation Network
- Historic Barns of Nipmose
- Silos & Smokestacks Nat'l Heritage Area
- Timber Framers Guild

We encourage you to visit their websites to learn more. Find these links at www.barnalliance.org.

Not a member yet, or need to renew? Join us in preserving America's disappearing rural heritage today! When you renew your membership you will receive our newly designed bumper stick!

Name _____

Address _____ City _____

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Membership Categories:

- | | | | |
|---------------------------|-------|--------------------------------|-------|
| Student membership \$20 | _____ | Individual membership \$30 | _____ |
| Family membership \$50 | _____ | Not-for-Profit affiliate \$100 | _____ |
| Corporate affiliate \$500 | _____ | Unrestricted gift to NBA | _____ |

Please send to:

National Barn Alliance c/o Ann Marie van den Hurk
1301 North Main Street
Tarboro, NC 27886 USA

Got a Barn for Events?

As a member, you can list for free. Visit our site to find out how!

Thank you!

Barns

Historic Barns of Connecticut
 Updated **SAVE THE DATE!**
 June 7th and 8th, 2013
 Bushnell Farm in Old Saybrook

A Celebration of Barns!

Partnering with the National Barn Alliance, the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation presents a two-day national barn conference - plus much much more



Bushnell Farm is a 17th century, privately owned, historic farm site.



The Connecticut Trust For Historic Preservation
www.connecticutbarns.org

Want to write for *The Barn Door*?

The National Barn Alliance is seeking articles and contributors for our Newsletter, "The Barn Door". The "The Barn Door" is bi-yearly publication mailed to our membership. Articles will also be posted on our blog, "The Barn Journal" on www.barnalliance.org.

We encourage individuals as well as our state and local barn preservation partners to share updates on their activities. This is an opportunity to share your successes with others working to save historic barns in their own states.

Article topics must be barn-focused such as history/preservation, grant programs, kids & education, photos, art, barn facts, endangered barns, saved barns, repair tips, preservation tips, book review, surveys & studies, barn raisings, and tours. *We are also taking calendar submissions for conferences, tours and events.*

There is an editorial board, which will review all submissions. There will be cases where the article is not published in the printed newsletter, but may be published on the website.

Submission guidelines.

- Suggested length is 300 – 600 words. Photos are highly recommended.
- Send article in a MS Word, iWorks Pages, or text in the body of the email. Photos are preferred in .jpeg format as attachments with captions.
- Email article to info@barnalliance.org with contact information.

Our mission is to provide national leadership for the preservation of America's historic barns.

National Barn Alliance

1301 North Main Street, Tarboro, NC 27886 USA

"Preserving America's Historic Barns & Rural Heritage"
www.barnalliance.org