



The Old BARN POST

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Recap of the 2016 Ohio Barn Conference in Butler County

Did anyone say “where’s the coffee?” I know I did, but that is par for the course when we have the conference at a conference center — coffee is expensive at these places and we had to cap the amount so as not to go over budget, and we had a big budget for coffee. We strive to put on an affordable conference but also one that has all the bells and whistles too. It’s not easy. Unlimited coffee was not affordable. But really, bells and whistles are exactly what we did have with the line-up of speakers that we had in Butler County.

Our Keynote was none other than Steve Gordon, the Museum Administrator for the William Holmes McGuffey Museum located in Oxford. Enthusiastic, entertaining and quite knowledgeable in all aspects of historic preservation, Steve was the perfect Keynote speaker. I would like to say that I took in every word that Steve spoke but I was too busy dealing with our “coffee girl” who was keeping me in the loop as to how many carafes of coffee we were going through! And, like I said, we didn’t want to go over budget! But I did hear laughter and several questions so I know Steve did a great job. While Steve was still at the podium, Joe Steiger stood up and offered a couple books he had in his possession to Steve as a donation to the McGuffey Museum (see related article).

After a short break our own Tom O’Grady stood up and gave a typically entertaining talk, this one of the canals of Ohio. Tom even pulled from his attic the carousel projector, not to be outdone by modern technology and Power Point — relics, both of them, the carousel and Tom that is.

And then there was Doug Reed. By this time we had blown through our budget on coffee, although I could have used another cup, even at the 11 am hour, but at least I didn’t have to keep checking with

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Photo by: Sarah Woodall
FOB Vice-President Dan Troth (left) and outgoing President Rick Beck (right) with youngest FOB member yet, Kaiser Werling.



Photo by: Dan Troth
Dan Troth sprints for his third try to join the group photo at the Tom Stander barn before the timer goes off on his camera.



It is hard to see the barnyard fence from a hospital bed.

Even after one arrives home with an arm load of medications, a list of don'ts, and the prospect of a total liquid diet for the next six weeks it takes a while to get one's head wrapped around all that has happened in the last couple of weeks. Especially when most of it seemed to have happened in a fog. But when all is said and done everything has a positive outcome. I am on the road to good health once again. Recovery and stamina will come with time.

I am so thankful for the wonderful team of board members who always carry on and keep things running smoothly.

So excited to have FOB host the Ohio Premier of The Barn Raisers by Fourth Wall Films. Tammy and Kelly made several trips to Ohio and spent many hours traveling, filming and interviewing many people involved with the timber framing industry today. Each with their own reflections of the past and visions for the future. Please put this exciting event on your calendar and plan to attend, August 21st, from 5pm to 9pm at the Amelita Mirolo Barn and community center in Upper Arlington. If you have not visited this magnificent timber frame structure that Friends of Ohio Barns and the Timber Framers Guild restored and raised in 2010 well you are in for two treats that evening. There will be refreshments and appetizers as well as a few remarks and thanks before the 80 minute film, which should begin around 6pm. There is no charge for the event, just come and enjoy a summer's evening with other barn lovers.

Keep the Barn Doors Closed
Pamela Whitney Gray, President



Cherryl Forte, host of the JBD pre-conference workshop, receives FOB sign from FOB board member, Ric Beck.

Photo by:
 Sarah Woodall

"I still find each day too short for all the thoughts I want to think, all the walks I want to take, all the books I want to read, and all the friends I want to see."

- John Burroughs 1837-1921

Scholarship Recipient Parker Edman

"Recently, Sarah Sisser and the rest of Friends of Ohio Barns invited me to participate in this year's Barn Conference down in Butler County, Ohio. It was a fantastic and eye opening experience that I will never forget. I never realized how much engineering and time went into each barn, and how they really are works of art. Once I have the money saved up, I plan to become a lifetime member of Friends of Ohio Barns. I am also now planning to buy, restore, and maintain an Ohio barn once I am older. I can't say enough how thankful, and how grateful I am that Friends of Ohio Barns gave me this opportunity — I can't wait to attend my next Barn Conference sometime down the road."
 — Parker Edman

For his high school Senior Seminar Project, Parker Edman created a concept album based on interviews done with local independent farmers. He turned to Friends of Ohio Barns for help with his project, and they were able to put him in contact with two barn owners — Mark Metzger and Dave Reese.

Parker recently finished his project, and titled it after the centerpiece of American farm life — the barn. You can listen to The Ohio Barn Project, as well as parts of the interviews done with Mark and Dave, on Soundcloud. The link to the music is soundcloud.com/robertleroy.

Parker was our first recipient of a scholarship through our Endowment Fund to attend the Ohio Barn Conference as a result of his enthusiasm and artistic way of capturing the history and stories of Ohio's historic barns.

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Thank You Mike Wengler!

Mike, on behalf of the Board and the entire Friends of Ohio Barns membership — Thank you so much for helping us to put on a great conference in Butler County! Those of us who have worked on the conference, in one way or another, and those other Local Heroes that have helped with other conferences know, very well, how much time and effort goes in to arranging a successful conference. And the Butler County conference was a very successful conference!

We appreciated your knowledge of the area, your knowledge of the barns in the area, the local stories and all the contacts that we needed in order to pull off this conference. It was great to have you on board — you were a tremendous help, truly.

The Board was delighted when you offered to be the Local Hero — having a Local Hero that knows their county well is indispensable. And your enthusiasm was a huge bonus! It is not often that a Local Hero is not only the Local Hero but a docent on a bus and a speaker as well. Thank you.

We have had many Local Heroes over the years and although it seems like a lot of work (and it is) and a lot of hours are spent (and they are), most of the time those heroes tell me afterward that they had so much fun and learned so much more about their county that the overall experience was very rewarding. I hope that you feel that same way and that you have learned something new about the extraordinary place in which you live and



Perched like a barn owl in the rafters of a Butler County barn, Mike Wengler helps the Barn Detectives interpret the history of the ever-changing use of an old hand hewn, timber frame barn.

make your living.

Again, we are very grateful for all your help, input, knowledge and hospitality!

—Sarah Woodall

RECAP, Continued from Page 1

the “coffee girl” as we had maxed our budget and then some. But Doug kept the energy up with his display of passion for old barns and why they should be saved. On a side note I might add that Doug was so impressed with our group that he has offered to come back next year and help out in any way possible. That speaks highly of him and our organization in that he feels it is worth supporting. By now the “lunch girls” were getting restless and Doug is nowhere near done with his presentation so out came lunch while Doug continued and I think it went pretty well although I would have still enjoyed a cup of coffee, even at the noon hour.

After Doug wrapped up we moved right into the Annual Member Meeting that generally occurs during the lunch hour. We began with the Award presentation, the first award being the Hubert Wilhelm Award that was given to Robert F. Ensminger and accepted on his behalf by Doug Reed (see related article). The Board Members of Friends of Ohio Barns have put in a lot of effort and consideration in the conception of this award and we were thrilled to name Bob as the recipient for this year. We announced the Barn of the Year winners and also the newest lifetime members: Nathaniel Stitzlein and Terri Flanagan.

We then moved on to roasting Ric Beck as out-going president with many pictures and commentary from Dan Troth and the membership. Ric was presented with a red

apron and chef’s hat along with an undergarment that he’d rather I not mention. And I won’t, but there is a photo that I will keep on hand, wink wink. I think Ric was ok handing the presidential whatever to Pam Gray after 10 years. We should all thank him every time we see him for a job well done!

And, speaking of thanks....thankfully we always schedule the Barn Detectives right after lunch, especially since I have not had a cup of coffee in a long time, and Rudy and Dan did their job quite well, as usual, keeping us all entertained and awake (after eating) with their interesting comments about the barn tour on Friday. I’d have to say, though, that we did find the best historians in Butler County for this conference. Ed Creighton, sporting his “Got History?” t shirt (and his wife and daughter showed up with the same t-shirt!) demonstrates that there are definitely still many people out there that consider our past and heritage as very important. History. History is why the Creightons chose their farm, the one he spoke about, the one he loves, the one that he now is a part of as was Andrew Lewis. History is how they live their lives.

Thankfully there are people like the Creightons, Steve Gordon, Doug Reed, Rudy Christian, Tom O’Grady and Dan Troth to keep our interest in history. Thankfully. And, thankfully there are people like Mike Wengler. Mike was our local

hero. He was a barnstormer. He was a docent on a bus. He was a speaker (remember the post bottom repair talk/demonstration with Ric Beck?). He was very enthusiastic and helpful in bringing this conference together and he did it because of his love of old barns, old timbers and old timers. Overall? I think it was an exceptional conference. I met new people, saw old friends and feel very fortunate to be a part of organization that cares about old barns.

And then there was the JBD part of the conference. Cheryl and Toby Forte we gracious enough to hold the pre-conference workshop at their lovely farm. Cheryl went all out by giving us a tour of the farmhouse and the barns as well as having several of her contractors on hand to give presentations. I, for one, loved the Orkin man — he suggested I use a turkey baster and powdered Sevin to eradicate my carpenter bees. Well, I tried that but still resorted to the \$3.00 fishing net from Marc’s and have scored more often than not — those bees are too inquisitive for their own good. Cheryl’s contractor spoke to the repairs and her Sherwin Williams guy answered many questions about the paint job on the barn. Cheryl was very forthcoming with all the details about their repairs and renovation work and was very entertaining to listen to as well. Did I mention the cookies? Thank You to Cheryl and Toby for a great JBD Workshop!

By: Sarah Woodall

Why We Silent Auction

Over the years our silent auction, which is held in conjunction with the annual conference, has demonstrated a positive flow of income to our “treasure chest” which impacts our programs by providing a resource for scholarships and supplying funds to the organization and giving us the freedom to make contributions to other barn organizations and our endowment fund.

Our 2016 auction was a success bringing in \$672.00 but, not nearly as successful as years past. This brought about a discussion instigated by our volunteer auction crew who asked Sarah Woodall and myself what can be done to make the auction better. That led to the question being added to the conference wrap up agenda for the May board call. Comments expressed included:

- Maybe we are trying to do too much.
- Do we need more items, fewer items or better items?
- Should we cut back on presentations and allow more free time to visit and bid? (That idea was met with a resounding “no”)
- Should we feature more about the auction in the newsletter or Facebook, i.e. happy winning bidders with their items, happy donors showing their donations or the fist fight photo over who gets the last bid for the jar of honey?

For years now our fabulous volunteers Beryl, Judy and Kendal have done a wonderful job of organizing and displaying all the items and tracking the sales. They have fine tuned the process but we also know and appreciate that they sometimes miss elements of the conference presentations while they are doing their auction jobs. And when we have our breaks, they are working! Thank you ladies! We would like to hear from our conference goers. That's you! What do you think about the auction? It is good, bad, fun or sad? How can it be made better for participants and the organization?

Please send your thoughts to friendsohiobarns@gmail.com

Don't worry; we're all “friends”!

—Laura Saeger



Doug Reed presenting the Wilhelm Award to Robert Ensminger, at his home after the 2016 Ohio Barn Conference.

Hubert Wilhelm Award Presented to Robert F. Ensminger

This year, at the Ohio Barn Conference, the Wilhelm Award for Exceptional Contributions to Understanding Ohio's Heritage of Historic Barns was presented to Robert F. Ensminger while Doug Reed accepted on his behalf. This award was created by Friends of Ohio Barns to honor Hubert G H Wilhelm in recognition of his pioneering spirit and outstanding achievement in promoting the appreciation, significance and preservation of Ohio's historic barns. The Friends of Ohio Barns Board honors those qualified people that emulate Dr. Wilhelm by presenting this award to those inspirational people.

Robert F. Ensminger is a professor of geography, emeritus, at Kutztown University in Kutztown, Pennsylvania, and widely known author of *The Pennsylvania Barn: Its Origin, Evolution, and Distribution in North America*. His book provided the first comprehensive study of an important piece of American vernacular architecture — the forebay bank barn, better known as the Pennsylvania barn or the Pennsylvania German barn. Ensminger's research, diligent

fieldwork, and archival research into the origins, evolution, and distribution in North America of this significant agricultural structure has brought a greater understanding of the importance of the Pennsylvania barn. His work is responsible for the movement to protect and preserve the Pennsylvania barn. His classic work will appeal to students and scholars in cultural and historical geography, folklore, and vernacular architectural history, and American studies, as well as to general readers.

“It [reward] means that it's fun to find barns and share them with other people and hope that they'll be preserved,” said Ensminger. “They [barns] represent the architectural heritage of the Pennsylvania German culture. They're the outstanding building along with the farmhouse of the farm scene in Pennsylvania and therefore we should preserve them like we preserve all important monuments.”

Congratulations to Robert F. Ensminger!

—Pamela Whitney Gray

“...we have become a throwaway society. Instead of honoring and preserving our past, we tear it down, shove it aside, and just go on our merry way. Well, I won't have it. We have to stand firm for what we believe in. Only in the most dire circumstances should a structure of historical significance be demolished.”

Author: Beth Hoffman

Joe Steiger makes a Donation to the McGuffey Museum



Photo by: Tom O'Grady

Joe Steiger (right) making a presentation of historic books to Steve Gordon (left), keynote speaker at Barn Conference and Administrator at William Holmes McGuffey Museum at Ohio University in Butler County.

What a surprise, when a Friends of Ohio Barn member interrupts the Annual Member Meeting with a donation to a museum who's administrator just happened to be our Keynote Speaker, Steve Gordon!

Joe Steiger presented Steve with a book published by the Order of General Assembly in 1825 titled Land Laws for Ohio, a Compilation of Laws, Treaties, Resolutions and Ordinances of the General and State Governments that has a stamp of James McBride on the title page. Mr. McBride was a long-time trustee of Miami and resident of Hamilton, Ohio. Joe also presented An Introduction to Natural Philosophy: A Text Book for Students of Yale College by Dennison Olmstead, 1849. Both books were presented to Steve Gordon, the William Holmes McGuffey Museum Administrator, as donations to be approved and accepted by the Museum. Joe, a retired soil conservationist, was born and raised in Butler County and he wanted the books to be donated to Miami University and it seemed to be the perfect opportunity to do so in front of the membership at the Annual Ohio Barn Conference in Butler County! Thank you Joe!

Are you ready for an adventure?

Ohio's Sights, Sounds, and Smells with the Friends of Ohio Barns folks

The adventure is a driving tour beginning in central Ohio and concluding in the southwestern Ohio area. Included in the sights will be barns, historic homes, barns, historic restaurants, barns and some surprises along the way.

You will need a driver and a navigator for this event so you can enjoy beautiful Ohio during the fall season of spacious skies and amber waves of grain. There will be plenty of breaks along the way to stretch your legs. Restaurants have been prearranged and the historic sites will be ready with tour guides who are anxious to share a wealth of information about their region of Ohio.

After you have made your reservation for this first-time FOB event, you will be given all the information needed — departure times and locations, maps and contact numbers in case you



Saturday and Sunday, October 22 & 23, 2016

are directionally challenged, along with a list of hotel accommodations and approximate meal costs. If you can't meet us at the beginning, you are welcome to meet us along the way.

The FOB Board's goal is 16 members participating but we would need to limit it to 15 cars; many more cars than that could get a bit unmanage-

able as far as parking, getting everyone in and out of the sites and of course being served your meal in a reasonable time.

To make your reservations (by October 3) or to answer questions, please contact FOB board member Dave Hamblin at 419.947.1360 or daveh2949@centurylink.net.

My First Barn Tour Experience

My expectations for my first barn tour were primarily set by the many back issues of *The Old Barn Post* I had read online. My initial impression on that morning waiting in the lobby of the Hueston Woods Lodge was “Wow, there are A LOT of people here!” While Sarah Woodall had indicated that the tour is a popular activity for the members of the Friends of Ohio Barns, I still had capped the number in my mind to one bus load. Around nine o’clock in the morning, I was astonished by the two buses fully loaded with barn enthusiasts. The following account hits the highlights of what impressed me the most about the tour with this new group of people of which I now belong.

My bus was guided by Steve Gordon, a local historian. He pointed out barns of interest all along our way as well as many notable buildings. When he did talk about the barns, he gave the historical names of ownership and statistics of what that farm produced. I thoroughly enjoyed his commentary as it reminded me of a recent activity I have secretly enjoyed at home — reading through the 1870 Ottawa County atlas. Knowing what the farms produced provided a wonderful context for how the barns were utilized at the time they were built.

At our first stop at the Kramer Farmstead, I got my first experience of Rudy and Dan at work as barn detectives. While the tour book statement about the barn gave the date of 1875, Rudy and Dan revised it while we were there based on new evidence they observed. They assessed the original barn was built in 1838. They also uncovered a pinwheel carving on one of the vertical posts, which was used to help keep the proportions correct when building the barn. Rudy emphasized how barns are a tool for farmers, something I had not thought about before. He described how the barns are set up with big doors on the east and west side so the wind could remove the chaff after threshing on the barn floor. Now for those who have been on these tours before, this information is probably Barn 101 but for me, it was exactly the type of information I was hoping I would learn from this tour.

Stop 2, the Good-Hunter Barn, posed a challenge for the bus drivers, who were worried they could not avoid the mailbox when turning into the driveway. So we



Photo by: Sarah Woodall

Ann Krause, holding coat, walking with her new barn friends Carol & Rocky Gaal as they leave the Tom Stander barn in Butler County.

were treated to a police escort that directed traffic around our busses as we got off and walked to the barn. This walk gave us an impressive view of the farm house. In this barn, Rudy and Dan pointed out where the original barn was within the framework and where it was added onto the framework. They highlighted the beams that were hand-hewn earlier but water-wheel sawn later. Again, important construction marks were found written into the beams.

I believe it was in this barn that Rudy said, “You are standing in an old growth forest.” This statement illuminated why I became a FOB member. Back in September 2015, I was at the Malabar Farm Heritage Days and visited the FOB booth. My daughter joined the kids in putting up a timber frame with Paul while I asked Darlyn if she had information on timber framers in Ohio. I had recently started researching alternative methods for house building with the hope of building our own house in the future. Timber framing was one technique I wanted to incorporate if possible. Darlyn gave me the name of an FOB member to get me started but also suggested that I consider saving a barn’s timber frame from destruction like several FOB members had done in building their houses. I had never considered this and, after reading up on FOB through previous newsletters, I determined that the barn



Photo: Tom O’Grady

Pinwheel etching on one of the vertical posts in the Kramer barn left by the barn builder. The dimensions of the arc in the pinwheel are used to help keep the proportions correct when building the barn.

tour would be a good way to get started in my investigations. After Rudy’s statement, I thought to myself, “Why, yes, I would love to live in an old growth forest.” A visit to the farm’s corn-crib solidified this desire. Made out of poplar trees around 1810, one log was estimated to be a tree

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“The Barn Raisers” documentary to be previewed in Ohio, August 21

The long awaited event is coming!

Fourth Wall Films, led by director, producer, videographer and writers Tammy and Kelly Rundle, have put the finishing touches on what they hope to be another award winning documentary. The Barn Raisers will be, at least, their 10th such production.

The Barn Raisers will paint a cinematic portrait of barns and builders and remind viewers that these remnants from America’s rural past are still here to be interpreted and experienced. Barns were constructed by farmer-craftsmen, professional builders who traveled from job to job, and even architects like Frank Lloyd Wright. The film will explore what barn styles, building methods and materials tell us about the people who built them, the life they lived and the role these “country cathedrals” played in the settling and building of the Nation. The Barn Raisers tells the story of barns in the Upper Midwest by examining them through the lens of architecture.

The Barn Raisers has been awarded grants from Silos & Smokestacks National Heritage Area, Humanities Iowa, the Kansas Humanities Council, the Wisconsin Humanities Council, Ohio Hu-

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manities, the Michigan Barn Preservation Network, the National Barn Alliance and Russ & Lu Ann Mawby. Special screenings of the documentary will also take place at venues in Iowa, Kansas, Wisconsin, Ohio and Michigan.

If you remember, Tammy and Kelly were at the 2015 Ohio Barn Conference in Findlay and gave us a sneak peek into the work they had done in the buckeye state. They have spent countless hours filming, interviewing, and researching this project, and we are quite proud to preview the film at the Amelita Mirolo Barn and community center in Upper Arlington. It is a magnificent timber frame structure that Friends of Ohio Barns and the Tim-

ber Framers Guild restored and raised in 2010. Through special arrangement with the Upper Arlington Parks and Recreation Department and Jodi Osborne we are delighted to bring this event to you, August 21st (Sunday) from 5pm until 9pm. There will be refreshments and appetizers as well as a few remarks and thanks before the 80 minute film, which should begin around 6pm. There is no charge for the event.

“This program is made possible in part by the Ohio Humanities Council, a State affiliate of The National Endowment for the Humanities. Any views, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this documentary film and program do not necessarily reflect those of the National Endowment for the Humanities.”

FIRST, Continued from Page 6

that was around 270 years old. Essentially, we were touching a tree that starting growing in this area around the time when the Spanish conquistador Hernando de Soto was in present day Alabama. Who wouldn’t want to be surrounded by nature’s history in their own home?

After an exciting morning of having my head filled with new ideas, we stopped for lunch at the Barn-n-Bunk Farm Market. Throughout the morning, I was finding out how friendly the FOB members are. Lunch was no exception. I had an enjoyable lunchtime conversation with dairy farmers from Findlay and a young lady who worked for an electric company in their area. I was finding that FOB members were people who own farms with barns at various stages of restoration, people who do the restoration work, people who work at non-profits (such as historical societies and metro parks), and people who are interested in houses built from a barn’s timber frame. So here was another aspect I didn’t consider before I

took the tour — that Ohio barns are a binding thread across a diversity of people and their interests.

The fourth stop on the tour was the Lewis-Creighton Farmstead. There was so much going on at this barn and farm it was information overload! Here I picked up an understanding of more barn construction terms like traverse loft, swing beam, and square rule. Ed, the owner, told me about the Hopewell culture artifacts that he found on the property, including an old camp up on the hill behind the barn and mounds in what is now a farm field. We were allowed to tour the farm house full of antiques. I will admit I was particularly impressed with the WPA-built Roosevelt privy out back, the smallest infrastructure I have seen built by that amazing program. I am glad we had ample time to take everything in including the beautiful setting.

By the last two stops, I must have been getting tired as I don’t have as many photos or notes as the previous stops. I

do have a note about that the roof at the Sayers-Stander barn had most likely had been removed by wind at some point in its history prior to 1910. The owner, Mr. Stander, did not have a record of something like this happening. I can’t remember what Rudy and Dan found that led them to this conclusion but at this point of the tour I was fully convinced of their barn detective title! Our final stop was at the barn located on the property of the Oxford Museum Association, where the most memorable things for me were that the torrential rainstorm that had been threatening us all day finally let loose and that I almost missed the bus back to the lodge because I was talking too much.

Overall, the barn tour exceeded my expectations and made me appreciate how very much I am glad to be a part of this group. I also now have a burning desire to stop my car and take a look inside all the old barns I pass in the Ohio countryside.

By: Ann Krause

Elf Making Plaques



Photo by: Robin Troth

FOB Vice President, Dan Troth, burning the midnight oil as he hand hews Barn Of the Year Award plaques from primeval timber for the 2016 Ohio Barn Conference the next morning. Or, something like that.

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