



# The Old BARN POST

A publication of Friends of Ohio Barns • February, 2016 • Vol. XV, Issue 1

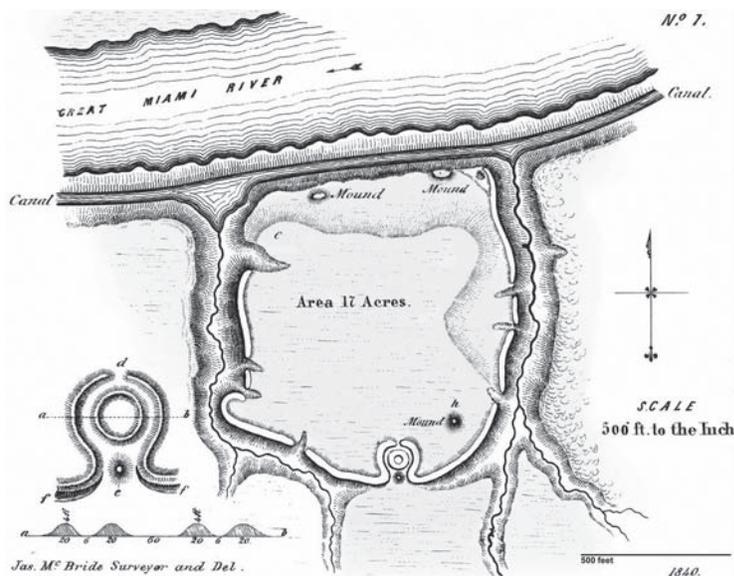
## Butler County to Host 2016 Ohio Barn Conference/Tour

Butler County, Ohio, will be host to the 2016 Ohio Barn Conference and Barn Tour. This should be a treat. Like the rest of Ohio, Butler County is rich in natural and cultural heritage. The limestone bedrock covered by rolling glacial till deposits sustaining beech-maple forests were dotted by more than 250 Native American mounds and geometric earthworks at the time of early settlement.

Dr. Hubert Wilhelm, Ohio Geographer, indicates that by 1850 pioneers from New England and the Southern states had cleared land in the region following the opening of the Ohio Country after the revolution and the end of the Indian wars in Ohio. But the great majority of the new settlers purchasing acreage in the Congress Lands, which became Butler County, were from Pennsylvania and Germany.

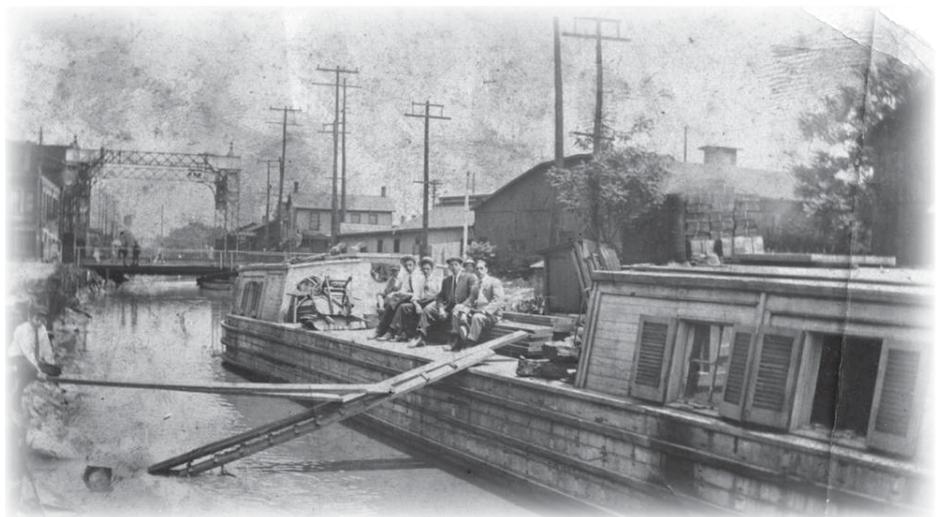
Butler County was formed in 1803 and named for General Richard Butler, a distinguished officer of the Revolution, who fell in Arthur St. Clair's defeat, one of the greatest military routs in American history. Before 1760 Butler emigrated with his brothers from Ireland to America and, for a long time, traded with Native Americans.

According to Henry Howe, in his Historical Collections of Ohio in 1889, "Butler County has been termed 'THE GARDEN OF OHIO.' It is within the blue limestone formation and is one of the richest in the State. The Great Miami, river runs through it. This valley here averages a breadth of twelve miles, and the soil of its bottom lands are of a deep black and famed



Left: An 1840's sketch of a Native American earthwork in Butler County, one of more than 250 earthen structures built in Butler County's prehistoric era.

Below: Combination passenger and freight boat on the Miami-Erie Canal at Middletown in Butler County.



Please See BUTLER COUNTY, Page 3

# Random Thoughts

Where did the time go?

This will be my last random thoughts article; I'm really retiring (really) my post as president of Friends at the conclusion of this spring's conference. I'm still planning to hang around as a board member if you'll have me, but it is time for some new blood in this office. Pamela Whitney Gray will do a splendid job. She has the knowledge, history, experience and vision to carry Friends of Ohio Barns forward.

In retrospect, we have accomplished many things since I took the position in 2006, and it was truly a team effort from you and the board. Some highlights:

**No conference or membership fee increase since 2009** - Lean times challenged us to streamline operations, increase efficiency, and seek out funding sources to supplement costs. I think we have had better venues, presentations, and info for you because of it. The ground work applied by this board will make it easier for new faces to step in and continue the smooth operations of the organization.

**Expanded programs and developed new ones** - Starting with a revamp of the website and a new address with expanded content, we also introduced our Facebook page. We developed a guideline book for the improved barn survey program, and started the Junior Barn Detectives program to supplement our documentation efforts. We've since morphed JBD into the Barn Conservancy Program, and so far, the Upper Arlington Community Center has been the shining example of it. We expanded the Barn of the Year award to include Stewardship, because all barn stewards should be recognized for their conservation efforts! We've grown various policies and guidelines aimed at consistency in services to members and to aid future board members in governance. Finally, we bought needed items for audio/video, web membership services, bookkeeping, and programs.

**Started an Endowment Fund** - To provide financial support for our barn programs, to increase awareness, and to assist educational endeavors, we have way for anyone that wants to support our cause. With over \$15,000 given so far, we have created a substantial little nest egg for the future.

**Got into the film business** - We've had several opportunities to feature the organization and Ohio's great barn stewards over the years through newsprint and media. Cosponsoring the upcoming barn documentary "The Barn Raisers" with fellow state wide organizations will hopefully raise awareness for barns across the country.

Help and suggestions from the members during my tenure has served me well. The board has been a godsend. Their hard work and dedication have done so much to make this organization work, I could easily sit back and think up 'big ideas'. Now, it's someone else's turn. Thanks for allowing me to set the path of Friends of Ohio Barns these last nine years, it's been quite a ride!

Respectfully submitted,  
Ric Beck, president

"Growing up on a farm was the best. I remember loving that expanse of space. The sky at night was so clear, I could see every star."

*-Abby Cornish*

# A Special Thanks to our Endowment Fund Donors!

A special thanks to all who donated funds to Friends of Ohio Barns in 2015! This is the first year that we had such a good response to the BIG GIVE event offered by the Columbus Foundation. The following list of donors is in alphabetical order and bears no association with the value of the donations made. Catherine Albrecht, Charles Bauer, Ric Beck, Pam Gray, Rich & Linda Kolehmainen, Gene Moore, Robert Postle, Rick Secrist, Nathaniel Stitzlein, Jim and Kendal Taylor, Douglas Terpstra, and Lehman Hardware. Your generosity allowed us to allocate \$3750.00 in contributions to our Endowment fund. We also thank all of you who "round up" your auction purchase amounts, as they are factored into our donation reporting as well. Let's keep the positive flow going!

Laura Saeger, Treasurer

## Upcoming Events

**Michigan Barn Preservation Network Annual Barn Conference** May 6th and 7th, 2016 at the Coopersville Farm Museum

Visit their website at <http://mibarn.net> for more information

~~~~~

**Knox County Barn Tour**  
September, 2016

## FRIENDS OF OHIO BARN BOARD

### President

Ric Beck                      Morrow County              (614) 738-4302

### Vice President

Dan Troth                      Delaware County              (614) 989-1122

### Secretary

Sarah Woodall              Trumbull County              (330) 856-9053

### Treasurer

Laura Saeger              Wayne County              (330) 465-7001

### Newsletter

Tom O'Grady              Athens County              (740) 593-7552

### Members

Gary Clower              Trumbull County              (330) 720-6671

Pam Gray              Knox County              (740) 263-1369

David Hamblin              Morrow County              (419) 947-1360

Sarah Sisser              Hancock County              (912) 604-5598

### Affiliate

Chris Clower (IT)              Trumbull County              (330) 989-4528

Hollow Earth marker on the grave of Captain John Cleves Symmes, Jr. in Butler County.



## BUTLER COUNTY, Continued from Page 1

for their immense crops of corn, while the uplands are equally well adapted to wheat and barley. The county is traversed by so many small streams that over 1,000 bridges are in use. The uplands are beautifully undulating, forming charming scenes of pastoral beauty. A large proportion of its population is of German descent.” “Butler County,” says Professor Edward Orton (State Geologist and first president of Ohio State University), “stands scarcely second in productive power to any equal area in the State. No qualification certainly would be required if the valley of the Great Miami and that portion of the county lying east of the river were alone to be taken into account. This region might put in an unquestioned claim to be styled the Garden of Ohio.”

Another large group of immigrants settling in Butler County were the Irish. In late July, 1825 the Miami-Erie Canal started with a groundbreaking on Daniel Doty’s farm, then south of Middletown. Many of the canal workers were Irish immigrants and a Middletown neighborhood east of the canal became known as Little Dublin during the construction period.

The canal’s route of about 25 miles through Butler County touched several canal towns where surplus agricultural products were loaded onto canal boats and moved to larger markets. According to an 1859 report, there were 10 locks and four aqueducts carrying canal boats across streams in Butler County.

Eventually connecting Lake Erie at Toledo with the Ohio River at Cincinnati, the Miami and Erie Canal was a major influence on the economic development of western Ohio. The abundant agricultural surplus produced on the glacial till plains



Bank barn and residence of the Shafor Family along the Miami-Erie Canal near Middletown. From the Combination Atlas Map of Butler County, Ohio 1857.



Old stone pier (at far right) on which the telescope of the second observatory in North America was mounted on the campus of Miami University in the 1830’s.

of the western part of Ohio found its way to markets inaccessible before the opening of the canal.

Butler County was also home to some early interests in the nature of planet Earth and its place among the stars. Captain John Cleves Symmes, Jr. developed the “Hollow Earth” Theory, proposing that the planet had a hollow center with holes at the north and south poles. Undeterred by criticism and ridicule he lectured widely on the topic. Buried in Symmes Cemetery in Butler County his grave is marked by a monument topped with a hollow sphere. In 1878, a small book was published with the rather lengthy title - *Symmes’s Theory of Concentric Spheres: Demonstrating That the Earth is Hollow, Habitable Within, and Widely Open About the Poles, Compiled by Americus Symmes, from the Writings of his Father, Capt. John Cleves Symmes*. This 19th century idea still has legs today as witnessed by the plethora of websites, books, conferences and even a radio station.

In Oxford, on the Miami University campus, stands a non-descript stone, about three feet high and two feet square that is passed unnoticed by thousands each day. Cast iron braces on the stone pier held a telescope, the second observatory

in North America, established in 1838. A few months later, a third observatory was established, that also in Ohio, at Western Reserve College in Hudson. While the observatory and telescope are still in service in Hudson, only the old stone pier remains on the campus in Oxford, at best a vague reminder of Ohio’s leadership in science in early American history.

Butler County was home to a couple of governors, several athletes, musicians, politicians and a Medal of Honor recipient in the Civil War. A few other Butler County personalities of note include the writer, William Dean Howells, Judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis – America’s first Baseball Commissioner, Joe Nuxhall – the youngest Major League Baseball player, Charles Richter – the scientist who devised the Richter Scale for determining the magnitude of earthquakes, the McGuire Sisters musical group, columnist Clarence Page of the Chicago Tribune, All-American Basketball player, Jerry Lucas, and John Boehner, former Speaker of the House of Representatives.

Butler County promises to be a very interesting place to explore if one makes the time.

By: Tom O’Grady

# Ohio Barn Conference XVII Details

By now you have read Steve Gordon's article in December's issue about Butler County and some of the barns on the tour. And you have probably read Tom O'Grady's article in this issue as well. So you should be excited about travelling to Butler County in April for the Ohio Barn Conference! The JBD Workshop on Thursday afternoon, April 21st, will kick off the conference with the Barn Tour on Friday, April 22nd, followed by the Conference on Saturday, April 24th, 2016.

We have chosen Butler County for several reasons; it's chock full of history, including the canal system, along with beautiful scenery and, of course, very interesting barns. Thankfully we chose Butler County because Steve Gordon, our Keynote speaker, resides there and was more than gracious to accept our invitation to speak at Saturday's conference. Steve is the current Museum Administrator for the William Holmes McGuffey Museum located in Oxford as well as the provost and Executive VP for Academic Affairs at Miami University. He holds undergraduate and graduate degrees in History from Miami University and has worked in the field of historic preservation throughout his career. Steve is very much involved with the Three Valley Conservation Trust as well as the MetroParks of Butler County. His presentation will be about historic agriculture in Butler County and how it influenced farm layout and barn design. Steve has been very helpful in organizing our barn tour this year by participating in the barnstorming event and leading the gang to several outstanding barns in the area. Steve is a self-proclaimed huffer of land, trees and historic buildings. Works for me.

We are also fortunate to have Doug Reed, from Mercersburg, PA, as a speaker this year. Doug has extensive knowledge of log crib barns (and we have one on the tour!). His hunt for the earliest known crib barn has taken him to far-away places. Please read his bio on our website to get the full picture of what this man is passionate about. Doug has 44 years of experience as a vernacular architectural historian, craftsman and technical consultant. When we asked him to describe his presentation he wrote "In today's throwaway society, most people think of new as better than old. Too many people have been misled into

automatically thinking an old barn is far more expensive to maintain or rehab than to tear it down and build new. For the past 44 years Doug Reed has been in the larger recycling world of maintaining, renovating and repurposing older buildings. Learn why it is far wiser to keep your old building and banish the thought of new construction when it is not necessary. Using his experience with barns from all over the world, Doug will explain some of why maintaining your older buildings will benefit your local government, your local dump, your local bank account and your regional job market to name only a few". Wow. Makes sense to me.

If that isn't enough we have Ed Creighton, a local barn owner (whose barn is on the tour – the one with Indian mounds!) who will give a detailed account of the history of his farm, the Andrew Lewis Farm. This farm was built by Revolutionary War General Andrew Lewis and was owned by the same family until recently when Ed & Kathy made the purchase. According to Ed, The Ohio History Connection has named it "one of the best intact, original farms in Butler County". Ed is proud that the farm has been well kept and preserved with all the original buildings since it was built back in 1812. Ed's bio: "I walk upright, have two legs, breathe air and eat steak!" There is more, really. But you will have to go to the website to read more about Ed Creighton and his interests. Can anyone say "Morgan horses"?

What would be an Ohio Barns Conference without the Barn Detectives, Rudy Christian and Dan Troth? I can't imagine. So they will be there as well as FOber and Newsletter editor Tom O'Grady who will, most definitely, enlighten the audience on the history of the Ohio Canal system.

Last, but not least, will be a presentation by Ric Beck (FOB President and Timber Framer Extraordinaire) and Mike Wengler (our local hero for this conference) called "Post Bottom Repairs – Simple to Historic Preservation" which will be a combination of a power point presentation as well as showing some actual examples and Ric and Mike will even dazzle us by laying out an historic repair, drilling and cutting the piece. Chips will be flying! Mike has worked the area for some time and has even done some repair work on a couple of the barns on the tour.

## Barn Tour Restrictions

The Barn Tour is a day-long event that requires some physical activity on your part. Please sign up and enjoy the tour if you are able to abide by the following stipulations:

### You must be:

- physically able to get on and off a bus several times
- able to walk on uneven terrain in potentially slippery conditions outside the barn/property
- able to go up and down barn stairs and ramps/banks
- aware of possible dangerous conditions inside the barn and be able to move in tight spaces
- aware that low light conditions could exist inside the barns
- aware of the weather conditions for the day and dress accordingly

We will have the Annual Member Meeting, Silent Auction and exhibitors plus vendors and it will all happen at the beautiful Hueston Woods Lodge and Conference Center located in College Center. Please note that if you are planning on staying at the lodge that the cutoff date for the reduced rate under the Friends of Ohio Barns block is March 31st, 2016 so call the lodge at 513-664-3550 to make your own room reservations.

But what about the barn tour you ask? There are six stops including the Barn-n-Bunk Farm Market as our lunch stop with plenty to see. The tour will not disappoint. The Martin-Swartz barn, an 1815 Sweitzer barn with a double crib log corn crib on the same property. The Creighton Barn, a 44'x60' hay barn with double drive bay doors. The Richardson Barn, a 38'x60' ground barn with massive 12'x12' posts with swing beam. The Stander Barn, an 1825 all hewn 26'x48' 4 bay ground barn with swing beam t-auger mortices. The Brosier house/barn, a Mail Pouch timber frame barn that Dave Gaker converted into their house. All of which will be analyzed and commented on by the Barn Detectives. Parking is available at Hueston

Please See CONFERENCE, Page 5



# Lodging for Ohio Barn Conference XVII

Hueston Woods Lodge & Conference Center

520 Lodge Rd College Center, OH 45003

Phone: (513) 664-3550

The host hotel for this year's conference is Hueston Woods Lodge. To make reservations call the hotel directly and mention the "Friends of Ohio Barns" block for the reduced rate. The block is reserved from Thursday, April 21st through Sunday April 24<sup>th</sup>. **Cutoff date is March 31, 2016.**

## Register Securely Online

Click on the Calendar of Events at the top of the menu column to the left on our homepage at [www.friendsofohiobarns.org](http://www.friendsofohiobarns.org). You will then see the registration button in the Ohio Barn Conference XVII box. Select your type of registration on the first page (you will be able to sign up your guest on the second page where there is a button to "add a guest" at the guest reduced rate). If you have any questions and/or problems please call Sarah Woodall at 330-550-6982.

---

## Junior Barn Detective Workshop

Thursday, April 21st 1:00 to 4:00 pm

Location: Cheryl and Toby Forte's Barn

3884 Wallace Rd, Oxford, OH 45056

Cheryl and Toby Forte have graciously agreed to host an afternoon workshop at their farm outside of Oxford. The Forte's will showcase their raised barn and farmhouse, discussing the details of renovations in the barn and house.

The barn was built around 1853. The original frame was all sash sawn timber from a mill right on the property! It has been carefully repaired using more modern material to make the barn useful for the Forte's farming endeavors, while keeping costs under control.

The beautiful dark purple painted barn is a 3-bay cantilevered barn with a stone foundation. The farm house was built around 1830 and very handsome. It also took many hours of loving restoration to repurpose the home into a bed and breakfast! Opening this spring, the Forte's will happily invite guests to enjoy the idyllic setting that is the Forte farm.



Cheryl and Toby will provide us with before and after photos of the renovations, and discuss the challenges and rewards of fixing the barn and farmhouse. Mike Wengler, the barn repair contractor, will also be on hand to answer questions about barn repairs.

Please join us for lively conversations, and tours of the barn and farmhouse bed and breakfast. Plenty of parking is available, there will also be refreshments! We want to limit the workshop 40 folks, sign up on the front

of this insert. You can also sign up on our website on the Event page, please note that it is separate from the conference registration. If you have any questions please call Sarah at 330-550-6982 or email Sarah at [Friendsohiobarns@gmail.com](mailto:Friendsohiobarns@gmail.com). This is an outdoor event so dress accordingly!

## Namesake of FOB's Wilhelm Award Passes

Hubertus G. H. Wilhelm, professor of Ohio and Settlement Geography at Ohio University for thirty five years, passed away in November, 2015. Friends of Ohio Barns established the Wilhelm Award in his honor in 2012.

For more than three decades Dr. Hubert Wilhelm taught classes on cultural and settlement geography and the Geography of Ohio at Ohio University in Athens. Wilhelm spent untold hours poring over the 1850 census and driving the county and township roads of the state to determine where Ohioans came from. He tallied their origins by county and recorded the number from each state and each European country. He made maps and charts showing where these settlers put down their roots.

For many of us, he turned a simple ride down the road into an unending story of Ohio's cultural and settlement history, geography, and architectural study. Thanks



Hubertus G.H. Wilhelm, ca. 1985

of our city centers, and the canals and railroads linking them tells us volumes about our past. The buildings and the names of the places that make up Ohio's communities are all indicators of the many nationalities of the migrants and immigrants that built the places we call home. Thank goodness for this immigrant! Thank you Hubertus G.H. Wilhelm! TOG

to this post World War II refugee and immigrant we know a hell of a lot more about who we are and where we came from. Every house and barn and privy in Ohio's rural landscape, nearly every house type lining our city streets, the churches, courthouses, public buildings,

## ACCORDING TO HUBERT:

...the midwestern barn is not just a simple, white, rectangular building with a gabled roof. Instead, it is a farm building with a complex material culture-history, conditioned by agricultural land use and economy, and above all, by scientific principles and modern technology.

*Hubertus G.H. Wilhelm, (1931-2015)  
Professor of Ohio and Settlement Geography  
at Ohio University for 35 years.*

## Register Securely Online for the Ohio Barn Conference XVII and Barn Tour

Click on the Event Calendar at the top of the menu column to the left on the homepage located at [www.friendsofoiobarns.org](http://www.friendsofoiobarns.org) and you will then see the registration button to click on in the Ohio Barn Conference XVII box. There will be a JBD Workshop this year and you will have to register for it separately. For the Conference please select your type of registration on the first page knowing that you will be able to sign up your guest/spouse on the second page where it has a button to "add a guest" at the guest/spouse reduced rate. If you have any questions or difficulties please call Sarah Woodall at 330-856-9053 or 330-550-6982. Online Registration ends April 18th, 2016.

### CONFERENCE, Continued from Page 4

Woods which is where the buses will depart. As usual, registration begins at 8am with the buses leaving promptly at 9am, rain or shine. Dress accordingly.

There will be a Thursday afternoon JBD Workshop this year at Cheryl and Toby Forte's barn. Please see the insert for more information.

Sign up early and securely though our website or fill out the insert and send to the address noted on the form. Remember to book your room at Hueston Woods Lodge by March 31st!

— Sarah Woodall

## Send in your Nominations for Barn of the Year Awards!

Do you know of an outstanding barn in your region? If so, drop us a line and get it nominated for the annual Friends of Ohio Barns "Barn of the Year Award". The deadline for entries is March 31st.

Nominations should include photos, the current owners' name and location of the barn, current use of the barn, history of the barn including the age and builder, if known, and information on repairs and who made them, if known.

Please find a nomination form on our website and mail to Dan Troth, 7591 Perry Rd, Delaware, Ohio 43015. The awards will be presented at the Ohio Barn Conference on Saturday, April 23th, 2016.

Nominations will be judged in three categories: agricultural use, adaptive re-use (non-agricultural) and stewardship.

Some of the criteria we use to select barns are:

**Agricultural Use:** original intent and current use, generational history, current condition and barn repairs.

**Adaptive Re-use:** history of barn and present day use, completed restoration work, aesthetics, significance and exposure to the community.

**Stewardship:** restored barns that don't meet criteria above, but serve a family function such as storage, entertainment structure or not readily accessible to the public.

## Silent Auction Donations Needed!

Part of the fun we have each year during the Ohio Barn Conference is, of course, the silent auction. Friends of Ohio Barns encourage everyone to bring silent auction items for the Saturday event. The proceeds help us offset the costs of the conference, and still provide you, the members, with a quality program.

We hope you can contribute an item

or two – something handmade, collectible, store bought, or something interesting you've found in your travels. The more you bring, and the better the items, the more exciting the auction gets!

If you can't find anything to bring, at least come prepared to make someone else bid a little higher before walking off with a treasure!

# The Day our World Turned Upside Down

"I finally got the farm exactly the way I always wanted it," Loren remarked the morning of Tuesday, November 17, 2015. He had purchased the farm in 1986 and had worked hard at upgrading the buildings and installing a new milking parlor. In 1991 he moved the cows and dairy operation from his parents' farm.

The morning milking had gone smoothly and we had even finished ahead of schedule. It was a beautiful morning so I let our milking herd of 150 Holsteins out to pasture. They were already crowded against the fence, eagerly waiting to be released into the pasture.

I thought how lucky my Holsteins were to be able to enjoy grazing in the pasture this late in the fall. The weather had been dry and perfect for harvest with three Indian summers someone had said. We had even been able to gather all the corn stubble into over 300 big round bales. For once there was more than enough bedding to get us through winter with plenty to carry over to next year.

"I'm going to tell the guys what to do before I leave for my appointment," Loren remarked. Although harvest was done, there was still plenty of work to do. The manure needed to be hauled out of all the barns and fresh bedding carried in. We said our goodbyes and I left for work. I had only been gone about 20 minutes when Loren called. "What could he possibly want now?" I wondered as I completed my bank transaction and let it go to voice mail. My errand done, I then checked his message before I continued my commute to town.

"Call me back immediately," was all Loren said in his message. I sat in the bank driveway and dialed his number, expecting bad news but my call went straight into voice mail. Although I knew that I should have turned back around and gone home, I decided to head to work as planned. Then about five minutes later my phone rang.

"The white barn's on fire!" Logan, the morning milker said. She was crying.

"Oh my God," was all I could manage.

"We got all the cows out and everybody's okay, but the barn's nearly burned to the ground," she sniffed.

"But how?" I asked completely dumbfounded.

"I don't know. The bales just burned



Image submitted by Barb Lang

**Lang barn afire in November 2015. Thankfully the fire did not spread to the other impressive buildings that make up this historic farm.**

up so fast. There was nothing the fire department could do."

"I've got to go into work. I'll be back as soon as I can. Thanks Logan." I said hanging up my cell wondering how the barn could have gone down in such a short span of time.

I went to my desk and did the best I could to put my ads together for the Saturday issue. I just couldn't concentrate and knew I should leave but there was too much to finish. I had just started my job September 1 and I had deadlines that day I couldn't miss. I mentioned in passing to a co-worker that our barn had burnt down as if I was merely making a casual remark about the weather. It wasn't long after that when the calls and texts started coming in. A friend sent me a link to a video taken of the barn burning but I just couldn't bring myself to watch it. I was still in denial. This was something that happened to other people but never to us. We had worked hard and made sacrifices. It didn't seem fair.

Soon after that another work colleague showed me pictures that a passerby had taken of the fire in progress. The cows were standing calmly in the pasture by the gorgeous red and white Pennsylvania forebay bank barn we had moved half a mile to our farm in 2001 and then gradually restored. We had been awarded the Friends of Ohio Barns Barn of the Year designation in 2010 for Agricultural Use. I was relieved to see that it was intact.

The pictures didn't seem real to me.

They had to be photo shopped. The main white bank barn, the centerpiece of our farm, was completely engulfed in flames, a huge mass of orange fire licking at the sky. She asked me how the fire started. I told her it had been caused by spontaneous combustion because of the damp corn stalks inside the bales that had simply heated up and then ignited the dry areas.

It was early afternoon when Loren and I finally talked. I asked if he had moved the rest of the bales out of the other barns before they started on fire too.

"What? Don't you don't know how it started? The bales didn't just start burning by themselves."

"I thought it was caused by spontaneous combustion?" I asked, confused.

"No, one of the employees backed the skid loader into a bale and the hot muffler started the bales on fire."

I struggled with my emotions as I tried to digest this new nugget of information. I couldn't put off going home any longer. I was dreading what I knew was going to be something awful to see. As I approached our once orderly complex of buildings, the terrible reality of what had happened was worse than I had imagined. A heavy blanket of white smoke hung in the air like a ghostly mist around the buildings. The serene, bucolic scene I had left behind just that morning now looked more like a war zone. And the men and women from the seven fire departments who responded had indeed waged a battle against the flames,

Please See LANG, Page 7

## Check your Address on the Front of this Issue!

If you have a hashtag (#) by your name then please be aware that we will be removing your name from our mailing list for the conference newsletter after this issue due to high costs of printing and mailing. Our intention was to entice our past members to come to the conference and perhaps rejoin by mailing the conference newsletter to all of you. Please consider becoming a member (there is a form to do so inside this issue) – then you will receive *The Old Barn Post* plus enjoy other benefits of being a member with Friends of Ohio Barns.

### LANG, Continued from Page 6

successfully preventing it from burning up the rest of the buildings. For that I will be eternally grateful. Vehicles were parked haphazardly everywhere, in the yard, the driveway, and all along the road. Dozens of people milled around or sat on the barn stones that once supported the restored barn. Now they line the now soupy driveway, from all the water pulled from Whispering Hills Campgrounds then used to put out the fire and keep it from spreading to the other buildings.

I cannot put into words what I was feeling. It was a miserable stew of helplessness, vulnerability, devastation and even embarrassment at being the center of unwanted attention from strangers driving by and rubbernecking. And in so many respects, losing a barn was worse than the death of either of my parents. The pain from the loss of my mother earlier that year was still fresh. I didn't need any more heartache. But as devastating as the death of my mother was, the unexpected loss of the barn was even worse because you don't think that something like that will ever happen to you. I was shell shocked but running on caffeine and adrenalin. I knew that it was going to be a long night of separating the milk cows from the treated cows which were all mixed together with the steers and heifers. We finally finished the evening chores at 9:30 and in only six hours would have to start all over again then go straight to my job. Bone weary, I went to the house and was cheered by a huge container of cookies plus a second one filled with cinnamon rolls that someone had left on the kitchen counter while I was at the barn. The funeral meal for the family of a murdered barn I thought. Although I hadn't eaten a thing since early that morning, I left them untouched.

The total randomness and unexpectedness of the fire was terrible, both in the brutality and intensity of the flames. The next morning I watched the video taken by

a passerby the morning before and it drove that reality home. It was a miracle that the fire hadn't done more damage than it did. It could have been so much worse but luckily Loren directed one of our workers to let the cattle out of the burning barn before the unimaginable happened.

Five days later on a cloudy, cold Sunday morning, I gazed out at the aftermath of the fire from my kitchen window. A few snowflakes floated down from the sky like confetti. Thin columns of white smoke still rose lazily from the remains of the hundreds of big round bales now strewn about the pasture beside the wreckage of ugly, black twisted steel that used to be siding and roofing. I looked beyond the empty space where the proud barn bank once towered high in the sky. Now I have an unobstructed view of other farms with their barns intact, miles away straight across the beautiful wide low valley to the east.

Tears pooled in my eyes but I wiped them away. God was there during that awful ordeal watching over my herd and people. My dog and cats all made it, none the worst for the wear it seemed for losing their favorite sleeping spot. I feel pity for the poor steers who now wander aimlessly in the pasture they had so coveted only days before. They are accustomed to the comfort of their warm barn and they have nowhere else to seek shelter. I love my cattle whose warm breath and soft eyes connect straight to my heart. The blood in my veins turns cold when I think about what could have happened if the animals had been trapped in that burning barn.

The days continued just as before the fire. The cows still need fed and milked. New calves are born mostly on schedule. We have started to rebuild, although it will not look the same as before. But I'll always remember November 17, 2015 as the day when our little world was turned upside down.

— Barb Lang

## Board Member Elections

Friends of Ohio Barns will once again be seeking candidates to fill board positions of members whose terms are expiring.

Responsibilities include participating in the annual barn conference, attending board meetings and conference calls, and representing Friends at festivals and events with the satisfaction of knowing that you are doing something to help save a part of Ohio's rich agricultural heritage.

If you are interested in a board position, please send a short biography with your goals and ideas to Friends of Ohio Barns, PO Box 203, Burbank, OH 44214 or email us at [friendsohiobarns@gmail.com](mailto:friendsohiobarns@gmail.com). Remember, new blood brings fresh ideas and keeps the organization alive with promise!

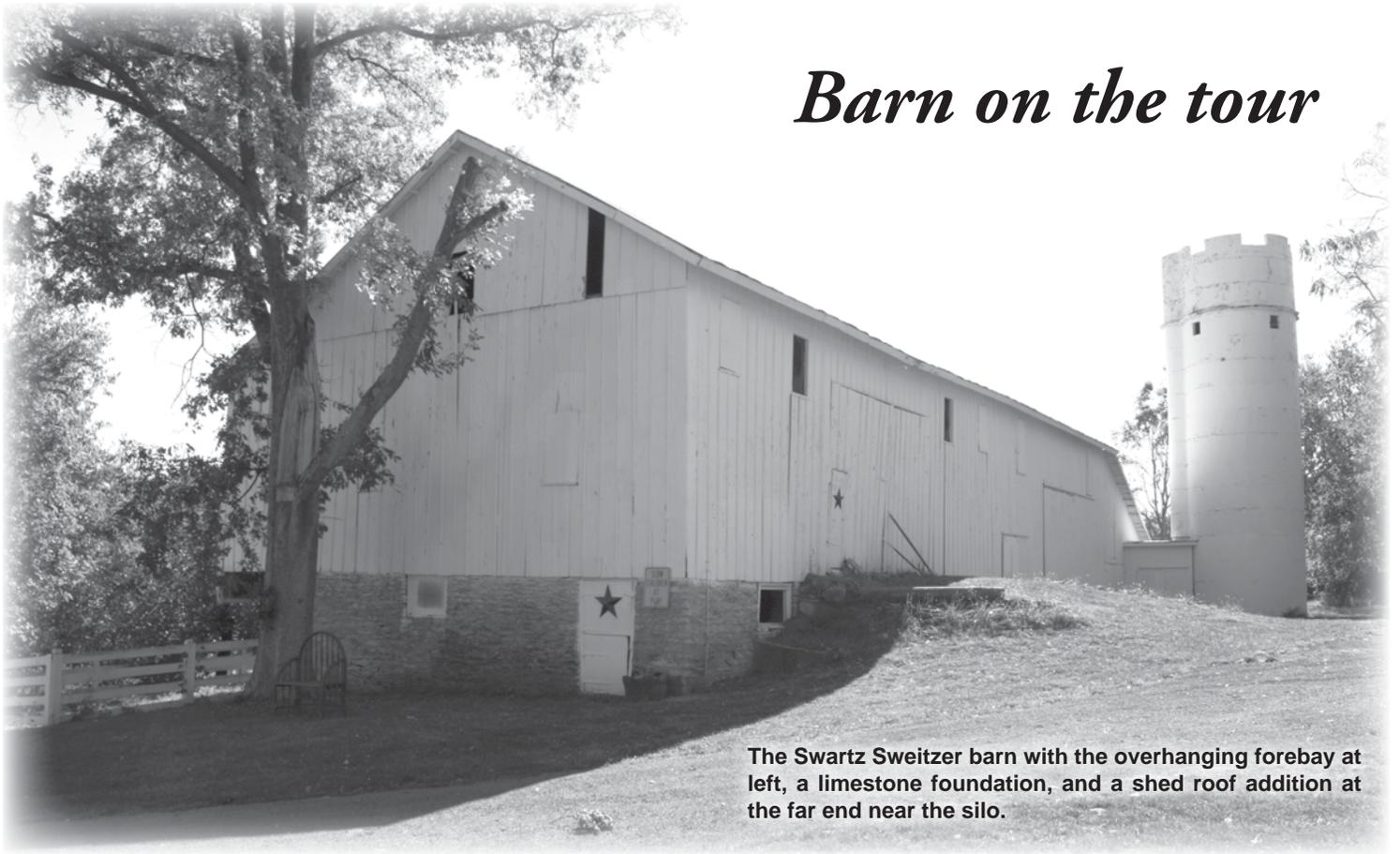
## Membership Renewal Time is here!

Each year we are excited to send out our Ohio Barn Conference newsletter to all our past members. We do so to invite all Ohio stewards of our magnificent barns to see more excellent examples of barns in the state and be better informed of what is being done by Friends of Ohio Barns and our current members to help preserve the Ohio barn heritage.

We also do this in the hopes that you consider re-joining us by renewing your membership with Friends of Ohio Barns. Your membership helps us maintain valuable programs such as the barn survey, the Junior Barn Detective program, the kids mini-barn and, most importantly, all the educational and awareness programs that arm enthusiasts with information and aid in their preservation efforts.

Please note that if there is a hashtag (#) by your name on the front of this issue you are in danger of being dropped from this mailing list due to high costs of printing and mailing. So please consider renewing your membership! Check out our website for costs and our secure online payment method. Thanks, and we look forward to seeing you in April!

# *Barn on the tour*



The Swartz Sweitzer barn with the overhanging forebay at left, a limestone foundation, and a shed roof addition at the far end near the silo.

Please recycle this newsletter. Share it with a friend.  
Printed on recycled paper, of course.



FRIENDS OF OHIO BARNS  
P.O. Box 203  
Burbank, Ohio 44214

