



The Old BARN POST

A publication of Friends of Ohio Barns • December, 2014 • Vol. XIII, Issue 4

Farms Carved From Glaciated Landscape in Hancock County

Ohio's glacial till plain and the edge of the Great Black Swamp will host the upcoming Ohio Barn Tour and Barn Conference XVI in Hancock County in late April, 2015.

Lying just north of the Ohio Divide, Hancock County is drained largely by the Blanchard River, flowing westward out of Findlay to join the Auglaize before it flows into the Maumee and then Lake Erie at Toledo. Portions of northern Hancock County, above the Defiance Moraine, drain into the Portage River which discharges into Lake Erie at Port Clinton.

Commonly thought of as the flat part of Ohio, the gently rolling landscape belies the subtle but complex history beneath the woodlots and farm fields. Beach ridges and sand dunes from the ancient Lake Maumee mingle with the Defiance Moraine and its potholes not far from the Findlay Embayment. All of this overlies the Findlay Arch, an underlying geologic structure reaching from Springfield to Toledo. The underlying arching bedrock closest to the surface is made up of limestone sediments deposited in the Silurian seas. The county seat of Findlay is favorably located at the intersection of the Blanchard River and these prehistoric beach ridges. The Blanchard River flows westerly from the town through the Findlay Embayment into the lake plain of the old Lake Maumee which early settlers discovered as the Great Black Swamp.

All of these geological contortions over the millennia have contrived to build the soils so eagerly sought by Ohio's early settlers. Because of the poorly drained lake plain sediments of the swamp, it was the last region of the state settled. The beach ridges served as Indian trails and the first thoroughfares into this region of the Ohio country. Set aside as the last refuge for Native Americans in Ohio after the Treaty of Greenville in 1795, these lands were quickly redefined as Congress lands and were sold to settlers from eastern states and Europe.

The vast majority of settlers staking a claim in Hancock County were migrants from Middle Atlantic States, primarily Pennsylvania. Many also came from New York and Maryland. The bulk of immigrants setting down roots in the county were from Germany. As many Germans were pacifists during the Revolutionary War, they were not eligible for land grants in the Military Districts. We commonly find the settlers of German descent in subdivisions of the Congress lands which they could purchase from the federal government. Anyone could purchase and settle in

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Virgin Beech forest trees

Random Thoughts

Ok, so you know how you tend to reminisce at the end of the year over what transpired during the year? (Ok, maybe it's just me...) Well, in putting together a note to our fantastic members I thought I'd review what the board was up to this year and see what we accomplished. Hopefully you won't mind obliging me a bit...

Last winter had us working hard to put together our 14th annual barn conference. When I think about it and realize that only one other state wide all volunteer organization has been able to put together conferences like ours for this long is pretty special. I think it speaks volumes to the quality of our volunteers' efforts to pull off such an informative and fun experience. The amount of free advice, education, history and great food you get from the Friday bus tour is worth the price of admission alone!

What you may not realize is that since 2008 we have not raised our conference fees and yet we have been able to support the organization and make it grow. Our local heroes and their help with securing sponsors have made a lot of difference. Stream lining our operations and being more efficient has also helped save valuable dollars and for that I am extremely grateful. Our general fund is currently over \$12,000.

We have continued to grow the organization in other ways too. The new website has been up for a while now, and does a great job of informing and entertaining with its cleaner setup and easy to navigate options. With the money we judiciously guard, we have been able to afford new equipment (namely a new LED projector) that will enhance the quality of our presentations. Our new logo has pushed us to put together some new merchandise that we will roll out (for sure) this coming spring conference. Our endowment fund continues to prosper. It's up to \$13,700 and growing. We are diligently working on a policy paper for utilizing the funds. It of course will be made available to members when completed, and you are welcome to respond to it.

Organization programs are regularly reviewed at our board face to face meeting. We are currently revising and expanding the JBD program into a broader scope. It will be a barn conservancy program that will focus on ways FOB can support the conservation of Ohio's top ten neediest barns. The concept has been discussed at previous conferences and we still would love to get suggestions from you for such projects. We have a project guideline booklet developed and are still in negotiations with the Dairy Arts Barn folks in Athens. We are of course hopeful that the project will happen!

Our fall activities always keep us hopping...especially in September and October! The mini-barn was on the road every weekend for 5 weeks, and we managed to squeeze in another fun fall picnic too! I had a chance to present our Ohio Barn Heritage talk to folks in Marion, and several of the board folks were interviewed and filmed this fall for the upcoming documentary "The Barn Raisers" from Fourth Wall Films (see related article). Based on their responses, it promises to be an exciting project!

All this activity keeps us hopping, but we enjoy the experience. Most of this current board crew has been around for quite a while now. The two recent additions have helped to infuse new ideas enthusiasm to the organization. Like all successful organizations, growth comes from new blood and new ideas. It takes change at the board level to best make that happen, and we are no different. Please consider joining the board. Take the ground work we have established and help grow it...help us keep Friends of Ohio Barns vibrant and keep the stewardship of Ohio Barns alive!

— Ric Beck

Accepting Nominations

FOB is accepting Barn of the Year Award Nominations. Awards are given for 1) Agricultural Use, 2) Adaptive Reuse, and 3) Stewardship. Visit the FOB website at friendsofohio-barns.org for more information. Nominations are due on March 31, 2015.

The big doors of the country barn stand open and ready;
The dried grass of the harvest-time loads the slow-drawn wagon;
The clear light plays on the brown gray and green intertinged;
The armfuls are pack'd to the sagging mow.

I am there—I help—I came stretch'd atop of the load;
I felt its soft jolts—one leg reclined on the other;
I jump from the cross-beams, and seize the clover and timothy,
And roll head over heels, and tangle my hair full of wisps.

— Walt Whitman, from "Song of Myself" 1856

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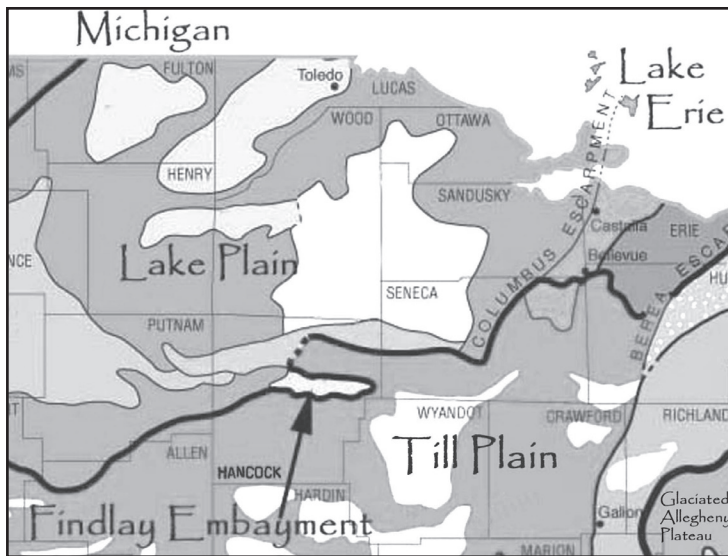
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Hancock County, lower left center, straddles the Lake Plain and the glacial Till Plain. An embayment of old lake Maumee, presents a finger-like projection eastward toward Findlay. The Great Black Swamp comprised a large portion of the Lake Plain which reaches as far west as Fort Wayne, Indiana.

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the Congress lands and they did. But we find a strong German influence in this settlement region.

The underlying bedrock, limestone deposits of the Silurian seas, and the effects of the glacial age have conspired to create the landscape and soils discovered by Ohio's settlers. The encumbering elm-ash swamp forests of the lake plain surrounded by the upland beech forests of the glacial drift presented an enormous challenge to the early pioneers.

Inspired by the immense fields of corn along the confluence of the Auglaize and Maumee Rivers early settlers followed the example of the Native American horticulturalists and began girdling the big trees and allowing them to die. The following spring the underbrush was burned off and they began planting corn among the standing dead trees. In a year or a few they burned them down or pulled the fallen stems into enormous piles. Another innovation involved notching selected trees for felling but not deeply enough for them to fall in calm weather. Leaving the forest for squall winds and severe storms would result in the crashing of great tree crowns and the monarchs of the forest falling one against the other bringing each other to the earth, jumbled like jackstraws in a heap. When dry enough, the entire mass was set ablaze in an immense inferno that burned and smoldered for weeks. This was the deadening of the primeval forests. The largest boles and stumps were left in place to decay.

With the removal of the forests, the land lying within the physiographic regions of the Lake Plain and the Till Plain, Hancock County is in the heart of some of the finest, most productive agricultural land in the state of Ohio. These sediments from the glacial era lake bottom and the loamy deposits of the Wisconsin Age drift are high in lime. When drained of excess moisture they have proven to be the farmland the early settlers were in search of.

These soils have produced untold bushels of corn over the past two centuries and have been highly competitive in the production of other grains and soy beans as well as hogs and other livestock. Hancock County has also produced not a small amount of



Deadening for the forest began with the girdling of the big trees to let the light into the forest. Many trees were notched and then fell during great wind storms into giant heaps which were then set ablaze. Thus was the fate of the majority of the primeval forest trees of the Ohio Country.

sugar beets and maple syrup from its woodlots.

Looking at barns during the upcoming barn tour one might watch for a fairly strong German influence. But, as Dr. Hubert Wilhelm reminds us, there may be some possible hybrid modifications as these were built later than those along the eastern shores of Ohio. Barnbuilders may have been taking on new partners and new ideas from neighboring barn raising efforts across the state after a couple of decades.

Being located in the upland beech forest we should look for the employment of that species of tree in the barns. There were a number of oak openings scattered north and south across western Ohio and we may see some extensive use of oak as well.

Foundations may be set on glacial erratics, the large granite boulders left strewn across the landscape with the retreat of the last glacier. Some barns may have continuous foundations and others may only be supported beneath corner posts and those along the side walls and doorways. Other barns may have foundations of locally quarried limestone blocks, sandstone being absent from the bedrock of western Ohio. Scattered among barns of German influence will surely be those of the New Englanders, especially in the northern part of the county, originally claimed as a part of the Connecticut Western Reserve. The ground being less hilly than other parts of the state we may see more ground barns and barns with a basement and a large man-made ramp leading up to the threshing floor. Then again, who knows what we will see? That's why we go to these far reaches of the state of Ohio – to explore the built heritage of our forebears and see what they did and try to interpret how and why and when they did it to the best of our ability.

— Tom O'Grady

Hancock County Historical Addenda

Hancock County played an important part in the Underground Railroad as abolitionist conductors helped guide fugitives northward toward Bowling Green and on toward lake Erie and safe harbors on the Canadian side.

In the 1880's Findlay, situated along a number of railroads was home to the largest natural-gas wells in the world and supplied manufacturers there with fuel at a nominal cost; private consumers paid fifteen cents a month per stove while in use, and for illuminating purposes five cents per month per burner. Oil was abundant and was piped elsewhere with some refined there.

Limestone has long been produced in large quantities in Hancock County being one of the top dozen or so producers in Ohio in the 90's. Peat deposits occur in the southeastern portion of the county. Drift clay has been developed to serve at least one ceramic plant near Findlay.

The Hancock County Courthouse in Findlay, is the county's third. Built during the gas and oil boom of the 1880's it is a fine example of second empire architecture. The beautiful building has recently undergone an extensive restoration project under the guidance of Schooley Caldwell Associates. This architectural firm is responsible for the magnificent restoration of the Ohio Statehouse and the Justice Center in Columbus, Ohio along with many



Old post card image of the Hancock County Courthouse, an example of Victorian Second Empire architecture with Founding Father and famed signer of the Declaration of Independence, John Hancock atop the clock tower looking out over a grouping of the three feminine figures of Law, Justice and Mercy.

other fine public and private buildings in Ohio and around the country. Take a look at this fine restoration effort when you are in Findlay for the Ohio Barn Tour and Barn Conference and take heart that this architectural firm is on the job with two very important historic structures in Ohio which have become a part of the legacy of the Friends of Ohio Barns. Barn tour participants watched the Carlyle Building in

downtown Chillicothe burn the evening after the 2003 barn tour. In 2012 Barn Conference attendees had the opportunity to see the historic Athens Asylum. Both of these buildings are an important part of Ohio's heritage and they are now facing a brighter future than they have in a long time as Schooley Caldwell Associates helps provide the guidance for their venture into another century of service.

Timber frame with a twist

Participants on the Ohio Barn Tour in Athens County in 2013 stopped for lunch at the Amesville Grange Hall. Lunch was catered by The Village Bakery from Athens. Food for lunch was locally sourced. The Village Bakery is a local leader and example for sustainability in southeastern Ohio.

Recent improvements to the bakery include a timber framed porch and a timber framed shelter over the outdoor oven and wood storage facility. Employing a local craftsman, these additions were made with a bit of a twist on the traditional timber framing method. Mortise and tenons were fitted onto curved and forked tim-



The Village Bakery with a timber frame porch addition. Solar panels on the roof of both the porch and the building provide power to operate the business. Local art is used for signage and decoration. Forked posts, pegged to a top plate, support the porch roof. Century old bricks, fired in Athens County kilns, are incorporated into the base for the posts.

Photo by Tom O'Grady

bers which were adapted to the needs of the space available.

Solar panels added to the roof complement the full cutoff light fixtures installed a number of years ago which are effective in curbing light pollution, an issue of growing importance in the darkest region of the state remaining for star watchers.

The Village Bakery is active in local conservation and environmental protec-

tion efforts. They set a fine example in all aspects of their operation supporting local food and dairy operations, local brewers and vintners, artists and crafts persons, energy conservation and political action. This is all done while creating local employment and supporting the local economy. Bioregional economics is sustainable economics – just like our forebears demonstrated when they built the foundations of Ohio.



Hubert Wilhelm, in the foreground, is presented the Wilhelm Award, established in his honor by members of the board of Friends of Ohio Barns; from left to right – Vice-President - Dan Troth, Treasurer - Laura Saeger, former President - Rudy Christian, President - Ric Beck, and newsletter editor - Tom O'Grady.

Photo by Dan Troth

Wilhelm Award Presented to Namesake for Work on Ohio Barns

For more than thirty years 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 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.

Wilhelm taught about the natural landscape of Ohio; the forests and soils and landforms; the early land claims and subdivisions; transportation routes into the new state; how each of these factors influenced those settlement patterns. Wilhelm examined the records and imparted his findings with enthusiasm and exuberance to his students. He taught us how to see the 19th century settlement patterns in the rural and urban landscapes of Ohio by observing the architecture, land-use practices, place names, and other characteristic attributes of the material culture surrounding us.

A very significant part of that lesson is the Ohio barn. He matched the people to the barns we see dotting the rural scenes we observe in our travels across the state. By merely glancing at many an Ohio barn we can know a great deal about the people who built them, their place of

origin, and their cultural history. For many it has made a trip across the state an ongoing lesson in Ohio history and geography. Wilhelm's legacy is marked by his infectious enthusiasm that has inspired many to learn more about the people who used local resources and cultural traditions to build the foundations of Ohio's economy.

It is for these efforts, and this body of work, that the Friends of Ohio Barns recently established the Wilhelm Award, named in his honor. The award will be presented on occasion for outstanding contributions to the understanding of the history and significance of Ohio's barn heritage. The first presentation of that award was made to Hubert Wilhelm himself.

Wilhelm was recently presented this award in the presence of family members including his son David Wilhelm, daughters Suzanne Robinson and Diana Pollock, daughter-in-law, Degee, and his grandson Logan.

In making the presentation, Rudy Christian, founding President of Friends of Ohio Barns, thanked Wilhelm for his work "which has taught us the real value of our historic barns is not as much in what we can learn about them, but what they can teach us about our self." Wilhelm has made exceptional contributions to our understanding of our roots and our agricultural heritage.

Barnstormin' for 2015 Conference



Above: This ground barn has been recently repainted...notice the transom window over the drive bay doors and the beautiful trim detail on the windows.

Right: Very interesting cabling in the center bent tie beam. Floor to beam probably 16 ft. Lots of room for crop storage here and more surprises await the tour!

Photos by Pamela Whitney Gray



Left: Some wonderful young folks are starting to rehab this barn for farming. There is an approx. 8"x8"x80' one length eave plate in this barn...pretty exciting! We'll get to hear their story in April.

Below: Reusing random timbers to make a beautiful barn house.



Take a peek here and mark your calendars for April 24th and 25th!!



Fourth Wall Films begins production work in Ohio

Tammy and Kelly Rundle were in the state this past October to begin filming and interviewing FOB members for their upcoming documentary "The Barn Raisers".

Dan Troth, Tom O'Grady, Pam Gray and Tim Anderson talked with the Rundles about all things Ohio Barns. They discussed history, migration patterns, evolution of barns with changing agricultural practices, and most importantly the amazing craftsmen who built our Ohio Barns.

"The Barn Raisers", a companion film to their Emmy® nominated historical documentary *Country School: One Room – One Nation*, tells the story of barns in the Upper Midwest by examining them through the lens of architecture. The film will explore how 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.

Barns were constructed by farmer-craftsmen, professional builders who traveled from job to job and even architects like Frank Lloyd Wright. The Barn Raisers will paint a cinematic portrait of barns and their builders, an important way of life that has been largely forgotten, and the film will remind us that these remnants from America's rural past are still here to be interpreted and experienced." (Excerpt from their blog page).

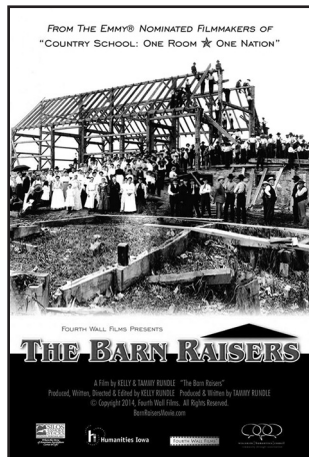
In addition to the interviews, the Rundles started documenting some of Ohio's best barns in the southern and central part of the state. They will be back next spring to talk with Rudy Christian and Scott Carlson, document barns to the north and west, and take part in the 2015 spring conference! They are invited to come along on our bus tour, so be prepared; you might be a part of this wonderful project!! They have expressed their delight in including Ohio in this important film and their admiration of our beautiful Ohio barns and the stewards who care for them.

Fourth Wall Films, based in Moline Illinois, has received funding from the Ohio Humanities Council, Silos and Smokestacks National Heritage Area, Humanities Iowa, the Wisconsin Humanities Council, Kansas Humanities Council, and the National Endowment for the Humanities. But even with these supporters, additional funding is needed for the finish production work, advertising, and distribution of the final product.

If you check out their website BarnMovie.com, you will be sent to their blog page. There, more information about the status of the film is posted as well as ways you might be able to help with donations if you like. Under the heading The Film there is a line, "Lend a Hand" that details donation possibilities.

We are excited to be involved in this very important project. The Rundles will talk more about it at our upcoming conference and who knows, they might even provide a little teaser of the film.

— Ric Beck



Barns

There's nothing Americans of another age have built on the land that makes more difference to what our country looks like than barns. When you drive a long distance and get out of town, you look out your car window and what do you see? In many parts of the Country you see barns. You see lots and lots of barns.

Barns look good because they're built for what they do. Nothing fake about a barn. Skyscrapers have been tortured into shape by architects who had only some vague idea what would happen inside them. Barns, on the other hand, are purposeful. They provide a roof overhead for everything a farmer can't take into his farmhouse. A barn covers cows in winter, horses if a farmer has them, hay, machinery and, on a rainy day, the kids who play in it.

Barns are bigger than farmhouses and very often, better looking. A well-built barn is a thing of beauty. An 8 by 8 inch oak beam 14 feet long dovetailed into another is practically immortal and exceeds in beauty any picture ever hung on a wall.

The bad news is, wooden barns, like farmers, are disappearing.

There were once three million farms in the United States, and every farm had at least one barn. Most farms had two, some had three and a few farms had a whole family of barns...big barns, middle-sized barns...small barns. Barns can't move to the city when the farmer does, barns stay where they are and fall first into disrepair and then down.

Barns don't give up easily but our countryside is littered with abandoned barns that are deteriorating. It's sad to see something so noble as a barn die a slow and painful death. They deserve better than what most of them get. There is no society devoted to saving them. Their roofs no longer keep out the weather but some barns were so honestly built that they last 50 years after they're left for dead. Old barn boards cling where they were nailed to old beams. Our houses should be so well built.

Barns age more gracefully than most buildings and certainly more gracefully than people. They actually improve in appearance with age. Their weathered wood turns silvery gray. Or if they were painted barn red, they never give up being red. Some farmers, in need of cash, sold the side of their barns to companies advertising chewing tobacco or some other commercial product. A sign painter spent a day applying a grossly commercial advertisement to the side of the barn most visible from the road. In many cases, the fading picture on the side of the barn outlasted the farmer and the product.

Barns last for another reason, too. They don't have to take indoor heating or leaky plumbing fixtures. A barn is pretty much the same temperature inside as it is outside so barns remain standing long after the farmers who built them have been laid to rest.

Everyone says they love the country but everyone moves to the city. There are about 800,000 fewer farms in the United States than there were just 20 years ago. Most of the deteriorating barns are right where the farmers left them, evidence of their sad and desperate departure.

By: Andy Rooney - From: *Common Nonsense*, 2003
(*Andy Rooney was a radio and television writer and a regular on the CBS news program 60 Minutes for more than 30 years.*)

REUNION

Here past the edge of town,
this one as well as any other
in the Adirondacks, the trees lock arms
and lean into each other like
relatives at a family reunion.
This is some history; listen to the names,
Sugar Maple, Black Spruce, Wild Cherry,
Sweet Birch, the old White Oaks. On and
on into the hillsides until my tongue rolls
and I whisper Ohio, imagining this is what it was
one hundred years ago, imagining this is what
whispered in the ear of Tecumseh, who fought for it
for twenty years, knowing when he started he couldn't
win, but who fought and lost anyway, imagining
this is what whispered to my great grandfather

Marvin Peabody, when he dropped down out of the
Northeast. Who left when he heard his neighbors
unfolding the arms of trees with axes and bucksaws
and headed west, rubbing the fine dust from his eyes.
But came back when he saw that like Ohio, that too
was lost. He came back I suppose because he had
nowhere else to go. Or maybe he just liked the name
Ohio. And why not. Whisper it now, whisper
Ohio, Ohio, Ohio, and amid the miles of concrete,
under the culverts dumping waste, around the smokestacks
over by the river, a breeze picks up
sending a ripple, like a litany
through the family of tree.

— Robert Kinsley
(Submitted by Dan Troth)

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