



The Old BARN POST

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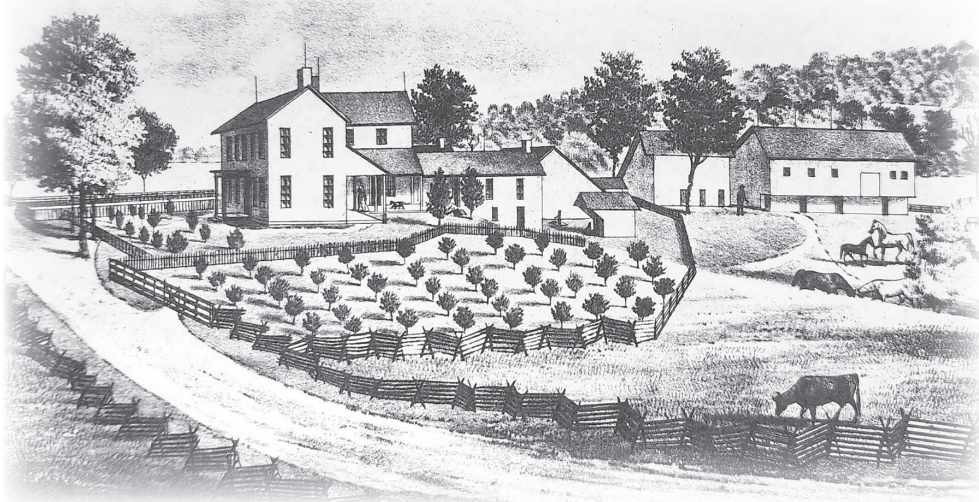
The Zeller-Mathias Farm

Overlooking the town of Enterprise in Hocking County from a terrace on the west side of the Hocking River sits the Mathias-Zeller Farm, comprised of several historic structures and a few modern additions. The land was first cleared in 1805 by Jacob Zeller (b. 1770, d. ~1830), who had emigrated from Tulpehocken Township, Berks County, Pennsylvania, with his brother Jacob. Three other Zeller brothers also left Berks County around that same time, but they opted to settle farther west in the Germantown area of Montgomery County. By 1806, Jacob Zeller had secured the property with a land patent obtained through the Harrison Land Act of 1800, which had been created to promote settlement of the Northwest Territories through purchase of land on credit.

Prior to making the journey across the Appalachians, Jacob Zeller married Christina Bucher (b. 1774, d. ~1850) in 1793. The union resulted in at least four children, three daughters and a son. Upon Jacob's passing around 1830, the farm was willed to Christina Zeller, who had married Abraham Mathias (b. 1797, d. 1856) just a few years prior.

Abraham Mathias, the son of Johan Jacob Mathias and Sarah *McDuhah* Mathias, was born on July 16th, 1797 in Pennsylvania, likely in Berks County, the same county from which the Zellers originated. It was Abraham's father, Johan Jacob Mathias, who would bring the Mathias name to Hocking County by moving his wife and their children, including Abraham Mathias, to the Ohio Country.

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Photos by Josh Zielinski

A sketch of the Zeller-Mathias Farm from the 1876 Hocking County Atlas. Isaac Mathias owned the farm at the time of the sketch.



A contemporary view of the Zeller-Mathias Farm similar to the sketch's perspective.

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Intermarriage between the Zeller and Mathias families eventually led to much of the land settled by Jacob Zeller being inherited into the Mathias bloodline. Isaac Mathias, born on January 25th, 1827 in Falls Township, purchased the property in 1849, likely from his father, Abraham, and mother, Christina Zeller Mathias. After marrying his first wife, Margaret Ann Lanham Mathias, in April of 1850, he moved to the farm and began making improvements. Isaac must have found quick success in the livestock market as he was able to construct the current farmhouse in 1854, and arrival of the railroad to Enterprise in 1869 would surely have enhanced his business. Both Isaac and Margaret lived as active residents of Enterprise. The two were major supporters of the United Brethren Church, while Isaac also contributed to the town by serving as postmaster and as the keeper of a store for a time. Before her untimely death in 1878 at the age of 49, Margaret had five children with Isaac, and Isaac would later go on to have an additional child after marrying Martha Reddick Mathias in 1882.

Isaac Mathias passed away on June 20th, 1904 during his 77th year. He is buried with his first wife, Margaret, in Antioch Cemetery, located directly south of the farm. In subsequent years, the farm



Overhanging forebay of a classic Pennsylvania German barn. Note wind doors and louvered vents on the level of the threshing floor and basement for livestock.

was divided into several parcels, with the 1854 farmhouse being on one parcel, and the operational part of the farm existing on another. Presently, the house is owned by the Kemper family, whereas the farm is run separately as the Walker Farm.

A sketch of the Zeller-Mathias farm can be found in the 1876 Atlas of Hocking County, in which the house and several other structures are visible. These

include a Pennsylvania German barn, a smokehouse, two additional barns, and a couple smaller structures. A key feature of note on the house is its Greek-revival porch, which is a later addition. Its L-shape layout is retained to the modern day, and the home still sits on its original sandstone foundation.

Aside from the house, the German

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23rd Annual Ohio Barn Tour and Conference – April 25-27

This year we will be visiting Tuscarawas County. The Thursday afternoon event features visits to two museums for local history and a wine and cheese tasting. Visit the Ernest Warther Museum and Gardens which highlights the carvings of steam engines and historic trains by the World's Master Carver. See the Reeves Museum, a Victorian mansion and Carriage House of an industrialist Jeremiah Reeves in Dover, Ohio.

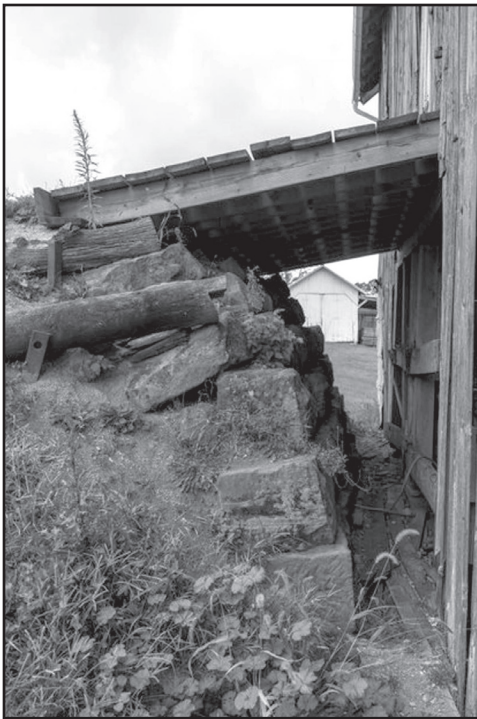
The Friday Barn Tour, centered in the New Philadelphia area includes six barns built from the early 19th and 20th centuries to the present. Take the opportunity to learn about the Moravian Indian communities of Gnadenhutton, Schoenbrunn, and Salem and the American tragedy associated with those early settlements in the Ohio country in the 1780s. Find out the story of the local German Separatist community of Zoar that was established in Tuscarawas County in 1817.

Saturday's conference will offer a great overview of the early years of barn building in Ohio and the line-up of speakers will inspire and entertain you.

For information about sign up and registration watch the web at <https://www.friendsofohiobarns.org/>.

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Bridge entry to threshing floor of the Mathias barn.

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style barn is the only other identifiable structure remaining from the sketch. Its foundation is made of sandstone that is almost certainly locally sourced Blackhand sandstone. The barn's ramp is reinforced by large sandstone blocks, and scoring marks are visible from when the stone was quarried. Inside the barn, mortise and tenon joinery can be seen holding the structure's timbers together, and rounded kerf marks left in these timbers by a circular saw indicate the barn likely having been constructed post-Civil War. Given the barn's sandstone foundation, it's possible an older barn sat on the same site as the present one, or, at the very least, existed somewhere else on the farm. Peering up towards the rafters, the hay trolley and its track are seen still in place.

Two other wooden structures also sit on the farm. There is a shed with a lean-to attached, as well as a small barn with a large lean-to surrounding two of its four sides. The small barn harbors an assortment of newer and antique tools. Especially notable, however, are the hand-hewn logs that comprise the structure. Though the exact history of the timbers isn't known, there are two main possibilities associated with them. Either the small log barn predates the Pennsylvania German barn, or the timbers framing the small barn were salvaged from an earlier structure, like an-



Since the barn was not built into a bank access, the threshing floor is reached by a massive stone ramp leading over a bridge entry.



The historic Mathias home. Much the same as it was in 1876.

other barn or a log cabin.

These structures exist as great, well-cared for examples of an early farm evolving with the times. Additions to the house and repairs done to the barns have been done respectfully, so the structures retain their original character while keeping them usable. Though now located on separate parcels, the farm continues to proudly overlook old U.S. Rt. 33 and the village of Enterprise near the southern boundary for the occurrence of Pennsylvania German barns in Ohio.

By: Josh Zielinski

Wayne County Barn Survey Planned

Wayne County Barn Survey Revival at Buckeye Agricultural Museum, 877 West Old Lincolnway, Wooster (across from Wayne County Fairgrounds Friday, March 1 10:00 am to 2:00. Free event presented by the Ag Success Team and Friends of Ohio Barns. Learn about the preservation and significance of historic timber framed barns and how to conduct or complete a barn survey in your county. For more information call 330-464-0624.

Friends of Ohio Barns strives to preserve history, state's farming roots

Debbie Ledley's family bought a farm near the Delaware County Airport in 1968, when she was just 4 years old. The farm included a big, old barn.

Her father boarded horses and was a grain farmer, Ledley said.

"So, there were gravity (grain) wagons in there. And then we would climb up the hay mow and swing from one side to the other right over the gravity wagon," Ledley recalled.

Now, with Ledley's parents in their 80s and no one to take over the farm, it was time for it to go, she said. A company purchased the land to build warehouses.

Ledley's voice cracked as she explained, "Mom and dad sold the farm, and it was just going to be destroyed."

But Ledley's husband, Chris Ledley, who also grew up on a farm, had the idea to deconstruct and move the barn to make it into their home. They're in the process of rebuilding it outside of Ostrander, about halfway between Marysville and Delaware. Recent date nights have involved pressure-washing old beams, Debbie said.

Dan Troth of GreenTech Construction, who is the contractor leading the reconstruction of the Ledley's barn, estimates that it dates to around 1870 or 1880. Standing in the barn near what would someday be the Ledley's kitchen, he pointed to the historic frame – the large posts and tie beams are all hand-hewn, while the smaller scantling was sawed.

To be sure of the barn's age, though, Troth said the Ledleys would have to have a core sample of the wood dated – through a process called dendrochronology, which can pinpoint within about three months of when a tree was felled.

A passion for barns

Troth is a longtime member of the Timber Framers Guild. He took down his first barn in 1976 and at the time was only trying to get the slate from the roof to sell, he said. Now, he has a deep appreciation for barns that stems in part from his childhood visits to the country while growing up in Ashland.

Troth said his father was an attorney



From left, Debbie Ledley, dog Layla, Friends of Ohio Barns Vice President Dan Troth, and Chris Ledley stand in the Ledley's still-under-construction barn home in Ostrander. Debbie Ledley moved the late-1800s barn from her family's farm near the Delaware County Airport after her parents, who are octogenarians, sold the land to a company building warehouses in the area.



Dan Troth, a contractor who rebuilds timber structures and vice president of Friends of Ohio Barns, points to layout marks on a post made by a historic barn's original builders, while dog Layla looks on.

who had many clients that were farmers, and on Sundays they would visit the farms.

"Whenever they had a barn, we would play in the barn. Because back in those days, we had – we called them square bales, they were actually rectangular – but you could build forts with those hay bales," Troth said. "And I just loved it."

In addition to being a contractor who works on timber structures, Troth is the

vice-president of Friends of Ohio Barns, a nonprofit that encourages preservation of the state's historic barns.

The group works with other organizations, like the National Barn Alliance, to connect Ohio barn owners with repair specialists. It also hosts an annual barn conference; the 2023 conference was held in April in Morrow County and included a tour of six barns. Friends of Ohio Barns

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also gives three annual “Barn of the Year” awards for agricultural use, adaptive reuse and stewardship.

The organization is based in Burbank but has members all over the state. Troth lives in southern Delaware County in an 1828 barn that he and his wife, Robin, converted into a house.

Saving Ohio’s barns

Troth rebuilds barns as they were, sometimes with structural improvements or with additions like the garage and sun-room on the Ledley’s house. But he doesn’t dismantle barns for parts, which he said is common.

“For the people who are selling it, it’s like elephant tusks – they know they have value. But our group, Friends of Ohio Barns, we’re trying to save the elephants,” Troth said.

He said most barns that are repurposed have to be moved. In their new locations, they become community centers, event venues, brewpubs, and restaurants.

Ohio’s historic barns were built with the trees on farmers’ properties and the most common types of wood used were white oak, tulip poplar and American beech, Troth said.

Farmers felled trees in the winter when the leaves were gone, and the underbrush was subdued. If snow was on the ground, they hooked the cut trees to an ox or horse and easily dragged them to the barn site, Troth said.

In the spring, they’d hew – or, in later years, saw – the trunks into posts. Then, in the summer, families, friends and neighbors came together to put up the barn. Troth said barn raisings were community events.

“And that sense of community has been lost to a great degree,” Troth said. But, he believes turning the barns into public places brings back that sense of community.

The barn became an official symbol of Ohio in 2019, thanks to the efforts of a few Westerville City Schools’ students and a little support from the Friends of Ohio Barns.

Remembering roots

For the Ledleys, their new house will



Chris and Debbie Ledley saved extra timber from Debbie Ledley’s family barn.



Chris and Debbie Ledley’s barn home is under construction in Ostrander. The Ledleys moved Debbie Ledley’s family barn from near the Delaware County Airport after her parents sold the family farm.

always be connected to old memories.

“So, you know, every time you walk in through the door, you just remember the blizzard of ‘78, what dad was doing, you know, in the barn, pulling in tractors out to plow out, the neighbors who were burning their furniture to stay warm,” Debbie Ledley said.

Troth says knowing your roots is important and in Ohio, those roots are in farming. Farmland, however, is slowly starting to disappear as big companies

buy it to build or expand factories and warehouses.

“And they’re, you know, moving us into the future with technology,” Troth said. “But I just think, how can we pay tribute to the farmers whose land we’ve bought? And I’m thinking, boy, it’s a great place for a barn where the community can gather.”

By: Allie Vugrincic,
Multi Media Reporter
created this story for an NPR
broadcast on WOSU radio

Unique Allen County Barn is History

Built circa 1890 by Dr. Richard E. Jones, the this unique Victorian Gothic barn, near Gomer, Ohio, featured a turret and two hay-hoods, a slate roof, and some vertical slate siding in the upper stories, louvered vents beneath a hipped roof feature near the ridge and in a circular feature on the gable end. Some accounts suggest the turret held a water tank. The barn sported several windows and doors, some on the second story. A Gothic carriage house with cupola stood nearby. A house and a two story brick building on the site added to the collection of buildings that was a real showplace in its time.

Gomer is one of the early Welsh settlements in Ohio. Welsh cultural influence could possibly account for the unique building style.

The Old Barn Post featured an image of this interesting Allen County barn a few years ago. This Ohio treasure seems to have recently succumbed to a combination of weather and neglect up on the flat and windy till plain of northwest Ohio.

How many barns are in Ohio, anyway? Not as many as there were yesterday!

Tom O'Grady



Dr. R.E. Jones' barn in its heyday near Gomer, Ohio in Allen County, circa 1900. Small hay-hood to right of the turret. Round louvered vents in gable. Source: Allen County History



Above Left: Jones barn in the 21st century having received much less TLC over the previous 100 years. Larger hay-hood behind double gabled second story space. Source: Irl Grundy – <https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=10201709467124481&set=a.1440708823764>

Above: Dr. Jones' farm sometime after 2019. Facebook



Left: Double gable space on second story at far left. Carriage house at right. Separate carriage house to extreme right. Source: <http://shunpikingtoheaven.blogspot.com/2020/02/american-gothic-barn-gomer-ohio.html>



Photo by: Tom O'Grady

Fun Barn – movies in Athens County.



Unless otherwise noted images are from Pinterest

Boot Barn – footwear and Western wear



Party Barn – Kegs to Go

Evolution of the American Barn

The timber framers hewed barns out of the forest and the bedrock of the Ohio wilderness. They built them to last for a thousand years. The barn builders could not have imagined that we would hardly maintain them for a century and that they would be replaced by disposable structures of all kinds. After being sentinels in the landscape, overlooking fields of crops and livestock for more than a century a staggering number of traditional American barns are in a state of increasing disrepair or are being demolished to make room for strip malls, subdivisions, or parking spaces. In fifty years how many Americans will even know what a barn is, or was? How many will understand that it was likely the most important building in the American economy, housing the harvest that sustained the society? How many will understand its relationship to the land, the economy, culture, American history, and the growth of the nation?

America had the greatest barns ever built in the history of the world. Protecting those that are left is an ever-growing challenge.

These images are another reason why Friends of Ohio Barns exists.



The Barn – Twelve packs and eighteen packs



The Barn Restaurant – “Just Real Good Food”



Photo by: Tom O'Grady

Beauty Barn – hair and nails in Marietta; Washington County.



Dairy Barn – cold beer, cigarettes, and ice cubes

Windy and Cold

2023 Friends of Ohio Barns Fall Picnic

It was a dark and stormy night — no wait — it was a partly sunny very brisk Saturday, October 7, when 27 members of Friends of Ohio Barns met at Malabar Farm State Park, Lucas, for the annual fall picnic.

There were quite a few members we hadn't seen for a few years and a great layout of food provided by everyone, including Ohio-shaped burgers sold by Lanning's Foods in Mount Vernon and delivered by board member Pam Gray and cooked by board president Caleb Miller.

Our program was reconnecting with friends and touring the park, including the barn some of our members were involved in rebuilding after a fire in 1993.

Thanks to all who attended. It was good to see everyone.

By: Dave Hamblin



Photo by Barb Beck

Several of the FOB fall picnic attendees after their tour of the main barn at Malabar Farm State Park, Lucas, Ohio - October 7, 2023. Left to right: Bruce and Bev Riddle, JoAnne Hamblin, Dan Troth, Dave Hamblin-event coordinator, Rudy Christian, Laura Saeger, Jack Shumaker, Ric Beck, and Darlyn Shumaker.

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FRIENDS OF OHIO BARNs
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