



# *The Old* BARN POST

*A publication of Friends of Ohio Barns • February, 2015 • Vol. XIV, Issue 1*

## Hancock County – Here Come the Friends of Ohio's Barns!

The 16th annual Ohio Barn Conference and Barn Tour will be in an area filled with history and wonderful architecture. Plan on spending a day before and/or a day after to take in all the wonderful sights and sounds of Findlay and the surrounding area. The downtown area is filled with good eateries, coffee houses, antique stores, as well as arts and culture in the form of shops and museums. And if the weather is nice (and we hope so for the barn tour) there are several parks and nature preserves in the area.

Join us for another tour of great barns on Friday, April 24th and listen to many great talks at the Brugeman Lodge on Saturday, April 25th. Dave Fey, of the Fairfield County Historical Parks District, who hosted barn tour participants at the restored Rock Mill near Lancaster a few years ago, will be the keynote speaker. Tim Mason, former FOB V.P. will talk about Barn Owls and what Ohioans can do to help their populations. Gary Wilson will talk about the History of Farming & the Relationship with the Co-operative Extension Service. David & Linda Spahr will discuss The Modern Family Farm. And we will get an update from Kelly & Tammy Rundle and 4th Wall Films regarding the documentary they are making called "The Barn Raisers".

Rudy Christian and Dan Troth, the Barn Detectives, will give us a review of the barns visited on the Friday Barn Tour.



A Silent Auction and the Member Annual Meeting during the lunch break will round off the agenda. FOB will also be presenting their annual Barn of the Year Awards.

Come to the Conference and Barn Tour early and explore the area and stay over on Sunday to explore more. Hancock County has a rich history being part of the Great Black Swamp and contested lands between Native Americans and early settlers seeking rich soils to farm. Hancock County played a role in the Underground Railroad. The Hancock County Courthouse, built between 1886 and 1888, is a fine example of the Victorian Second

Empire architecture and is spectacular. It was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1973. The oil boom of the 1880's culminated in dozens of Victorian style homes being built by townsmen with great wealth. Many are listed on the National Register of Historic Places as well and can be found on South Main St. and West Sandusky St. The Mazza Museum of International Art from Picture Books is for those of you wanting to relive your childhood through the artwork of your favorite kiddie books.

And then there is the beautiful Hancock Historical Museum located at 422

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# Random Thoughts

Happy New Year to one and all...here's hoping your's is off to a great start! This is going to be a true random thoughts article this time, so here goes...

I have seen an increase in barn related photos, news articles, and projects of all kinds in various media outlets over the past several months...a good sign indeed!

Your board of directors has changed their annual face to face meeting to January (in fact we had it as this newsletter was preparing to go to press) because it was frankly easier to get us all together at once, and we could discuss future issues with more time to act on them.

If you see a hashtag (#) by your name on the address label of this issue it means we haven't heard from you in several years. We have been mailing Conference Newsletters to those past members in hopes that they will come to the conference and/or renew their membership. However, in order to keep costs down for mailings the board has decided to remove those of you with the # from the conference newsletter mailings, we hope you understand. We do want you to know that we would love to have you rejoin and receive full benefits of membership.

We have some potential projects still on the launch pad for this year, most notably a barn repair workshop at Slate Run Metro Park near Columbus, probably in the summer. There are at least two other possibilities, and of course we will keep you in the loop.

Don't forget to nominate your favorite barn (or friend's / relative's barn) for Barn of the Year!! Check the website for details and the address to send submissions.

Please consider submitting photos to our website and Facebook page...we would love to hear from you...it's always nice to see our beautiful Ohio Barns displayed in all their glory...even the deteriorating ones.

I hope to establish a volunteer "task list" posting for our website and Facebook page, so be on the lookout. I'm hoping that posting "specific opportunities" will get better responses for aid, and we will get a chance to find our membership's hidden talents!

Don't forget to let us know of a "Top Ten" endangered barn in Ohio. Our new Barn Conservancy Program is looking for that needy Ohio barn that can be revived and showcased for all Ohioans to enjoy. Part of our new policy is as follows:

*The criteria for selection will include the barn being:*

*In a high traffic area for convenient public viewing.*

*Historically significant to local region or state.*

*Structure of high quality craftsmanship, at least 100 years or older in its original location at least for most of its life and provided or will provide a vital community function.*

*Work with the owner (or community) and possibly aid in the repairs, restoration and re-purposing of the structure. FOB would look into procuring grant funding or use endowment money to perform structural repairs and maintenance up to a given dollar figure and hopefully have workshops during work on the structure.*

That's it for now...time to shovel more snow...looking forward to seeing you in Findlay!

Respectfully submitted,  
Ric Beck, president

# Ohio Barn Tour XVI

The 16th Ohio Barn Tour in Hancock County will include a variety of interesting buildings. A couple of the stops offer repurposed barns while others give us a look at what the traditional barns of northwestern Ohio are like. Get a taste of what kinds of structures northwestern Ohio farmers used to store their hay, thresh their grain, and manage their livestock. Hear what our Barn Detectives have to say about the age of the barns, the types of trees used to build them, techniques of construction and how they may differ from barns built in other parts of Ohio.

Five of the barns are highlighted in this issue of the Old Barn Post. The Barn Tour will be on Friday, April 24th. Seats on the buses are limited. Reserve yours now.

## HANCOCK COUNTY, Continued from Page 1

West Sandusky St. in downtown Findlay. Visit the website at [www.hancockhistoricalmuseum.org](http://www.hancockhistoricalmuseum.org) for more about the museum and its hours of operation. Sarah Sisser, the Director of the Hancock Historical Museum, has been instrumental in getting our Ohio Barn Conference organized this year and we are extremely grateful to her and the museum. The museum is located in the Hull-Flater House (an Italian Villa style home) which was built in 1881 by Jasper Hull who was the co-founder of the Findlay Artificial Gas and Light Company. A barn was built behind the house in 1985 to hold the exhibits on transportation and agriculture. Finally, the Crawford Log House was moved to its location behind the barn from Biglick Township where it originally stood. The museum has loads to offer and should be a part of your visit to Hancock County.

**"There are no unsacred places; there are only sacred places and desecrated places."**

— Wendell Berry (1934 -) An American farmer, author, poet, teacher based in Kentucky

## FRIENDS OF OHIO BARNS BOARD

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### Members

Gary Clower Trumbull County (330) 720-6671

Pam Gray Knox County (740) 263-1369

David Hamblin Morrow County (419) 947-1360

## Upcoming Events

**March 10th, 2015** – FOB vice president, Dan Troth, will be presenting a talk titled "Ohio's Vanishing Barns. What Would Ferdinand A. Brader Do?" at the Canton Museum of Art located at 1001 Market Ave, North Canton, OH 44702. For more information check the Museum's website at [www.cantonart.org](http://www.cantonart.org).

**March 14th, 2015** – FOB president, Ric Beck, will be presenting a talk titled "Preserving Living History for Living Space" at the Michigan Barn Preservation Network Annual Conference at the Kellogg Hotel & Conference Center, MSU in East Lansing, Michigan. For more information check the MBPN website at <http://mibarn.net>.

**April 12th, 2015** – FOB vice president, Dan Troth, will be presenting a talk titled "Ohio's Vanishing Barns" at the Ohio History Connection located at 800 East 17th Ave, Columbus, OH 43211. For more information check out the Ohio History Connection's website at [www.ohiohistory.org](http://www.ohiohistory.org).

**May 31st, 2015** – FOB vice president, Dan Troth, will be hosting the Conestoga Annual Fund Raiser for the Ohio History Connection at his home in Delaware. Check out [www.ohiohistory.org](http://www.ohiohistory.org) for ticket information.

## Register Securely Online for the Ohio Barn Conference XVI 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 XVI box. There is no JBD Workshop this year. 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 20th, 2015.

## FOB board meets



The FOB board got right to business in 2015 meeting at Vice President, Dan Troth's timber frame home in Delaware in January. Hard at work are, from left to right – Dave Hamblin, Sarah Woodall, Mr. V.P. Dan Troth, Tom O'Grady, Gary Clower, Ric Beck, Pam Whitney Gray, and Laura Saeger. Photo by Robin Troth

## BASINGER BARN



Photo by Pamela Whitney Gray

The Basinger Barn holds many surprises, some of which are firsts for members of Friends of Ohio Barns to see. The gable ends of the barn are graced with eleven louvers and five owl holes. Plus there is an owl hole over each driveway door. We have never seen owl holes on the broad side of the barn before. There are several surprises on the inside of the barn as well. The Basinger stop has an added bonus. The original brick farm house is timber frame inside and most of it is stripped bare so we can see how some of the framing in the house is different from the barn.

## 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!

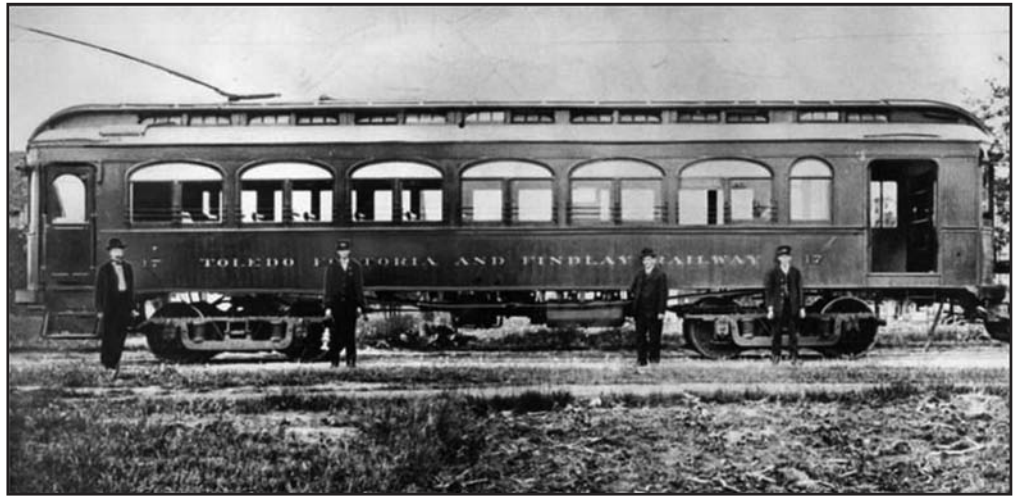
If you can't find anything to bring, at least come prepared to make someone else bid a little higher before walking off with a treasure!

# Hancock County Not Just Farms and Barns

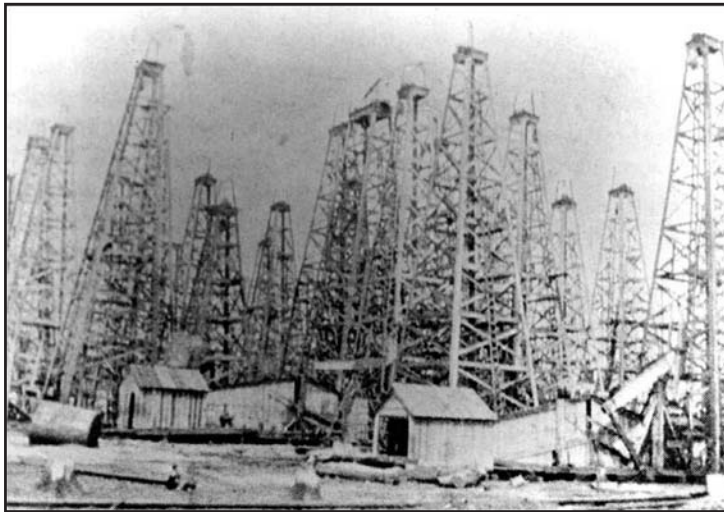
Hancock County, in addition to being a leading county in Ohio's great agriculture industry, was also home to a gas and oil boom in the late 19th century. In addition to sprouting corn, wheat and other agricultural crops the rural regions of Hancock County also had a season sprouting oil derricks. Hancock County was a leading producer of the bubbling crude for a while. The gas development supported a diverse glass industry in the region.

The nation's rails also found their way through Hancock County and Findlay in a big way. The Mad River and Lake Erie Railroad, one of the first in Ohio had a spur reaching into Findlay. Canals were still being built in other parts of Ohio at the time. Railroads continued to expand their routes through Hancock County. An interurban line connected Findlay with Fostoria, Ohio and Toledo building up a weekend traffic offering a free dinner ticket to any one of several Findlay restaurants with excursion tickets. Today Findlay is home to Northwest Ohio Railroad Preservation, Inc.

While one may think of Hancock County as an important part of America's breadbasket, it has played a dual role supporting a substantial industrial economy for a century.



**Above:** Toledo, Fostoria, and Findlay Interurban railroad car used for day excursions and short distance travel between towns from the late 1800's to the 1930's.



**Left:** Hancock County oil derricks north of Findlay, Ohio in the late 19th century.

## BRIGHT-HOY/LAMB'S EAR BARN BED & BREAKFAST AND GIFT SHOP



Photos by Pamela Whitney Gray  
The grand old lady at Lamb's Ear is a beauty to be sure. She has been lovingly repainted and shines like a rare gem. The fenestration is a work of art as well as functional ventilation. The oval louvers and transoms over the driveway doors are very unusual.

## FISH BARN-HOME



Photo by Pamela Whitney Gray

The Fish home has open living space created from many salvaged barn parts. It is comfortable with a feel of country and a touch of class.

## PEPPLE BARN



The Pepple Barn is decorated with painted arch doors. A pent roof on the gable end has a window with a decorative arch over it. On the inside a center post between the driveways is crafted with chamfered corners. A straw shed was added to increase the storage capacity at the rear of the barn. The Pepple barn appears to have a forebay at the rear as well.

Photo by Pamela Whitney Gray

## 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.

## 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!

## A Special Thank You to our Donors

We would like to thank our members who helped build up our Endowment Fund in 2014. Listed alphabetically, they are not related by placement to the value of their donation: Charles Bauer, Rex and Martha Buller, Suzanne and David Fisher and Delbert Gutridge. Donations from the Brookfield and Kinsman Historical Societies were made in gratitude for programs provided by Gary Clower and Sarah and John Woodall. Donations that also matter are those

that come in smaller denominations such as the generosity shown by rounding up the amounts spent for merchandise, silent auction and memberships. Yes, we keep track of those too. More information on our Endowment Fund and Grants made to Friends in 2014 will be shared at our annual member meeting scheduled during the 2015 annual conference. We look forward to seeing you there!

— Laura Saeger - FOB Treasurer

# Methods of the Master Barn Builders

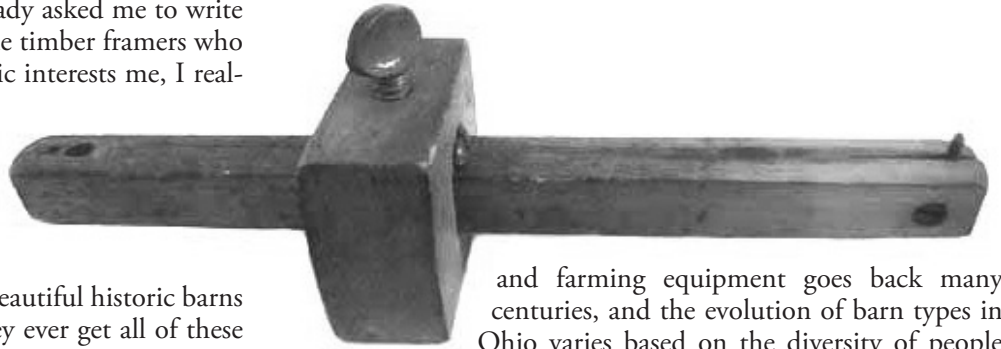
Some time ago, your editor Tom O'Grady asked me to write something about layout systems used by the timber framers who built our Ohio barns. As much as this topic interests me, I realized the challenge was to write something that you would find interesting, and hopefully informative. What I have finally realized is that my interest lies in the fact that layout of timbers is part of my trade. So why would you be interested at all?

Have you ever walked into one of our beautiful historic barns and wondered, "How in the world did they ever get all of these big pieces of wood to fit together so well?" That in itself is a very good question. When you watch builders today, they are working with small pieces of wood, most 2x4, 2x6s etc. Those framing materials are relatively consistently sized and made from pine, so they are fairly light and easy to move around. But the timbers we see in our barns are mostly hardwoods like oak, beech and hickory because that was what was available in the forests the barn builders harvested to build with. They are anything but light and very few of them can be easily picked up or moved by one person.

So part of the challenge barn builders faced was moving the timbers around, but the other part was making sure they fit together when it finally came time to gather the members of the local community together and have a "raising". Both of these challenges required a good deal of forethought, and to be able to repeat the process from one barn frame to the next required a good deal of skill. That skill, the hallmark of the master builder, lies in understanding how to lay out the mortices, tenons, lap joints and rafter seats accurately on every piece of timber in the barn frame so when those joints are cut by the framing crew, everything fits together correctly.

One key element in understanding the importance of a layout is to realize that the builders who constructed our early barns did not have drawings or plans of any kind to work from when they were asked to build a barn. The new owner of the barn might tell them where they wanted the barn located, how big of a barn they wanted, and maybe even the type of barn they wanted. But it was the purview of the barn builder to know how to build it. For most barns that make up our historic agricultural landscape, the type, and even size of barn that was built, was based on a tradition rooted in the lineage of both the new owner and the builder.

The history of building barns to protect farm animals, harvested crops



and farming equipment goes back many centuries, and the evolution of barn types in Ohio varies based on the diversity of people with different cultural backgrounds who settled here. The wide variety of barns that we find in Ohio, quite likely more than in any other state, means that the barn builders who built them had many different backgrounds. The knowledge that they brought with them was quite specific to their own cultural heritage, but it also represented an amalgamation of techniques which were shared among the barn builders as settlement and the ensuing growth of agriculture placed greater and greater demands on master builders.

Although the barn builder's knowledge of how to lay out timbers came from many different cultural backgrounds, there is a surprising commonality in the basic knowledge of the principles of layout. So much so that the system of layout used by barn builders when they first settled the Midwest is given one common name; Scribe Rule layout. This system of layout, common to both the British Isles and European countries, remains the basic principle still used today throughout the Old World.

Of particular interest is the fact that the system of layout used commonly in America beginning in the 19th century appears to have evolved as a result of the melting pot effect - having master builders from diverse backgrounds working together in the New World. That system is known as Square Rule layout and is still used only in the Americas.

By the 20th century a third system of layout had evolved, based on the fact that builders were now building primarily with wood which had been converted from tree to framing timber by the use of a sawmill rather than being hewn square with an axe. Several decades ago, I identified this new system and named it Mill Rule layout.

Over the next few issues of the Old Barn Post I will be describing the various methods of layout used by the master builders who came before us. We will talk about both the similarities and differences between the cultural influences which affected the barn builders, and look at how those peculiarities can help us identify characteristics about our barns and the people who built them.

You are welcome to send Tom ([ogradey@ohio.edu](mailto:ogradey@ohio.edu)) or me ([rchristian@planexus.com](mailto:rchristian@planexus.com)) questions about the layout systems and I will try to answer some of those questions in future posts. Hopefully this series of articles will help give you a little better understanding of who the barn builders were, and how we can find evidence of how they managed to create structures that have lasted for centuries, and how they provided us such a diverse cultural heritage.

— Rudy Christian

## ROPP-METZGER BARN



Photo by Pamela Whitney Gray

**The Metzger Stop is a working farm that is now being managed by the younger generation. It has lots of history and stories to be told by Mr. Metzger, the senior. It is interesting to talk to three generations of farmers and hear their views and visions, past, present and future, on farming the family holdings. While at the Metzger Farm the FOB Barnstorming Team found an old wooden length of water pipe the family did not know existed. They were surprised and pleased to discover this piece of history.**

## Soroka Barn Update

The Soroka barn in Trumbull County is on the fast track to becoming a fixture in the landscape of their farm for years to come. Recent repairs include using metal plates for bottom post repairs. A new roof went on soon after the barn was lowered back onto the new block foundation. The grading has been completed and new doors installed on the back side of the barn. It looked like only new gutters and possible siding repairs were needed to call this project "Done". Our hats go off to the three generations of Sorokas and their passion to repair their timber frame barn for future Soroka generations to enjoy.

— Sarah Woodall



Photos by Sarah Woodall

**Gary Clower uncovers one of the metal plates used for the bottom post repair.**



**Soroka barn sports a new roof and new back doors, now all they need is a little grass seed.**

## 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 Program, the Barn Conservancy 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!

## 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 25th, 2015.

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.

# NORTH STAR

by Sheila Packa

In Hanko, Finland  
a young woman boards  
the vessel in the Baltic  
for a ship across the Atlantic.  
The North Star shines in the sky.  
She's carrying in her valise  
a change of clothes  
a packet of seeds  
and the sauna dipper.  
Distance pours between constellations  
between English words on her tongue  
through storms and sun.  
In New York City, she buys  
a one way ticket  
boards the train going  
across the continent  
arrives on an inland sea.  
The winter ground underfoot

is familiar with frost  
as she transfers to a northbound  
along the Vermilion Trail  
in Minnesota.  
Ahead of her waits a man  
a house to be built  
and a fire that burns it down.  
Ahead, eleven children  
to bear, a few she must bury,  
the cows in the barn  
needing to be milked.  
Unbroken ground only hers to till.  
Above her, the North Star  
inside the aurora borealis, northern  
banners waving welcome —

"North Star" by Sheila Packa, from *Night Train Red*  
*Dust: Poems of the Iron Range.* ©  
Submitted by Dan Troth

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Printed on recycled paper, of course.



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