



# The Old BARN POST

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## Saving the Döllinger – Geer Cabin

It's all too common a tale. An old relic is languishing by the side of the road, off in a field somewhere, slowly succumbing to relentless weathering. And occasionally a well-intended person or group might have the idea to save an old structure, and want to use it. They eagerly call people like FOB members and ask if we can help. Sadly the response is also too common, *"The building codes does not allow us to move a building, without bringing it up-to-code."* Until now!

Johann Stephen Döllinger was born in 1818 in Neidhartswinden, Germany. A brick mason by trade, Mr. Döllinger immigrated to Ohio in 1842 and settled south of Marysville. There on 44.5 acres Stephen (his call name) would build his cabin, marry in 1850, and raise a family. He was also a member of the St. John's Lutheran Church founded in 1838, which is still located just 1.5 miles away.

Stephen Döllinger lived in the house with his wife and children through the late 1800's; with their youngest daughter Anna (her call name) inheriting the property after marrying J. Leonard Geer. And while the Döllinger's and Geer's are now gone, the cabin is not.

The Döllinger's cabin is a log or crib constructed cabin, approximately 28 feet by 20 feet, with just two rooms on the first floor and two small loft rooms above. Built with swamp white oak that grows locally, the cabin also featured a central brick chimney that must have been built by Mr. Döllinger himself.

In 2024, Michael Geer, the last family member to own the property, moved to sell



**The Dollinger-Geer log cabin near Marysville, Ohio circa 1897. Image submitted by Mike Wengler.**

all of the property except for a small piece with the cabin. However the city's rules would not allow the smaller lot to have an access drive. Mr. Geer was left with only the option to sell all of the land. But his commitment to the cabin remained steadfast. Mr. Geer donates the cabin to the St. John's Lutheran Church; the church his ancestors were early members of, along with generous funding to move the cabin and have it rebuilt. This brings us back to

the building code.

The approach was going to be to plead for mercy, and to ask the local building department to lean into their better angels and let us relocate the building and use it as is. Then we heard the good news. Ohio adopted the *"Existing Building Code"* a few months earlier.

The *"Existing Building Code"* has been around as a model code for about 20 years,

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# CALEB'S CORNER

I need to take a pause with my column series on the experiences of our two barn-grant recipients and inform you fine readers of an update in the evolution of the mechanics of the financial operation of our organization. Over the last two years we have begun the shift to digital payment for the yearly conference. During that same period, we transitioned to a new Treasurer, Mindy, with the retirement of Laura who kept us legal for the past two decades. Over the past year we have methodically figured out what is and is not working efficiently. You might be asking, "How does this all affect me?"

We are requesting that everyone help with this year's conference by using credit/debit cards and register for the conference, barn tour, and pay annual membership fees entirely online. I will be the first to admit to being a stick-in-the-mud when it comes to this process, but even I have seen the necessity in this evolution!

For the conference registration we have requested that everyone do this. Over the past two years about 90% of attendees have made this transition with us. Moving forward with this we are going to try and include all merchandise sales and the silent auction payments to be digital as well. Last year we did have the capabilities onsite to do this but there were still a few growing pains that went along with this. But we are confident that Laura and Mindy have worked out those bugs for this year. I thank you ahead of time for your patience with us as we make this more seamless for you and, in turn, for us!

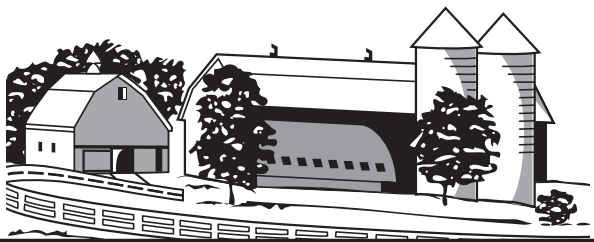
Caleb Miller, President  
Friends of Ohio Barns

## Thank you, thank you!

A heartfelt Thank You to all our donors in 2024! The FOB donation account was increased by a total of \$1,442.00, which is close to fulfilling our quarterly contribution to the FOB Endowment Fund. With your generous donations, FOB can continue to serve our mission of supporting Ohio resident's efforts to preserve Ohio's historic timber frame barns.

*David & Donna Anderson; Charles Bauer; Nancy Bruch; Doug Butts; Rudy Christian; Tim Cook; Tom Derr; Doug & Carrie Mineweaser; Paul "PT" Farley; Suzanne Fisher; Steve Gordon; Pamela Gray; Debra Hatherhill; Judy Hendershot; Denise Kelly; William Lawhon; Bruce & Beverly Riddle; Charles Sarver; Carol Tackett, Douglas Terpstra.*

By: Mindy Cooper



# Treasurer's Notes

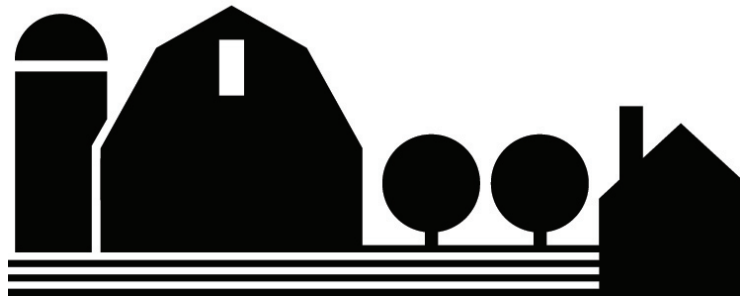
As the organization grows and membership becomes more geographically distributed across the state of Ohio, the need to adopt more flexible, timely and efficient mail and banking processes has been recognized. While we are researching improved payment options, we kindly request that you use the option to pay by credit/debit card through the FOB website which will ensure your membership, donations and conference registrations are processed promptly. Some have expressed concerns about the use of Paypal and we are looking at different and better member options for the future, but these won't be in place for the April 2025 conference timeframe.

For those members who are unable to pay by credit card, or have set up automated bank payments, we value your membership and contributions! Please continue to send checks to the current address at:

Friends of Ohio Barns, PO Box 203, Burbank OH 44214, and expect a 3-8 week delay in processing your check.

Thank you for your support.

Mindy Cooper, Treasurer



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# FOB Fall Picnic

The first Saturday in October was a perfect day for our annual member picnic. We all gathered at the Octagon Shelter in Virginia Kendall State Park just outside the village of Peninsula. Blue skies and sunshine were on the menu along with a wonderful array of potluck dishes and Holmes County special burgers ala Caleb Miller, made with grass-fed beef and heritage bred pork. I witnessed vegetarians eating those burgers!

The octagon building was originally built by the CCC in the 1930's using wormy chestnut beams. It was refur-

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The interior of the CCC Pavilion shows historic chestnut framing of plates and posts. Our barn detectives discovered new oak rafter & purlin roof repairs. Well-fed members on right, Jim Told and Dave Hamblin across from JoAnne Hamblin and Jane Todd join nearly 30 FOB members at Virginia Kendall State Park for the annual fall picnic.

Photo by: Laura Saeger

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but each state adopts the model, when they see fit. And up until 2024, Ohio had not seen fit to adopt it. Without this code, a building cannot be moved, no matter how historic, unless it is brought up-to-code.

What makes the “Existing Building Code” unique is its provision that allows historic buildings to be moved without upgrade provided they meet the criteria for what this code defines as “historic.” [The emphasis below is mine].

*HISTORIC BUILDING - Any building or structure that is one or more of the following:*

1. Listed, or certified as eligible for listing, by the State Historic Preservation Officer [SHPO] or the Keeper of the National Register of Historic Places, in the National Register of Historic Places.
2. Designated as historic under an applicable state or local law.
3. Certified as a contributing resource within a National Register, state designated or locally designated historic district.

What we immediately noticed was being “eligible for listing” seemed easier and faster to obtain, than getting on the National Register; or so we hoped.

We reached out to the SHPO to ask them to consider the resource as eligible for listing, which proved to be interesting. From our first conversation it was clear that the SHPO had not yet wrestled with this aspect of the new code and were caught off-guard. They had some policy-



Photo by: Mike Wengler

### The Dollinger-Greer log cabin moving into its third century of service.

making to craft. Nevertheless, in the course of a few weeks the SHPO sent us a letter saying, “... it appears the cabin will likely qualify for the National Register under Criterion C for Architecture as an early log construction and building type associated with local settlement patterns.”

As many of us can attest, the preservation of old buildings is difficult, and fraught with nuance. And while Building Codes are written to protect our health and safety, many of us who love old structures and understand how they are built sometimes lament the collateral damage caused by those codes. However, with Ohio's adoption of the “Existing Building Code” there are now other options to protect our historic buildings.

Had this story occurred before March

2024, Mr. Geer's donation of his family's cabin, and the generous funding to move it, may have been for naught. Harsh as it sounds, Mr. Geer may have heard the line many of have heard before, “We love what you are trying to do... but we have no way to approve it.” Thankfully there is now a way. And now Mr. Geer's vision for his ancestor's cabin to have a new home can be brought to fruition. This may be the first historic building to benefit from this code.

Epilogue — Mike Wengler, a longtime FOB member, and his crew, have dismantled the Döllinger — Geer Cabin, and is working to build its new foundation. It is our hope that the new structure goes back up soon.

By: Chuck Bultman

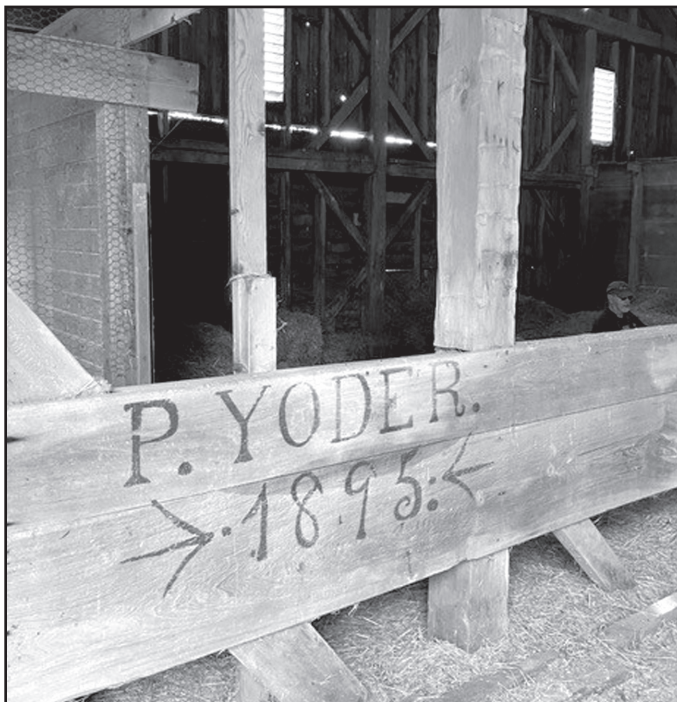
# My Grandpa's Farm

In March of 2015 Dan Troth invited us to a presentation he was giving at the Canton Museum of Art. It was on the history of barn raisings and the presentation made use of Dan's collection of historical barn photos to support his talk. His presentation was in conjunction with the *Ferdinand A. Brader* exhibit.

We arrived early so we would have time to visit the exhibit and talk with Dan. Once or twice in our history of attending auctions we had seen Brader drawings come up for bid, all of which were rendered in pencil on wove paper. All of them are large-scale, often up to 32 inches high by 52 inches wide. They are fascinating to study as they depict property and animals that were most likely the owner's most valuable assets, in an artistic and flattering way. In every case these were commissioned works that show Brader's ability to draw truthfully and showed his understanding of life on the farm. While viewing the exhibit I realized that I was looking at a view of my grandfather's farm just outside of Louisville in Stark County! I was stunned. Brader did that drawing in 1885. His earliest Ohio drawings were in 1884. The owners at that time were Peter and Nancy Yoder who had purchased more than 100 acres on Georgetown Rd. in 1889.

I do not know exactly when my grandparents bought the farm. Grampa was born in 1892, Grandma in 1895. Lloyd and Mary (Bair) Saeger married in 1912 and moved to Ohio from Saegertown, PA. My father was born in 1914 and recalled working the farm which had grown to 180 acres with his father and four brothers. His mother and sister worked the gardens, prepared and preserved food, sewed clothing and quilts, and "cleaned up" as was the custom in those times. And those were the things I learned from my grandma, mom, and aunts on that farm. "Many hands make light work" means that when the work is done, you can go play in the barn with your sister and cousins!

That barn was, and still is, a beauty. It is an extremely well built, hand hewn, German forebay bank barn. There was a small dairy herd at pasture. All the milking was done by hand, poured into large milk cans, chilled in the spring-fed trough in the milk house, then hauled by wagon



**Peter Yoder signature on very thick planked waste wall 1895, ten years after Brader's drawing.**

Photo by: Laura Saeger

to the end of the drive for pick up. The hen house was off limits unless you were asked to gather and wash eggs. Seems we could not be trusted to close the door in the evening. But the barn, fields, pasture, creek, and woods were our playground. The crops during my time on the farm were corn, oats and wheat. All the plowing, planting, and harvesting was done with the magnificent assistance of four teams of steady, intelligent Percheron horses. I was in love with them, in awe of their size, their thoughtful gaze and their gentle nature. Even at the very young age of five I remember hanging on the field fence waiting for the teams to come back to the barn. Grandpa showed us how to pat the rump of the horse and say, "over now." I barely came up to its thigh. Then the horse would step to one side and patiently wait for us to slip into the stall with a leather bucket full of grain for their evening treat. There was no pushing or rushing although they would always sniff the top of my head. The gentle giants always waited until we said, "OK now." Giving them another pat we would exit the stall before they put their face in the feed bin. They must have been extremely trustworthy for Grandpa to allow us to do that.

The biggest event of the year, besides Christmas, was threshing time. The co-op threshing machine would make the rounds

of the local farms that needed them. The crew along with my dad, uncles, and older male cousins would set up the steam powered thresher on the bank or ramp and point the shoot into the barn, feeding the shafts of wheat off the wagon and onto a belt that moved through the machine separating the wheat from the straw. The straw was hand loaded or pitched into the mows. The world shook when that thresher operated. It was loud, dusty and usually hot. My job was to help make sure there were towels, soap, and wash basins at the pump so folks could wash up before coming in for a meal. I also helped prep food — a Lot of food — for everyone to eat at dinner. The crew that came with the machine also slept and ate at the farm until the job was done.

There are more buildings in the 1885 Brader drawing than there were in my time. There was the barn, 2 wagon sheds, 2 large corn cribs behind the barn, the chicken coop beside the barn and small milk house off the front corner of the barn driveway side. All the auxiliary buildings along the drive had been removed. The lone tree in the pasture behind the house was a beech tree. By the 50s and 60s that giant beech was known as the hobo tree. It was so large that a man could stand or sit in the cavity of the trunk. The tree was hollowed out, perhaps resulting from a lightning strike,

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## FARM, Continued from Page 4

but still living. The hobos were men who had jumped off a local train and the hand carved “signs” on and in that tree noted that the lady at the farmhouse would give you food and maybe a little work. We were not supposed to go there but, of course, we did. It may be that Brader who was fascinated by trains jumped off one of those local trains himself. I wish someone, anyone, had a record of those hobo marks.

In 1963 the entire farm and farmhouse were sold at auction. It was time to downsize. My grandpa was worn thin by debilitating arthritis, and it was time to retire. He had no interest in all the new-fangled farm equipment and, sadly, none of the kids wanted to take over the operation. The Kiko family that lived on the farm across the road bought the Saeger farm so they could enlarge their horse business. They later added the large loafing shed to the barn that now obscures the view of the forebay from the road today.

Ferdinand A. Brader left a legacy of farm architecture and landscapes and scenes of rural life that are intricate and beautiful. It is hard to believe that his large format pencil drawings could have been rendered while sitting on a crate or stump using a folding drafting board set upon an easel somewhere on the edge of the property. Even harder to believe that his commission for the drawings was generally not more than five dollars. Perhaps it was an extravagant amount for that time, but he did live in the Poor House or County Home in Stark County and Portage County (1891-1895) until a distant relative left him money and he returned to Switzerland in 1899.

And so, until some distant relative leaves me enough money to move to Switzerland I'm happy to recall those memories of my family time on that farm. I'm grateful that Mr. Yoder hired Mr. Brader to draw the farm on Georgetown Rd. in Louisville, Ohio and that somehow that fragile piece of paper survived time and changes in ownership. And I'm grateful



**F.A. Brader sketch of The Property of Peter and Nancy Yoder, Nimishillen Twp. Stark Co. Ohio. 1885. Submitted by Laura Saeger. Source: *Legacy of Ferdinand A. Brader* by Kathleen Wieschaus-Voss; McKinley Presidential Library& Museum, Canton, Ohio**



Photo by: Laura Saeger

**The old Yoder-Saeger – Kiko – Scheetz farm barn, looking good in its 145th year of service to the agricultural heritage of Stark County.**

to Dan Troth for inviting us to hear him speak, or I may have never known that the drawing existed. I'm delighted to say that

we will be visiting this barn on our barn tour April 25, 2025.

By: Laura Saeger

## PICNIC, Continued from Page 3

bished in 1970 when it became part of the Cuyahoga Valley National Park. The octagon shape was unusual and complicated for the time it was built but kept to the craftsman style of the time for park buildings known as “parkitecture”

— sporting a low slung profile on the landscape and using natural materials of wood and stone.

A big thanks to all who attended and to Dave & JoAnne Hamblin for finding another great picnic venue. Special ku-

dos to all for putting on your blinders while driving through Peninsula during their annual village yard sales! It was busy but I don't think we lost anyone in that crowd.

By: Laura Saeger

# Abandoned

Harsh winter winds blow through the house, disrupting the curtains in the front room, which, with no windows to contain them, pass in and out of the house at a whim. The clapboard siding and other wooden features lack paint, appearing grey and worn. The ornate porch supports and spindlework frieze running the length of the house, however, offer imagined life to the forlorn home. While a collapsed garage and empty clothesline flank the side of the residence, across the street sits a suite of farm structures: a double corn crib, a barn, and a small shed. These are the assets of a farm that once was.

I have driven by the place countless times before, and though I have previously taken a peek at the barn, I decided today to give the property a more thorough investigation. Adorned in my full winter attire, I begin in the double corn crib. A tractor tire rests in the far end, but the scene is dominated by plastic paint buckets. Some are standalone, some in stacks of two, or three, or more. The buckets fill, not just the equipment bay, but both corn cribs. Property owners and neighbors often have a plethora of facts to share about such a property as this, but, nonetheless, mysteries always abound. Why these paint buckets are here, it's hard to say.

Near the double corn crib is a small shed. It's nearly empty inside aside from bits of electrical wiring, remnants of glass jars, and other odd partial items, few complete enough to gauge their initial being. The wood frame in here, just as the one in the double corn crib, was squared with a circular saw, which is made evident by the rounded kerf marks. It's likely these two structures are of the newest on the property, perhaps dating to the late 1800s or early 1900s.

Farther back into the property sits the barn. This is the truest expression of the love that once went into this farm. This massive barn, despite hanging quite literally in the balance with all of its southeastern timbers removed, remains still as a testament to the craftsmanship of its builders. In the summer, the barn is cloaked in a thick veil of vines, but, now winter, it is visible as ever, as if in bloom. A pair of lightning rods, one upright and one bent over, crown the surprisingly intact sheet metal roof.

Foxtail grass rustles at the barn's side as I enter, pressing my feet upon the hay-



**The old farmhouse house with a large catalpa tree arching overhead.**

Photos by: Josh Zeilinsky

**The old barn leaning heavily to the southwest.**



covered floor. The timbers immediately capture my attention. Almost all are hand-hewn, and they weren't cut from just any trees. These are substantial. A remnant of our region's virgin forests, preserved, or at least existent, right here in these timbers. I find the hew marks mesmerizing. Each of these deep gouges in the timber represents one blow from an axe, yielded by the hands of a man, not a machine. There is a soul embedded within this barn.

The occasional gust of wind causes the barn to cry out, its weighty structure stressing the corner that lacks any timbers. Thankfully, the mortise-and-tenon joinery is stubborn. The frame members quiver, but they hold true, and so the barn rests again.

Leaving the barn, I head for the house. Decorative elements abound on the exterior, which is characterized by a wrap-around porch and a roof of variegated slate shingles. Like the barn, the roof is quite intact, though storms and tree falls have certainly begun taking their toll. The house is often the most depressing part of an abandoned farm. This worn wooden shell was once a family home. Generations of memories

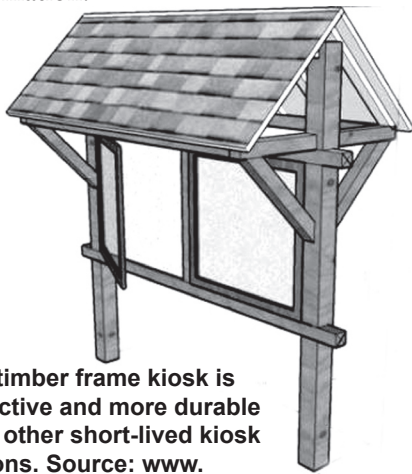
have been made here. With the holidays around the corner relative to my visit, the thought of the Christmases experienced here is ever-potent. A vocal floor and the waning daylight dissuade me from exploring the interior extensively, though a look into each of the doorways and windows reveals a residence in disarray. Belongings, particularly clothing, scatter the floor in many of the rooms. Other reminders of everyday life endure in the kitchen and living room. These possessions were once a part someone's daily life, but here they lay, an abstract representation of the past.

I do not know the current owner's exact situation, and so to pass judgement would be a mistake. The abandonment may well have been the consequence of a series of unfortunate events. Nonetheless, how sad it is to see a family's legacy neglected in such a way. It is only since the 1990s that this farm has been disused, but the vacant years accumulated, and the weather has not always been fair. Restoration will likely never arrive for this farm, but its memory, hopefully, will at least be preserved, lest our forebears' efforts be in vain.

By: Josh Zeilinsky

# Timber Framed Shelter House at Slate Run Historical Park

Picnic shelters and kiosks are being installed in record numbers in city, county, state, metro, and federal parks, along bike trails, and in heritage corridors around Ohio. More timber frame options would be a good way to educate the public about traditional building methods in early Ohio history. Small plaques installed on timber frame structures could encourage interest and direct people to websites for American Timber Framers Guild, Friends of Ohio Barns, and other sources for more information.

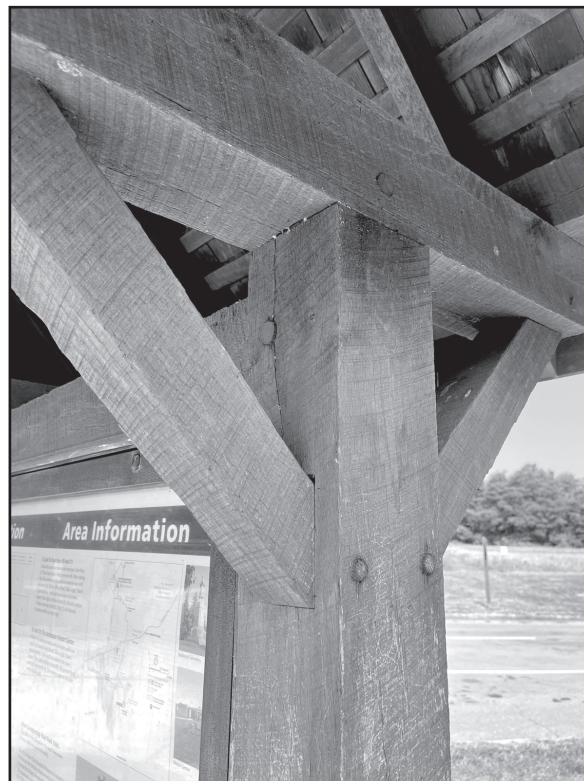


The timber frame kiosk is attractive and more durable than other short-lived kiosk options. Source: [www.pinterest.com](http://www.pinterest.com)



Photo by: Tom O'Grady

A timber frame shelter house at the 156-acre wetland where Sandhill cranes nest along Winchester Road near the Pickaway/Fairfield county-line.



Far left: Timber frame kiosk — a hard-wearing and attractive alternative to pressure treated dimensional lumber, plywood, and screws.

Left: Corner bracing in shelter house with mortice, tenon, and pegs.

Photos by: Tom O'Grady

A New England three bay bank barn with entry to the threshing floor at ground level on the far side of the barn. The wind doors used in threshing are visible on the side facing the camera. There appears to be an owl hole on the gable end of this side of the barn. The haystack and rail fence are interesting features in this historic photo. If anyone knows the location of this barn, please submit information to Friends of Ohio Barns. Image from editor's collection.



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