



The Old BARN POST

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Saving the Barns at Malabar Farm

When Louis Bromfield purchased three farms in Lucas Ohio in 1939 his intention was to make them into one large farm which he called Malabar Farm. Louis was already a well known Pulitzer Prize winning author, but his interest in conservation was something he would have a real opportunity to practice and promote at Malabar. His years in France had peaked his interest in soil conservation and in November 1942, a year after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Bromfield released a work called "A Primer on Conservation". To quote:

"This other war, the war upon destruction of natural assets is one that will never be finished. Our weakness in this vast war is largely ignorance, that most of our citizens do not realize what is going on under their very feet." -Louis Bromfield

Louis Bromfield also exhibited skills in agricultural building conservation and had found interesting and unique ways to keep the various barns and sheds on the farm useful. At one point he decided to take the barn known now as the "Working Farm Barn" and turn it into a

three story chicken coop with an integral three story multi-chambered granary. He had kept the "Big Barn", which sits adjacent to the "Big House" which was grandly rehabilitated under the guidance of Mansfield architect Louis Lamoreux in 1940-41, in use as a breeding barn and storage for hay, feed and farm equipment. After Bromfield's death in 1956, the farm was operated by a conservation foundation called "Friends of the Land" until 1976 when it became Malabar Farm State Park.

Tragically the Big Barn burned to the ground on April 4, 1993. Part of the agreement the State of Ohio had made in turning Malabar Farm into a working farm State Park was that the buildings and land were to be conserved as they had been when Bromfield owned and operated the farm. The state architect put out a set of bid documents and thanx to a phone call from now FOB Board member Dan Troth, Christian & Son inc. was added to the bidder's list for specialty timber frame companies. The R.G. Beer Company from Mansfield won the bid

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The highly decorated Big Barn after siding, trim, and cupolas have been added.



Random Thoughts

The year is coming rapidly to a close, and, as usual, I'm not quite ready for it. The holiday season is upon us and I'm not ready for that either! I am especially not ready for the onslaught of advertising and the profit driven big box stores' indifference to the meaning of the holiday.

What happened to the gathering of families sharing in the bounty of the season? Back in the day when our Ohio barns were a significant part of our agricultural landscape, this holiday season was revered. Our grandparents finished the harvesting season, stored some of their crops in the trusty barn, took inventory of maintenance issues, and started preparing themselves for the hard winter to come. When the holidays came, families got together to celebrate their good fortune with fellowship and remembrance.

Our barns were quiet sentinels standing watch over the crops, livestock and machinery, protecting them from the impending cold and dark.

What in the world happened?

I mean, I get it...changes in everything, such as farming, business, communication, etc., have brought us to this stage in the Earth's life. But do we have to keep dismissing the importance of this season for the sake of profit? For the latest, greatest gadget? Why must hard-working folks be forced to work on these important days, and more importantly, why in the world would do shoppers subject themselves to the barrage of other rude, pushy bargain hunters? Aren't there enough shopping days in the holiday season? Can't we hold onto a few of the moments that those before us worked so hard for and treat them with the respect they deserve?

Sorry...all this ranting has given me a headache...

Please...go out there and enjoy the beauty of the upcoming holiday season. Appreciate all you have, and share that joy with family. If you have or know of a loved one serving in the armed forces, say a prayer for them, initiate conversation about someone having to work the holidays...

Your board members are also going to be busy working around the holiday season making certain that the finishing touches for the next conference are completed. There are some teasers in this issue, and details coming on our website, Facebook, and of course the next newsletter in winter.

So, Happiest of Holidays to you all from the Friends board!!

Respectfully submitted,
— Ric Beck, President

Upcoming Events

APRIL 25-26, 2014

Friends of Ohio Barns

Annual Conference XV • Knox, County

"I like to see a man proud of the place in which he lives. I like to see a man live so that his place will be proud of him."

— *Abraham Lincoln*

No Tool or Rope or Pail

by: Bob Arnold

It hardly mattered what time of year
We passed by their farmhouse,
They never waved,
This old farm couple
Usually bent over in the vegetable garden or walking
the muddy dooryard between house and red-
weathered barn.
They would look up, see who was passing, Then look
back down, ignorant to the event.
We would always wave nonetheless,
Before you dropped me off at work
Further up the hill,
Toolbox rattling in the backseat,
And then again on the way home
Later in the day, the pale sunlight
High up in their pasture,
Our arms out the window,
Cooling ourselves.
And it was that one midsummer evening
We drove past and caught them sitting
Together on the front porch
At ease, chores done,
The tangle of cats and kittens
Cleaning themselves of fresh spilled milk on the barn
door ramp; We drove by and they looked up — The
first time I've ever seen their Hands free of any work,
No tool or rope or pail — And they waved.

— Submitted by Mr. Vice President, Dan Troth

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Knox County to Host Ohio Barn Conference XV

Friends of Ohio Barns is heading to the gently rolling hills of Knox County for Ohio Barn Conference and Barn Tour number fifteen. Straddling the glaciated portion of the Allegheny Plateau the relief is not sharp but some elevations reach 1400 feet above sea level, some of the highest ground in Ohio. Most of the county is drained by the Kokosing River thence into the Walhonding which joins the Tuscarawas at Coshocton forming the great Muskingum River, the largest in Ohio. Northeastern Knox County drains into the Mohican before flowing into the Walhonding and the southwestern part of the county runs off into the Licking River which joins the Muskingum in Zanesville beneath the famous Y-Bridge.

Approximately 60 percent of Knox

County is farmland and about 30 percent is forested. Lakes and towns make up the difference.

A number of Native American earthworks indicate early habitation of this area of Ohio. Dozens of conical mounds and walled enclosures dot the Ohio State Archaeological Atlas of 1915.

Named for George Washington's friend, General Henry Knox, the county was largely settled by migrants from the Middle Atlantic States. The most came from Pennsylvania and Maryland. Several came from New Jersey and other New England states and others came up from Virginia. Most of the immigrants settling in Knox County came from Ireland and England. Conference attendees should be able to identify New England barns, Penn-

sylvania barns and even some southern barns with the gable end entry and hayhood as they come into Knox County.

The county seat is Mt. Vernon, founded in 1805 and named for George Washington's plantation home. A fine historic settlement with a central park on the town square, the community is steeped in Ohio heritage and many old buildings and brick streets. Nearby is the beautiful village of Gambier with the attractive campus of Kenyon College.

An extensive park district with nature preserves, wildlife areas, public parks and the Kokosing Gap Trail Bike Path which follows an old railroad through the small towns of Knox County offer another reason to come early and extend your visit while attending the Ohio Barn Conference XV.

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as general contractors to replace the Big Barn and awarded Christian & Son, Inc. the contract to cut the new timber frame.

During the spring of 1994, now FOB Board member, Laura Saeger suggested to the Park staff and the construction team members that the barn raising at Malabar Farm might be something that would interest the general public. The idea was accepted and supported with a great deal of publicity, including barn raising posters inviting the public to attend, and the Timber Framers Guild was approached about making it into a Guild event. Over the holiday weekend of September 3, 4 & 5, 1994 over 25,000 people came out to watch over 150 volunteers from the Timber Framers Guild raise the new "Big Barn" frame at Malabar Farm. It was, at the time, thought to be the largest public barn raising of the 20th century.

An interesting side note on the Malabar Farm Big Barn raising was the influence that project had on the formation of Friends of Ohio Barns. During the cutting up of the timbers for the replacement barn frame, quite a number of itinerant timber framers had come to work at the Christian & Son shop. Chuck Whitney, who had been studying Ohio's barns and how to save them since 1960, made a point of

coming to visit, bringing along stories and even tools and in general getting to know these barn builders he had such a great respect for. As Ohio's focus on its barns was increasing with the Barn Again! program coming to Ohio in 1996, Chuck decided we needed to have a statewide conference about barns to see just how many people would attend. With help from several County Extensions agents, the first Ohio Barn conference was scheduled for February 2000 at the timber framed Delaware Church. Over 250 people attended and the next year Friends of Ohio Barns was formed at the second Ohio Barn Conference held in Wooster, Ohio.

Eight years after the Big Barn raising the Parks Department realized they had to do something to save the Working Farm Barn. The bank of the barn was leaning in pretty dramatically, which is not uncommon for bank barns, but gauges that had been placed in the barn two years earlier showed that the bank was starting to move too rapidly for comfort. Temporary stabilization was done to stop the movement of the bank and plans were put in place to repair the foundation problem as well as repair the timber frame and damaged siding and flooring in the barn. A project that became fairly large for a number of reasons.

Investigations as to the original construction, and any later modifications which may have been made to the barn revealed some very interesting history. It turns out the barn had had at least three different significant periods of adaptive reuse prior to the modifications Bromfield had made to the barn when he converted it to a mammoth egg production facility. Investigating the frame work of the barn revealed that the roof framing didn't match the wall framing in age or style of timber framing. The roof was framed using "scribe rule" layout, which was typical of very early craftsmen who might have learned their trade in the old country. The walls of the barn were framed using "square rule" layout, which did not come into common use until the early to mid 19th century. Further, the forebay overhang framing was an addition put on the frame after the early roof frame had been placed on the more recent wall framing. Finally, the existence of "side lapped" wooden shakes on the roof was a clear indicator of age, but these were lost during the restoration of the frame.

Restoring the Working Farm Barn was a significant challenge for a number of reasons. The foundation failure posed a unique

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Barnstormers Search Knox C

FOB barnstormers took advantage of one of the last nice days to view barns in Knox County for the 2014 Annual Conference and Barn Tour. Ten barns were visited, of the ten barns: three have very nice swing beams; one is circa 1840s and totally hewn; two are re-purposed for woodworking shops and another for an event barn. One farm has two combined log houses that have been remodeled.

One can take a step back in time at the Knox County Agricultural Museum. The museum offers something of interest for everyone. You can see tools and implements depicting farm and home lifestyles of the 1800s and early 1900s.

However, the hunt is not over. There are so many more barns dotting the Knox County countryside from which to choose. The committee is still searching for other gems for your viewing pleasure and edification. We aim to offer a look at the history and construction of barns and the historic role they play in Knox County's heritage yesterday, today, and tomorrow. Join us in 2014 for a great Conference in "The Heart of It All," Knox County.

— Pamela Whitney Gray

This barn was moved to Knox County from the Columbus area and re-purposed for a woodworking shop with several added windows.

Photo by Pamela Whitney Gray



Photo by

This barn, northwest of Fredericktown, has been re-purposed as a woodworking shop complete with a drying room. The structure and interior are fully maintained.



Photo by Pamela Whitney Gray

The carriage barn was moved to its present site and has been converted to a garage while the second floor has become a hunting lodge.



Interior of the upstairs of the carriage barn currently serves as a hunting lodge.

County for the Best of the Best

Re-purposed Barn to Showcase for 2014 Pre-Conference Workshop

In keeping with the 2014 conference theme, of re-purposing historic barns to keep them viable for use in today's modern world, attendees of the Thursday afternoon Workshop will have an opportunity to meet and talk with event-barn owners Janet and Steve Thompson. They purchased the barn and property, moved the barn, and remodeled it for an extended-family gathering place. From there it grew into a business as a place to rent for special events. This is the perfect opportunity to ask questions about the decisions they made, the processes they went through, and the problems encountered and the solutions they found. They have done it all from beginning to end and have a very interesting and successful story to share. Do not miss touring this unique facility.

— Pamela Whitney Gray



Photo by Pamela Whitney Gray

Pamela Whitney Gray
ed as a woodwork-
setting are beauti-



Above: Barnstormers, from the FOB board of directors, approach a group of 2014 Barn Tour candidates at the end of a long day of barnstorming in Knox County.

Above Right: This swing beam barn that will be on the 2014 Ohio Barn Tour. This swing beam bent originally had sixteen braces in it, twelve of which were cut out long ago. Our vice president stated that he has "been in over one million barns in the last 60 years and has never seen anything like this. He could hardly contain himself."

Right: FOB President, Ric Beck discovers another swing beam barn loaded with a hundred tons of hay.

Photos and captions by Mr. Vice President, Dan Troth

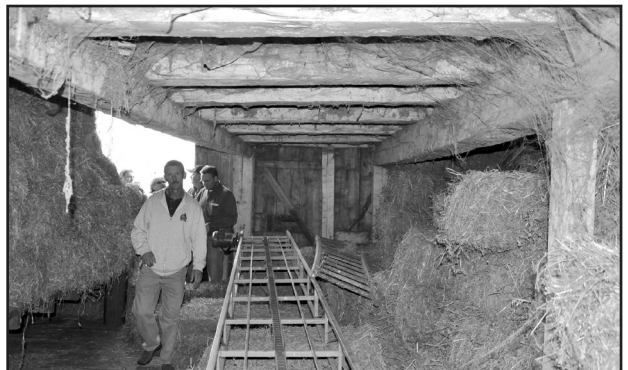


Photo by Dan Troth
ing lodge.



All images provided by Rudy R. Christian
The author presents Governor George Voinovich a mallet to drive the first peg in the restored Big Barn frame while his wife, Nancy, and head ranger, Louie Andres, look on.

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challenge in that the failure was the result of modern equipment becoming part of the animal husbandry program. The floor of the basement is a very sandy soil which wasn't a problem in the decades that pitch forks were used to remove the manure. You can't pick up much sand with a pitch fork. When a skid steer with a front loader bucket started to be used for manure removal, a little bit of sand went out with every load of manure. Eventually the stone walls themselves were becoming undermined making the foundation very unstable. The solution was to jack up the barn frame on steel I-beams supported with stacks of cribbing, marking and removing each piece of sandstone, installing footings beneath the walls and relaying the walls using lime bedding.

Once the foundation was repaired the framework above needed a significant amount of repair work as well. Not only was much of the timber frame floor and sill system badly rotted, but much of the timber in the basement had been replaced with steel columns and the principle tie beams in the bents above were gone and had to be replaced. They had been removed during the chicken coop period and replaced with iron rods. Once



Foundation and first floor framing has been restored on the Working Farm Barn. Work begins on repairing the forebay framing.



A barn in flight? The Working Farm Barn has been cribbed so that foundation restoration can begin.

the floor systems that had been added for egg production were removed, the barn became very unstable and quite literally probably only survived because of the existence of the massive three story internal granary. There was no practical way to attach wind braces from the wooden posts to the iron rods.

Another major obstacle in the frame repair was the quantity and size of the white oak timbers that would be required to properly repair the frame so it could continue to function correctly for the next century. Timbers of that size would be both difficult and expensive to source. After some discussion with the forest

management folks in the Park System the decision was made to go down to the forest at Mohican State Park and see if some logging could be arranged. Although sufficient trees clearly existed in the woodlots, restrictions on what size and how many could be cut kept that from being a workable solution. The answer came when we happened into the campground at Mohican and came to the realization it was full of dead trees. Aside from being a potential safety hazard, these trees were large, straight for the most part and were white oak trees that had been killed by the gypsy moths. Everything needed could be

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Louis Bromfield on Ohio Barns

... I knew it was chore time and so I went to the big barn to find the owners.

It was a big, red barn built in the days when farmers were rich and took pride in their barns. Ohio is filled with them, barns which are an expression of everything that is good in farming, barns in which their owners took pride. Nowadays one sees often enough great new barns on dairy farms owned by great corporations, or stock farms owned by millionaires; but these new barns have no character. They express nothing but utility and mechanized equipment, with no soul, no beauty, and no individuality. Already they appear on any country landscape commonplace and standardized without beauty or individuality – in fifty years they will simply be eyesores.

The old barns built in the time of the great tradition of American agriculture when the new land was still rich and unravaged by greed and bad farming, had each one its own character, its special beauty born of the same order of spirit and devotion which built the great cathedrals of Chartres or Rheims or Salzburg. They were built out of love and pride in the earth, each with a little element of triumphal boastfulness – as if each barn was saying to all the rich neighboring countryside, “Look at me! What a fine splendid thing I am, built by a loving master, sheltering fat cattle and big-uddered cows and great bins of grain! A temple of abundance and good living!”

And they were not built *en serie*, like barracks. Each rich farmer had his own ideas, bizarre sometimes, fanciful with fretwork and cupolas and big handsome paintings of a Belgian stallion or a short-horn bull, the main cupola bearing a pair of trotting horses bright with gilt as a weather vane. They were barns with great cavernous mows filled with clover hay, two stories or three in height with the cattle and horses below bedded in winter in clean straw, halfway to their fat bellies. Perhaps there was waste space or they

were inconveniently planned for chores, but there was a splendor and nobility about them which no modern hip-roofed, standardized, monstrosity can approach. Ohio is filled with them – Gothic barns, Pennsylvania Dutch barns with stone pillars, New England barns attached to the house itself, the stone ended barns of Virginia and even baroque barns. There is in Ohio no regional pattern of architecture as there is in New England or the Pennsylvania Dutch country. Ohio was settled by people from all the coastal states each bringing his own tradition with him, and so there is immense variety.

In my boyhood nearly all these barns had a rich, well painted appearance. Those owned by farmers with an ancient Moravian background outdid the barns which only had a single stallion or bull painted on them; they had painted on the big sliding door a whole farm landscape for which the farm itself had served as a model and in it appeared bulls and cows, calves and stallions, hens and ducks and guinea fowl, horses and sheep and hogs. They were hex paintings and their roots lay, not in Ohio or even in the coastal states, but far back in the darkness of medieval Germany, in a world of Bald Mountains and *Walpurgisnacht*. They were painted there on the big barn doors as a safeguard against the spells of witches, against vampires and incubi for it was believed and it is still believed among the old people that the spell cast by any malicious neighboring witch on the cattle in one of these great barns would fall not on the cattle themselves but upon the representations painted on the barn door. Always they were painted artlessly by someone on the farm and some of them had a fine primitive quality of directness and simplicity of conception.

Usually over the doors of these painted barns there hung a worn horseshoe, for it was believed that witches had an overweening passion for mathematics coupled with

a devouring curiosity. If a witch sought during the night to sweep through the barn door on her broomstick and found herself confronted by a used horseshoe, she was forced to turn about and have no peace until she had retraced and counted all the hoof prints made by the shoe. The more worn the shoe the better, for it would take her all the longer to satisfy her compulsion, and she would not have completed her impossible task before morning arrived and she had to return whence she came. If the shoe had been worn long enough the prints it had made would be so numerous that she could never count them all in a single night. As each night she had to begin afresh, she would never be able even in the long nights of winter, to get through the door to do evil to the cattle.

As a boy I had seen in the early mornings little heaps of corn or corn meal outside each door of a barn owned by some old man whose Moravian blood took him far back into the mists and shadows of Germany. They were placed before the doors for the same reason as the omnipresent horseshoe. A witch confronted by a heap of corn could not go on with her evil purpose until she had satisfied her curiosity by counting every grain. If the corn were ground into meal, so much the better for the task became a thousand times more difficult.

All these memories came flooding back during the short walk from the house to the great barn. Then I pushed open the door and walked into the smell of cattle and horses and hay and silage and I knew that I had come home and that never again would I be long separated from that smell because it meant security and stability and because in the end, after years of excitement and wandering and adventure, it had reclaimed me. It was in the blood and could not be denied. But all of that entire story I told long ago in *The Farm*.

— Louis Bromfield,
from *Pleasant Valley*, 1945

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harvested in that one campground at Mohican and it was pre-approved as required maintenance.

Since the restoration work at the Working Farm Barn didn't really involve a raising, the crowds of onlookers were not there, but plenty of people stopped by to

watch and ask questions and in the years since the replacement of the Big Barn and the restoration of the Working Farm Barn, many visitors have had the opportunity to see what saving a barn that is about to be lost, or already has been, works. Provided another fire doesn't occur, and that

good maintenance practices are adhered to, saving the barns at Malabar Farm will continue to educate people well into future generations and set a good example of what barn stewardship can mean and how important it is.

— Rudy R. Christian

Gallagher Centre

The 15th annual Friends of Ohio Barns Conference will be held in a beautiful new banquet facility in the Gallagher Centre, located east of Mount Vernon on State Route 229. This spacious and comfortable meeting space is just the place to relax and listen to our great line up of speakers, reconnect with barn friends, make new ones, and bid on the special items offered in the silent auction to help support the ongoing projects of FOB.



Photo by: Pamela Whitney Gray

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