

2007 Barn Conference planned in Richland, Ashland counties

The 2007 Ohio Barn Conference will be held in the Ashland/Richland County area March 30 to April 1.

Plans are under way to have a great barn tour on March 30, with a visit to the Friends of Ohio Barn of the Year award winner for adaptive use, the Springmill Furniture Barn, a working barn with lots of history. Another tour barn was built in the early 1820s then added on to in the 1880s. And we still looking for more unique barns.

Saturday will feature speakers, workshops, and a silent auction.

Sunday we will spend the morning touring Malabar Farm State Park. Rudy Christian and Sons helped restore one barn on the farm, and the Timber Framers Guild helped raise the other barn that burnt down. Also at Malabar, over 1400 barn pictures of Ashland County will be on display.

Everyone is working to put on another great conference. Please put the dates on your calendar.

Background photo: The Springmill Furniture Barn, winner of this year's Ohio Barn of the Year award for adaptive re-use, will be one of the barns featured during the 2007 barn tour.



FRIENDS OF OHIO BARNs

P.O. Box 203
Burbank, Ohio 44214



The Old BARN POST

A publication of Friends of Ohio Barns • July 2006 • Vol. V, Issue 2

A barn without swallows ...

Some things just go together, at least for this southern Ohio boy. I can't imagine (and don't want to!) biscuits without gravy, a ballpark without hot dogs, July 4 without fireworks, or, yes, barns without barn swallows. And I rather imagine I'm not alone in these sentiments.

Of course, other cultures have their unique traditions. But I'm willing to bet that anywhere in the world there are farmers and barns you'll find others who share my feeling about *Hirundo rustica*, the barn swallow. For barn swallows are among the most "cosmopolitan" (a funny word to use for such a rural species!) birds on the planet, found on every continent except Australia and Antarctica.

When the first European explorers and settlers came to the "New World," they found many new bird species. But barn swallows would have been familiar to them already as nesting birds of their agricultural landscapes. African and south Asian immigrants would have recognized swallows as migratory birds that visited their homelands during the winter months in the northern hemisphere.

The great naturalist Linnaeus gave the species its scientific name—*rustica* means "rural." *Hirundo* is the Latin word for a swallow.

Barn swallows are still abundant in the Old World. They are the national bird of Estonia, regarded as the bird of happiness, as we regard our Eastern bluebird. Estonian folklore has it that anyone who harms a barn swallow will go blind. In England they are simply swallows, what Briton Collingwood Ingram calls the "symbol of summer and talisman of good fortune."

When the first settlers arrived in America, barn swallows were probably rather uncommon, given the heavily forested nature of eastern North America at that time. Back then, barn swallows built their nests on cliff faces or in caves, and perhaps on occasion in hollow trees. Today, a few barn swallows still nest on cliffs in the Great Lakes region, but the species has adapted itself almost entirely to the use of human structures.

Barns and sheds, of course, but also sites under bridges and culverts. Creation of an agricultural landscape has

greatly expanded barn swallow populations in North America.

Many barn owners are happy to have barn swallows nesting in their buildings. They capture significant numbers of flies, beetles, and bugs in the air. While not especially swift, they are incredibly acrobatic fliers. When foraging both for themselves and their voracious young, they may fly 600 miles in a day. They are especially drawn to bodies of water to forage for emerging insects, but also range over grassy fields. It was always a source of wonder and delight to me back in my farming days to

watch how quickly the birds would appear in the wake of my tractor as I mowed a field, as though the sound of the tractor was like a dinner bell to them.

Although barn swallows are still fairly abundant in North America and Europe, there is some evidence their populations are declining in both areas. This could be due to negative changes to their wintering habitats in tropical regions. Several insecticides banned in North America, such as DDT, are still being widely used in those areas.

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Mini barn raising attracts attention at Wolf Creek

Friends of Ohio Barns members spent a wonderful day at the Wolf Creek/Pine Run Grist Mill during Mohican Wildlife Weekend April 21 to 23.

Friends members Paul Knoebel, Bob and Nancy Rowland, and Ric Beck set up displays, sold shirts and hats, and helped Paul and his youthful barn enthusiasts raise his mini barn.

Mark Smith, director of Friends of Wolf Creek /Pine Run Grist Mill Inc., was pleased with the turnout and hopes it will get the word out about the mill. Built circa 1830, the mill was moved to its present site in 1970, and restoration began in 2000. Mark and his volunteers have since restored the mill and are adding some donated log cabins to the grounds to form a historic village. The current project, a two-story log structure, was built circa 1815 and is going to be used as a miller's home.

The mill is open most weekends from spring to fall. Mark and his volunteers camp on the beautiful grounds and lead tours of the grist mill.

During the April event, volunteers dressed in period costumes demonstrated candle making. Ken Arthur held the attention of the adult crowd with his log hewing demonstrations and displays of the tools used to accomplish this arduous task.

Paul Knoebel's mini barn raising was certainly a hit with the children. He held two raisings that day and did a splendid job of teaching the young enthusiasts how barns were made, what each part of the barn frame was used for, and how to work together to raise the structure. The biggest challenge may have been keeping the grown-ups from helping their kids too much!

Paul's mini barn has been an extremely valuable asset to Friends of Ohio Barns. He has volunteered his time on numerous occasions to educate young people about these beautiful structures that dot Ohio's landscape, their history and value to



Children take a moment to play after working together to frame the mini barn.

present and future owners. Hopefully, some of his young charges will one day carry the torch and teach others the significance of Ohio's barns.

— Story and photo by Ric Beck

Barns of the year recognized

Friends of Ohio Barns announced the winners of the first Ohio Barn of the Year Award at the annual conference in April.

The barn of Traci and Alan Cassell, located in Mount Vernon (Knox County), was selected in the Continuous Agricultural Use category. This Maryland-style bank barn barn was built in 1835 by George Cassell. Using sycamore and hickory lumber from the farm, the barn remains on its original stone foundation. The farm is home to the seventh generation of Cassells to live and farm the land. They raise registered Angus cattle, hay, and some grain. The farm has been designated as an Outstanding Ohio Century Farm by the Ohio Historical Society and hosts numerous local farm and barn tours. The Cassell barn is a living demonstration of what maintenance and upkeep can do to preserve these functional agricultural icons

The barn selected in the Adaptive Re-use category is the Spring Mill Furniture Barn. Built in 1916 by a wealthy Mansfield (Richland County) industrialist, the barn was the home of a high tech dairy operation. After falling into disrepair in the mid 1900s, the barn came into the ownership of the Stober family in 1963. They renovated the barn and moved their furniture business to the 110-by-80-foot brick structure. The barn has the fame of being one of the first in the Midwest to support a traditional Dutch gambrel roof. Today the 11,000-square-foot barn houses living rooms in the milking parlor, dining rooms in the bull pen, and bedrooms in the hay loft.

In addition to a plaque, each winner received a membership to Friends of Ohio Barns. Both the Cassell barn and Spring Mill Furniture Barn will be highlighted during the Friends of Ohio Barns conference to be held in Richland County next year and in future issues of The Old Barn Post.

—Tim Mason

Friends picnic to be held September 3

This year's Friends of Ohio Barns picnic will be held at the barn of Brenda and Fred Copeland of Miami County on Sunday, September 3.

Brenda and Fred are heading up the barn survey in Miami County. Their barn is also the Miami County Bicentennial barn. The Copeland's have done lots of restoration on the barn and view it as a piece of history.

This will be a great time to talk about barn surveys and meet with old and new friends and talk barns.

This is a rain or shine event. A meat entree will be provided. Bring your own table service, beverage of choice, your favorite dish to share, and lawn chairs. Your family is welcome.

Barn quilt tour comes to Champaign County

The Champaign County Visitors Bureau will host the first Barn Quilt Tour of Champaign County on Saturday, September 16. The goal is to promote an annual tour celebrating the unique agricultural experience of Champaign County through the visual combination of barns, which were vital to the economic well-being of our rural community, and the comfort of handmade quilts that provided warmth, beauty and an outlet for individual artistic expression.

The tour will feature five barns throughout the county with quilt patterns painted onto them. Tours of the barns will be available, and various activities including barn history and architecture, quilting, art, and agricultural living will occur at each site. In addition to the five featured barns, other barns will also be painted as a way to form a loop around each of these anchor barns in an attempt to connect the entire county on a "clothesline of quilts." These barns will not be open to the public, but will be involved in supporting our agricultural heritage and the tour.

"Driving in Champaign County will never be the same," said Kelly Evans-Wilson, executive director of the Champaign County Chamber of Commerce and Visitors Bureau. "Visitors and residents will come away with a new appreciation of our rural life and heritage."

To learn more about the Barn Quilt Tour or to become involved in the planning process, contact the Champaign County Chamber of Commerce at (937) 653-5764 or visit www.champaigncountybarns.com.

Swallows ... (continued from Page 1)

However, at least part of the decline is probably due to changes in farming practices in their northern breeding habitats. The widespread shift from mixed farming, with livestock and grassland, to intensive row crop production has reduced habitat for their preferred insect prey. And barn swallows require straw or grass, along with mud, to build their nests. They love to incorporate horsehair when they can get it. These materials are simply scarcer in a landscape of corn and soybeans.



Photos by Tom O'Grady

Barn swallows in their nest.

Perhaps just as critical is the loss of traditional barns and other out-buildings for nesting. Wooden, unpainted barns are by far the best as surfaces to attach their nests. Metal buildings don't provide good nest sites, both due to the material and the fact that they often have tight doors and no windows, blocking access. If you don't have barn swallows and want them, be sure they have some way to fly in and out. It is also useful to provide little platforms for their nests, close under the eaves on the outside, close under the roof on the inside. Black rat snakes are predators of the eggs and young birds, so don't put the platforms on posts or poles a snake could climb. You want the snakes to control your rodents, and the swallows your insects! Providing a source of mud near the building will help, too.

Climate change, or global warming, is a topic much in the news these days. Long-term studies of barn

swallow migration indicate that this species (and other species, too) is returning to its North American breeding grounds as much as 21 days earlier than it did 30 years ago. When I mentioned this at a recent talk on climate change and birds, a local farmer came up to talk to me afterward. He said that they'd always made note of when the barn swallows would first appear on their farm. When he was a boy it had always been around April 17. In recent years it has been about April 10. And last year the first swallow appeared on the seventh. Perhaps the birds are telling us something.

Whatever messages barn swallows have for us, may our relationship long endure. Being a barn owner and/or advocate doesn't only mean protecting and celebrating a symbol of our rural heritage, but can also provide a home to a delightful and beneficial co-habitant of a vanishing landscape.

— Bob Scott Placier

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"It is pretty to behold our backsettlements where the barns are as large as palaces, while the owners live in log huts; a sign of thrifty farming."

— Lewis Evans, 1753