

Ohio Barn Conference X

April 24 and 25
at
Bluffton University

Come celebrate Friend's 10 years of service to and stewardship of Ohio's agricultural icons. Look inside this issue for more information, registration forms, early bird discounts, and a conference itinerary.

Background photo: This English three-bay ground barn with hand-hewn timbers has been abandoned for more than 30 years in northern Athens County.

Photo by Tom O'Grady



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The Old BARN POST

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Come celebrate ten years with Friends!

Friends of Ohio Barns is getting ready to celebrate 10 years of stewardship, education, and preservation by hosting our tenth annual Ohio Barn Conference April 24 and 25 in Bluffton, Ohio.

A lot has happened in 10 years! We've gone from a concept of a few enthusiastic barn lovers to a comprehensive, non-profit, statewide organization intent on preserving Ohio's agricultural heritage. Along the way we've learned a great deal about the diversity of Ohio's barns and their stewards too. We've met some dedicated folks, most of whom are very supportive of our mission.

We've learned to adapt our barns and our ideals to the changing times. This year will be no different. We decided to move the conference date to April so we could take advantage of hopefully warmer weather and some better signs of spring.

Partly because of the current economy, we are downsizing this year's conference. We will have a Friday-Saturday conference only, with the Saturday portion of the conference at Bluffton University. These measures and a few others will allow us to reduce the cost of the conference for our valued members.

Friday's bus tour will have a new quirk too. Members will receive a Junior Barn Detective field guide. It is part of the mini workshop/barn survey program we have developed, and it is designed to help our members not only learn more about their barns, but also help educate their neighbors about their barns. We will designate one of the tour stops to enlist members in testing the program out and providing feedback to Friends board members, so don't miss out on the fun!

Friday evening we are going to get together at one of the local restaurants to eat, drink, and network, so please take advantage of this opportunity to catch up with old friends and discuss barn matters with fellow stewards.

The Saturday presentations will have a reflective feel as we celebrate our tenth year. Bill Kimball of the Michigan Barn

Preservation Network will be our keynote speaker. Bill was one of those instrumental in developing the concept of Friends of Ohio Barns. We will also have many of our favorite barn construction/repair demonstrations, the barn repair panel, and of course the Barn Detectives. We will have some exciting announcements during the annual members' meeting and end the proceedings with another fabulous silent auction.

Early registration is again available to all, and provides another chance to save a little money. You can use the registration form provided in this newsletter or sign up online at our website. The village of Bluffton has several beautiful homes and buildings as well as some very interesting Germanic influenced barns. Keith Sommers, our local expert, promises to provide us with a look at some unique structures and some interesting history of the area. We look forward to seeing everyone again, and hopefully meeting some new people too! So, come on spring!

— Ric Beck



Bracing and roof structure of one of the barns on the tour during Ohio Barn Conference X. For more information, please see the foldout centerfold in this issue.

FOB mascot

The kids' mini-barn has become a familiar sight at FOB displays throughout Northeastern Ohio. In the past five years it has been raised 62 times by teams of three to eight children, once by a high school shop class, and twice by adult "wannabe" kids. It is estimated that over 400 children have now enjoyed pounding pegs into this rugged timber frame teaching tool. Each hour-long session involves a lot of teamwork and humor, a bit of muscle power, and an abundance of peg pounding.

This remarkably popular, authentic, but small timber-framed structure was dreamed up, designed, laid out, and cut by an FOB member over a three-month period beginning in April of 2003. The initial trial raising was done by four local 10- to 12-year-old volunteers. It went so well and the kids had such a good time that it was immediately adopted by FOB. It now functions primarily as a drawing card and teaching tool at fairs, festivals, schools, and other events. It is wearing well and should be around for years to come.

— Paul Knoebel

Planting seeds

No, I am not a seed. Actually, I am a real honest to goodness timberframe peg, somewhat small but with a very important job to do. I'll get to the seed part later, so allow me to explain.

My mother was a rather plain looking, straight-grained, air-dried white oak board. I myself have eight sides, am five inches long, am pointed on one end and only 5/8 inch in diameter. I am not exactly round and not quite that big. To be more specific, I am a wee bit less than that across my octagon sides and a tad more from edge to opposite edge. That helps me fit a bit snugly in a real 5/8" hole. Just tight enough a fit that it requires some kid with a mean wooden mallet a couple of good whacks to get me into place.

You see, my job and that of 52 similar pegs is to help hold together the timbers of a children's playhouse size mini-barn. Different groups of kids cooperatively raise the all-wooden timber frame structure. Those Friends of Ohio Barns folks see to it that we get a real workout at lots of festivals, fairs, schools, etc., usually wherever and whenever an FOB display is going on. In between raisings we pegs just lay in that ole decapitated white milk jug for weeks on end. I keep hoping that soon some kid will pick me up and make me feel useful by pounding me into place somewhere in our wonderful little building. It is kind of neat because, unlike my larger size cousins and distant relatives who got pounded into a barn only once many years ago, it happens to me over and over again. And by different kids!

Okay, now to the seed part. It has something to do with when I discovered just how important I really am.

It happened when I was about four years old and we pegs had seen about 40 or so raisings. We were down at Malabar State Park on a beautiful sunny afternoon during their annual Heritage Days. Three sisters were doing the raising by themselves. The frame was about half raised when the middle girl, about 11 years old, had just pounded me into a brace-to-post joint. She paused, looked over at my protruding pointy end, reached out and ever so gently ran her little fingers over me and said "this feels good." Boy, that made my day! At that moment I happened to notice the smile on the face of that old and sometimes fussy fellow who hauls us all over and takes care of us—the one who patiently helps so many different kids successfully put the frame up time after time. Maybe it was the way the sun hit his eyes, but I am sure I saw a misty sparkle there, even as he suddenly started using fancy new words like patina and such. I am glad that I made them both happy. Perhaps I did help plant a seed that day.

— Peggy

Upcoming events

Michigan Barn Preservation Conference

March 13-14, 2009
Kellogg Center, Michigan State University
For more details, check the web at www.mibarn.net.

Tenth Annual Ohio Barn Conference

April 24-25, 2009; Bluffton, Ohio
Details in this issue.

National Barn Alliance Southern Conference

May 14-16, 2009
Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill, Harrodsburg, KY
www.barnalliance.org.

Friends board member elections

Friends of Ohio Barns will once again be seeking candidates to fill board positions of members whose terms are expiring. Two positions are currently open.

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, P.O. Box 203, Burbank, Ohio 44214, or e-mail friendsofohio-barns@aol.com. Remember, new blood brings fresh ideas and keeps the organization alive with promise!

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Autumn picnic held in Miami County

Our FOB annual picnic, originally scheduled for September 20 in Miami County, was postponed due to the damages inflicted by Hurricane Ike. We were able to gather together on October 18 at the Fulton Farm gift shop, which won the 2008 Barn of the Year award for Adaptive Reuse.

As part of Miami County's culture, the Fulton Farms fruit stand and farms are a popular destination year round. Especially impressive were two 14,000-bushel tile corn bins at one of Ohio's largest bank barns: 60' x 120' with a 40' x 80' barn at each end.

From there we proceeded to the 800-acre Lost Creek Farm in the Miami County Parks District, the former Mark Knoop homestead. The Knoop family immigrated from Germany and settled the land in 1797, becoming some of the first white settlers in Miami County. Today the homestead includes a springhouse dated 1825, a buggy shed, tobacco shed, corn crib, and a Pennsylvania forebay bank barn dated July 1832.

We stopped for lunch at the Elizabeth Township Community Center before arriving at the 160-acre Staley farm, where our gracious hosts, Joe and Missy Duer, gave us a tour of their lovely home, the bank barn, a former whiskey distillery, and a rare double water wheel grist mill built in 1818. We explored all four



Photos by Dan Troth



levels of the mill, which is still in great condition. Also noteworthy is possibly the only single sash sawmill left in Ohio, which we were told made about two cut strokes per second. We should all get together someday and film a short documentary about its operation.

We had wonderful weather for the entire day and especially want to thank Steve and Sarah Werling for contributing our lunch and for many hours of work organizing the event, which was enjoyed by all in attendance.

— Dan Troth

Top: Clay tile silos at the Fulton Farm

Left: Wooden gears turned the stones that ground the grain in this 1818 grist mill (inset photo).



This Morgan County barn got a little extra lease on life with a bit of foundation work in 2008.

Photos by Tom O'Grady