

Laura Saeger

Laura grew up in a small Ohio town surrounded by extended family (38 cousins) grandmas, grandpas, aunts, uncles and siblings who all had a knack for working with their hands. Her father was a carpenter who in those days seemed to think that having his son work with him was normal, but his daughter, not so much. Fortunately her interest in building did not fade and as luck would have it she ended up in the trades with her husband and business partner Rudy. Shortly after taking a timber framing workshop in Gambier, OH in 1982 she was drafted into service as a joiner in their newly formed business and helped produce their first timber framed addition to an historic home outside Akron. She became a member of the Timber Framers Guild at its founding in 1985 and has participated in a variety of workshops as student and then as instructor. Over the years as her trades journey expanded she became involved with the Preservation Trades Network which like the TF Guild is an internationally known non profit dedicated to recognizing the need for skilled trades people. Beginning in 2001 she served on the board of directors for PTN for 9 years thriving on the opportunity to fashion events, workshops, conferences and auction venues for the organization.

Coincidentally, in 2000 a barn conference in Delaware, OH had opened the door to the idea of beginning a statewide non profit to help raise awareness for Ohio's historic barns and Laura joined the steering committee that eventually formed Friends of Ohio Barns, and three years later was asked to join the steering committee that helped the National Barn Alliance become a national non profit that now serves as an umbrella organization for all the statewide barn organizations. During those formative years involvement in four organizations netted over 500 volunteer hours a year. You could say that she had formed a habit of sorts, but not a bad habit. As time moved on their business model transitioned from building new custom timber frame homes, which they still do, into focusing on historic frames, predominantly barns. The tipping point came with the reconstruction of Malabar Farms main barn which had been lost to fire in 1994, and then the deconstruction of and reconstruction of the monumental Longaberger/Crawford Barn in 1998. Nothing stays the same and Laura is pleased that barns that were once thought of as essential to a productive agricultural lifestyle, then down graded to a state of neglect and "liability" are now seeing a revival as public space. That may do a lot to maintain their dignified presence on our rural landscape.

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