
The Barn Door

Friends of Minnesota Barns
www.mnbarns.org

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Chairman's Message

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With the state fair in the past and the kids back in school it was once again time for the annual FoMB Fall Barn Tour. This year the tour was in the Southeastern part of the state. We all know Minnesota is beautiful with a very diverse landscape from East to West and North to South and this area of the state is distinct

with its combination of bluffs, valleys and streams and added to this is the contrasting colors the practice of contour farming in this area adds. Nestled into the countryside are many century farms with numerous old barns and buildings. This area of the state was settled early because of its access to rivers and waterways, plentiful game, rich farmland and forests.

In the process of setting this tour up we were exposed to a plentiful supply of Minnesota Nice, as we visited many farm families throughout the area. The farms selected had diverse settings and stories. The weather was absolutely perfect and the leaves had started to turn colors as the thirty-seven members and guests traveled between sites on September 27th-28th.

August was a very busy month with Mark Johnson putting on restoration workshops at the LeSueur and Scott-Carver Threshing

Shows. At the Now Then Threshing Show an information booth was set up by the Bruentrups and Kutas displaying barn photos and old timber framing tools including an old portable drill press used in making the mortise on the timbers in post and beam construction.

There were a lot of people who stopped to talk and we signed up a couple of new members with five others requesting more information on the Fall Barn Tour. Four of these attended the tour.



*Stone Barn
Chatfield, MN*

On August 28th Minnesota Public Radio aired a story on FoMB Board Member Scott Tempel's project of dismantling his 1920s barn for reuse using *Better Futures Minnesota*, an organization that helps men

who have been incarcerated learn new job skills. Since then it has been published in many newspapers and on Saturday the MPR website. There is an article from Scott in this newsletter.

We hope you like our new newsletter format. Thanks to Board member Scott Tempel for taking on the duties of newsletter editor.

See inside for details of the October 18th Coffee Chat in Spring Valley and Preston. Thanks again to all who attended the tour and coffee chats.

Bill Bruentrup

Fantastic Fall Tour by Mary Jo Youngbauer

The weekend was spectacular. We could not have asked for better weather for the Friends of Minnesota Barns' annual fall barn tour.

This year's tour took place in southeastern Minnesota over two days (September 27 and 28). The tour started with a jaw-dropping stone barn in Chatfield. The barn could be straight out of Scotland, which makes sense when we learned that the barn's builder was indeed from Scotland. Thomas Ferguson came to America from Scotland in 1869 and purchased the site where his barn now stands in 1871. Being a stone mason back in Scotland, it was only natural that Thomas would continue his craft here in America, building homes, bridges, churches, and other buildings in the area. He worked on his own masterpiece barn in between other projects, taking an amazing 22 years to complete. It is said that Thomas laid every stone himself! The current owners of the barn, Deb and Gary Anderson, have done a fabulous job of maintaining the barn. They have done some tuck-pointing and mortaring to replace rain-washed mortar. A heartfelt thank you to Deb and Gary for hosting us and letting us explore this wonderful barn!

Our caravan next descended on the Old Barn Resort for lunch and a tour of the barn, which has been repurposed for a bar/restaurant and hostel. As we ate, our host told us the intriguing story of the barn's builder Jere Allis, the "playboy" son of Edward Allis (the founder of Allis Chalmers Equipment). Jere raised a variety of animals in the four-story barn, including race horses. Jere finally lost the farm in 1906. The current owners, Doug Brenna and Shirley Endries, purchased the property and barn in 1996. They remodeled the restaurant in the barn, and added a golf course, pool, and camping to the site to complete the Old Barn Resort.

After lunch, we moved on to the Myrah farm in Spring Grove. As the line of cars carefully navigated down the steep wooded driveway, a magnificent 200' long barn came into view. We couldn't wait to get inside for a peak. The owners, Matt and Katherine Myrah, along with their beautiful children, were waiting for us in the barn with hot treats and local cola. What a great after-lunch snack! The barn has been used for several weddings, and it was easy to see why. The arching Gothic-style roof, hung with twinkling white lights, seemed to be made for dancing and celebration. We saw pictures of the

barn lined with white tables and floating globes, all spruced up for a wedding. It was perfect! Perhaps the most touching part was each married couples' names and wedding dates painted on the big barn doors.

The original barn was built in the 1950s and was 70 feet long. A 130 foot addition was added in the 1980s by Ed Myrah. Ed stopped milking in the 1990s and his son, Matt, purchased the farm and is now a certified organic producer. Ed Myrah was on hand to show us his beautiful 1921 Hart Parr tractor. We can't thank the Myrahs enough for their hospitality!

Next was the Kinneburg barn in Spring Grove. Glenn Kinneburg met us in front of his beautifully restored home to give us the history of his barn. We also were very curious about the yellow airplane on wheels sitting in the yard. Glenn explained that he first salvaged the main body of the plane for a bus stop warming house and then added wings and a golf cart so that he can drive the plane in parades each summer.

Glenn's barn was built in 1895 with the unique hay slide, which travels the length of the barn on tracks below the hay carrier. The slide can be tilted to either side to distribute loose hay, or can be moved from under the hay fork to allow hay to be dropped in the center of the barn. It was also incredible to see the original blueprint for a barn remodel hanging on one

of the beams in the barn. Quite a remarkable farm and barn! Thank you to Glenn for letting us see it!



Ed Myrah firing up the Hart Parr

Not far from the Kinneburg barn was the tour's next stop, the Hendel farm in Caledonia. This farm is a Century farm, settled in 1869, and has a 1950s dairy barn on site. But that is not what made this farm so remarkable. The "old" barn has been remodeled to house breeding cows and young calves. Matt and Karl Hendel, 4th generation brothers, bought the farm from their father George in 1990. They have updated the farm with the latest technology, including a milking parlor and new free station barns with ventilated side walls. Matt explained that the focus on this farm is cow comfort, which is the best way to increase production. They use sand bedding, which is easier on the cows and keeps them cleaner. The Hendel family is also running a frozen embryo business on the farm. They have customers across the world that buy embryos from them. A huge thank you to the Hendel family,

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Fantastic Fall Tour by Mary Jo Youngbauer

which took time out of their busy day (including milking) to teach us about their farm. It was an amazing experience! The final stop of Saturday's tour was the Houston County fairgrounds, where the Houston County Museum is located. There were a number of historical buildings, including a school house and a pioneer log cabin, that were open for us to explore. We were also able to see the exhibits in the impressive new museum building and a large collection of farm machinery stored on site. You could easily spend an entire day here learning about the past!

That evening, the group dispersed on their own. Some gathered for a memorable dinner experience at a local establishment. The group met again in the morning to continue the tour to the Heintz Badger Valley farm in Caledonia. The drive to this farm was quite scenic, with winding roads and trees just about to turn fully ablaze in fall colors. The Heintz farm was just as worthwhile to see as the scenery. This farm has two robots that do all the milking of the 160 cow herd. Doug and Julie Heintz installed their robotic milking system in 2009. They updated the 1911 dairy barn and added new ventilated-side barns to house their herd. This farm, like the Hendel farm we visited yesterday, is all about increasing production through cow comfort. They use the free stall barns with sand bedding as well. Doug likened the cows' life to "sitting on a sand beach with a buffet at the ready behind you, fans ready to cool you, and a waiter next to you to take care of your every need."

The cows are able to eat, drink, lie down, and be milked at any time they want it. Quite remarkable!

The final stop of the tour was at Schech's Mill. Although not a barn, the mill was impressive and a perfect way to wrap up the tour. The mill's owner, Ed Krugmire, was on site to tell us about the history of the 1876 grist mill. This is the only water-powered mill that still operates with original equipment in Minnesota.



Ed Krugmire sifting flour at Schech's Mill



Modern free stall barn at Hendel

Large turbines powered by water run all of the shelling, crushing, and grinding equipment inside the mill. Ed walked us through each of the "machines" and showed us how they worked. As he opened the turbines and powered up the machine that bagged flour, the whole building shook with the power! We were able to explore the basement and the second floor of the mill as well, seeing all the connections between the floors. It was truly amazing how intricate and well-planned out the system was! We owe Ed a big thank you for the tour and the fabulously scenic spot along the river with ducks floating on the water for our lunch. You can purchase flour, cornmeal, and other products from Schech's Mill by contacting Ed Krugmire.

The tour was certainly a success and one of the most memorable weekends I've had in a long while. The Friends of Minnesota Barns wants to thank everyone that joined us on the tour as well as each of the owners that took time out of their busy schedules to let us stop by and explore. A major thank you is also due to the hard-working folks that put the tour together. It takes a lot of planning and work to make such a fabulous event happen. Thank you to Shirley Johnson, Executive Director of the Houston County Historical Society, for providing contact information to help set up the tour. Thank you to Mary Jane Hendel and Naomi Fuechee for research and contributing a list of contacts in the area. Thank you to Bill and Raydelle Bruentrup and LeRoy and Donna Kuta for their investigative trips, contacting barn owners, and doing all the behind-the-scenes work on this tour. It was truly fantastic!

For more photos of the tour, visit our website at www.mnbarns.org or visit us on Facebook!

Chasing Barn Dreams, Part 2 by Mary Jo Youngbauer

When you are searching for your perfect barn, there seems to be a candidate every direction you turn. How do I pick one that I really want? They are all so amazing, and they all should be saved! I didn't really believe that I would be moving a barn on to my property any time soon, and so my search was more of a passive one rather than an in-depth one. And I let my mind wander, imagining what different barns would look like perched in my yard. I certainly did not bother worrying about any of the details. After all, it was just a dream, right?

I threw my idea out there to a few different barn owners at different times, never really thinking I would get serious consideration. And I didn't! Most often, the person I was talking to looked at me like I had absolutely lost mind. It was the same thing the first time I floated the idea to the man who came to fix my sewer when the pipe froze and broke two winters ago.

"You don't want that barn." That's what he told me, standing in my kitchen. In my mind, I'm shouting "Yes I do!" but I just let it go. However, I did slip a note in the envelope when I paid the bill. "I'm serious about the barn. Call me if you change your mind." No call. The next winter, my sewer woes continued and Mr. Sewer Man was back. This time my whole mound system was frozen, so we needed to pump each time the tanks got full. Which meant that Mr. Sewer Man (aka Mr. Barn Owner) was at my house frequently. Each time I mentioned the barn again. Just a little nudge. Not really believing it would go anywhere.

And then it happened. I was standing in my garage getting the latest frozen sewer report and he casually says, "So you really want that barn?" Uh, yeah. Calmly, I answered "Of course." "Well ok, you can have it." Holy smokes! Did that really just happen? Am I imagining this? All I could squeak out was "Are you serious?" He gave me the 'you're nuts' look and said, "Yeah. I don't know why you want it but if you really do, it's yours."

My mind exploded. So much to do! Was it even possible to move it? Was it in good shape? I've never even been inside of it, I've just driven by it a million times. I did not sleep that night at all. I was running through all the possibilities and trying, and failing, not to get my hopes up. After all, I had a long way to go before this barn was actually mine.

Thankfully, I have excellent resources as a Board member on the Friends of Minnesota Barns group. Fellow Board member Jay Schmidt met me at the barn. I needed to know the answer to the burning question: Can it be moved? As I first stepped inside "my" barn, I fell hopelessly in love with it. No longer could I hold back my excitement and hope. If this didn't work out, I would be heartbroken. I held my breath as I asked, "Well, what do you think Jay?"

He thought it could be done. Phew. Exhale. Jay suggested bringing in a house-mover that he knew to take a look at it and give me a better idea of cost. Right, could I possibly afford this? I'll need a new foundation, and the cost of moving it, and fixing it up...yikes, I just encountered a new hurdle that could make my plans crumble.

The hardest part all the way along was the waiting. Waiting for the next appointment, for the next answer. I went to the bank to see what I could finagle out of them. I went through a home

equity line application and pre-approval, only to be denied at the last minute. I only bought my house two years ago; just not enough equity there. Hopes are crushed. But, like an angel, the banker says "You might qualify for a premium loan." Ok, what is that? In the end, I was approved and had a number in mind of what I could spend on this project.

Next up, Mr. Barn Mover. He makes the trip to the barn and meets with Jay and I. We do the walk through and I'm getting more and more discouraged. The barn was not

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*Moving a barn
(Not mine)*

(Continued from page 4)

made to be moved, he tells me. It is built differently, braced up after the fact and that makes it much more difficult. His words start to blur as I stop listening because I'm realizing it's not possible. On top of that, I heard from the electric company that they would charge me \$11,000 to move the lines between the barn and my house (a short 4 mile trip). That pretty much puts the kibosh on it.

The barn mover says he will shoot me a cost estimate in the next week or so. I set up a meeting with the electric company to find out exactly why they think it should cost so much. And then I anxiously wait, my dream barely flickering.

When I meet with Mr. Electric Company, it's evident that no one had actually been out to measure the height of the lines along the route. A couple of the "really important lines" are actually high enough to travel underneath. So, Mr. Electric Company agrees to give me a new estimate. When I get the numbers back from him and from the barn mover, I'm above my budget. I start listing the things I own that I really don't need anymore and could sell: snowboard, treadmill, scrapbooking stuff. As I'm discussing this with my partner Ben, he offers to help me make up the difference without having to liquidate my assets. I hate, hate, hate borrowing money, but I decide I may have to give in. After all, this is my barn we are talking about!

Ok, so what's next? Mr. Concrete. I don't even know what I need. Foundation? Slab? I go with what the experts suggest, a floating slab. Need to decide on a site, strip the sod off, get sand hauled in and spread, and then concrete. Sounds simple enough. However, I did not account for Mother Nature's sudden decision to rain buckets every other day. A little over a month later, I finally have a concrete slab.

And that's where we are as I write this. I expected to be able to wrap up my story in this second installment, but it's looking like I'll need a third article. In the next newsletter, I will hopefully be telling you about the perfect, absolutely non-stressful, and extremely smooth process of moving the barn itself. Keep your fingers crossed; I need all the help I can get.

Mary Jo Youngbauer

FoMB Board Member

Thank You Members!

Friends of Minnesota Barns relies exclusively on our members for support. Without you there would be no organization. We would like to recognize today those members who have supported our efforts since 2004.

Marvel Anderson
Paul Ellefson
Hazel Erikson
Norm & Jonathan Glock
Bruce & Judy Goldstrand
Tawnya Hoffmann
Christina Harrison
Bruce & Linda Karpenko
John & Louise Kuester
Bob Meyer
Minnesota Historical Society
David Peterson
Edward & Arlene Pinske
Jay Schmidt
Sherry Stirling
Hagdis Tschunk
Wayne & Helen Zuelch

Thank you for a decade of support!

We would also like to recognize our new members this year. The Board is working diligently to recruit new members to assure our continued viability as an organization.

Robert Acton
Paul and Meredith Arbuckle
Aaron Barrit
Teri Blair
Chuck & Sandy Doherty
Myron Dvorak
Mark Fjelstad
Roger Groetsch
Pearl Heitke
Pete Johnson
Robert & Deborah Mahutga
James Martin
Polly Nessel
Mike Nicklaus
Paul Ormseth
Kathy Petrick
Susan Rafian
Mary Gooch & Melanie Sanco
Mark Sorteberg
Sunnis Soucek
Randy Swenson
Randy Woitalla
Kirkwold Construction

FoMB Coffee Chat—October 18

On October 18th FoMB was back in the Southeastern part of the state with a dozen FoMB Members for a Coffee Chat that featured two Barn to house conversions. Our first visit was the Marilyn Matson home in Spring Valley known as the Organ Barn where Marilyn and her late husband Dr. Roland converted this 1936 gambrel roofed barn into living quarters on the lower level and finished the loft to house the 1922 pipe organ he purchased at a church auction. The organ was originally in a theater in Minneapolis. Dr. Matson played the organ and there was a musical group that met in the barn on a regular basis. Many concerts were held in the barn as well, The Matsons raised three daughters there and we were lucky enough to have her daughter Laura Lott with her two children Gabriella and Bianca visiting. Laura played the organ and later Gabriella sang for us with her mother accompanying her on the Grand piano in the lower living area.



On the way to our next stop we had lunch at The Old Barn Resort, which is a 100+-year-old barn with a great history converted to a restaurant with lots of farm memorabilia throughout.

The second Stop of the day was at the Bob and Dollie Acton Farm near Preston. This large 40 X 80 gambrel roofed barn was built in the 1920's and the five-year conversion project was completed just last year. The Acton's converted the barn to living quarters after they couldn't find a good use for the barn which sits on a hill with a million dollar view of the three hundred acre farm and the surrounding countryside. An oversized garage was added to the barn and Bob has a great workshop in the lower level, a new metal shingle roof was added as well. This is a huge home that is very nicely done with views that stretch for miles in all directions. This barn has an extremely tall loft to which a second floor was added as part of the living quarters so they have two full floors of living space plus the unfinished loft area which features the hay carrier as well as a hay slide that was used to distribute the loose hay to the sides of the barn.

After the house tour Bob took a couple of us on a tour of the property with his ATV where a neighbor grazes 50 cow/calf pairs. This is bluff country where half of the farm is cropland and the rest is a combination of trees and hills suitable for pastureland. There is a creek that meanders through the property for about a mile in length.

On behalf of FoMB a big thank you to Marilyn, Dollie and Bob for their hospitality.

FoMB is always looking for people to host a Coffee Chat. Thanks to members Steve and Shawn Taylor of Loretto who have offered to host a Coffee Chat in the spring,



Barn Deconstruction by Scott Tempel



The Tempel Barn

It was with great sadness that we decided to take our old barn down last month. My involvement with Friends of Minnesota Barns started through my attempts to save it. Unfortunately, the \$32,000+ needed to solve its failures and wrap it in metal would have left us with a building not of much use for our horses. Moving it was not feasible.

While much of the base was rotted, there was still a tremendous amount of quality wood in the upper structure. I certainly didn't want to just burn it; an all too common fate for old barns. I had also heard many horror stories of fly by night contractors that promise to take down the barn, only to come in, take out the prime pieces, and leave an even more dangerous structure and a huge mess.

So, while continuing to investigate our options, I came across Better Futures Minnesota. This is a non-profit dedicated to "building a movement that supports the personal transformation of high-risk men and the building of healthy, vibrant communities." Their deconstruction services offer a green alternative to demolition.

How it worked is I hired the Better Futures crew for a fee set by contract. At that point, the materials in the barn became their property. However, I am able to write off the appraised value of those materials as a donation to their non-profit. This helped defray the cost of the demolition. While the project took a little longer than they planned (this was their first barn), the crew was a joy to work with.

The Better Futures crew was kind, polite and professional. It was amazing to see the pride they had in their work and to witness the daily growth in some of the men.

What was even more impressive to me was the deep interest and respect they had for the history of the barn. They intend to preserve the story of the barn wherever possible through the sale of the reclaimed materials. Not only is the organization working to change lives, they are working to build a viable market for reclaimed lumber and materials.

As an FoMB board member, my main efforts will continue to focus on the preservation of our agricultural heritage. However, I now understand how sometimes situations call for action that is not one's first choice. I hope that by giving this project some publicity, I can help make a difficult choice easier for others by providing an alternative.

Deconstruction prevents our landfills from filling up. It prevents air pollution from burning buildings. It provides unique materials for building new products. And, in this case, it helps provide a future for men who need a new start.

You can find a link to an MPR story on the Friends of Minnesota Barns website at mnbarns.org



Deconstruction

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Upcoming Friends of Minnesota Barns Events

*April 12, 2015—Annual Meeting
Hope Glen Farm, Cottage Grove, MN*

*Look for an announcement about our upcoming
Photo Contest!*

The Barn Door