



Friends of Minnesota Barns
www.mnbarns.org

Quarter 2, 2019

Volume 15, Issue 2

Message from the Chairman

As we just honored and celebrated Memorial Day, a sincere thank you to all who made the ultimate sacrifice to ensure the freedom we all enjoy today.

It has been a long winter, which has transitioned into a cold, wet spring, certainly not ideal for the planting season. On April 7th Troy and Lisa Rediehs hosted a Coffee Chat in their barn near Alexandria. It of course was another cold, wet and windy day but we were all able to enjoy the climate-controlled comfort in the barn loft. Troy and Lisa shared all the work they put into finishing the loft into a first-class gathering space. Lisa told how she would recruit her mother-in-law to come over and spot for her when she was up on scaffolding insulating the roof. Troy who farms a couple hundred acres as well as a partner in a machine shop, built a structural steel floor for the hot tub, which is elevated above the loft floor. The steel support system extends all the way to the cement floor on the lower level. They also built a full bar and have a pool table and game table along with a big screen TV to watch events. They obviously have a lot of love and sweat in this retreat area. Lisa made the statement on a stormy day last year, "take my house but not my barn!"

Last year the FoMB Annual meeting was postponed because of a late April snowstorm. This year it was held at the Bruentrup Heritage Farm on May 19th with the temperature in the low 40s with strong winds and rain. Despite the miserable day we had over 40 members and friends attend. The FoMB model barn was partially assembled on the main floor of the barn. The annual meeting was held in the basement. Mark Johnson was re-elected to the board. The treasury is stable with a

balance of \$6,500. I gave a power-point presentation on donating the farm buildings to be preserved as the original site was sold for development.

The 1890s granary, 1890s metal workshop, early 1900s 3-legged Woodmanse windmill, 1912-2 story brick house and 1905 36x60 timber frame Gambrel roof bank barn and the brick smokehouse which was taken down brick by brick, were all moved to the present site in 1999 and 2000. New basements and cement slabs were constructed to place the buildings on and two new buildings were built to replace the ones we couldn't afford to move in 1999. It is now designated as the Bruentrup Heritage Farm, which is the home of the Maplewood Area Historical Society. Work continues on the restoration of the buildings and the smoke house was recently rebuilt. There have been many dedicated volunteers contributing their time and skills over the years to make it a successful venture. The Farm hosts about 70 events per year. The present site is 1/2 mile from the original site and is part of a 23 acre Maplewood prairie preserve with 2 1/2 acres dedicated to the farm site. Clare Hoelderle and LeRoy Kuta presented the winning photographs for the 2020 FoMB calendar. Calendars are on sale for \$15.

The next FoMB Board Meeting will be held on June 24th at Davanni's Eden Prairie. We also have a Coffee Chat coming up in June and one in July details are in this issue. The Now Then Threshing Show and the Le Sueur Threshing Show in August.

If you can help promote FoMB at either show, please call Bill at 612-581-1620 or email me.

Bill Bruentrup Chairman

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Upcoming Coffee Chats



COFFEE CHAT **Sunday, June 23 at 1:00 p.m.**

Hosts: David and Carla Mertz, Iron Shoe Farm
31548 136th Street, Princeton, MN 55371

Carla and David purchased their 69-acre farm in Princeton about 5 years ago with plans to raise beef cattle, hogs, and chickens and to use the barn as an event center. They have since added raising micro greens and ducks. They know the history of the farm and look forward to sharing their stories.

Please RSVP to Bill Bruentrup at 612-581-1620 or billandraydelle@hotmail.com

COFFEE CHAT **Sunday, July 21 at 1:00 p.m.**

Location: Norenberg Barn and Garden Tour
2865 Northshore Drive, Wayzata, MN 55391

The barn has been described by Dennis Gardner, National Register Historian with the State Preservation Office, as one as the most impressive barns in Minnesota.

The gardens also described as one of the finest formal gardens in Minnesota, both are located on the shores of Lake Minnetonka and are preserved on the estate of Frederick Noerenberg who was chairman of Grain Belt Breweries in the late 1800s.

This will be a guided tour by experts from Three Rivers Park.

Members: Free

Non-members & guests: \$5 per person

Please RSVP to Bill Bruentrup at 612-581-1620 or billandraydelle@hotmail.com



How an Old Barn Transformed One Town's Food Scene

By Lauren Walser, National Trust for Historic Preservation



Opening a restaurant and market in a 19th-century barn is fitting for a husband and wife team with a jam-making business called Preservation.

And while turning Preservation into an act of, well, preservation wasn't intentional, for Melanie and Toby Miles, it worked out perfectly. Their venture, Rail Epicurean Market in Westfield, Indiana, has been a foodie haven since 2014—and it's helped revolutionize the city's downtown district.

After years of working in the restaurant industry, the Mileses began dreaming about

their own place—somewhere to continue making their jams, jellies, and preserves, and, perhaps, to branch out into new territory.

Staying local was important to them. “We love this town,” Toby Miles, age 30, says of Westfield, located 20 miles north of Indianapolis. “And we thought, ‘Let’s bring something new here.’”

The challenge was finding the right space. “We like our food and beer and cocktails and wine, but that kind of thing wasn't happening here,” Toby says. “We were tired of having to leave Westfield to find something good to eat.”

Then one day in 2013, Melanie Miles noticed a man working on the exterior of a long-vacant barn on Park Street, near downtown. She asked him what his plans were. That man, Robert Beauchamp, said he had nothing concrete in mind. So she made a pitch: How about turning the barn into a restaurant?



The barn was built circa 1890 as part of a lumber mill.



Rail Epicurean Market opened on April 1, 2014.

His answer was a firm no. But they exchanged information before parting ways. And Melanie, unable to get the barn out of her head, called him back. Eventually Beauchamp agreed to meet with her and Toby.

“We put together a game plan to convince him to do this insane project to put a restaurant where a restaurant doesn't necessarily belong,” Toby says. “But a month later we were signing a lease.”

Then the work began.

Originally part of a lumber mill, the barn has served many functions over the last 110-plus years: a dairy barn, an ice cream store, a bait shop, a bike repair store.

“When we first looked at it, we were waist-deep in bike parts,” Toby says.

By that point, the building had fallen to deep disrepair, with warped boards and wildlife occupying the second floor. “But the barn, itself, had great bone structure,” Toby says. “So we just had to add onto it, straighten it out, and make it habitable.”

How an Old Barn Transformed One Town's Food Scene, continued



He adds, “We started with one extension cord that ran from the place next store. And now there’s plumbing, heating, air conditioning, new electrical systems, bathrooms, everything.”

Many original architectural features—like the doors, windows, and wooden support beams—are still intact. Other features have been repurposed. For example, parts of the roof and siding that couldn’t be saved were turned into interior trim work, countertops, and server stations.

What started as a small market and place to serve lunch expanded to service dinner, wine and beer.

Other old touches come from someplace else entirely—like the downstairs countertops, which are made of salvaged flooring from a bowling alley in nearby Warsaw, Indiana, and the light fixtures, which come from a barn in Wisconsin.

Rail Epicurean Market opened in April 2014, serving lunch and selling locally sourced grocery items—think honey, peanut butter, cheese, hummus, coffee. (The name comes from an old rail line that ran behind the barn; that rail line is now a trail.) Most everything served and sold comes from Indiana. Eventually, the market expanded to serve dinner, along with wine and beer.

And a year after opening, the Mileses expanded into the barn’s second floor, with another bar and more seating. (The barn’s third floor is the Mileses’ office: “Best office in Westfield,” Toby says.) And the outdoor patio, remodeled in the spring of 2016, stays packed during the warm-weather months.



The second-floor dining area

The restaurant’s success has trickled beyond its barn doors. In the years since Rail Epicurean Market opened, several other restaurants and businesses have opened in older, underused buildings near downtown.

“Now there’s this pocket of independently-owned businesses using structures that are already there,” Toby says. “They’re using these older buildings so they don’t get torn down.”

Neither the restaurant nor the city’s growth was on the Mileses’ mind back when they first started scheming about putting a kitchen inside that old Park Street barn. “We never would have pictured this three years ago,” Miles says. “We just wanted a place where we could make sandwiches and jam. And now we’re doing all kinds of stuff—stuff we never would have dreamed of doing.”

Article by Lauren Walser, May 24, 2017 article from
The National Trust for Historic Preservation (www.savingplaces.org)

Coffee Chat Recap: Rediehs Barn, Alexandria



Troy and Lisa Rediehs

Troy and Lisa hosted a coffee chat on April 7.

Thank you for your hospitality and sharing the story of your beautiful barn restoration.

More details from this coffee chat are in “Message from the Chairman” on page 1.

Thank you for hosting!



Barn Memories

By Julie and Pete Flatten {Park River, ND}

Our kitchen window frames the barn that sits directly west of our house. It greets me as the dawn creeps in each morning. Today the roof has a pristine whitewash of snow. Some days snow has blown off the north corner and there are Dairy Queen swirls and drifts on the roof telling me that the wind is up. If snow is coming thick enough that I can't see the barn, I know that I can pour a cup of coffee, grab a book, and go back to the quilts. No one is coming to visit today. In summer's humid weather, the roof takes on a green cast from the moss between the cedar shakes. I count the birds, swallows, mourning doves, and pigeons taking their rest. The barn roof tells me of the first frost, and I mark the progress of the sun as the frost steams off around the shadow of the house. Last summer a couple of small holes appeared along the eaves, as sure a sign of aging as the gray hairs on my head.

A barn burning was an immense tragedy. I remember the day the call came that our cousin's barn was on fire, my dad left immediately to help. I so wanted to go too but of course it was "no place for children". In the aftermath we children were instructed to stay away from the charred remains, but it demanded our attention. We poked around the cadaver looking for things recognizable, some token of remembrance. The Sobak barn was moved off its foundation by a straight line wind shortly after Bergit and Justin were married, and a couple of landmark barns in the neighborhood were also taken by wind a few years ago. Most barns die of old age, their sagging roofs and bulging splintered walls a shell of their once central importance to the farm.

Both the front and back barn have a second floor loft that is open to the center hay room. The hay room also has a large door to the south so that a wagon could pull in and the horses could get hitched and unhitched in indoor comfort. In my time the hay room was tightly stacked with about a million bales, at least it seemed like that many when we were bucking them. The hay room, our kids used the bales as the farm playroom, like life size Legos building houses, forts and anything their imagination came up with. They were reprimanded when bale strings were broken but we couldn't be too hard on them because Pete and I grew up playing in the hay having the same dreams. There is a rope that hangs from a carriage, which runs on a track suspended from the roof ridge at the peak of the roof. The rope that hangs from the carriage to the floor can be used to swing from the front loft to the back loft with the safety net of the bales below. It was a wonderful aid should a pirate ship need to be boarded or for jungle transportation. One year we grew a crop of oats and peas that defied the baler so we pulled out of retirement our green crop loader and filled the hay room with loose hay. It may have been the most beautiful we ever fed and in addition it had very high play value. Instead of building the children tunneled in, at other times the hay room became a giant trampoline. We have an enduring memory of our niece Terrie Ray when she was about five years old, all bundled up in her snow suit with graceful abandon swan diving into the loose hay.

In the hayloft the rungs of the ladder were designed for adults so it was a challenge for kids to climb up. We usually needed an upside down feed pail to reach the first step; the loft covered the whole top floor and again was filled with about a million bales which were climbed and rearranged for many building projects. There were trap doors along the walls in strategic locations to push hay down for use in mangers and pens. We were always warned to pay attention so as not to fall through to the lower level barn floor which added to the adventure. A rope was an important feature of the Lewis barn with a pulley system from one end of the ridge to the other end. The slack rope could then be used as a swing to sit on or to hang by your knees to perform a variety of circus tricks then dropping into the hay.

The barn cats called the hayloft home and it was there that we searched for the latest litter of kittens. Like many things timing was important, if the kittens were found too soon the mama cat would move them but if you waited too long the kittens would be wild-hard and sometimes impossible to catch. When all worked well the kittens played with us, sometimes privileged to wear doll clothes. Every farm kid knew that the barn was the best place to play, it was where we entertained our company but it was also a good place to go when you needed some quiet to be alone with your hurts or your plans.

Condensed from a Christmas letter by Bill Bruentrup

Photo Calendar Contest Winners



2020 Friends of Minnesota Barn calendars available for purchase for \$15 each

Thank you to all that submitted photos for the calendar contest! There were 2 categories this year: Youth/Student Open and Adult Open. We had 8 submissions for the youth category and 28 for the adult category for a total of 36 entries! Start gearing up for next year's contest with the same Youth and Adult Open categories.

Youth/Student Open Winners:

- ◆ Kelly Ristau
- ◆ Maria Christensen
- ◆ Erica Kotek

Adult Open Winners:

- ◆ Mark Johnson
- ◆ Steve Crownover (3 winning entries)
- ◆ Kris Parker
- ◆ Wayne Zuelch
- ◆ Helen Zuelch
- ◆ Joni Mehus (2 winning entries)

**** You can email contest photos at anytime to redbenchvintage@hotmail.com. Please see the upcoming contest details in this newsletter. ****

2019 Annual Meeting Recp

Our annual meeting was held on Sunday, May 19. A big thank you to our fabulous venue host, Bruentrup Heritage Farm in Maplewood. It was a cold and rainy day but over 40 members and friends gathered for a wonderful meeting and presentation, while staying warm and dry in the barn's lower level. The "Message from Chairman" on the first page has the meeting details.



Perhaps Snow Isn't the Real Burden on Those Collapsing Barns in Minnesota

Perhaps it's the way we've changed farming

By Will Weaver

While reading in recent weeks about dairy barns in Minnesota collapsing under the weight of the snow, I could not but think of my family's dairy barn in Hubbard County, still standing tall after almost 100 years. The old barn is empty these days. The cavernous hayloft is silent but for the flutter and coo of pigeons, but its ridge line is unbowed and its rounded roof has remained firm against all weather. It never had a problem with snow because it was built right.

A good copy editor would object to "right": "Don't you mean 'correctly'?"

"That, too," would be my answer.

Our 21st-century barns, dozens of which have collapsed this winter, are actually giant, open-air sheds. Their purpose is for bovine "loafing" — a place for cows to rest, wander around a bit and eat before they head back for yet another milking in high-tech parlors. These new-style barns are collapsing because, indisputably, they were not built correctly. Their trusses were engineered too thinly or their span was too great or their spacing too wide — and so the roof couldn't hold the snow load of this particular winter. It has been a bad winter, yes, but this is Minnesota. We've seen similar winters in our lifetimes.

Because they're still standing, then, our grand old dairy barns deserve our attention. Clearly they were "right" for their times. In the 1930s, the average Minnesota dairy herd was 10 or so cows, those in a traditional barn with hayloft above, stanchions and gutters below. The high-stacked hay in the loft, at first loose, then in small, "square" bales, provided insulation above and endless ruminating below. By spring the hay was "fed down," the hayloft floor swept clean, and the cows let out to pasture. Barn size and cow numbers rose quickly over the years, but into the 1960s a 40-cow dairy was still considered "big." Today the average is 200 cows per farm, with that number skewed by the presence of a few massive dairies each with thousands of cows. In 1965, Minnesota had about 70,000 licensed milk producers. Today it's just over 3,000. We have bought into the specialized, industrial model of milk production in the same way as we have with corn-, wheat- and potato-growing. In return for cheap food, we have put a lot of our eggs in one basket. Or under one roof. (Along with centralization has come other problems, including the depopulation of rural Minnesota, not to say environmental concerns — what to do with all that manure? — but those issues deserve their own discussions.)

Clearly, we can't go back to the old days. Thomas Jefferson's vision for America included the 160-acre, self-sufficient "general farm" perfect for one family. That ship has sailed. And it's easy to sentimentalize about the past. If our family's barn had a hayloft that, to a small boy, was a cathedral (and a roller-skating rink and a basketball gym), its ground floor where the cows lived was a dungeon. Low ceilings. Dim lighting. Poor ventilation. Its workflow was built around a fork and shovel (trust me on this part).

Maybe the message in our modern but collapsing barns is simple: We have reached the breaking point with industrial-style farming. Maybe it's time to get serious about a more decentralized, diversified and sustainable approach to food production. But don't blame our current barn troubles on the milk producers themselves. These families work harder than most anyone you know, but they are trapped in business models that have never quite worked well for agriculture. There are too many variables in farming, largest of which is the weather. Too much rain or too little. Too few hot days or too many. But too much snow? Who'd-a thunk? Actually, our grandfathers did, and their fathers, too, the ones who built barns with high roofs, steep gambrel sides and rafters galore. Maybe these old barns are calling on us now to think — more carefully — about where we're going with modern agriculture.

*Will Weaver, of Bemidji, is the author of "Barns of Minnesota" (Minnesota Historical Society Press)
Star Tribune article, March 19, 2019*

Photo Calendar Contest



Annual Barn Photography Contest

- Contest categories: Adult Open and Youth/Student Open. Photographs must include an identifiable part of a barn (inside or out).
- Photos may be taken with any type of camera, phone, tablet, etc. Filters and other camera accessories may be used. Photos need to be high resolution AND horizontal format.
- Photographs can be enhanced using computer software.
- By entering the contest, you allow the Friends of Minnesota Barns (FoMB) to use your photograph in the barn calendar as well as in other promotions, advertisements, products, websites, social media sites, and any other way the group sees fit. The photographer will be credited if the photograph is used.
- A photographer may enter three (3) unique photographs into the Adult Open category. Youth/students may submit photos to the “Adult” category. The same photograph may not be entered into multiple categories.
- A total of 12 winners will be selected and will receive a 2021 calendar.
- Winners will be announced in spring 2020 at the FoMB Annual Meeting.
- Judges will have the final decision on if a photograph meets the criteria.

Updates about the contest will be posted to our website and Facebook page.
www.friendsofminnesotabarns.org

Barn Photography Contest

2020 Contest Categories

1. Adult Open (up to 3 entries per person)
2. Youth/Student Open (16 years old and under)

Entry Deadline: Monday, February 3, 2020

Entry Fee: Free for youth/students and members of FoMB **or** \$25 yearly membership for adults. Yearly membership includes a quarterly newsletter, discounts on tours, barn coffee chat gatherings, great group of people to get to know and so much more!

Submission Information to Include:

1. Name
2. Email Address
3. Home Address
4. Phone Number
5. Category Entering

Email: .jpg digital image (high resolution) and horizontal format to: redbenchvintage@hotmail.com

Mail: 8 x 10 printed photograph to: Clare Hoelderle, 19685 Oak Grove Avenue, Prior Lake, MN 55372. Must be postmarked by entry deadline.

The Old Stone Barn in Chokio, MN

Another Minnesota hidden gem that I've had on the radar for the better part of a decade is the ruins of an old barn, found on the flat plains of western Minnesota. The barn was built in the early 1900s by Frank Schott and his sons William and Anthony and has since fallen into disrepair. It stands on the side of a dirt road, magnificent, deserted and silent.

Frank Schott emigrated from Germany to the United States in 1907. He learned the art of stone masonry from his father and grandfather. When his wooden barn was damaged in a windstorm in the 1920s, he began construction on the stone barn and other concrete outbuildings on the property. The foundation is 2 feet wide and 5 feet deep. The barn measures 50 feet by 33 feet with stone and concrete wall 18 inches thick. It had stalls for 14 cows and several horses.

The barn took almost 20 years to build and was in use until the late 1970s. It fell into disrepair after that and has sat empty and abandoned since. The barn features towers on each corner and the architect's signature etched into one of the columns. The roof collapsed in the 1990s but the concrete interior walls and stone exterior aren't going anywhere anytime soon. Nowadays, the barn is home to some barn swallows and a few stray beer cans litter the floor,

The barn is located on the Big Stone and Stevens county line along County Highway 56 southwest of Chokio. The barn can be seen from a distance and is located on Walk-In Access land, which is private land managed by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and open during any legal hunting season. The roof of the barn constructed of wooden shingles was burned by vandals. From a distance the old structure takes on a look of a cathedral on the prairie. It is an amazing sight to see. Frank Schott's Stone Barn will likely stand for many more years to come.

Article information taken from "The Old Stone Barn, Chokio, MN" posted by "seth5544" on February 20, 2017 from Highway Highlights (highwaylights.com) and article "Stone barn is sentinel on the prairie" by Steve Kohls on July 18, 2018.



Photo by Helen Zuelch

Friends of Minnesota Barns

10605 Joliet Avenue North
Stillwater, MN 55082

Telephone:
612-338-BARN (2276)

E-mail:
info@friendsofminnesotabarns.org

Website:
www.mnbarns.org

Our mission is to educate the public and raise awareness to the importance of historic barns and farmsteads in Minnesota, and to help advocate for barn preservation. We offer educational workshops and assist others in finding resources for preservation and/or restoration of historic barns and farmsteads.



Drawing courtesy of LeRoy Kuta

General Announcements



* Please note that our mailing address has changed to: 10605 Joliet Avenue North, Stillwater, MN 55082

* The Statewide Historic Preservation Conference will be in St. Cloud on September 11-13, 2019.

* The next Friends of MN Barns Board Meeting will be on June 24 at 6:30 p.m. at Davanni's in Eden Prairie. All are welcome to attend.

* We are always looking for barn articles, pictures and interesting facts to be used in upcoming newsletters. If you would like to contribute, please contact newsletter editor and board member, Clare Hoelderle at redbenchvintage@hotmail.com.