

# BARN LIGHTS

Quarterly Newsletter

APPALACHIAN BARN ALLIANCE

VOL. 5 No. 1 Summer 2018

## The Gudger/Ramsey Barn at Trail Branch

Sometimes we're fortunate in our research of old barns to find newspaper articles from the past about the landowners responsible for their construction. Madison County's *News Record* ran an article on September 12, 1974, which described a meeting of the County Historical Society, held at the historic home of Dr. and Mrs. Harry Ditmore, also known as "Trail Branch." An excerpt from that story reads:

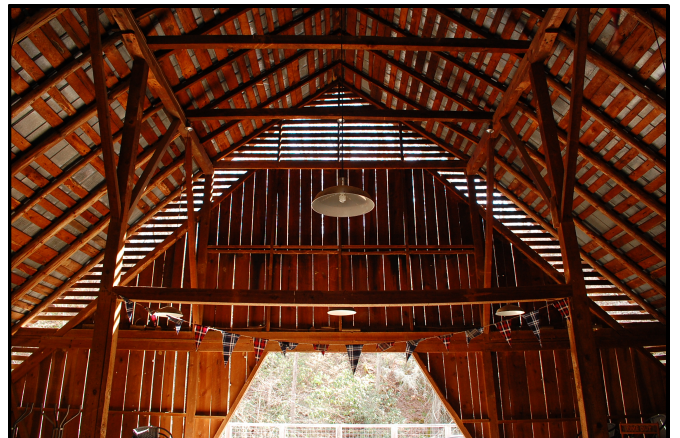
*History Received Widespread interest in the old community of "Trail Branch," on Lower Sandy Mush Creek, resulting in a record attendance at the quarterly meeting of the Madison County Historical Society on Saturday. The meeting was held on the spacious front porch of the house built in the 1880's by Jack Gudger as a private home, and is located within calling distance of the site of the famous Gudger's Mill, the store, blacksmith shop and post office. Dr. and Mrs. Harry Ditmore accompanied guests throughout the house. Mrs. Ditmore is the daughter of the late Mr. and Mrs. R. S. Ramsey who purchased the property from the J. J. Gudgers in 1903. A son, James Madison Gudger, served as a U.S. Congressman as did his daughter, Kathryn Gudger Langley; Hezekiah, another son, served as Ambassador to Columbia and to Panama and later became Governor of Panama.*



This farm and commercial property received its name of "Trail Branch" because of its strategic location on a famous stagecoach and wagon trail, later designated as NC Highway 20, the new auto-age highway from Asheville to Madison County, to Marshall by way of Bailey's Branch. Today it is a little-traveled county road, mostly forgotten except by local residents, who are few and far between.

Surviving along with the historic house, springhouse, and the stone ruins of the old mill, is a beautiful livestock barn, likely built by the Bob Ramsey family in the early 20th century. It is a classic Appalachian bank-barn with a broad gable roof covering a large hay loft, above the ground-level livestock stalls, enclosed by a massive rock

retaining wall on the bank side. While having been restored for use as a meeting facility, the majority of the structure and materials have survived intact, providing a rustic yet elegant loft space for guests, with a view of Sandy Mush Creek.



Story & photos courtesy of Taylor Barnhill



## *The President's Letter*

As I sit on our deck with an iced tea, escaping from the heat of the day, I can look in one direction and see our barn. While looking in the other direction, I catch sight of our neighbor's barn. Yes, I admit that I have turned into an official barn geek! Recently on our travels to New York state and Canada, I kept looking at the landscape for barns to compare with ours. No contest! My life has been enriched by my involvement with the organization through all the history that I have learned about the area in the process. That thought sustains me during these busy months when our activities grew as fast as the grass (and

weeds) during this wet spring season. Luckily, there is the support of volunteers, board members, advisory council members and members of the community to ease the work that we have accomplished over the last few months. Special thanks to those who made Barn Month and accompanying events such a success. Earthsong Photography's Don McGowan and Bonnie Cooper for their Photo Workshop. Judy Ricker for donating an exquisitely crafted quilt for our raffle. And all those who contributed to the success of Barn Day—especially Reese and Lynn Steen for once again allowing us to use the party barn. Sebastiaan & Ariel Zijp at the Farmers' Hands are such wonderful supporters of our annual dinner. So, that iced tea is especially refreshing as I reflect on what makes life so sweet here in Madison County.

*Sandy Stevenson*

## *Summer Concert*



Our good friends Susi Gott and two of the Sons of Ralph—Marty and Don Lewis—are back to regale the audience with tales of growing up in Madison County and the songs that reflect this unique Appalachian culture. Each of them is talented in their own way, but a combination of the three (who toured together in the 70's as the Gott & Lewis Offspring String Band) brings a powerful sound that will delight your senses. They performed benefit concerts for us in 2014 at Ebbs Chapel, in 2016 at our Barn Tour Day, and this time, they will be at Broyhill Chapel on the Mars Hill University campus. The date is Sunday, August 12 at 3pm and the ticket price is \$10 in advance and \$15 at the door. For reservations or more information, email [info@appalachianbarns.org](mailto:info@appalachianbarns.org) or call Sandy at 828 380-914

### July Van Tour of Historic Barns

The Barn Alliance is offering 10-passenger van tours of historic barns on a monthly schedule. The July tour narrated and led by Taylor Barnhill will be Friday, July 20 from 9am to approximately Noon (and, yes, there will be a bathroom stop in the middle). The cost is \$40 per person. To reserve your spot, email [info@appalachianbarns.org](mailto:info@appalachianbarns.org) or call Sandy at 828 380-9146.



# Barn Month: A Month of Exciting Happenings!



*Taylor & Mike Stevenson mounting the Photo Display at Zuma's Coffee in downtown Marshall.*



*Barn photos at the opening of Barn Month at Madison County Arts Council (MCAC).*



*Sandy meeting with some of the staff at Bonnie & Clyde's Restaurant in Marshall, one of the local restaurants that graciously participated in our "Nourish" fundraising for Barn Month.*



*Bailey Mountain Cloggers lead square dance lessons at Barn Day at Steen's Barn in Mars Hill.*



*Third annual Farm to Table Dinner hosted by Sebastiaan & Ariel Zijp at The Farmer's Hands in Mars Hill.*

*Board of Directors:*

Sandy Stevenson (President), Jeannie Blethen, Janet Foster, Mike Foster, Rob Kraft, Sara Nichols, Matthew Pierce, Keith Ray, Jack Thomson, and David Wyatt.

*Advisory Council:*

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*We gratefully acknowledge our generous patrons:*

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