

BARN LIGHTS

Quarterly Newsletter

APPALACHIAN BARN ALLIANCE

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The Modern Barn of a Century Ago

On the upper end of Big Pine Creek, above the junction of South Fork and North Fork, as you begin the climb to Troublesome Gap, you will pass an old barn on your left. Upon first glance, you may only notice it because of the way it clings to the outside of a sharp switch-back in the road. If you look more closely, careful not to drive over the bank, you will notice the distinctive roof line of a “monitor roof” barn. This year marks the 100-year anniversary of this once unique Appalachian barn, thought to be the first of its kind in Madison County.



The barn was built in 1918 by Claude Wild, the son of George Washington Wild, an innovative Big Pine farmer and mountain politician of the latter 19th century. Claude became a peddler, or drummer as they were called locally. His route ran from Big Pine over Troublesome Gap to Newport, then to Asheville, and back home to Big Pine. His income from one circuit was said to average \$75, quite a lot of cash for the period. But Claude was frugal and didn't want to buy food along his trip, so his wife Katie made him ham biscuits to carry with him. As his clientele became established, he purchased the first truck in the Big Pine valley: an REO “Speed Wagon.”

The REO Motor Car Company was founded by Ransom Eli Olds (REO), father of the Oldsmobile. Quite a luxury, Claude Wild's exotic new truck was specially equipped for peddlers. The family's story describes one of Claude's discoveries along his route: sets of blueprint drawings for a “modern” 20th century barn. From those plans he built the innovative monitor roof barn, with its ridge-line

roof vent, designed to create a chimney effect to draw air up through the loft level. As the new air-cured burley tobacco began to replace flue-cured tobacco, this type of ventilated structure was the barn of the future. Monitor roof barns spread throughout the Big Pine valley, and by the early 1930s, began to appear in other areas of Madison County.

Claude's new barn also had the latest in plumbing, with its own water pipe and spring-head for watering the livestock, circulated through a concrete spring-box on the roadside, which still shows Claude's initials and date carved into the concrete: “C. J. W. 1919.” It continues to flow into the horses' water trough today.

REO

**If It Isn't a Reo
It Isn't a "Speed Wagon"**

RIVALS ARE COPIING not only the general features of design, but even the very term by which we designate the light, speedy Reo Motor Truck.

WE SAID "GENERAL" features. Note the distinctive "For that is as far as the imitation go."

THEY CANNOT IMITATE REO in the fundamental features—motor, transmission, axle, steering and control system—without actually counterfeiting the Reo.

AND EVEN THEN, there would still be lacking that quality which you have come to know as Reo.

SO DON'T BE MISLED by the term "Speed Wagon" for legitimately that belongs to Reo exclusively.

REO ENGINEERS developed this special type of motor truck—wind in the Reo advertising we created the term.

IF IT ISN'T a Reo then, it isn't a "Speed Wagon."

AND IF IT IS A REO—then you can be sure it is the best motor truck of that type because it was the pioneer and therefore represents the ripest practical experience.

THIS REO WAS RIGHT from the very first—that is why it has enjoyed such a tremendous success—that is why it is being so generously imitated now.

De Witt Motors Company, Inc.
215-217 James Street
Warren 4807
Reo Motor Car Company, Lansing, Michigan

Reo
"Speed Wagon"
\$1,500



Delivered in Syracuse, including
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THE GOLD STANDARD



The President's Letter

Ah, the New Year! It's just around the corner and thoughts go to assessing the previous year and looking forward to the new one. In the case of an organization, maybe those thoughts expand to a reflection on a longer time—how about 5 years? When I think about where we were at the end of 2013, I am amazed at how far we have progressed. We had just been awarded our 501(c)3 status that fall and had just completed the documentation of the first township—Beech Glen. We have learned a lot since then and put those lessons to good use. Our fundraising efforts have expanded and our support from both the local community and the grant community has strengthened. Now, as I look forward, I expect that the next 5 years will be just as rewarding. Our announcement of the

site-search for our Heritage Farmstead and the steps we follow after is what will drive our organization's work for that period of time. It is pretty exciting to be moving in this direction with you, our ABA family supporting us in this journey. On behalf of the members of our board, I wish you a wonderful holiday and the best in the

upcoming year.

Sandy Stevenson

The Path to the Heritage Farmstead

When the Appalachian Barn Alliance formed in 2012, the small group of volunteers brainstormed some ideas to fulfill the mission: to preserve the rural heritage of Madison County and surrounding areas through the documentation of the historical barn building traditions and the barns they represent. We knew that we would be collecting information about historic barns to develop self-guided tours and to have that information accessible on our website.

During our planning for Barn Day in 2015, the committee members decided to expand the “day” to the whole month and create some excitement around other activities in the month of May. Sandy Stevenson's husband Mike has been collecting antique tools for decades, so Sandy persuaded him to donate those that relate to barn-building to a display of such tools. Peggy and John Wilson donated a foot adz and broad ax for this display. Little did we know that it would be the first of many donations to form the basis for tools and implements that could be either on the property of a Heritage Farmstead or in a museum on the site.

A horse-drawn threshing machine from the early 1900s will be “on loan” to our farmstead from the Meadows family in Spring Creek. Rob Kraft spent hours using new welding knowledge to repair the machine so that it could be moved by heavy equipment to a location where it would be protected from the weather awaiting the time when it would move to the Heritage Farmstead.

Another donation—this time a horse-drawn hay rake from Shawn Hutchens, the new owner of the Johnny Ramsey farmstead on Lower Paw Paw—luckily was sitting outside the barn and just took the manual labor of our trusty crew (Rob Kraft, Taylor Barnhill, Mike Stevenson, and Mike Foster) to push it onto the trailer. And Jackie Painter—a name familiar to many history buffs, especially in the Hot Springs area—graciously donated several farm tools and implements which only required picking them up from her home in Sylva.

Of course, the premier donation which truly put us in mind of working toward a Heritage Farmstead was the Jervis/Ray flue-cured tobacco barn donated by Elaine Ray Thomas and her husband David. The work of the trusty crew plus Rick Thomason, Ross Young, and Matthew Pierce took two days of deconstruction of the building and moving the logs to storage. We had such a great time with a ceremony preceding that event to share memories of the barn before taking it down! All donated items will have a small plaque at the Heritage Farmstead to commemorate the donating family.

The next page shares some of the photos of these donations over the years.



Hand Cultivator donated by Jackie Painter



Moving the Hay Rake donated by Shawn Hutchens



The Celebration Group in front of donated Jervis/Ray Barn



*Tools Donated by the
Wilsons*



Threshing Machine donated by the Meadows family



Steve Kaple's Farm Sled Being Moved

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.

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We gratefully acknowledge our generous patrons:

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Lesley King
Rob & Melanie Kraft
Bill & Susan Sewell
Mike & Sandy Stevenson
Maria & Jack Thomson
Diane Van Helden

Save the date: Friday, June 21, 2019,

5 p.m.-8 p.m.

Barn Art featured at a Gala Event
"A Pastoral Palette." Watch for details.