

BARN LIGHTS

Quarterly Newsletter

APPALACHIAN BARN ALLIANCE

VOL. 2 No. 4 Winter 2015

The Strength of Community

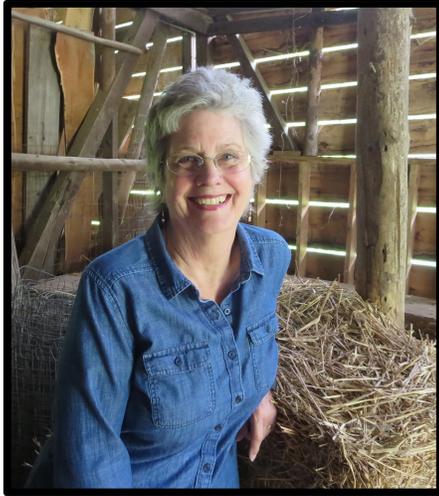


The Annual Meeting on November 15 was a full circle celebration of the strong community that is Madison County. In January of 2012, a group of representatives from many different organizations met for the first time to brainstorm the implementation of an idea presented by Ross Young, the County Extension Agent. Out of that meeting grew the Appalachian Barn Alliance later that year with the goal of documenting the historically significant barns as the foundation to the “big idea” of establishing Madison County as “The Barn County.” Three years later we recognized those many people who have been instrumental in helping Taylor Barnhill tell the stories of our agricultural history through those barns. Three is a significant number for us at this point: We are one-third of the way through the documentation (4 of the 11 townships completed).; we received our third grant to help us in the process; and we have increased our membership three-fold since our first year.



The President's Letter

We celebrated our 3rd birthday at the Annual Meeting with a special recognition of the kind residents of the county who have helped us achieve our goals over the past years. The memories and stories that they have shared with Taylor as well as the access to their barns is a gift that we constantly appreciate. 2015 has been a successful year beginning with the \$7000 grant from the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area. This money allowed Taylor to complete the fourth township—Walnut. Additionally, with the money from the Marion Stedman Covington grant we rolled out the database portion of our research by putting the Beech Glen information on that website.



Our fundraising efforts continue to gain momentum as we were able to raise more money from Barn Day and the summer concert and we hosted our first workshop. However, I think that the most exciting things that have happened over the past year is our recognition beyond our county. Our State magazine ran a sidebar about our organization in their October issue and we were featured on WNCW in November. Both of those were unsolicited. The hardworking members of the Barn Alliance Board are grateful to the support we receive from all sources and look forward to continuing to grow in 2016.

Sandy Stevenson

Field Trip

Several Board members recently accompanied Ross Young—County Extension Agent and the inspiration for our organization—to the Museum of Appalachia in nearby eastern Tennessee. The original impetus for the visit was to see the cantilever barns on the property. However, it soon became clear that there is so much more at the site to serve as an inspiration for a future goal. The Barn Alliance is building the foundation for establishing Madison County as “The Barn County” of the Southeast. We spent several hours examining the historic buildings and displays of historic tools and drove back home excited about what we might do to support the effort to bring something similar to our county. The site—located in Clinton TN (just north of Knoxville) is the dream of John Rice Irwin who began the project in 1969 because he realized “how important it is to preserve...the memorabilia of all the people who represented a passing culture.” And, isn't that our mission, too? Our documentation of the historic barns is just a start.



A Sneak Peek at the Walnut Tour

Nine barns in the Walnut township form the self-guided tour for that area, which is now available as a download from our website or in brochure form at the Visitor Center. In his research, Taylor Barnhill has found that each of the townships has a unique style of barn building. For this area, that distinctive barn type is the monitor roof livestock barn. While found in other areas, the Big Pine valley has many of this type, likely introduced to the county by the Wild family, who were award-winning innovators in many of their farm practices. These barns also demonstrate a prevalent use of lapped board siding and lattice work. Additionally, while many 19th century hewn log *houses* remain here, as evidence of the Appalachian hewn-log building tradition, there is a notable absence of barns built with heavily hewn log cribs supporting large timber-framed loft structures above. Instead, *unhewn round* log barn construction was the norm, and continued as late as the mid-20th century.



Annual Photo Contest Yields Great Stories

Our Annual Historic Barn Photo Contest was especially rewarding this year. Not only did we see the largest number of entries, but we also added to our organization. The first place winner in the Adult Category—Mark Powell—has been a fan of the Barn Alliance since its inception. Recently retired from his job as an architect, Mark has volunteered to help Taylor with the architectural measuring and drawing part of the documentation. Next, our first (and second) place winner in the Youth Category—Carrie Maney—is the granddaughter of David Wyatt, a longtime supporter of our project. David has now joined our Board. The other winners in the Adult Category are also two of our cheerleaders—Regina Fowler who will be using her prize money to help fund a spot in the Barn Alliance's Benefit Photo Workshop, and Steven Tweed who has been one of Taylor Barnhill's strongest sources for barn information in his neighborhood. However the most gratifying stories were those shared by the winners in the Youth Category. Carrie drove around with her father taking scores of photos of barns and both of her submittals were recognized by the judges to be the first and second place winners. Noah Marler whose photo won third place also shared that same experience with *his* father. If a love of this heritage is passed down to the younger generation, then what we are doing is worth all the work. We are grateful to the support of the Madison County Tourism Development Authority who sponsors the contest to highlight the cultural heritage of our county, the Cooperative Extension Office for their help in organizing the entries, and to the Madison County Fair to allowing us to be a part of the competitions in the photography category.



APPALACHIAN BARN ALLIANCE

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Sandy Stevenson (President), Jeannie Blethen, Ryan Cody, Katie Estridge, Rob Kraft, Nancy Larkin, Les Reker, David Wyatt and Patrick Cash.

Advisory Board:

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