

Barn Lights

Remembering the barns and farms of our heritage

Quarterly Newsletter

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Barn Day is Main Event for Alliance

The inaugural Madison County Barn Day was such a success that the Barn Alliance board has decided to make it our annual signature event. The sold-out barn tour/dinner/auction/entertainment drew participants not only from Madison County, but also from Buncombe and Yancey counties. "We were surprised that we got so many outsiders to attend," said Barn Alliance President Sandy Stevenson. "But even more gratifying than the turnout was the reaction of our visitors. Many of them left saying they had no idea we had this kind of cultural entertainment in Madison County." The event began with a bus tour of several significant and photogenic barns in the county. Taylor Barnhill shared his expertise with an informative running commentary on the history and structural details of the barns. Following the tour, guests assembled at the Mars Hill party barn owned by Reese and Lynn Steen. Participants enjoyed a social hour and a country barbecue dinner. After dinner, a live auction featured works by some of Madison County's most acclaimed artists: A painting of the party barn and surrounding mountains by popular watercolor artist Polly Gott, a pottery piece by Jim and Shirl Parmentier and another by Alex Matisse, a gourd lamp by Robin Carter and a wood sculpture by Dennis Ruane. Following the auction, the world champion Bailey Mountain Cloggers of Mars Hill University performed -- and then brought guests up to join them in an informal clogging class. "The results exceeded our most ambitious estimates," Sandy Stevenson said. "Both from a fund-raising perspective and from the reaction of our guests, we realized we had created a winner. We'll hold our second annual Barn Day sometime this spring -- with new surprises added to the mix. By the nature of the tour, tickets are limited so watch for notices to make your reservations early. This is an event you don't want to miss."

Chilly Workshop Produces Some Hot Pictures

A courageous group of photo enthusiasts braved our untimely November freeze to take to the fields and hollers of Madison County in a photo workshop under the tutelage of renowned photographer Don McGowan.

The workshop took place on the weekend of Nov. 14-16, beginning with a Friday evening introductory session and instructional program. On Saturday, the group got an early start in the freezing temperatures to photograph barns in Beech Glen, Grapevine and Spring Creek. Don McGowan offered the photographers individual coaching and professional tips about how to get the best shot in outdoor surroundings. On Sunday afternoon, the weekend concluded with another instructional program and a critique of participants' images.

"It was even better than I expected," said one of the participants, Vickie Sealock. "I'd happily sign up to do it again. Don is an extremely talented professional and a very good instructor."

Don McGowan's professional workshops are highly regarded by professional and experienced amateur photographers. They draw participants from across the country.

"In my first barn workshop earlier this year, I had two people come in from Boston and two from Indiana," Don said. "I began to realize that there's a lot of interest in photographing barns among people not only in this part of the world but all over the country."

Don has become a supporter of the Barn Alliance, and offered to conduct a weekend workshop for local residents who have an interest in photography.

The Barn Alliance is grateful to Don for donating his time and talents to this unique project. "What a wonderful gesture," said Sandy Stevenson, the Alliance president. "To have someone of Don's professional stature donate his time and expertise is a great benefit to the Alliance, not only as a fund-raiser, but also as an education tool to point up the value of maintaining the beautiful barns in our rural landscape. We are grateful to Don for his valuable help in spreading our message."



Photos taken by Vickie Sealock during photo workshop

Focus on Barns Produces Winners In Photo Contest

A black-and-white image caught the eye of the judges in the Barn Alliance's third annual photo contest. They awarded it first prize in the adult category. The winning photographer, Regina Fowler, chose the black-and-white treatment for the historic old barn against a scrub-covered hillside to evoke the early feel of the scene. Regina also won third place with her color photo of a log barn set into a rise alongside a country path in a lush green setting, as well as taking home first prize in last year's contest with a photo of a barn beneath an arching rainbow.

The second-place winner in the adult category found his winning shot while taking the Barn Alliance's Beech Glen driving tour. Mike Merrill saw a story about the tour in the Citizen-Times, downloaded the tour and took off from his Fletcher home in search of a great photo. "The people who own the barns on the tour were really great. One woman even invited us in to talk about her barn. I love a driving tour like that. It was a great experience." In the youth division (grades 5 through 12) Morgan Willett of Spring Creek took home the first and second-place awards for barns in her neighborhood. Morgan was undecided as to what she might do with her cash award. Third place went to Chandler Hensley. All the winning photos are available on the Alliance website, www.appalachianbarns.org.

The contest is part of the Madison County Fair. It is sponsored by the Tourism Development Authority (TDA) and is a continuing project to generate interest in the county's historic barns as part of the Appalachian Barn Alliance's mission. Bill Ricker, Chair of the Tourism Development Board, presented the checks (\$100 for first place, \$75 for second place, and \$50 for third place) and the Fair ribbons to each of the winners.



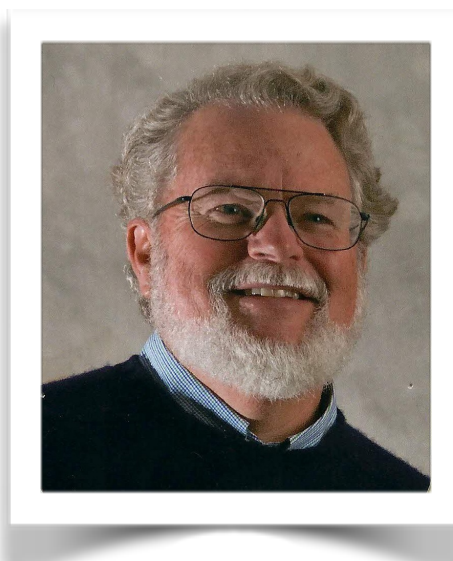
Have Barn Stories, Will Travel

Taylor Barnhill knows barns. And he is available as a speaker for your organization's meeting, where he will share his knowledge and insights.

Taylor has accumulated a wealth of historic and architectural information about Madison County barns as he has compiled the Barn Alliance regional driving tours.

He has put his findings into a slide presentation that is both informative and entertaining. His presentations have received favorable reactions -- ranging from, "I didn't know that" to "Wow! I had no idea there was so much history in that old barn."

The Barn Alliance is happy to support Taylor's outreach efforts to help people understand these unique gems hidden in plain sight across the County. To get more information about Taylor's presentations, call the Barn Alliance at 828-380-9066.



Barn Research To Go Online

The Barn Alliance has received a \$5,000 grant from the Marion Stedman Covington Foundation to begin our second phase of documentation. With the help of an earlier Covington grant, we have collected histories, taken photographs and developed architectural drawings of barns in three areas of Madison County. That field work is continuing, and now we are beginning to make the materials accessible on line. This second Covington grant will enable us to develop a database to put our research material on our website in a searchable format. The design will allow researchers and the general public to access whatever information they may need.

"We are indebted to the Covington Foundation for their continuing support of our documentation efforts," said ABA President Sandy Stevenson. "The barns of Madison County illustrate the history of the region, and we are happy to make that history available to future generations."

The project is expected to take several months to enter and test the materials we have collected so far, and our future findings will be added as we continue with our field work.

This database will be shared with the Mars Hill University Liston Ramsey Center for Regional Studies and the western office of the Department of Cultural Resources as well as any other institution that might be interested.

Come One, Come All!

The Barn Alliance is wrapping up a big year -- and planning an even bigger one. We'd love to have you become a part of it.

Your membership is actually much more important than most people realize. Our funding comes from annual dues, PLUS from institutional grants. And as we write more grant applications, it is clear that one of the things they want to see is support from the community. So when you continue your membership for another year, you're actually standing up and saying, "This is important to us." And the people who give out the grants are listening.

Our annual letters went out about a week ago, and we are aware how easy it is to put a letter in the "to do -- some day" file, and then forget about it. Consider this an urgent reminder. Please return your membership dues, and mention us to a friend. Any friend of yours is a friend of ours!

Oh! And one other thing: One of the grants we are chasing has a matching provision. They'll give us only as much as we can raise independently. So please consider adding a few dollars so we can build up our "matching" account to maximize our grant income.

Many thanks.

From our President...

It is hard to imagine that our organization is only two years and a few months old. Looking back over this past year, we have met and exceeded our goals. Let me begin with the wonderful success of our inaugural Barn Day. Knowing that we wanted to create a signature annual event, we began 2014 by brainstorming and I am pleased to say that all of our great ideas came together to the delight of those who attended in September. We are grateful to the artists who donated works for the live auction and to Reese and Lynn Steen for the use of their perfect location. Look for this to continue each year. Another fundraising success was the Joe Penland/Laura Boosinger Benefit Concert in August where the audience numbers exceeded our expectations. This year we were offered space in both Fiddlestix in Mars Hill and in Mad for Madison Gallery in Marshall to sell some of our barn-related items. Interest in the cutting boards and napkin rings made from tobacco sticks is growing and information about our organization is reaching more people. We have also been awarded another grant from the Marion Stedman Covington Foundation—this time for \$5,000 to build a searchable database for all of the information that has been collected. They were impressed by how much we have accomplished and by the support of the community. Our membership numbers have almost doubled from 2013 to 2014. A true testament to the commitment that we all have in the importance of preserving this aspect of our heritage. So, thank you and please continue to help us continue our work in 2015.

Sandy Stevenson