

BARN LIGHTS

Quarterly Newsletter

APPALACHIAN BARN ALLIANCE

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An Appalachian Christmas and a Sacred Moment in the Family Barn

The language of Appalachian culture, in which old words and expressions from Elizabethan England survived, could be found here throughout the twentieth century. Held by the generation of folks born at the end of the 1800's, this oral tradition was a curiosity for later generations. Christmas in Appalachia was commonly celebrated on "Old Christmas," or January 6, ending the feast of the twelve days of Christmas beginning on December 25. Another Appalachian Christmas tradition could be found in the family barn, a story shared by a Madison County woman whose recollection as a six-year-old vividly held the story: *The time was Christmas Eve, 1959, and a light snow had begun to cover the ground in a remote cove of Madison County. A sleepy six-year-old girl sat in her Papaw's lap, listening to Christmas Bible stories from long ago. Suddenly, she realized she had fallen asleep as she felt herself bundled into a quilt and lifted from the chair. "Come on baby girl, we'll go see us a miracle," her Papaw said as he carried her out into the drifting snow. With the light of a lantern, they made their way to the old log barn where the soft sounds of animals could be heard. The lantern light caught the halo of breath from old Pete the mule as he softly nickered. Dolly the milk cow seemed puzzled by this late-night visit, and the three sheep shuffled together expectantly. The soft cooing sound of hens drifted down from their nesting boxes on the wall of the stall. Papaw reached into his overalls pocket, opened his well-worn watch and murmured, "Hmmm, jes' a coupla minutes to go." The animals began to move quietly and stood, all facing to the east. At the stroke of midnight, old Pete slowly leaned forward onto his knees, followed by the cow, then the sheep. They all kneeled reverently, facing east. With a tear in his eye, Papaw whispered, "Baby girl, this is the moment of a time when the baby Jesus is born unto us, to save us from our sinful ways."* Our mountain barns hold priceless stories. May this holiday season bring memories of the richness of this heritage, and the importance of carrying it forward to the New Year.



*The old barn setting for an Appalachian Christmas
Photo courtesy of Don McGowan, Earthsong Photography*

The President's Letter



The holiday season is when we often reflect on family, and I am so pleased at the expansion of our ABA family over this past year. Our relationship with Mars Hill University has strengthened with our community partnership in a grant they received this past year. Look for news of its culminating ceremony this coming spring. Our work was the focus of our inaugural Art Gala—held in Asheville—with an expanded audience. Look for the Second Annual Gala in June 2020. Additionally, we are now known beyond the borders of Madison County thanks to a wonderful article in the September 2019 Barn Issue of Our State magazine. And, our tours offered of the historic barns brought almost 170 people to Madison County in regularly scheduled monthly tours as well as several specialized tours for groups. We are so grateful to our farmstead families who are willing to share their property so that we can showcase Madison County's heritage. And, so, on behalf of the ABA board, warm wishes for a happy holiday season with your family!

Sandy Stevenson

Prestigious Grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation

Early December brought the exciting news of the receipt of a grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation. This \$2500 grant will fund a project to collect short (up to 2 minute) audio recordings of barn memories and then overlay the recording with photos of either the speaker or the barn. These photos could be either historic or contemporary. Thanks to Susan Patrice, a transplanted professional photographer, who helped with the grant for its success. The ABA has been recording stories either on paper or equipment for seven years, but this grant will allow us to formalize the process in a condensed version. Our goal is to have these snippets on our website and include in classroom lessons to encourage young students to collect such memories from their families. And, of course, these would form the foundation for what can be an important part of the museum on a future heritage farmstead. What a wonderful Christmas gift to end our year!

How about some last-minute ideas for those barn lovers among your family and friends? Brand new is a gift certificate for one of our barn tours which are offered once a month, May through October. However, if a person should gather 4 or more people, we can arrange a special tour date that is convenient. The price is \$40 per person for a 3-hour guided tour. Or how about some beautiful Polly Gott notecards (10 different barns for \$25) or one of the many tobacco stick products ranging from a \$12 Appalachian butter knife to a \$40 cutting board? If you have an art-lover on your list, we still have paintings by the Saints of Paint artists available on our online sale page on the website. Just give us a call and we can help you check off that name on your list while you help us with our work with your gift.



THE ALLURE OF THE BARN

The historic Madison County barns are an attraction to those who love barns and their stories as much as the board members of the ABA. This year we have found a special group of people who want to spend more time visiting these beautiful structures—photographers. In addition to our regular Photo Workshop conducted by Don McGowan in the Fall, two groups contacted us for a long day of photographing barns: The Georgia Nature Photographers Association and a Women's Group from the Camera Club of Hendersonville.



*Photo Workshop taught by Don McGowan,
Earthsong Photography*



*A Women's group from the Camera Club
of Hendersonville*



*Participants from the Georgia Nature
Photographers Association*

Annual Meeting

The first real winter blast of the season caused our loyal supporters to adjust their schedules until the weather warmed up and the ice on the roads melted. We met one day later than the original date for our celebration of 2019 for the Appalachian Barn Alliance. Once again, the Lodge at Bear River was the setting—a beautiful venue for us to recognize a successful year. The successes include our inaugural Art Gala in June, the 9-page article in the September issue of Our State magazine, a record number of people taking our guided tours, and a partnership in a grant with MHU. Thanks for a wonderful year!

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