

# BARN LIGHTS

Quarterly Newsletter

APPALACHIAN BARN ALLIANCE

VOL. 6 No. 4 Spring 2020

## Resilience During Hard Times and the Pierce Rector Livestock Barn

The beautiful and always mysterious barns of one hundred years ago give us hints about life on the farmsteads of the early twentieth century. One of the stories rarely shared among our farm families is of “the other pandemic,” the so-called Spanish Flu of 1918. From the CDC’s written history of that pandemic, “influenza killed almost 500,000 Americans—ten times the number of American soldiers who died in combat during the war (WWI). In a single week in October 1918, an estimated 21,000 Americans died. In North Carolina 13,644 people died before the epidemic finally went away. During its peak in October and November, there were only two kinds of people in the state—those who were sick with influenza and those who were trying to save them.”

A dramatic and tragic scenario from our home state. Yet what was happening here with farm families in Madison County? It was a surprise to learn that, after a quick sampling of ten cemeteries across the County, looking at more than 600 gravestones, we find there were only three deaths during the period of the 1918 flu

pandemic represented by those graves. Were our hardy farm families somehow spared?

While researching the historic barns of Rector Corner and the Pierce Rector family, a particular gravestone was found and stood out from the rest, depicting the death of twenty-five-year old Glennie Mae Rector who died on December 17, 1918. Glennie Mae was the daughter of Pierce Rector. We don’t know that she died of influenza, but she was of the age for which the flu was most deadly: 20 to 40-year-olds. Her death also occurred within the second peak period of the flu recurrence.

The Rector family lived on this land for almost 200 years, from 1814 to 2007. Glennie Mae’s father, John Pierce Rector, known as Pierce, raised his family there on the east slope of Rector Corner ridge, and built a simple vernacular Victorian house and a classic hewn-log livestock barn. Pierce was one of the patriarchs of the large Rector family of the south Marshall township.

The barn is elegant in its form, a two-story log structure that exemplifies care and the craftsmanship of the turn-of-the century. Having arrived at a place of relative affluence by 1918, this family was

tragically changed, perhaps by the flu pandemic. We wonder about their sense of loss, and their resilience, a week before Christmas, 1918.



## The President's Letter



Where to begin? Our world has been turned upside down since the last newsletter and our thoughts have been on family, community and certainly not on what the Appalachian Barn Alliance should be doing. However, we finally had to look at our calendar with events scheduled over the next few months. Thus, we had to make some decisions—not a difficult task considering that the state has set out guidelines and that we consider people's well being a top priority. Our current calendar (subject to constant changes) is below.

Our minds are most concerned with what type of world we will be facing when we get through this crisis—and who knows when that may be. The uncertainty that is now part of our lives is going to shape our future. So, we will be doing what many of you (those who aren't working from home or

taking on the task of homeschooling your children) are doing—tackling those projects that have been on the “back burner.” For the ABA, that means finishing up our barn database while we are under the Stay at Home orders. And, when face-to-face contact is allowed, we will continue to do our work as the situations permit. Our team looks forward to working on collecting audio interviews from barn owners as part of a grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation. In the meantime, please stay safe!

*Sandy*

*Stevenson*

---

## **REVISED CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

- **POSTPONED:** Barn Day (originally scheduled for Saturday, May 9). As we move into the summer months, we may consider scheduling it for a date in the early fall. So, watch for our announcements.
- **CANCELLED:** Our usual events for May's Barn Month will not be happening-- Restaurants sharing a portion of their profits, the display at Zuma, “The Barns of Madison County” exhibit at the Arts Center in Marshall.
- **CANCELLED:** There can be no more dinners at The Farmers' Hands according to a Madison County ruling.
- **POSTPONED:** The Art Gala (originally scheduled for Friday, June 26) has been postponed. We hope to reschedule it for late summer.

Monthly van tours will resume when the Stay at Home order is lifted. If the dates are not compatible with your schedule, please contact us and we can work out a date with our tour guide Taylor. Minimum of 2 people—4 or less will go in his personal vehicle.



*Board of Directors:*

Sandy Stevenson (President), Jeannie Blethen, Bill Downey, Janet Foster, Mike Foster, Rob Kraft, Laura Ledford, Sara Nichols, and David Wyatt.

*Advisory Council:*

Joy Anders, Chad Ayers, Christopher Brown, Dedrick Cody, Ryan Cody, Jemima Cook, Bonnie Cooper, Pat Franklin, Sidney Harrison, Jerry Jacover, Ethel Kirkpatrick, Maurice McAllister, Paula Shelton McAllister, Susan McChesney, Don McGowan, Gail Meadows, Karen Paar, Ryan Phillips, Robin Reeves, O'Neal Shelton, Steve Tweed, and Ross Young.

*We gratefully acknowledge our generous patrons:*

**Business Patrons:**

AT Vacation Rentals  
Bonnie & Clyde's Restaurant  
Donovan Electric  
Earthsong Photography  
French Broad Realty  
Griffin Insurance Agency  
Kari Morton Quilting  
The Lodge at Bear River  
Mountain Meadows  
*Murdoch's Curse* Novel  
Papa Nick's Restaurant  
RiverDance  
Stackhouse Restaurant  
Tennoca Construction  
WNC Wood Stock, LLC

Bob Carr & Carolyn Davis  
Nancy & Mike Driscoll  
Pamela Dupuis & Bill Saupe  
Frances Figart & John Beaudet  
Pam & Tem Fitch  
John Graeter  
Louise & Grier Martin  
Susan McChesney  
Sara Nichols  
Mr. & Mrs. W. I. Parker  
Edie & Eric Parr  
Mark & Karen Powell  
Ray & Dorothy Rapp  
Anne Rawson  
Susan & Bill Sewell  
Mary Zoch

**President's Circle:**

Madison County Tourism Development

**In-Kind Business Supporter Level:**

Lunsford Festival  
Madison County Arts Council  
Mars Hill Retirement Center  
NC Agritourism Network  
NC Cooperative Extension  
*The News Record & Sentinel*

**Personal Supporters (\$100 level):**

Bob & Susan Adams  
Joy Anders  
Nancy Anders  
Evelyn Anderson  
Jim & Linda Barber  
Kathryn Beattie  
David & Sylvia Bell  
Larry & Genevieve Burda  
Bobbi Darling

**Benefactors (\$200 + level):**

Taylor Barnhill  
Mike & Janet Foster  
Rob Kraft  
Rob Pulleyn  
William Robertson & Gail Meadows  
Ann & Farley Snell  
Mike & Sandy Stevenson  
Diane Van Helden  
David & Willa Wyatt

Contact us at [info@appalachianbarns.org](mailto:info@appalachianbarns.org) or  
828 380-9146 [www.appalachianbarns.org](http://www.appalachianbarns.org)