

Site search begins for heritage farmstead

From Staff Reports

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Since their beginning in 2012, the board members of the Appalachian Barn Alliance (ABA) have had a long-term goal of establishing a Heritage Farmstead in Madison County. The official announcement at the November Annual Meeting by Board President Sandy Stevenson confirmed that the organization will begin their search for a site in 2019. "The generous support from the local residents in donations of both barns, as well as farm implements and tools, has given us the courage to take these first steps," said Stevenson at the meeting.

Volunteer Board Members have been slowly working their way toward the long-term goal of a Heritage Farmstead in line with the organization's 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." In the last 18 months, some of the board members visited heritage farmsteads in the state and neighboring states to get an idea of what elements would be best for the Madison County site. Additionally, committee members met with various potential partners and stakeholders to share and develop ideas to form the vision. Then, committee members met with a consultant to discuss where to go with that information. Thus, the ABA will move forward with a project and business plan in 2019. Application for a grant to cover the costs of this was the next logical move.

Stevenson was quick to point out that this is an ever-developing process but outlined their thoughts at this point for the long-term goal. The hope is that the Heritage Farmstead will be a cultural attraction for Madison County and Western North Carolina, grounded in traditional historic building practices. The site will grow in stages but will include a demonstration farmstead with several different barn types and out-buildings. A building will house the offices and a museum which will display the documentation and stories collected by the ABA over the years presented in



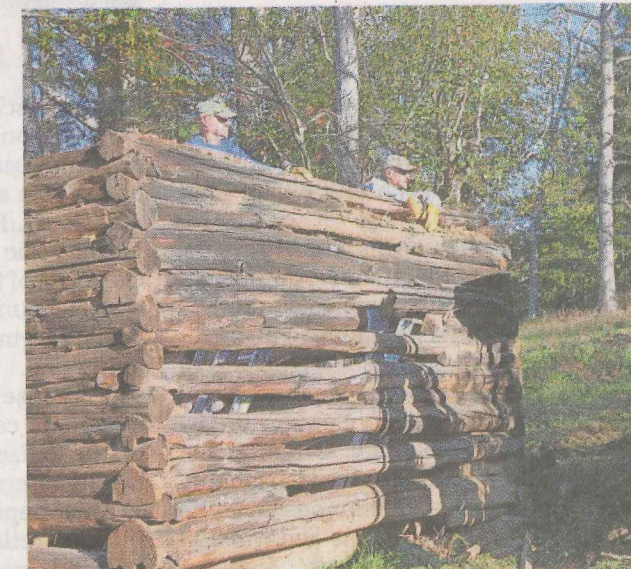
Elaine Ray Thomas and David Thomas donated the barn behind them. In the photo the Thomas' are standing alongside county officials at the celebration of the barn's donation. COURTESY PHOTOS

video or audio interactive format. Classrooms will accommodate workshops and students from field trips.

The first step will be to find a site. Their research at the area's existing heritage farmsteads resulted in the optimal qualities they are hoping to find: Seven to 12 acres within 20 minutes of a major interstate or highway; historical value — of the barns or the house or the family itself who lived on the property; reasonably flat land for parking and the farmstead; presence of a small building/house to locate the welcome center/museum phase.

The most important consideration for ABA is not about the land itself, but about the process. In order to be sustainable, the ABA hopes to form a partnership with another organization, educational institution, government, or committed individual who can provide the endowment funds to keep the site going so that "this heritage is preserved for many generations to come."

For information about the Appalachian Barn Alliance, go to appalachianbarns.org or to contact them, email infor@appalachianbarns.org.



Beginning deconstruction of the flue-cured Jervis/Ray-Thomas Barn in 2017.