

Ceremony Set to Unveil Signage at New Smith Farm Heritage Farmstead



Three barns in front of Bailey Mountain. Photos courtesy of the Appalachian Barn Alliance

BY EMMA CASTLEBERRY

The Appalachian Barn Alliance (ABA) will host *Breaking Ground*, a ceremony at the Smith Farm Heritage Farmstead in Mars Hill, on Friday, October 29, at 11 a.m. The event will unveil a series of signs at three barns on the new Heritage Farmstead property.

The farmstead is the realization of a long-term goal for the ABA because it offers a centralized, preserved place to find examples of these historic structures. “These barns are slowly deteriorating or falling to nature and eventually, we knew we would need a place where we could have examples of the architectural style of the barn in southern Appalachia,” says Sandy Stevenson, ABA president. In 2017, Elaine Ray Thomas and her husband David approached ABA

to donate their flue-cured barn that was built by Elaine’s grandfather in the late 1800s and passed down through her family. “I knew without a doubt that Dad would want it to be preserved,” Elaine said in a speech, “and to be used as an educational tool for people to know what we are all about around here and where we came from.”



Future Welcome Center

ABA deconstructed the barn and stored the logs until they could find a farmstead property and give it a permanent home. The Thomas’s donation was followed by the donation of the historic Floyd Wallin livestock barn owned by Larry and Genevieve Burda, which was also deconstructed and stored. Then, serendipitously, the Richard L. Hoffman Foundation came through with the perfect property for ABA’s Farm Heritage Farmstead. The Hoffman Foundation had been working to

preserve Bailey Mountain Preserve, 85 acres of land on the edge of Mars Hill, which just happened to include a seven-acre property with three barns and a small house. With help from the Foundation, the Town of Mars Hill purchased this property from Belva Smith, Charles and Kathleen Smith and Gustav Becker in December of 2018—hence the name, Smith Farm Heritage Farmstead. “Bailey Mountain in particular, and Appalachian Culture in general are sometimes taken for granted by those of us who live with it every day,” says board member and project director Lee Hoffman,



MHU freshmen hike up Bailey Mountain past the barns

screens and white boards to provide information about the farmstead,” says Stevenson.

ABA received four different grants in 2021 to help the town develop the property and start refurbishing the barns. A grant from the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area Partnership is being used to create signage to describe the architectural style of each of the three existing barns which will be

Jr. “Similarly, the barns and structures that we pass daily and barely notice are part of who we are. Bailey Mountain is the perfect location for the Heritage Farmstead. Mountain people lived seamlessly with the land and the mountains of Appalachia. There is tremendous value in that simple lesson for future generations.”

The Smith Farm Heritage Farmstead will serve as the public entrance to Bailey Mountain and Nathan Bennett, town manager for Mars Hill, has plans for each barn to be in active use—a very unique quality among heritage farmsteads. “The all-purpose barn will serve as a green room for a stage which will attach to the outside wall of that barn; the burley barn will have picnic tables for snacking in the shade with stylized burley tobacco hanging in the tiers above the ground; the bank barn will be equipped with technology so that field trips and conferences can have speakers and guides using



unveiled at Ground Breaking. The event will include addresses from key participants in the creation of Smith Farm Heritage Farmstead and ABA researcher Taylor Barnhill will give a brief tour of the barns.

For more information, visit AppalachianBarns.org.