

Greenville Local History Group Newsletter

June 1999, Issue 107

Barns / Hilscher

A few local history topics can entice more people than usual to turn out for a meeting, and Barns is one of them. About 25 were present – about 15 of us regulars and about 10 others.

Ted Hilscher, who some of you recognize because of his association with the Greene County Historical Society, presented the program about barns. His slides showed many local barns in the New Baltimore and Coxsackie area, exemplifying many of the characteristics he was trying to show.

The purpose of the program was to help viewers to identify the types of barns, become aware of distinguishing features of barns, and to better appreciate barns' past purpose and present fate.

Ted explained the importance of barns in America's history. Since so many people worked on farms up until the 20th century, barns were the centers of the workplace for millions. As the nature of work changed, and the dominating role of agriculture declined, the vital nature of the barn has declined accordingly. Many of you recognize that the number of old barns has declined, almost to the point of endangerment of "species." Ted mused that, in the not too distant future, young people may very well have to go to a museum to see what a barn is like.

Ted spent a few minutes on the bent of the barn, the main structure outline of the barn. The handout that Ted made available is re-copied later in this newsletter. Typically, four or more of these bents run the length of the barn, to which the siding and roof is attached.

The distinguishing features of different types barns were noted. The English barn, the most common type in our area, is noted by the entrance or drive-through between two of the bents, or through the long sides. Typically, these English barns had no ridge beam. The Dutch barn contained the H-shaped bents, with the roof attached

pieces connecting the H-structures. The entrance was through the gable end. The third type was the Pennsylvania barn with an overhang (sorry, Ted, I forgot the correct term for it).

On a side note, Ted noted the existence of the Dutch Barn Preservation Society, and opined there should be an English Barn society too.

Ted also discussed the mortise-and-tenon (post and beam, today) construction, the different joints, marriage marks, roof shapes, marten holes, sidings, ventilation, silos, etc. A small part of the program was about some of the special outbuildings.

Ted finished off with the taking of questions and with the displaying of several books about barns. He was trying to get people to fill out a barn data sheet, and since it's the kind of information we're looking for in our "house" history collection, I made a copy of the collection sheet. If you can't use it, pass it on, if you can.

Ted mentioned he would like to visit some of the area barns, but does so only on invitation. Give Ted a call if you have, or know of, a barn that you'd like him to see.

A thank you goes to Ted for reminding us what barns meant, and mean, to us.

A note about subscriptions. If the mailing label number on your envelope is less than 9906, your subscription has expired. Any number from 9907 through 9912 means the subscription will run out sometime this year. Any number from 0001 and higher means your subscription is good through this year and into the year 2000. Everyone will receive another reminder in the annual report next winter.

On another note, some people like mailing in a double year subscription. Although I have not encouraged it, I don't mind if you want to subscribe in two or three year multiples. (Although I have intentions of keeping on writing, somehow the idea of

guaranteeing it seems a bit presumptuous on my part.)

The next meeting is a share session. Let's plan on indicating some of the houses that you feel should be preserved, even if it is our own list. However, the potential exists to use such a list so that the Town Board could use it as input for preserva-

tion purposes.

The passing of Ray Bennett came too late to get into last month's newsletter. Many of us remember Ray as a good and caring man, who told good stories, loved his wife, and respected the people and history he lived around. Of course, I'm leaving out more than can be written in this space; we will miss, Ray.



TEXT-FIGURE 47. Bent typology. First phase: Bents with a single set of purlins. (a) English barn; between Edmeston and New Berlin (Feb. 14, 1965). (b) Upper level of a two-level, all frame barn; between South New Berlin and New Berlin (Feb. 14, 1965). (c) English barn; north of Wells Bridge (July 20, 1965). (d) English barn; northeast of Cherry Valley (May 16, 1965). (e) English barn; west of Hartwick (Feb. 11, 1965). (f) English barn; northeast of Pleasant Brook (July 14, 1965). (g) Two-level barn; southeast of Saltspringville (June 6, 1965). (h) Upper level of a two-level barn with a stone basement; between Middlefield Center and Whiggs Corners (Feb. 3, 1965). (i) Upper level of a two-level barn with a stone basement; northeast of Springfield (June 6, 1965). (j) Two-level, all frame barn; north of Springfield (June 6, 1965). (k) English barn; east of Pleasant Brook (May 15, 1965). (l) Upper level of a two-level barn with a stone basement; northeast of Milford (Jan. 9, 1965). (m) English barn between Richfield Springs and Schuyler Lake (Nov., 1964). (n) English barn; southeast of Burlington (July 12, 1965). (o) Upper level of a two-level barn with a stone basement; between Edmeston and New Berlin (Feb. 14, 1965). (p) English barn; west of Middlefield (May 15, 1965). (q) English barn; southeast of Worcester (July 12, 1965). (r) Same barn as j. (s) English barn; southwest of Springfield Center (Feb. 5, 1965).

BARN DATA SHEET

Location: (Be specific – how far in tenths of a mile from an intersection, which side of the road).

Current/Former owners; dates of ownership:

Year built:

Dimensions:

Number of Floors:

Use: (1st Floor):

Use (2nd Floor):

Number of Bays:

Swing-beam yes () no ()

Bank barn: yes () no ()

Mortise – and tenon yes () no ()

Marriage marks yes () no ()

(If Dairy Barn) Number
of Stantions:

Ornamentation:

Color:

Type of Roof:

Distinguishing features:

Farm History:

Bent (illustration):

Floor Plan (illustration):