

THE DISAPPEARING AMERICAN BARN



ABOVE: Two farm buildings, likely built 30 years apart.

RIGHT: An unaltered barn near Woodson features iconic crossbuck doors.

Photos by Ron Baldwin



Nonprofits fight to preserve heritage barns from destruction

BY RON BALDWIN

It is hot and dark except for the narrow shafts of light that shine between the sideboards. The dust specks glisten in the light as they drift past. A lone fly buzzes its twisted path between the light shafts.

For a moment, maybe two, time stands motionless. The silence and suspense are causing my 8-year-old heart to pound like a drum. Then suddenly, without warning, the Oyala boys pounce on me like barn cats on a mouse.

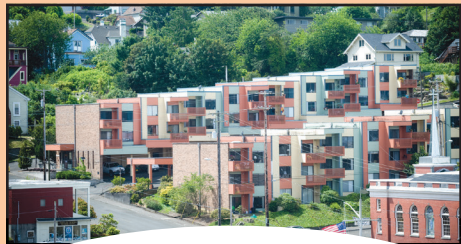
My hiding place has been compromised. There's hay flying around in the shadows and the sound of giggling and hollering as I chase them out the door. Soon we're all rolling in the pasture grass guffawing and struggling to catch our breaths. Now, I discover that they made a visit to the manure pile outside the back door before their attack. I'm covered. And the chase is on again.

In America, the barn is an icon with few rivals. Few Americans would fail to recognize the red building with the white crisscross doors. Even toddlers burble out "moo-cow" at the sight. Artists use the image to add nostalgia to their works. Story weavers cause their characters to sleep, hideout, work, love, play, teach and ponder there.

When designing barns, farmers in the new America took inspiration from their primarily British roots, but other cultures such as Germany and the Netherlands added their influences as well.

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