

# The Times Leader

## Barns Part of Ohio's History



The barn at the Valley View Campgrounds near Morristown stands ready for visitors. The campground will be filled with festival-goers come July, when Jamboree In The Hills is in full swing.

MORRISTOWN — The state of Ohio has several symbols that are designated to represent the pride of the Buckeye State, such as the white tailed deer as the state animal, the large white trillium as the state wildflower and the trilobite as the state fossil. Now, the state legislators are considering adding a new symbol to the list — the humble barn became the official architectural structure of Ohio.

The Ohio House of Representatives unanimously passed a bill this month designating the barn as the official state historical architectural structure. Rep. Anne Gonzales, R-Westerville, who was involved in bringing the bill to the House, said the idea was brought to her from the Westerville City Schools' gifted education program. The purpose of the bill was to emphasize the importance the barn holds in Ohio state history. Having passed the House, the bill will now go to the state Senate for consideration.

*"It was brought to the legislature by some school students, and this happens often,"* said state Rep. Jack Cera, D-Bellaire.

The barn is an important part of Ohio's agricultural history. The structures were once common to every farming and rural family in the state. Barns are used for a variety of purposes, including the storage of tools and crops, housing for animals and a general workplace area for farmers. As the state and the local area became more industrialized, barns became less common, but they are still an important part of life for many who own or operate farms in the state. Many owners are proud of the barns on their property, some of which have been in their family or on their property for many generations. Some barns have even been decorated for various purposes, drawing more attention to the structures and their owners.

*"The barn is certainly an important part of Ohio history with all the agriculture we have here,"* said Cera.

Some notable examples of decorated barns in the local area include the famous Mail Pouch Tobacco barns. These ionic barns had their sides painted with advertisements for Mail Pouch Tobacco, which was manufactured in Wheeling. At the height of the advertising campaign, the barns could be found from Illinois to New Jersey, proudly advertising the local tobacco products and drawing attention to the Wheeling area. The campaign lasted for nearly 100 years, ending in 1992. Many of the barns had since fallen into disrepair, but those remaining are now historic landmarks, with volunteers often taking the time to restore the barns to their former glory.

Other important barns in the Eastern Ohio area include the Ohio Bicentennial barns, which proudly stand out to travelers with their bold red, white and blue coloring. These barns were commissioned in the early 2000s by the state to celebrate the 200th anniversary of Ohio's statehood. Scott Hagan, a barn artist who lives in New Castle, painted 88 barns — one in every county of the state — to commemorate the anniversary. Many of these barns still proudly stand with those logos, attracting the eyes of travelers with their coloring. The barns stand as a reminder of the rich history of the state, which has endured for more than two centuries in the face of war, civil unrest and uncertain social and economic times.

Residents and travelers to Harrison County have an opportunity to see more unique barns on the The Harrison County Quilt Barn Driving Tour. The tour is a self-guided journey focusing on the 20 barns scattered over the region. Each barn is decorated with an 8-foot painted replica of a quilt square. All the squares come together to help form a complete quilt. These colorful squares were part of an effort to beautify the county, and they serve as a way to draw attention to various properties throughout the county. All of the frames for the quilt squares were built by the students of the industrial arts program at Harrison Central High School before being installed by the Harrison County engineer's staff.

Similar quilt barns can be found in Belmont and Monroe counties as well.

From its humble beginnings as a simple building to store crops and house animals to its use as a billboard to advertise products and its status as a tourist attraction and a celebration of state heritage, the barn certainly holds a unique place in the hearts of many residents.

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