

# Looking Back • Moving Forward

UPDATES, ACCOMPLISHMENTS & ACTIVITIES • May 31, 2022



## Changing the Face of the Barn

### Contents

Cover • The Barn

2 President's Message, New Board members

3 Farm & Barn Recognitions

4 Ball Grant for Cupola +

5 Barn Rehabilitation

6 Consultations

7 Website, Documentary

8 Gardens

9 The Residence

Cover • Thank You

A grant from the Edmund F. and Virginia B. Ball Foundation is making it possible to replicate two original features of the barn —the cupola and west shed roof— now missing for more than sixty years! Both were part of the original architect's design.

The design and reconstructions are being done by David Webster Construction, owned by James Schettek —the grandson of the original 1911 builder of the barn! The cupola was built in the workshop and then raised and installed on the roof on May 2. Such a celebration for us — and for James' 50th birthday. See page 4.



*Photos: Above: Cupola and James Schettek, owner, David Webster Construction. Historic dedication photo from which the cupola design was developed.*



*Leelanau County Historic Preservation Society is a nonprofit, community and educational organization dedicated to facilitating the preservation and rehabilitation of historic structures in the county.*

*Formed in 2017 to save the Leelanau County Poor Farm Barn, our larger mission is to assist owners of historic structures in understanding these buildings and becoming stewards of their futures in our communities.*

#### **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Stephen Stier, President  
[stephenstier@gmail.com](mailto:stephenstier@gmail.com)  
517 648 2933

Barbara Siepker, Vice President  
[siepker@aol.com](mailto:siepker@aol.com)  
231 334 4395

Laurel Jeris, Secretary  
[jerislaurel@gmail.com](mailto:jerislaurel@gmail.com)  
231 326 2120

Jane Cline  
[empirebluesky@gmail.com](mailto:empirebluesky@gmail.com)  
847 833 7830

Tina Mehren  
[cbmehren@gmail.com](mailto:cbmehren@gmail.com)  
520 275 3344

Tom Patton  
[tpatton47@charter.net](mailto:tpatton47@charter.net)

Andrew White  
[andrewwhite77@gmail.com](mailto:andrewwhite77@gmail.com)  
231 645 1308

## President's Message

Hello Friends

The Leelanau County Historic Preservation Society (LCHPS), was formed and began its work about five years ago in response to the Leelanau County Commissioners advertised wish to have the County Farm Barn removed. Believing that the barn could and should be saved, our work began toward that goal. Many generous donors proved that we were right. Five years later we can now say that that the barn has been saved! It is in good structural and visual condition, and ready to serve the county again.

The lease we have with Leelanau County for the barn and surrounding property stipulates that as rehabilitation work winds down a joint committee be formed to determine use of the barn. The committee is made up of members of our Board of Directors and members of the Leelanau County Parks and Recreation Commission. During the last quarter of 2021 this committee had its initial meeting; work continues into 2022.

Despite the restraints and uncertainty posed by the Covid-19 pandemic we have continued to make great strides rehabilitating the Leelanau County Poor Farm Barn, and reviving its history as an important cultural asset and example. With this report, we share our accomplishments over the past several years.

*Steve Stier*, President LCHPS

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## New Board Members

Two new board members have joined the LCHPS board. Welcome Tina Mehren and Andrew White.



# Two Recognitions

Michigan History Center's MICHIGAN HISTORICAL MARKER

Michigan Barn Preservation Network • BARN OF THE YEAR

The **State of Michigan** designated the Leelanau County Poor Farm and Barn as a Michigan Historic Site. In July of 2021, our State Historic Marker was dedicated at the barn site in Myles Kimmerly County Park, west of Maple City.

The **Michigan Barn Preservation Network** recognized Leelanau County Poor Farm Barn as a 2021 Barn of the Year. This program recognizes preserved Michigan barns exemplifying outstanding character. By honoring these efforts of barn owners, others are encouraged to take on stewardship to save more of these historic community icons.

Over the past 27-year years, MBPN has recognized 101 barns from across Michigan for their unique qualities and preservation efforts.





# Ball Grant to Replicate Features

## Original Cupola and West Shed Roof

The Leelanau County Historic Preservation Society received a generous grant from the Edmund F. and Virginia B. Ball Foundation in 2021. The Ball family's commitment to making a difference in the nonprofit world (in this case Leelanau County, which they consider a second home) will have a significant architectural effect on the appearance of the County Poor Farm Barn in Myles Kimmerly Park.

This Ball Foundation grant enables LCHPS to replicate two of the original features of the County Poor Farm Barn that have been missing for more than sixty years: the unique cupola, and the shed roof that was on the west side of the barn, both part of the original design by Traverse City architect Jens C. Petersen. These elements will complement the now rehabilitated barn, giving it more visibility for the interpretation of their original functions. This barn is unique because it was designed by an architect, whereas most barns were constructed by barn builders without architectural plans.

The Leelanau County Poor Farm Barn, the only remaining structure of the poor farm, is the iconic symbol of an era of caring. The Poor Farm provided a home and purpose for the more destitute of the county. We are looking forward to the installation of these two features in 2022 and will celebrate by initiating an annual spring appeal. Please join our mailing list to stay apprised of upcoming events, by visiting our website: [www.lchp.org](http://www.lchp.org).

*Photos: Installation day crew: Left, James Schettek, owner, right, Ronnie Hines, both of David Webster Construction, and center, Crane operator, Pat Herman, Herman's Mobile Service.*



# Continuing Barn Rehabilitation

Stephen Stier

Major projects to repair deteriorated parts of the Poor Farm Barn were completed pre-pandemic. Just as spring 2020 work was getting under way the Covid-19 restrictions severely limited planned work. However, we have completed several projects in spite of the pandemic:

- Reinforcement of the main floor beams and selected floor joists
- Volunteers completed carpentry, cleaning, & landscaping projects
- Volunteers installed our State Historic Marker
- Volunteers installed our Barn of the Year Award
- An earthen ramp was installed at the east door
- Window sashes were removed, restored, and reinstalled
- Volunteers installed new main door hardware and rollers

The most visible improvement to the barn is the new paint. The roof and sidewalls were scraped, primed, and painted by Fortified Coatings Painters LLC (Maple City).

A sign, *Leelanau County Poor Farm 1901-1960*, was made and installed on the south wall by Good Harbor Graphics (Maple City).



## You Are Our Future!

Leelanau County Historic Preservation Society is a 501c3 organization, dedicated to the preservation and rehabilitation of historic structures in Leelanau County for the education and wellbeing of our communities. In keeping with our mission, potential uses for the barn shall be educational and/or clearly designed to benefit residents of the county, and in keeping with the Myles Kimmerly Park setting.



# Consultations

Barbara Siepker and Andrew White

*LCHPS has never lost sight of its larger mission: to increase public awareness of the cultural significance of preserving and rehabilitating Leelanau County structures.*

## LCHPS Consultations Available

LCHPS offers a complimentary site visit to assist historic property owners in evaluating potential for rehabilitation, and understanding their buildings' history, rehabilitation, and future uses. Board members Steve Stier, Barbara Siepker, and Andy White provide consultations to help address these interests and concerns.

Our goal is to help owners save their structures. To that end, LCHPS supports owners by helping to evaluate and prioritize rehabilitation needs, look at historical significance (intactness of original structure, rarity of original use and architectural style), explore alternative uses, and consider the usefulness of a historical designation. We can provide information on resources, rehabilitation guidelines, suggestions for funding, and potential contractors. A one to two-hour site visit helps to identify what further LCHPS services might be appropriate and offered. We may establish a mentoring relationship, offer a workshop to demonstrate repair techniques, provide consultation, or a written report. These additional services may have costs associated.

As examples, two recent formal consultations included stone foundation repair and considerations towards establishing a public assembly capability.

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*Photos courtesy: Leelanau Conservancy and Leelanau Historical Museum, Old Schoolhouse collection.*

## Stone Repair & Repointing DeYoung Farm, Leelanau Conservancy

Steve worked with Conservancy Senior Project Manager Chase Heise to evaluate and demonstrate stone foundation repair for the DeYoung Farm barn. An on-site, hands-on re-pointing training provided orientation and techniques so that Chase would be able to instruct other staff and volunteers in the review and repair of the foundations.

## Developing a Public Meeting Space Solon Township School

Our team, Barbara, Andy, and Steve, met with Kelly Claar (Chair of the Solon Township Parks & Recreations Committee) for an on-site evaluation and discussion of options and approaches for the long vacant school to be adapted for a public meeting space. Assistance and services LCHPS may provide include: a formal building assessment, and identification of regulations required in the transformation to a public meeting facility.

We also explored the importance of and ways to engage the community in caring about the history and future of the school. A Discovery Day / fall open house could: a) inform the public, b) gather school memories and memorabilia documenting it's history, and c) engage the public in helping to make this happen. Collaborations with LCHPS, and Leelanau Historical Society and Museum (who maintain files on county schools) could be useful.





## Website Launched May 2021

**Laurel Jeris**

Design work for the LCHPS website began in July 2020 with LCHPS volunteer, Juli Erdmann, leading us toward a strategic vision with sample page structures as a model. With that as an important start, we began working with Rob Smuck of Big Water Media in Traverse City who did the technical design work and now hosts our website.

The website went live a year later in May 2021. LCHPS founding board member and secretary, Laurel Jeris, leads this effort as webmaster. Laurel has learned the ropes of adding new materials and editing existing features to keep the website up-to-date. There are many great photos accompanying short features about the history of the Leelanau County Poor Farm, how to get involved, news, and events. LCHPS Board members contribute regularly with photos and stories from the past and present to continue the story of this Leelanau legacy.

*Visit [lchp.org](http://lchp.org) to learn about our history, services, plans and how you can get involved!*

## Video Documentary Project

**Barbara Siepker and Tina Mehren**



**ROTARY  
CHARITIES**  
Resources for change.



The development of a video documentary began last summer by interviewing individuals with past experiences with the Leelanau County Poor Farm. The video will focus on a 100-year-old culture when county governments provided care and a safety network for the poor.

LCHPS board members Barbara Siepker and Tina Mehren, in consultation with Adam Oster, Poor Farm expert (Library of Michigan) are shaping this project. The documentary will include period photographs and be filmed, edited, and produced by Joe VanderMuelen. Two \$10,000 grants have been awarded by Rotary Charities and Michigan Humanities to fund this exciting project.

# Gardens at the Poor Farm Site

## Flower Garden



*Meet Jane Ecclestone, Buckets of Rain volunteer and helper to our 100 foot long flower garden.*

During the fall of 2021, after winding down her own 34 year career as a garden designer, Jane developed a plan to organize and consolidate existing donated perennials that established the flower garden 3 years ago. Problematic plants and placements were identified. New goals included road appeal, cutting flowers, natives, pollinators, bloom succession, accessibility, and deer issues. Flowering shrubs – lilac and forsythia – were moved to a border area by the barn. Potentially invasive day lilies were removed (some planted in the shrub boarder) and beautiful spreading bee balm was condensed. Deep red-orange day lilies and ‘natives’ were planted under the Michigan Historic Marker to ornament and provide for ease in mowing.

Work-bees have focused on amending the soil, freshening wood chip paths in preparation for a late May planting of zinnias for continuous color, cutting and pollinators! We plan to spray Liquid Fence regularly for deer, who are already visiting. An hour or two of maintenance bi-weekly should keep all in order. We are looking forward to seeing this new plan unfold through the season with Jane’s stewardship and guidance.

Thank you Jane!

## Row by Row



*Chris Skellenger, vegetable garden coordinator, being interviewed at the gardens.*

2022 will be the fifth year that the Poor Farm barnyard has its large vegetable garden. Buckets of Rain (BoR) volunteers plant and harvest more than a ton of vegetables each year to distribute to persons in need. BOR kept gardens here, in Detroit, and Benzie County. Recently the five thousand square foot garden was enlarged by a thousand square feet.

BoR has morphed into a new organization this year and “Row By Row” will continue to grow and harvest vegetables from the Poor Farm garden. This year, Taylor Moore of Food Rescue will be handling pick-up and distribution. This nonprofit gathers still viable food from restaurants and groceries that in the past was discarded and provides it to agencies for greater distribution. A refrigerator will be added in the barn to facilitate harvest, storage, and pick-up.

**ROW BY ROW** This year, Buckets of Rain - Leelanau is now known as "Row By Row", focusing on (1) local food security in Northern Michigan and (2) food justice in Guatemala. Row By Row is waiting for approval of its non profit status.

Buckets of Rain will continue as a Detroit-based non profit providing scholarships, corporate internships, and mentoring for at-risk youth. Made up of Detroit based board members, this nonprofit will keep its name to capitalize on ‘BoR’s street credibility in the city.

Thank you Chris!



# Poor Farm Residence

Laurel Jeris

In 1901 the county purchased Dr. Roswell Burke's farm to create a Poor Farm for county residents unable to care for themselves. This was decades prior to the establishment of state and local 'welfare'. Michigan counties were responsible for the health and welfare of their residents.

**NEIGHBORING – THEN & NOW** This property has a long and storied history, the most interesting of which has been the recollections of descendants of people who worked at the farm, and neighboring farms who helped with planting, harvesting, haying, filling the hay loft and silo, and butchering livestock. Since its earliest days, this property has thrived through community effort. That continues to this day with its current use as the Myles Kimmerly Recreation Area, one of three Leelanau County parks.

**A SENSE OF COMMUNITY** Through interviews and research, many comments have been made about the sense of community residents and staff enjoyed. Charles and Mabel Coleman (the last farm managers, 1935 - 1961) focused on creating a culture of inclusion. We have documented stories of community meals, shared clean-up tasks, men's card games (staff and residents), and other recreational pursuits as well as the actual work of running the farm. Of course, not everyone who lived in the residence was sufficiently able bodied or clear minded enough to fully participate, but stories of exclusion were absent.

**A NEW RESIDENCE** In 1906 Leelanau County put a proposal before the voters to replace the two frame structures of the former Burke Farm to build a new residence. It passed with a slim margin of 9 votes. Traverse City architect, Jens C. Petersen, was hired to design the residence. Construction began in 1906 and was completed in 1908.

The new residence housed women on the second floor and men on the third. The manager's family quarters and common areas were on the first. We know from Board of Supervisors minutes that the residence was quite modern for its time with indoor plumbing, tubs, toilets, and heating and lighting plants. Numerous homes in Leelanau County, indeed Michigan in general, did not have these amenities. When you think of the desperate circumstances of those individuals and families who were assigned to the Poor Farm, the living conditions there would have been a vast improvement. Without the poor farm, these citizens would have been homeless. Community members and neighbors began to refer to the farm as County Farm out of respect for the residents and the distaste for stigmatizing them.

**TRANSITION TO A COUNTY PARK** In 1961 the residents were moved to the newly built Maple Valley Nursing Home. The Farm operation continued for several years, but the residence was torn down in the mid 1970s.

In 1974 the Cedar Lions Club took on the newly designated park area as their signature project and made many improvements in the early days of the park; many more have been made since. Through the park, these acres continue to be dedicated to the health and wellness of Leelanau County residents.



For a more information, go to our website at <<https://lchp.org>.

# Thanks to so many!

Since 2017, LCHPS has benefitted from many individuals and organizations that have helped us to move forward. We are grateful for the assistance and cooperation of Leelanau County employees and elected officials.

Volunteers, too numerous to mention, from across the region, have shared their time, skills, and resources to make things happen.

We are grateful for the work of craftspersons, businesses, and companies from this area and across the state.

Our donors and grantors have been very generous in their support of LCHPS activities.



It Takes  
a  
Village!

