

## HISTORIC CACHE VALLEY BARNS

A drive across Iowa and Nebraska last week reminded me of hearty, rugged American pioneers. As we passed numerous farmsteads with old timber barns and outbuildings, commingled with newer metal structures, I was impressed with the quality of workmanship our ancestors possessed. Those same stately structures can be found within Cache Valley. Unfortunately, many of these impressive historic barns, built with heavy timbers and human ingenuity are falling into disrepair. Fortunately, efforts are being made to preserve many of those structures to remind us of former days---days when men and women led simpler lives, but truly earned their daily bread.

I have always wished I could have been on one of those early “barn-raising” crews. The planning, the cooperation, and the craftsmanship must have been impressive. I have helped build smaller structures and watched crews use modern equipment to construct present-day edifices, but the old time barn building days had to be extraordinary.

The designs of those big barns made them comfortably warm in the winter and pleasantly cool in the summer. The barns usually had stalls on the main floor for work horses, cows, sheep and sometimes pigs. The huge upper parts were used for hay storage. Farmers soon learned that gambrel and arched roofs created more hay storage space in the loft than traditional gable roofs. The main design of individual barns, however, was determined by the intended daily use of the structure and how many financial resources were available to the farm family.

Many family and neighborly discussions took place in the barns. World and local problems were debated and solved within the walls as folks milked cows, brushed horses or repaired equipment. The barns were also good places to hide if things weren't quite right in the house. Undoubtedly, many mothers were glad to send their children to the barn when they were less than helpful in the home. Most parents don't have that option any more.

As tractors replaced horses and as elevated milking parlors took the place of flat milking barns, these big barns often became machine sheds, repair shops or general storage areas. Regardless of how old a barn is one can still smell the aroma of hay, manure and even the sweat of working horses. I find it a comforting smell. I much prefer time in a barn to the bustle and business of an amusement park.

A few years ago Elaine Thatcher, Mountain West Center for Regional Studies, directed a project of the Bear River Heritage Area entitled Historic Barns of Northern Utah: A Self-Guided Driving Tour. Funding for the project came from the Utah Humanities Council and the Utah State Historical Society. Elaine was assisted by Lisa Duskin-Goede and other capable workers who did some interesting research and descriptive photography of more than 50 specific barns in northern Utah and southern Idaho. The project resulted in the publication of a 60 page booklet with interesting historical tidbits and photos of each featured barn. In addition to reading about the barns in the publication, folks were

invited to a self-guided Barn Tour by following GPS coordinates or street addresses. The books have been available at Bear River Association of Governments and at local bookstores for \$10.00. A new printing will soon be available. I think most will find the booklet to be informative and enjoyable.

The Bear River Heritage Area is also sponsoring barn restoration workshops with the assistance of State History architect Don Hartley. The workshops are designed to help two barn owners in Cache Valley and at the same time teach participants uncommon building preservation skills. For the last several years, a partnership between BRAG, State History, and the National Trust for Historic Preservation has helped restore several barns. These workshops are for anyone who is interested in old buildings. You don't have to be a barn owner to attend. Many of the skills participants will learn can be applied to any historic building.

The first workshop was held June 24 with participants learning how to build and hang new doors on a barn in Paradise. In addition, participants received hands-on instruction of methods in building skylight covers and how to rebuild, re-glaze, and replace window sashes.

On July 15, the workshop will focus on a barn in Richmond. The training there will consist of instruction in applying a traditional mortar mix for stone masonry. Participants will also learn how to stabilize roof framing and install a new metal roof. Cost for the July workshop is \$5, which includes lunch and printed materials. Individuals who have an interest in the workshop may contact Cindy Hall Bilskie at 752-7242.