

ANSWERS TO BARN AGAIN! QUESTIONS

BARN AGAIN! calls and requests:

Question #1: “How do I get some of that barn money?”

Answer:

BARN AGAIN! does not provide grants to private individuals to fix up their barns.

There are select numbers of states that have grant programs for historic preservation. You should check with your state historic preservation office to see if your state offers any grants, or other incentives such as income or property tax incentives. Generally, your building would have to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places (see explanation below) or on a state or local register to be considered for a grant. The grants that are available are listed on the BARN AGAIN! website under “Financial Help”. (www.barnagain.org)

(Go to http://www.nationaltrust.org/help/statewide_org.asp for SHPO and Statewide Preservation office contacts and further information about local financial assistance.)

Question # 2: If you don’t give away money, what do you do?

Answer:

We provide the information you need to get your project off the ground: examples of how other barns have been adapted for new farming uses, information on the rehabilitation process, technical information on specific questions such as foundation or roof repair, referrals for contractors and others who can help with a project, and personalized advice.

We are a nationwide clearinghouse for information about barns and barn preservation.

We promote the preservation and use of historic barns nationwide, and encourage contractors, extension personnel and others to consider preservation as a practical alternative to new construction.

We put on workshops to train individuals in the barn rehabilitation process.

We give awards for completed barn preservation projects.

We publish and disseminate information: examples of new uses for older barns, general rehab guides and technical information.

We help states and local organizations develop their own barn preservation programs.

We also advocate for federal and state funding programs to assist barn preservation activities.

Question # 3: What is the National Register of Historic Places?

Answer:

The National Register of Historic Places is the official listing of buildings, sites and objects significant in American history and culture.

The National Register is managed in each state by the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). (www.ncshpo.org) The National Trust does not manage the National Register!

Generally, to be listed on the Register, a barn would have to be 50 years old and outstanding architecturally, have associations with an important person in history or be part of a farm complex that has several extant historic buildings. Each state handles the Register differently, so I encourage you to check with your state historic preservation office to see if your barn might qualify.

Listing on the Register is an honorary designation which does not carry any restrictions on what you can do with your property (you can even tear it down if you want). However, if you take advantage of any public funds (grants, tax credits, etc), you may have to agree to certain restrictions (these vary from program to program).

Question #4: What are the tax credits for rehabilitation of historic buildings?

Answer:

There are two levels of federal tax credits available for rehabilitation of historic buildings: a 20% tax credit for rehabilitation of buildings eligible for listing on the National Register, and a 10% tax credit for buildings built before 1936 that are not eligible for the Register.

A tax credit is a direct credit on the amount of taxes you owe (as opposed to a tax deduction). The credit is applied against the investment made into your rehabilitation expenses.

To use the tax credit, your rehabilitation project must cost a minimum of \$5,000 or the adjusted cost basis of your building (whichever is greater). The barn must also be part of an income producing activity.

To use the 20% tax credit, your building must be certified as historic by your SHPO, and your rehabilitation work must be approved by the SHPO. To use the 10% credit, you request Form 3468 - Investment Credit - from the IRS and follow the instructions included with the form. The form can be found on www.irs.gov under Forms and Publications, #3468.

Several states also have state income tax credits (some which can be used in conjunction with federal income tax credits), or property tax credits or abatements, for rehabilitation of historic buildings. Check with your SHPO to find out what is available in your state. Also, check the "Financial Help" section of the BARN AGAIN! website. (www.barnagain.org)

Question #5: Why Paint it Red?

Answer:

The tradition of painting a barn was not widespread in America until the nineteenth century. The practice of painting barns in the American Colonies started in Virginia, where a combination of lampblack, turpentine and linseed oil made a light gray mixture whose purpose was to act as a preservative for the wood. Occasionally, iron oxide (rust) and clay would be added to the concoction to give the paint a red or orange color. Further north, farmers varied their paint recipe somewhat to get a stronger, more enamel-like mixture that lasted longer than the southern version. The primary ingredients were skim milk and lime with a touch of linseed oil. The iron oxide was used in favor of the lampblack and turpentine and, consequently, the paint for barns in the north became almost exclusively red. Red is still the most popular color for barns, with white a distant second.

Question #6: Is it possible to straighten my barn?

Answer:

Yes. Straightening is a process that may have to be tackled by professionals due to dangers in structural movement, however it has been refined in recent years and many aspects can be done easier and cheaper than in the past.

Cabling of a barn depends on the extent of the lean and the strength and size of the timbers used in the frame. The key is to determine how slow the process needs to occur depending on how much of the frame is connected to static pieces of the structure such as the foundation and roof. The quick movement of the frame may lead to other problems if connected in multiple areas. Embedding anchor bolts that are fitted to turnbuckles which are, subsequently, attached to cables is a standard procedure, but it needs to be situated at a proper angle and anchored to a solid timber or an outside concrete form.

Jacking is another method of straightening, usually in a localized situation or in conjunction with cabling. Jacks must be placed on a stable surface and pressure asserted on a solid structural component of the frame. Jacks may be placed on solid ground or on temporary supports. The speed of jacking must also take into account the strength and flexibility of the structural members being moved. It is best to consult an experienced contractor or structural engineer before beginning a straightening project.

(More information can be found in *Barn Aid #2: New Spaces for Old Places* at the BARN AGAIN! store on www.barnagain.org.)

Question #7: How do I stop water damage to the foundation, siding and sills?

Answer:

Water damage is most often caused by improper drainage away from buildings. Where located next to unavoidable slopes, water must be redirected around a building. This can be done with the help of concrete gutters or with a linear French drain. The proper grade away from any structure is at least 3 – 5%. (Example for a 5% grade is a 6 inch drop in the first 10 feet.)

A problem for barns built on relatively level ground may be the proximity of the ground to the sills and siding. It is recommended that at least 10 inches of foundation be exposed, any less will not allow for an adequate drying area for the sills or siding.

(For more information about moisture abatement, read the National Park Service's Preservation Brief #39 at <http://www.cr.nps.gov/hps/tps/briefs/brief39.htm>.)

Question #8: How do I repair damaged siding?

Answer:

Repair to damaged or broken siding can be very simple. When localized damage or rot is visible, it is important to make repairs quickly in order to avoid water or exposure damage to floor, beams and sills.

To begin repair on vertical siding, find a point above the damaged section and square across the broken boards. Saw along this line to even up the broken ends. Fasten a metal strip along the ends of the old boards to weatherproof the joint, bending the strip over the ends and fastening again from the inside. Nail a board across the top of the opening from the inside, letting it extend down far enough so that the new siding can be nailed to it. Finish by sawing new siding boards to length and nailing them in place.

In the case of horizontal siding, the broken boards need to be sawn off at their outside edges, boards nailed on each end from the inside (allowing for a place to nail new boards from the outside) and metal flashing inserted in the connection space.

(More information can be found in *Barn Aid #3: Barn Exteriors and Painting* at the BARN AGAIN! store on www.barnagain.org)

Question #9: What type of roof material should I use?

Answer:

Wood shakes or shingles are the most historically accurate roofing material for many barns. However, they can be relatively expensive compared with other choices.

Asphalt shingles are less expensive than wood shingles but may not be as durable or may violate the historical integrity of the barn. Asphalt shingles should be installed on decking or may be installed over one previous layer of shingles if the decking is still intact.

While modern metal roofing is not the most historically accurate material for old barns, it is less expensive than wood shingles and longer lasting than asphalt.

(More information can be found in *Barn Aid #4: Barn Roofs* at the BARN AGAIN! store on www.barnagain.org and by reading the National Park Service's Preservation Brief #4 at <http://www.cr.nps.gov/hps/tps/briefs/brief04.htm>.)

Question #10: How do I determine the age of my barn?

Answer:

A good place to start when searching for a barn's history is in the tax records or assessor's office at your local city hall or county courthouse. Property tax assessments are a good way to gauge the addition of a predominant piece of value to a farm, namely the barn. Armed with a general date of construction of the barn, additional information about the original owners, builder and use may be obtained from the local newspaper's archives.

Question #11: What is the view of BARN AGAIN! on moving barns?

Answer:

Moving barns was not an uncommon practice for farmers. There could have been several reasons for a structure move, including threats of flood, threats of attack on the frontier, consolidation of neighboring farms, adaptation to changing farm practices or simply because of personal preference. That being said, the BARN AGAIN! program's first priority is to keep historic barns within their original landscapes. Historic barns in their original historic setting can more easily take advantage of financial incentives and are more apt to be protected in the future. BARN AGAIN! prefers to keep historic barns in place when it is, at all, possible. However, in instances of a barn's imminent demolition or due to evidence of continued neglect, the BARN AGAIN! program is prepared to assist in a barn's move with referral and technical services.

Question #12: Where can I find qualified contractors?

Answer:

The BARN AGAIN! program has compiled a nationwide list of barn contractors specializing in all aspects of barn repair and rehabilitation. This list has been collected on the recommendations made by barn owners we have assisted in the past. We do not endorse or guarantee any work done by the contractors found on our list. It is best to contact at least three contractors about any upcoming work and request contact information and photographs of past projects. More information about hiring a contractor can be found on the cover page of our list. To request a contractor list via fax or mail, call (303) 623-1504. You may also want to try lists found at *The Barn Journal* (www.thebarnjournal.org), the *Michigan Barn Preservation Network* (www.mibarn.net), *The New York Barn Coalition* (www.barncoalition.org) and at the *Iowa Barn Foundation* (www.iowabarnfoundation.org).

Question #13: Are there places where I could find salvaged barn materials?

Answer:

BARN AGAIN! does not promote the dismantling of barns for the sale of old growth wood. There are, however, many instances where a historic barn requires repair or replacement parts found only in other barns. It is our experience that your local lumber yard or hardware store is the best resource for actual product or for information about locations where salvaged material might be found. You may also want to try our online forum, Barn Talk, found on our website at to inquire amongst other barn preservation enthusiasts about materials needed.

Question #14: Does BARN AGAIN! assist barns that are no longer in agriculture?

Answer:

BARN AGAIN! believes that the best use of a barn, is as a barn. While demonstrating the abundance of uses a historic barn may have on a modern farm, we have cracked the myth that historic barn's are obsolete and cannot be adapted to modern practices. We also believe that the historic barn's agricultural setting is what sets this structure apart from many others. The productive barn in agriculture is the American symbol of rural beauty. We, as a program, believe the most good is done by keeping the barns which built our rural society in production. We also realize the realities of change and support almost any purpose that preserves the barn as a building. We keep an adaptive use database and can offer examples of successful projects in retail, lodging, non-profit and residential, to name a few. Contact us for referrals and resources to assist in your adaptive use project.

Question #15: Should I cover my barn in metal siding?

Answer:

We strongly recommend against it. Our reasons begin with aesthetics and end with practicality. First, the appearance of metal on a barn removes much of the timeless luster of the building and encases beautiful posts and beams under a flat and thin exterior. It certainly removes the building as a candidate for historic federal tax credits or possible resources on the state level. BARN AGAIN! research has also shown that it can be damaging to the barn, itself. Metal siding will allow water through seams or damaged sections (likely to occur on working barns), however unlike wood, it will not allow the water to escape very easily. This, in conjunction with natural condensation, can cause long term problems with water damage and rot in the remaining wood found in the barn. Metal as siding is an expensive solution with its own set of problems.

Metal roofing is another matter altogether and can be a good alternative for a historic barn. Before applying metal roofing, check with your State Historic Preservation Office (www.ncshpo.org) about qualifications for financial possibilities.

Question #16: How do I start a barn preservation program?

Answer:

Starting a barn preservation program is easy and the best resource is the publication, *Protecting Older and Historic Barns through Barn Preservation Programs*, available through the BARN AGAIN! store on the web at www.barnagain.org. It identifies many of the key components and hurdles involved in beginning your own program. Contact the BARN AGAIN! program to purchase the publication and for advice on initial activities and organizational structure. BARN AGAIN! will be able to get you in touch with the National Barn Alliance, a collaborative group from around the country dedicated to preserving America's historic barns. Also, check out the *Local Preservation Groups* section of the BARN AGAIN! website for contacts and resources of neighboring states who have already embarked on programs to preserve barns. BARN AGAIN! is here to help you fulfill your barn preservation passion!