

# Old Barn Finds New Home At Carroll County Farm Museum

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WESTMINSTER, Md. — A barn once slated to be demolished has found a new home and a new lease on life, thanks in part to a Carroll County agricultural museum. The 19th century barn has been completely disassembled and is being rebuilt on site at the Carroll County Farm Museum in Westminster.

The barn survived its near-fatal brush with progress thanks to the involvement of a series of different groups of people who each in their own way have contributed to the edifice's new life. Each worked through different channels to make their own unique contribution to the barn's survival.

Originally erected around 1840 at a 93-acre farm owned by the Jacob Mearing family at the crossroads of Rt. 31 and Uniontown Road in Westminster, the barn is a typical 19th century bank barn. It measures roughly 42 by 60 feet, and originally sat on a fieldstone foundation. Fifteen posts support the barn downstairs, and up above there are the typical center open area with two mows and a hay fork track running the length of the barn. A lean-to had been attached to one end for equipment and crop storage.

In the 1970s the farm was subdivided, and several parcels, including a 45-acre piece containing the home and outbuildings, were acquired by Uniontown Road Associates, a real estate development group. Uniontown Road Associates is now developing the property into single family homes. After over a century of usefulness, the barn sat vacant awaiting demolition.

According to Jonathan Fink, of Uniontown Road Associates, there were some people in the community who expressed an interest in the historical aspects of the barn, and were reluctant to see the building torn down.

"There was some sentiment from a few people in the community that we should save it," said Fink. He said the development group was motivated to perform some type of goodwill gesture in the community. "When you come in and do a development, everybody has a varied interest in it. Normally a developer likes to make a goodwill gesture."

In the first of several steps on the road to preserving the structure, Uniontown Road Associates looked into the feasibility of donating the barn to a group that would maintain it as it had originally been used. Since the farmstead is actually within the city limits of Westminster, and is not on any historic register, there were no regulations prohibiting the developers from doing what they liked with the house and outbuildings. "There were basically no hoops to go through," said Fink. By contrast, the entire town of Uniontown, several miles away, is considered a historic district and his heavily regulated.

Fink approached the Carroll County Farm Museum, a local museum dedicated to the preservation and appreciation of the rural culture of Carroll County, about accepting the barn in a donation. Dottie Freeman, manager of the Farm Museum, explained that the Farm Museum, situated on 142 acres, is a living history museum that focuses on the agricultural heritage of the county. The collections of the museum include more

than 10,000 horse-drawn implements, many exhibit buildings including a farm home, barns, and a one-room schoolhouse, and a flower and herb garden.

The Museum serves more than 100,000 visitors each year. The Museum decided the barn would make a welcome addition to its exhibit area, and accepted the donation.

Once the decision was made to accept the barn, though, the logistics of actually disassembling and moving the massive structure had to be considered. To deal with the intricacies of the barn's tear-down and reconstruction, the Museum would have to rely on the expertise of a barn builder familiar with traditional construction techniques. That is how Henry Stoltzfus and his company, W.W. Builders, became involved.

W.W. Builders is a company out of Christiana, Pa. that specializes in barn repair and metal roofing work. John Crowl, a local farmer and special consultant to the Farm Museum board, knew Stoltzfus and approached him to see if he would undertake the job. Although Stoltzfus said this was more or less his first time doing a complete disassembly and reassembly of a barn, he agreed to take on the project.

The first step was to disassemble the barn. Each piece was painstakingly labeled to tell its position and each joint was given a number. Stoltzfus explained that the post and beam construction technique used when the barn was constructed is basically the same as new post and beam construction. Most of the time, he said, when we say post and beam, we actually mean mortise and tenon construction.

"You really appreciate what the original builders put into it," said Stoltzfus. He said there are four main frames running crossways in the barn. "When I go to number

the joints in the barn, and each joint gets a number, by the time I get to the opposite end of the barn, there's like 60 for each of the four frames. And someone made each

one." He explained that if a builder was off by an inch or so, none of the joints would meet up.

Overall, the deconstruction phase of the project went well. A

local company, Cox Steel, volunteered time and the use of their portable "roustabout" to help take the barn apart. The man-powered

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