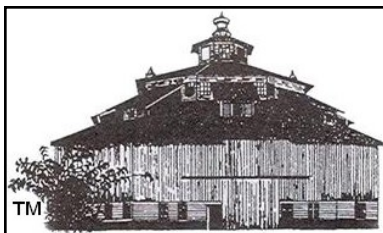


# Thumb Octagon Barn News



## Home of the Thumb Agricultural Museum

*Our mission is to maintain a volunteer group of Friends of the Thumb Octagon Barn involved in the restoration and preservation of the barn complex as an educational tool preserving our rural and agricultural history for the benefit of our visitors.*

Spring 2022

### Executive Committee

**President**  
**Dennis Anderson**

**1st Vice President**  
**Rose Putnam**

**2nd Vice President**  
**Gerald Auten**

**Treasurer**  
**Joan Koch**

**Recording Secretary and**  
**Corresponding Secretary**  
**Patti Parker**

**Purdy Home Chair**  
**Marilyn Phillips**

**Museum Chair**  
**Connie Osentoski**

**Grounds &**  
**Grain Elevator Chair**  
**Louis Wehrman**

**Barn/Float Chair**  
**Paul Deo**

**Alert Team Chair**  
**Norm Parker**

Visit our website  
[thumboctagonbarn.org](http://thumboctagonbarn.org)  
FaceBook  
Thumboctagonbarn  
989-665-0081

## President's Message

From Dennis Anderson:

We want to thank Rick Murawski for the excellent job he did on the Purdy Home project. Rick is the owner of Bull Dog Cleaning & Tuning, a local company that specializes in air duct cleaning and home restoration projects. One of our members introduced us to Rick and we saw his work on Facebook.

When I told Rick the project involved a 100 years old hardwood floors that many thought could not be saved, he did not turn away. The floors were in bad shape. The main hallway upstairs was especially challenging since the varnish finish had been painted over. To complicate the job further, the rooms were packed with furniture and historic items on display.

Our goal was to keep the Purdy Home like it might have been in 1942 when the Purdys last lived there. This was the goal Bob Hirn set when the Home was saved. We tried to follow his lead. The floors do not look new...they look restored. An anonymous

donor gave us a second generous donation. Phase II of the project will begin next winter when we tackle the basement and the downstairs bedroom that we did not have time to do previously.

The Purdy Home is 100 years young, and we hope you will like the work. It was a very challenging job and I tip my hat to Rick for the job he did for the Purdy Home. The project also was a battery charger since more people are now coming to help out at the House. Marilyn Phillips (pictured to the right with Dennis Anderson in the parlor during renovation in January) is the Purdy Home Chair and has been working in the house for 19 years. She has been super to work with and has done a great job. Do stop and visit and stay awhile.



**Pictured below from the left are the Parlor, Dining Room and Sewing Room recently refreshed.**



# House Restoration Over The Years

The Friends of the Thumb Octagon Barn began organizing in January of 1993. With many tasks taking priority, such as “saving the Octagon Barn” from demolition and any further deterioration, the Purdy Home restoration did not start until 1996. The first big job was to replace the roof to keep the rain out. Arnie Steger and crew supplied the labor and the work was completed in the **summer of 1996**. Madelyn Skaggs was our first house chair with Jane Hool working alongside her. Bob Hirn and Madelyn worked on repairs to the front porch. The attic windows were replaced to keep out the rain and raccoons, who are now outside looking in! A potluck dinner was served in the house following Fall Family Days that year to celebrate the progress in the house. Restoration work then began in the parlor by repairing plaster, cleaning woodwork, removing the residual glue from the z-brick covering the fireplace and the upper wall and installing electrical outlets. Jerry Stilson, owner of Bigelow Hardware in Cass City, donated and cut the glass for the windows in the house and the Barn.

**Also in 1996**, the front upstairs bedroom in the house was named “The Baker Bedroom” in honor of the Brian Baker family who adopted the room by providing funds for restoration. Brian and family had lived in the Purdy Home from 1961-1962. Brian donated the money in memory of his mother, Betty, who spent many hours cleaning the messiest room in the house.

**In 1998**, Madelyn, Jane and Mary Downing began scraping and painting the exterior of the house. An outside crew was hired to finish the job, especially the upper level. New front steps were also added. Later that year, Jim Wilson, grandson of the Purdy’s, donated several family

**In 1999**, work began to restore the sitting room, which was where the Purdy family spent most of their time. The walls and ceiling were washed, plaster repair work was completed and painting started. Under the guidance of Steve Wright of The Paint Store in Cass City, an authentic faux finish of the period was applied to the dining room where restoration also began. **In 2000**, the chimney was repaired, the electrical wiring was upgraded, the windows were repaired or replaced and the Purdy bedroom downstairs was restored all as part of the ongoing restoration.

**In 2001**, Marilyn Lester came on board as new chair of the house. Work was progressing with a new ceiling in the kitchen, more work in the sitting room and lighting throughout the house. The kitchen was in terrible condition so bead board was applied to the ceiling and wallpaper to the walls. By doing this, the absolute purity of the kitchen is still there.

**In 2003**, Marilyn Phillips became the Purdy Home Chair. A decision was made to replace the two panels in the ice box in the kitchen with glass in order to restore it to its original look. Three of the upstairs bedrooms were painted and/or wallpapered along with the closets. Donations of clothing were accepted to fill the closets. A beautiful 100 year old organ was donated for the parlor. It was wonderful to bring music back into the house. The restored dining room and parlor are so beautiful. George & Glenda Wilson donated Jim Purdy’s wedding suit, which is now on display in the Purdy bedroom downstairs.

The entire house was then insulated and ready for a new furnace. New flooring was secured on the front porch. An understructure was replaced on the north porch before new floorboards were installed.

## House Restoration Continued

**In 2004**, restoration continued with painting the downstairs hallway, restoring another upstairs bedroom and installing a kitchen sink with running water. Madelyn Skaggs had a creative solution to temporarily brighten the kitchen and hallway floor. She designed a pattern using the colors of the original linoleum, painted it on the wood flooring and covered it with several layers of polyurethane. It looks fantastic.

**In 2006**, Elmer Miller was awarded the contract to work on repairs to the back porch. With the help of many volunteers and paid labor, the back porch was pretty much back to its original form. The Barbara Maynard McKelvey family donated funds to cover the cost of the portecochere restoration. 95% of the original old brick was carefully cleaned before being put back in place. A newly poured cement area under the roof gives a neat, clean appearance to the entryway.

A handmade wreath of seeds, nuts, berries and other dried items made by Preston Purdy, father of James Purdy, in 1865 was donated by the family.

**In the summer of 2007**, the water leak in the basement was sealed in t and the attached bath-

room in the Baker bedroom was restored.

Many hours were also spent in restoring the remaining bedrooms. A trial run for tea parties was held in the autumn of that year.

**As of the summer of 2008**, the house has hot and cold running water and the bathroom off the Purdy bedroom is functioning. Three tea parties were hosted in the Purdy Home that year.

And then there was heat! Kundering and Krohl of Sebewaing was awarded the bid. They removed all the radiators, tested them, retrofitted them for hot water, and finally cleaned and painted before they were reinstalled. A new gas-fired energy efficient furnace was installed using the existing radiators.

**In 2009**, the major projects were replacing the storm windows with new specially built ones and replacing the soffit boards on the overhang of the upper roof.

Alex Paladi spent 125 hours restoring the melodeon (circa 1850-55) donated in 2006 by the James Wilson family. It was silent for 85 to 100 years and is now playable.

(More restoration information will follow in the next edition of the newsletter.)

## Theme for 2022-The House/The Home 100 Years Old!

The Purdy Home is 100 Years Old this year. Let's read an excerpt from the history book of the Thumb Octagon Barn entitled "The Story of the Mud Lake Estate": "Being a wise man, James Purdy decided to build the family home first before building his "air castle." So in 1919, James hired local builders from Gagetown, John and George Munro, to begin building a spacious fifteen room arts and crafts style home on Richie Road. The Munro Brothers did all the carpentry work while others did the plastering, painting, plumbing and electrical wiring. From Cora's diaries we know that on May 19, 1922, they moved from their home in Gagetown to the Mud Lake Estate. Cora wrote, "*First nights lodging in our new home. All rested well.*"

During our year long celebration, we are asking our volunteers to wear "period appropriate" clothing. Please be sure to come out and see what they've chosen.

## Benefactors

The following made a donation of \$10.00 or more since our last newsletter through and including February 12, 2022.

Raymond Abraham, Chesterfield, MI  
 Raymond Baur, Unionville, MI  
 Carl & Lisa Bednarski, Pigeon, MI  
 Paul Beres, Lenox, MI  
 Gerald Booms, Ubly, MI  
 Sally Brauer, Troy, MI  
 Robert Brundage, Jefferson City, MO  
 Donna Burke, Perrysburg, OH  
 Dale & Patty Churchill, Deford, MI  
 Russ & Bonnie Coons, Unionville, MI  
 Janelle & Edward Cooper, South Lyon, MI  
 Lori & Rich Corl, Grand Lake, CO  
 Dan & Jean Creyts, Charlotte, MI  
 Janet Cummings, Mt. Pleasant, MI  
 Robert & Susan Darmofal, Toledo, OH  
 Bob and Linda Deeg, Sebawaing, MI  
 Gayla Eagle, Sandusky, MI  
 Tony & Diane Eisele, Vassar, MI  
 Paul & Linda Elandt, Port Hope, MI  
 Louis & Deborah Fehner, Bad Axe, MI  
 John & Deb Forshee, Caro, MI  
 Maris & Judy Fravel, Bain Bridge Island, WA  
 Tom & Elizabeth Fritz, Gagetown, MI  
 Robert Grandmaison, Linwood, MI  
 Susan Gremel, Sebawaing, MI  
 Robert Harcourt, Madison Heights, MI  
 Barbara Hatfield, Swartz Creek, MI  
 Peggy Hellwig, Owendale, MI  
 Tammi & Ron Hensley, LeHigh Acres, FL  
 Roy & Diane Hinkley, Sterling Heights, MI  
 Dr. Susan Hoppe & Dr. Charles Reed, Cass City, MI  
 Susan Ignasiak, Grosse Pointe, MI  
 David & Marie Jaroch, Ubly, MI  
 Tom & Jane Johnson, Williamson, MI

Terry & Sandy Keinath, Reese, MI  
 Patrick Kendall, Bay City, MI  
 Karl & Anita Kirk, Lapeer, MI  
 Randall Kursinsky, Midland, MI  
 Patricia Kuxhaus, Longmont, CO  
 Ron Laeder, Caro, MI  
 Ruth Leen, Carsonville, MI  
 Paul MacCallum, Owendale, MI  
 McDonalds Restaurant, Cass City, MI  
 Mark & Betsy McKelvey, Chicago, IL  
 Don & Carla McKimmy, Bad Axe, MI  
 Jane Morse, Cass City, MI  
 Janet Muntz, Cass City, MI  
 Francis O'Donnell and Helen Weber, Ferndale, MI  
 Thomas & Denise Patrick, Fostoria, MI  
 Wayne and Linda Patterson, Attica, MI  
 Beverly Perry, Cass City, MI  
 Mike & Drucilla Pisarek, Cass City, MI  
 Nicholas Posak, St. Clair, MI  
 Barb Prime, Fairgrove, MI  
 Rose Putnam, Cass City, MI  
 Judy Ann Rau, Reese, MI  
 Richard Roth, Caseville, MI  
 Fred Snow & Joanne Herban, Frankfort, MI  
 Richard & Nancy Sylvester, Fairgrove, MI  
 Dave & Penny Turner, Mayville, MI  
 Tuscola County Fair Board, Caro, MI  
 Willa Vargas, Bellevue, NE  
 Rosalie Walsh, Ubly, MI  
 Ramon & Mary Ann Waltz, Mason, MI  
 Dorothy Warner, Sandusky, MI  
 Ken & Margaret Watson, New Hudson, MI  
 Bud & Molly Wildman, Gagetown, MI

## Benefactors

The following made a donation of \$10.00 or more from February 12, 2022 through and including May 6, 2022.

Area 4-H groups for School Tours  
 Carol & John Beith, Linden, MI  
 Family Farm & Home for School Tours  
 Fred & Faith Fahrner, Owendale, MI  
 Richard Fullmer, Caro, MI  
 Galaxy Office Machines, Caro, MI for School  
 Tours  
 Mike & Paula Green, Mayville, MI

Brian Klemmer, Bad Axe, MI  
 Peter & Marilyn Leiterman, Gagetown, MI  
 Ed Mantey & Sons, Fairgrove, MI  
 Timothy & Debora McMurtrie, Yale, MI  
 William & Deborah Posak, East China, MI  
 Gretchen Rodammer, Coleman, MI  
 Gerald Schember, Goodalls, MI  
 Sue Scott, Saginaw, MI

## **Special Donations**

**Following is a list of memorial donations and celebrations.**

**Ray Baur, Unionville, MI, in Memory of George F. Rueger of Bay City, MI**

**Shelly Corsini, Bad Axe, MI, in Memory of Maddie Skaggs, “who taught me how to spin wool 20 years ago.”**

**Karen and Steve Hamlin, Escanaba, MI, in Memory of Edith Purdy Fritz and Perry Fritz  
Evelyn Schadd, Fillion, MI, in Memory of Sandy Frasher**

**Ivernia Schwartz, Michelle, Brenda, & Theresa, Gagetown, MI, in Memory of Margie Muegge, Cass City, MI**

**Dorothy Warner, Sandusky, MI, in Memory of Madelyn Skaggs**

**Celebration: Richard and Vera Wroblewski, Sebawaing, MI, in Honor of their 50<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary. Congratulations Richard and Vera!**

## **Election of Officers**

At the April 12, 2022 meeting, an election of officers was held. Dennis Anderson was elected as President, Rose Putnam as 1st Vice-President, and Patti Parker in a dual role as Recording and Corresponding Secretary. These individuals will hold their positions for a two year term. We would like to thank all of our Executive Committee members for maintaining a strong leadership role during the COVID-19 pandemic and sustaining a robust and viable organization.

## **Volunteer Picnic & Auction—June 12, 2022**

Social Hour 12:00 p.m. Buffet dinner served at 1:00 p.m. in the Munro Building at the Barn complex.

A fundraising auction will be held after dinner and is sure to provide the afternoon’s entertainment. It will be conducted by Marty & Dave Osentoski from Osentoski Auctioneering, who generously donate their time. (Auction items are welcome, no silent auction)

We hope you take us up on our offer to enjoy an afternoon of good food and good humor, to show our appreciation. EVERYONE must RSVP with their name and number attending by mailing back the form that you received in the mail. (Mailing address: P. O. Box 145, Gagetown, MI 48735) You will in-turn receive a ticket, which you WILL NEED to attend. The form must be back to us by May 27<sup>th</sup> for the caterer’s count.

## **Plans for Fall Family Days Underway**

The first organizational meeting for Fall Family Days was held on April 26, 2022. Many of the previous committee chairs will be returning. A discussion was held on rising costs and all chair persons were asked to hold down expenses. Unfortunately, the Mullin Entertainment puppets, who were here last year, will not be returning until 2024. Future meetings dates are on page 8. See you then.

We are looking forward to another great year!

## In Memoriam



With deep regret, we must share that we have lost a dear, dear friend at the Thumb Octagon Barn. Margaret Sergeant passed on March 22, 2022. Margaret has been an integral part of the "Friends" from the very beginning. Even though she was still working full time in the St. Clair Shores school system, Margaret found time to devote to the "saving of The Thumb Octagon Barn". She jumped right in and agreed to write our newsletter. The first edition, which was only two pages, was published in January of 1995. Margaret took this role very seriously and the newsletter became a very important tool for communication and historical reference. She

happily continued in this role until January of 2019 and then became the editor until December of 2021. She was ever ready with her camera and amassed thousands of pictures of all the activities and the renovation work at the Barn site. Margaret was well respected by all members of "the Friends" who gladly accepted her words of wisdom and also admonishments when deserved. Her role as teacher was



ever present. She was a bright light at each activity and our visitors came to her light like moths



searching in the dark. Her voice was the first to be heard as she welcomed thousands of school children during our annual School Tours and she spoke to countless visitors during Fall Family Days. She always enhanced the annual auction by providing her famous lemon bars and purchasing Gerald Auten's famous peanut clusters for a very generous donation and then sharing them with those at the auction. Her love of stray cats was known by all. There are many still at her farm. Margaret was always ready to receive visitors at the farm to show off her flowers. She was so proud of them. Margaret also adopted Ena Reintjes, known as "My Ena", who loved and cared for her until the end. We all miss you, Margaret.

**Many more stories will be shared at the memorial service that will be held Sat. June 18, 2022, at 11 AM at the Thumb Octagon Barn, 6948 Richie Rd., Gagetown. Family and friends may start gathering at 10 AM. A luncheon will follow.**

Memorials through May 6, 2022, given in memory of Margaret:

Gerald Auten, Cass City, MI

Riggs and Darlene Bedford, Ron and Julann Kuenzli, Terry and Colleen Sweeney & Gerald Auten

Shelly Corsini, Bad Axe, MI

Melvin Gay, Saginaw, MI, "I am 94 and have been attending Fall Family Days since the 4th one and haven't missed many since. Margaret was such a nice lady. I missed her meeting me at the barn last year."

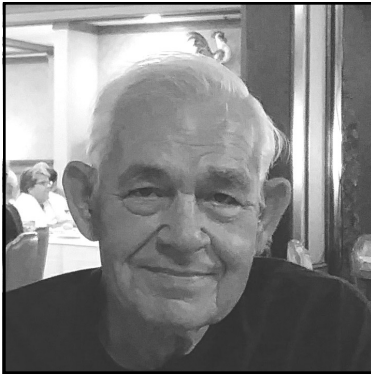
Joan Koch, Cass City, MI, "I truly miss my Birthday Buddy and Friend."

Ivornia Schwartz, Gagetown, MI, Michelle, Brenda, Theresa, Kimberlee, Lindsay, Charleen, Brittney, Logan, Megan, Lauren & Ken Glaza

Linda and Louis Wehrman, Reese, MI

George and Glenda Wilson, Gagetown, MI

## In Memoriam



We are also very sad to have lost Duane Osbourn on April 28, 2022. Duane and his wife, Gail, first came to us as a host couple in June of 2010.

Duane was impressed that we had the Akron Fire truck in our possession since he had

lived in Akron. Duane and Gail loved coming to the Barn for several years and spent many hours working on small or large projects, whatever needed to be done. Duane was often seen driving the golf cart and providing rides to those in need. (Photo-Duane with Gerald Auten.)



## Must See These Donated Pony Carts

Randy Ross of Bad Axe donated this red and white restored pony cart, which will be on display in the Barn in the spring. G. James (Jim) Popham owned the pony cart. His uncle built the cart when Jim was a small boy. It was used on the farm to get



vegetables from the garden and give all the kids a ride around the farm.

This pony cart was donated in Memory of Don & Anita Loomis by Mike and Sally Scott of Cass City. It is in near perfect condition and is painted red and black. It will also be on display in the Barn in the spring. Stop by to see both pony carts.



Friends of the  
THUMB OCTAGON BARN  
PO BOX 145  
6948 RICHIE RD.  
GAGETOWN, MI 48735-0145  
989-665-0081

Non-Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Gagetown, MI  
Permit No. 3

### Museum Donation

Cement Mixer donated by:  
Jerry Bartnick of Cass City

This type of mixer from the 1920's—1930's was possibly used to pour the foundation of the Barn.



### Next Meetings :

The Executive Committee meetings will be held the second Tuesday of the month at 6:00 PM at the Munro Building until further notice.

The next Fall Family Days meetings are scheduled for May 17, June 21, July 19, and August 23, 2022 at 7:00 PM at the Munro Building.

### Newsletter

Database and Labels.....David Eichler

Editing .....Grace Janowski

Newsletter Coordinator & Layout.....Rose Putnam

Photos.....Connie Osentoski & Rose Putnam

## 2022 Events

### Themed Tea Parties in the Purdy Home

June 15, 2022—"Taking Tea With Granddaughter"

July 27, 2022—"Christmas in July"

August 17, 2022—"Purdy Home 100th Birthday Party"

Contact Tammi Hensley  
865-297-6475 for reservations.

### Music Weekend in the Barn

July 16, 2022—**Country Barn Dance** —7:00PM-9:00PM or later

July 17, 2022—**Gospel Music**  
Sheldon Family  
1:00PM-3:00PM

Light refreshments served.  
Free will offering at both events.

### Open House Weekend July 30 & 31, 2022

Open regular hours for free tours. Enjoy free light refreshments while learning about the history of the Thumb Octagon Barn, the James Purdy family and farm life in the 1920's.