This Master Plan Report contains the history of September Barn and defines its place in the Upper Mount Bethel Township (UMBT) Community Park in Northampton County, Pennsylvania. Further, this report is meant to guide the rehabilitation of the barn and assist those who are responsible for obtaining donations and grant monies.
Mission

The Barn Committee was formed to rescue September Barn at a point where serious deterioration was evident. From its inception the committee’s mission has been to rehabilitate the barn so that present and future generations of our greater community can utilize it as a resource while at the same time it authenticates the township’s agricultural heritage.

Summary

This Master Plan Report contains the history of September Barn and defines its place in the Upper Mount Bethel Township (UMBT) Community Park in Northampton County, Pennsylvania. Further, this report is meant to guide the rehabilitation of the barn and assist those who are responsible for obtaining donations and grant monies.

UMBT acquired the approximately 90 acres designated for the Community Park in 2003 from Reliant Energy Mid-Atlantic as compensation to the township for the loss of township recreation facilities at the company’s power plant on the Delaware River. At the time the property was conveyed to the township, the former farmstead contained a farmhouse, the barn, and other smaller utility buildings associated with farming. The farmhouse was deemed not to be worth rehabilitation and was razed. The large dairy barn, prototypical of the agricultural history of this community, was kept for future use as a utility building within the park complex. Therefore the barn was not demolished. Also remaining on the property are a silo and a concrete block building that served as a calf-barn.

A group of citizens who were interested in raising funds for the park founded the Upper Mount Bethel Community Park Foundation, a 501(c) (3) corporation chartered in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Funds designated for barn rehabilitation can be forwarded to the foundation.

Regional Setting, Location and Population

UMBT is a rural community of 44.5 square miles occupying the northeastern corner of Northampton County. The Township is bordered by Monroe County to the north and west. To the south, UMBT is adjacent to Washington Township, East Bangor Borough and Lower Mount Bethel Township. The Delaware River and state of New Jersey form the Township’s eastern boundary. Portland Borough, which also borders the Delaware River, is surrounded on its landward sides by UMBT.

Our rural location affords many opportunities to enjoy the outdoors. The Kittatinny Ridge and the Appalachian Trail are prominent features of the northern boundary and are part of the U.S. National Park Services’ Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area. Other facilities in UMBT include Northampton County Parks’ Minsi Lake Wilderness Area and Bear Swamp Park & Archery Complex, athletic facilities of the Bangor Area School District, township ball fields, private non-profit and private for-profit recreation sites.
The Township is a second class municipality. Population, according to the 2010 census, is 6,706 persons. Of this number, 1,384 are under 18 years of age and 1,043 are over 65. The median household income is $60,320 and the per capita income is $28,980. There are 155 persons defined as living below the poverty level. The table below shows 2010 census population data of the adjacent townships and boroughs that are likely users of the park and its resources.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>Total Pop.</th>
<th>Under 18</th>
<th>Over 65</th>
</tr>
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<td>East Bangor Boro</td>
<td>1172</td>
<td>314</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lower Mt.Bethel Township</td>
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History of the Park Property

September Barn is located within Upper Mount Bethel’s 90-acre Community Park property with its stunning, unhindered view of the Delaware Water Gap. According to barn expert Ken Sandri, Assistant Director for Preservation and Resource Management, Grey Towers National Historic Site, this barn is considered a “Front Extension Forebay Barn” or “Upcountry Posted Barn”. Judging by the hewn frame, the original core barn was built around the time of the Civil War, most likely sometime between 1850 and 1870.
The earliest recorded mention of the property can be found in the Northampton County archives, located in Harrisburg, PA. A descendent of William Penn turned over the property to Christopher and Catherine Baker, who sold it to William and Diane Sherlock in February 1791. The property was later purchased by Adam Keller in August 1809. Historical records indicated Adam started the farm and owned it for 22 years.

The property changed ownership several times until being sold to Jacob Utt (Ott) in April 1856. The deed was recorded in August 1861 and listed a purchase price of $8,553.70 for 122+ acres. Jacob Ott is the earliest likely builder of the September Barn. In 1873, Jesse Oyer acquired the 122+ acre property at auction. If the barn was built later than thought, it is possible that Jesse could have been responsible for building the September Barn.

The Oyer family farmed the property until 1940 and then there is a period of unknown ownership. Lela Price Snyder, a current UMBT resident, recalls that the farm was always called the “Oyer Farm”. Morris and Ruth Cohon eventually purchased the property in a sale recorded in Deed Book D98:157 on February 14, 1956. Fran Beresch Fullwood, who resided on the farm as a child from approximately 1960-1969, remembers that Morris called the barn the “September Barn” because he purchased the property in the month of September.
The farmland on which the barn is located was in turn purchased by Met-Ed Power Generating Plant in the 1970’s in an effort to provide a buffer for a proposed nuclear power plant that was never built. Reliant Energy who subsequently purchased the Med-Ed Power Generating Plant and acquired all property, donated the 90 acres to Upper Mount Bethel Township and September Barn occupies a prominent spot on that 90 acres. According to Laraine Brands, who heads the *Save the September Barn Committee*, the 140-year old barn is “an icon of the past that should be brought into the future with us”.

**Barn Committee Formation**

The committee was formed due to the passion of UMBT resident, Laraine Brands, who was concerned that the barn’s deterioration required targeted attention unavailable from park administration because they were responsible for the many tasks involved in developing the entire park area. In 2006, Brands attended a seminar about “The Pennsylvania Barn” and that is when she learned of September Barn’s significance as an example of this genre. Brands felt that as a historic structure the barn is a symbol of the earlier history of settlers and their land use that will help stories of the past come alive. When inspecting the interior of the barn she saw evidence of the leaking roof and realized that unless the roof was replaced the building would become victim to the elements. Brands received permission from the township Board of Supervisors (UMBT BOS) to organize a committee to focus attention on the barn. Judith Henckel, Supervisor, became the Board’s liaison to this township committee. Brands and Henckel contacted several people whose interests were historic barns. Both Ken Sandri and Jeff Marshall, President of the Heritage Conservancy, surveyed the barn to assess the structural
integrity and provide suggestion for its future. Sandri and Marshall have been officers of the Historic Barn and Farm Foundation of Pennsylvania.

**Progress Up Through July 2012**

Brands consulted with Alex Greenwood of the Barn Company in Ringoes, NJ to inspect the barn and determine immediate needs. Mr. Greenwood prepared a plan for the roof repair because he saw the need was urgent in order to arrest further deterioration. He also enumerated other projects that could be done with volunteer help. Professor Sal Varrastro of Lafayette College in Easton PA assigned his students the project of assessing the barn. Students provided a historic overview, prepared reports containing CAD drawings, load bearing capacities, possibilities for LEED green improvements, and their suggestions of community uses for September Barn. The students presented their report to the UMBT BOS.

By April of 2008, Brands secured a PA State grant for $15,000 toward roof replacement through our state representative Richard Grucela. By August 2009 the old slate roof had been replaced by a metal roof. The township provided an additional $30,000 needed for the roofing bill which also allowed the replacement of six rotted floor joists.

The history of the property’s ownership was documented by resident Robin Weidman in 2011. Weidman used Northampton County archives and Ancestry.com as resources for her research.

Volunteers, including community residents and a church youth group - Allies Invasion - have committed many hours to cleaning, painting, and repairs since 2009. The committee has been obliged to be creative in completing the tasks that have been tackled to date. Funding has come from solicitation of money and materials from local residents. These efforts have not only improved the appearance but have helped sustain the barn and arrest deterioration.

An early snowstorm near the end of October 2011 created an emergency that could have imperiled all progress made to date. The weight of snow on the roof, framing and siding on that (east) side of the building following the structural damage from Hurricane Irene in August 2011 could have caused the collapse of that entire end of the barn. Additional high winds tore out more of the side. Immediate attention to repair was needed. Some of the repair costs were covered by insurance. Most were not. A local contractor, Wm. Joseph Smith, who was hired to make repairs, donated many hours of labor and material. He replaced all the east side framing and siding and stained the new siding. The committee feels obligated to raise money to cover a shortfall of $11,200 for work which the Park Foundation agreed to pay. As of August 2012, the Save September Barn Committee is indebted to the UMBT Park Foundation for their help. As a result of that work, the east side of the barn is sound and the barn is now stable. It survived Hurricane Sandy, 2012 and is ready for winter snow and winds that swirl across park fields and meadows.
September Barn within UMBT Community Park

Since September Barn is an integral part of the UMBT Community Park it cannot be considered as an entity on its own aside from its location. It can serve those who visit the park for various sports and community activities. With its mass and prominent location, September Barn serves as the symbol of park identity. Agriculture is our past, present, and future. The barn is a remarkable representative of community heritage and tradition. It helps us remember where we came from and the people who lived before.

Development plans for the park include; baseball fields, basketball courts, tennis courts, volleyball courts, concession stand, recreation building, equipment storage building, amphitheater, pavilions, picnic area, children’s playgrounds, courtyard, several fitness trails, and a sledding hill. Precisely how the barn can serve these uses has not yet been defined. To date since cleaning and stabilization has been the focus of work on the barn, there is still complete flexibility to plan and make use of the building to serve park activities.

Projected Use of the Barn

The March 2005 Master Park Plan states:

The existing 85’ by 150’ barn on-site will be renovated and rehabilitated to accommodate a concession stand and restrooms. The building is centrally-located in the park site. A concession stand typically provides pre-prepared snacks and refreshments such as sports drinks, soda, bottles water, candy bars, and chips. Additional machinery and kitchen space may allow for an expanded menu including hot dogs, hamburgers, hot pretzels, nachos, and more. A concession stand adds vitality to a park, and also provides a great opportunity for fund-raising. Restrooms will most likely consist of gender-separate rooms, each with at least one toilet and one sink. The final layout of the concession/restroom/storage building should be determined in future design.

It should be noted that the foregoing reflects the thoughts of those who formulated the Park Master Plan. At the time many opportunities and obstacles with respect to the development of the park and also the condition of the barn were not known. While the ideas expressed are good ones, the Save September Barn Committee has come to realize that those early intentions require the addition of electric service and plumbing to the barn as well as restructuring interior spaces. Our intentions for the barn, at this time, are far more modest. We want to preserve the barn and provide for the kinds of rehabilitation needed to ensure that. Even without introducing electric and water utilities to the barn it can serve park administration and the community. But the utilities will add important function. With a more limited scope in mind, we propose that the barn can be utilized for such purposes as:

- Education as a historical representation of our agricultural heritage
- Arts, crafts, antiques, car shows
- Rustic gatherings
- Boy Scout and other youth group jamboree or meeting place
Country fairs
Parties/receptions
Shelter for outdoor events
Concession/reception center
Dances and concerts
Outdoor movies

Needs Assessment

In order for the barn to serve the community with the flexibility needed to be a 3-season facility, it is important that the committee continue its work of minor repairs needed to keep out the weather and also take action if the building sustains damage, as was done when the storms of 2011 struck. The task list that the committee is continuing with as time and funds become available is listed in Appendix A of this document.

To make the barn a viable facility that can serve various uses of the community as described it is important to first secure architectural and engineering assessments that include all steps of construction that lead to a fully rehabilitated building. To that end we see these assessments as the most critical next step in plotting the path to the future for September Barn.

The committee’s non-professional assessment of bigger projects to improve the barn includes the following:

- Re-side north and west side and stain
- Install windows in upper and lower levels
- Install doors, frames and locks in upper and lower level
- Put a stucco finish on lower level concrete block
- Replace rotted floor boards on upper level
- Replace rotted beams
- Provide electrical wiring on both levels adequate for lighting and equipment
- Provide plumbing for toilet and washroom
APPENDIX A

Small projects (in logical sequence)
The Committee’s Long and Short Term Repair List:
Lower level:
1. Corner ceiling to be pulled down in lower level (Remaining homesote)
2. Remove remaining side boards from ceiling beams
3. Clean debris from ceiling
4. Final clean/rake of floors on lower level
5. Finish Broom, wire brush or power air/wash the back stone wall
6. Point and white wash the back stone wall
7. Window treatment (currently wire or board)
8. Wire brush/clean metal cow stanchions, paint?
9. Whitewash lower level walls (second coat on three concrete block walls)

Upper level outside
10. Construct remaining large sliding door and hang
11. Remove door opening and replace with siding
12. Repair stone retaining wall and ½ lower block wall at milk house site
13. Repoint stone foundation at mill house site and silo corner

Upper level inside
14. Assess soundness of all 4 sections of floor and replace flooring where needed
15. Urgent need to replace beams and siding boards near the door
16. Secure/screw down upstairs hatches

Remaining two outer sides
17. Secure/hammer in old and new nails using scaffolding on site.
18. Replace clapboards on north and west side as needed
19. Stain the outside lap board

Bibliography


2 Ibid., page 35.