

A PIECE OF RURAL HISTORY



The old barn's dismantling and reconstruction was done by the Bob Dress Construction company during the winter of 1998/1999.



America's past is rich and diverse, full of mysteries and beautiful relics. Since some of the most astounding remnants of our past exist in the form of old buildings, their preservation seems essential to the continuity of our history. As we move quickly into the twenty-first century, many old buildings are collapsing in on themselves—a particularly striking visual effect in rural America, one that adds to our cultural loss.

Mendocino County resident Barbara Clausen and her husband Skip Newell decided to help preserve the past of their town, Potter Valley. In speaking of an eighty-year-old barn located near her home, Barbara said that when it came time to make a decision to build a barn for their horses, they realized it would be better to restore that one rather than build something new. It was important as an architectural masterpiece and also gave her an opportunity save the vast amount of old growth redwood in this abandoned structure. She hired the Bob Dress Construction Company to label every piece of wood (milled just West of Willits), take the barn apart and move it to her residence property, one mile from its original site.

This is a replica of a traditional East Coast barn, with influence from the German heritage of its first owner, John Newman, and his childhood in a Pennsylvanian Dutch colony. Before its removal and renovation, the barn stood stoutly on its original property in West Potter Valley.

John Newman left Pennsylvania speaking only German and learned English on the train ride cross-country on his way to California. He bought the property in Potter Valley with the help of his brothers and sisters in 1912, built a small barn and developed a family-run farm. He married in 1913 and then built the big barn in 1920. This barn was



Barbara and Skip are also in the process of moving and restoring a smaller barn and silo that were built on the same property in Potter Valley as the main barn.

AND . . . A STORY OF RENEWAL

STORY BY **KATRINA REICHERT**
SENIOR AT **POTTER VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL**



The barn now sits on the Hukam Maj Arabian Horse Ranch, named in memory of Barbara's late son, Hukam Maj Mayginnes. Hukam was somebody who brought abundant love and joy to his friends and family. The horses on the ranch were bred by Merv Griffin in Arizona.

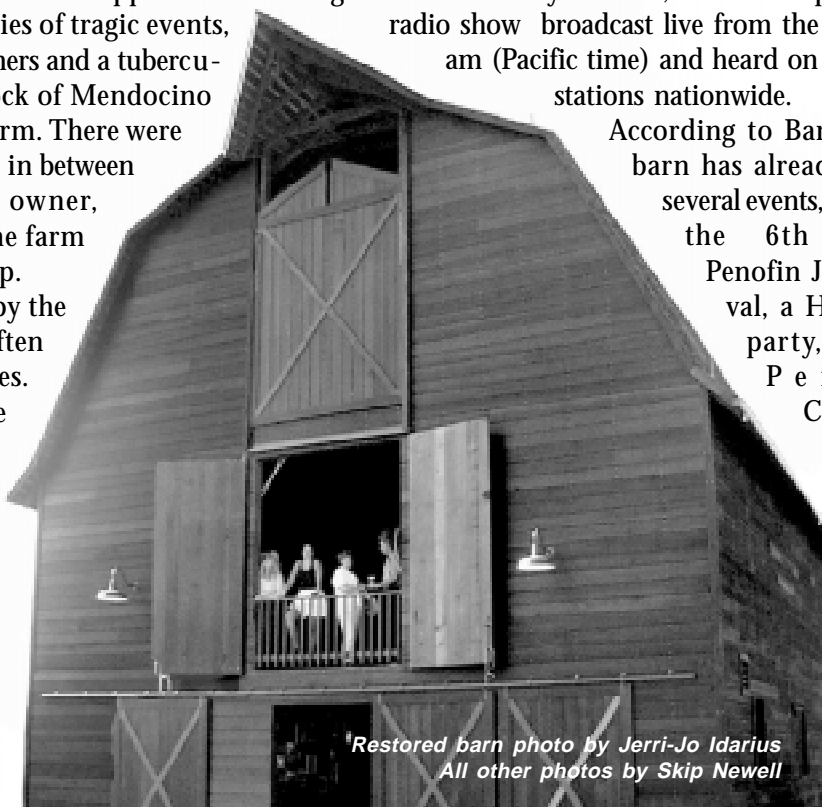
used in the traditional fashion—to store grain and hay in the loft and to milk the cows below. The family made a business of cream production and shipped their product outside the area. A series of tragic events, including the death of two brothers and a tuberculosis outbreak among livestock of Mendocino County, led to the sale of the farm. There were two other owners of the ranch in between the Newmans and its current owner, George Douglas—who sold the farm buildings to Barbara and Skip.

Years ago barns were built by the whole community and were often used as central gathering places. According to Carre Brown, “Before the Potter Valley Grange was built, the community would gather together at their neighbors’ barns to ‘raise the roof.’” Barbara and Skip are keeping with tradition by sponsoring community cultural events and celebrations at their restored barn.

The eldest living relations were too young to recall much of the early history of the barn. Madeline Wipf, the five-year-old daughter of the Newmans at the time the red barn was built, remembers this as an exciting event. She also recalls with humor the time “our calf, Princess, was chasing me around the barn, and she accidentally put her horns through my baby sister’s dress. My sister, Beth (mother of Carre Brown), claims that is what’s wrong with her today!”

On the twenty-fourth of May 1999, Barbara and Skip held an old-time music festival to celebrate the barn’s completion and give it recognition much deserved. All the living relations of John Newman attended, including his granddaughter, Carre Brown (administrator of the Mendocino County Farm Bureau). After exclaiming the barn’s beauty, Carre congratulated this effort, “Barbara has saved a piece of history in this valley.” In addition to the music festival, Barbara and Skip were guests on “The Cary Brothers,” a home improvement radio show broadcast live from the barn at 5 am (Pacific time) and heard on 153 radio stations nationwide.

According to Barbara, the barn has already hosted several events, including the 6th annual Penofin Jazz Festival, a Halloween party, and the Penofin Christmas party.



*Restored barn photo by Jerri-Jo Idarius
All other photos by Skip Newell*