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May 20, 2015

The News-Record & Sentinel

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Barn Day celebrates mountain heritage

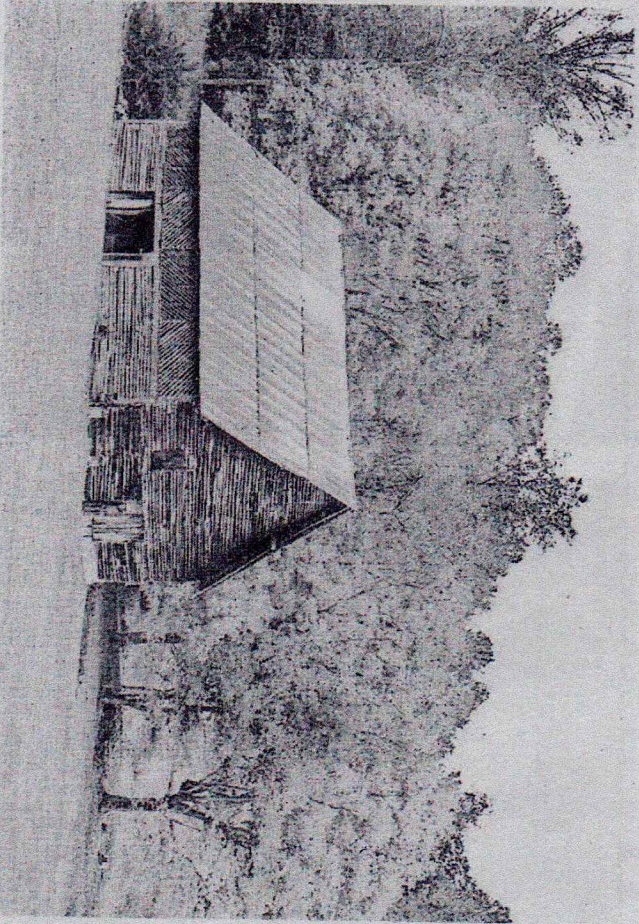
By Jim Murphy

From barns to barbeque, from Appalachian arts to country music, Madison County Barn Day celebrates mountain culture and good times.

The big event, on Saturday, May 30, will feature some additions to the format of last year's inaugural celebration. "We were pleasantly surprised with the attendance at our first Barn Day last September," said Barn Alliance President Sandy Stevenson. "We were even happier with the reactions we got from our guests."

Building on last year's success, the first big change is in the schedule, moving Barn Day from a fall to springtime event. "We tried to consider everything from the weather to school calendars to whatever other conditions could affect an event like this," Sandy said. "We decided that May 30, the Saturday after the Memorial Day weekend, would present the best opportunity for a successful celebration."

The Barn Alliance is also adjusting the format of the bus tour that begins the day's attractions: Instead of stopping for short visits at several barns, this year's tour will feature an extended exploration of an historic and recently renovated barn in the Wolf Laurel area. Taylor Barnhill will point out significant barns along the route to the host barn, where he will take guests inside to explain the fea-



Carswell barn

PHOTO BY BY STEVE BUETTNER

tures that make it a significant example of early Madison County barns as well as those "quirks" that make it unique. The barn's owner, Scott Carswell, welcomes Taylor and guests to one of Madison County's most picturesque locations for an excursion that promises to be both educational and entertaining.

lingering questions about the Carswell barn and other prominent barns in Madison County. A silent auction and barbeque dinner will follow, and the evening will end with a live auction, featuring items donated by prominent Madison County artists.

Barn Day is the signature annual fund-raising event for the Appalachian Barn Alliance. It relies on support and sponsorship by the Madison County Tourism Development Authority. The accent is on entertainment, but the theme of the event is local history and culture. Taylor Barnhill, who has been researching the historic barns of Madison County for the Alliance, says the barns have stories to tell. "We hope to increase awareness of the role these iconic buildings have played in our heritage," he said. "Nowadays many of the old barns are little more than colorful and attractive features of the country landscape, but their history dates back to the first settlers in these mountains and continues all the way up to the era of big tobacco."

Following the bus tour, guests will return to Reese Steen's party barn in Mars Hill, a ruby red jewel set against a backdrop of Appalachian ridges and valleys, where the rest of the day's events will unfold. A social hour will feature music by Roger Howell and Jerry Sutton. Taylor Barnhill will be available to answer any

Last year's event drew rave reviews from the participants, and tickets are expected to go quickly for this second edition. The price is \$34 per person, \$65 for two. Advance purchase is required. For information and reservations call Nancy Larikin at 230-6982 or email larikin@nrc.com.