

## Great Lakes Lifestyle



# Proud barn owners

**Editor's note:** Blaine VanSickle was the first to identify this barn, featured as the "Mystery Barn" in the January issue of Michigan Farmer. He says a parcel of land was up for sale in the 1950s from H Drive to J Drive in Marshall. His father, L.W. VanSickle, bought a piece of it (160 acres) that faced J Drive, while the Wilburs bought another chunk (120 acres) and the buildings abutting H Drive. A nice, shiny Michigan Farmer coffee cup is headed Blaine's way!

By JAN COREY ARNETT

**QUESTION 1:** Why would a man in his late 60s devote more than two months of time and energy to install 17,000 feet of new siding on his barns?

Answer 1: Because he loves his barns and wants to take good care of them.

Question 2: Why would that same man, now in his early 80s, clean and repaint those same barns?

Answer 2: See Answer 1.

Bill Wilbur and wife Carol bought the farm at 21375 H Drive N in Marshall in 1958, moving there a few years later from a rented farm down the road. As is true of many farms, theirs contains a variety of buildings for a menagerie of animals — chickens, hogs, sheep, horses and cattle. A separate crib stored corn.

The Wilburs raised only beef cattle and sheep for a time, but used some of the buildings for storage.

After serving in the Korean War, Bill farmed in partnership with his father at yet another farm where they milked 105 cows twice a day. "All but one of the barns where Bill and his dad farmed are gone now," Carol says. "The one that is left is falling in. It is hard for Bill to see."

Admiring the bright, beautiful barns on the Wilbur property today, one could easily assume they were brand-spanking new, each bearing a wood-cut silhouette of the animal or crop housed there. The dairy barn is depicted by a milk can on the milk house wall. The oldest barn on the Wilbur property is the 1880 cupola-topped horse barn; most date to the late 1920s and '30s. The gambrel-roofed barn next to the silo is the third barn to stand on that footprint, the first two having been lost to lantern fires in the

days before electric power. The current barn is about 14 feet longer than either of its predecessors.

"When another guy and I put the new siding on the barns," Bill recalls, "we went through 150 pounds of nails, and we drove them all by hand. It takes a lot of nails if you are going to work with oak!"

The Wilburs are proud to share their love of their barns with local children who have come from the nearby Mar-Lee and Marshall school districts to gaze at the hand-hewn-pegged, mortise-and-tenon framing. Couples also use the barns as a backdrop for their wedding photos.

"Older barns are not being saved," Bill says. "People put up pole buildings. It's not the same. I like to show kids a real barn."

Arnett owns Coralan Communications and writes from Battle Creek.

## Shutter Stopper



**DADDY'S SHADOW:** Emma Phebus, who was 18 months when this photo was taken in May, was watching and shadowing her father, Roger (just out of the picture), checking the depth of the seed corn. Phebus Farms LLC is a fourth-generation, family-owned cash crop farm of corn, soybeans and wheat in Morenci. Emma's mom, Theresa, took this photo.

Do you have a farm-related photo to share? We'd love to feature your photo. Send them to [jkiel@farmprogress.com](mailto:jkiel@farmprogress.com). Please include who, what, where and when with the attached photo.

### THE MYSTERY BARN



## Where's this barn?

**T**HIS feature highlights Michigan barns from across the state and challenges readers to identify, exactly, where they are located.

Visit [FarmProgress.com](http://FarmProgress.com), and click on "Web Exclusives" to view the barn and post your comments. It will stay up for a month. The first to supply the exact location of the barn will receive a shiny, new Michigan Farmer coffee mug. The winner will be notified and announced in the following month's magazine.

The competition focuses on the location of the barn, but please feel free to elaborate on structure, dates, ownership and more — including stories of its use.