

The Star Barn
By Mary A. McCurdy

Many people, including myself, have passed this old barn and not even noticed it on PA State Route 283 in Dauphin County. Some may even think it is a church; again, myself included. It is not a church but a special barn; here is its story.

The first known owner of land for the Star Barn was Benjamin Brown. In 1778 Colonel James Crouch bought the land from Mr. Brown. Colonel Crouch fought in the Revolutionary War. The land was called Walnut Hill, because the boundary mark was a walnut tree. That was the first name it received. When Crouch died his son, Edward inherited the land. Edward Crouch served as a soldier, a county judge, and a member of the United States Congress. In 1827 his daughter, Mary and her husband inherited Walnut Hill. Her husband, Benjamin Jordan, was a Pennsylvania State Senator.

John Motter bought the land for \$19,310.34 in 1872. This happened at an auction. Motter raised horses. Many of his horses were sold to the United States Cavalry in the west. In 1872 the Star Barn was built by Daniel Reichert. Motter had the barn built to show off his horses.

The Star Barn was built in the Gothic Revival style. This style had gables, trefoil space brackets. The stars on the barn have five points and are on each side of the barn. These stars were not just for decoration; they were used to ventilate air into the barn to dry hay and other types of grains; they also meant good fortune for the farm and land.

In 1925 the farm then went to the Nissley family. The Nissleys were dairy farmers. They changed the farm to have room for all the cows. They built outbuildings for animal storage. These outbuildings were used on most farms for animals. But some were used for food storage. The Nissley family added windows to them for sunlight; they added silos to store the food for the cattle.

In 1940 Aaron Hoffer became the owner of the barn. Four generations of the Hoffer family farmed the land until 1986. The land had to be divided in 1994. Today all that exists is the barn and the outbuildings

The barn and the outbuildings went from animal storage to food storage to decay from lack of attention and use. In the 1980's the summer kitchen was burned in a fire. The only outbuildings that survive today are the chicken coop, the pig pen, and the carriage house/corn crib.

In 2000 Millport Conservancy and Preservation Pennsylvania wanted to save the Star Barn. They bought the barn and saved it from collapsing.

In 2007 Agrarian Country bought the Star Barn and is trying to save this wonderful and historic artifact from a dreadful end. The barn will soon be moved to a new site and turned into an Agriculture Exhibition Center. They plan on using it as a farm museum and other festivals and shows.

The Star Barn will be taken down and rebuilt in its new home. They will rebuild it using its old pieces and using 1870's techniques. The stars and cupola will be moved in one piece. The Star Barn will be taken down board by board, piece by piece and rebuilt just like its original form.