

The Landis Arboretum Newsletter

Lape Road

Esperance, New York

Special Edition 1998

This special issue of the Newsletter is meant to provide a brief pictorial record of a major, long-anticipated event at the Arboretum. For those who did not see the barn in the process of renovation or haven't visited the Arboretum recently, these photos supply evidence for what may have only been imagined.

... "The barn is well built, timbered with hemlock beams foot square, cut from the forest that grew here before the farm was thought of; a hundred years ago the neighbors came to a raising bee and joined its frame.

Fifty years it stood well kept, and at length yielded not to time but neglect. That wind of the century's turn that blew our folk into cities like leaves in a sink hole, left it twenty years deserted; its roof rotted; the rain dripped like showers into its mows; its sills crumbled like ice in spring.

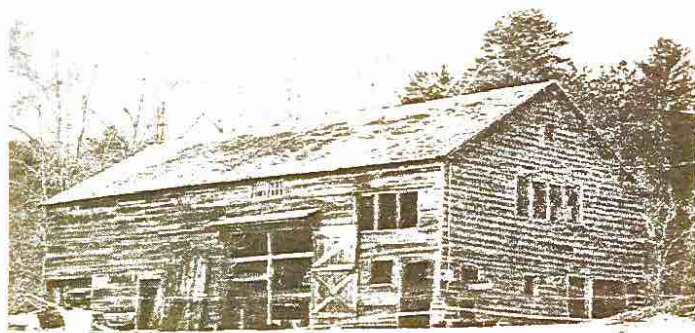
One who hated the cities, returning, gave it new life. He shingled its roof, nailed down its siding, raised it on solid sills. Now good as new it stands firm against wind and snow and rain, and shelters warm life under its name-scrawled beams." ...

From "The Barn" in *Barnyard Year* by Fred Lape
Harper & Brothers, New York 1949

An 1830's English-style barn is not likely to be part of many arboretum collections. But we have one. It's woven into the historic fabric of the Landis Arboretum and the Schoharie Valley.

In the mid-1930s when Fred Lape came back to Oak Nose farm to live, he attempted to repair the damage and neglect of a succession of tenant farmers. ... "I reroofed the barn, tore down the wagonhouse and with the lumber transformed one of the haymows of the main barn into a studio. I began to reforest the lean hillsides with pine and spruce and fir seedlings which the state forestry service was offering cheaply. The rich flats were going back to weeds and brush." (*A Farm and Village Boyhood*, Fred Lape, Syracuse University Press, Syracuse, NY 1980.)

Over the next sixty years, the renewed barn lived on as a useful part of Oak Nose farm; and when the farm became the George Landis Arboretum, the barn served as meeting place, classroom,



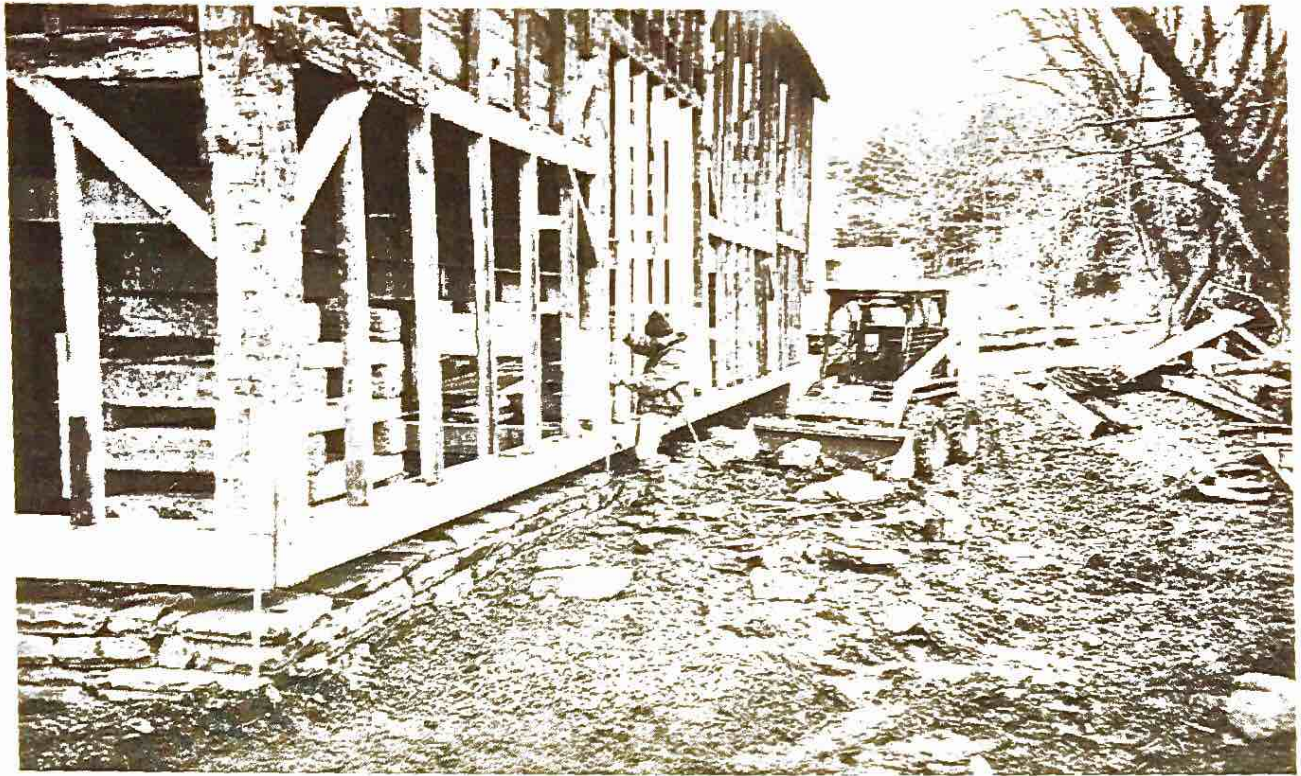
and storage - and it gradually became a sentimental symbol for the Arboretum to many members and visitors.

In the mid-1990s, sixty-some years later, the barn was again badly in need of repair, nearly at the point of collapse. Recently, need, circumstance, and good fortune brought people and funding together to make it possible to renew that old barn for another fifty or more years of use.

There have been many steps in reaching the present stage of barn restoration. In the Fall of 1996 Esperance contractor Boice Smith and his crew installed a perimeter drain to remove the water from around and next to the barn, long an obstacle to doing work on the barn except during the driest part of the year. Crushed stone for the drain came from Cobleskill Stone Products, Inc. Frank Gilmore donated barn beams that were eventually used for shoring and for replacing rotted posts. Conceptual sketches and construction drawings were donated by the architectural firm of Stracher, Roth and Gilmore.

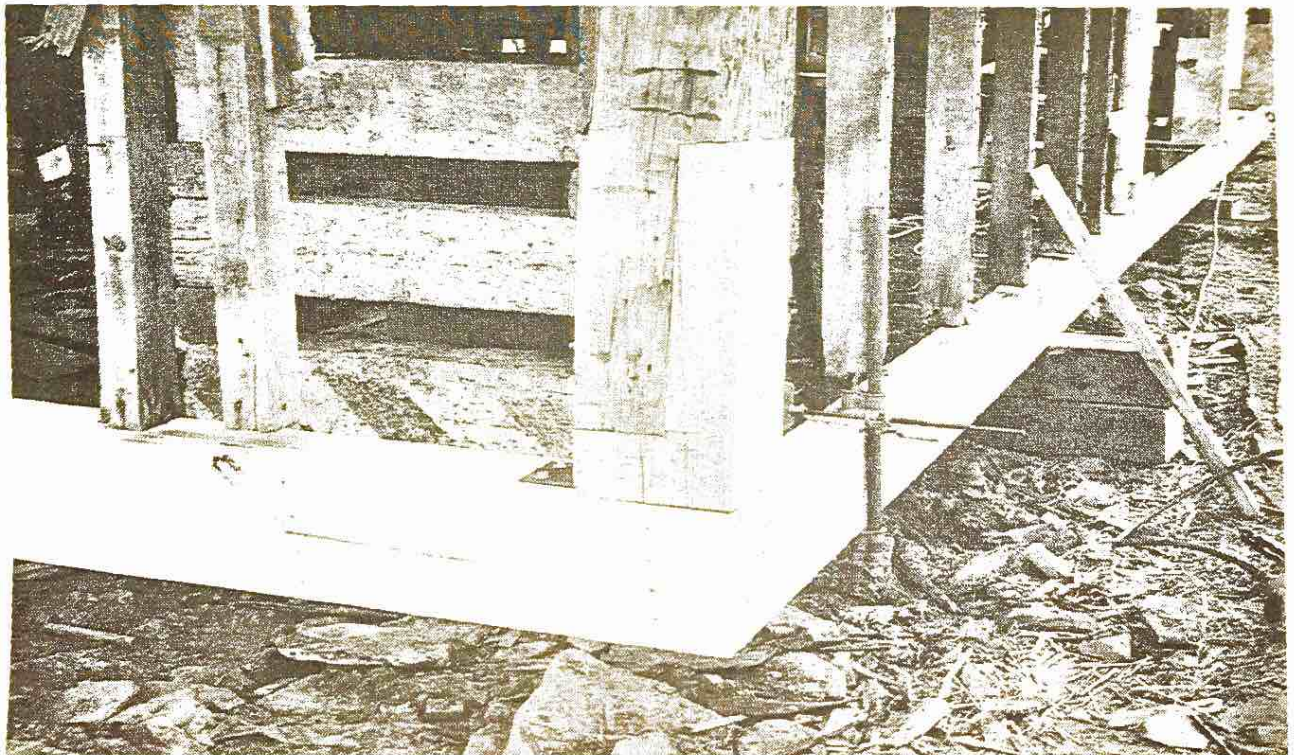
Through the efforts of of Senator James Seward and Assemblyman John Faso, the Arboretum received a \$20,000 grant from the NYS Office of Parks & Recreation.

On February 11, 1998 a contract was signed with J.M. Kelley, Ltd. to restore the structural integrity of the barn timbers, to provide a



PHOTOS:

Top left: Repairing a barn post and working on the stone foundation. Bottom left: Attaching new sills and showing a lap joint to repair a post. Top right: The barn resting on steel beams and timber cribbing. Center right: The barn back on its new dry stone foundation. Bottom right: Removing old siding and pulling nails. Previous page: Steel beams in place, the barn is ready to be jacked up.



dry stone foundation, to replace the roof sheathing and shingles, and to put new siding on the building.

In February 1998, Mike Kelley and his people began by jacking up the entire barn, in some places to a height of six feet or so. Steel beams were put in place through both the length and width of the barn and hydraulic jacks lifted the building an inch at a time. Cribbing was constructed at strategic spots and the barn rested on it.

Next came removal of the old sills, very little of which remained and none in sound condition due to the accumulation of water over so many years. When the sills were removed, it was discovered that all but one of the barn posts was rotted to a height of two feet, and several to three or four feet. Thus, the bottom portion of each - save one - had to be removed, a new piece fitted with lap joints and bolted to the barn posts. About this time came another surprise. The electrical service for the farm house is fed through the barn from the power pole between the barn and greenhouse. When the barn was straightened, the distances changed just enough to make the old cable too short.

After the posts were repaired, new pressure-treated sills were put in place. Simultaneously, work was begun on the stone foundations. Earlier discussions had led to the conclusion that a dry-laid stone foundation would be suitable and more in keeping with the character of the barn, rather than poured concrete, the other option.

With the the foundation complete and the sills installed, on Monday, April 6, the barn was lowered - very, very carefully - onto its new dry stone foundation.

When the work was begun on the barn, none of the parts of the building that were meant to be on the same plane, either vertically or horizontally, were. Now, almost every portion of the building was straightened, leveled and plumbed. (But, the barn looked very strange to many of us. It no longer tilted or leaned. It looked odd - not as picturesque, somehow.)

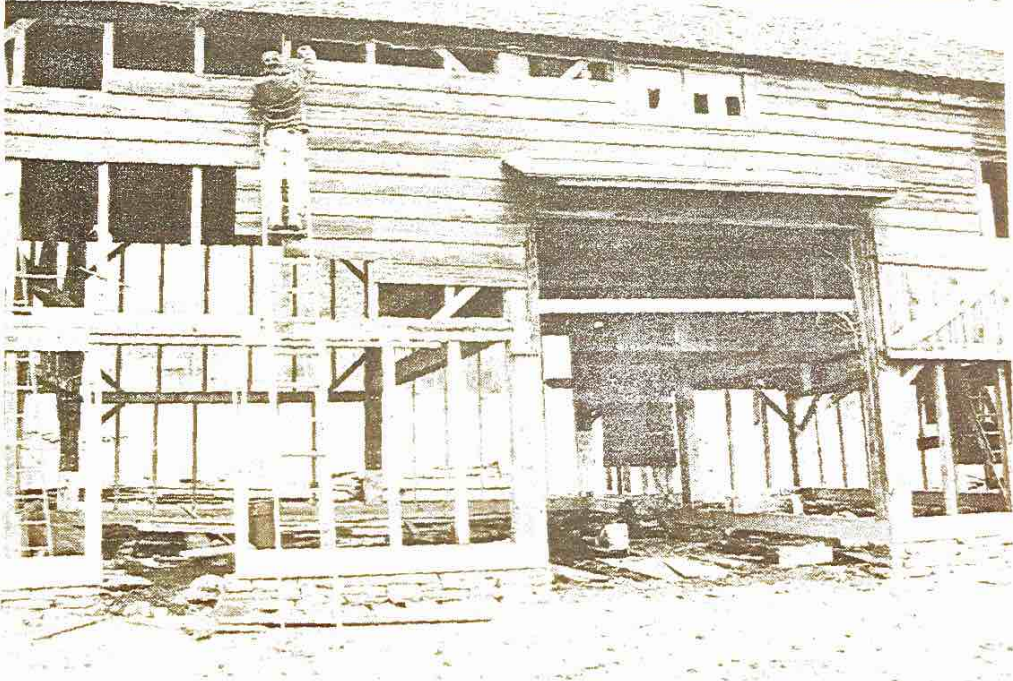
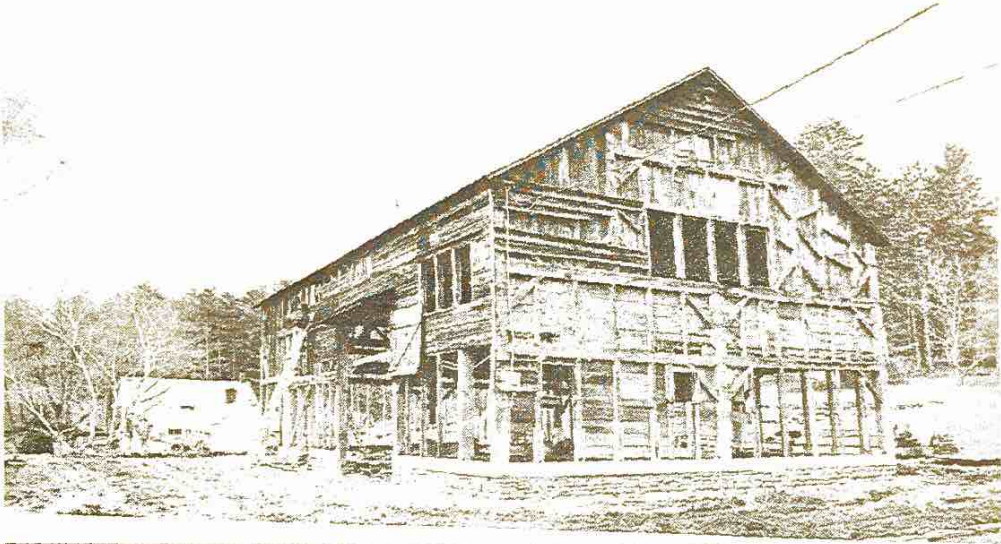
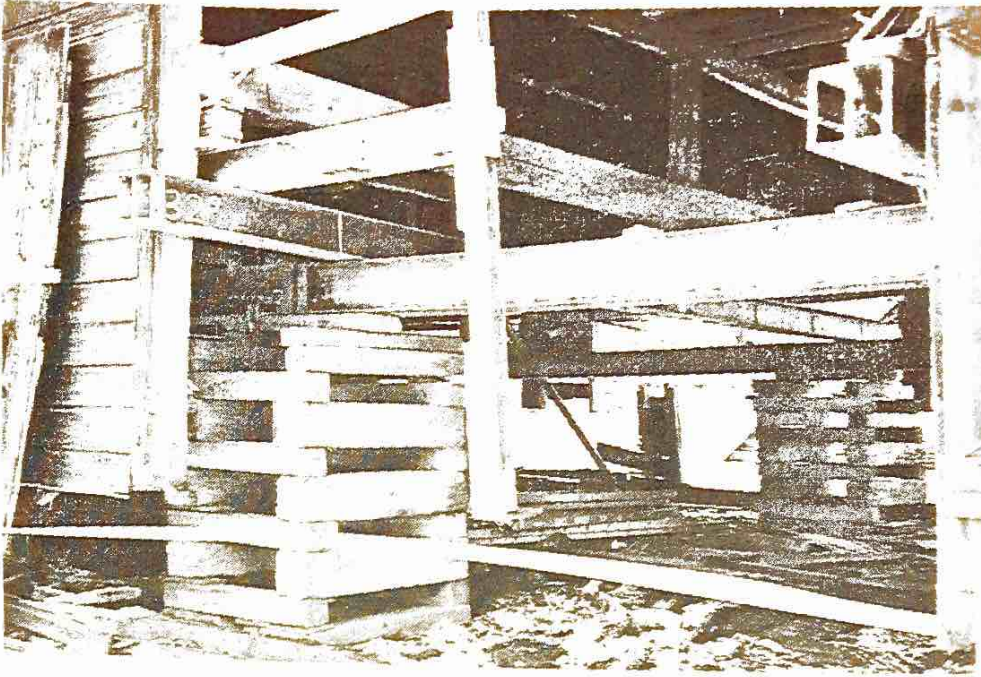
Now came the moment of truth. When the jacking steel was removed and the barn came to rest on its new foundation, would it stay straight and plumb? Or would it twist itself around and try to go back to the comfortable crookedness of so many years?

Except for the rear wall bowing inward about four inches at the bottom, it stayed straight.

At this point the old roof was removed and new sheathing and shingles were put on. Gutters were added and it was time to tackle the siding. Although the original siding was approximately 3/4" thick, time had taken its toll. Most of the siding had less than 3/8" of sound wood and when an attempt was made to remove it, the nails pulled straight through, which meant that all of the nails had to be pulled separately, and there were many. And then, another surprise. None of the wall studs at the west end of the barn were useable. That part of the barn had leaked for so many years that the studs were hollow shells.

Finally, two weeks before the plant sale, new siding was put on the building. At the same time the dirt floor was removed and crushed stone put in place; a layer of stone dust finished the floor. Seven and a half window frames were added where there were none before, and two days before the Spring Plant Sale the last of the siding was put on the front of the barn. Siding on the east side and the back was completed on Friday morning before the Members' Preview Party that same evening.

For the first time in many years - for the first time in the memory of most of us - the barn interior is bright and dry.



However, it isn't finished!

The barn is standing straight and the interior is bright and dry, but it won't stay that way unless we finish the job. And, we can't complete the project without **your** help.

The cost of the work done on the barn so far is \$53,878, paid for by a \$20,000 grant from the New York State Office of Parks and Recreation, \$14,058 in member donations, and a \$20,000 loan.

Now we must raise funds to make the building weather tight and secure and to put the studio end of the barn back into service for meetings and classes.

Staining the barn is an urgent part of the restoration. Wet/dry cycles can severely degrade untreated wood, even in a year. We have often been asked what color the barn will be. Probably none of us can remember the barn with its original color - but traces of paint found under the eaves were "barn red," the traditional choice for area barns and out buildings. This color is available in a warm, rich stain which weathers to an appropriate appearance in a year or two.

Current estimates to do the needed work are:

Doors (construct and hang two barn doors plus one to the studio and one to the center bay)	\$2,650
Windows (19 1/2, barn sash)	4,200
Studio floor joists and flooring	2,500
Stair to second floor of studio	700
Staining	3,000

There are approximately 600 boards in the siding. A contribution of \$5 will stain a board; \$21 will buy a gallon of stain; \$215 will put in a window (or \$108 will pay for an upper or a lower sash); a gift of \$650 will put on a door; \$75 will add a floor joist, and \$12.50 a floor board. Clearly, every level of contribution will get us closer to finishing the project. (Contributions are tax deductible to the full extent of the law.)

The Arboretum needs help from all of its members. Donations of any size will help complete the work and demonstrate the commitment of Arboretum members to the project. When the Arboretum seeks funding from agencies and organizations, government or private, one of the most important factors in qualifying for support is our ability to show that members are committed to the work of the Arboretum. The best demonstrations of commitment are volunteer hours served and the number of members who provide financial support.

Please fill out the pledge form below and mail it today! Let's not lessen the benefits of what has already been accomplished by failing to finish the job. - Herm Finkbeiner, Chair, Barn Restoration Committee

Cut here



The Big Oak

BARN RESTORATION FUND

Name _____

Street _____

City, state, zip _____

Amount pledged \$50 _____ \$100 _____ \$200 _____ \$500 _____ \$1000 _____ Other \$ _____

Amount enclosed \$ _____ Amount due \$ _____

Do you want your contribution to be targeted to a specific part of the remaining work?

Doors _____ Windows _____ Floor joists _____ Flooring _____ Stairs _____ Staining _____

Wherever it's needed _____

Are you employed by or retired from a company or organization that matches funds? Company _____

Should any matching funds also go to the Barn Restoration Fund? _____

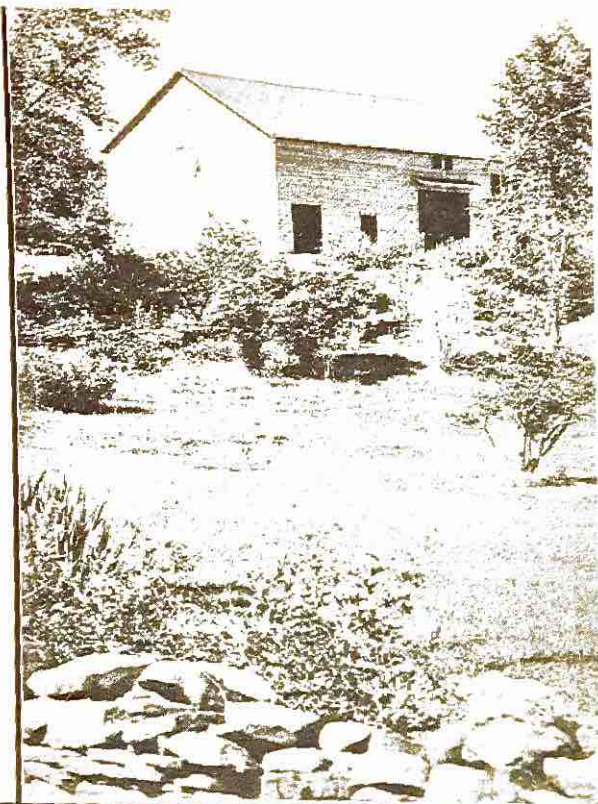
Make your check payable to **Landis Arboretum** and mail it to PO Box 186, Lape Road, Esperance, NY 12066-6935

Plant Sale Overstock

A few plants remain from the Spring plant sale and are available at the Arboretum. The prices are \$5-7 depending on size, species and condition. This is your chance to shop in a "leisurely" fashion and find some unusual specimens. There are only a few of any type, and in some cases only one or two. If you see something listed that you particularly want, don't hesitate.

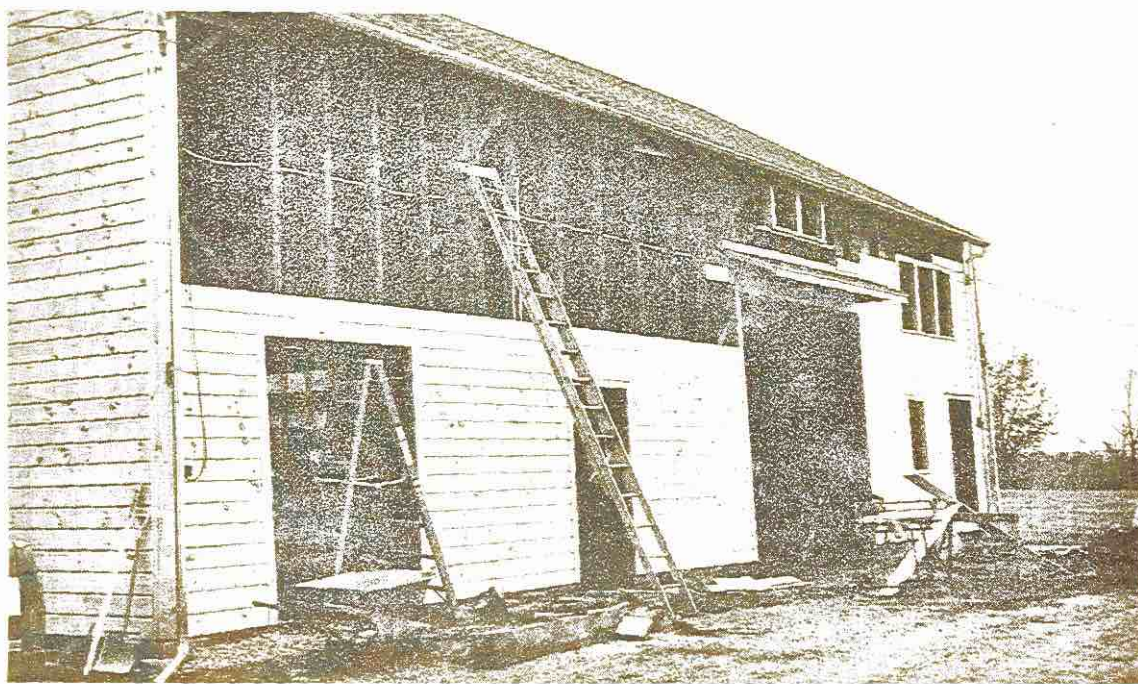
Acorus calamus. Sweet flag
Acorus gramineus 'Oberon'
Chrysanthemum nipponicum. Montauk daisy
Coreopsis verticillata 'Moonbeam'
Euphorbia dulcis 'Chameleon'
Genista tinctoria 'Royal Gold'
Geranium endressii 'Claridge Druce'
Geranium x cantabrigiense 'Bikovo Karmina'
Hemerocallis 'Bonanza'
Heuchera 'Royal Robe'
Heuchera 'Eco-improved'

Iris cristata alba
Iris cristata caerulea
Iris setosa arctica
Metasequoia glyptostroboides
Muehlenbeckia exillaris. Sweet grass
Oenothera berlandieri 'Siskiyou'
Paxistima canbyi 'Green Cliff' (evergreen ground cover)
Pulmonaria longifolia ssp. *ovennensis*
Salix melanastachys
Scabiosa ochroleuca



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U.S. Postage Paid
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Permit No. 6

The Landis Arboretum - Lape Road - PO Box 186 - Esperance, NY 12066



The photos above show the addition of new siding and the barn as it is today - tall and straight - and awaiting doors, windows, and stain to secure the structure for at least another fifty years. Photos in this newsletter were provided by Warren Burton, Fran Finkbeiner, Florence Grimm, Mike Kelley and Pat Rush.