



Town-wide Barn Survey Tips & Stumbling Blocks

Chichester:

1. Glean information from other towns that have completed surveys.
2. Explain and publicize project – mailings, newspapers, web site, and special programs.
3. Create survey teams of at least 3 people – recorder/scribe, observer/questioner, and photographer.
4. “One set of eyes is not enough” – look at every identified building to see if it began life as a barn.
5. Thank participating barn owners. We sent a follow-up thank you note with a picture of the owner’s barn.
6. Create database with information collected (we used Access).
7. Continue to update barn survey information, i.e. alterations, repairs, re-purposing, demolition.

Francestown:

1. If you have someone who works in renovation of historical properties, they can be very helpful in teaching your team what to look for as far as sawn beams, hand hewn beams, gunstock posts and other features that will help you date the barn.
2. If you have someone who farms in town and has been in your town for years, try to get them on your team. Their help will be invaluable!
3. Check with your historical association in town for any information they have on various properties.
4. Having someone on the team who has lived in town for years and/or has been involved in the community is helpful to 'get in the door' to see the barns.
5. You don't have to be as knowledgeable about construction features or farming as you may think to be involved in this project. Just a few basics will get you going and you will learn along the way.

Deerfield:

1. Have committee of at least 4 people with assigned responsibilities.
2. Start with barns you are familiar with.
3. Share notes before leaving site.
4. Carpool - that is where the fun is!
5. Helpful to have a committee member who is familiar with barn architecture
6. Leverage town history.
7. Helps to have the person setting up site visits well know in the community.

Stumbling Blocks

Chichester:

1. A few property owners were suspicious that the survey would affect their taxes. (One refused to participate in the survey.)
2. Trouble keeping files up to date with recent changes. Barns are disappearing; have lost 8 or 9 since 2005.
3. Scheduling difficult at times. Needed at least three committee members at each visit.

Deerfield:

1. Don't do it too fast. Take your time, but do set a deadline for completion.
2. Be realistic with what you can accomplish. Don't be overly ambitious or you may lose momentum/interest.
3. Don't let the concern of property owners not wanting to participate get in the way. Only one barn owner refused to participate.

Francestown:

1. There were a few (and only a few) people who had concerns that we were there to survey their barn for tax assessment purposes and it took a bit of conversation to help them understand that our survey had nothing to do with 'property assessment'. Eventually we had 100% compliance with all property owners who had barns in the 50+ year old category.
2. There were many people who had concerns that our survey was going to be put into a book which would be 'sold' for profit. Then there were those who *wanted* the opportunity to have a publication of our survey. We decided early on that in addition to the copy that went to the NH Division of Historical Resources, there would be 2 copies available for research purposes only, one in our Historical rooms and one in our town library. This balance seemed to appease the property owners on both sides.