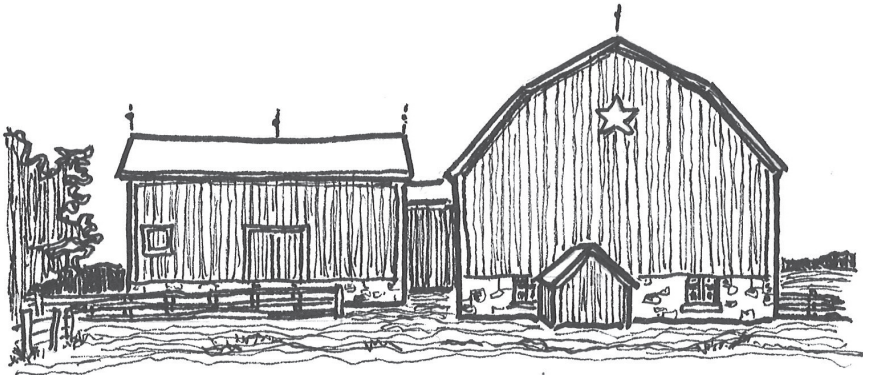


A *FEW* OLD BARNNS



by George W. J. Duncan

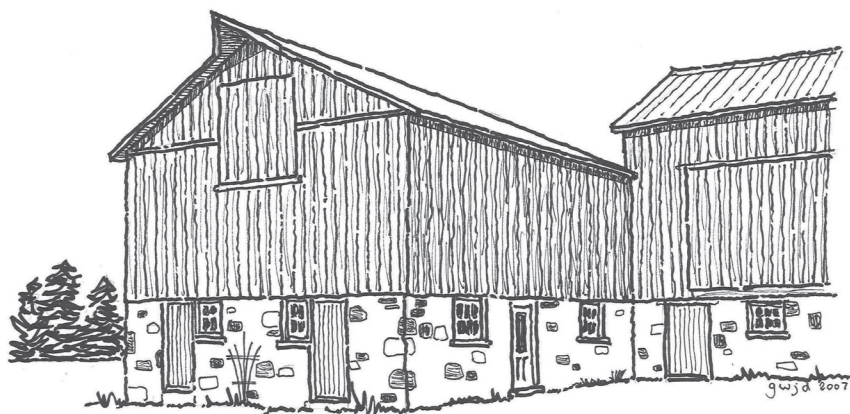


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A FEW OLD BARNs

George W. J. Duncan



As our cities grow and the business of farming continues to evolve into a large-scale corporate enterprise, only a few old barns will remain as monuments to our agricultural heritage.



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Dedicated to the memory of the late Jim
Carter of the Vaughan Township Historical
Society for his encouragement and support
for the publication of *A Few Old Barns*.

A Few Old Barns

Written and illustrated by George W.J. Duncan

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Storry-Appleton "Star" barn, Kennedy Road, north of
Unionville, Markham.

Title page illustration:
Barn complex at Southbrook Farm, Vaughan.



Barn at Headford, Richmond Hill.

Preface to the 2019 Edition

In the field of heritage conservation in Ontario, the topic of barns and their preservation is at the forefront of people's interest. There is a sense of urgency to act before it is too late to recognize and preserve this important aspect of our social, economic, and architectural heritage within the context of accelerating change. A provincial historical organization dedicated to the documentation, study, and preservation of barns has recently been incorporated through affiliation with The Ontario Historical Society. Ontario Barn Preservation, a new not-for-profit corporation, is attracting much interest throughout the province.

When the first edition of *A Few Old Barns* was published in 2007, there was already a growing awareness that Ontario barns were disappearing from the rural landscape. Since that

time, most of the barns illustrated in this book have been lost to demolition or fire. Countless more have followed.

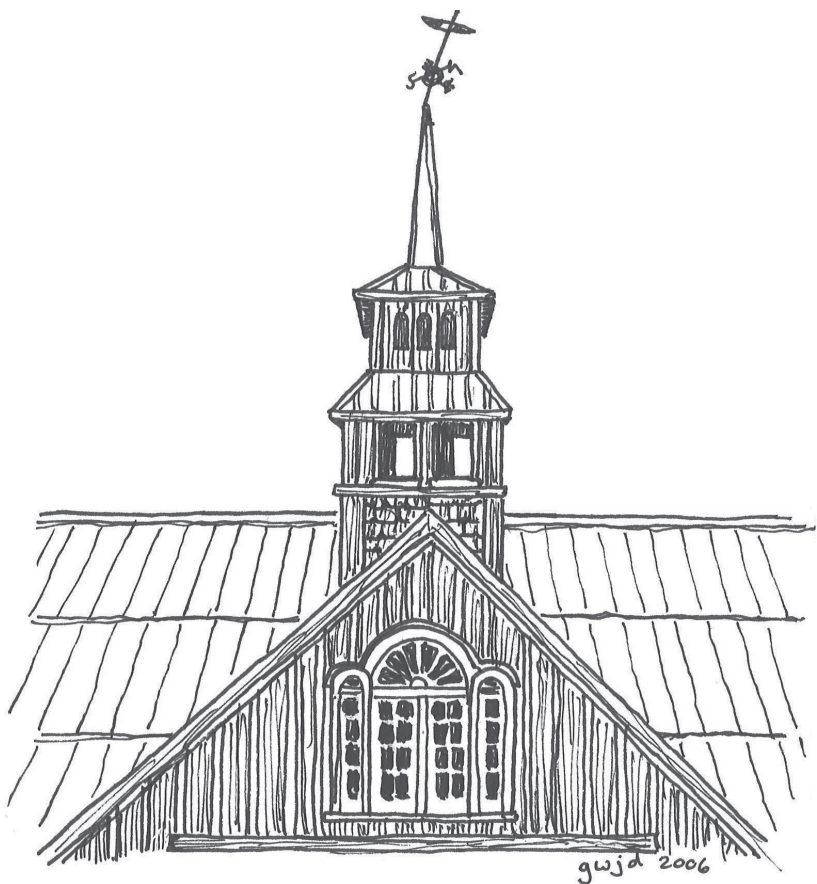
The disappearance of barns is symbolic of the greater issue of the removal of much of our prime agricultural land and its replacement with urban sprawl. With the threat that climate change poses to the world's food supply, it seems that society is acting somewhat recklessly to allow the most productive, arable land to be lost forever when it is an irreplaceable resource necessary for our survival.

The rural landscape of Ontario is a significant part of the province's cultural identity that is worth preserving. Barns, farmhouses, and other buildings and structures associated with farming comprise a valuable part of this treasured, cultural heritage landscape. The question of how to preserve the legacy of the family farm in the face of so many competing interests that affect our agricultural lands is yet to be answered.

Acknowledgements

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George W. J. Duncan
Heritage Week, 2019



Cupola of the Musical Barn, near the village of Coldwater.

Nostalgia for Barns

When I think about barns, the example that first comes to mind is the Musical Barn that once stood near the village of Coldwater, Ontario. The Musical Barn, a landmark on Highway 12, had a distinctive church-like cupola with a tilted weathervane on its roof ridge, and a Palladian window over its drive doors. According to local historical accounts, the barn

was built in the 1860s by a farmer named William Darling. It is said that the cupola served as a lookout for the farmer to ensure his hired men were hard at work in the fields. It is also said that the cupola provided a place for young Eby Sallows to practice his violin playing, hence the name “Musical Barn.” This remarkable structure was unfortunately demolished in 1973 by an owner that did not appreciate its grandeur. Happily though, the cupola was saved by a salvager, and in recent years has been installed in a park near the Coldwater Grist Mill as a kind of monument.

Other barns that have made a lasting impression upon me were not real barns at all, but replicas designed to evoke the feeling of what barns represent to city dwellers—the simple pleasures of the country, the wholesome goodness of farm-fresh produce, and nostalgia for our agricultural roots. Remember the “Red Barn” fast food restaurants with their metal and glass barn-shaped buildings, and their interior murals depicting an agricultural heartland? What about the Cullen Country Barns on the Toronto-Markham border that stood for just a few years before they were swept away by the forces of economics and changing demographics? This complex of retail stores within a huge barn-shaped structure contained fragments of demolished barns saved from the federally-expropriated airport lands in Pickering. The stairwell spiralled within a massive poured concrete silo. Outside of the restaurant was a wooden wall decorated with an array of hand-forged barn hinges. Now, both the historic barn structures that provided some of the materials for the Cullen Country Barns, and the replica barns themselves, are gone.