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Annual Old House & Barn Expo set for March 24 & 25

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MANCHESTER — The Old House and Barn Expo will be held Saturday and Sunday, March 24-25, from 9 a.m.-5 p.m. at the Radisson, 700 Elm St. in Manchester. The event offers people interested in restoring their old house or barn the chance to learn from experts and identify appropriate and affordable solutions. Presentations will include preservation strategies; architecture; craft; and history through hourly lectures; visits with high quality exhibitors; demonstrations; a scavenger hunt for kids and adults, and “Old House and Barn Doctor” sessions.

What's Cool in Old House Trends


- **Young old buildings:** At a session on mid-20th century architecture on March 25 by Reagan Ruedig and Lisa Mausolf, and at exhibits on the show floor, folks will be talking about the newest old buildings. According to Sally Zimmerman of Historic New England, “mid-century homes can offer an affordable alternative to first-time homebuyers in established suburbs: younger buyers appreciate the open floor plans, retro look, and smaller footprints of 1960s ranch houses and often they’re the least pricy options in desirable neighborhoods.” She noted that mid-century homes often have naturalistic settings with mature trees and plantings that add interest and privacy. “Adding-on takes some skill,” Zimmerman said, “but the modular nature of their original design can allow for enlargements in a vocabulary that is once again popular.” Contact Zimmerman: szimmerman@historicnewengland.org
- **Made in the Shade Spaces:** Life can be relaxing and enjoyable on the porch or in the garden, right? Presenters Gillian Lang and Henry Homeyer—and exhibitors—will offer historical perspectives and advice in educational sessions on these important, hip parts of homes we love.
- **Cool cats:** Pope Memorial SPCA Concord-Merrimack County will be at the show to inform attendees about barn cat adoption and care. The Preservation Alliance’s members who are barn and barn cat owners report that their daily routine of barn cat care helps them keep track of barn maintenance issues. The cats also help control rodent population, and are fun to have around.



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Traditional artists

The New Hampshire “advantage” is often characterized in terms of our tax environment, but Granite State preservationists see the state’s qualified craftsmen as an enormous advantage, too. They are stewards of our historic properties whose work reinvigorates main streets, village centers and local economies. “New Hampshire citizens recognize and appreciate this important sector of New Hampshire’s creative economy,” Kayla Schweitzer, Heritage and Traditional Arts Coordinator, N.H. State Council on the Arts said. “Through the perpetuation of traditional art forms, skills and knowledge, these craftsmen offer an irreplaceable link to our heritage and are important to the character of our communities and our economic vitality.”

Expo exhibitors and presenters advise about “going local” and sustainability every day. New Hampshire contractors and designers report an uptick of client interest in local materials. Sue Booth of Vintage Kitchens in Concord notes that her customers like to use local lumber for floors and millwork, and that native plants are popular for gardens. She said that it is easy to source local talent in addition to local materials. “We are also lucky to have so many talented craftsmen who can make hardware, cabinets, weathervanes, murals and more,” she said. Booth described the Expo as a “big farmer’s market of old house products and services.” She is an Expo sponsor and exhibitor and will be presenting an illustrated talk on vintage kitchen design with Liz Barbour of Creative Feast. Contact Booth at sue@vintagekitchens.com.

Preservation guru and Preservation Alliance board member Ian Blackman of Chichester puts it this way: “People whom you meet at the Expo are passionate about what they do. The exhibitors and presenters are knowledgeable, love their work, and care deeply about the historic character of our state.” Blackman is an Expo sponsor and will present two sessions on barn preservation at the Expo. Contact Blackman at 603-344-5995

Kevin Fife of Canterbury specializes in the traditional art of dry stack stonewalls, which are made without the use of mortar to hold them together. Fife has extensive experience in restoring historic field stone walls, as well as building new ones in the traditional style. He is also skilled in splitting and laying up granite foundations, walls, and steps. Fife lives in Northfield and is a demonstrator at the Expo. Contact Fife at 603-286-2242.

Steve Bedard of Gilmanton knows old houses the way some people know the Boston Red Sox’s stats. His thoughtful analysis and creative persistence have helped with many key “saves” around New Hampshire. Bedard will be a prominent exhibitor, lecturer, and sponsor at the Expo. Bedard’s two talks at the Expo will cover how to assess a building before you start a project, and many issues related to comfort and convenience in older structures. Contact Bedard at 603-387-3482



People who inspire

Stars of the heritage “constellation” will participate in the Expo as special guests and will be available to attendees for conversation and book-signings:

- Tom McLaughlin, the new host of NHPBS’s Rough Cut with Fine Woodworking. Available for conversation, and demonstrating hand tools.
- Jim Garvin, retired State Architectural Historian and author of "A Building History of Northern New England." His encyclopedic knowledge of New Hampshire, thoughtful analysis of individual projects, and passion for preservation has led to “saves” across the state, from homes and bridges to mill building and hotels. His talk at the Expo will be "The Old House Speaks: Learning to Read the Physical Evidence." This talk will describe the architectural clues found in every old house, from its overall style to the details of doors, windows, paneling, moldings and hardware. These elements changed over time. Together, they can help estimate when a house was built and when later changes were made to it, allowing the old house to speak to us and tell us its story.
- Popular presenter, farmer, and former Commissioner of Agriculture, Markets and Food Steve Taylor will facilitate a conversation about place and preservation with New Hampshire authors Joe Monninger, author of "A Barn in New England"; author and newspaper columnist John Clayton, now executive director of the historic association in the Expo's host city; and Howard Mansfield, author of "The Same Axe, Twice, Dwelling in Possibility and In the Memory House," with his newest book, "Summer Over Autumn."
- Kevin Gardner, writer, teacher and stone mason• Henry Homeyer, garden columnist and commentator.
- Jim DeStefano, structural engineer, architect, and author of "Antique New England Homes and Barns."

Tickets for the Expo are \$10 for adults; \$7 for seniors and students. Children 12 and under are free. For more information contact Jennifer Goodman, New Hampshire Preservation Alliance, 603-224-2281.

Attendees watch a demonstration of wood turning at a previous Old House & Barn Expo. This year's event will be held Saturday and Sunday, March 24-25, from 9 a.m.-5 p.m. at the Radisson, 700 Elm St. in Manchester. (Photo: Steve Booth)

