



From Ranger Station Barn to Heritage & Arts Centre

As well as conserving ecologically valued lands Legacy strives to conserve similar valued aspects of our history. Our series of barn stories recalls the significance of these structures to individuals and communities. The barn is open to visitors from July to the long weekend in September.

The James River Ranger Station barn was built west of Bearberry in the late 1940s to house horses and hay for Forest Rangers Jack Walker and Bert Hadley.

The loft was sometimes used for social events during the 1950s. Once better roads were built through the area the Station was not used and the barn sat empty for decades.

When it was scheduled to be demolished in the late 1990s, the Bearberry Wapitana Society requested it be relocated near the Bearberry Hall which already had the historic school house as part of its construction.

On April 8, 2000 the barn was hauled to Bearberry and the work began to refurbish it and turn it into the Bearberry Heritage and Arts Centre.

Many Bearberrians had fond memories of the barn where family members and friends had worked or enjoyed the social events held in the loft. They and more recent members of the community rallied behind the project with donations of dollars, volunteer hours, equipment, materials and expertise.

Although it had sat empty for many years, the barn was in good shape. Only two logs had to be replaced. The building always gets admiration and questions about its origin from visitors. We have even had a request to purchase it. When we refused his offer, the man returned a week later to gather enough information to build a replica.

Today, the ground floor of the Heritage and Arts Centre holds historic artifacts as does the loft that was a craft market for local artisans.

The Centre has a special place in the hearts of the long time residents who enjoy dropping by to reminisce or enjoy a wild blueberry tart on special days.

Non-resident visitors often have a connection with Bearberry through being raised in the area, visiting Grandparents, weekends at the family cabin, work in the area or various other reasons. The Centre attendant always enjoys hearing their stories, recording them for our records, or showing them their family story in the Bearberry history book.

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