

Bowerman Barn

Weaverville Ranger Station - Shasta-Trinity National Forest



Bowerman Barn, built in 1878 by Jacob Bowerman, stands today as an outstanding example of a late 19th century hand-crafted structure. The barn (along with 155 acres of land surrounding it) was acquired by the Forest Service in 1974, and is on the National Register of Historic Places. It is significant for its historic association with the growth and development of local commerce and agriculture. Few other barns remaining in Northern California rival Bowerman Barn in age or state of preservation. The barn is located between Covington Mill and Bowerman Boat Ramp (see map on back).

To see this hand-built barn is to get a glimpse of a bygone era. You can't help but marvel at the skill and ingenuity shown by the people who constructed this building without the benefit of modern tools and techniques. Imagine the time and energy required for people of this era to cut and shape the timbers, to mill the lumber, secure it together and create this structure. Ask yourself, as you examine the barn: could I have climbed to the top of that roof and put on shingles, and how did they get those massive pine logs in position to attach the flooring? What a thrilling place this barn must have been when fully functioning with horses and cows below, milking to be done and hay to be lofted up for storage. With these sights, smells, and

sounds, Bowerman Barn was once a hub of activity in rural Trinity County.

Bowerman History

Jacob Bowerman first came west from Ohio in 1856 to seek his fortune in mining. For five years he tried his luck in the gold fields from Montana to California. He never struck it rich, so instead, he convinced his brother John, still in Ohio, to come west and help him start a ranch, a business they both knew and felt they could succeed in.

John made the long trip to California and together they raised \$1,800 to buy a 160 acre ranch up the East Fork of Stuarts Fork where Bowerman Barn is now located. The date was August 26, 1861, and the Bowerman's were ready to start their ranching business. They purchased beef cattle and milk stock and planted hay and corn. In so doing, they had laid the foundation for a successful ranch.

As the brothers worked to build the ranch, Jacob's future wife, Anna Tourtellotte, was making her way towards their common destiny. After coming to Minersville from Connecticut in 1863 or 1864 and failing at one marriage, she met Jacob while working at her father's store and inn in Minersville. When John realized that Jacob was serious about Anna, he purchased a mining claim about a mile and a half from the ranch and moved in. On December 11, 1872 Jacob and Anna were married in Minersville. He was 39 and she was 21. From their marriage two sons were born; Frank Leslie and Jacob Ray Bowerman. Frank Leslie managed to live through the terrible diphtheria epidemic of 1879, but younger brother Jacob Ray died.

The ranch became very successful. The main stage road from Weaverville to Trinity Center passed through the Bowerman Ranch and soon after their marriage Anna began to utilize her inn-keeping experience to take advantage of this. She started her own small-scale inn business in a five bed capacity room, called the "Bull Pen," located above the kitchen of the main house. Many teamsters transporting goods, and male travelers used her inn.

Beef cattle were sold directly to businesses in Minersville and to the mines through a wholesaler who butchered the beef and sold it at 10 cents per pound. The dairy stock were another important source of income. Butter was sold by the "whiskey barrelful" to local businesses and miners.



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The old ranch house, built at about the same time as the barn, burned in the late 1920s and the only building remaining is this splendid hand built barn.

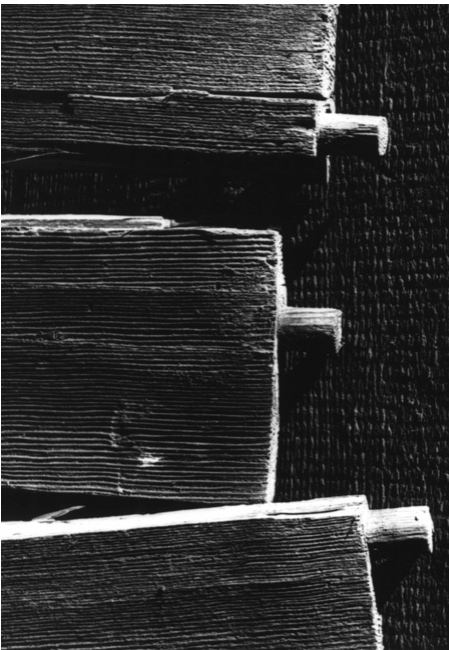
In addition to leaving the barn, the Bowerman's gave their names to a number of local places including Bowerman Ridge, Bowerman Gulch, and Bowerman Meadows. Lake Anna, in the Trinity Alps Wilderness was named after Anna because she was the first white woman to hike to the lake. She first saw the lake when accompanying Jacob who was herding cattle to Bowerman Meadows for the summer grazing.

Frank Leslie Bowerman married Nellie Bolton of Minersville in 1895, and in that same year John Bowerman, who never married, died at the ranch. Jacob eventually died at the age of 83 in 1917 and Anna in 1931 at age 80. Though Jacob Bowerman first came as a miner, he stayed and helped to build a successful ranch and played his part in turning Trinity County into the stable and productive area it is today.

Barn Description

The two story rectangular wood structure is made from whipsawn lumber and hand-hewn beams while the foundation was originally built of hand-placed native stone.

The outside dimensions are forty feet wide by sixty feet in length. It is approximately forty-six feet to the peak at the front side and approximately fifty-five feet to the peak at the back side. The barn's frame is made almost entirely of pine and some of the flooring beams are a full sixty feet



Mortise and Tenon joints

long. The post and beam construction incorporates mortise and tenon joints secured with hardwood pegs. Square nails hold the flooring and siding together. The rare whipsawn siding of board and batten construction remains in fair to good condition with remnants of the original red ochre and oil paint still visible. Above the main floor at the front and back of the barn were floored loft areas

used to store hay. Very little of the pulley system used to lift hay into these areas now remains.

Minor alterations have been made to the barn over the years. Part of the covered feeding and milking area on the south side of the structure was removed at an unknown

date. A cattle chute was added to that side about 30 years ago but has been removed due to its badly deteriorated condition. The original wood shake roof was replaced with tin sheeting around 1940. In addition, the tack room located on the left as you enter the barn was added by Jacob Bowerman's grandson-in-law somewhere between the years 1917 and 1931.

The bottom story of the barn is partitioned along a north-south axis and is accessible from the rear. Horse stalls are in the back section and the front has a feeding/bedding area for milk cows and calves. The front side was split into two levels so that the calves could be separated from the milk cows at night. At the time of purchase in 1974, a narrow, steep staircase which provided access between the top and bottom floors was badly rotted and several steps were missing. In an attempt to slow the rot which was occurring due to rain coming through holes in the roof, a partial restoration of the barn was undertaken in 1975. Old tin sheeting which matched the original was purchased to replace what had blown off over the years. The underlying beams and rafters were replaced with beams finished with draw knives and broadaxes to retain the hand-hewn integrity. Another restoration job was to replace the 2" X 12" whipsawn flooring, which had rotted, with rough-sawn lumber.

Some time in the past, a portion of the foundation stone was pushed out by vandals in order to gain access to the bottom story. These stones were cemented back in place. The ventilation louvers above the front entrance to the barn were also broken by vandals. Replacement copies were hand whittled by a local craftsman. The rotten staircase between floors was used as a pattern for a replacement and a safety rail was added to the top.

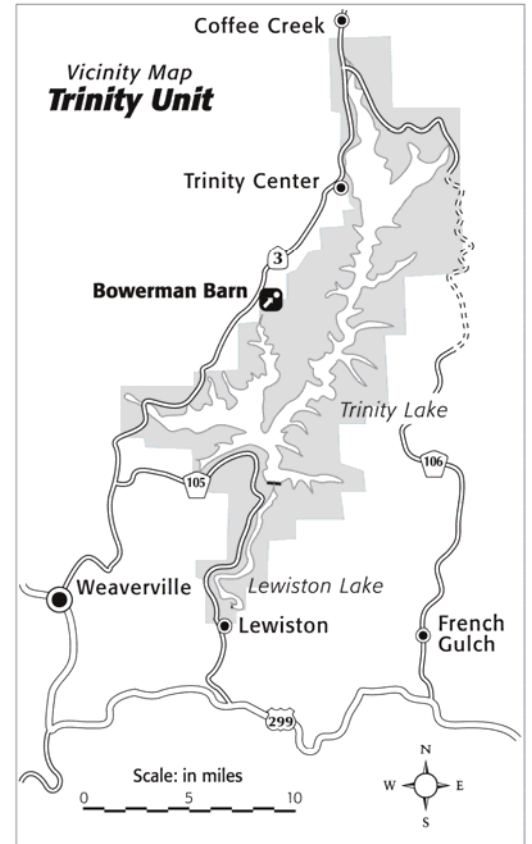
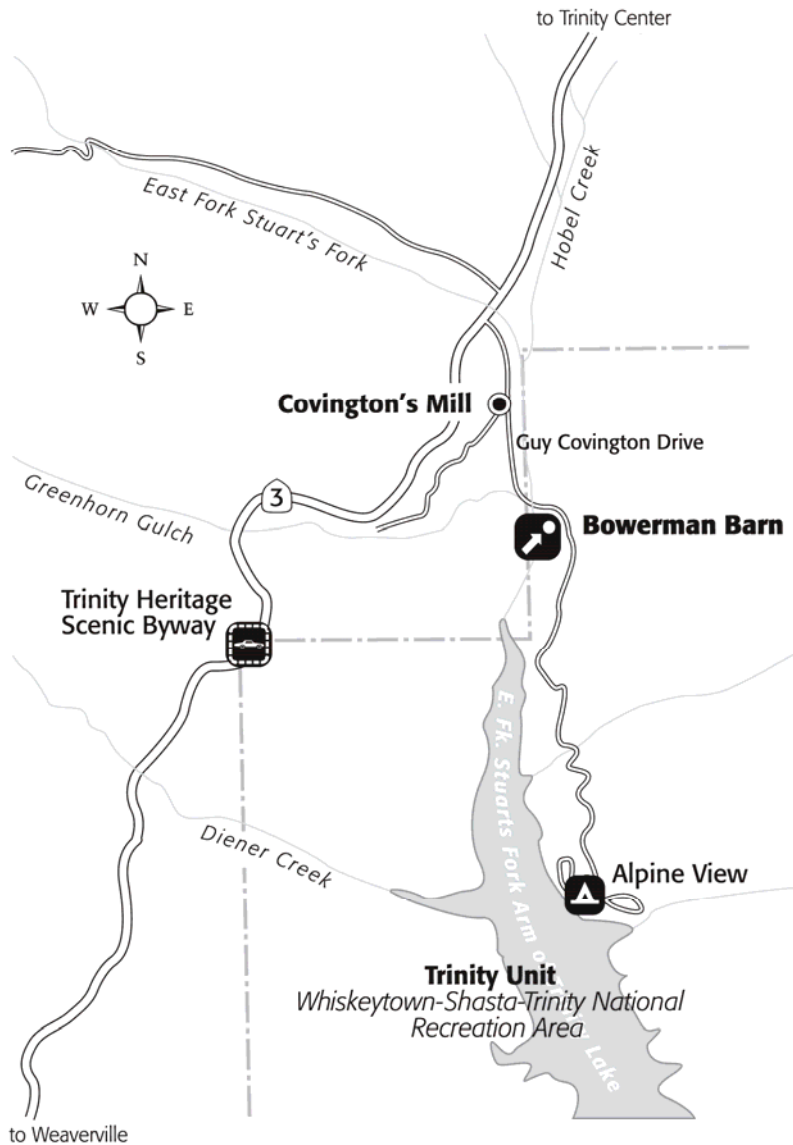
During the summer and fall of 1993 additional restoration was done. This work focused on the rear of the barn, in particular on the foundation and southwest corner. Rotted beams were replaced and a new foundation put in. Additional work is needed on the front foundation and several rotted beams need to be replaced. As in the old days repair and maintenance of the barn is an ongoing job.



Back of the barn

Map to Bowerman Barn

Highway 3 to Guy Covington Drive



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