

# A piece of the past comes home

By Sara Putnam

*We heard from many readers who were pleased to see the photo of the newly refurbished Jacobson Barn on the front page of the last Journal. Now we have more good news ...*

One day late this past fall, Don Grant came to the Dean's Office carrying a large, weathered metal object. Grant was the College's livestock superintendent from 1949 until he retired in 1986, and what he brought with him was the weathervane that had been blown off the Jacobson Barn's cupola in the hurricane of 1938.

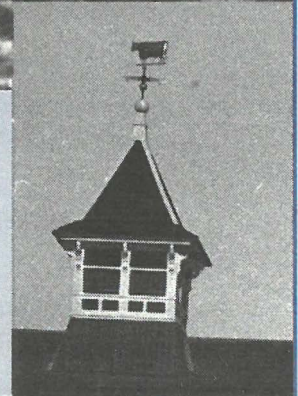
The 1938 hurricane, one of the worst storms in American history, made landfall on September 21 over Long Island and moved north over Connecticut, causing devastating wind, flood, and fire damage throughout New England and killing nearly 700 people.

Writing in the *UConn Advance* of September 21, 1998, Mark Roy notes that 1938 fall classes had been scheduled to begin September 23 at Connecticut State College, as UConn was then called, but that "what students found as they arrived was a



Photo of the the Jacobson Barn taken some time between 1913 and 1920.

Inset: Detail of the weathervane.



Photos courtesy of Archives & Special Collections at the Thomas J. Dodd Research Center, University of Connecticut Libraries.

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campus without electricity or telephones, no water, and hundreds of trees blocking roads and walkways.”

During the storm, the weathervane had been blown off the Jacobson Barn at the north end of campus and it came to rest across the road in the yard of Professor H.L. Garrigus, who was head of the Department of Animal Industries. Amidst all the damage to be repaired, returning the weathervane to its perch was not a high priority, so Garrigus put it in his barn, where, according to Grant, it remained, forgotten, for many years. Eventually, while cleaning out his barn Garrigus found the weathervane and brought it back across the road to Don Grant, who worked at the Jacobson Barn. Another weathervane had been installed, and fearing the old one might be stolen from the barn, Grant took it home.

Last fall, Grant, who lives in Mansfield, had been watching the progress on refurbishing the Jacobson Barn, and something tugged at his memory. He looked around at home, and, sure enough, in his cellar was the old weathervane.

It's actually not the entire weathervane, but the figure from the top, a bull of the milking shorthorn breed. It is 19 inches high and 30 inches long, made of hand-hammered copper that still bears traces of the gold leaf that once covered it completely. Grant doesn't know who made it or how long it graced the top of the barn. But he does remember that in 1938, the Jacobson Barn housed a herd of about 15 milking shorthorns, a breed used for both beef and milk production. They can be red, white, red with a white stomach, or a mixture of red and white called roan.

The Jacobson Barn was built about 1870 by the Farwell family, replacing an earlier barn on the site; in fact it is often called the Farwell Barn. In 1908 the Farwell farm was sold to George

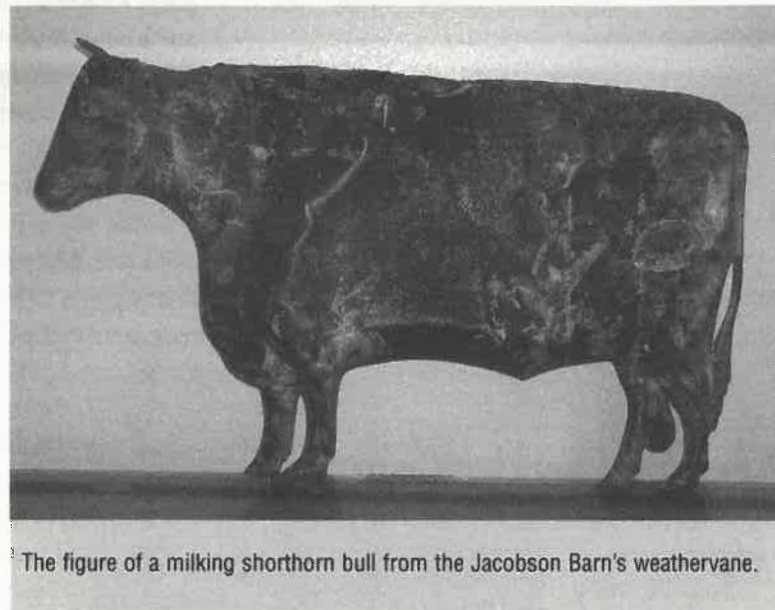
Jacobson, who sold it to Connecticut Agricultural College in 1911. Shortly after, the one-story sheep barn was added to the barn.

In recent years, the barn has not been used to house animals and it had fallen into disrepair. It was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2001 as the Farwell Barn, for its agricultural, education, architectural, and engineering significance. The University committed funds to stabilize the structure and repair the exterior of the barn, contracting with

Kronenberger and Sons Restoration of Middletown, a firm specializing in restoration, preservation, and adaptive re-use of period structures, to do the work

If additional funding becomes available in the future, the barn's interior may be adapted for re-use. But for now the structure is stable and the exterior work is finished except for removing the foundations of the sheep barn, which had partially collapsed and was taken down during the work last fall. John Warner, project manager in University Architectural and Engineering Services, says of Kronenberger and Sons, "They did a great job and took a great deal of pride in doing it right." The Jacobson Barn now looks much as it did when the photo on page 8 was taken (some time between 1913 and 1920), but without the sheep barn, and of course, without the weathervane. The old bull is too fragile to be put back on the barn.

Says Dean Kirklyn Kerr, "The weathervane is a great treasure and will be exhibited in the Dean's Office for everyone to see and enjoy."



The figure of a milking shorthorn bull from the Jacobson Barn's weathervane.

At this writing, an American flag flies from the restored cupola, but Kronenberger and Sons are donating a new weathervane that will be installed as soon as the weather permits. Bill Deuschle, project manager for Kronenberger and Sons, says, "this was an unusual project and we were pleased to be a part of it. Tom [Kronenberger] Jr., one of the principals, and Tom [Kronenberger] Sr., who started the business in 1946, both worked full time on this project. Tom Sr. says he's retired, but he's still very active in the business, and this was really a labor of love for him."

Deuschle continues, "We worked very closely with the University on this project ... there was discussion that there had been a weathervane. The budget was tight on the project, but we thought it would be nice if we could put that back too. So we looked at old pictures, and Tom Sr. said an older gentleman had stopped by ... We had this one made to look as much like the original as we could. It has the directional arrow with feathers and the ball [which are missing from the original]. It's our pleasure."