“Kindelberger Old”

It would not be fair to paint Kindelberger’s stone barn, nationally recognized, and ignore the original, a barn that sits quietly in the shadows of the famous one but still manages to exude rustic charm. As I wrote about the famous 1883 stone barn, barns and farms that pass from one or two generations are fairly common, but one that has passed to the fifth generation – Marge Baumberger – qualifies as unique.

The Kindelberger family emigrated here from Bavaria, as many Germans and Swiss did in that era. In fact, this is now called Switzerland Township. When he arrived in 1846, the patriarch, Frederick Kindelberger, paid $950 for a farm from John Lapp who was the original pioneer, starting the farm in 1831. This deed was recorded in the Marietta land office, Ohio’s first, and was signed by President Andrew Jackson, as was required for all land deeds in those years.

Frederick was a German stone mason and used his skills to build the “old” barn’s (1855 is etched inside the barn) stone foundation – the rest of the barn is wooden – and a log cabin. It’s a small one, typical of a conservative farmer’s first barn – think small, then grow, and finally build a bigger one. The stones, quarried on the farm, have weathered over the years, culminating in an array of colors – tan, Indian brown, light gray, and ochre. Some of the side boards have warped and a few are missing – but not many, adding to the barn’s homey look. The original roof was probably made of wooden shingles, the material used for roofs in the 1850s, but, perhaps due to the farmer’s prosperity in the late 1800s, it was covered with tile at some point, which has paid off: a century later, the roof still works.

Today the barn houses horses owned by Marge and Gary’s daughter, and, if you’re lucky, one of them will pop his head out of one of the two windows to say “Hi.” Social beings, these horses.

I liked the composition. From standing about 50 yards below, I could see three levels: a red, modern barn on top of the high hill, just above a green field, next the old barn getting a direct hit from the sun, showing off its ancient stone work, and finally a green-brown hillside decorated with a string of irregular fence posts, accented by a giant gray-black tractor tire, lying flat on the ground. How could I refuse to paint this?

I don’t know how much longer this barn will last, but I’m glad I had the chance to paint it and write about it. Its charisma fascinated me and, I hope, it may fascinate others through this painting.