

## Amanda Kaufman – Collingwood Barn

This is Kansas Profile. I'm Ron Wilson, director of the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development at Kansas State University.

“Feel the Barn.” That sounds like a political slogan of 2016, but it may also describe the deep feeling of a young woman who is helping a historic barn find new purpose in rural Kansas. It's today's Kansas Profile.

Amanda Kaufman is events coordinator for the Collingwood Barn in Pretty Prairie, Kansas. A man named Mart Collingwood started building this barn in 1913. The current owners, Dan and Brenda Pace, are descendants of the Collingwood family who also started a grain company.

Amanda first saw this barn in 2011. She is a Colorado native who went to Oklahoma State University. While working at a rodeo Bible camp in Texas, she met a young Kansan named Blaine Kaufman from Pretty Prairie. Their relationship grew.

Amanda then met Blaine's sister Brooke who was preparing to get married. Brooke had seen the old, historic Collingwood Barn and dreamed of getting married there. When the barn's owners were contacted about this possibility, they replied, “Oh no, the barn's in awful condition. Come take a look at it, you'll change your mind.”

They came to look, but their minds were not changed. So, some 30 or 40 friends of Brooke got together to clean out and fix up the old barn for her wedding. One of those was her future sister-in-law, Amanda.

“I fell in love with this barn when I saw it,” Amanda said. “It was breathtaking. I found the hidden treasure of this small town.” They cleaned out the barn, ran an electric line to it, and decorated for the wedding. When the owner saw the barn cleaned and lit up at night, she almost cried.

The wedding was a success. Amanda went on to graduate from college, marry Blaine, move to Pretty Prairie, and work at the USDA office in nearby Hutchinson. The possibilities for this barn remained in the back of her mind.

Then came April 1, 2015. A powerful storm passed through Pretty Prairie with devastating straightline winds that damaged houses and uprooted trees. “The west wing of the barn was almost shredded to pieces and the center beams were knocked out of position,” Amanda said. Construction experts questioned that the barn could be saved. “We prayed that it would be repaired or restored and not destroyed,” Amanda said.

The owners were on the brink of finding someone to tear down the barn when a contractor from Kingman showed up uninvited. “It's not as bad as you think,” he told the Pace family. Ultimately, they decided to rebuild the barn. “He may have regretted those words later,” Amanda said with a smile.

As the barn was being rebuilt, Amanda felt called to approach the owners about the barn becoming a wedding and event venue. They agreed to her ideas. She became the event coordinator.

Today, the Collingwood Barn events center is a beautifully restored structure with modern lighting and electricity, surrounded by a spacious lawn. It is built in the shape of a Maltese cross with four wings emanating from the center. Each of those wings is 4,000 square feet, so at 16,000 square feet total, this is believed to be the largest barn in Kansas.

The first floor has authentic horse stalls, and the huge hayloft upstairs has 30 foot vaulted ceilings for large gatherings. There are two flights of stairs plus an elevator hand-made from the antique wood.

The roof was redone and the original cupolas repainted. The building was re-sided in an attractive green color with white trim. Of two adjoining lean-tos, one is half-enclosed as a bridal suite and the other is a covered outdoor seating area. A kitchen prep area is inside. The facility is designed for weddings, corporate events, and special occasions. “We want to involve the community,” she said.

“It’s a place to make memories for a lifetime,” Amanda said. The barn is located just west of Pretty Prairie, population 610 people. Now, that’s rural. For more information, go to [www.collingwoodbarn.com](http://www.collingwoodbarn.com).

Feel the barn. No, it’s not a political slogan. We salute Amanda Kaufman for making a difference by helping this barn serve a new purpose, as this barn is reborn.

For the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development, this is Ron Wilson with Kansas Profile.