

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Couser Barn (NeHBS # CD00-12)

and or common NA

2. Location

street & number NA not for publication

city, town Laurel vicinity of

state Nebraska code 031 county Cedar code 027

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>NA</u> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Curtis A. Crandall

street & number Box 567

city, town Laurel NA vicinity of state Nebraska

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Register of Deeds, Cedar County Courthouse

street & number NA

city, town Hartington state Nebraska

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date On-going federal state county local

depository for survey records Nebraska State Historical Society

city, town Lincoln state Nebraska

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date <u>NA</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The William Couser barn is an dodecagon-shaped cattle and horse feeding barn of frame construction built c. 1912-13 for William Couser. The single story with loft structure has a sectional cone roof with a large projecting gable roof hay dormer. The barn is located on a farmstead in the southeast portion of Cedar County. Structural and historical integrity has been preserved except for minor interior modifications.

The William Couser barn is located on a farmstead in rural Cedar County near the town of Laurel, Nebraska. Cedar County is situated in the extreme northeast portion of the state, bordering the South Dakota state line. As the only known extant centric barn in Cedar County, the structure has become a landmark in the area, well known to community residents.

Built c.1912-13 of wood-frame construction, the barn is dodecagon-shaped in plan, with each of the 12 sides measuring 14 feet. Its total circumference measures 168 feet, with the height of the walls from ground floor to the haymow floor measuring 8 feet, while the sectional cone roof reaches a height of approximately 24 feet. The roof, of pie-shaped sections, is penetrated by a large projecting gable roof hay dormer with turkey tail overhang. The walls are sheathed with horizontal clapboarding and the entire structure rests on a concrete foundation. Openings are arranged in a functional manner with doors on the main level found on the south (one to each side of the granary), northwest, northeast and east southeast facades. Small window openings, with divided panes, are found on the main level, and in the gabled hay dormer providing light to the loft floor above. Roof sections are covered with asphalt shingles, replacing the original wood shingles.

In the central portion of the barn interior, twelve timber posts help support the conical roof. This circular area originally served as hay storage for livestock feeding. The hay was brought into the mow through the loft door (south side) by hay slings utilizing a track at the top of the mow. Originally the barn housed cattle on the west and horses on the east. The grain bin is located in the front (south) portion of the barn. Interior modifications have been made in past years to accommodate livestock changes in the farm's operation. The hay mow floor was extended covering the central portion of the barn. The west side is now used for a farrowing house and the east side which was used in recent years for dairying, contains ten stanchions. One horse stall remains extant.

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Description

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Nomination of this structure recognizes the barn as a significant product of Nebraska's agricultural history and excludes any other surrounding buildings which lack architectural and/or historical integrity. The property was surveyed by the Nebraska Historic Preservation Office in May, 1985. The owners have since painted the barn its original colors, red with white trim.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates c. 1912-13 Builder/Architect Unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The William Couser barn is architecturally significant as one of a small and finite number of centric barns in Nebraska, illustrating the second phase (post 1900) of centric barn construction in the state, more specifically the polygonal variety of light frame construction. On a local level the barn represents a well preserved example of the round barn phenomena, and is the only such barn recorded in Cedar County. The period of significance is derived from the original construction date of the barn. (c. 1912-13).

Architecturally significant, the William Couser barn represents a well preserved example of the centric-barn phenomena in Nebraska, one for which the state has only a small number of recorded examples. Centric barn construction occurred in the midwest in two phases--the first, which became evident in the 1880's and the second which occurred during the years c. 1905-20. Octagonal shaped barns were prevalent during the first period while true round barns dominated the second. Polygonal barns, including the twelve sided variety such as the Couser barn, could be found throughout both periods but were most generally built between the years 1910-1920 (Soike, 1983, p. 3).

In the "Frank Uehling Barn" National Register nomination, D. Murphy discusses the centric barn phenomena in Nebraska:

Promoted first in the 1880's, centric barns were considered functionally more efficient than traditional barns in that, ideally, operations could be performed in a circumferential fashion, with access to every part of the barn from one aisle. In actual fact, however, the nineteenth century barns did not function in that fashion for a variety of reasons--first, early efforts attempted to force multifunctional traditional barns into the octagonal shape, resulting in too-much fragmentation of the space to make them work efficiently, in fact they were less efficient in space utilization than traditional barns; and second, traditional heavy-timber framing methods applied to the early barns were structural nightmares, resulting in excessive structural obstruction of the interior. Because of struc-

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Significance

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tural difficulties, the early barns were almost always polygonal in shape, and then primarily octagonal in reflection of Orson Squire Fowler's publications during that time.

The second phase of centric barn construction, corresponded with the years c. 1905-1920. Two factors distinguish the phase--the introduction of light frame wall plate construction, and specialization of barn function. The adoption of light, or balloon, frame construction allowed true-round shapes to be built (although polygonal shapes were still constructed), and most significantly allowed the loft floor and roof structures to be carried exclusively by the walls, or by the walls and the central silo. Large spaces, unobstructed by structural members resulted. This in conjunction with functional specialization (e.g. cattle-feeding barns, dairy barns, etc.) finally allowed centric barns to achieve the efficiency of operation which was first touted in the 1880's.

The Couser barn is a good example in Nebraska of this second, architecturally logical phase of barn construction.

In Roger L. Welsch's "Nebraska Round Barns," he identifies thirty-five centric barns in the state, the majority of which are believed to be standing. Although Welsch was unable to verify construction dates for all of the barns, it appears that at least 32 of the 35 structures were built in the twentieth century. Of the total, sixteen were built of light frame construction, and less than one percent were dodecagon in shape. The Couser barn is the only centric barn recorded in Cedar County, and stands today as a well-preserved, locally significant example of the centric-barn phenomenon, representing one of a very small recorded number of polygonal (dodecagon) barn structures in the state.

Very little is known of the life of William Couser, for whom the barn was built, except that he came to Cedar County from Shelby County, Iowa in the spring of 1899, and engaged in farming and cattle raising until 1917 when the family moved to South Dakota. Oral history holds that the plans for the barn came from the University of Nebraska, however this has not been verified.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name Coleridge Southeast, Nebraska

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A

1	4	6	5	8	0	8	0	4	7	1	2	6	4	0
Zone			Easting					Northing						

B

Zone			Easting					Northing						

C

Zone			Easting					Northing						

D

Zone			Easting					Northing						

E

Zone			Easting					Northing						

F

Zone			Easting					Northing						

G

Zone			Easting					Northing						

H

Zone			Easting					Northing						

Verbal boundary description and justification An independent artifact with boundaries described by an imaginary line located 5 feet from each wall of the building, located in the NE $\frac{1}{4}$ of the NE $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 28, Township 30 North, Range 3 East, a rural legal description in Cedar County, Nebraska, excluding any adjacent real estate that lacks historical association or integrity.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state NA code county code

state NA code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Joni Gilkerson, Architectural Historian

organization Nebraska State Historical Society date April, 1986

street & number 1500 R Street telephone 402/471-4767

city or town Lincoln state Nebraska

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature James A. Hanson

title Director, Nebraska State Historical Society date June 11, 1986

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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Bibliography

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Crandall, Curtis A. "Couser Barn (NeHBS # CD00-12) rural Cedar County, Nebraska," Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey Form, June 1983, updated November 1985, on file at the Nebraska State Historical Society, Lincoln, Nebraska.

Monnier, Mrs. Goldie (Couser), Oral history of Couser family in letter written to Cindy Tooker, student volunteer, July 2, 1985. On file at the Nebraska State Historical Society, Lincoln, Nebraska.

Murphy, D. "Frank Uehling Barn (DD00-49), Rural Dodge County, Nebraska," National Register of Historic Places-- Inventory Nomination Form. Lincoln: Nebraska State Historical Society, 1984.

Soike, Lowell J. Without Right Angles: The Round Barns of Iowa. Des Moines: Iowa State Historical Department, Office of Historic Preservation, 1983.

Welsch, Roger L. "Nebraska's Round Barns," Nebraska History 51:1 (1970), pp. 49-92.



Photo 1 of 6 – view looking north northeast showing south (front) and west facades
Photo by Joni Gilkerson, May 1985, NSHS (8505/4:4)



Photo 2 of 6 – view looking northeast showing south (front) and west facades
Photo by Joni Gilkerson, May 1985, NSHS (8505/4:5)



Photo 3 of 6 – view looking west showing east façade
Photo by Janet Jeffries Spencer, May 1985, NSHS (8505/4:6)

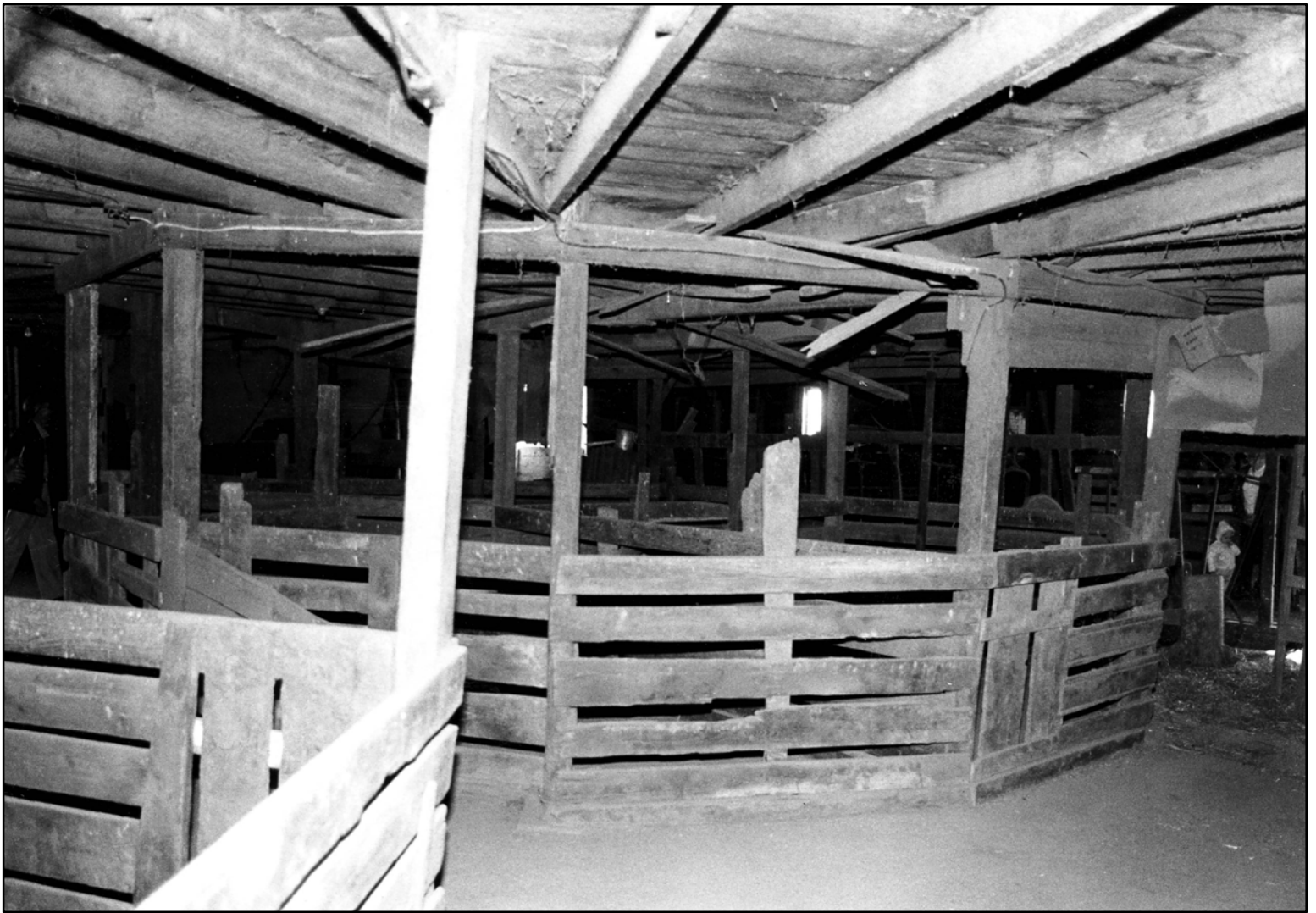


Photo 4 of 6 – interior view looking northeast showing stall arrangement
Photo by Janet Jeffries Spencer, May 1985, NSHS (8505/3:21)



Photo 5 of 6 – interior view looking southeast showing hay mow
Photo by Janet Jeffries Spencer, May 1985, NSHS (8505/3:25)



Photo 6 of 6 – interior view looking up showing roof truss system
Photo by Janet Jeffries Spencer, May 1985, NSHS (8505/3:24)