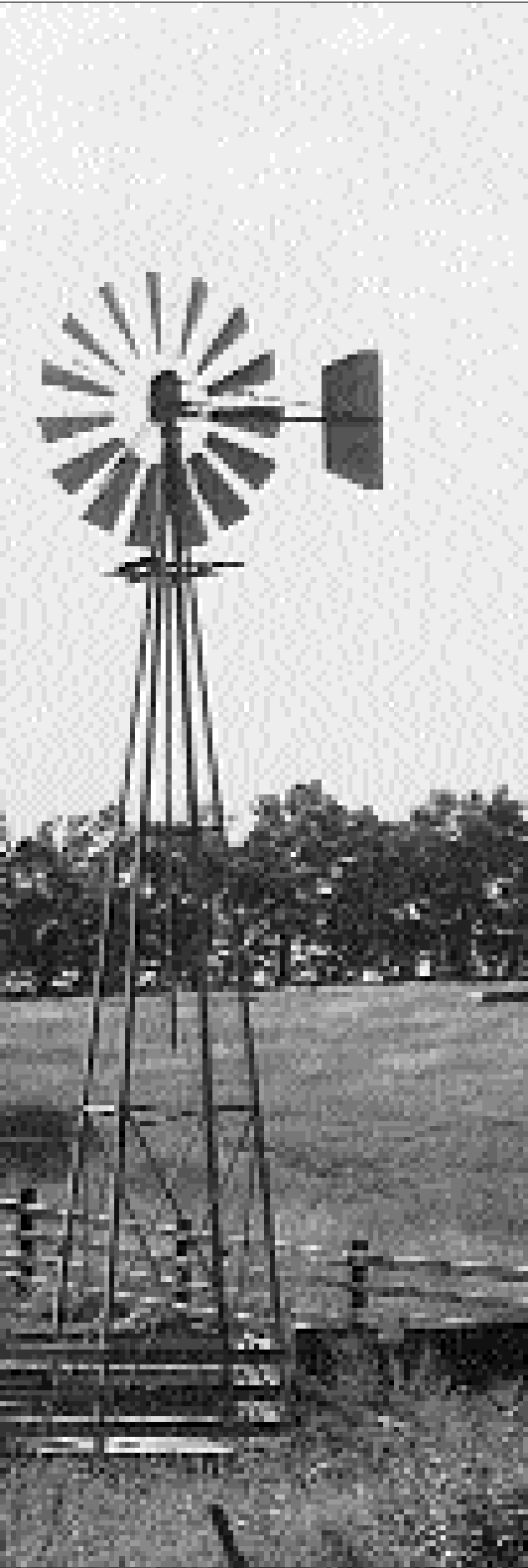


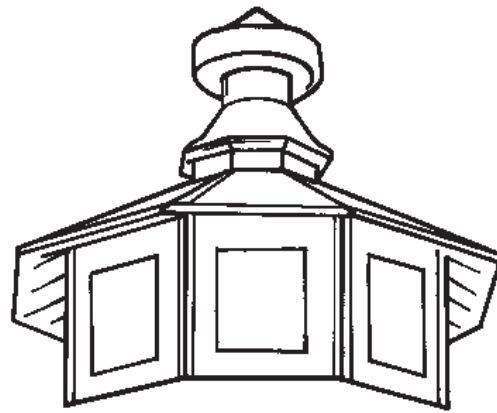
THE ROUND BARN OF KANSAS



The Charles and James Drennen/David Stump barn in Marshall County. For details on this barn see page 80 (no. 27).



by James R. Shortridge



Whether during the heyday of their construction in the 1910s or now, round barns have always attracted public attention. Editors and readers of farm magazines once engaged in spirited debate over the advantages that this new shape might offer for housing animals and for storing feed and equipment. More recently the appeal has been based largely on scarcity and aesthetics. Fewer than fourteen hundred round barns have ever existed in the United States, most of them in Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, and Wisconsin.¹ Kansas is on the fringe of this concentration. A local survey begun in the 1980s has located forty-one such barns built over the years for and by Kansas farmers and stockmen. Of these, a mere twenty-four still remain on the landscape (Fig. 1).

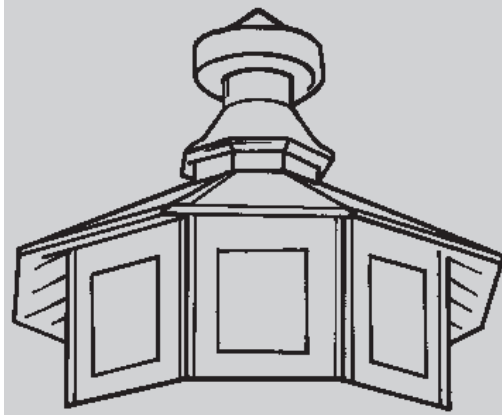
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The author would appreciate hearing from readers with supplemental and/or corrected information on any of these structures and any other barns that have so far escaped his sleuthing. He also would like to thank the following individuals for their assistance in this ongoing investigation: Evelyn Armitage, Fred Bernhardt, Fred Burgess, Mark Burke, Margaret Duncan, Dixie Elkington, Imogene Fleming, Dana Fulkerson, Lewis Gilbreath, Mary Ellen Goodwin, Kathy Haney, Wallace Harden, Murton Hartzler, Marion Hawke, Pat Heath, Bradley Judy, Ann and Jerry Kendall, Arlen Kirkwood, Shirley Koch, Jessie Lickteig, Alice Lueck, Lloyd McCandless, Dean McConnell, Leon McDaniel, Pamela Muntz, Carol Peterson, Jordia Praither, Mary Francis Proberts, Helen Reuber, Oretha Ruetti, Clay Rusk, Laurabelle Sander, Gary Shaw, Richard Sleezer, Delbert Smith, Margarette Smith, Ellen Snell, Lee Sternberger, Irma Taylor, Merle Taylor, Coralie Tighe, Gladys Walker, Don Ward, Joan Weaver, and Rosemary Williams.

1. For maps of the midwestern distribution pattern, see Keith A. Sculle and H. Wayne Price, "Barns of Nonorthogonal Plan," in *Barns of the Midwest*, ed. Allen G. Noble and Hubert G. H. Wilhelm (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1995), 188–212; see also John T. Hanou, *A Round Indiana: Round Barns in the Hoosier State* (West Lafayette, Ind.: Purdue University Press, 1993), 1–2.

If curiosity about an architectural oddity is the reason most people initially stop to look at a round barn, the striking aesthetics of these buildings is surely what brings them back. Benton Steele, a resident of Halstead and Sedgwick, Kansas, in the early part of this century and the country's leading builder, designer, and promoter of round barns, probably put the case as succinctly as anyone. He once wrote that "the circular form of building is . . . the ultimate in architectural form as well as the strongest shape ever conceived by man."² Even if one allows for some self-pride in Steele's assertion, the reactions of generations of inquisitive travelers and artists suggest that he basically was correct. Something about these barns instantly draws the eye, and from inside the attraction is even more intense. Soaring, converging rafters; muted lighting; and the graceful, circular tracks that once distributed hay bring to mind feelings of cathedral awe. Several farmers who own round barns said that small but regular streams of visitors knock on their doors to ask permission to take photographs. Complete celebratory books have been published for the round barns of both Indiana and Iowa, and such structures always are overrepresented on the quilts, note cards, and other materials that people have produced in conjunction with the Smithsonian's touring exhibition *Barn Again!* In Kansas, a similar emphasis occurs in the line drawings that Newton resident Martha Knudsen has created for her popular barn calendars and book.³

The primary purpose of this article is to provide a record of and guide to the Kansas contingent of round barns before they completely disappear from memory and the rural landscape. These buildings



will be placed in the context of their times, for the story is more complex than commonly assumed. One of their basic subtypes, the octagon barn, possibly derives from the architecture of an early world's fair. The pure circular form definitely is linked to the rise of specialized dairy farming, to the invention of the silo, and to the general movement a century ago that trans-

formed American agriculture from a traditional folk activity into an economically efficient and thereby "progressive" component of the nation's rapidly maturing capitalistic system. The round barn, in fact, is one of the most appropriate symbols for this heady, self-confident era.

Following commonly accepted practice the term round barn is used in this article to refer to a family of structures whose floor plans might more properly (although more awkwardly) be called nonorthogonal. In theory this grouping would include triangular, pentagonal, and hexagonal buildings, but in reality the only common variations are pure circular plans, octagons, and twelve- or sixteen-sided polygons. A few nine-sided barns have been reported elsewhere, but the only Kansas exception to these four basic designs was the twenty-four-sided Jeff Turley Barn that stood from 1910 until 1996 near Angola in Labette County (no. 21).⁴ The several nonorthogonal forms are united, of course, by their rejection of right angles. Such nonconformity was a radical idea in the rigid midwestern rural landscape of the early 1900s that featured a grid system of land subdivision; trim, four-square houses; and straight rows of corn and milo.

What caused this minor revolution in rural architecture? A good way to begin study of the issue is to pinpoint the dates of barn construction. This already has been done for other states, and corresponding information has been located for all but three of the forty-one known Kansas

2. Quote in Hanou, *A Round Indiana*, 17, from Shirley Koch scrapbook. Steele's granddaughter, Shirley Koch of Derby, Kansas, maintains a scrapbook of information about her grandfather, Benton Steele. A second granddaughter, Linda J. Harsin of Sedgwick, has compiled an unpublished manuscript entitled "Facts about Benton Steele." Steele deserves more detailed biographical study.

3. Lowell J. Soike, *Without Right Angles: The Round Barns of Iowa* (Des Moines: Iowa State Historical Department, 1983); Hanou, *A Round Indiana*; Martha Knudsen, *Kansas Barns* (Newton, Kans.: 1993).

4. Barn numbers refer to both the Kansas Round Barn Inventory on pages 58–89 of this article and to the corresponding map in Figure 1.

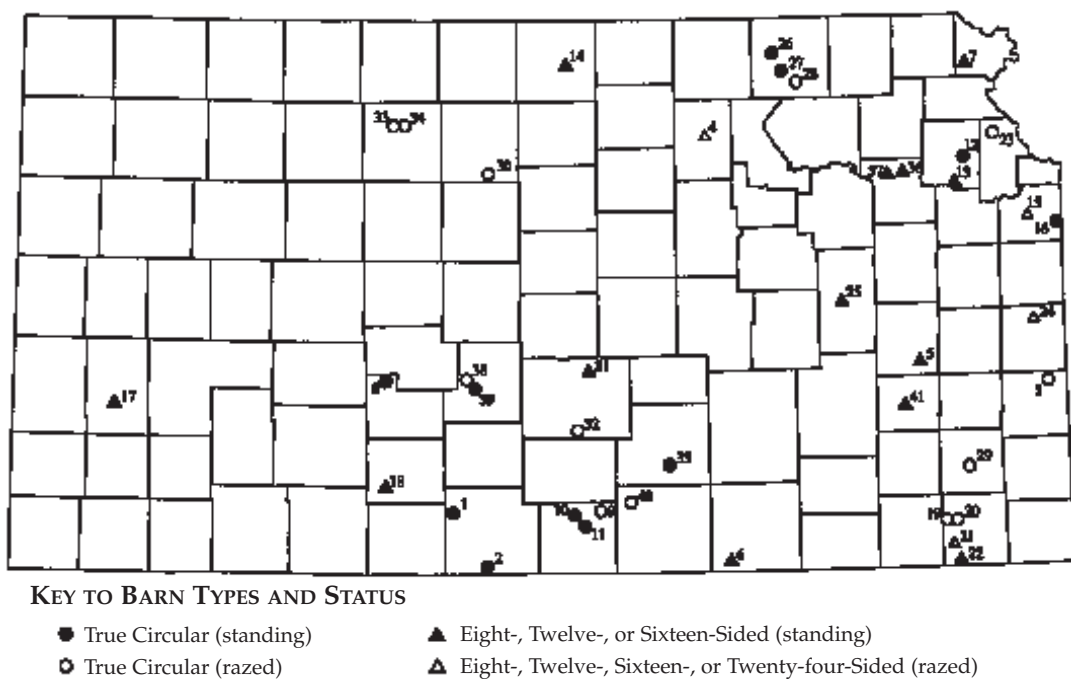
barns.⁵ The earliest examples—two octagonal structures in Shawnee County (nos. 36, 37)—were constructed in the early 1880s. Then comes a gap of some twenty years before H. T. Norton built a twelve-sided barn near Olathe in Johnson County in 1903 (no. 15), and Ed Grim erected a pure circular one in northeastern Harper County in 1904 (no. 9). The Norton and Grim barns initiated the peak period of construction in Kansas, again matching the experience of the rest of

the Midwest. Kansans built nineteen pure round barns and eleven polygonal ones between 1905 and 1915, numbers that represent 86 percent of all the pure round construction ever done in the state and 69 percent of all polygonal construction. Two additional circular barns were built during the 1920s, and two octagonal ones went up in the early 1930s. The period of enthusiasm was thus short-lived and essentially over by the outbreak of World War I.

Scholars who have traced the history of round barns believe that these buildings are largely an American phenomenon. George Washington had a sixteen-sided structure built on his Virginia estate in 1793, and the religious group known as the Shakers constructed a circular stone one at their Hancock, Massachusetts, colony in 1826. Neither of these spawned any immediate imitators, however. The direct father of the movement seems to be Elliot W. Stewart, a wealthy farmer from Erie County, New York. He designed and built an octagonal barn in

Fig. 1

ROUND BARNS IN KANSAS



1874 as an experiment and was pleased enough with the results that he published its plans, together with an enthusiastic personal endorsement, in a farm journal he edited. The idea was picked up by several other rural magazines during the next two years, including one in Chicago, and also found its way into at least two books. By 1884 Stewart said that he knew of thirty to forty octagonal barns that were inspired by his design.⁶

The Stewart plans are the most likely model for the barns northwest of Topeka that were built for orchardist Benjamin F. Vanorsdol and general farmer George W. Whiteman. The actual carpenter (or carpenters) for them is unknown, but the two barns are close enough together in construction detail and location that the same hand seems probable. They have slightly differing diameters, but both feature a central driveway that links large entry doors on the east and west and a segmented roof that is support-

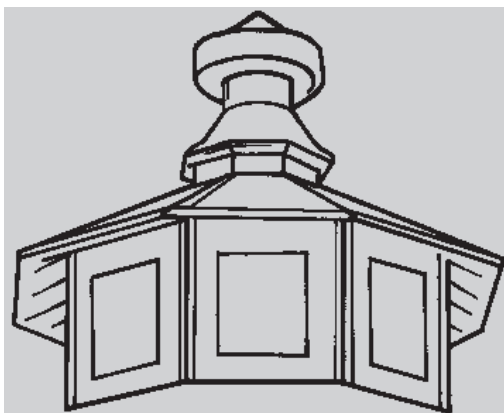
5. In addition to the Hanou and Soike sources, state-level studies include Jerry Apps and Allen Strang, *Barns of Wisconsin* (Madison, Wisc.: Tamarack Press, 1977); Roger L. Welsch, "Nebraska's Round Barns," *Nebraska History* 51 (Spring 1970): 48-92; Stephen T. Whitney, "Round Barns," *Vermont Life* 25 (Summer 1971): 8-15.

6. Chicago's *National Live-Stock Journal* (successor to Elliot Stewart's *Live-Stock Journal*, Buffalo, N.Y.) reprinted the original article as a series. See *National Live-Stock Journal* 9 (February, March, April 1878): 52-53, 100-1, 149. The books are J.P. Sheldon, *Dairy Farming* (London: Cassell, Petter, Gilpin and Co., 1885); Elliot Stewart, *Feeding Animals*, 2d ed. (Lake View, N.Y.: 1883). For the best general descriptions of this history, see Hanou, *A Round Indiana*; Sculle and Price, "Barns of Nonorthogonal Plan"; Soike, *Without Right Angles*.

ed at its midpoints by eight large posts extending up from an unusual interior rock foundation. Both also have partial basement levels, used for fruit storage by Vanorsdol and for livestock by Whiteman.

Neither of the two Shawnee County barns possess the grid-like interior arrangement of Stewart's published plans. Perhaps this is just a case of the local carpenter being innovative, but it also suggests that other experiments with the octagonal form may have been common knowledge at the time. One intriguing idea is that farmers were stimulated by the presence of octagonal buildings at the new and popular agricultural fairs of the time. Octagonal designs had been common in these settings ever since New York's Crystal Palace, the country's first and most famous exposition building, was built in that shape in 1853. The St. Louis Fair Association featured an octagonal building on its grounds later in the 1850s, and the idea also filtered down to the local level, including several Kansas examples. The first permanent building at the well-known Western National Fair at Bismarck Grove in North Lawrence was a large (115-foot diameter) octagon known as the tabernacle. It was constructed in 1878 or 1879. A somewhat smaller but slightly older example (1875) is the stone floral hall that still stands in a Manhattan city park.⁷

Elliot Stewart touted his octagon design for its inexpensive construction, wind resistance, efficiency of use, and general strength of form. These attributes were to be repeated consistently throughout the history of the round-barn movement. The lower cost of building materials was given the most attention, an argument drawn irrefutably from the laws of geometry. A cylinder contains greater volume in relation to the area of its exterior surface than does a rectangu-



lar solid. Promoters repeated this fact tirelessly and emphasized how it would translate easily into a 20 percent savings on the lumber. An octagon was not a circle, of course, but Stewart claimed that this shape represented the best practical compromise. It "approaches the circle in economy of outside walls," he wrote, "and is as easily built as a square."⁸

Why did the octagon design not catch on in Kansas or elsewhere? We have no way of knowing with certainty, but the essence is perhaps captured in some damning remarks made in 1891 by J.D. Walters, a professor at the Kansas State Agricultural College. In a general essay on barn construction he reported that at least some farmers had found the octagonal design hard to construct. Difficulties in executing its unusual angles led not only to increased labor costs for construction, he argued, but also to

the annihilation of the deep "corners," the most valuable parts of a rectangular barn. . . . It may also be said that all pyramidal or conical roofs, except upon buildings with extended wings, look supremely ugly, and that public opinion would surely render its verdict against such a structure by naming it the cyclorama or the circus. The only regular polygon form which is often used is the square.⁹

If Professor Walters was correct in claiming that Kansas farmers by the early 1890s had labeled octagonal barns as ugly instead of innovative and impractical instead of efficient, it is all the more remarkable that this same general idea was revived little more than a decade later. This would have been possible only with strong support from the agricultural establishment and/or a new conceptualization of its use and design. Strangely enough, both things happened nearly simultaneously. The process began indirectly with experimentation on an improved silo design by Professor Franklin H. King at the agricultural experi-

7. Cathy J. Ambler, "The Look of the Fair: Kansas County Fairs, 1854-1994" (Ph.D. diss., University of Kansas, 1996), 52-76, 108-34. Besides the Manhattan floral hall, other octagonal buildings survive on Kansas fairgrounds at Belleville, Blue Rapids, Onaga, and Peabody. In addition, Sylvan Grove has a hexagonal building and Goodland an unusual, elongated octagonal one.

8. Stewart, *Feeding Animals*, 89.

9. J. D. Walters, "The Barn," in Kansas State Board of Agriculture, *Quarterly Report* 11 (Topeka: Kansas Publishing House, March 1891), pt. 2, 56-61 (quote on 57).

ment station at the University of Wisconsin. Ensilage—livestock fodder preserved by storage in an air-tight container—had been shown by the 1880s to be an excellent winter feed for dairy cattle. A limitation to its use, however, was that the original, square-plan silos of the time suffered from air leakage because of differing pressures placed by the stored materials on the sides and corners of the structures. This meant feed spoilage. Professor King solved the problem with a cylindrical, wood-stave design and promoted the vastly improved product in an 1891 publication.¹⁰

The association between the new silo and round barns began in 1889 when C. E. King, a dairy farmer near Whitewater, Wisconsin, and brother of Professor King, needed a new barn and silo for his eighty-cow operation. Professor King offered to help and decided that his new silo design could best be utilized by placing it in the center of a perfectly round, two-level barn. It was a revolutionary idea in at least two ways. First, the circular form was to be executed in wood, an innovation made possible by the employment of a flexible “balloon” frame. In this technology a network of closely spaced two-by-four studs was substituted for the traditional “timber” frame of heavy, widely spaced beams. It was an idea that had been used successfully for houses since the 1830s, and it also worked well on the barn. The balloon innovation was overshadowed, however, by another innovation. The presence of a central silo prompted him to completely reconceptualize the barn’s internal arrangement. Unlike the Stewart octagons, in which the familiar rectangular stalls and granaries had been forced into a differently shaped container, King decided to make positive use of the circle’s inherent attributes. He created a series of efficient rings. Cattle would be placed in wedge-shaped stalls that faced the center. There they could be fed from the central silo with minimal steps, while the wedge design of the stalls would properly confine the animals more toward their heads (the

10. Franklin H. King, “The Construction of Silos,” University of Wisconsin Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin 28 (Madison, Wisc.: State Printers, 1891); see also N. S. Fish, “The History of the Silo in Wisconsin,” *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 8 (December 1924): 160–70.

stanchion location) than at their hindquarters. Similarly, manure removal would be easy with another circular path, this one featuring a collection gutter and, perhaps, an overhead trolley system. In the loft area, a hay fork connected by ropes to a circular overhead track would effortlessly distribute hay to any sector of that level.

Professor King was justifiably proud of his new barn design. He wrote about it in the 1890 annual report of the experiment station and then publicized the idea widely through articles in the popular *Hoard’s Dairyman* and the Chicago-based *Breeder’s Gazette* magazines plus a more extended discussion in all six editions of his own influential textbook on rural architecture.¹¹ The round-barn concept quickly became a hot topic for discussion. It was an obvious break with tradition and as such was seen by many people as a symbol for the new “scientific” approach to agriculture that the land grant universities and their associated experiment stations had been advocating for years. Hybrid seed; purebred livestock; the concepts of fallowing, strip cropping, and terracing—change was everywhere.¹² None of it was more visible, however, than in this radically new shape for the farm’s most prominent building.

As discussions of round barns proliferated, entrepreneurs from throughout the Midwest began to take King’s basic idea, make modifications to it, and promote themselves as designer-builders. Iowans, for example, pioneered in the use of vitrified clay tile for walls (the “Iowa barn”), but Indianans made the biggest single contribution.¹³ Professor King’s barn had a simple conical roof. It used the central silo as the top support but required additional vertical posts at its midpoints similar to those previously described for the octagonal barns in Shawnee County. These posts and their attendant bracing interrupted the openness of the interior and especially interfered

11. Franklin H. King, “Plans of a Barn for a Dairy Farm,” in University of Wisconsin Agricultural Experiment Station, *Seventh Annual Report* (Madison, Wisc.: State Printers, 1890); see also *Hoard’s Dairyman* 26 (April 19, 1895): 159; *ibid.* 28 (March 26, 1897): 103; *Breeder’s Gazette* 31 (April 7, 1897): 264; King, *A Text Book on the Physics of Agriculture*, 6th ed. (Madison, Wisc.: 1914).

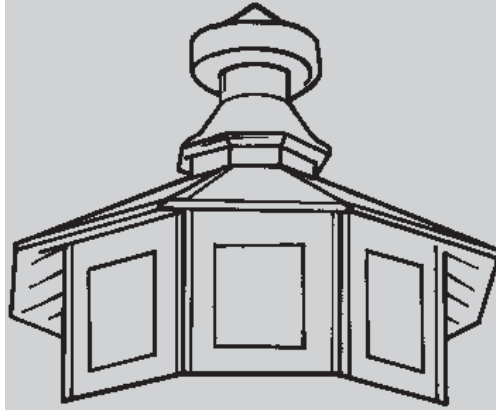
12. A compact account of this process is Wayne D. Rasmussen, “The Impact of Technological Change on American Agriculture, 1862–1962,” *Journal of Economic History* 22 (December 1962): 578–99.

13. Soike, *Without Right Angles*, 30, 53.

with easy use of the haymow. The Indiana innovation, a self-supporting, two-pitched, gambrel roof eliminated these cumbersome posts.

The first round barn to feature the new gambrel roof seems to have been that of Fremont Goodwine in Warren County, Indiana, in 1901. The principal designer-builder was fellow Hoosier (and future Kansan) Benton Steele, but probably Isaac McNamee and his son also were involved. Both Steele and McNamee soon became major barn promoters. Steele was especially active, touting the gambrel-roofed model as the "ideal circular barn," and placing regular ads in the *Indiana Farmer* and the *Breeder's Gazette*. By 1909 he had sold plans all over the Midwest and taken his own building crew as far west as South Dakota. The success of all the builders was bolstered further by a chance outbreak of severe storms on June 24, 1902. Tornadoes and other high winds destroyed many barns and houses just east of Indianapolis but left untouched the one local round barn. Such structures could now also be promoted as "cyclone proof."¹⁴

Benton Steele realized early on that an endorsement of his "ideal" circular design by agricultural experts would help sales. He failed to arouse the interest of people at either Indiana or Purdue Universities in his home state but did impress Professor C.B. Dorsey at the University of Illinois. Dorsey first hired Steele to build a new barn on his personal farm. Then, in 1908, Steele helped university officials in the dairy department erect the first of three round barns on their Champaign-Urbana campus. When the Illinois people issued a laudatory bulletin in 1910 called the "Economy of the Round Dairy Barn," they legitimized the design in the eyes of many skeptics.¹⁵ Record numbers of farmers across



the Midwest decided to take the plunge, and the enthusiasm even spread to some major corporations. Sears, Roebuck and Company inserted a round design into their "Honorbuilt" line of barn kits in 1911, and the major Davenport, Iowa, farm supplier, Gordon-Van Tine Company, followed suit soon thereafter. Sales data for these companies are unavailable, but at least one Kansas

barn, that of Lewis Rowe in Marshall County (no. 26), is known to be a Sears design.¹⁶

Construction of round barns continued briskly until 1917 when the United States entered World War I. Although no one expected this disruption to be anything but temporary, it proved to be otherwise. The University of Illinois reissued its influential bulletin on the barn in 1918, but only a few people took advantage of these plans to actually build any of the structures in the 1920s or afterwards.¹⁷ What happened? No single reason accounts for the decline. Some of it is related to the general poor economic health of the nation's farms that increased steadily throughout the 1920s, but most scholars have focused more on flaws with the barn itself and particularly how these flaws tended to be emphasized more in the agricultural press after 1910 than they had been before. Many articles and letters to the editor cited difficulties in finding carpenters skilled enough to design and frame the buildings. Other people emphasized that round barns greater than approximately sixty feet in diameter tended to be dark inside and have relatively poor ventilation. Both were special problems for dairy operations. Perhaps the biggest disillusionment with the round design, however, came with the realization that central-barn locations were not ideal for silos. The towers were difficult to fill in that position. The ensilage in-

14. Hanou, *A Round Indiana*, 16-22. Designers also created two other types of self-supporting roofs, neither as popular as the two-pitched gambrel. One was a gambrel with three different pitches, the other a domed model.

15. Ibid., 25-26; Wilbur J. Fraser, "Economy of the Round Dairy Barn," University of Illinois Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin 143 (Urbana, Ill.: 1910).

16. Sculle and Price, "Barns of Nonorthogonal Plan," 201; Soike, *Without Right Angles*, 53-56; Oretha Ruetti, "Sears Roebuck Round Barn Has Weathered Years," *Marysville Advocate*, December 14, 1995.

17. Wilbur J. Fraser, "The Round Barn," University of Illinois Agricultural Experiment Station Circular 230 (Urbana, Ill.: 1918).

side also produced noxious methane gas and other odors that made barn life unpleasant for animals and farmers alike.¹⁸ When the Kansas Agricultural Experiment Station issued a bulletin on recommended designs for dairy barns in 1925, it contained no mention of circular structures.¹⁹

Research by John Hanou has uncovered still another reason for the decline of at least the pure circular form of the round barn. This was a rivalry within the original small group of Indiana builders, a dispute that came to have direct implications for Kansas. Benton Steele seems to have been the creative leader of those individuals, but two other men, Horace Duncan and Isaac McNamee, had obtained a patent for the self-supporting roof. After McNamee died in 1909, Duncan began to seek compensation from the owners of already constructed round barns, claiming patent infringement. Hanou has concluded that the impact of these threats was "immediate and tremendous," leading Indiana farmers and others to abandon any plans for new round barns and forcing Steele to escape some of Duncan's tyranny by moving to Kansas, where he had family. Another implication of the Duncan campaign involved a new building strategy adopted by farmers who still wanted a round design but feared lawsuits. They began to construct twelve-sided, sixteen-sided, and other polygonal designs (even a revival of the old octagon) to circumvent the letter of the law. Kansas has ten such polygonal barns constructed after 1909, but it is unknown how many (if any) of these were so designed specifically because of Duncan.²⁰

Benton Steele was a talented architect who could design many structures other than barns. After relocating to Kansas in 1909, according to two of his granddaughters, he helped build Wichita North High School, a dormitory at the state women's prison in

Lansing, and the courthouse at Larned.²¹ He never abandoned his love for the circular barn, however. The plans sold by the Gordon-Van Tine Company were his, for example, as were some of the hay equipment and other barn accessory designs made and sold by the Loudon Machinery Company of Fairfield, Iowa.²² Moreover, he is thought to be responsible for at least five of the twenty-four circular barns in Kansas. From oldest to youngest they are the W. C. Foley and Walter Kay barns erected in 1910 in Sedgwick and Jefferson Counties, respectively (nos. 35, 12); the Charles and James Drennen barn built in 1913 in Marshall County (no. 27); and a horse barn-cow barn pair constructed for Walter Sander in Rooks County in 1914 and 1915 (nos. 33, 34).²³ That all of these differ from one another is testimony to the designer's willingness to customize his plans for individual needs.

The distribution pattern of Kansas round barns reveals no striking relationships to any particular farming regions or ethnic concentrations (Fig. 1). Low numbers on the High Plains make sense, given that in the 1910s (the round-barn peak) this region had been reoccupied for little more than a decade following a disastrous drought in the 1890s. Similarly, a tradition of transient cattle grazing without winter feeding in the Flint Hills meant minimal need there for such barns. The most remarkable map features are the small clusters of barns. Ten counties have (or had) two or more barns, led by Labette with four and Harper and Marshall with three apiece. This is the pattern one would expect from an innovation touted mostly through magazine articles and advertisements. When a local person decided to build one, it would be natural for that example to prompt a relative or neighbor to do the same.

In Kansas it is known that Raymond Brinkman in Johnson County (no. 16) and Henry Biehler in Leavenworth County (no. 23) both received their in-

18. Hanou, *A Round Indiana*, 26–32; H. Wayne Price and Keith A. Sculle, "The Failed Round Barn Experiment: Horace Duncan's Experience as Carpenter," *Pioneer America Society Transactions* 6 (1983): 1–7; Sculle and Price, "Barns of Nonorthogonal Plan," 204–8; Soike, *Without Right Angles*, 57–61; Welsch, "Nebraska's Round Barns," 79–84. An example of a negative article is C. E. Doane, "Round Barn Handicaps," *Country Gentleman* 77 (September 14, 1912): 26.

19. J. B. Fitch and V. R. Hillman, "Dairy Buildings for Kansas," *Kansas State Agricultural College Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin* 236 (Topeka: Kansas State Printing Plant, 1925).

20. Hanou, *A Round Indiana*, 29–30.

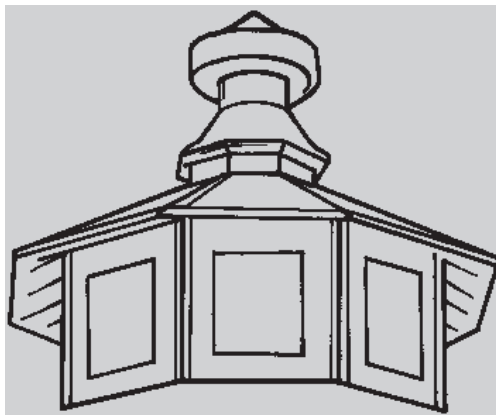
21. Shirley Koch, telephone interview by author, November 1998; Coralie Tighe, *ibid.*

22. Donald Nebergall, *ibid.*; Sculle and Price, "Barns of Nonorthogonal Plan," 198.

23. Inventory and National Register files, Cultural Resources Division, Kansas State Historical Society, hereafter cited as National Register files.

spiration from magazine articles, and that Hayes Coe in Woodson County (no. 41) learned about the design during his student years at Kansas State Agricultural College. Fred Cottrell had a story on his Marshall County barn (no. 28) published in *Breeder's Gazette*, so it is likely that his motivation came from the same source.²⁴ Benton Steele's advertisements and articles in the *Kansas Farmer*, *Hoard's Dairyman*, and elsewhere obviously had impacts as well (Fig. 2). As for the clusterings, family and/or builder connections explain most of them. Kate Drennen (no. 27) was a sister of Fred Cottrell (no. 28); and Harry Reeves, the owner/builder of a round barn (no. 32) in southeastern Reno County, was the son of D. A. Reeves, the owner of a nearby barn (no. 40) in northwestern Sumner County. Similarly, Benton Steele built both round barns in Rooks County (nos. 33, 34), A. H. McConnell was involved with two barns (nos. 19, 20) in Labette County, an unidentified carpenter built two barns (nos. 38, 39) in Stafford County, and (probably) another unidentified man designed yet two more barns (nos. 36, 37) in Shawnee County. The only oddity is that Harvey County, where Steele made his home from 1909 until his death in 1943, apparently never contained any of his famous architectural creations.

Research in other states suggests that early owners of round barns tended to be relatively wealthy, with ordinary farmers joining in only after the designs were better established.²⁵ Studies on this front have not been exhaustive, but no strong correlations have been found between barn ownership and the size of land holdings recorded on county plat atlases of the time. Of the two early octagonal barns, for example, Benjamin F. Vanorsdol (no. 37) and George W. Whiteman (no. 36) owned good-sized but not huge tracts of 260 and 240 acres, respectively. Ed Grim, the owner of the first circular barn in the state



(no. 9), was a major rancher, but H. T. Norton, the owner of the first twelve-sider (no. 15), farmed only 120 acres. A much stronger association exists between barn size and wealth. All four owners whose barns exceeded eighty feet in diameter were men of considerable means: Fred Cottrell (no. 28) and Charles and James Drennen (no. 27) in Marshall County, Dell Brownback (no. 2) in Barber County, and Zach Thompson (no. 11) in Harper County.²⁶

Another basic question concerns the total numbers of round barns in Kansas. If Indiana once had 226, Wisconsin 215, Illinois 155, and both Iowa and Minnesota 115 apiece, why is the local number so small?²⁷ Part of the answer is that one should expect the totals to be higher in areas closer to where the idea originated (Wisconsin), was perfected (Indiana), and was most effectively promoted by the state university (Illinois). The Kansas State Agricultural Experiment Station never issued any bulletins specifically on round barns, and the Kansas State Board of Agriculture limited its commentary to a brief story about Fred Cottrell's new barn in its 1909–1910 report and a reprinting of a short (yet laudatory) article from the Iowa periodical the *Homestead* in its 1911–1912 report.²⁸ The other major factor working against the round barn's popularity in Kansas was the structure's strong association with dairy operations. Kansas has never been a major dairy center, and most of the state's round barns were built for other purposes, often for horses or as general-purpose structures. A good indicator of this is that only five of the seventeen polygonal barns ever construct-

24. "A Round Cattle Barn in Kansas," *Breeder's Gazette* 57 (March 30, 1910): 834.

25. Hanou, *A Round Indiana*, 15–18; Sculle and Price, "Barns of Nonorthogonal Plan," 201–4.

26. Fred Cottrell was described as a man of "considerable means" in "A Round Cattle Barn in Kansas," 834. Additional information on Cottrell and the Drennens is from Oretha Ruetti, telephone interview by author, November 1998; for information on Brownback and Thompson, see Knudsen, *Kansas Barns*, 49, 611; Lee Sternberger, telephone interview by author, November 1998; National Register files.

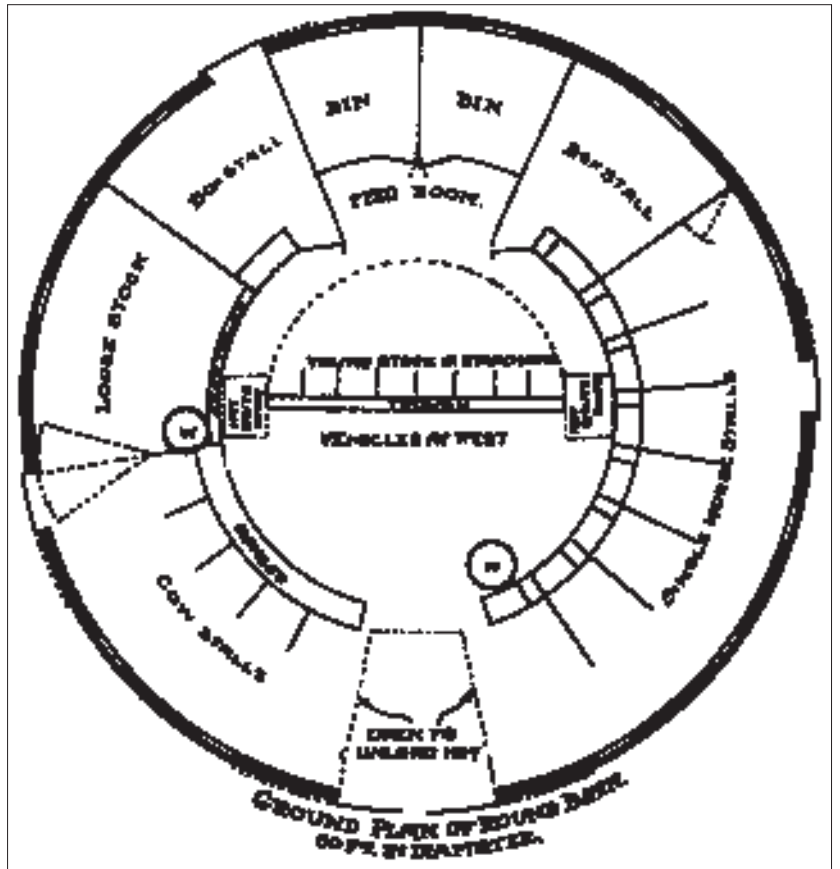
27. Hanou, *A Round Indiana*, 1.

28. "A Marshall County Hay, Grain and Stock Barn," Kansas State Board of Agriculture, *Seventeenth Biennial Report, 1909–1910* (Topeka: Kansas Department of Agriculture, 1911), 188–89; "Efficiency of the Round Barn," *ibid.*, *Eighteenth Biennial Report, 1911–1912* (Topeka: Kansas Department of Agriculture, 1913), 139–42.

ed here (29 percent) and only five of the twenty-four circular ones (21 percent) contain or contained silos, figures considerably lower than in states to the north and east.

Two contradictions struck me about round barns as I talked with people across the state: how everybody loves them (owners, neighbors, and strangers alike) and how these structures are disappearing rapidly from our landscape. Figure 1 shows twenty-four barns standing and seventeen razed. This ratio does not look too threatening until the dates of destruction are noted. Only seven happened before 1979, including two by fire and two due to the Big Hill Lake project in Labette County. The other ten, 24 percent of the total, have occurred since 1987. Most of these have been products of neglect. Like their rectangular cousins, round barns have outlived their original function as stables for working horses or small dairy herds. If adaptive reuses and/or public or private monies are not found soon, they will almost all be gone. As recently as November 1998 the H. T. Norton barn near Olathe (no.15) was bulldozed to make way for more Johnson County houses.

Can anything be done to save the barns? The answer is yes, but the work will not be easy. A few owners, such as Ann Kendall (no. 22), Arlen Kirkwood (no. 36), and David Stump (no. 27), have invested considerable sums of personal money into their barns even though they do not anticipate utilizing them fully in the future. This is laudable, but we cannot expect every owner to be so altruistic. The critical maintenance factor, roof repair, is especially expensive on the massive domes of these barns. John Hanou in 1993 estimated that even relatively inexpensive asphalt shingles for one would cost between ten thousand and twenty thousand dollars.²⁹ One possibility for aid is government dollars that become available once a structure is placed on the National



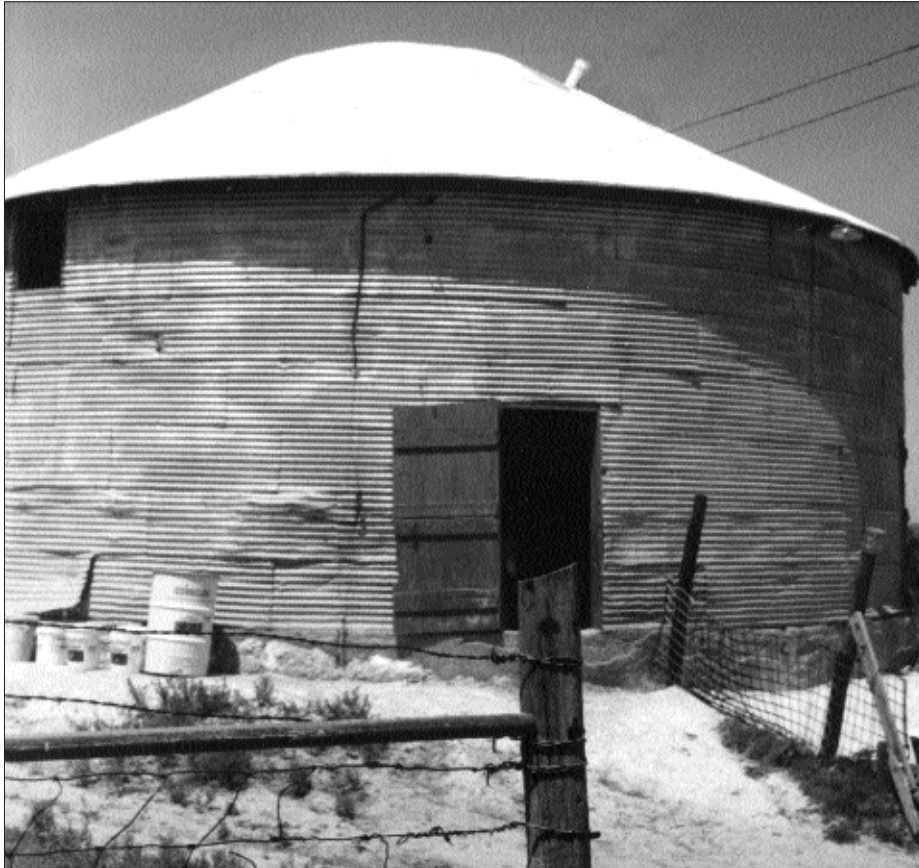
This illustration appeared in an article promoting circular barns, written by Benton Steele for *Hoard's Dairyman*, August 19, 1910.

Register of Historic Places. Two Kansas round barns now have this status, those built for Henry Fromme in Kiowa County (no. 18) and Zach Thompson in Harper County (no. 11); so did that of Henry Biehler in Leavenworth County (no. 23) before it burned in 1978. Others could be added if individuals would work to complete the needed documentation. Ownership of a barn by a local preservation group also will ensure repairs. The shining example here is the Fromme barn, restored by the Kiowa County Historical Society and used for local celebrations. A final possibility is adaptive reuse by a private owner. One Wisconsin barn is now a restaurant that advertises "a square meal at the round barn," but perhaps a better model is provided by Imogene Fleming. She and her late husband converted part of their barn near Wichita (no. 35) into an osteopathic clinic and part into an antique shop. The main, round section is rented out for meetings, parties, and dances.

29. Hanou, *A Round Indiana*, 60-61.

KANSAS ROUND BARN INVENTORY

The following entries, with a photograph or sketch when available, provide basic information on the forty-one known Kansas round barns.³⁰ They are arranged alphabetically by county, and, within a given county, from north to south. The first name assigned to a barn, unless otherwise noted, is that of the original owner. Locations are given using standard legal description (section, township, and range). Visitors to any of the structures should remember that all are privately owned and that permissions are needed.



1. BARBER COUNTY—ARLOS RUSK BARN

SITE: NE quarter, Sec. 31, T31S, R15W; twenty-two miles west of Medicine Lodge, then two and a half miles north.

TYPE AND SIZE: circular without silo; diameter unknown but described as “small.”

DATES AND STATUS: built in 1926; moved to present location from two miles away; in good condition in 1999.

CURRENT OWNER: Clay Rusk.

The barn sits on the Rusk Ranch. Its roof, a continuous dome, contains no cupola. The interior features a loft, harness room, and granary. The siding is horizontal boards.

30. The information comes partly from scattered accounts in newspapers and other local publications, but mostly from interviews undertaken by Martha Hagedorn-Krass and the author with present and past owners, neighbors, local librarians, and various county officials. Inaccuracies inevitably occur in such a process, if nothing else because of the haziness of time.



2. BARBER COUNTY—DELL BROWNBACK/LEE STERNBERGER BARN

SITE: NW quarter, Sec. 8, T35S, R13W; six and a half miles west of Hardtner.

TYPE AND SIZE: circular without silo; 86-foot diameter, 38 feet 8 inches to roof peak.

DATES AND STATUS: built in 1912–1914; in good condition in 1999.

CURRENT OWNER: Lee Sternberger.

Brownback was a prominent breeder of Hereford cattle. The building was designed initially as a show barn with a central ring surrounded by pens. Later it was modified to stable horses. The roof is unusual, with a low eave line and a slowly rising dome. A large, Gothic-inspired hay door and hood project from the roof. Seventeen windows on the main level and others in a large cupola provide adequate light in this very large barn. The siding is vertical boards painted white, and the interior contains an expensive trolley system for manure removal.³¹

31. For an article on the Brownback / Sternberger barn, see *High Plains Journal* (Dodge City), June 18, 1990.

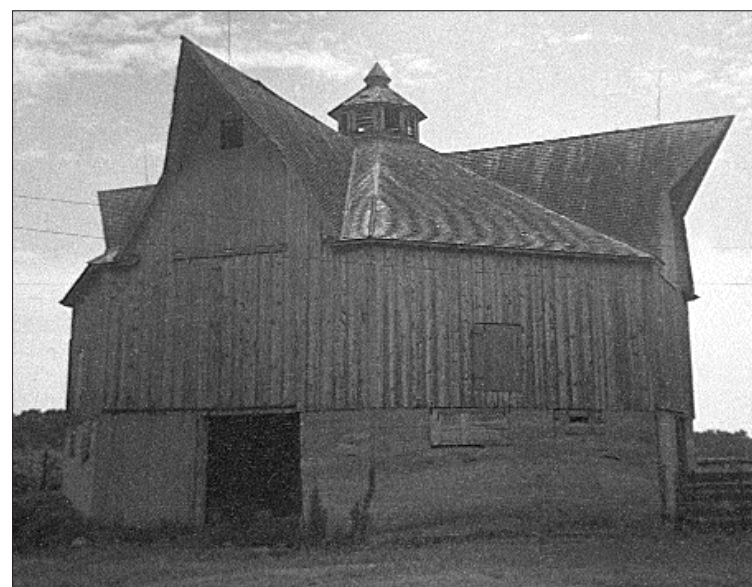
3. BOURBON COUNTY— IKE SHIRLEY BARN

SITE: SE quarter, Sec. 19, T23S, R25E; one mile north and one mile east of Fulton.

TYPE AND SIZE: circular without silo; no estimate of diameter.

DATES AND STATUS: built in 1914; razed in 1994.

The barn was built for a dairy herd. It had a manure trolley but no silo or loft area. A hay door and hood projected slightly from the upper level. The lower six feet of the walls were concrete, the upper section horizontal board construction. Both sections contained numerous small windows. The roof had an unusual monitor design, meaning that its single pitch was interrupted midway by a vertical surface. Windows on this surface allowed additional light into the interior. The roof was capped by a venting cupola.



4. Clay County—Lewis Kretzmeier Barn

SITE: NE quarter, Sec. 35, T7S, R2E; two miles west and two miles north of Clay Center.

TYPE AND SIZE: octagonal without silo; no estimate of diameter.

DATES AND STATUS: built about 1915; razed about 1998.

Kretzmeier owned only 160 acres but built a unique barn. The lower six feet of the walls were concrete, the upper section was of vertical boards, but the roof was its most distinctive feature. It had two ridge lines that intersected at right angles to form a cross. This design also produced four gable projections leading into a large loft, each one featuring a prominent hay hood. An octagonal cupola atop the building provided even more character.



5. COFFEY COUNTY—JOHN AND ALLEN DAVIS BARN

SITE: NE quarter, Sec. 5, T22S, R16E; four miles east and one and three-quarters miles south of Burlington.

TYPE AND SIZE: sixteen-sided with a central silo; 72-foot diameter.

DATES AND STATUS: built in 1909; in fair condition in 1999.

BUILDERS/DESIGNERS: John and Allen Davis.

CURRENT OWNERS: William and Rosemary Williams.

An unpublished paper by Allen Davis's granddaughter, Patty Wilcox, provides details for this barn. A wood-stave silo thirty-six feet tall was built first (from a kit) and the barn then constructed around and over it for protection. The barn is a two-story design built on a modest hillside to provide ground-level entrances for both stable and storage levels. The stable level was excavated under only a third of the barn, however. The structure was intended for general use, and its stalls and other interior features remain generally intact. The barn walls are vertical boards, originally painted red, with white battens. The roof is not self-supporting. It has sixteen sections, a single pitch, and is supported by two rounds of tall poles (black walnut and blackjack oak). The inner group of eight poles abuts the silo, the other is midway between the silo and the eaves. The roof is topped with an octagonal cupola and weathervane.

6. COWLEY COUNTY—HALL /DON WARD BARN

SITE: NW quarter, Sec. 29, T34S, R4E; one mile east of Arkansas City (703 North Centennial Road).

TYPE AND SIZE: octagonal without silo; estimated 50-foot diameter.

DATES AND STATUS: built about 1930; in good condition in 1999.

CURRENT OWNERS: Don and DeeAnn Ward.

The barn was built primarily for dairy cattle, but a third of it was partitioned off for the Hall family to live in while they constructed a house. It is a one-level barn made from Silverdale Limestone. A rampway cut through the ground rock enabled cattle to enter the structure easily.





7. DONIPHAN COUNTY—JOHN FUHRKEN BARN

SITE: NW quarter, Sec. 27, T4S, R19E; three and a half miles south of Denton, then a half mile west on Highway 20.

TYPE AND SIZE: octagonal without silo; 58-foot diameter.

DATES AND STATUS: built about 1914–1915; in good condition in 1999 although the main entry has been enlarged and the interior gutted for hay storage.

CURRENT OWNER: Orlin Sturm.

Fuhrken built his barn primarily to stable mules. It originally contained five double stalls, a single stall, two granaries, a harness room, and a full loft. Two large hay doors project through the roof on opposite sides. The roof is segmented and single-pitched and is supported by interior posts and braces. The walls—vertical boards with battens—contain many small windows. Two gabled machine-shed additions extend to the northeast and northwest.³²

32. The Fuhrken barn was featured in a 1992 television commercial for Budweiser beer. See *Kansas Chief* (Troy), September 3, 1992.



8. EDWARDS COUNTY— JOHN NEBERGALL BARN

SITE: SW quarter, Sec. 3, T23S, R19W; ten miles north of Kinsley on Old Highway 183.

TYPE AND SIZE: circular with a central silo; no estimate of diameter.

DATES AND STATUS: built before 1917; in poor condition in 1999.

BUILDER/DESIGNER: possibly Benton Steele (Steele built a barn in Scott County, Iowa, for another Nebergall).

CURRENT OWNER: Randy Barnes.

Nebergall was a wealthy railroad man from Missouri who owned two and a half sections of land in Edwards County for his Angusdale Ranch.

This barn was built for his smaller dairy herd (it could hold twenty-four cows for milking). The silo is concrete and projects through the top of the roof. The walls, of vertical boards, contain many windows. The Nebergall barn provides the best Kansas illustration for the claim that round barns are cyclone proof—it survived a storm that destroyed a nearby horse barn.

9. HARPER COUNTY— ED GRIM/TED NEWSUM BARN

SITE: SW quarter, Sec. 1, T31S, R6W; one mile north of Runnymede.

TYPE AND SIZE: circular without silo; no estimate of diameter.

DATES AND STATUS: built in 1904; razed about 1975–1976.

Grim owned the Runnymede Valley Stock Farm and built this barn for his Percheron horses. It had horizontal board siding, a central ventilation shaft capped by a cupola, and an unusual roof line in which a single pitch was interrupted by a short, monitor-style wall at its midpoint.³³



33. For an article on the Grim/Newsom barn, see Paul F. Long, "The Round Barns of Harper County," *Kanhistiquie* 1 (August 1975): 3–4.



10. HARPER COUNTY—LEWIS BABCOCK/OLIVER KELLER BARN

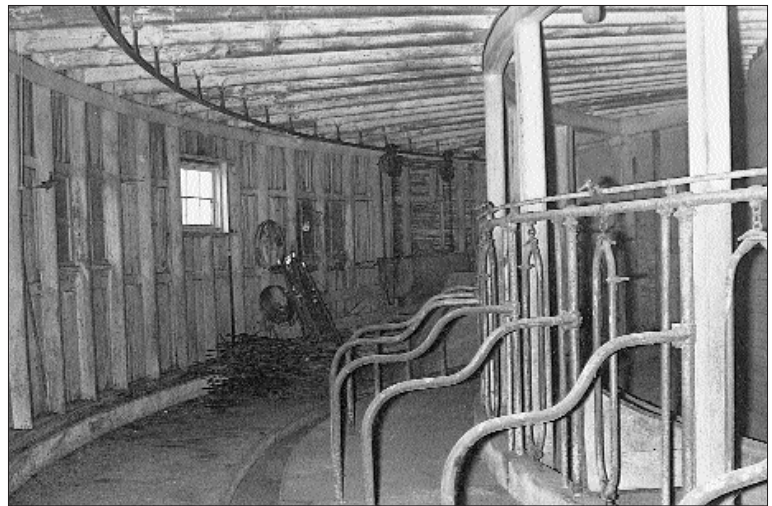
SITE: SW quarter, Sec. 30, T31S, R6W; one and a half miles north of Harper.

TYPE AND SIZE: circular without silo; approximately 60-foot diameter.

DATES AND STATUS: built in 1908; in good condition in 1999.

CURRENT OWNERS: Oliver and Frieda Keller.

Babcock intended this barn primarily for dairy cattle, but he kept horses in it as well. A manure gutter and trolley system are near the outer wall. A small, gable-roofed entrance projects a few feet from the barn proper, and the walls are vertical boards painted white. The roof is a classic, self-supporting design (two-pitch gambrel) topped with a cupola.³⁴



34. For an article on the Babcock/Keller barn, *see* *ibid.*



**11. HARPER COUNTY—
ZACH THOMPSON/
DALE WOHLSCHEGEL BARN**

SITE: SE quarter, Sec. 9, T32S, R6W; three miles east of Harper, then a half mile south.

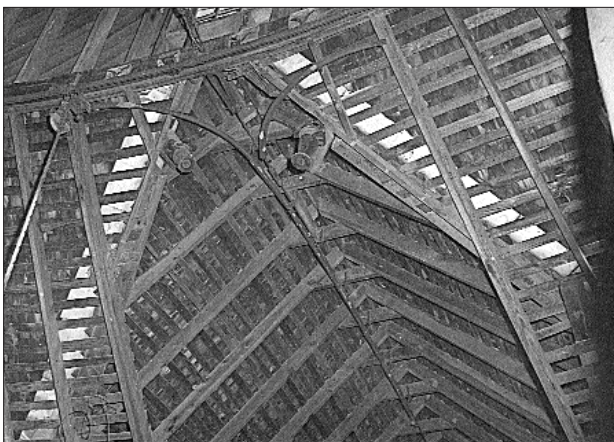
TYPE AND SIZE: circular with two silos adjacent to it; 80-foot diameter, 75 feet tall.

DATES AND STATUS: built in 1912–1913; the roof was badly deteriorated in 1999.

CURRENT OWNER: Dale Wohlschlegel.

This is the largest and most elaborate of the remaining Kansas round barns. It is on the National Register of Historic Places but needs immediate attention if it is to survive. The barn was expensive when built (sixteen thousand dollars) and features concrete blocks made on the site for its lower walls and for twin silos

that flank the main entrance. The entrance itself is through a two-and-a-half-story, gabled projection. The barn was intended for general use, including milking. Its interior is truly massive and contains two main levels plus hay tracks at two different loft heights. Cottonwood was used for joists, studs, and stalls. The walls are vertical boards above the concrete base and feature many windows. The roof is a monitor design with more windows in its vertical section.³⁵



35. For an article on the Thompson/Wohlschlegel barn, see *ibid.*



12. JEFFERSON COUNTY—WALTER KAY/LARRY ELKINGTON BARN

SITE: NW quarter, Sec. 2, T10S, R19E; two miles east of Oskaloosa on Ninety-fourth Street.

TYPE AND SIZE: circular without silo; 68-foot diameter (100 feet with its former surround-shed, shown in the above photo), 50 feet tall.

DATES AND STATUS: built in 1910; in fair condition in 1999.

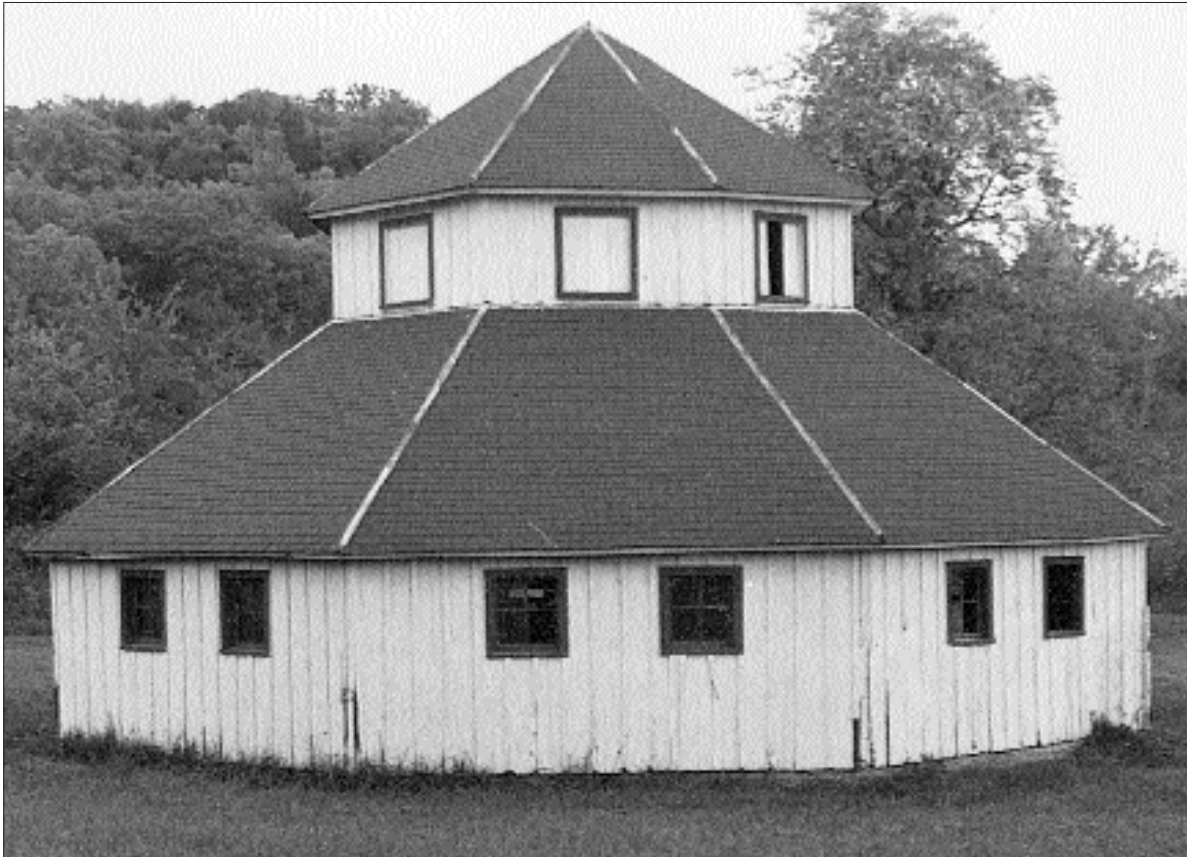
BUILDER/DESIGNER: Benton Steele for the original barn; local carpenters George Sands and John Trehunn for the shed addition.

CURRENT OWNERS: Larry and Dixie Elkington.



For most of its history, the Kay barn looked quite different than it does either now (LEFT) or when it was built. In 1912 or 1922 a shed about sixteen feet wide was constructed around its entire perimeter (ABOVE). This shed joined the main structure about two feet below the eave line. It featured windows spaced every five feet, but the interior of the remodeled structure nevertheless was quite dark. Sometime in the 1970s this shed was removed. The barn has horizontal wood siding, a large hay door projecting through the roof's south side, and a shed-roofed addition on the north that serves as the main entrance. Inside, animal stalls are around the perimeter, leaving the center section open. The roof is a gambrel, self-supporting design but has no cupola.³⁶

36. For an article on the Kay/Elkington barn, see *Oskaloosa Independent*, February 13, 1973.



13. JEFFERSON COUNTY—CYRUS GOEFFERT BARN

SITE: SW quarter, Sec. 24, T11S, R18E; one mile east of Perry on Highway 24.

TYPE AND SIZE: octagonal without silo; 42-foot diameter.

DATES AND STATUS: built between 1915 and 1920; in fair condition in 1999.

BUILDER/DESIGNER: Cyrus Goepfert in imitation of barns about which he had heard.

The cottonwood stalls and other interior partitions are still largely intact in this structure, designed originally as a horse barn. Its most distinguishing feature is a monitor roof designed with windows in it to maximize light and ventilation. This roof is supported by two rings of eight posts. The walls, vertical boards painted white, contain two windows on most sides. Doors open to the east and west. The barn has no loft.

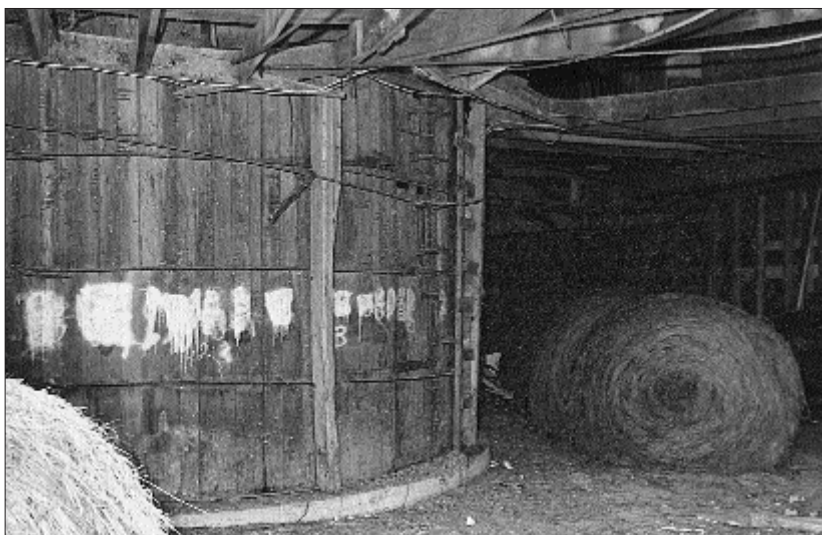




14. JEWELL COUNTY—ALEXANDER JUDY BARN

SITE: SW quarter, Sec. 15, T3S, R7W; on Highway 36 just east of Montrose.

TYPE AND SIZE: octagonal with a central silo; 58-foot diameter, 30 feet tall.



DATES AND STATUS: built in 1915; in good condition in 1999.

BUILDER/DESIGNER: Jude Elliot, a local man.

CURRENT OWNERS: Bradley and Marvel Judy.

This barn was built to house beef cattle. It still serves that role, although the Judy family agrees that the design is flawed somehow because the cattle sometimes get too hot inside. The silo, twenty feet in diameter, is built of wood staves and projects through the roof. It is accessed at the top through a small dormer. The barn is constructed mainly of cottonwood, but the outside walls have been covered by metal siding since about 1950. Its roof is segmented and single-pitched.



15. JOHNSON COUNTY—H. T. NORTON/BILL ARMITAGE BARN

SITE: NE quarter, Sec. 22, T13S, R23E; 119th Street and Lone Elm Road at the northwest edge of Olathe.

TYPE AND SIZE: twelve-sided without silo; 75-foot diameter, 75 feet tall.

DATES AND STATUS: built in 1903; razed in 1998.

A central driveway ran north and south through this barn, connecting large entry doors on each end. Horse stalls lined the outer perimeter on one side, cattle stalls on the other. Between the stalls and the driveway were granaries. A large loft (elevated over the driveway) was accessed by a hay door on the north side. The siding was vertical boards painted white; the roof was a segmented, gambrel design topped by an octagonal cupola. Six lodgepole pine timbers on the interior, each thirty-six feet tall, helped support the roof.³⁷

37. For an article on the Norton / Armitage barn, see Jim French, "Our Vanishing Landmarks," *Olathe Gazette*, February 15, 1987.

16. JOHNSON COUNTY—RAYMOND BRINKMAN BARN

SITE: SW quarter, Sec. 4, T15S, R25E; a half mile east of Stilwell (199th Street and Rosewood).

TYPE AND SIZE: circular without silo; 48-foot diameter, 33 feet tall.

DATES AND STATUS: built in 1912; in fair condition in 1999.

BUILDER: the construction crew of John C. Long, a Kansas City lumber company.

Brinkman was a wealthy Kansas City man who decided to take up farming in 1911. He saw plans for a round barn in a magazine that year and decided to duplicate them as a home for his Percherons. The barn is small but elaborate, with eleven stalls, flagstone flooring in the aisles, and an elevator for moving grain to second-level bins. Hay was unloaded from inside the barn using a standard fork and track system. The total cost was sixteen hundred dollars. A limestone foundation extends four feet above grade. This is topped by vertical board walls (now unpainted), and then by a conical, self-supporting roof and small cupola. Four windows and six doors are on the lower level; eight other windows provide loft lighting.³⁸



38. A large file on the Brinkman barn is at the Johnson County Museum in Olathe. For an article on this barn, see Margaret Olwine, "Round Barn a Stilwell Landmark," *Kansas City Star*, June 27, 1968.



**17. KEARNY COUNTY—
ROBERT GLASS/
WILLIAM CARLILE BARN**

SITE: SE quarter, Sec. 21, T24S, R36W; a mile and a half west of Lakin on Highway 50.

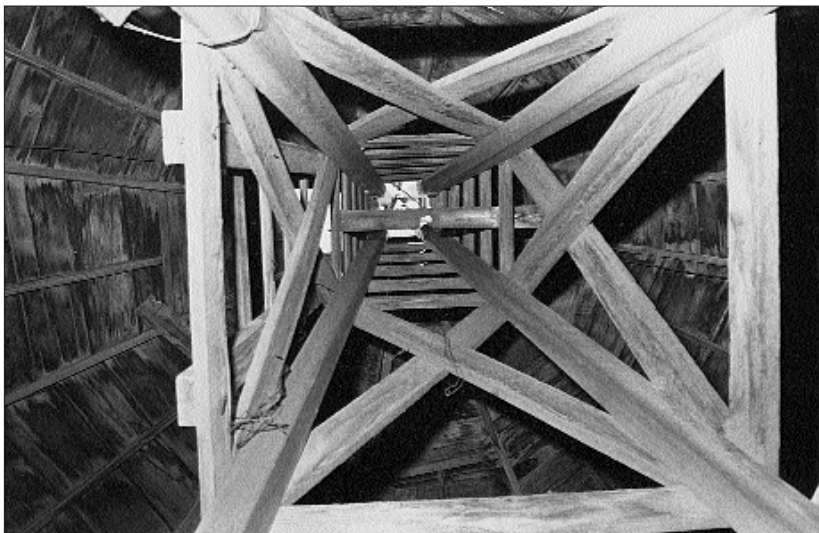
TYPE AND SIZE: twelve-sided without silo; approximately 40-foot diameter.

DATES AND STATUS: built in 1908; in poor condition in 1999.

BUILDER/DESIGNER: Robert Glass.

CURRENT OWNERS: Robert and Margaret Duncan.

Glass, a surveyor and superintendent of the Amazon Ditch Company, built this small barn for his own use. Stalls for four horses and six cows are still intact, and a well at the barn center was once pumped by a windmill that extends through the roof. The building has horizontal board siding painted red and a single-pitch, segmented roof. It has no cupola.



**18. KIOWA COUNTY—
HENRY FROMME/
PHYLLIS BIRNEY BARN**

SITE: NE quarter, Sec.16,
T29S, R20W; four miles
south and two miles east
of Mullinville.

TYPE AND SIZE: sixteen-
sided without silo; 70-foot
diameter, 50 feet tall.

DATES AND STATUS: built in
1912; restored in 1995; in
excellent condition in
1999.

BUILDER/DESIGNER: William
D. (“Pat”) Campbell, an
Irish immigrant.

CURRENT OWNER: Kiowa
County Historical Society.

Fromme, an affluent German immigrant, had this barn built to house his draft horses. He demanded quality, including the use of clear white pine for siding, and he paid Campbell eight thousand dollars for the project. The barn has a sixteen-sided granary, sixteen feet in diameter, at its center. Beyond this is a circular runway, thirteen feet wide, and then fourteen double stalls around the perimeter. Each wall panel has a window except the one where the main entrance is located. The siding is horizontal boards, and the roof has a segmented, gambrel design topped by a cupola. The Birney family bought this barn in 1954 and gave it to the county historical society in 1993. It is now on the National Register of Historical Places.³⁹



39. The Fromme barn was named a winner in a 1917–1918 photography contest sponsored by the Kansas State Board of Agriculture. See “Farm Barns,” Kansas State Board of Agriculture, *Twenty-First Biennial Report, 1917–1918* (Topeka: 1919), 193.



19. LABETTE COUNTY—A. H. McCONNELL BARN

SITE: SE quarter, Sec. 7, T32S, R18E; five miles east of Cherryvale.

TYPE AND SIZE: circular without silo; 40-foot diameter.

DATES AND STATUS: built about 1908; razed about 1975 because of Big Hill Lake construction.

BUILDERS/DESIGNERS: A. H. McConnell (a carpenter by trade before he became a farmer) and a Mr. Glassmier, a local man.

This was a small, two-level, general-purpose barn. A small shed attached to one side was used for calves and a large hay door projected through the roof. McConnell installed a series of turnbuckles and wires to keep the building straight, and he supported the loft with a large tree trunk placed in the barn's center. The siding was vertical boards with battens (both red), the foundation was brick, and the roof was a gambrel design topped by a cupola.⁴⁰

40. The McConnell barn is featured in Ruth Nixon, *History of Big Hill and Old Mount Zion* (N.p.: 1982), 107.

20. LABETTE COUNTY—JOHN HORNER/GEORGE SMITH BARN

SITE: SW quarter, Sec. 8, T32S, R18E; five and a half miles east of Cherryvale.

TYPE AND SIZE: circular without silo; 60-foot diameter.

DATES AND STATUS: built about 1910; razed about 1975 because of Big Hill Lake construction.

BUILDERS/DESIGNERS: A. H. McConnell and Glassmier at least “helped” with this barn.⁴¹

This barn was similar in construction to the McConnell barn (no. 19), although larger. It was a two-level, bank design built primarily for a dairy herd, and it had a concrete foundation. The original roof was gambrel in form, and self-supporting, but it blew off sometime before 1945. The replacement, a standard gable model characteristic of rectangular buildings, was relatively inexpensive to erect, but it drastically changed the appearance of the barn.



41. Ibid.



**21. LABETTE COUNTY—
JEFF TURLEY/LEON MCDANIEL**

SITE: NE quarter, Sec. 9, T34S, R18E; three-quarters of a mile east of Angola.

TYPE AND SIZE: twenty-four sided with a central silo; 60-foot diameter.

DATES AND STATUS: built in 1910 or 1911; razed in 1996.

BUILDER/DESIGNER: Lon Vale, a local man described as a genius who constructed several unique buildings in the area.

As with the Davis barn (no. 5), the original structure on this site was a wooden silo. The barn was built around it a year or two later, with the silo ending about six feet below the roof peak. The barn had stalls for cattle on the east side and ones for horses on the west; both were served by overhead feed bins. A hay loft extended for 270 degrees around an upper level. The walls were vertical boards with battens, and a window had been cut in every other section. The roof was a standard gambrel design with a cupola. Poor foundation planning led to the barn's demise—the walls slipped off in places, leading to a loss of structural integrity.

22. LABETTE COUNTY—CLYDE NACE/NAT GOODWIN BARN

SITE: NE quarter, Sec. 7, T35S, R19E; two miles south of Edna, then a quarter mile west.

TYPE AND SIZE: sixteen-sided with a central silo; 62-foot diameter.

DATES AND STATUS: built before 1918; in good condition in 1999.

CURRENT OWNER: Ann Kendall.

A hilltop location makes the Nace/Goodwin barn one of the most attractive in the state. Although close in location to the Turley/McDaniel barn (no. 21), it is different enough in structure to rule out Lon Vale as the builder. Concrete is featured prominently: foundation, feed troughs, and a central silo twenty feet in diameter that extends through the roof. The main barn entrance is on the south, with stalls for horses to the west and for cattle to the east. The hay loft is accessed from inside the barn. A segmented, single-pitched roof is braced diagonally from the silo at the loft level. Above the roof, the silo has a conical cover. Vertical boards painted red form the barn walls.



**23. LEAVENWORTH COUNTY—
HENRY BIEHLER BARN**

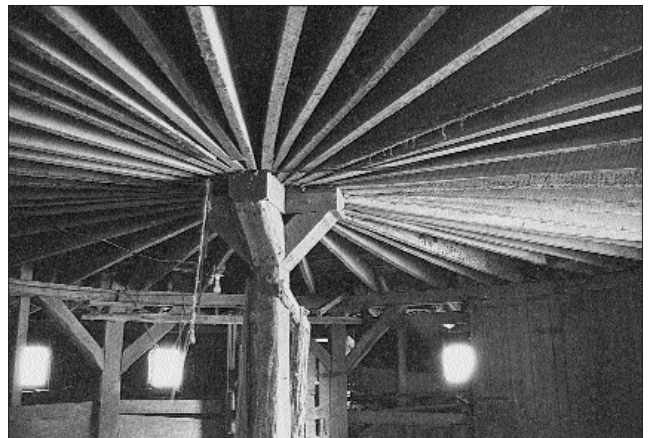
SITE: SE quarter, Sec. 6, T8S, R21E; two and a half miles north of Easton.

TYPE AND SIZE: circular without silo; 60-foot diameter.

DATES AND STATUS: built in 1914; burned in 1978 due to a heat-lamp accident.

BUILDER/DESIGNER: Asa Aaratt (or Erratt), a local man who worked from a photograph that Biehler saw in a magazine.

This barn was beautifully restored and on the National Register of Historic Places before its destruction in 1978. It was built to stable horses and mules and featured a steep-pitched, conical roof with a tall cupola and a large hay door. The walls, painted white, were vertical boards with battens.



24. LINN COUNTY—GEORGE POLLMAN BARN
(NO PHOTOGRAPH AVAILABLE)

SITE: SW quarter, Sec. 36, T19S, R24E; two miles east of La Cygne.

TYPE AND SIZE: octagonal without silo; 30-foot diameter, 10 feet tall.

DATES AND STATUS: built about 1905; razed before 1968.

Pollman was in the hog business, and the octagonal design provided him with a series of wedge-shaped pens separated one from another by swinging gates. The center was a storage area for feed and the perimeter walls had many windows.⁴²

25. LYON COUNTY—ALLEN WALKER BARN

SITE: SW quarter, Sec.12, T19S, R11E; at the eastern edge of Emporia on Old Highway 50.

TYPE AND SIZE: octagonal without silo; 40-foot diameter.

DATES AND STATUS: built in 1932; in good condition in 1999.

CURRENT OWNER: Leonard Dieker.



The Walker Barn has an unusual history. It was built not by a farmer to stable cattle, but by circus people to train elephants. After the circus experience the building was used as a church by the local congregation of Latter-Day Saints before it settled into a more ordinary life as a storage facility. The barn is constructed of red brick and has a segmented, single-pitch roof. A small metal vent sits at its peak.

⁴² Notice of the construction of this innovative and specialized barn was published in the *La Cygne Journal*, reprinted in the *Miami Republican* (Paola), May 5, 1905.



26. MARSHALL COUNTY—LEWIS ROWE BARN

SITE: SW quarter, Sec. 13, T3S, R6E; six miles southwest of Marysville.

TYPE AND SIZE: circular without silo; 40- or 42-foot diameter, 17 feet from ground to plate.

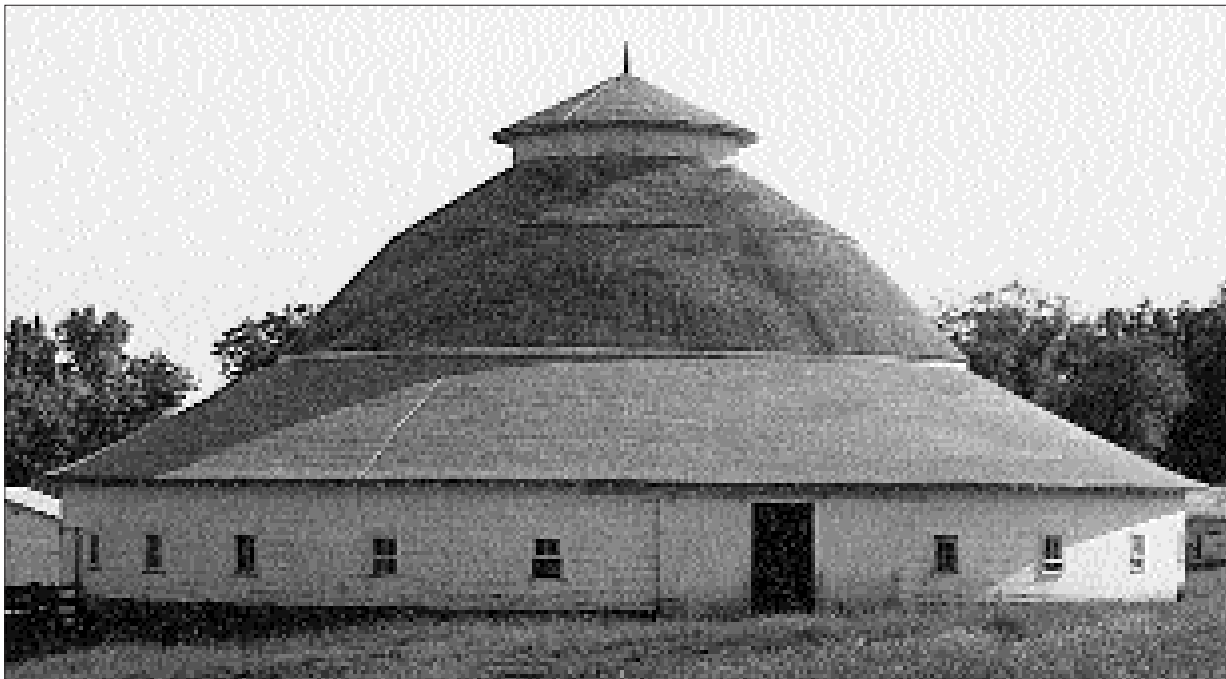
DATES AND STATUS: built in 1914; in good condition in 1999.

BUILDER/DESIGNER: Sears, Roebuck and Company designed it; local men George Eddy and Charles Olsen assembled it.

CURRENT OWNERS: Gail and Carol Norman.

Lewis Rowe, who farmed a modest 120 acres, bought the only known kit-barn in Kansas: a Sears “Honorbuilt” model. The materials included precut yellow-pine framing lumber, cypress horizontal siding, and a pair of curved sliding doors for the main entrance. Inside, the barn has a center passageway with a pair of double stalls on each side for horses. It also contains two grain bins and a hay loft that is accessed from the main aisle. The building has always been painted red with white trim. Its roof is domal with a slight “kick” at the eaves and a ten-sided cupola on top.⁴³

43. More information on the Rowe barn is in Ruetti, “Sears Roebuck Round Barn Has Weathered Years.”



27. MARSHALL COUNTY—CHARLES AND JAMES DRENNEN/DAVID STUMP BARN

SITE: SW quarter, Sec. 23, T4S, R7E; two miles east of Blue Rapids on Highway 9.

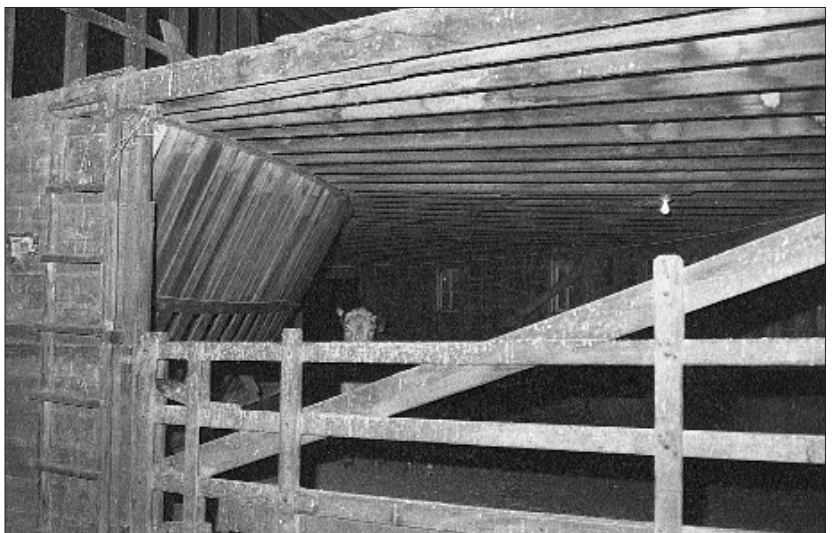
TYPE AND SIZE: circular without silo; 92-foot diameter, approximately 60 feet tall.

DATES AND STATUS: built in 1913; in good condition in 1999.

BUILDER/DESIGNER: Benton Steele.

CURRENT OWNER: David Stump.

The Drennens were prominent Hereford breeders on their Walnut Row Stock Farm. Their inspiration for a round barn almost surely came from Fred Cottrell, their neighbor, fellow Hereford man, and relative by marriage, who had built a barn of his own a few years before (no. 28). The Drennen barn has vertical board walls, a self-supporting gambrel roof, and a cupola. The building's most distinctive feature is a surround-shed similar to the one that once encircled the Kay barn (no. 12).



28. MARSHALL COUNTY—FRED COTTRELL BARN



SITE: NW quarter, Sec. 6, T5S, R8E; five miles east of Blue Rapids, then two and a quarter miles south.

TYPE AND SIZE: circular without silo; 100-foot diameter, 90 feet tall.

DATES AND STATUS: built between 1906 and 1908; razed about 1997 after being vandalized for several years.

BUILDER/DESIGNER: Simon Strader.

In 1910 the *Breeder's Gazette* hailed Fred Cottrell's new cattle barn as the largest in Kansas. It also was the best-known round barn in the state.⁴⁴ The barn was huge, a two-floor design with the capacity to hold three hundred cattle, five hundred tons of hay, and ten thousand bushels of grain. The stable level was constructed of stone and had thirty windows, whereas the main walls and roof were sheathed with galvanized iron. Within the stable area, box stalls lined the outer walls. Inward from these was a nine-

foot feeding alley and then a second ring of stalls. The center section housed a work room. The roof was a smooth dome topped by a cupola (fifteen feet in diameter). The total cost of the barn was five thousand dollars, and Cottrell made it the centerpiece of his Blue Valley Hereford Ranch. He even held occasional rodeos there.

29. NEOSHO COUNTY—GARY SHAW BARN

SITE: SW quarter, Sec.16, T28S, R19E; five miles south and five miles east of Chanute, near the community of Shaw.

TYPE AND SIZE: circular with a central silo; approximately 50-foot diameter.

DATES AND STATUS: construction date unknown; razed in 1997 because of deterioration.

This was a classic, central-silo dairy barn. The silo was about ten feet in diameter and constructed with tongue-and-groove redwood lumber. The barn had a simple, single-pitch, conical roof; a cupola; and vertical board walls. A hay door projected through one side of the roof and gave access to a full loft.



44. "A Round Cattle Barn in Kansas"; "A Marshall County Hay, Grain and Stock Barn." The Cottrell barn was a winner in the Kansas State Board of Agriculture's 1917–1918 photography contest. See "Farm Barns," 188.

**30. OSBORNE COUNTY—
O'BRIEN BARN**

SITE: SW quarter, Sec. 14, T10S, R12W; five miles north of Luray, then three miles east.

TYPE AND SIZE: circular without silo; 53-foot diameter.

DATES AND STATUS: built about 1908; razed in 1978.

DESIGNERS/BUILDERS: unidentified but said to be nonlocal people.

O'Brien was a veterinarian. His barn had a limestone foundation, vertical board siding painted red, and a gambrel, self-supporting roof. A cupola topped the design.



31. RENO COUNTY—ALBERT HARDEN BARN

SITE: SW quarter, Sec. 19, T22S, R6W; two and a half miles east of Nickerson, then one and a half miles south.

TYPE AND SIZE: octagonal without silo but originally with two gable-roofed wings; the center section had a 40- to 45-foot diameter.



DATES AND STATUS: built in 1905; severely damaged in 1948, but the remaining portion is in good condition in 1999.

DESIGNER/BUILDER: Albert Harden.

CURRENT OWNER: Wallace Harden.

Albert Harden's original design for this horse barn resembled that of the modified Foley/Fleming barn of today (no. 35). With twelve hundred dollars worth of lumber he built an octagonal core structure and added large wings to the north and south. Hay lofts were built in each wing, and each section had its own fairly elaborate cupola. The main stables area was in the octagon. A storm in 1948 destroyed the entire north wing and all three cupolas. The Hardens replaced only the central of the three vents, and this with a simpler design. The barn has horizontal siding and a segmented roof. Its interior has been gutted for hay storage.



32. RENO COUNTY—HARRY REEVES BARN

SITE: SE quarter, Sec. 29, T26S, R5W; two miles south of Pretty Prairie, then seven and a half miles east.

TYPE AND SIZE: circular with a central silo; no estimate of diameter.

DATES AND STATUS: built in 1924; razed in 1998 because of deterioration.

BUILDERS/DESIGNERS: Harry Reeves and Joe Wenzel, a local man.

Reeves was inspired to build this barn by a similar one that his father once owned in Sumner County (no. 40). It was designed primarily for dairy cattle and featured twelve cattle stalls, six horse stalls, a loft, a milk room, and a wood-stave central silo. Most of the interior lumber was cottonwood whereas the exterior walls were sheathed in metal. The roof was a gambrel type with a “kick” at the eaves. The most unusual element was the cupola, which had a wind-driven generator incorporated into it to produce electricity.⁴⁵

45. For an article on Harry Reeves, see Pat Mitchell, “Round Barn—Then and Now,” *Kanhistique* 16 (April 1991): 2–3.

**33. ROOKS COUNTY—
WALTER SANDER
HORSE BARN**

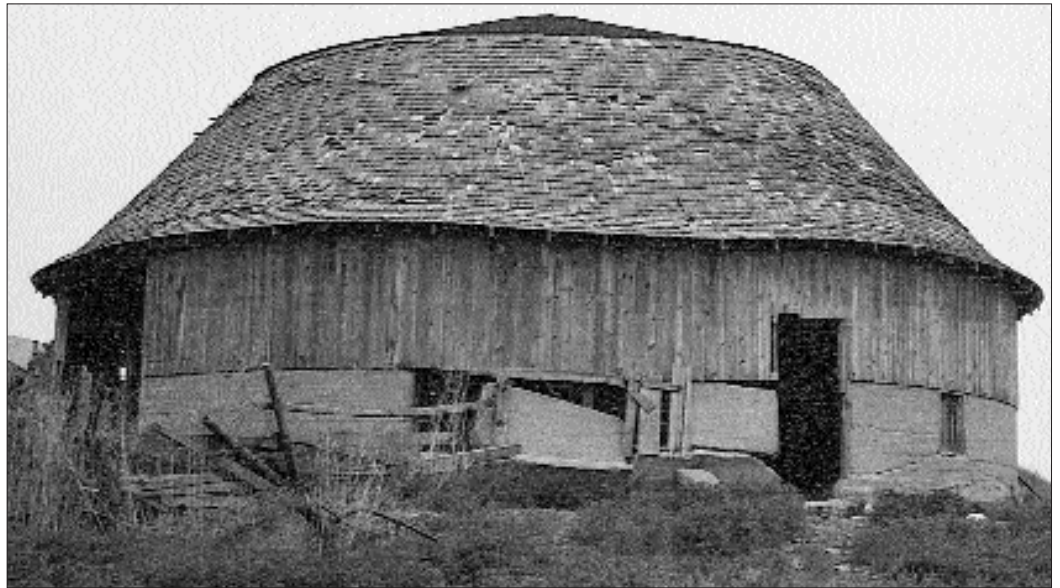
SITE: SW quarter, Sec. 5, T7S, R18W; three and three-quarters miles west of Stockton, then two miles north.

TYPE AND SIZE: circular without silo; 52-foot diameter.

DATES AND STATUS: built in 1914; razed about 1990 because of deterioration.

BUILDER/DESIGNER: Benton Steele.

Designed as a shelter for horses and sheep, this barn was constructed with a cement foundation and cement-block walls. Originally it was two stories tall and had a standard gambrel roof, but a wind storm destroyed the entire top section of the building. The lost wall pieces were not replaced, and the new roof was a low cone. Benton Steele's bill for the barn was one thousand dollars.



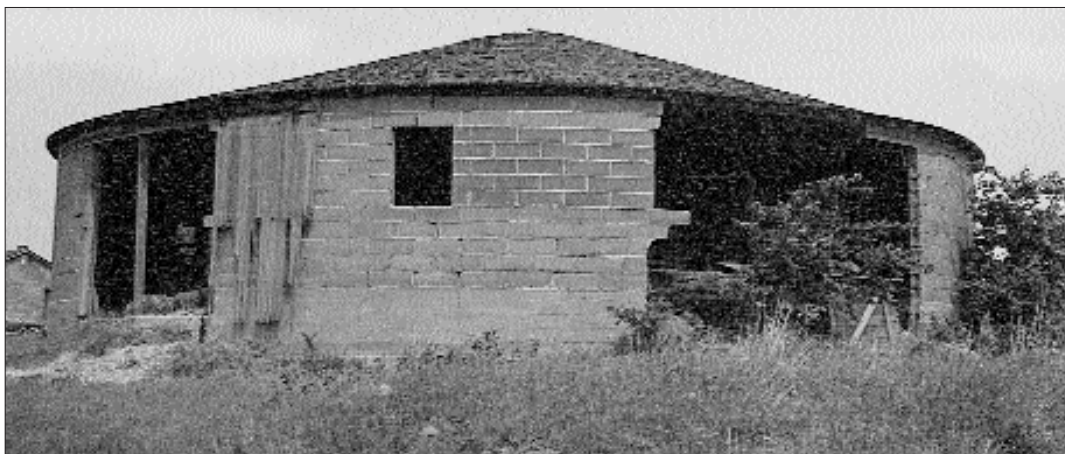
34. ROOKS COUNTY—WALTER SANDER DAIRY BARN

SITE: SW quarter, Sec. 5, T7S, R18W; three and three-quarters miles west of Stockton, then two miles north.

TYPE AND SIZE: circular with a central silo; 48-foot diameter.

DATES AND STATUS: built in 1915; razed about 1995 because of deterioration.

BUILDER/DESIGNER: Benton Steele.



Although smaller in diameter than its accompanying horse stable (no. 33), this barn was more expensive (fifteen hundred dollars). It was standard in design: a two-level plan with vertical board walls, a gambrel roof, and a cupola. A shed-roofed addition was made in 1924 for use as a milk house.



35. SEDGWICK COUNTY—W. C. FOLEY/RICHARD FLEMING BARN

SITE: SE quarter, Sec. 13, T29S, R1E; just south of Derby at 9451 South Woodlawn.

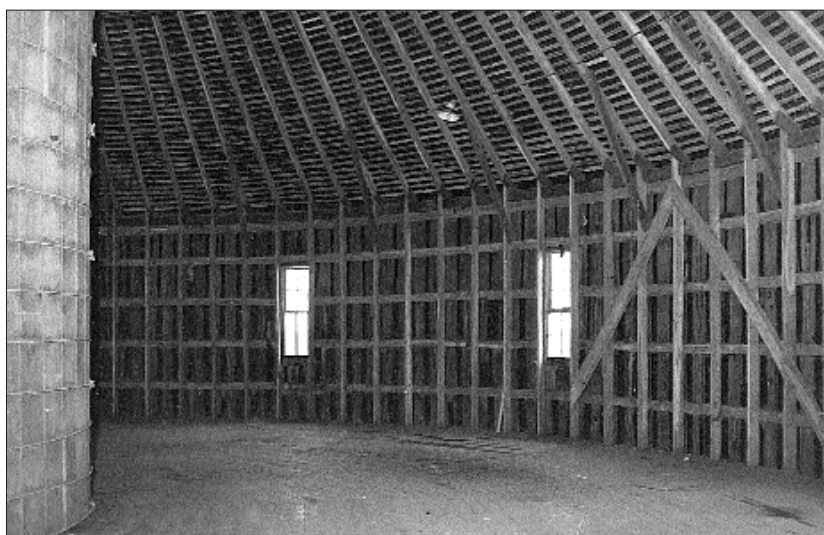
TYPE AND SIZE: circular with a central silo; 58-foot diameter.

DATES AND STATUS: built in 1910; in good condition in 1999.

BUILDER/DESIGNER: Benton Steele.

CURRENT OWNER: Imogene Fleming.

Like the Davis barn (no. 5) and the Turley/McDaniel barn (no. 21), this building, designed as a dairy barn, was constructed around a preexisting silo. A stone stable level has walls extending about five feet above grade, whereas the main level is sheathed with vertical boards. As the terrain is flat, this main level is accessed by a ramp.



The original silo was wooden and projected through the roof, but it was replaced by a shorter concrete model. Cottonwood was the principal lumber used in the barn. The exterior traditionally has been painted yellow-brown. Charles Davis, the barn's owner in 1945, added two long, gable-roofed wings to the north and south. These are built of fieldstone, and they enabled the dairy operation to expand. Richard and Imogene Fleming bought the barn in 1960 and converted it to a series of nonfarm uses: a clinic, an antique shop, and a meeting/party facility.



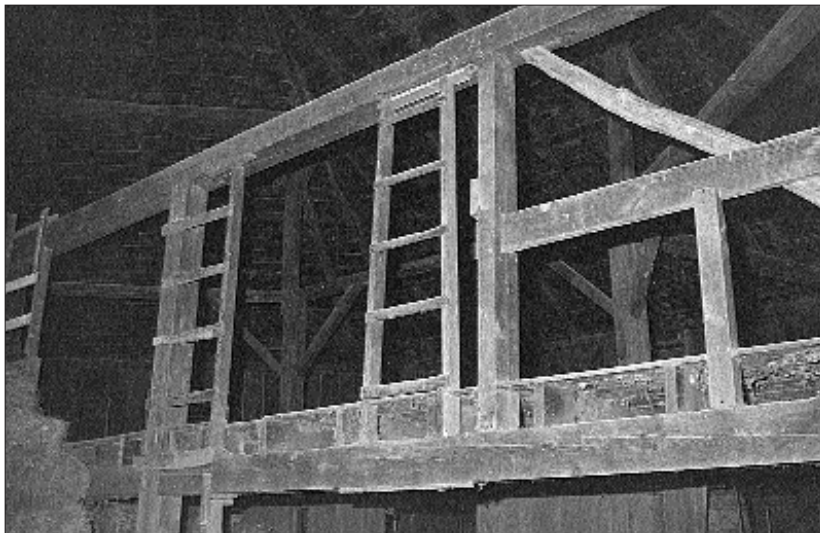
36. SHAWNEE COUNTY—GEORGE W. WHITEMAN/ARLEN KIRKWOOD BARN

SITE: SE quarter, Sec. 31, T10S, R15E; six miles northwest of Topeka at 6638 NW Forty-sixth Street.

TYPE AND SIZE: octagonal without silo; 60-foot diameter, 16 feet from ground to plate.

DATES AND STATUS: built in 1883–1884; in good condition in 1999.

CURRENT OWNERS: Arlen and Darlene Kirkwood.



This barn and its neighbor (no. 37) both have doubled stone foundations, the inner of which marks the limit of a partially excavated stable level and also serves as a base for eight tall posts that rise to support the roof. The frame is constructed of heavy timbers. An east–west driveway bisects the main level. Granaries are in its northwest quadrant, and a full loft is interrupted only for a central access opening. The roof is segmented and has a just-noticeable break in its pitch at its midpoint. Light is provided through four small dormers and a cupola. The walls originally were vertical boards, but Kirkwood added red metal siding in the 1980s.



**37. SHAWNEE COUNTY—
BENJAMIN F.
VANORSDOL BARN**

SITE: SW quarter, Sec. 1, T11S, R14E; six miles northwest of Topeka at 4044 NW Humphrey Road.

TYPE AND SIZE: octagonal without silo; 54-foot diameter.

DATES AND STATUS: built in the 1880s; in poor condition in 1999 with large holes in two roof sections.

The internal organization, foundation structure, and bracing system of this barn

are almost exactly the same as on the Whiteman/Kirkwood Barn (no. 36), and so a single builder seems likely. The basement level here was used for fruit storage by Vanorsdol, and he built a gable-roofed extension on the barn's east side to stable his livestock. The walls are painted white, and they differ further from those in barn no. 36 in having louvered ventilation panels on each of the six nondoor sections.

38. STAFFORD COUNTY—CLARENCE PROFITT BARN

SITE: NE quarter, Sec.14, T23S, R14W; five and a half miles northwest of St. John.

TYPE AND SIZE: circular without silo; 50-foot diameter, 42 feet tall.

DATES AND STATUS: built in 1910; burned in 1987.

This barn is said to have been identical to the Fergus/McCandless barn (no. 39). The builder is unknown but is thought to have been an itinerant carpenter. Both barns were constructed with horizontal wood siding and had numerous small windows spaced at regular intervals. They also had full lofts, accessed from inside the buildings, and domal roofs with cupolas. A plat atlas shows that the Profitt farm was owned in 1904 by R. T. Forrester. Forrester may therefore have been this barn's creator.





**39. STAFFORD COUNTY—
WILLIAM FERGUS/
C. C. McCANDLESS BARN**

SITE: SW quarter, Sec.13, T23S, R14W;
five miles northwest of St. John.

TYPE AND SIZE: circular without silo; 50-
foot diameter and 42 feet tall.

DATES AND STATUS: built in 1910; in poor
condition in 1999.

CURRENT OWNERS: Lloyd and Ella Mc-
Candless.

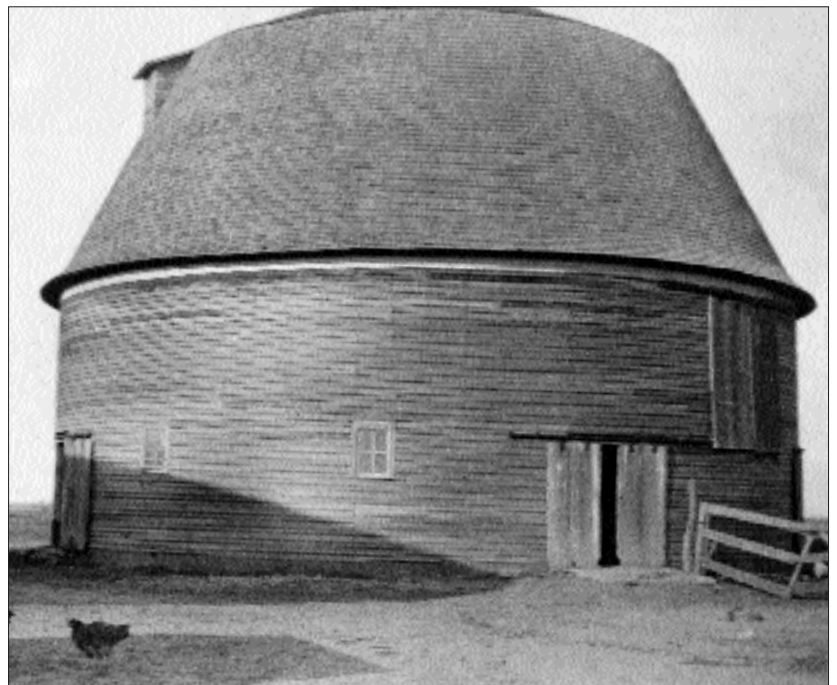
This barn is located a half mile south of
the Profitt barn (no. 38) and is identical
to it.

40. SUMNER COUNTY—D. A. REEVES BARN

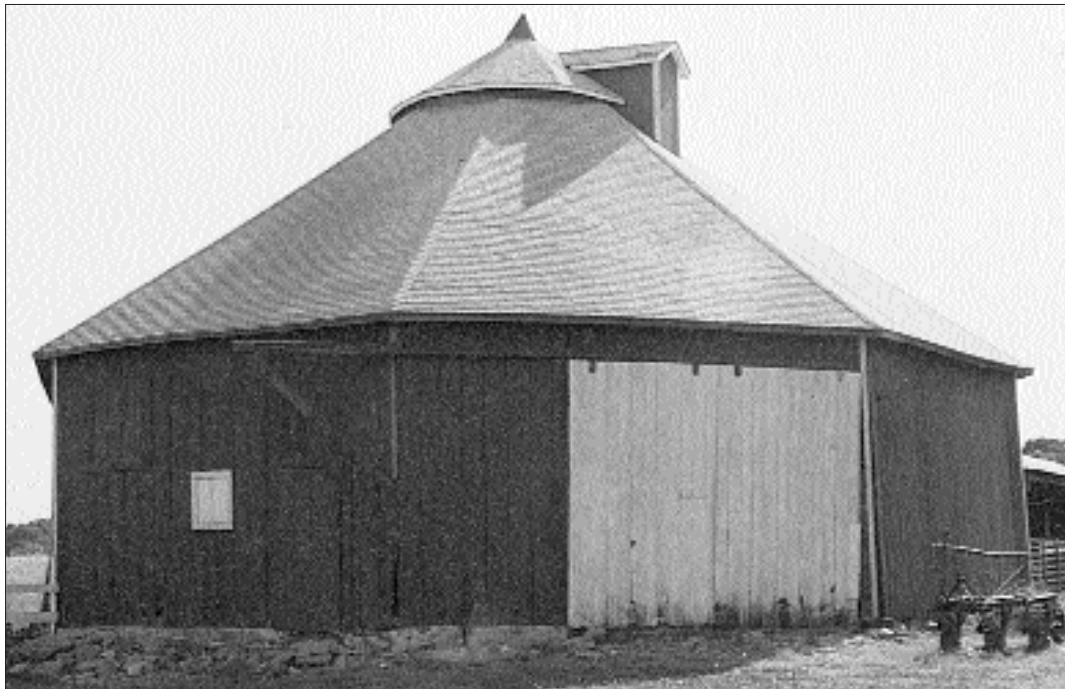
SITE: Sec. 9 or 16, T31S, R3W; two miles south of
Conway Springs, then a half mile west.

TYPE AND SIZE: circular (silo presence or absence
unknown); no estimate of diameter.

DATES AND STATUS: built about 1915; destroyed by
a lightning fire in July 1937.⁴⁶



46. Information about this barn is in *ibid.*; see also Marjorie Bergkamp to Bobbie Pray, March 2, 1999, Education and Outreach Division, Kansas State Historical Society.



41. WOODSON COUNTY—HAYES COE/MURTON HARTZLER BARN

SITE: SW quarter, Sec. 2, T25S, R15E; a mile north of Yates Center on Highway 75.

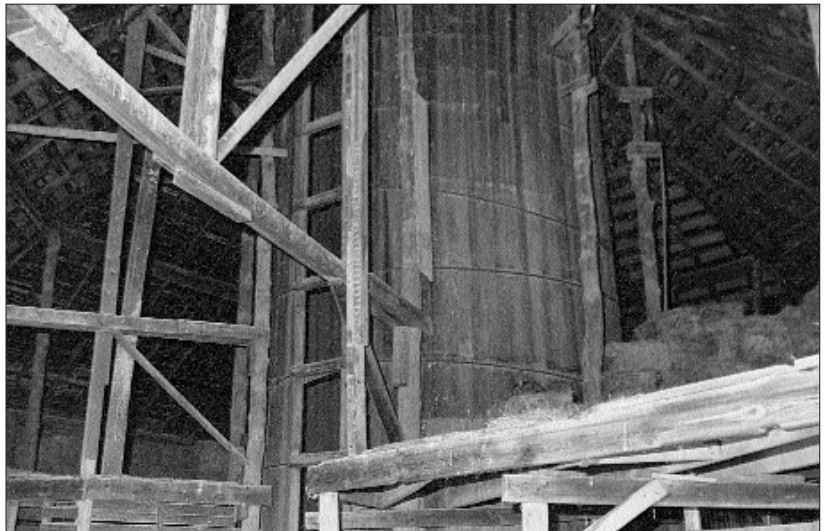
TYPE AND SIZE: octagonal with a central silo; 54-foot diameter.

DATES AND STATUS: built in 1910; in good condition in 1999.

BUILDER/DESIGNER: Hayes Coe with the help of local carpenter Charles Tustison.

CURRENT OWNER: Murton Hartzler.

Coe learned about octagonal barns while a student at Kansas State Agricultural College. He built this barn when he returned to his home county to serve as county agent. The silo is a wood-stave design, fourteen by thirty feet, and is accessed from the top by a small roof dormer. The cylinder projects through the roof slightly and has its own conical covering. A granary is adjacent to the silo and a loft extends over two-thirds of the interior. The roof is segmented, has a single pitch, and is supported at its midpoint by eight tall posts. A gable-roofed shed was added to the barn's east side, but it has no internal connection to the octagon. The barn walls are vertical boards painted red.⁴⁷



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47. For more details about the Coe/Hartzler barn, see "Octagon Shaped Barn," *In the Beginning* 9 (January 1976): 13–14.