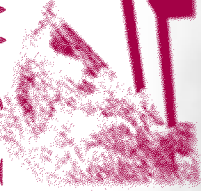


# IOWA BARN FOUNDATION

M A G A Z I N E

FALL 2003 VOL. 6 NO. 2



## *The All-State* Barn Tour





Iowa Barn Foundation Magazine

Fall 2003 Vol. 6, No. 2

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Cover photo of Asherl barn, Granville, by Joe Ascherl. Barn will be on the all-state tour September 20 and 21.

See pages 8 & 9.

**County Representatives** Many of Iowa's 99 counties have representatives to the Iowa Barn Foundation. Other counties still need representatives. The representatives promote the preservation of barns, organize the surveying of barns in their counties, encourage membership in the Iowa Barn Foundation, and help with fund raising. Working with members of the board from each of nine areas of the state, they will also help to oversee projects. We welcome volunteers for other counties.

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# Weather vanes

## ART & FARMER'S FRIEND

Story & Photos By Paul Walther

American farmers have always kept weather records in their diaries. Weather is an important element in their livelihood. Planting seeds, hay making, birthing animals—almost every aspect of farming depends on weather—including the winds. Before the days of “weather reports”, the weathervane was more important to farmers than the clock is today.

Early weathervanes were made of wood—usually pine—and were simply an arrow or a pointing arm and hand—some as large as six feet in length. They weath-ered quickly. That is why so few are in existence today.



Later, sheet copper was hammered over the pine to protect the wood, but it was often too

heavy to swing properly. The next innovation was to remove the copper after molding it to the wood and soldering it together. This resulted in a hollow copper figure which responded quickly to wind changes.

The Green Athenians erected the first recorded weathervane honoring the Greek god Triton about 48 B.C. It had the head of a man and the tail of a fish. They believed that winds had divine powers.

It is difficult to go anywhere in the Christian world and not find a weather cock on the steeple of a church. A pope in the ninth century supposedly decreed that every church should have a cock on its steeple as a reminder of Jesus’ prophesy that the cock would crow when Peter denied him three times (Luke 22:34). It was to be a reminder that each of us would deny Jesus in some way. The practice caught on, and many Christian churches feature a weather cock on their steeples.

Weather cocks did not become popular in the United States until the eighteenth

century. The Puritans and Quakers disapproved of graven images. They also associated the cock with Catholic and Episcopal churches. In the eighteenth century many churches began to adopt either rooster or swallow-tailed vanes.

Probably the most famous weathervane in this country is the Fanuell Hall grasshopper in Boston made in 1742. It has green glass eyes and is six feet in length. If the eyes could see, it would have recorded much of the early history of our country. It has had a long and tumultuous history,



*Iowa weathervanes tell stories*

suffering earthquakes, fire and accidents. In the process it lost its horns, two front feet and one leg—all repaired later. It has been patched and spliced many times.

Some other early documented weathervanes adorned Boston’s Old North Church (1740) as a banner, the rooster now on First Church in Cambridge (1721), and the large copper Indian for Boston’s Province House (1716). At Monticello, Thomas Jefferson attached a weathervane to a pointer in the ceiling of the room directly below so he could determine the wind direction from inside the home.

In 1974, the U.S. Post Office printed a Christmas stamp featuring the dove

weathervane commissioned by George Washington for the cupola at the top of his Mount Vernon home in 1787. The dove represented the dove sent out by Noah to search for dry land. It returned with an olive leaf in its beak.

Weathervanes usually featured the interests of the owners. A church usually had a weather cock. Farmers had chickens, pigs, sheep, horses, cows and other livestock. A hunter put a deer or waterfowl on his roof; a fisherman, a fish. A sportsman had a race horse or a boat. Some were fancy; others plain. Some were humorous; some highly artistic. Often it was simply an arrow that pointed into the wind.

Barns that feature a weathervane are becoming a rarity today. The cost of maintaining the barn itself, the cupola, and the weathervane has become a financial burden. Weathervanes are hot items for collectors. Some even steal weathervanes. A weathervane featuring a horse and rider made by a known craftsman in 1860 recently sold for \$770,000.

Weathervanes erected today tend to be smaller than those erected in years past. Few would think of putting up a five-foot rooster as was erected on the New Brick Church in 1721 in Boston.

We have enjoyed weathervanes for hundreds of years. As an art form, they are here to stay. Keep looking up.

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A tribute to Maine’s tradition of  
weathervanes.*





# The Barns of Hardin County

By Ken Starek

*Ken Starek, Ackley photographer, “barnologist”, and Hardin County representative to the Iowa Barn Foundation, travels the by ways of Iowa seeking out remarkable barns to photograph. He spent weeks searching the hills and prairies of his own pastoral central Iowa county for barns to photograph and share with us.*

**The Jefferson Highway barn** was named for the famous old road it sits next to south of Hubbard. There is decorative woodwork on the split haymow doors on the south side of the barn. There is a ground level walk in door on the east side. A decorative “V” shape of overlapping boards is on the gable end below the windows. The unusual windows have nine panes of glass.



*Jefferson Highway Barn*

**The Harry Ryken barn** has airplane wings painted on the south peak of the barn to celebrate Ryken’s role as a pilot. The center section was built of post, beam, and pegged construction in the 1870’s. Attached sheds were built at a later date. The barn is located west of Ackley and is visible from D-15 and 11645 U Avenue.



*Ryken barn*



*Iowa State Training School barn*

**Iowa State Training School barns** are important although the history is sketchy. The main barn is 110 feet long by 40 feet wide and split into two sections with an alley running the length of the barn. The 25-foot extension on the north contained vocational agriculture classroom, feed rooms, offices, and possibly a milk room. The smaller barn is 32 feet by 65 feet and has some original hardware and pen partitions. To view these barns, go to the Eldora /New Providence High School baseball diamond and look to the southwest. You can visit the barns by signing in as a guest at the training school.

*Eagle City barn*



**Eagle City barn**, a large and stunning barn, was built on a beautiful and tranquil bluff above the Iowa River and the little town of Eagle City which died out when the stage lines disbanded and the railroad

bypassed it. A drive-through haymow has a row of single glass pane windows just above the large doors. Basement walls are of native limestone. Cattle stanchions and pens faced a center feeding alley. The barn, located at 28536 160<sup>th</sup> Street, is owned by Dr. and Mrs. Ken Groninga.

*Mural barn*



**Mural barn** across from the Eagle City barn has a mural on the haymow door illustrating canoeing on the Iowa River. It is believed the mural was painted some 30 years ago. The barn’s boards are red; the bats white.

**Palisades Barn** was built in 1910 and got its name from limestone formations on the other side of the Iowa River, now submerged by a dam. The original farm went to the river’s edge. The timber frame barn originally had Bliss K. Hall lettered on an arch above the 1910. The barn, owned by Russ and Virginia Schneider, is at 24228 Riverside Road, Iowa Falls.

**Richtsmeier barn** has been in the same family for three generations. It is now owned by Joe and Julie Richtsmeier. It is of hollow clay tile construction. The haymow floor is hardwood. The barn was built in 1935 to replace a barn that burned after being struck by lightning. The barn is equipped with Iowa-based Clay Manufacturing windows, hardware, and ventilators. The barn is located at 27134 D-15, west of Ackley.

**Jones barn** is unique as there are three gables in the west roof, each with a window. Beneath each gable is a granary with chutes leading to the basement. There are horse stalls and dairy stanchions in the basement with an alley separating them. The barn is at 24767 D-15, east of Iowa Falls.



*Jones barn*

**Hackbarth barns** sit near the old stagecoach trail where ruts can still be seen. One barn was built in 1864 to house horses for the stagecoach stop. A pegged post and beam barn, it has uneven lengths and widths of sheeting probably from a local sawmill. The hay trolley ran on a beam rather than a steel track. The stone walls are two feet thick. When the east wall tipped out in

*Palisades barn*



*Richtsmeier barn during construction*

*Richtsmeier barn today*



*Hackbarth barn*

the 1950s and the west wall tipped in later, they were removed and replaced with metal over stud framing. A newer barn is used to farrow sows. Ed and Michelle Hackbarth own the barns at 14768 155<sup>th</sup> Street.

**Slayton Round barn** is one of 16 barns built with hollow clay tile from Johnson Brother's Clay Works, Fort Dodge. Loudon Manufacturing, Fairfield, furnished the equipment including an overhead rail for manure litter. It has a three-way switch allowing the carrier to go to the dairy stanchions, the horse stalls, or calf pens. The rail also had a switch to allow the trolley of hay to be directed left or right by a system of ropes and pulleys. The barn is a restoration project of the Hardin County Preservation Commission.

*Slayton round barn*



*Hardin County Farm Museum barn*



its open haymow, held large amounts of hay and was the last word in barn construction.



# Doors Closed at Historic Iowa State University Dairy Barns

Changing times and a hefty budget pull back in the College of Agriculture at Iowa State University have meant the abandonment of the dairy farm established on Mortensen Road, south of campus, in 1908.

The farm, one of the roots of the Land Grant university, is being shut down as a production, teaching, and research facility due to major budget cuts in the College of Agriculture. At this time, the buildings will remain and appropriate use/historic preservation discussions will be held.

Many dairy cattle are being retained and eventually will be moved to a new 500-cow dairy facility further south from the present one.

Concerns about the future of these historic barns are being voiced by people throughout the state. The first dairy barn, a distinctive wooden structure built in 1908 when cattle were moved from the campus, still stands.

The large, magnificent, one-of-a-kind main dairy barn, completed in 1937, remains largely in original condition both inside and out although milking parlor modifications have been made as improved equipment was acquired over the years.

The barn is U-shaped in design with classical gambrel roof accommodating a haymow over the entire structure.

Thousands of school children have visited the barn through the years to learn about milk, a food so important to them.

"I was deeply dismayed to learn that Iowa State's dairy cattle teaching herd

is being repositioned and landmark buildings being considered for other uses," said Tom Lyon, Cambridge, Wisconsin, who recently retired after 40 years of managing a large dairy cooperative. "I was among hundreds of students who supplemented their college needs along with gaining valuable experience through employment at the farm.

the State Agricultural College and Model Farm was signed by Governor of Iowa Ralph P. Lowe in 1858. The first concern was establishing the model farm specified in the legislation.

"The barns reflect something about the important symbiotic relationship between humans and animals and the contributions of the livestock sector of agri-

culture to society as a whole," Solon (Bud) Ewing, long-time head of Animal Science at Iowa State, wrote in the Iowa Barn Foundation Magazine (Fall, 2000). "Strong appreciation exists because the barns represent an important component of the architectural heritage of Iowa State and the Midwest. And, finally, some love them simply because they represent an architec-



*1908 ISU dairy barn will close*

"Iowa State ranks among the premier land grant universities. It attained this distinction through strong programs in the dairy and animal sciences. Renowned scientists like Drs. Lush, Jacobson, and Freeman used the herd to advance new discoveries and to train graduate students.

"It is appalling to me that the Iowa State University College of Agriculture will no longer have any traditional farm animals residing on campus. Making way for more brick, mortar, and urban sprawl to solve short term budget problems is very short-sided and erodes the culture and tradition of a prominent Land Grant institution."

The legislative bill establishing

tural style that reflects a unique combination of beauty, simplicity, and magnificence developed by the mind and hand of simple folk.

"All of these feelings are intensified in that such important historical examples are rapidly disappearing from the landscape."

The dairy barns were on the Iowa Barn Foundation's Story County tour in June.

# Those Old-Fashioned Saturday Nights

By Howard Johnson

*Howard Johnson, retired head of agricultural engineering at Iowa State University, wrote this nostalgic piece about Saturday nights in a small town for us.*

Summer Saturday nights provided the social event of the week for farm kids in the thirties. First of all, there were chores--throwing down hay from the mow, feeding oats to the horses and cows, and milking. After dinner and bath in a small round wash tub, I put on my clean pair of bib overalls, Mother placed the last picking of eggs in the egg case, and Dad poured the fresh sweet cream into the can on top of the thick gray mass of sour cream. We found our places in the 1929 Olds and steered toward town over the dusty dirt road. By eight o'clock we arrived at the co-op and left the egg case and cream can. The eggs were candled and the cream tested for butterfat. By nine o'clock Dad could pick up the payment and spend it at Nate's grocery across the street, a sort of barter system.

If you arrived by eight, you could park along Main Street and watch the country folk walk by. My mother's favorite pastime was observing from the Olds' back seat. Part of the rites of passage was to be released to run Main Street at the age of eight. Usually we found a school or church friend and explored Watt's drug store and soda fountain, buying a green river or a frozen Milky Way candy bar. By age 10 we purchased a 10-cent ticket and found a back seat in the Princess Theater to see a Gene Autry or Roy Rogers spectacular.

At the location of Per Brentesson's Clothing Store, which burned and left a gaping black hole on the west side of Main Street, was a boarded wall and bench occupied on Saturday night by the elder gentry and retired farmers. The Odebolt Chronicle dubbed the gathering the "thirty old men on the bench" and provided more

editorial comment on discussions than deserved. However, that part of Main Street was the scourge of the modest women in the community who crossed the street to avoid glances and comments. Emma Hakansson was one of a few women who smiled at the old male redoubt and didn't give a damn about their activities. Emma was a big strong woman of Danish descent, confident and bold. Often she would walk over to a farmer she knew and embarrass him by asking whether his corn was knee high yet.

When cold fall weather arrived, the thirty old men moved to Bugs Ellis' pool hall to play cards. While Mother looked the other way, when in high school, I occasionally played snooker with friends at Bugs' place. If you bent over a little, you could see the pool table under the smoke and avoid the brass cuspidors scattered around in strategic locations. At first I felt guilty but in time playing pool was a routine part of being with friends. Walking into Bugs' pool hall was a part of growing up, a mark of bravery or possibly defiance.

In summer the high school band played on Wednesday nights. The bandstand, a flatbed trailer, was towed into the fenced W.W.I memorial park in front of Adams Bank. The audience sat in autos parked in a circle, two deep, and cheered and honked horns, and expressions of appreciation for the band's efforts.

Dad bought groceries from a prepared list after collecting the egg and cream money. In those days he stood at a counter and told the clerk what he wanted. After writing the items down on a ruled pad with name and date, the clerk walked around the store and sacked the groceries.

About 10:00 or 10:30 p.m. groceries, egg crate, cream cans, and kids were back in the Olds. Exhausted, we slept in a soft corner on the way home. The evening in town was fun, and it was not unusual to spend a quarter on Saturday night.

## ABOUT GRANTS

The Iowa Barn Foundation is giving two kinds of MATCHING grants for barns 50-years old or older. Grant form "A" is for those barns that, upon completion of work, will be eligible for the National Historic Register. Was the barn built before 1870? Is it large (over 40' wide and 60' long)? Was it built with all stonewalls? Is it of unusual shape? Was it where a first of a new breed of livestock was introduced or where an important event happened? These are some questions to ask. These barns may need restoration--more work than those in category "B".

Grant form "B" is for those who have barns that may not be as historic as those in the "A" category, but the barns must be important to the landscape and the community. Many will be eligible for the National Register upon completion of work. Most of these will be rehabilitation grants--smaller grants for foundation sealing, new roofs, siding.

Anyone receiving a grant will have to provide MATCHING funds. A PERPETUAL EASEMENT MUST BE SIGNED. The easement remains with the property if it is sold. We do not give retroactive grants. The buildings must be restored as closely as possible to original--no non-wood siding. Non-metal roofs are preferred although exceptions can be made. Checks are written after the project is completed.

To receive a grant form, please send \$5 and a \$25 membership to the Iowa Barn Foundation if you are not a current member. Send to: Ann Harvey, 2002 Cessna, Ames, Iowa, 50014, or to Mary Richards, 2201 R Avenue, Jamaica, Iowa 50128. For questions: call Ann Harvey, (515) 292-9104 or Mary Richards, (515) 386-4750, mrichards@netins.net.

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visit us at  
**www.iowabarnfoundation.org**

# The ALL-STATE

Barns throughout Iowa restored with Iowa Barn Foundation matching grants will be open to the public during a two-day, self-guided, all-state barn tour Saturday and Sunday, September 20 and 21 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

The tour is sponsored by the Iowa Barn Foundation, a non-profit group dedicated to preserving Iowa's rural buildings and rural heritage.

The tour is free and opened to the public.

This is the third year of the tour which has been organized to encourage barn preservation in the state, to teach young people about Iowa's rich agricultural heritage, and to renew pride in this unique heritage.

Maggie O'Rourke, Earlham, is coordinator of the tour. Joyce Lund Mears, LeClaire, is assisting.

Among the barns on tour:

## North Iowa Barns

**Jensen barn, 2410 560<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Ringsted (Emmett County)**-Travel one mile east of Ringsted on blacktop. Then go one-eighth mile south on P12. Farm on the left. Barn with attached milk house was built in 1938. Track and carriage in hayloft still used to lift hay into the barn.

**Youngberg barn, 4886 220<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Albert City (Buena Vista County)**-From Albert City, drive two miles north on M14. Go west one mile on 490<sup>th</sup> Street to 220<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Classic Iowa barn was built in 1911 and has always been used for agriculture.

**Wegener barn, 109 320<sup>th</sup> Street, Fenton (Kossuth County)**-Barn is one-half mile north of Fenton on Highway 15. It's the first place going west. Neighbors helped to build this magnificent double gambrel barn for a farmer's widow in 1915. Ed Dennert was in charge of the crew. The barn is still used in a farming operation.

**Rockafellow barn, 4484 Echo Avenue, St. Ansgar (Mitchell County)**-Go north out of St. Ansgar on US 218 for two miles. Turn left at Echo Avenue. This beautiful bank barn, with a limestone foundation, was built in 1877 for horses and cattle. The timber was framed with wooden pegs. It is unusual to have a bank barn in northern Iowa.

**Battaglioli barn, 4819 480<sup>th</sup> Street, Granville (O'Brien County)**-From Granville, take Highway 10 east two miles. Turn south on Monroe and drive two miles to 480<sup>th</sup> Street. Then travel east a quarter of a mile. This is one of the few large barns left in the area.

**Ascherl barn, 4680 McKinley, Granville (O'Brien/Sioux Counties)**-From Granville, go one mile east on Highway 10 and a half mile south on gravel. Barn is on east side of road. This landmark barn was built in 1914 by Mr. Buche from Germantown. It is 60x40. It is called the Hoeftler barn.

**Conover barn, 5315 190<sup>th</sup> Street, Holstein (Ida County)**-From Holstein travel 1.5 miles on US 20. Turn south on L67 and go three miles. Turn left on 190<sup>th</sup>. It is the first place on north side of road. Barn was built around 1900 and used by C.B. Conover and his son, C.B., Jr., for their outstanding Belgian draft horses. Harry Linn, Iowa's secretary of agriculture, gave draft horse demonstrations here.

**Johnson barn, 5075 525<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Rolfe (Palo Alto County)**-From the southwest side of Rolfe, find 290<sup>th</sup> Street. Go seven miles north to 400<sup>th</sup> (510<sup>th</sup>) Avenue. Go west one-half mile to 525<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Turn north and go one-fourth mile. This barn was built in 1950 by twins, Lovell and Rodell Long, for Fritz Johnson's cow and pig operation. Barn has laminated rafters constructed in eight layers. Rafters are set on two-foot foundation to allow for hay-mow.

**Gade barn, 301 230<sup>th</sup> Street, Whittemore (Kossuth County)**-From Algona go west to the corner of US 18 and State 15. Go north one mile on 15, then east on gravel and down a hill. Farm is on the left. Arnold and Martha Gade bought this farm in 1921 for \$3000. They raised their family on the farm and moved off in 1969 selling it to their oldest child, Wayne. It is now owned by their oldest son, Craig and his wife, Deb. There is a special room where cream was separated.

**Hutchinson barn, 2299 Scenic River Road, Decorah (Winnebago County)**-From Decorah, drive seven miles northwest on Bluffton Road. Turn right on Scenic River Road. Hutchinson farm is one place on the right. Farm has been in the family for 100 years. The barn was built in 1929. The farm is postcard idyllic.

**Mickelson barn, 5126 Highway 71, Storm Lake (Buena Vista County)**-Located 1 3/4 miles north of intersection of Highways 3 and 71 on the east side of the road. This huge (100x70x45) and distinct barn was built in 1901 to house 22 work horses. Owner Roger Mickelson has lived on the family farm for 74 years.

## West Iowa Barns

**Plumer barn, 51588 US 275, Glenwood (Mills County)**-From Highways 92 and 275 in Council Bluffs, travel south 10 miles to the farmstead. Farm was bought by Johann Plumer for \$1.25 per acre in 1851. House was stage coach station for weary travelers; tired horses rested in the barn. Barn was built in 1890's.

**Ditmars barn, 19638 225<sup>th</sup> Street, Council Bluffs (Pottawattamie County)**-Take Iowa Western exit off of I-80 onto Highway 6. Go east one-half mile on Highway 6. Turn north onto Hunt Avenue and follow signs to Ditmars' Orchard. This barn was built in 1950 and was part of a dairy operation.



# BARN TOUR

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**Barry barn**, 3043 Easton Trail, Woodbine (Harrison County)-Go west on Easton Trail (F32) from Woodbine one mile. Charles and Anna Nicely owned the farm when the sweet livestock and hay barn was built in 1936. This barn illustrates how a simple, small structure can be restored to a landmark.

**Belfrage barn**, 2410 Port Neal Road, Sergeant Bluff (Woodbury County)-Get off I 29 at the Port Neal exit and go south two miles to the first intersection. Then go north two miles. Farm is on the right. Owner Winston Belfrage's great-grandfather, John Belfrage, bought the land on which this barn stands in 1875 after serving in the Civil War. A carpenter named Aaron Gunderson built the barn on the land in 1910.

## Central Iowa Barns

**Handsaker barn**, 17266 650<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Fernald (Story County)-Barn is immediately southeast of Fernald which is on E 29 west of U.S. 65, north of Colo. Large, unique 1875 square barn is on farm purchased by Handsakers in 1853. Family gave land for Fernald.

**Schmidt barn**, 3395 Knapp Avenue, Laurel (Marshall County)-From Newton, take Highway 14 north 11 miles to a stop sign. Go straight north one mile, then east one mile, and north two miles. Two barns have been restored on this lovely farmstead. A piece of limestone in one barn's footing reveals it was built in 1905. The second barn, built in 1938, has unique trusses.

**McBurney barn**, 2550 Gotch Park Road, Humboldt (Humboldt County)-At the Westside elevator, turn right. Go to Gotch Park Road and take the black top 2.5 miles. Stephen Taft, who founded Springvale which became Humboldt, owned the land on which this barn stands. In 1874 he sold the land to Lorbeers who built the

house and barn, both still in use. The barn was built in 1890.

**Blake barn**, 11670 300<sup>th</sup> Street, Mason City (Cerro Gordo County)-Travel on Highway 65 north of Mason City two miles. Take a left on County Road B20. Go four miles west. The farm is on the north side of the road. This barn, typical of those of the Depression era, is being lovingly restored.

**Platz barn**, 330 W. Bennington Road, Waterloo (Black Hawk County)-Five miles north of Waterloo off US 65 is Bennington Road. Go west one-fourth mile. The 100 year-old barn has heavy beams supported with pegs and held together with wooden dowels.

**Ellis barn**, 2370 Fletcher Avenue, Lytton (Calhoun County)-The barn is three miles east and 2.5 miles north of Lytton. Landmark red barn, used to raise Red Rock Arabians, is called the "big red barn" by locals. It was built in 1918 and is 40 feet high to the eaves. It has 3x12-inch timbers.

**Wooster barn**, 2435 2100<sup>th</sup> Street, Manning (Shelby County). From Irwin, take the highway east five miles; turn north on gravel for one mile and turn east for ¾ miles. From Manning, go seven miles south on Airport Road on the west side of town. Turn west for 1 ¾ miles. Mr. Wooster's grandfather built this barn in 1896. It has always been used in the family farming operation and still is.

**Yezek barn**, 22881 Vine Avenue, Plymouth (Cerro Gordo County)-From Rock Falls, go one mile north on the county blacktop. Barn is on the east side of the road. This 32x52 barn with metal cupola was built in 1930 and is one of the only barns standing in the area. The barn was in vulnerable condition when the Yezeks started the restoration project. The barn now stands proud showing passersby what can be done with determination.

**Bennett barn**, 1664 Eagle Avenue, Latimer (Franklin County)-Take I-35 to State Highway 3. Turn west on 3 and go one mile to Eagle Avenue. Turn north and go 2.5 miles. This handsome clay tile barn, with round laminated rafter roof, was built in 1950 by Henning Construction Company, Latimer, for a dairy herd. The cow stanchions had drinking cups; there is a chain lift manure carrier. Butter was once made in the barn.

**Ramsey barn**, east of Mt. Ayr on Lesanville Road (Ringgold County)-From I-35, take Highway 2 west 25 miles to Lesanville Road. (Lesanville Road is five miles west of Kellerton.) Turn north on Lesanville Road and travel one-fourth mile. Solomon Lesan, one of the first settlers in the county, obtained the farm from the government in 1855. Eventually there were several farmsteads owned by Lesans making up the village of Lesanville. The Lesanville Cemetery (1878) is 300 yards from the barn that is still in the family.

**Klousia barn**, 1766 165<sup>th</sup> St., Hampton (Franklin County)-At the intersection of Highways 65 and 3 in Hampton, turn east for two miles. Then travel north for two miles and finally west a fourth mile to the barn. The barn of peg construction is on a hill on a gorgeous farmstead. The builder copied a Wisconsin dairy barn when he built it in 1888. The barn was proudly placed on the most prominent position on the farm. There was room for 10 horses. Three hay mows are separated by two alleys.

**Heflin barn**, 837 Orange Road, Harlan (Shelby County)-From the intersection of US 59 and State 44, go four miles east on 44 to Orange road. Then go one and a fourth miles south. Farm is on the east side of the road. Once there were several of these unique barns in the area, but this is the only one remaining. The barn, built in 1901 and featuring a roofline of four equidistant gabled sides, has been used by four generations of Heflins.

**Uetz barn**, 2011 180<sup>th</sup> Street, (Boone County)-Travel seven miles north of Boone on Highway 17. Turn east for one mile and go north one mile on E-26. Barn was built in 1928 by William Smalley, well-known Boone County farmer. It was built using cross-bracing on all sides all of the way out. The original farm buildings remain.

### Eastern Iowa Barns

**Cutkomp barn**, 22682 120<sup>th</sup> Street, Columbus Junction (Louisa County)-Take Highway 92 from Columbus Junction south to Columbus City. From Columbus City, go straight south. The road becomes gravel and T Avenue. Make the "S" turn and go straight two miles to 120<sup>th</sup> Street. Take a left (east), and it's the first barn on the north. Barn was originally built by Lewis Cutkomp in 1911. Native lumber was harvested on the place for the barn put together with wooden pegs. Cutkomp bought the farm in the late 1800's, and it has remained in the family.

**Delaney barn**, 23477 Bellevue-Cascade Road, LeMotte (Jackson County)-This lovely farm is known as the Sprank farm. The large barn was built around 1900, and the smaller one in 1940. The large barn has wooden peg construction.

**Ulch barn**, 4672 Sutliff Road, Solon (Johnson County)-On the north edge of Solon is a blacktop, Sutliff Road. Take it east one mile. This barn, built around 1905, is unique in that it is very primitive. The barn is used in farming.

**Schneckloth crib**, 23553 200<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Eldridge (Scott County)-Exit US 61 at Exit 127. Go east on LeClaire Road three miles. Then go south on 200<sup>th</sup> a half mile. Herbert Schneckloth, prominent Iowa farmer, whose family emigrated from Germany in 1854, built the landmark round crib in 1926. Work on the 50-foot in diameter structure was done with hand tools. The foundation was dug and poured by hand using a shovel and one-third of a bag of home mix at a time. Handmade forms were used to pour the concrete. The ventilation block tile and matching solid tile were brought from Adel by train and horse-drawn wagons.

**Strabala barn**, 930 290<sup>th</sup> Street, Washington (Washington County)-From Washington, go south on Route 1 one and a half miles. Turn west on 290<sup>th</sup> and go one-half mile. The barn is on the right. This large barn was built in the 1920's by distinguished United States Senator Smith Brookhart while he was in office. It is a barn that is important to Iowa and to America.

*If you have questions, telephone Maggie O'Rourke (515) 758-2878 or Roxanne Mehlich (641) 487-7690.*

## Rosenfeld Barn Awarded Certificate of Distinction

The Iowa Barn Foundation has given an Award of Distinction to Mrs. Beth Rosenfeld Young and Mrs. Ronald Rosenfeld, owners of the historic Rosenfeld barn, Kelley, for the restoration of the 90x 66 foot barn.

The pegged barn has 27 four-paned windows for light and ventilation. The barn, built about 1918, housed a nationally recognized purebred herd of Aberdeen-Angus cattle.

Some 360 people visited the barn which was on the Iowa Barn Foundation's spring tour featuring barns of Story County.

The Iowa Barn Foundation gives the Awards of Distinction to owners who restore their barns on their own. They must be restored within the foundation's guidelines. Owners receive metal plaques -Awards of Distinction.



Ascherl barn before restoration



Ascherl barn after restoration

# Adopt-A-Barn Program

by Neil E. Harl\*

The Iowa Barn Foundation, a non-profit organization formed in 1997 to encourage the restoration and rehabilitation of barns (and other farm buildings) in Iowa, has been highly successful. The signature activity of focusing on barn restoration has resulted in more than \$500,000 in funding provided in matching grant form in support of more than 50 projects across the state, which translates into \$1,000,000 going into Iowa barn restoration. The completed projects are identified as Iowa Barn Foundation projects. The barns are open a minimum of two days per year for public viewing in accordance with an easement that assures the structures will be maintained appropriately on a permanent basis. This year will be the third year of the all-state barn tour featuring these barns.

In 2002, the Foundation approved a second major initiative, the Farm Conservancy Program, which provides an opportunity to owners of farms to gift farmland to the Foundation or leave farmland to the Foundation at death. The farms in the program are operated and maintained in accordance with a farm plan which is jointly developed by the donor and the Foundation to carry out the expressed wishes of the donor and the donor's family. Preference is given to renting the farms to young, beginning farmers.

A third initiative, approved by the Foundation Board on June 7, 2003, addresses the problem of run-down or decrepit barns located on the major highways in the state. A pilot program has been underway on segments of U.S. Highway 2 in Southern Iowa.

The plan is to solicit contributions from interested individuals and firms to (1) fund the renovation of the structures or (2) raze the building if renovation is not feasible. Each project would be carried out with the approval and support of the property owner involved. Each project would be appropriately identified with the name of the donor of funds, the property owner and the Iowa Barn Foundation.

The new initiative lends itself to involvement by local groups, including Vocational Agriculture Departments and FFA Chapters and 4-H Clubs in terms of identifying barns which would be candidates for attention and working with the Iowa Barn Foundation and the property owner to carry out individual projects. The involvement of such local groups would be appropriately noted and recognized.

The idea behind the new initiative is to focus attention on high profile barns seen daily by thousands of visitors to the State of Iowa. The Foundation is sensitive to the fact that owners of run-down barns may lack the resources to meet the 50 percent matching grant requirement for regular barn

restoration projects. The idea is to provide, when necessary, sufficient funding to carry out restoration for highly visible barns. For barns that are beyond restoration, the new project would provide assistance in completing the demolition process.

As Jacqueline Schmeal, Iowa Barn Foundation, has stressed, "We support strongly the rehabilitation of barns in the state. Only in rare instances where the barn is too far gone to be restored would the new initiative result in removal of barns from the scene."

Individuals and groups interested in participating in the program should contact:

Jacqueline Schmeal, President  
Iowa Barn Foundation  
jschmeal@earthlink.net  
PH: 505-988-5917  
641-487-7433

Neil E. Harl, Member of the Board  
Iowa Barn Foundation  
harl@iastate.edu  
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\* Charles F. Curtiss Distinguished Professor in Agriculture and Professor of Economics, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa; Member of the Iowa Bar.

## Fading Memory

*Nola Hanson, Mingo, sent this poignant poem written by her teenage son, Travis, after moving to the historic family farm in 1999. The farm had its beginning in 1856. The Hanson barn has been awarded an Iowa Barn Foundation matching grant.*

A windmill squeaks as I walk past it,  
A reminder of the days when this place  
Was once a flourishing farm,  
The barnyard looks like a ghost town with a silo standing in the center  
That was once filled with grain,  
I enter a barn;  
The door creaks as it opens,  
I step inside and smell a mix of hay and cedar,  
An old pitchfork leans against the wall waiting to be used again,  
I hear a rustle as an animal scurries from place to place,  
Then I realize that this was once a place full of energy,  
Now it is just, A fading memory





# About Our



On Highway 13, between Monticello and Manchester, almost every barn has, at least, a new roof. Barns, once ignored and neglected, are now being valued as treasures all over the state. Wouldn't our grandfathers and great grandfathers, who built these barns, be proud? We believe that the work of the Iowa Barn Foundation has made a contribution toward this major preservation effort.

It was six years ago when the idea of starting a foundation to preserve Iowa's barns was transferred from discussion over dinner into the realm of reality. This is a unique organization, as it is all-volunteer. It's about "generosity" and "giving". There are no administrative or operational costs. No one gets a salary or stipend. Yet, the volunteers all over the state are "the best".

When Michael Lanning, Ames, was asked to help lay out the first Iowa Barn Foundation Magazine, he was gracious, but he did not know that there would be a volume 6, number 2 in his future. Michael, a landscape architect, generously continues to do the graphics for our magazine. In fact, he is the creator of our very recognizable and enduring logo.

Don Poggensee, Ida Grove photographer, continually provides us with needed

*Dykstra Barn*



photographs. So does Ken Starek, Ackley. Roxanne Mehlich takes phone calls, helps with mailings, and myriad other chores. The list of friends dedicated to saving barns is long.



After the Iowa Barn Foundation was organized, Ruby Woodbury, Ft. Dodge, sent one of the first letters. Ruby told about her barn built in 1920 with brown blocks from Kalo Brick and Tile near Otho, Webster County. Ruby wrote, "I love this old barn and silo with passion. I've been warned by my husband for years that he's going to knock the barn down. So far I've won, as it's still standing.

"The place where I was born has been completely demolished, and it makes me sad. Everything is gone behind me in my life-my rural one-room school house, high school, church."

After a long illness, Ruby's husband, Ronald, died. Ruby is now at a senior citizens home. But, she still puts on her boots and visits the farm regularly. And, she is determined to save the old barn.

She can't do it alone. John Samuelson, Webster County representative to the Iowa Barn Foundation, is advising and guiding her through the project. This is

an example of the generosity and cooperation that is so much a part of the foundation. John, a farmer, lost his barn two years ago due to a combustion fire.



John Dykstra, Wapello, sent this photo of his lovely well-cared for barn along with a note.

"This barn was built in 1904 and was in bad condition when I acquired the farm. Doing the restoration work by myself, I am giving it another chance for a good life. "Its original use was to provide stalls for the farm work horses and an area for milk cows. The material for the beam and peg construction was cut in local wood lots and sawed in a local steam powered saw mill," John wrote.

He said the barn is "slated for new paint this summer. We hope to keep a neat farmstead and well-kept farm."

The house on the farm was built in the 1880's. The Dykstras have lived on the farm for over 40 years.



*Swallows by Joan Lech*



From Northampton, Pennsylvania, Evelyn Guss wrote, "After my husband, Jack, and I read James Dinsmore's article about barn swallows, we thought maybe you'd like to hear about the enjoyment we have watching barn swallows that come to our barn around the middle of April and leave around the end of August. Well, we are fortunate to have a friend, Joan Lech, from Leighton, Pennsylvania, whose hobby is photography. We got Joan excited to come to our barn with all her photography paraphernalia to shoot pictures of the barn swallows going about their daily chores of

# ur Barns

building their mud nests and filling them with eggs....”



Dave and Pam Battaglioli's barn outside Granville was recently the scene of an old-fashioned "Hay Loft Hymn Sing". Their large 1933 barn was restored with an Iowa Barn Foundation matching grant. Wanting to celebrate the anniversary of the completion of their barn with friends and neighbors, they invited Glory Bound, an Orange City singing group, to lead the sing. Some 70 folks showed up.

"We raised the roof singing old-time gospel hymns," wrote Pam. "Afterwards we visited and enjoyed homemade goodies, coffee, and punch. Thanks to the Iowa Barn Foundation for enabling us to save our barn and to make it useable and beautiful again."

Pam and Dave plan to make this an annual event.



The spring area tour, focused on the barns of Story County, created much interest. The Kalsems, a prominent Story County farm family, pulled out antiques and old photographs to share with visitors. "Barns are part of us," said Dave, as he hung an old photo on the wall.

Beth Rosenfeld Young, who owns the historic Rosenfeld barn along with her sister-in-law, Shirley Rosenfeld, stood for two days and talked about the history of the barn, historically home to championship Angus cattle. Beth and her family drove from Denver to open the barn for the tour.

At the picnic at the Handsaker barn, Gary explained how the family's landmark square barn is going to be restored in time for the fall tour. Interested guests

said they were going to bring chairs and sit and watch the major restoration.

We are grateful to Doug Kenealy, associate chairman, Iowa State Animal Science Department, for opening the Iowa State horse and dairy barns for us. He spent two days welcoming visitors. And, Flora Freeland, 92, welcomed everyone to her Huxley barn which, with great help from Roxanne Mehlich and painter Paul Williams, New Providence, was newly painted. Norma Johnson dashed from helping with the event to hosting folks at her barn. Terry and Tom Bowman listened to raves about their interesting brick round barn; the Vince Hassebrocks greeted folks at their barns, once part of the O'Neil Dairy, Ames.

The Story County committee that organized the tour included Jim Christy, Bill Vogel, Joyce Hertz, Roxanne Mehlich, Norma Johnson, and Jan Walter.



Edmund Erikson of Gilman sent a photo of his historic family barn with a note:

"My father had it built about 1901; he bought this farm in 1893 and grandfather had purchased some of this farm in 1891.

"Dad had, at one time, as many as eight Clydesdales kept in this building. When I farmed, many years ago, we still had milk cows, and I raised some beef cattle that sheltered here."



*Erikson Barn*

Norma Smith, Johnston, was in the process of restoring her 132 year-old family barn in Boone County. It had been built by her great grandfather, grandfather, and their neighbor. Norma wrote, "It was a big old barn with three double horse stalls, one single horse stall, and a double pony stall. There was a hay loft around two sides of the barn that had been constructed with wooden pegs to connect the boards there....The full basement held stanchions for eight to 10 milk cows and an area three times larger where cattle could find shelter and food in the winter."

The barn and a crib were burned from "undetermined causes" in April. "Nothing is left but ashes and the rock and cement foundation.

"Two days before I had been studying the latest Barn Foundation magazine to see if we might be able to get a grant...."

# BATS *and* BARNS

**By Bruce Ehresman**

Wildlife Diversity Biologist, Department of Natural Resources

*I grew up on a farm in eastern Iowa (Jones County) and have always held an appreciation for barns. I not only learned the usefulness of barns for the welfare of our different farm animals, but I enjoyed the various kinds of wildlife that inhabited the barns, too. One particular*

*Another thing I remember about those barn bats is that there were a lot of them. In the evening when it was just starting to get dark, the bats would emerge by the hundreds. It was an especially dramatic sight when the large hay mow door was open and the bats could fly out en masse. I grew to appreciate bats on the farm, for I soon learned that they are great catchers of mosquitoes. We didn't have air conditioning in the house when I was younger,*

mately 1,000 species of bats inhabit the earth in a large variety of habitats. There are 45 species of bats in the United States, while only nine species are regularly found in Iowa. Two of these species, the Big Brown Bat and Little Brown Bat, often inhabit buildings, and these are the two bats that you are most likely to find in your barns.

Although many of the tropical bats are fruit and nectar eaters and are important



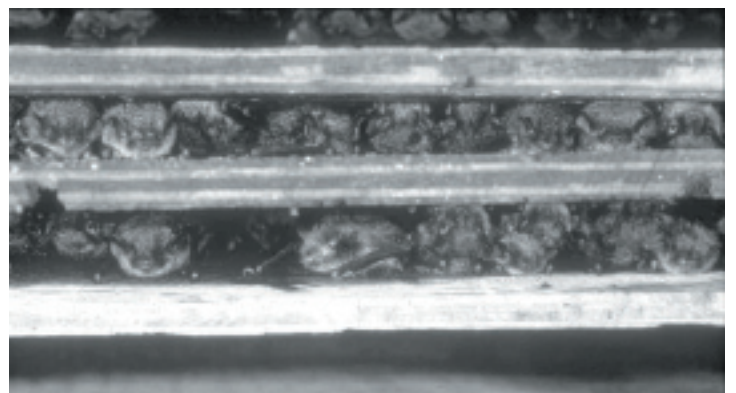
*animal that seemed to live in the barn in large numbers was the bat. I especially noticed the bats during the summertime, when I was up in the haymow stacking freshly made hay bales. I would hear squeaking noises coming from the roof rafters above me. Usually, I could not find the animals that were making the sounds, and I assumed that they were hidden in those dark spaces where the sheeting boards were gapped above the roof rafters. But once in awhile, when the hay was piled up high enough for me to get a good look at the barn loft ceiling, I would spot several of the little critters hanging upside down from the ridge rafter at the barn's peak. I remember it being incredibly hot up there, and I was amazed that any warm-blooded creature would choose to be in that spot (if they didn't have to be). It would be many years later before I learned that some bats actually prefer to roost where the temperature exceeds 100 degrees Fahrenheit.*

*and on hot summer nights I often slept out under the stars in our backyard where the air temperature was cooler than inside. As mosquitoes started to buzz about my head, I noticed that bats started to show up too. I soon realized that the bats were feeding on the mosquitoes that were honing in on me. I now know that a bat can eat at least half of its body weight in insects each night. That translates into a lot of mosquitoes!*

## **General Bat Information**

Before I go further, I should provide you more information about bats. Bats are a very diverse group of animals and make up about one-fourth of all mammals in the world. Approxi-

pollinators of such things as bananas, figs, and cashews, Iowa's bats are all insect eaters. The Little Brown Bat, in particular, can eat about 1,200 small insects (including mosquitoes) in an hour, and a nursing mother can eat more than her own body weight nightly. The larger Big Brown Bat eats bigger insects, like beetles, leafhoppers, and moths, and can consume a large volume of agricultural and horticultural





insect pests. Just 150 Big Brown Bats can eat so many cucumber beetles each summer that they protect farmers from 33 million of these beetles' root worm larvae, pests that cost American farmers an estimated one billion dollars each year.

Most of bats' insect catching is done on the wing. Even though they can see well, it is their sense of hearing that is most developed and allows them to catch prey in total darkness. While in flight, a bat utters a series of high-pitched squeaks (higher pitched than most humans can hear). These sound waves echo off nearby objects, like barns, tree branches, and insects, and bounce back to the bat's ears into a specialized portion of the brain. This information is processed so fast that it allows the bat to quickly change flight direction to avoid obstacles or catch its darting insect prey.

### **Bat Biology**

While most Iowa bats migrate south in the fall, some spend the winter hibernating in caves (particularly in eastern Iowa). The Big Brown Bat is the only Iowa bat that sometimes is found hibernating in heated buildings, and no bats can survive in places that routinely reach temperatures



below freezing. Most bats mate in early fall, just before hibernation, but the female typically will not become pregnant before spring. Young are usually born between late May and late June, soon after females return to their summer roosting areas. Colonial species, like Big and Little Brown Bats, form nurseries of 50 to 1,000 or more individuals in a variety of locations, including tree hollows, under loose tree bark, and in barns and other buildings. The Little Brown Bat has one young each year, and the Big Brown Bat usually has two. Returning mothers recognize their own young within

the colony by odor or sound. Young bats grow rapidly and are able to fly at three weeks of age. They become independent of their mothers shortly thereafter and can join the fall migration when less than two months old.

Surprisingly, Little Brown Bats can sometimes be long-lived, reaching an age of 33 or 34 years. The oldest individual known from Iowa was a pregnant Little Brown Bat that was captured at the Manchester Fish Hatchery 23 years after it had been banded (on its wing).

### **The Value of Barns to Bats**

So – how important are barns to Iowa's Big Brown and Little Brown Bats? According to the leading bat protection organization in the world, Bat Conservation International (BCI), the most important threat to bats is loss of roost sites. To my knowledge, no one has quantified barn use by bats in Iowa, but recent studies in other places indicate that barns are very important roost and nursery sites for bats. In one extensive study in Hertfordshire, England, Patty Briggs found that 89% of the barns with suitable roosting features supported bats. As Iowa continues to lose its wonderful old wooden barns, it also is losing valuable homes for bats.

Some of you might now be asking, "Why should we care if bats disappear?" Well, for one thing, they are part of the natural ecosystem in which we both exist. I firmly believe that everything alive exists for a reason, and it seems arrogant of us to assume that we can eliminate species, communities, and even ecosystems without, us or our descendants, experiencing negative repercussions. On the practical side, loss of bats can increase the demand for chemical pesticides, upset natural cycles, and harm human economies.

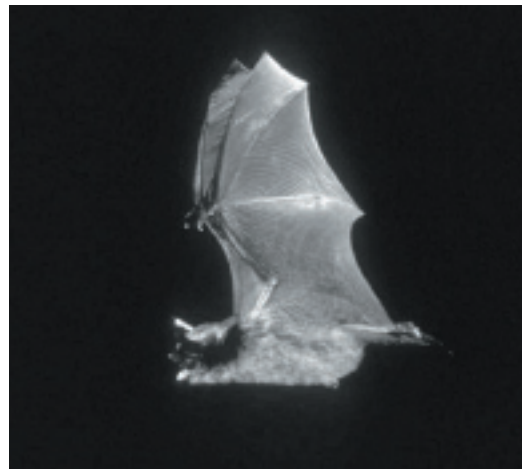
The argument that bats are harmful because they give humans rabies does not hold water with me. In more than 40 years of record keeping in this country, only 16 people are believed to have died from bat-borne rabies. The chance of dying by lightning strike is far greater than the



chance that you will be exposed to rabies from a bat bite.

Getting back to the subject of bats and barns – it seems to me that another good reason for preserving Iowa's barns is to benefit our bats. While building and putting up bat houses is a noble gesture to create homes for bats, preserving a grand old barn that houses the same species that use these bat houses seems an even nobler gesture. And if you want to provide even more homes for bats, you can always attach bat houses to the side of your barn.

Although I still have much to learn about bats, I find that the more I get to know them, the more I appreciate them. I believe that they have their place in nature and that they deserve to be here, too. Perhaps you too will appreciate bats more the next time you notice bats on mosquito patrol in your own backyard or barnyard!



*For more information about bats or bat houses, please contact Bat Conservation International, P.O. Box 162603, Austin, Texas 78716. Their internet address is [www.batcon.org](http://www.batcon.org)*

# Barn Holds Secrets of Generations

By Lori Evilsizer

In April 1842, William O. Reed, his wife Margaret, and their seven children began their journey from Pennsylvania to Jackson County, Iowa. They traveled by raft down the Ohio River and up the Mississippi by steam boat to Muscatine. They then headed north in a covered wagon drawn by two yoke of oxen.

Along the way, Margaret became violently sick. On August 15, she died as the family was preparing to cross the Wapsipinicon River at the mouth of Brophy Creek. Not wanting to leave her, the family brought her body along until they reached their claim at the mouth of Rock Creek—a trip of two weeks from Brophy Creek. There they buried her atop a hill overlooking the river, making her the first resident of Reed Cemetery.

When the Reed family settled, one of their sons, William E., was 16. During his lifetime he: joined the “Brush Creek Rangers” of Andrew, Iowa, serving in the Mexican War; struck gold in California in 1850 and returned to Iowa to teach and to farm; built three schoolhouses in Fairfield Township; helped design and build the original Iron Bridge and Dunham Bridge over the Maquoketa River; and assisted in organizing Iowa’s Republican party.

He married Samantha Hough in 1852. He was later ordained a Baptist minister and formed a congregation at the North Bend Baptist Church building. He was a circuit-riding minister and preached for funerals, often making caskets for friends and neighbors since he was a skillful carpenter.

Rev. Reed’s greatest accomplishment occurred in 1848 when the government

ordered militia to convoy the entire tribe of Winnebago Indians from Ft. Atkinson to a new reservation on the Crow Wing River in Minnesota. Rev. Reed’s account of this expedition is in the Library of Congress.

An excerpt from his diary dated 1866: “Mo. August 13 went to Blacksmith shop got plow sharpened come cut hay to 3 pm went to Deep Creek helped raise Alexanders barn come home.”

In February, 1891, my great-grandfather, William F.H. Stromeier, bought the farm for \$250 and the following year married my great-grandmother, Wilhelmina Meyer. My great-grandpa tore down an existing barn and went to planning and designing a “new” barn that would fit his needs on the farm in 1902. He and his two brothers cut timbers and hand hewn the beams and placed them securely together with iron bolts, washers, and nuts at every junction. He had a herd of 12 milk cows and built 12 wooden stanchions that were used until the 1970’s.

His son, Gilbert, my grandfather, married Irene Kelly in 1923 and continued to farm the family farm. He would often say how he enjoyed farming even though it was hard work. He did not like working with horses and was glad when his mother bought him his first tractor. Gil Stromeier was a self-taught musician. In the 1930’s and 1940’s, the orchestra that he formed, known as the “Oklahoma Cowboys”, was a popular dance band that played at wed-

dings and barn dances. Area residents were familiar with the Stromeier Place near Spragueville since Grandpa also had a sideline business of hatching chicks.

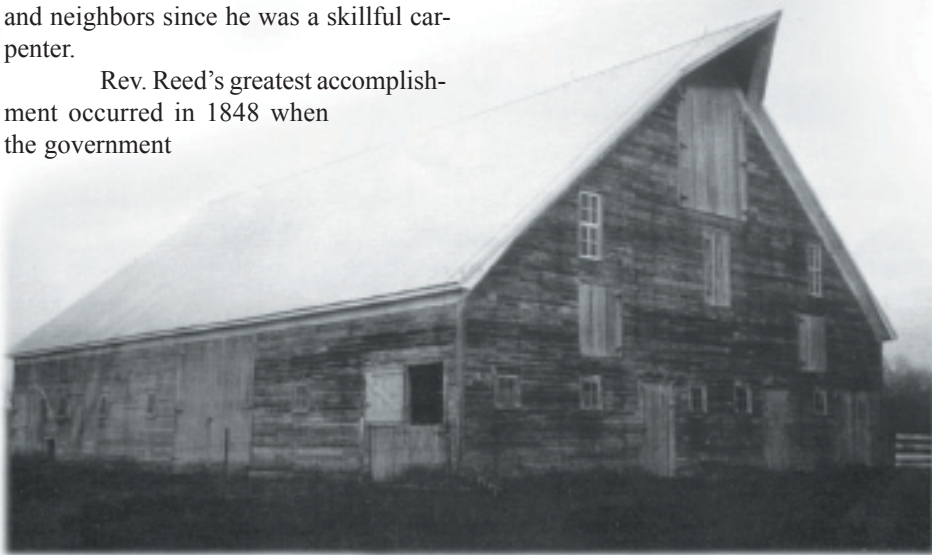
When I asked my grandmother how they got along without electricity and refrigeration, she simply said, “We didn’t miss what we didn’t have. We got along fine. Work was work, but we made time for fun too.”

My mother, Laurel Stromeier Williams, was born in the farmhouse in 1929. Her earliest recollection of the barn was when she was small. Her parents would put her in a seat and hang her on the barn door while they milked cows. Other memories include roller skating in the hayloft with her friends and jumping through holes in the floor into piles of loose hay. When she was a teenager, she helped her dad re-shingle the barn roof.

My mom and dad, Jack Williams, married in 1949 and moved in with my grandparents here on the farm. My father and grandfather worked side by side farming. Both were craftsmen and decided to change the barn. Late in the summer of 1950, they removed a “lean-to” and extended the barn to the size it remains today. It is 54 feet wide and 72 feet long. It has 96 windowpanes and 40 doors. In 1900, my great-great uncle, Otto Stromeier, designed a cupola that he felt would be appropriate on the “new” barn and took a Proctor and Gamble wooden hand soap box and built a scale model. For whatever reason, the cupola never materialized, but we still have the scale model.

The barn has reached its century mark. My family and I plan to paint and restore it. The barn was not built to be a showcase or architectural monument, but that’s what it has become. It is still a shelter for some hay and occasionally a few cows are kept in the pens. But, the milking operation has become obsolete along with many other aspects of the family farm.

We hope the barn will continue to stand straight and tall for years to come so folks can stop by, take a look, and get a glimpse of what life was like on an Iowa farm, if only for a moment.



# The Jacob Christen Barn

By Will Christen

In the fall of 1926, when I was 14 years old, Dad bought 80 acres adjoining the original 160 ancestral farm in Cheery Valley Township six miles east of Elgin. He then decided that he would need more barn room for the extra livestock that he could feed with the extra crop. He asked a neighbor, a carpenter, to draw up a plan.

When we got all the crops harvested, the carpenter, two other neighbors, another man, Dad, and my older brother, John, cut enough lots to build the frame. Each pair had a crosscut saw and two axes. By that time, we had enough snow for good sledding so Dad, John, and the two neighbors started hauling sand from about four miles away. Each had two horses on a bobsled which held a cubic yard of sand. They hauled sand for about a week before the snow melted too much for good sledding.

We started hauling logs. I snaked them out of the timber with one team, and Dad

and John hauled them home. If we had enough snow, they used a sled. If not, they used a steel-wheeled wagon.

In April, the carpenter brought his sawmill and sawed the logs into lumber—30,000 board feet—while we sowed our oats. Then they started to cut and shape the frame. The crew consisted of the boss and five helpers who worked six days a week from 7 to 6. The boss got 30 cents an hour, and the rest got 20 and 25 cents an hour, plus their dinner and supper. While the crew was working on the barn, we planted our corn and hauled more sand. They hauled lumber and cement 10 miles with teams, with one trip a day the limit.

Since the barn was to be built on a slope, we had to level the spot. My younger brother, Elmer, and I each drove a team on a slip scraper. Two men handled the scraper and seven men with shovels dug the edges, taking a week. Next, we poured the walls, seven feet high, 32 feet wide on the ends,

48 feet on one side.

My younger brother and I hauled water with a team and buggy and several 10-gallon milk cans. Two men fed the mixer, three men carried the cement with scoop shovels, and three men carried rocks to drop in the cement. We poured all but two cubic yards the first day.

Next was the barn raising. The first day, a bunch of neighbors came, and they raised the first floor. The second day, there was a larger crowd, and they raised the frame, put on the siding and most of the roof. After that, the crew finished the carpenter work. In September, two men painted the barn.

After the oats harvest, we again hauled sand for about a week, and then poured the cement for the floors. After that, the carpenters put in the stalls and partitions. Last of all, an 80-year-old tinsmith walked out six miles from town to ask for the job of putting up the eaves-troughs. Which he did.

## More Grants Awarded

The Iowa Barn Foundation has awarded 14 matching grants this year to barn owners throughout the state. Many of these barns will be on the September all-state tour.

Those receiving grants include:

Sherry Gribble, Ft. Atkinson, for a Czech barn that has been in the family for generations;



Gladys McBurney, Humboldt, for an 1890's barn (above) on farm that was owned by Stephen Taft, who founded Humboldt;

Clay Plumer, Glenwood, for a barn on

farm—later a stage coach stop-- bought by the family in 1851;

Donna Meierotto, West Point, for a barn with hand-hewn beams secured with wooden pegs;

Mike and Kathy Clasen, Bellevue, for a barn built in 1890;

Tom Waller/Norman Behrns, Traer, (right) for a National Register round barn built in the 1920's;



Harald Jensen, Ringsted, for a 1938 barn with attached milk house.

Nola Hanson, Mingo, for circa 1907 family barn built with wood from an older barn leveled by a tornado;

Kochersperger family (Stan Allen), Emerson, for a barn on a farm in the family since 1870;

Richard Cooper, Toledo, for 1898 barn built by Henry Pusteoska, who owned a meat market in Toledo;

Linda Redman, Osceola, for a barn built in 1916;

Gloria and Gary Handsaker, Fernald/Nevada, for an 1875 land-

mark square barn;

Phyllis Dreyer, Fenton, for 1903 barn on Century Farm that has a 1000-gallon wooden water storage tank;

John McNutt and Ilene Lande, Iowa City, for an early bank barn with ramp for horses and wagons.



# The Family Barn: A Teenager's Story

*Robin Haack, Hospers, was recently reminded of a story her son wrote at age 13 about the family barn. He wrote the piece for a local arts council project focusing on barns. "Kyle is now 27 years old and lives in Michigan. He went to visit Grandpa a day this winter to get more of the story. Grandpa died on March 20, 2003. The barn had to be torn down, but we have displayed the door of the hayloft where the barn stood. This reminds us of our barn."*

## The Old Barn

As I look at our barn, I think of the history it must have. It was built in 1919, seventy-one years ago. It has seen my Grandpa, my Dad, and I grow up. It has been through snowstorms, severe rain, and times of drought. The foundation is starting to crack and some of the wood is rotting. Leaking is also a problem. And yet, it still stands, a monument to years long gone.

I picture in my mind my Great Grandpa helping the carpenter build the

barn. They work side by side until the job is done. The plan of the building was etched in his mind from years of planning. He had everything planned and prepared for his "modern" barn. He wanted the horses and cows to live in comfort.

Now my mind switches to my Grandpa's generation. I can see him proudly driving home his new tractor. It is a 1953 Ford Jubilee, the first tractor on this farm. My uncle, aunt, dad, sister, brother, and I learned how to drive on this tractor. It still runs, but only whenever it feels like it. Horses were no longer needed to do the work, and our farm now had a modern machine.

I can see my Dad now. He's bringing in the cows from the pasture. He changed the horse stalls into places for cows. He has control of his boyhood home now and is making new changes. He works full time in town but still works on the farm at night and has many uses for the barn. Grandpa retired from the farm and moved into town. Dad couldn't let the farm

place slip into some stranger's hands. The barn held too many special memories for him.

This last picture is a familiar one. It shows my Dad, my brother, and I working in the barn. We decided to put sheep in the horse barn and are in the middle of lambing season. We are working hard to make it into a productive barn again. My Dad talks about tearing down the barn because it is old and a new one sure would be nice. I personally am against that idea. Now this old barn holds too many memories for me. I want it to hold many more memories.

My great grandpa has died, but my grandpa still comes out and helps us work. We have had four generations of Haacks on this farm, and the barn has been useful to all of them. Last year was our barn's 70<sup>th</sup> birthday. It is still standing; even after all it has been through. I wonder what my great grandpa would say if he saw what his old barn is being used for today. He'd probably ask why we didn't stick to horses.

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\$140,000

The Brown Foundation, Inc., Houston, Tx.

\$25,000

Iowa West Foundation

\$20,000

Linda and Ken Lay Family, Houston, Tx.

\$10,000 to \$15,000

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\$1000 to \$5000

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