

— BY DAVE AUSTIN —

The Dobbin Round Barn

A tribute to the Iowa Family Farm

The 1919 Dobbin Round Barn in Marshall County has been a favorite stop on the Iowa Barn Foundation All-State Tour for many years. Owners Christy Dobbin Chambers and husband Jonathan Chambers have made a significant investment in restoring the barn, house, and additional farmstead buildings over the past few years. When asked the motivation for the project, Christy said, “Our legacy to the Dobbin family is to save the barn for future generations to enjoy. Our legacy to Iowa history is to preserve the entire farmstead as a tribute to the importance of early 1900 family farms to our state.” Christy noted that the land has been owned by the Dobbin family since the 1870s.

Visitors during the tour will notice several recent completed projects including the middle roof ring repair, a new cedar roof, and a repaired haymow floor. The barn will hopefully be getting new windows and a fresh coat of paint soon to complete the project later this year. When the three layers of old roofing materials were removed, there was an amazing view to the sky through the haymow (see cover) and the silo for the first time in over 100 years.

The 1919 barn was a pre-cut structure ordered from Gordan-Van Tine Farm Buildings in Davenport, Iowa. The Gordan-Van Tine Barrel Barn No. 214 catalog description touts the advantages of round barns:

“The Barn That is Most Economical of Space and Labor – A round barn 60 feet in diameter has a greater floor area by 627 square feet than is contained in a rectan-

gular barn of equal outside linear dimensions. In other words, a small round barn has a floor area equal to a larger, rectangular barn. For this reason, and because the feeding and cleaning is quickly accomplished in a round barn, they are recommended by the Agriculture Experiment Stations.”

When the barn was built in 1919, Christy’s great grandfather, Alexander Dobbin, was passing the torch to her grandfather, Henry Alexander Dobbin. Henry graduated from Iowa State University in 1914 with an agriculture degree, which was likely the inspiration that led to the selection of a round barn design. Christy’s father, Daniel Henry Dobbin, was just 3 years old when the barn was built and continued to live on the farmstead until he was 96 years old. Daniel and his wife Betty started off with a dairy operation and had draft horses for working the fields. When the dairy operation finished in the 1950s, a section of the barn was converted to hog farrowing stalls. The barn was an integral part of the family farming operation into the early 1990s.

You only have to talk to Christy and Jonathan for a few minutes to sense the great pride they take in preserving this amazing piece of Iowa agriculture history. Be sure to put this barn on your “must visit” list during the tour this September. Christy and Jonathan look forward to welcoming guests and sharing the barn’s history and beauty.

See more photos of this beauty on next two pages.



INSIDE THE DOBBIN



Work crew removing 3 layers of old roofing and installing the new cedar roof.



View of the main entrance into the barn.





Early morning view looking up through the central clay tile silo when the old roof was removed.

View of the dairy stanchions and hog farrowing stalls on the ground floor.



ROUND BARN

