

The Lake Township Round Barn(s)

By Dennis Boyd

Between the years of 1874-1936 there were 219 polygonal and round barns constructed throughout Indiana. Polygonal barns with 6, 8, 9, 10, 12, 14, or 16-sides were predominately constructed between 1874-1900. Changes in technology with the advent of the circular silo containing an elevator for moving feed, self-supporting roofs, and balloon framing - resulted in true round barns from 1889-1936.

Indiana once had more round barns than any other state, but their numbers are dwindling. As of 2017, there were only 73 of these historic barns remaining—Indiana is down to one-third of the barns we once had.

Nearly every county in Indiana could claim to have had one round barn at one time. In an article by John T. Hanou, he claimed there was one round barn built in Newton County and that was located in Lake Township, in Section 26, about ½ mile east of the old town of Conrad.

According to Graefnitz family history, Wilhelm Graefnitz migrated to Indiana from Germany in the 1880's and ended up in Lake Township. Eventually he became the Foreman of the Blair Ranch which was owned by a Mr. Blair of Chicago, IL. The ranch location is now part of the LaSalle Fish and Wildlife Area near the Indiana-Illinois State line just north of State Rd. Indiana 10. The ranch had many buildings including a Round Barn.

Later Wilhelm left the ranch and his son, Albert Graefnitz became the foreman. Albert (my wife's Grandfather) talked to me many times about the barn with livestock on the bottom floor and an elevator to move farming equipment up to the upper floor.

In the publication by John T. Hanou, "A Round Barn", he states that the barn was an eighteen sided barn and was built in 1906 but there was no recorded date on when it was destroyed.

Mr. Hanou described the barn as follows; the lower floor had 15 pens, 8 x 12' and a corresponding exercising lot 50 feet out from the building. In the inner circle there were seven farrowing pens, 8 x 10' and a large stove in the inner circle with a water pump.

The second floor, according to the article, was used for a hay mow and the third floor was used for the storage of machinery hoisted by an elevator. The information about the barn article by Mr. Hanou was taken from an article in the "Indiana Farmer" in 1906 describing his round barn. So the question is, were there two round barns in Lake Township, or was the round barn Mr. Hanou describes as being near Conrad a second barn?



Picture of the Round Barn at the Blair Ranch



Picture of Albert Graefnitz & his wife, Beulah, on his 1916 Harley-Davidson motorcycle

Information was taken from; the IN Gov. DNR (Article), and Round Barns by Damon Howell.

Information taken from

- The IN Gov. DNR (Article)
- Round Barns by Damon Howell

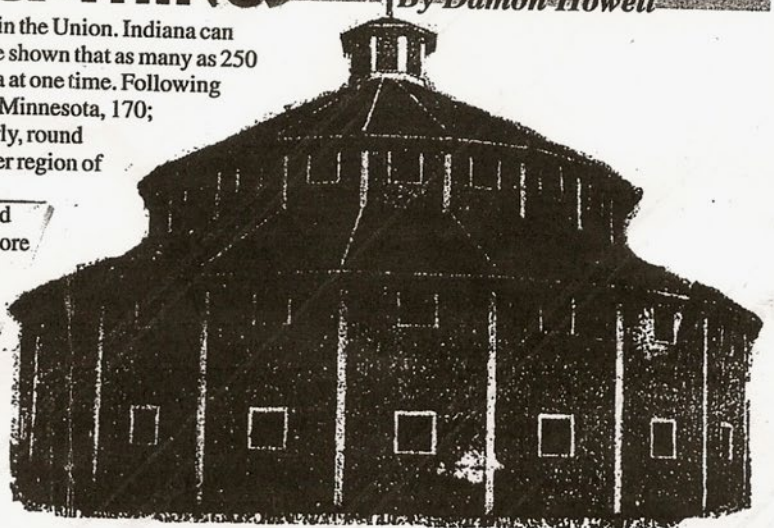
Round barns or circular barns appear in every state in the Union. Indiana can claim more round barns than any other state. Studies have shown that as many as 250 to 300 round barns may have stood in the State of Indiana at one time. Following Indiana in the number of round barns is Wisconsin, 215; Minnesota, 170; Iowa, 170; Illinois, 155; Ohio, 56 and Nebraska 49. Clearly, round barns were more common in the Midwest than in any other region of the United States.

Nearly every county in Indiana can claim to have had one round barn at one time. Many Indiana counties had more than one. Newton County had ONE round barn. It was located in Lake Township, Section 26, about one half mile east of Conrad.

In the publication, A Round Indiana, by John T. Hanou, he states that it was built in 1906 by C. B. Davis in Lake Township. Following are the specifications about the barn, and it is shown in the photo, right.

Eighteen sided barn, built 1906, destroyed, date unknown; Site, Lake Township; Original owner, C. B. Davis; builder, C. B. Davis; photo and diagram submitted by C. B. Davis.

An article appeared in a publication called Indiana Farmer in 1906, written by C. B. Davis. In it, Mr. Davis gives a description of the barn, including a diagram - included here.



Actual photo of Newton County's only round barn, built by C. B. Davis, Lake Village, from "A Round Indiana," by John T. Hanou

A Good Round Barn by C. B. Davis

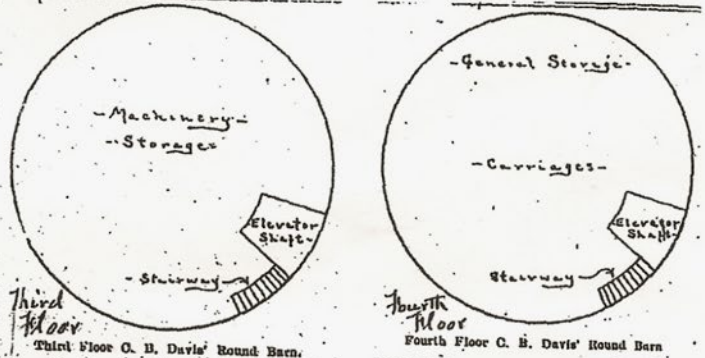
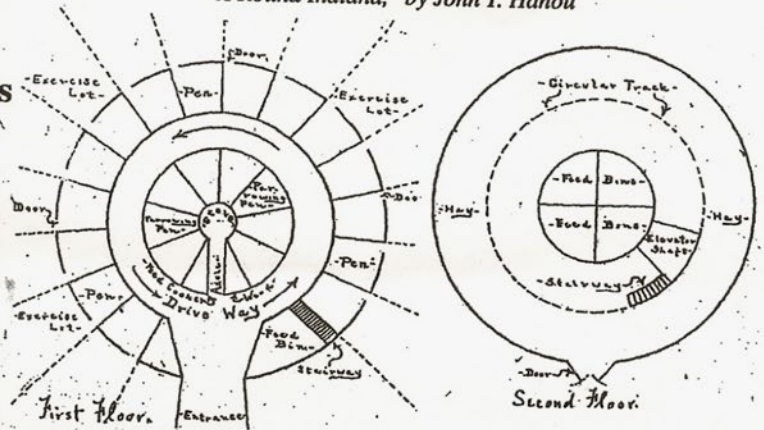
His article read as follows: Recently I sent you a plate of round barn and you requested me to describe it. that would be quite an undertaking so as to make one understand the construction of the barn. I will try and describe it to the best of my ability and also send you a rough sketch of each floor and its use.

The building is now used as a hog house, that is the ground floor, but could be used for barn purposes if needed. I am a breeder of full blood Poland China swine and find it very convenient for that purpose. In the outside circle there are 15 pens, 8x12 feet and a corresponding exercising lot 50 feet out from the building. In the inner circle there are seven farrowing pens 8x10 and a large stove in the center for use in cold weather. Also have a feed cooker in inner circle and water hydrant. There is a driveway between the inner and outer circle which enables a man to drive around with team and wagon.

The second floor is used as a hay mow and feed bins in the center for different grains.

The third floor is used for a storage for all surplus machinery in winter months. It is hoisted to the third floor by means of an elevator which is capable of lifting any farm machinery. The elevator is 12x14 feet, and extends from drive way on ground floor to top or fourth floor of building which is used for general storage purposes.

It would be a difficult matter to give a bill of lumber and cost of matter to give the readers of the Farmer, wish it will give the desired information. Hoping the rough sketches will be of some benefit, I am very truly yours, C. B. Davis, Maple Grove Stock Farm, Lake Village.



This is the diagram that C. B. Davis submitted with his article to the Indiana Farmer in 1906 describing his round barn. The search is on for more information regarding Mr. Davis, the barn and its specific location within Section 26 of Lake Township. If you have any information, please contact the editor!