

Rural Roundabouts

The Round Barns of Fulton County

By Janelle Michael

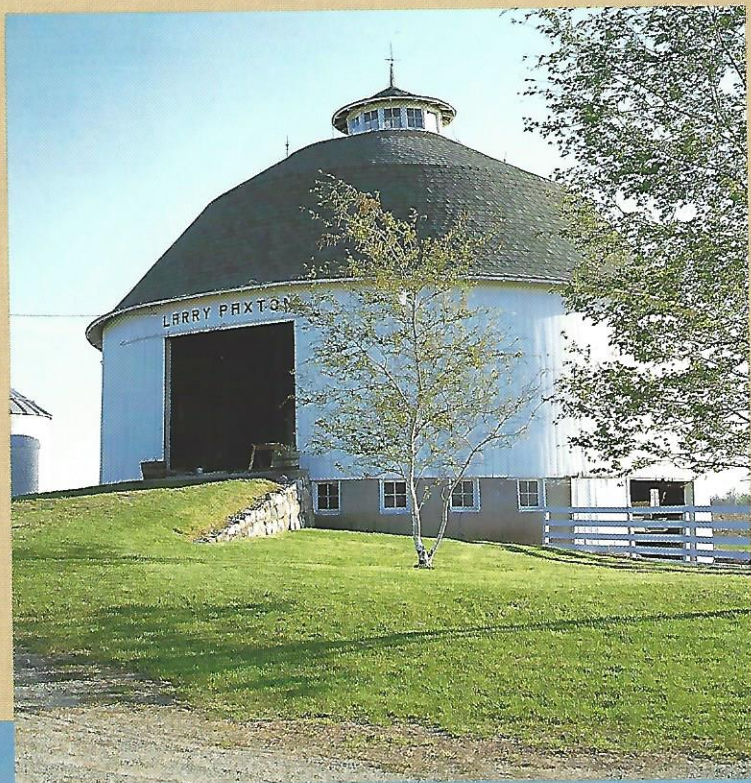
Dominating the landscape in Fulton County are nine, unique barns. Some of the structures are red, some white, and all are circular. They each serve as a reminder of, and a tribute to, Hoosier construction skills.

The circular structures are known simply as round barns. Although plainly named,

round barns are a complex framework comprised of Hoosier ideas and skills.

At the beginning of the 19th century, Hoosier craftsmen built a number of round, hexagonal and octagonal barns. The structures are scattered throughout Indiana, but the greatest concentration is located in Fulton County. The county's citizens work to ensure that the barns are preserved and





The Larry Paxton barn, built by the Kindig brothers in 1924, was the last round barn built in Fulton County.

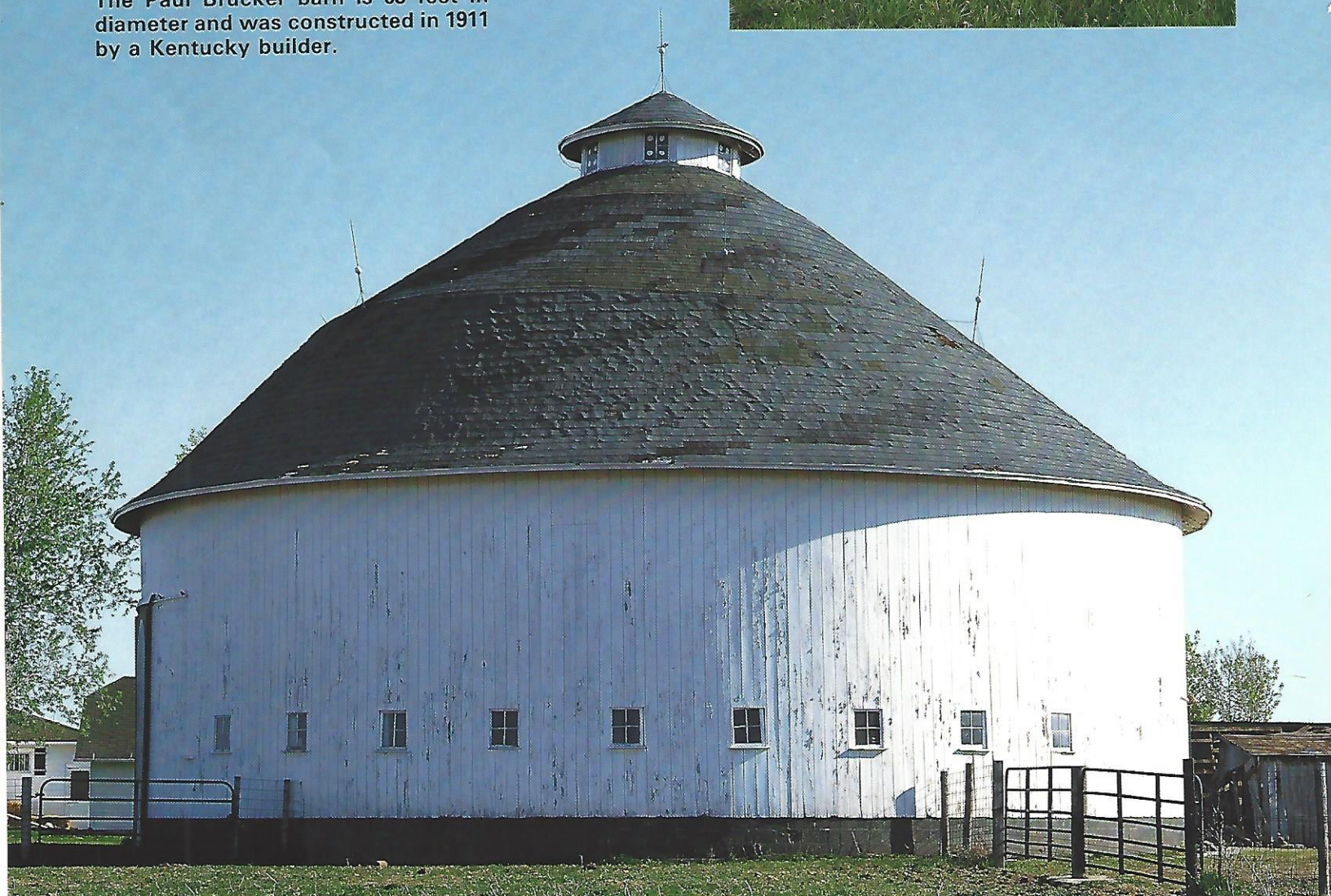
The Utter-Gerig barn at Pasturebrook farm was built by Courtney and Sumner Rhodes in 1915 with lumber taken from the Utter farm.



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The Paul Brucker barn is 63 feet in diameter and was constructed in 1911 by a Kentucky builder.



The Jerry Callaway barn is located in Miami County just across the Fulton County line. The barn was built by the Kindigs in 1915.



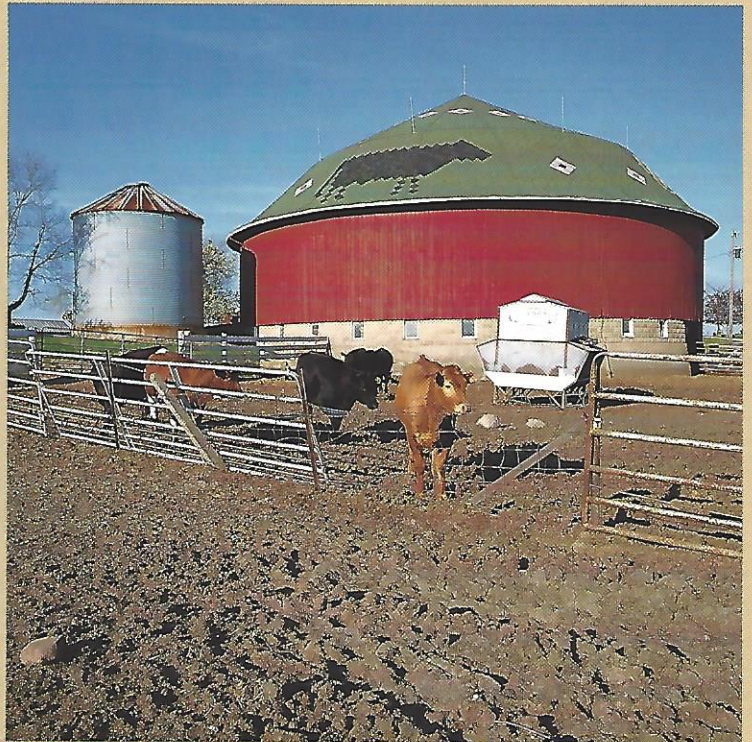
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The Bob Jones barn was built by Bob's father, Tom, and is 55 feet in diameter.

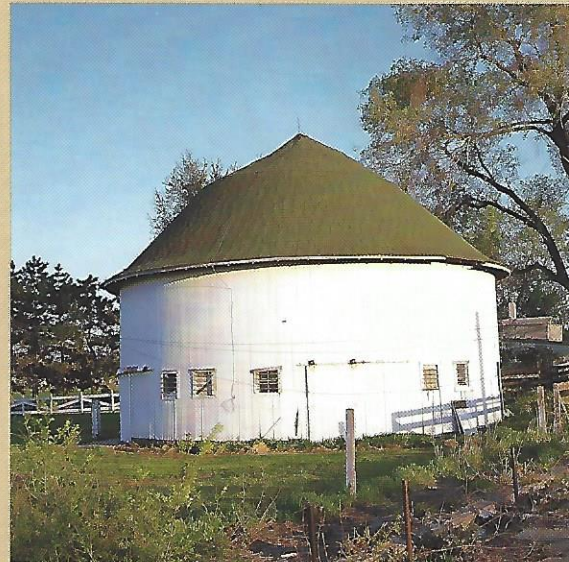
recognized for their specialized craftsmanship. The area is proud to proclaim itself, "The Round Barn Capital Of The World."

As one tours the north central Indiana county, pictures of the past are easily conjured. The sight of an immense building serenely standing in the middle of a barnyard leads the way for imaginings of the state's farming heritage.

Round barns were intended to improve efficiency in farming. Animals, for example, could be fed in a centralized spot. The building also required fewer materials to build than a similar-sized, box-shaped barn, based on the theory that a circle would maximize the amount of floor space while minimizing the surface area of the walls. The barns also held a certain aesthetic value.



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The Don Smiley barn was constructed by the Kindigs in 1915 and measures only 40 feet in diameter.

Although an innovative idea, the round barns had their down side, as well. In *Fulton County's Round Barns*, author Doris Hood points out that pie-shaped stalls were most effectively used for pie-shaped animals, hay storage proved to be an extremely complicated task and the expense of building a round barn was high. Also, carpenters con-

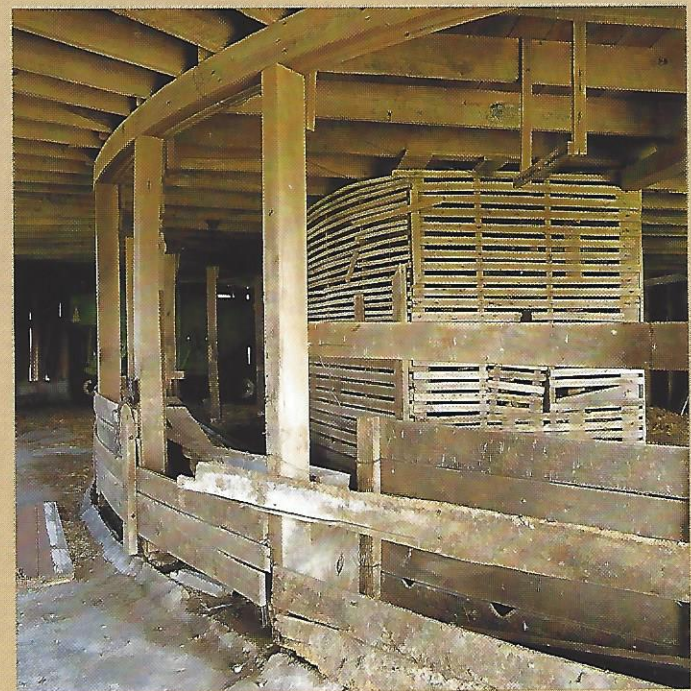


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The curved lines of round barns are visually appealing. Above, the inner geometry of the Jerry Callaway barn is revealed. At top right, a sunset is reflected in a window of the Utter-Gerig barn. The Selena Gerig barn, at right, has a central driveway and a corn crib.



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structuring round barns had to be highly skilled at their craft. The barns required special treatments of wood and careful measurement. An error in board length could result in a lopsided barn.

A good time to visit The Round Barn Capital Of The World would be during Fulton County's Round Barn Festival. An annual event, the festival is scheduled for July 7, 8 and 9 this year. No admission is charged and activities include guided tours, entertainment, parade and dance.

Because of such problems, building round barns became uncommon. The remaining structures deserve respect as historical tributes to Indiana's farmers and carpenters.

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