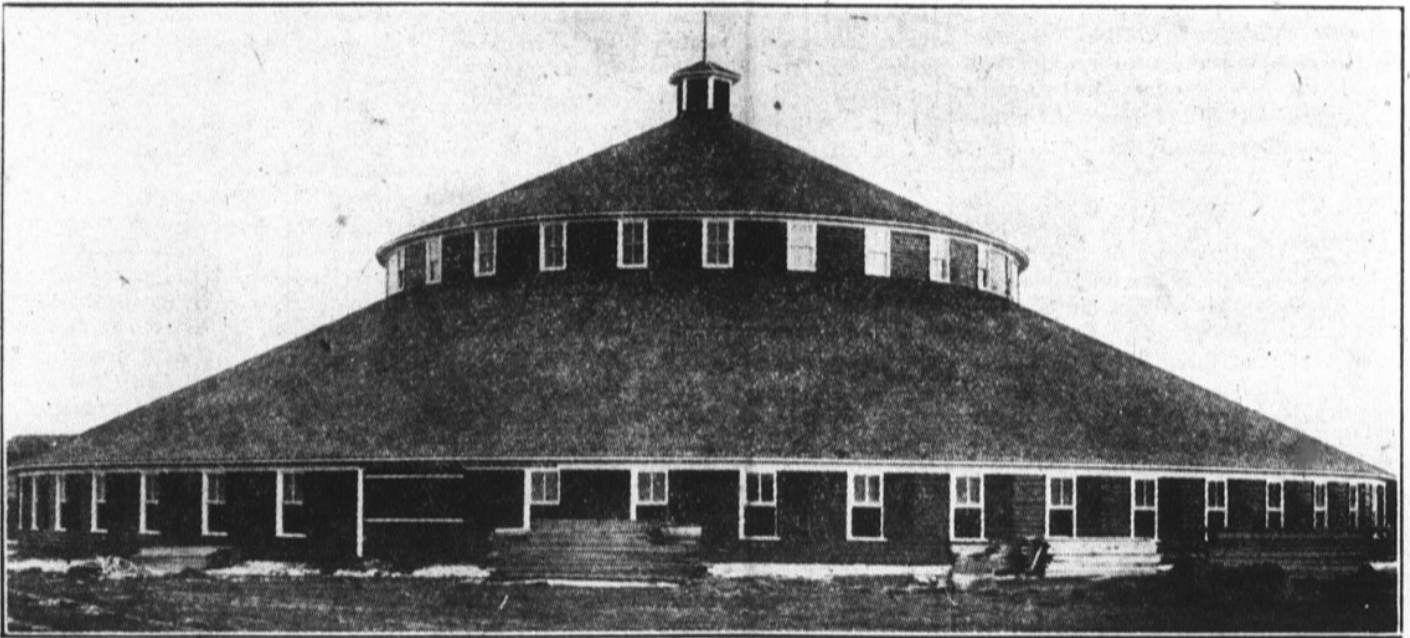


## Round Barn Newspaper Articles

### MARSHFIELD CAN BOAST OF THE BIGGEST ROUND BARN IN THE WORLD.



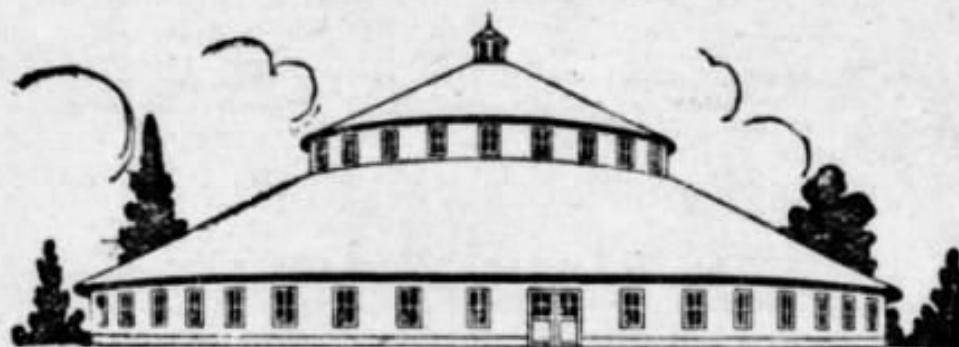
The Herald takes pleasure in presenting to its readers the first picture of the big round barn that is being built on the fair grounds in this city by the breeder's associations of this county, to be used for sale and exhibition purposes. It is the largest barn of the kind in the United States and perhaps in the world. It is 150 feet in diameter, 471 feet in circumference and covers a ground space of a little over one-third of an acre. To cover the roof it took 120,000 shingles. Two rows of stalls, with the latest improved stanchions,

extend around the entire barn, which together with box stalls and calf pens, built on either side of the entrance, makes it capable of housing nearly 250 head of cattle. In the center will be a 60 foot circle provided with raised seats capable of seating 1,000 spectators and in the center of this will be a show ring 35 feet in diameter. The entire floor, with the exception of the show ring, is made of concrete. Two rows of litter carriers extend around the entire barn.

The barn cost \$6,500, the different breeder's associations paying \$3,000, the

county \$1,900, the Wood County Bankers' Association \$500 and the citizens of Marshfield, by popular subscription, \$1,100. Frank Felhofer, the celebrated barn builder of this city, had the building contract and is very proud of the name of building the largest round barn in the United States.

It will be used by the different breeder's associations for sale purposes, the first sale to take place in May. During fair week it will be used for exhibition purposes.



**HEMLOCK** 'The biggest  
**BARN**  
in the world' is built of

## "Old Faithful" HEMLOCK LUMBER

AND NO WONDER, for it was built by the Central Wisconsin State Fair Association, a body of officials who *know* what is best. You're going to build your barn of the same material, aren't you? Of course.

The big round barn at the State Fair Grounds at Marshfield, Wis., just completed by the Central Wisconsin State Fair Association. It is 160 feet in diameter and has stalls for 250 head of cattle, and a judging space in the center with seats for 1,000 people. That's *some barn!* It is said to be the largest barn in the world and we certainly don't know of one any larger. Outside of the 198,000 White Cedar Shingles (best there is) every stick in it is "Old Faithful" HEMLOCK.

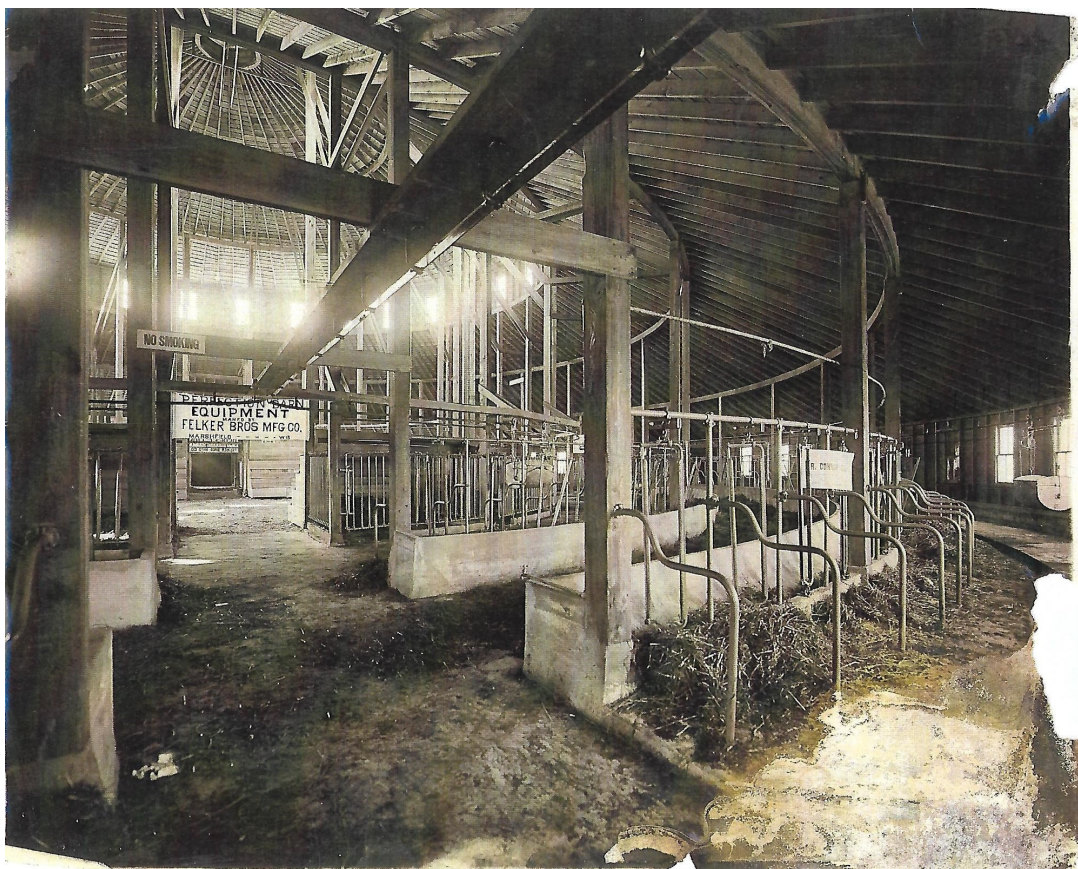
### THE HEMLOCK MANUFACTURERS

(of Wisconsin and Northern Michigan)

Offices at Oshkosh, Wisconsin

We spread the good news about "Old Faithful" HEMLOCK but we do not sell it. Get it from your **LOCAL LUMBER DEALER**





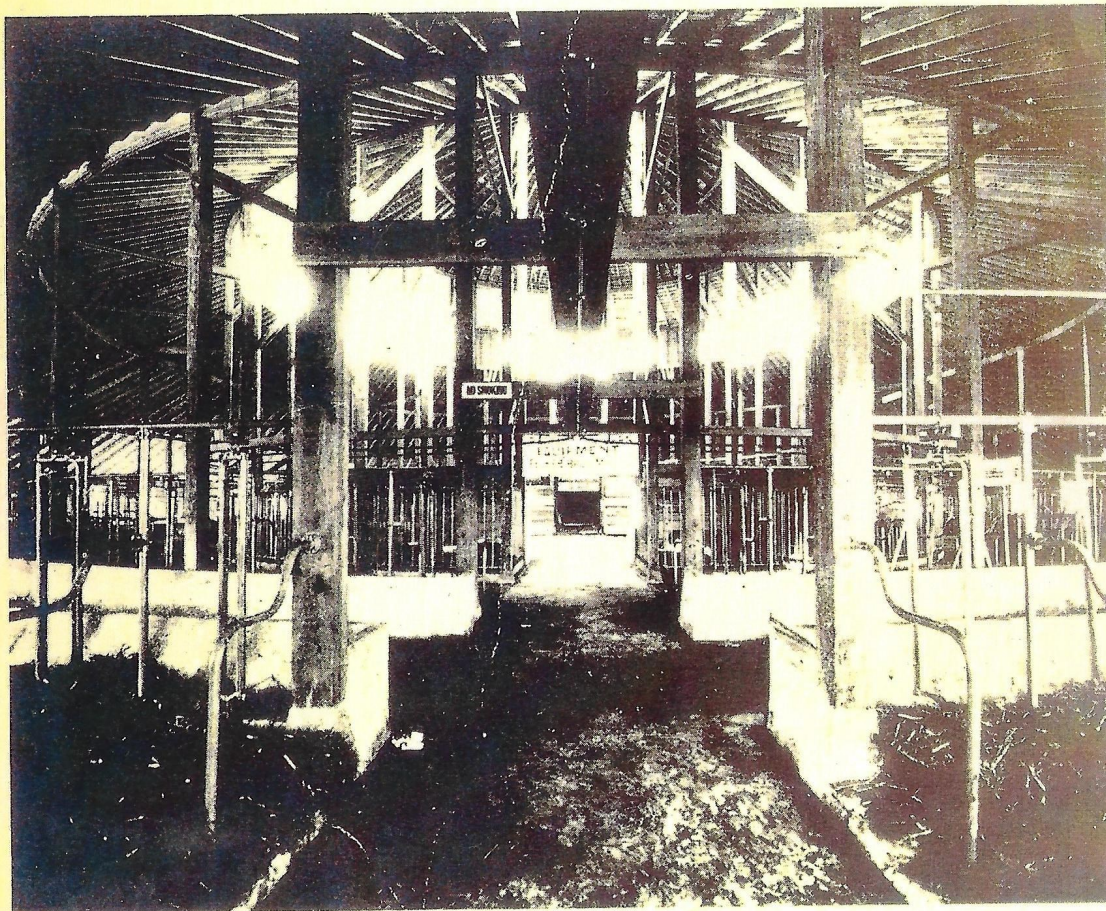
NWCHS #109.11 1916/1917 (Prior to 2nd Story)



NWCHS #109.10 1916/1917 (Prior to 2nd Story)



1917 BEFORE 2ND FLOOR WAS INSTALLED



NWCHS #108.21 1917

SALE PAVILION (INTERIOR) MARSHFIELD, WIS.



NWCHS #108.14 Postcard postmarked March 4, 1923



discharge.

Visitors at the Marshfield fair, Sept. 2 to 5 will find a veritable white city, as all buildings will be newly painted white. 51t3

The Marshfield News, Marshfield, Wisconsin, 14 Aug 1919, Thu • Page 9

## BREEDERS RE-ELECT KIEFFER PRESIDENT

### Association Holds Annual Meeting Here Today

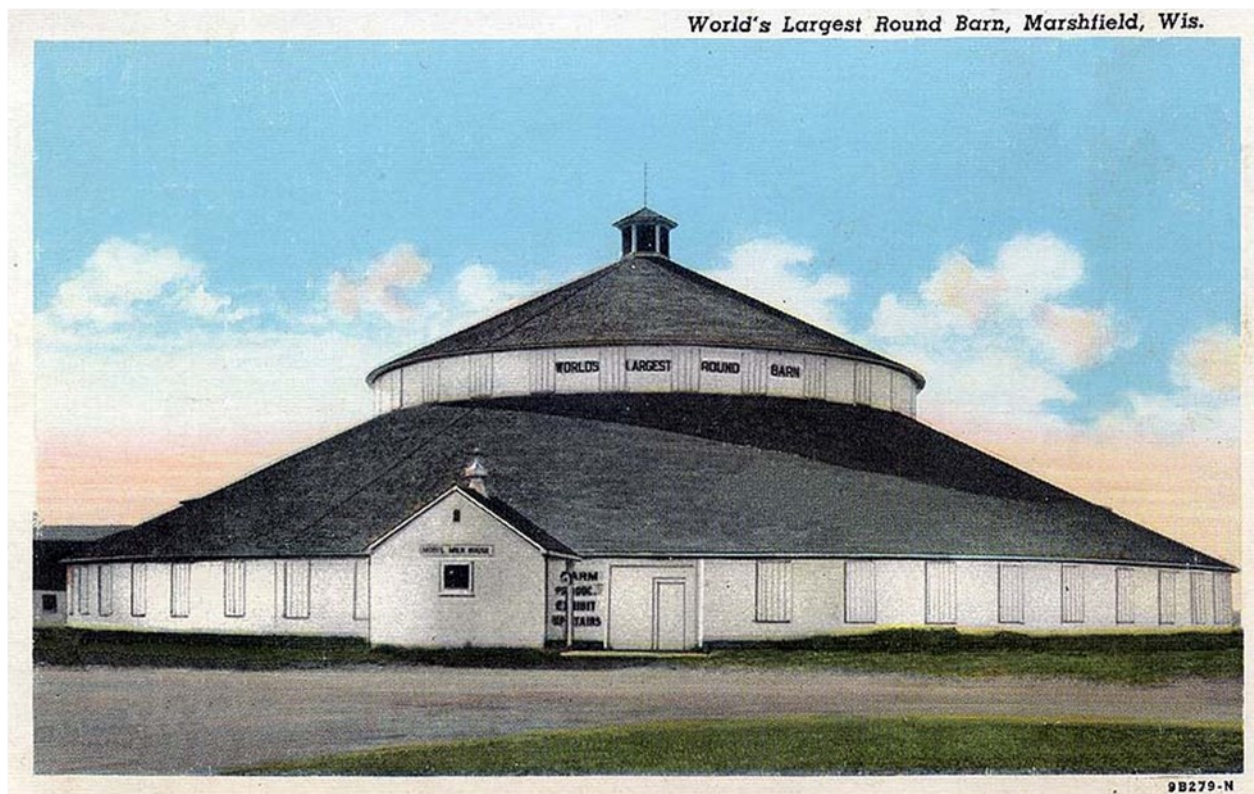
J. C. Kieffer, Auburndale, was re-elected president of the Central Wisconsin Breeders' association at the annual meeting of the organization, which was held in the community room of the First National Bank following the meeting of the Central Wisconsin State Fair association this morning. The other officers, who were also unanimously re-elected, are Fred Husted, Nasonville, vice-president; William Burhopp, Richfield, secretary and W. W. Clark, Vesper, treasurer.

The Breeder's association is the organization which sponsored the building of the round barn at the Marshfield fair grounds and attends to the upkeep of the same. Chief among the improvements made the past summer was having it painted white, in conformity with the other exhibition buildings on the grounds.

In addition to the routine business transacted at the meeting today, a motion was made and carried that the officers of the association co-operate with the Fair officials to secure a proper system of ventilation for the barn.

Marshfield News-Herald, Marshfield, Wisconsin, 03 Nov 1927, Thu • Page 4





Round Barn Postcard (lithograph), no date listed  
from Postcard Collection of Don Schnitzler, Marshfield







CENTRAL WISCONSIN STATE FAIR MARSHFIELD, WIS.

NWCHS #110.100

~ 1949 ~



NWCHS #108.18 1955





NWCHS #110.105



NWCHS #109.16 1955



# Fair 'Trademark' Has Served Area Well



W. W. CLARK, ACTIVE IN Building Round Barn, Surveys Handiwork a Half-Century Later.

W. W. Clark, Wood County's first county agent, a former assemblyman and long-time state senator and a veteran town of Hansen farmer, made a sentimental journey recently to the Marshfield fairgrounds.

There, before the World's Largest Round Barn, he talked to a reporter about the unique building which has become the trademark of the Central Wisconsin State Fair.

Clark, tradition says, designed the unusual livestock exposition building. But that is an honor he is not quite willing to claim.

"I may be credited with designing the building, but that actually isn't true," he said. "I think F.A. Felhofer (the contractor) and the committee did most of the designing."

The decision to build the barn was made just a half-century ago, following the 1914 fair.

"The barn was started late in the fall of 1913 and, as I recall, was not actually finished until 1917, which I believe marked the first show in the new barn," Clark stated.

Clark, vigorous and "sixty ish" at 79, came to Wood County at the age of 29 as the first principal of the Wood County Agricultural School which was being established in that year of 1914 as an adjunct to the Wood County Normal School. Force of circumstances quickly plunged him into





NWCHS #108.20 1962



NWCHS #108.19 1964



circumstances quickly plunged him into fair affairs.

"I came here July 1, 1914, but the school didn't start until fall," he recalls. "About three weeks after I got into the county, R. R. Williams (secretary of the Marshfield exposition) telephoned me and wanted to know if I'd ever judged livestock."

As incoming head of the brand new "agricultural" school, Clark "couldn't very well say 'no.'"

"Then he asked me to be the judge of everything from cattle to sheep, from horses to pigs to chickens. Damned if I didn't sweat, but I got through without getting my neck broken! I had done some judging for school fairs but I really had no experience."

The 1914 fair concluded and Clark, bearing no visible marks of his traumatic experience, attended what he recalls as a meeting of the fair board at which the matter of a new livestock building was discussed.

"They had a lot of little barns, nothing amounting to very much. I believe that a round barn, specifically, was discussed at that meeting and a committee was appointed," he recalled. "I suppose I was on the committee."

Late in October that year livestock breeders held a day-long meeting in the City Hall at which the Central Wisconsin Livestock Breeders Association was born. Its objective, in addition to the

improvement of the breeds, was according to a contemporary account, to spotlight "the need of carrying out the object which the stockholders have been agitating, namely a large sales and show barn at the fairgrounds."

Clark was named to the board of directors and also elected treasurer of the association. E. E. Butters, a farmer near Hewitt, W. R. Burhopp, a Marshfield farmer, and Clark were named to the building committee that day.

The committee probably joined with a fair association group, for Clark recalls that J. C. Kieffer, Auburndale, president of the fair board, and several others also served on the committee.

Clark today is the only survivor of the group, which he remembers with respect and affection.

Butters, for instance, "was a go-getter." He had a son who, obviously, inherited some of his father's traits. Clark said that, during World War II, the younger Butters won mention in a national magazine as the imaginative businessmen and livestock dealer who "purchased a herd of buffalo in Montana and corralled them in Michigan." Object: Fresh meat for sale with no ration points required!

"Felhofer was retained as contractor because he was on the ground, had been doing quite a bit of barn-building, and seemed interested."

The construction of a round barn was in the thinking of livestock

men from the start. The report of the organization meeting of the breeders' group said that "blueprints of the plans were submitted and considered."

"The barn will have a capacity of 300 head of cattle. Its estimated cost was given as \$5,000. The plan is to raise \$2,000 by donations and give a note for the balance and to pay the interest and make payments on the principal from percentages of stock sales, privileges of stock exhibits in the barn at fairs, and other ways. The City Council and County Board may be asked to join in making donations to the building fund."

In deciding on a round barn, the committee "wanted something unique and different. We looked on it as an advertising feature for the fair and the community," said Clark.

"We had no particular problems with construction. I don't believe that we even had any state inspection during construction. At least, if we did, it wasn't enough to cause any trouble."

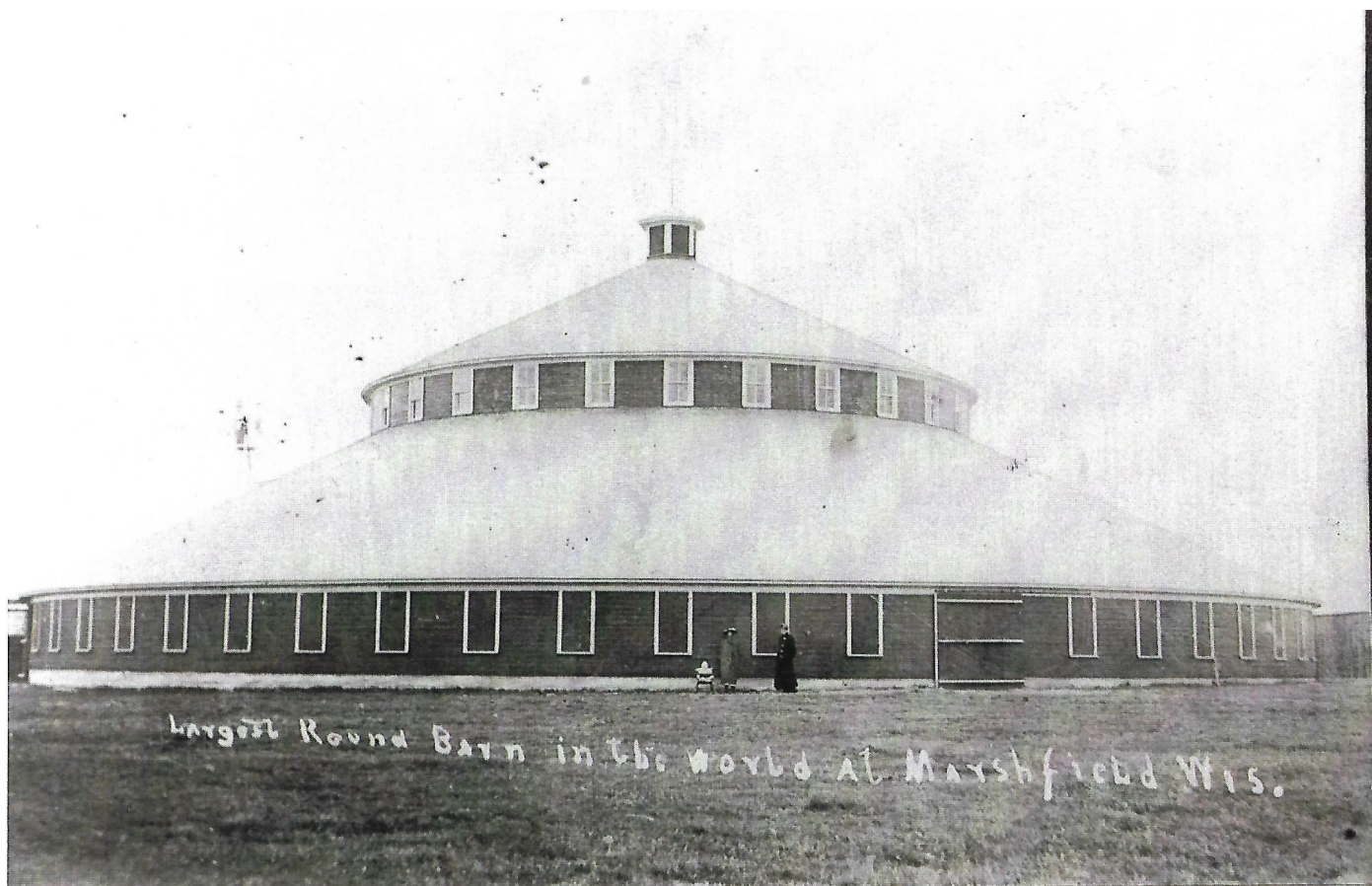
The World's Largest Round Barn was put into use with the fair of 1916, with about 200 head of cattle on exhibit, according to newspapers of the period. The second floor, probably, wasn't completed until the following year.

Said Clark: "We found ventilation for the upstairs was poor. In those days we had a lot of town exhibits and we used the second floor of the Round Barn for that purpose."





*World's Largest Round Barn, Marshfield, WI, 1916  
North Wood County Historical Society Photo Collection*



*World's Largest Round Barn, Marshfield, WI, 1916  
North Wood County Historical Society Collection Photo #108.11*

He doesn't remember what the barn cost, but W. A. Uthmeier, secretary-manager of the fair association who was a boy billposting for the fair a half-century ago, said the figure he remembers is \$17,000.

A \$2,000 appropriation was forthcoming from the county immediately and was an annual contribution for a number of years, Uthmeier remembers. Technically, the building was erected by the county under a special lease for the property on which it stands given by the city of Marshfield.

In any case, the remaining financing, Clark stated, as obtained via an associated note with more than 100 endorsers.

The Round Barn, once red and now painted red and white, was given a new roof this year and original dormers were removed. The project, which consumed 220 squares of shingles, cost \$4,200.

The first-floor circumference of the exposition's trademark is 476 feet; the "top" roof circumference is 246 feet, and the diameter of the building is 152 feet. Today the barn is set up to house about 290 animals, including stanchions, tie-stalls and 14 box stalls.

Clark as an educator, found himself in a dual role in Wood County as principal of the Agricultural School and serving, for all practical purposes, as county agent. He formally assumed the post of Wood County's first county agent in 1917.

He broke his tie with the county payroll in 1920 to become a full-time farmer on the farm he still operates in the Vesper area.

A Republican, he ventured into politics and won the post of assemblyman from Wood County for the 1921-22 term.

"I got \$500 for the term. I had a wife and kids and they had to eat. I believe I was on the ticket (for reelection) but I didn't campaign. A, Progressive got the job. I didn't go back into politics until 1939, when I won the office of assemblyman again."

He was defeated in 1940 by Chester A. Krohn, then of Marshfield, but was returned as assemblyman two years later, to remain as Wood County representative until taking over the Senate seat in 1952 relinquished by Rep. Melvin R. Laird of Marshfield. Clark retired from public life in 1960. His career also included lengthy service on the Wood County Board, which he also served as chairman.

Today, in addition to his pursuits as a farmer, he is a director of the Auburndale State Bank.

If Clark were planning a livestock building for the local fair today, "I wouldn't plan it differently. I think the Round Barn served its purpose as an advertising feature for the fair in Marshfield."

The building certainly has well served its purpose a means of fostering the breeding of purebred dairy stock. At the time the barn was built and the purebred move-

ment started here, there were only six large breeders of dairy stock in Wood County; within seven years there were hundreds of breeders, and scrub cattle had largely been replaced by purebred or high grade animals.

Thus the World's Largest Round Barn has more than fulfilled its purpose over the past half-century. Its role in the future, however, is not as clear or certain. The recent decades have seen the city of Marshfield growing by leaps and bounds about a fairgrounds which not too many years ago was a somewhat bucolic area on the city's fringe. And today some city planners, practical and non-sentimental men, see the fairgrounds as a curb to city growth on the southeast side and suggest the fairgrounds with its Round Barn as a site for a much-needed Senior High School.

Only time will tell.





*NWCHS #110.111 1966*



*NWCHS #110.108 1966*





NWCHS #110.30 August 25, 1972

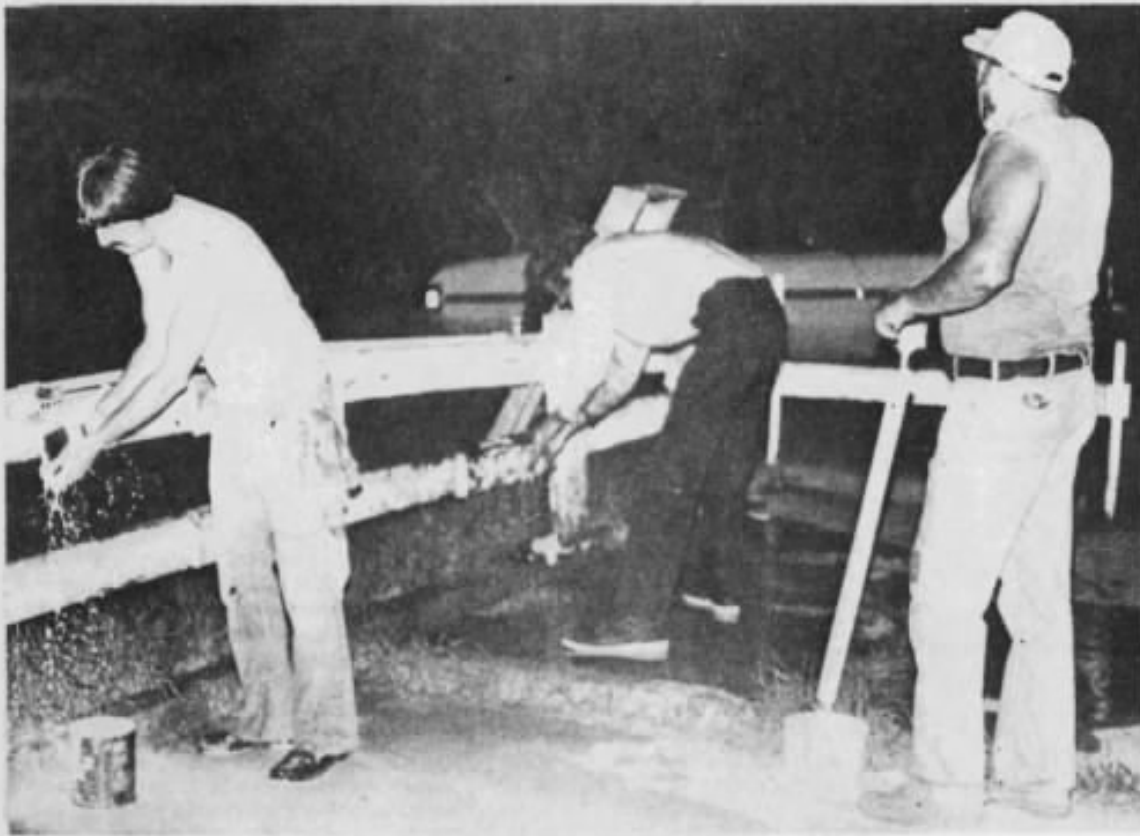
*FAIR FROM THE AIR* This photo, taken from the Cobra gunship, one of two Army helicopters at the fairgrounds for the 71st annual exposition, offers a different view of the Central Wisconsin State Fair, which today begins its big Labor Day holiday weekend of activities. The view looks southward down the midway to the Round Barn and clusters of fair buildings. The main gate on S. Vine avenue is visible at the lower right. (U.S. Army Photo)

(from Marshfield News-Herald, Marshfield, Wisconsin, 02 Sep 1972, Sat • Page 1)

NWCHS #110.117







### Night's work over

Members of the Felhofer family, friends and in-laws have been working this week to paint the round barn at the fairgrounds. The barn was built in 1916 by the Felhofer and Esser families in Marshfield. Above,

Jeff Wilcott (left), Milwaukee, Bernard Cull (center) and Allen Esser, both of Marshfield, clean their paint brushes after one night's work is completed.

## Fair's round barn repainted

The "world's largest round barn" at the Marshfield fairgrounds has been the scene of some cheerful volunteer work this week.

Back in 1916, the barn was built by Henry Felhofer and his six brothers, with the help of John Esser. The shape and size of the barn isn't the only unusual thing about it. Rather than using scaffolding, the brothers began construction at the bottom and worked up.

When Jean Felhofer Wilcott discovered recently that the barn needed painting, she thought it would be fun if second generation Felhofers did the work.

There also have been some third generation Felhofers, in-laws and friends pitching in to paint the barn, Wilcott said. In fact, 23 people

worked at the fairgrounds Wednesday night to begin repainting the old barn. As many people as possible will continue working until the job is done, she said.

The workers ranged in age from 13-year-old Paul Esser, whose grandfather John was one of the original construction workers on the barn, to 71-year-old Joe Felhofer.

"The 13-year-old worked at the top of the barn and the 71-year-old worked at the bottom," Wilcott said.

Members of the Green Thumb program began the work by scraping old paint from the bottom portion of the barn. Wilcott's son, Scott, scraped most of the barn's top.

"When I first suggested to my cousins that we paint the barn, they

questioned my sanity," Wilcott said. "But they all showed up to work."

All of the workers are donating their time because the Central Wisconsin Fair Association can't afford to pay for the work. Mills Fleet Farm lent a hand by donating paint. According to Wilcott, the firm donated 35 gallons of red and white paint for the project.

It has been years since the entire barn was painted, she said, although some trim work apparently has been done since 1974.

"It has been a matter of pride to see the family name up there on the barn," Wilcott said. "It is nicer now to look up and see the fresh paint."

"And the family has enjoyed it. It is nice to get everyone together."



Sandee Gerbers/Wausau Daily Herald

**S-o-o-o-o big!:** Jean Wilcott, vice president of the Central Wisconsin State Fair, models a sweatshirt

with a likeness of the world's biggest round barn, built by her father and six of her uncles.

## Biggest: Marshfield fair barn boasts legacy

By Tom Berger

Wausau Daily Herald

**MARSHFIELD** — To Jean Wilcott, the trademark round barn at the Central Wisconsin State Fair is extra special.

It's a family legacy.

Wilcott's father, William, was one of the seven Felhofer Brothers, builders of 435 barns in north central Wisconsin.

The most famous, though, is the white-trimmed red one called the largest round barn in the world.

The barn was a construction miracle of sorts. It was built — all 475 feet around — from the ground up, without a scaffold.

"Architects just look at this and they just shake their heads," she says.

The towering roof soars above a new

foundation, which at \$43,000 cost seven times more than the basic building cost in 1916-17. Next year, a new roof is planned at a cost of about \$35,000.

All the Felhofer Brothers — Frank, Fred, Henry, Charley, Edward, John and William — have died, but when they were alive the round barn was often a topic of family conversation.

"I lived here all my life and heard about it all my life," Wilcott says. "It's a matter of pride because everyone thinks it's great."

It's been an accomplishment that set the Felhofers apart.

Wilcott ran a tavern, The Round-Up, on Central Avenue a total of 22 years, the first 19 with her late husband Gordon "Chip" Wilcott. She lives near the fairgrounds and often walks through.

For 30 years, she ran an ice cream concession at the fair and now is a fair officer.

"I came from ice cream vendor to vice president," she says, showing some of the satisfaction her father and uncles might have felt when they topped out the round barn.

The fair is an important part of her life and its most famous building is her family's heirloom.

Yet, she'd invite the fairgoers to come back later, when the Lion's Den is shuttered, the midway quiet and the 1987 fair a fading memory.

"The time to see this is when the fair isn't here," she says, gesturing to the big, round barn.

"You can drive up to the front gate and just see it in all its splendor."





*Wisconsin Historical Society, 1994*



*Wisconsin Historical Society, 1994*



*Inside arena in the World's Largest Round Barn, Wisconsin Historical Society, 1994*



*Inside arena in the World's Largest Round Barn, Wisconsin Historical Society, 1995*



### 10 YEARS AGO TODAY

The World's Largest Round Barn has been refurbished, grandstand bleachers repaired and painted and a multitude of minor tasks have been completed in anticipation of the 67th Central Wisconsin State Fair. The scene of the exposition will be the Marshfield fairgrounds, the dates are Wednesday through Labor Day Aug. 28 through Sept. 2... Maximum temperatures yesterday 86. — (Marshfield News-Herald, Aug. 17, 1968)

Marshfield News-Herald, Marshfield, Wisconsin, 17 Aug 1978, Thu • Page 4

### 10 YEARS AGO TODAY

A bid of \$42,685 to repair the Round Barn at the Marshfield fairgrounds was accepted by the Fairgrounds Commission. The money to pay for the work will be taken from the annual \$50,000 appropriated from Wood County. Work will start March 30, with May 15 as the completion date....

(Possibly when windows were last replaced?)

Marshfield News-Herald, Marshfield, Wisconsin, 20 Mar 1997, Thu • Page 4



NWCHS #108.29 Felhofer Brothers: Ed, William, Henry, Fred, Frank, John, Charlie



Felhofer Brothers  
Charles, Frank Jr., John, Fred, Henry, William, Edward

X102.58

NWCHS #102.58



# Round Barn Resources List

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form:

<https://npgallery.nps.gov/NRHP/GetAsset/0bd66912-36fa-4e01-9592-93f42422c724/>

Round Barn Photos from National Registry Application:

<https://npgallery.nps.gov/NRHP/GetAsset/1f2752a9-6b23-41ec-9125-bc387e7a0c8d>

Photograph of Round Barn painted white (1936)

<https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Image/IM129851>

National or State Registers Record - Jct. of Vine Ave. and E. 17th St.

<https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/NationalRegister/NR1516>

National Register Listing Date: March 21, 1997

State Register Listing Date: July 26, 1996

Property Record at Wisconsin State Historical Society

<https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Property/HI16248>

YouTube Video of Round Barn from 2016

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OKo6GapJ7iA>

World's Largest Round Barn Winter 2017 Video

<https://alchetron.com/World%27s-Largest-Round-Barn>

World's Largest Round Barn VR Tour from Marshfield Drones, 2018

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u5icIIA115M>

The birth of the World's Largest Round Barn: Part I, May 6, 2016, Hub City Times

<https://www.hubcitytimes.com/2016/05/06/worlds-largest-round-barn-history/>

The birth of the World's Largest Round Barn: Part II, May 18, 2016, Hub City Times

<https://www.hubcitytimes.com/2016/05/18/worlds-largest-round-barn-history-ii/>