

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Utter-Gerig Round Barn
other names/site number 049-004-25009

2. Location

street & number County Roads 825 East and 100 North N/A not for publication
city, town Akron vicinity
state IN code IN county Fulton code 049 zip code 46910

3. Classification

Ownership of Property

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	Total

Name of related multiple property listing:
N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

[Signature]
Signature of certifying official
Indiana Department of Natural Resources
State or Federal agency and bureau

11-5-80
Date

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official
State or Federal agency and bureau

Date

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

AGRICULTURE: Animal
Facility

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

AGRICULTURE: Animal Facility

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

OTHER: Round barn

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE

walls WOOD: Weatherboard

roof ASPHALT

other CONCRETE

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Utter-Gerig Round Barn occupies level farmland in rural Henry Township of Fulton County. The Utter-Gerig farmstead includes several typical late 19th/early 20th century buildings such as the family house and gable-roofed barns. Since the purpose of this nomination is to recognize the unique character of the round barn, only it and a cinder block milkhouse which was attached to a ramp wall, are part of this nomination.

The Utter-Gerig Round Barn is a wood frame structure resting on a fieldstone foundation. It is about 63 feet in diameter and encloses two primary floors. The barn was erected in 1915 using fieldstone, timber, and several beams from a log barn, all found on the farm. The fieldstone foundation has only two openings on the east and west sides. Above the foundation, walls are of vertical boards reaching to the eave line. The lower level has evenly spaced four light fixed square windows. A broad earth ramp obscures a portion of the west foundation, providing vehicular access to the second level. Poured concrete retaining walls support the ramp. Markings in the concrete are believed to have come from beams from a log barn which was dismantled when this barn was erected. Large eave to sill plate sliding doors are the main wagon entrance (photo 1). The second level has no windows.

Perhaps the most character-defining element of the exterior is the double-pitched bellcast conical roof capped by a round cupola vent. The cupola originally had windows which pivoted open, operated by an interior rope system. The windows have since been blocked or converted to louvered vents. The original wood shingle roofing has long since been replaced by asphalt shingles.

The interior of the Utter-Gerig Round Barn is divided into two levels. The lower floor houses cattle, horses, and sheep. An east-west drive bisects this level. Large sliding doors at either end provide access to the exterior at grade. Semi-circular areas are centered on the middle of the floor (see plan). Closest to the center are feed rooms, followed by stalls on the south half and V-shaped feeders to the north. An open aisle is located closest to the outside wall. Hatches and chutes in the ceiling (upper floor) allowed feed and straw for bedding to be dropped from above.

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A team and manure spreader used this aisle to make cleaning the stalls easier. Originally, stalls were V-shaped, but during the 1920s, stanchions were installed to replace them. The massive supporting posts and floor joists are exposed. The floor is poured concrete. An open staircase leads from the north feed room to the upper level.

The upper level was originally completely open. During the 1940s, large posts were added to support the sagging roof. As part of a total rehabilitation, telephone poles were added to further support the roof and restore its distinctive double pitch. The floor has two layers to stand up to wagon traffic. The upper level served as a hay and feed mow as well as equipment storage. Though its roof is no longer self-supporting, the Utter-Gerig Round Barn is otherwise very intact. Sheep and cattle are still housed in the building.

One non-contributing building is included in this nomination. A concrete block milkhouse is partially attached to one of the ramp wingwalls (photos 1 and 2). Built in c.1943, this hip roofed building stored milk until a truck arrived. The milkhouse had to be included in the nomination since it is essentially added to the barn, yet it does not directly relate to the unique significance of the barn.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

AGRICULTURE

ENGINEERING

Period of Significance

1915-1930

Significant Dates

1915

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Rhodes, Courtney and Rhodes,

Sumner

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Utter-Gerig Round Barn is eligible for the National Register under Criteria A and C. This barn, built in 1915, is an outstanding representative of the application of scientific research to the improvement of agriculture. Built during an age when many cattle operations, such as feeding and bedding, involved much physical labor, the round barn used new engineering technology to make farm chores more centralized and therefore easier. In a broader sense, round barns represent the "Golden Age of Agriculture," when for a brief time during the early 1900s, farmers prospered from high prices for their goods, new techniques, and a sudden increase in demand for farm products created by World War I.

Oliver Perry Utter, father of the present owners, had the barn built in 1915. He commissioned carpenters Courtney and Sumner Rhodes of nearby Athens, Indiana, to build a round barn on his farmstead. Fieldstone gathered from the farm were laid into foundation walls by Clem, Wilbur, and Burwell Hammond of Akron, Indiana.

Historical Background

Buildings of circular form or central plan have been associated with progressive or ideal concepts for centuries in Western culture. In an agricultural context, central plan buildings are recorded as far back as the ninth century. A circular farm building at St. Gall Monastery is shown on plans dated A.D. 800. Round farm buildings were erected on English farms in the 1600s, and English publications from the 17th and 18th centuries mention polygonal barns.

In America, the central plan barn was distinctly associated with progressive agriculture. George Washington, who was very interested in scientific farming, had one of the earliest known central plan barns in America built on his Dongue Run Farm in Virginia in 1793. The Shakers were also interested in improving scientific agricultural techniques. This sect erected a 90 foot diameter stone round barn in 1824, which was replaced by another round barn in 1865.

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Both structures were widely admired and in several cases even inspired other central plan barns.

Through the 19th century, various persons and publications promoted centrally planned agricultural buildings. Orson Squire Fowler, champion of the octagonal house, also included a chapter about octagonal barns in his 1853 A Home for All. Elliot Stewart, a farmer from Erie County, New York, rekindled serious interest in the central plan barn in 1875 when he erected an octagonal dairy barn on his farm. Stewart taught at Cornell University's College of Agriculture and edited several farming journals. He published plans for his barn and maintained correspondence from interested farmers. By 1884, Stewart noted that 30 to 40 barns on his plan had been built in the United States, including 3 in Indiana. It is unknown if these 3 barns still stand, however, one early example of central planned farm outbuildings, Jersey Park Farm in Floyd County (NR 3-1-84), may have been influenced by these early attempts at round barn development.

The true round barn was not developed until the 1890s. As with other agricultural improvements, the round barn was the result of scientific research rather than acquired knowledge. Lowell Soike, in his without Right Angles, credits three developments with making the round barn practical. The wide spread acceptance of light weight balloon framing made building curved walls much easier. Next, the improvement of engineering techniques for self-supporting roofs allowed lofts to be free of posts. Third, the new method (c. 1880) of raising animals on silage necessitated the development of the now ubiquitous cylindrical silo. The round silo made the idea of circular farm buildings more acceptable.

Two important round barn prototypes combined these three developments. In 1889, Professor Franklin King of Wisconsin was given the challenge of designing a barn which could combine space for cows, horses, silo, granary, and dry fodder storage in one structure. King, who was also involved in developing round silos, adopted a circular, central plan as the solution. Plans and literature about this barn were widely published.

The Illinois Dairy Department of the Experiment Station perfected King's round barn in 1900-1910 when three large barns were erected on the University of Illinois campus in Champaign. These barns improved on King's design by featuring self-supporting roofs.

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Progressive Hoosier farmers could not help but notice, or perhaps even saw first hand, these two significant developments in barn construction. Northwestern and Central Indiana farmers were quick to adopt the new techniques and business-like approach to farming that characterized agriculture during late 19th early 20th century. About 154 round barns were built in Indiana, 15 of these were in Fulton County alone. Nine round barns stand in Fulton County today.

The exact reason Fulton County has so many round barns is not clear. Two factors may be considered, however. First, farmers who sought contractors to erect round barns often found few or no local builders who were capable of handling such a project. This is often cited as the primary reason why so few round barns were built. In this matter, Fulton County had no shortage of talent. The Kindig brothers were highly skilled carpenters who erected 9 round barns in Fulton County. Courtney and Sumner Rhodes of Athens also built barns in the area, including the Utter-Gerig Round Barn. Secondly, many Fulton County farms had sizable dairy operations, and the round barn was well suited to handle dairy cattle.

Round barns continued to be erected in Fulton County into the 1920s. By this time, the sudden decrease in demand for farm products following World War I was bringing an age of rural prosperity to an end. The Great Depression and changes in farming techniques and machinery sealed the fate of the round barn; only thirty years after it appeared it was rendered obsolete. The period of significance of the Utter-Gerig Round Barn has been selected based on this consideration.

9. Major Bibliographical References

- Arthur, Eric and Whitney, Dudley. The Barn, A Vanishing Landmark in North America. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, LTD., 1972.
- Burt, S. C. "Advantages and Disadvantages of the Round Barn: First One Built 25 Years Ago," Indiana Farmer's Guide. Vol. 30, 1918. p.5.
- Fraser, William. "Economy of the Round Barn." Illinois Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin, Urbana, Ill., No. 143, 1910.
- Fraser, William. "The Round Barn." Illinois Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin, Urbana, Ill., No. 230, 1918.

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository:

Indiana Historic Sites and Structures Inventory

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property Less than one acre

UTM References

A

1	6	5	7	6	2	8	0	4	5	4	6	1	0	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

C

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

B

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

A circular tract of land in Henry Township of Fulton County, Indiana described as follows: A concentric circle surrounding but 30' equidistant from the exterior walls of the Utter-Gerig Round Barn, including the earthen ramp, its wingwalls, and a concrete block milkhouse.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

Since the purpose of this nomination is to recognize the specific significance of the round barn in agricultural history, the boundary includes only the barn and its immediate environment. The boundary includes the entire barn and its earth ramp structure. A 1943 milkhouse had to be included in the boundary since it is partly attached to one ramp wall.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Shirley Willard
 organization Fulton County Historical Society date 6/28/89
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Bibliography (continued)

- Jost, Larry. The Round and Five-or-More Equal Sided Barns of Wisconsin. Larry Jost: 1980.
- Nolan, Jane and Lee, Ann. "Agriculture in Indiana: Overview 1730-1900." Resource Planning Protection Process, Indiana University and Purdue University at Indianapolis, 1989.
- Nolan, Jane and Lee, Ann. "Agriculture in Indiana: Overview 1900-1940." Resource Planning Protection Process, Indiana University and Purdue University at Indianapolis, 1989.
- Soike, Lowell. Without Right Angles, The Round Barns of Iowa. Des Moines: Iowa State Historical Department, 1983.
- Wisconsin Agricultural Experiment Station Report, Madison, Wi., No. 7, June 30, 1890.

