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**United States Department of Interior
National Park Service**



**National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900A). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Cunningham, Bert and Mary, Round Barn
other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number E7702 A Upper Maple Dale Road N/A not for publication
city or town Town of Viroqua N/A vicinity
state Wisconsin code WI county Vernon code 123 zip code 54665

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title
State Historic Preservation Officer Wisconsin

Date 7/1/14

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.
(See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

Cunningham, Bert and Mary, Round Barn

Vernon

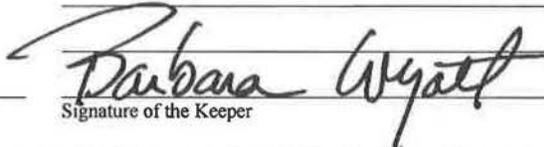
Wisconsin

Name of Property

County and State

4. National Park Service Certification

- I hereby certify that the 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.
 - See continuation sheet.
 - removed from the National Register.
 - other, (explain:)



Signature of the Keeper

8-14-14
Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (check as many boxes as as apply)	Category of Property (Check only one box)	Number of Resources within Property (Do not include previously listed resources in the count)	
		contributing	noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)		
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	1	0 buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	0	0 sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> site	0	0 structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	0	0 objects
		1	0 total

Name of related multiple property listing:
(Enter "N/A" if property not part of a multiple property
listing.)
Wisconsin Centric Barns

Number of contributing resources
previously listed in the National Register
0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)
AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE/animal facility

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)
VACANT/NOT IN USE

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)
OTHER: Centric Barn

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)
Foundation Concrete
Walls Ceramic Tile
Roof Asphalt
Other Wood

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria
(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for the National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations
(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance

1915

Significant Dates

1915

Significant Person
(Complete if Criterion B is marked)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Narrative Statement of Significance
(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Name of Property

County and State

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional Items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name/title	date
organization	telephone
street & number	zip code
city or town	state

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects, (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Section 7 Page 1

Cunningham, Bert and Mary, Round Barn
Town of Viroqua, Vernon Co., WI

Narrative Description

This distinct and largely intact clay tile clad round barn was built in 1915 for Bert and Mary Cunningham. The two-floor, true round barn measures fifty-five feet in diameter, with a central interior silo measuring twelve feet in diameter. It is an excellent example of the prevalent vernacular round barn type in Vernon County, Wisconsin. The barn sits on a cast concrete foundation with vertical walls of hollow structural clay tile left bare around the entire circumference. The lower feeding floor has eighteen equal double-hung windows and one door; the upper hay mow floor has two equal double-hung windows and one large barn door. The hay mow floor is constructed of sawn lumber in a radiating pattern from the central structural silo. The walls are capped with a large wood framed gambrel roof sheathed in asphalt shingles. This roof is comprised of a series of long trusses terminating at a central high-point above the interior silo, also constructed of hollow clay tile. The use of hollow clay tile, a popular building material of the early twentieth century, but not for round barns, makes the Cunningham Round Barn distinct among other examples of this property type. This is especially the case in the context of the multiple round barns in the Vernon County region that possess a similar form, scale, and construction technique.

Bert and Mary Cunningham had their round barn constructed in 1915, one year after moving to the outskirts of Viroqua from the Town of Woodstock in neighboring Richland County. The Cunninghams purchased an existing forty acre farm on the site upon arriving in Vernon County. Milking stopped in 1978 and the round barn has been used for storage and recreation since. Ownership of the Cunningham Round Barn, and the property around it, has remained with the Cunningham family since. The barn has been maintained since its construction and has a high degree of integrity and is in good physical condition. Consequently, the Cunningham Round Barn is largely uncompromised and is one of the region's most distinguished buildings.

The Cunningham Round Barn is located in the rural Town of Viroqua; however, it is on the outskirts of the city of Viroqua and growth of the settlement has come close to the Barn and its associated property. Other buildings on the property include an extant brick farmhouse, garage, service barn, tobacco barn, a windmill, and previously included a non-extant hog shed, chicken coop and other resources. These farm resources are either of more recent construction or at a distance from the round barn, thus they are excluded from the nomination and the property is consequently not understood as a historic farmstead. The parcel is bounded Upper Maple Dale Road to the south, which runs east-west roughly thirty-five feet away from the outside wall of the barn, and Felde Lane to the west. The larger property is a nearly perfect square from the right angle of the Upper Maple Dale Road and Felde Lane intersection. Most of buildings are grouped together in the southwest corner of the parcel, near the intersection. The round barn dominates the view along Upper Maple Dale Road.

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Cunningham, Bert and Mary, Round Barn
Town of Viroqua, Vernon Co., WI

Building Description

The Cunningham Round Barn is a free-standing centric barn situated close to the road, located in the same configuration when the barn was constructed. Located near the round barn, but outside the nominated boundary, is a modern metal building used as a barn. Historic photographs indicate that the metal building replaced an earlier wood barn on the site. The round barn is currently surrounded by a mown lawn with farmland beyond.

The true circle plan of the barn is fifty-five feet in diameter, relatively small for a true round barn, but not extremely so. From the lowest point of the foundation to the top of the roof is roughly thirty-six feet and the barn contains two floors. The lowest floor serves as stalls, pens, and feeding alley for livestock and measures only eight feet clear in height. Above is the hay mow floor that extends up to the roof structure. A large twelve foot diameter silo occupies the center of the barn penetrating the interior floor and terminating at the high point of the roof while being contained under the cover of the roof structure.

The barn sits on a concrete and stone rubble foundation and is built into a slope gently rising to the west. This configuration, often referred to as a "bank barn," is a common design element of dairy and other livestock barns; it is intended to permit direct access to both floors from the exterior. On the northwest side of the barn, the foundation is exposed and a layer of cementitious plaster, roughly half inch thick, is laid on clay tile; elsewhere, only structural hollow clay tiles are visible. The walls of the Cunningham Barn are constructed of red clay tiles, roughly eight by twelve inches on a face, and eight inches in depth. They are stacked in an inexact common bond. Variation in the firing of the clay tiles results in a gradation of red colors, randomly seen on the exterior of the barn. A light gray mortar was initially used in construction. Each clay tile has a series of horizontal dove-tail grooves, intended for holding plaster effectively, though there is no evidence to suggest that the barn was ever plastered above the lower level. Subsequent cement patches can be seen across the barns exterior. The use of hollow clay tiles in the construction of round barns is rare, and is found in the neighboring state of Iowa. The hollow clay tile is a structural wall material, and the wall construction of the Cunningham Barn does not appear to have any other components.

As a truly round structure the barn does not have clearly defined facades. The south side of the barn, facing Upper Maple Dale Road, consists of a twenty-two foot high clay tile wall punctuated at the first floor by eleven windows spaced equally between a steep slope on the west side and an entry door on the east side of the barn. These windows are roughly four feet high and two feet wide and are spaced three feet apart equally. The windows are double hung with equal sashes consisting of four equal square panes each. The wood windows are painted white and rest on four inch high concrete sills protruding from the clay tile wall. Historical photographs show a mesh wire screen on the exterior of

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Cunningham, Bert and Mary, Round Barn
Town of Viroqua, Vernon Co., WI

the windows. These screens were utilized on all of the fenestration and are no longer extant. The window frame furthest west has been removed and subsequently replaced with a white corrugated metal sheet for weatherizing purposes. Directly above this window on the western side of the barn is another window on the second floor. Six feet above the lower series of windows, this single window is raised significantly above the interior floor of the second level hay mow by four and half feet. It is of the same type and construction as the lower series of windows. A number of window panes have been damaged or destroyed. Six of these lower windows were replaced in 2007 with matching wood windows and wood sills. The clay tile wall terminates with a wood plate for the attachment of the roof above, with radiating rafters that extend to an open eave and narrow fascia.

A large barn door, and the sloped ground leading to it, dominates the west side of the Cunningham Round Barn. The lower level in this area is largely covered by sloped earth. The lower level to the north of the barn door reveals the exposed concrete foundation, and the side to south of the barn door consists of the row of fenestration mentioned earlier. Like the rest of the barn the wall consists entirely of common bond red clay tile with light gray mortar and occasional cement patches. The pair of wood barn doors and frame, extending from grade to the underside of the roof eave, are roughly eleven feet tall and fourteen feet wide. The two wood doors, painted white and consisting of vertical dimensional lumber, are hooked on metal runners from above and run along tracks to both the north and south side, exposing a large opening into the second level hay mow. The assembly is attached to the clay tile walls and is unadorned. To the south of the barn door there is evidence of a possible non-extant milk house addition. At grade level there is evidence of a large opening, most likely a door or window, subsequently filled with hollow clay tile and concrete block and patched. This area is now largely below the grade of the slope leading to the barn door above. This location may imply that the slope to the barn door entrance was considerably steeper at one time, or that the slope did not exist and a bridge to the barn door was initially used. There is also exposed flashing remaining along sixteen feet of horizontal mortar in the clay tile wall roughly three and a half feet below the eave. However, dated photographs from 1919 indicate that the barn's arrangement on the west side was essentially the same as the present condition. Perhaps there existed the intent of an addition to the barn that never materialized. The roof above, and the plate attachment and rafters, is the same on all sides of the round barn.

The north side of the barn mirrors the south side in many respects. However, the lower portions of the exterior, corresponding to the first interior floor, are largely exposed concrete as an extension of the foundation. This continues from the sloped earth leading to the higher grade level of the barn doors on the west side to the east side of the barn. In the concrete and the clay tile wall further to the east are nine equally spaced windows. These windows and openings match the windows on the south side of the barn, four feet by two feet and spaced at three feet apart, and a number of them have been altered. One has been boarded up as it is missing all of its glass panes. Five more have white corrugated metal

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covers, similar to the one example on the south side. One more window opening has been covered with boards and an electric ventilation fan. The two remaining intact wood double-hung windows are original and are in fair condition. In a mirror image of the south side, the north side also has a window positioned in the upper portion of the barn near the barn door on the west side and directly above the lower window opening positioned furthest west. It is located six feet above the lower array of windows and, in this case, the window has been replaced with horizontal wood slats in a louver, presumably for ventilation. Like the rest of the barn, the hollow clay tile wall is exposed and arranged in a common bond, terminating in the open eave of the roof above.

The east side of the barn has the lowest exterior grade level. In other locations the concrete foundation is partially exposed. Both sets of windows, wrapping around from the south and north sides of the barn, meet and terminate at a centrally located door. This door, about three feet in width and six and half feet high with a header aligning with the tops of the adjacent windows, is of simple wood construction and painted white to match the windows and barn doors. The door accesses the lower feeding floor of the barn. The hollow clay tile wall is above and continues, without any fenestration or adjustment, to the roof line above.

The roof above sits on a double plate that extends around the entire circumference of the round barn. Rafters, arranged in a radial pattern from the center, are simply extended and exposed in an upturned angle at the end with a narrow fascia making an upturned lip at the edge. The roof initially slopes sharply, and then adjusts in a gambrel shape to a lower pitch at two-thirds of its total fourteen foot height. The roof is currently sheathed in asphalt shingles, laid simply in an overlapping pattern and cut individually when needed to fit the centric shape of the roof. The roof terminates in the high center point, where a metal ventilator sits directly above the central interior silo.

The central circular silo, completely hidden from the exterior, is constructed from similar structural hollow clay tiles as the exterior walls of the round barn. However, these tiles have smooth faces as opposed to the dove-tail grooves present on the exterior walls. The twelve foot diameter silo, only eleven foot diameter on its interior, sits directly in the center of the round barn penetrating both floors with its own concrete foundation. The clay tile is stacked in a rough common bond with light gray mortar. Smaller, brick-shaped clay tile are used for the first eight feet of the silo. These smaller masonry units correspond with the construction of the first floor and continue up to the supporting members of the second floor. The clay tile has the same red color, scale and size as the rest of the barn structure, but has a different finish, lacking the dove-tail grooves found on the exterior wall. Occasional openings are punctured in the masonry silo to permit access and ventilation at the top and bottom. The silo extends vertically past thirty feet and serves as the bearing wall for beams in the interior hay mow floor and rafters in the barn roof. The roof of the silo is constructed of radial wood lumber with an opening in the central high point. In many ways the silo's form is the same as the

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entire round barn itself. Given the use of a different clay tile, it has been suggested that the silo was built first and the rest of the round barn was subsequently built around the silo within a few years.

Stables occupied the first floor of the Cunningham Round Barn; it is currently used for storage. The floor is bare concrete similar to the foundation, and the floor plan is arranged in centric rings based on use. Adjacent to exterior wall, unfinished with the hollow clay tile wall exposed, are fifteen cow stanchions and four or five more stalls for horses and calves. The stanchions are arranged so that cows face inwards for milking and feeding with their backs to the windows. The side of the stable level below grade, directly under the main barn doors on the exterior, is occupied by the other stalls and pens. A gutter runs along the entire circumference of the barn in the floor directly below the stalls. A manger is the next concentric ring for feeding and holding hay followed by a feed alley adjacent to the silo. The width of this working ring of space is twenty-one feet. The ceiling is the exposed wood structure, mostly 2x dimensional lumber, of the hay mow floor above. This floor structure is arranged with members radiating out from the central silo. There is one circular row of columns, near the mid-point of the span, to support and transition the joists from silo to the exterior wall. These joists are roughly one foot on center bearing on the silo masonry wall, and two feet on center bearing on the exterior wall. A few additional members and columns have been subsequently introduced to address structural issues since construction.

The hay mow second level is large open space intended to hold and store hay and feed. The walls are the exposed back face of the structural hollow clay tile seen on the exterior. Two windows, one currently covered, and the large barn doors are the only openings. The central silo sits in the center of the circular space and rises up to near the peak of the roof. There is opening at the top of the silo to fill the silo and access and ventilation to the exterior. Two ladders rest against the silo for access. The roof structure is a series of trusses resting at a low point on the top of the exterior masonry walls and at a high point on the walls of the silo. The Cunningham Round Barn utilizes a total truss, a relatively unique approach that is common in the work of builder Alga Shivers in the round barns of Vernon County, that spans the entire length of the roof structure from the support to support. This shallow truss was site-built from dimensional lumber as is the rest of the wood roof structure and gives the roof the distinctive gambrel shape. The trusses rest at only six inches on center on the high silo end and two feet on center at the low exterior wall. Horizontal boards, in consistent sets around the circumference of the roof structure, are nailed to the top side of the structure as decking. Currently, there is a layer of plywood between these boards and asphalt shingles. Above the silo is an extension of the roof structure pitched to a central point with a ventilator capping the roof. A set of six pulleys hang from the roof truss at its hip to assist in the moving of bales around the interior along a circular track, also attached to the underside of the roof truss. The roof of the barn has been patched and repaired repeatedly since construction in an effort to maintain it.

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Most of the changes, alterations and additions that have affected the exterior and interior of the barn are believed to have occurred some time ago. With the exception of window replacements, intended to match the existing appearance, many of the changes were done to maintain the building due to deterioration. Despite these changes the Cunningham Round Barn retains a high level of integrity. The historic form of the round barn, location, and the distinctive use of clay tile as a building material are still clearly in evidence. The barn demonstrates the structural qualities and agricultural uses of the round barn in Wisconsin and the Midwest in a largely intact form.

The Cunningham Round Barn has been fortunate in consistently receiving maintenance and care from its family ownership who have taken pride in their property. In addition, local interests such as Kickapoo Valley Heritage and the Vernon County Historical Society have taken an active role in promoting, protecting, and preserving Vernon County's historic resources. In listing this resource, the owner hopes to obtain tax credits and/or other incentives to maintain and restore her property.

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Cunningham, Bert and Mary, Round Barn
Town of Viroqua, Vernon Co., WI

Narrative Statement of Significance

The Bert and Mary Cunningham Barn is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places for its local significance under criterion C. The barn is locally significant in the area of architecture as an example of the round barn property type having a good level of integrity. Research was undertaken to assess the National Register of Historic Places potential of the barn utilizing a variety of primary and secondary sources. This nomination also draws on research conducted in the creation of a Centric Barns of Wisconsin Multiple Property Documentation and survey. The results of this research are detailed below and confirm that the Cunningham Barn possesses local significance. Intact examples of this barn type are rare. The period of significance is limited to the year of construction in 1915.

Historic Context

Of 111 extant centric barns identified in the Wisconsin Centric Barns Multiple Property Documentation, the Bert and Mary Cunningham Barn is an excellent example of the type and illustrates the importance of such barns to the turn of the century period. The Cunningham barn sits amongst the unglaciated driftless region of Vernon County in west-central Wisconsin. Its deep valleys have served to insulate and isolate many of the settlers who arrived in the area from the mid- to the late nineteenth century. Such a pastoral setting is ideal for the development of regional vernacular round barns to complement the growth of dairy farming in the area at the turn of the century. In the first two decades of the twentieth century as many as twenty round barns were constructed in Vernon County. By the mid-1990s only fifteen were extant, and by the mid-2000s only twelve remained. Currently, there are ten extant true round barns in the county.¹ It is estimated that Vernon County has the greatest number of the building type in the nation, and certainly in the state.

The majority of Vernon County's centric barns were constructed under the supervision of Alga Shivers, a notable local builder and the son of a slave. Shivers recognized barn designs are, without known exception, constructed entirely of wood. The roof construction of the Cunningham barn, emphasizing the efficient pattern of roofing boards and the utilization of a full-length truss spanning from sill to the central peak creating a gambrel shaped roof, resembles that of other local round barns know to have been constructed by Shivers. While it cannot be substantiated if Alga Shivers designed and built the Cunningham Round Barn, it remains a distinct possibility.

The use of clay tile as a structural building material is not entirely foreign to the region or the round barn type. In the neighboring state of Iowa, clay tile building units were produced in large numbers in the early twentieth century, and there are a number of examples of barns constructed using the hollow

¹ Alderson, Page 5; and Fish, Gail, Wava G. Haney, and June Zalewski, *Round Barns of Vernon County, Wisconsin: A Circle Tour*. Viroqua, WI: Vernon County Historical Society, 1996, Page 1.

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structural tiles. However, the Cunningham barn is believed to be the only extant round barn in Wisconsin constructed with clay tile.

The Cunningham Barn can be understood in the context of later and vernacular round barn developments in Wisconsin, especially those located in the geography of Vernon County and the western portion of the state, as outlined in the Wisconsin Centric Barns Multiple Property context.

Architecture

The Bert and Mary Cunningham Barn was constructed in 1915, a year after the Cunningham family purchased the forty acre farm of A.W. Green on the outskirts of the City of Viroqua in Vernon County. The Green farm had been in operation since the 1870s or earlier and a farmstead was already established.² Bert, born in 1872, and Mary, born in 1880, moved from the town of Woodstock in neighboring Richland County in the wake of an accident in which Bert severely injured his back in a fall from poles in a tobacco shed in 1912. While he survived and continued farming, Bert's range of motion and ability to walk great distances was hindered. A possible explanation of the preference for a round barn, and a smaller farm, might have been focused on limiting physical work by centralizing the location of labor. This can be further explained by the common practice of constructing a silo first, and then building the round barn around it. Bert passed away in 1945, and Mary in 1966. They had three children: Pearl, Mearl, and Helen. Mearl and her husband Kenneth Vance inherited it in the 1960s. Helen and her husband Annunciato (Nunce) Cina inherited it from Mearl in 1989. Their daughter, Angela Cina, has been the owner of the property since 2001. The barn ceased to be used for milking and storage in 1978 and has been used for storage and recreation since.

The Cunningham barn is slightly smaller than many of its type and period. For instance, in comparison to other true round barns in Vernon County, especially those built by Alga Shivers, the Cunningham barn's fifty-five foot diameter is less than the average of sixty feet. The barn is located near the road and near several newer farmstead buildings. The lower level is occupied by fifteen cow stanchions, a manger, and stalls for horses and calves. The area adjacent to the silo is open for access to the silage and the inward facing livestock. The hay mow floor above is accessed from a large barn door facing the rest of the farmstead. The silo sits in the middle with a ladder and the roof slopes up to a peak directly over the silo. A track hangs from the framed roof's trusses. In many ways this arrangement is similar to other true round barns from the 1900s and 1910s, and especially those nearby examples in Vernon County. However, its scale and the use of hollow clay tile for the construction of load-bearing walls is unique. Clay tile was a popular building material from the 1870s to the 1940s

² Plat Maps and Atlases.

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because of its bearing strength, light weight, and relative affordability. As a masonry form of construction, it was considered to be good for pest control, durability, and fireproofing.³

Iowa State University developed hollow clay tiles and the state supplied the production of clay tiles for much of the Midwest. The Iowa Experiment Station pioneered the use of clay tile in silo design in 1908.⁴ The proximity of the Cunningham property to Viroqua and the railroad may partially explain the use of clay tile. Not as inexpensive as wood, especially lumber taken from local farmland, clay tile would come from another location. A variety of producers such as the National Fireproofing Company and Pioneer Fireproof Construction Company of Chicago, and the Denison Fireproofing Company and the Johnston Brothers Clay Works in Iowa, were producing large quantities and a variety of hollow clay tile for construction purposes.⁵ The exact source of the building material for the Cunningham Barn is not known. Upon inspecting a loose tile example, no identifying marks or stamps could be identified.

Such clay tile was often not meant to be seen as a finished material, but rather as a structural material. The dove-tail grooves on the clay tiles of the Cunningham barn were likely intended to be covered with plaster or cement. Structural hollow clay tile was an advanced building material at the turn-of-the-century, well suited to barn building due to its ease of construction and fireproof attributes. The Cunningham Barn is likely the only extant clay tile round barn in the State of Wisconsin. While the variegated pattern on the clay tiles used in the Cunningham Barn implies an application along with a coat of plaster or cement, other examples of agricultural buildings constructed with clay tile are most often left bare. Utilitarian building types such as silos, grain elevators and cheese factories often utilized similar tiles. However, the use of the dove-tail patterned tiles such as in the Cunningham barn is rare.

The roof structure of the Cunningham barn is distinctive in its use of nearly total trusses to support each rafter. The rafters are arranged in radial pattern from the lower exterior bearing wall to the central high point above the interior silo. The silo structurally behaves as a large central column for an otherwise self-supporting roof. The roof takes its gambrel shape, with a sharp slope transitioning to a low one, from a long, shallow truss under each rafter. Truss systems are typical in the support of wood barn roofs; however, few examples are as shallow or as long as the truss systems of Vernon County round barns. The entire roof structure is constructed with dimensional wood lumber for a stick-built frame. This structural system is found in all of the barns constructed by Alga Shivers in Vernon

³ Wells, Jeremy C. *The History of Structural Hollow Clay Tile in the United States*; in *Construction History*, Vol. 2. Atlanta, GA: The Construction History Society, 2007, Page 31.

⁴ Soike, Page 32.

⁵ Wells, Page 34.

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County. While the basic form is common to many true round barns, the pattern of roof boards and the nearly total truss are distinctive.

The Bert and Mary Cunningham Round Barn demonstrates local architectural significance in accordance with the context of round barn design and construction outlined in the Centric Barns of Wisconsin Multiple Property document. It is a fine and unique example of the true round barn type, maintains a high level of integrity, and incorporates rare attributes such as its utilization of hollow structural clay tiles and roof truss construction that set it apart from other round barns in Wisconsin.

Alga Shivers

The distinctive nature of the round barn examples of Vernon County is derived from the vernacular building methods that correspond to later building patterns of the true round barn type. Most of these barns were constructed with the assistance and supervision of local carpenters and builders. Raised by local farmers, such barns would be designed and organized by figures who would proceed to work on a number of such projects, one every few years. One such builder was Alga Shivers, who led the building of as many as fifteen round barns in Vernon County, likely including the Bert and Mary Cunningham Round Barn, though this association cannot be confirmed.

Thomas Shivers was born a slave in Tennessee in 1854 and moved with his family to Vernon County as young man in 1879. There he became one of the most successful farmers in the county and the largest African American land owner in Wisconsin for a time in the late nineteenth century.⁶ Thomas's son, Alga Shivers, was born in 1889. He attended George Smith College in Sedalia, Missouri, and trained as a carpenter and studied mathematics. An avid follower of innovation and technology, Thomas Shivers built a round barn, with Alga's help, in the early 1900s. Alga Shivers likely took this experience as a model for the round barns he built during his career.⁷ His work gained enough promise and notoriety that it was published in Illinois farm journals as early as 1910.⁸ Shivers also served in World War I. He married Flora Revels Waldon in 1945 at the age of 56. While they never had children of their own, the couple raised a number of orphaned and related children in their home. Alga Shivers was an integral part of the local rural community and serves as an interesting historical figure due to the color of skin in the context of turn-of-the-century America. Western Wisconsin had two small African American colonies at the time in the Cheyenne Valley of Vernon County and Pleasant Ridge in Grant County, which had fully and successfully integrated with the

⁶ Alderson, Page 5; Fish, Page 36; and Cooper, Zachery. *Black Settlers in Rural Wisconsin*. Madison, WI: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin Press, 1977, Page 7.

⁷ Alderson, Page 38.

⁸ Fish, Page 36.

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Cunningham, Bert and Mary, Round Barn
Town of Viroqua, Vernon Co., WI

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white and immigrant majority.⁹ The fact that Alga Shivers became something of a local hero in Vernon County and a respected builder lends further proof to his importance. Alga Shivers died in 1978.

The construction of as many as fifteen round barns in Vernon and neighboring Monroe counties by Alga Shivers, with the assistance of his brother Ed and a small crew, stands out in the history of the round barn building type. His barns were almost always built of wood. The necessary logs were cut on a specific farm property a year or two in advance, then they would be sawn and cut into dimensional lumber and boards and constructed as a balloon frame of 2x members on a concrete and rubble foundation.¹⁰ The roof of a round barn would always be built in the same way with a radial pattern of rafters from the central silo acting as a column for the otherwise self-supporting roof structure. These long rafters, built up of dimensional lumber, were braced as a truss, spanning the distance from the lower sill on the exterior wall to the high point above the central silo. Such trusses were utilized for every single rafter. Vertical boards sheathed the exterior walls, and shingles were overlapped and nailed to sets of boards on the roof. The central silo was typically built of the same materials and in the same manner as the rest of the barn as an integral piece of the round barn structure. Shivers kept detailed notes, calculations, and specifications to assist him in the design of these barns with every piece of lumber documented; however, no drawings of any plans exist.¹¹ When round barns lost popularity in the 1920s, Shivers continued to build more conventional agricultural buildings and houses as a local carpenter.¹² Through the entire building process, Shivers and his small crew would stay on site, and during the final month or two of construction, they would often be assisted by neighboring farmers to raise the structure of a round barn.¹³

Alga Shivers is an example of a local builder having a large impact on the design and construction of true round barns. Not only are these barns architectural novelties, but they also demonstrate aspects of agricultural life in the early twentieth century. A number of the barns he was involved with are excellent examples of the type, are extant, and maintain a good physical condition and integrity. The Bert and Mary Cunningham Barn is especially notable because of its masonry construction and use of structural clay tile, which is unusual for a round barn and especially an Alga Shivers barn.

⁹ Cooper, Page 5.

¹⁰ "Alga Shivers and His Round Barns." *LaFarge Epitaph*, Nov. 7, 1979.

¹¹ "Alga Shivers." (Obituary.) *Wisconsin State Journal*, Nov. 29, 1978.

¹² Fish, Page 37.

¹³ "Alga Shivers and His Round Barns."

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Town of Viroqua, Vernon Co., WI

The Cunningham Barn can be understood in the context of Alga Shivers' work and life in Vernon County as the builder of round barns as described in the Centric Barns of Wisconsin Multiple property context; however, it cannot be confirmed that the Cunningham Round Barn was directly designed or built by Shivers.

Conclusion

The Bert and Mary Cunningham Round Barn is nominated at the local level under National Register Criterion C in the area of architecture as a fine example of the round barn type. The barn gains additional distinction from its unique clay tile walls and wood truss roof structure and its possible association with local builder Alga Shivers. Furthermore, the barn maintains its historic integrity in the preservation of its site, context, high level of craft, original materials and form, and high quality design. The Bert and Mary Cunningham Round Barn meets the registration requirements outlined in the Centric Barns of Wisconsin Multiple Property listing.

Acknowledgements

The Fuldner Heritage Fund paid for the preparation of this nomination. This endowed fund, created through a generous donation by the Jeffris Family Foundation and administered by the Wisconsin Historical Society, supports the nomination of historically and architecturally significant rural and small town properties.

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Town of Viroqua, Vernon Co., WI

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Cunningham, Bert and Mary, Round Barn
Town of Viroqua, Vernon Co., WI

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Cunningham, Bert and Mary, Round Barn
Town of Viroqua, Vernon Co., WI

Verbal Boundary Description:

The specific boundary of the contributing resource within the property is defined by a circle drawn 30 feet from the outer wall of the resource with a diameter of 115 feet. The resource is located within a larger legal parcel 036-00885-0000 located in Section 33, Town 12 North, Range 4 West in the Town of Viroqua in Vernon County, Wisconsin.

The boundary of the Bert and Mary Cunningham Round Barn as described above is clearly delineated on the accompanying sketch map. This boundary enclosed an area of approximately 0.25 acres.

Boundary Justification:

The boundary encloses approximately 0.25 acres that immediately surround the nominated resource and was drawn to exclude other buildings on the property that are not related to the barn's significance. The closest building to the nominated barn is a metal building of recent construction; other farm buildings are located at a distance from the nominated round barn.

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Section photos Page 1

Cunningham, Bert and Mary, Round Barn
Town of Viroqua, Vernon Co., WI

Name of Property:	Bert and Mary Cunningham Round Barn
City or Vicinity:	Town of Viroqua
County:	Vernon County
State:	Wisconsin
Name of Photographer:	Rowan Davidson
Date of Photographs:	August 30, 2013
Location of Original Digital Files:	Legacy Architecture, Inc. 529 Ontario Avenue, Suite FN1, Sheboygan, Wisconsin 53081

Photo #1 (WI_VernonCounty_Bert&MaryCunninghamRoundBarn_0001)
General view, camera facing northeast.

Photo #2 (WI_VernonCounty_Bert&MaryCunninghamRoundBarn_0002)
Southwest façade, camera facing northeast.

Photo #3 (WI_VernonCounty_Bert&MaryCunninghamRoundBarn_0003)
South façade, camera facing north.

Photo #4 (WI_VernonCounty_Bert&MaryCunninghamRoundBarn_0004)
Southeast façade, camera facing northeast.

Photo #5 (WI_VernonCounty_Bert&MaryCunninghamRoundBarn_0005)
East façade, camera facing west.

Photo #6 (WI_VernonCounty_Bert&MaryCunninghamRoundBarn_0006)
Northeast façade, camera facing southwest.

Photo #7 (WI_VernonCounty_Bert&MaryCunninghamRoundBarn_0007)
North façade, camera facing south.

Photo #8 (WI_VernonCounty_Bert&MaryCunninghamRoundBarn_0008)
Northwest façade, camera facing southeast.

Photo #9 (WI_VernonCounty_Bert&MaryCunninghamRoundBarn_0009)
Window detail, south façade.

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Cunningham, Bert and Mary, Round Barn
Town of Viroqua, Vernon Co., WI

Photo #10 (WI_VernonCounty_Bert&MaryCunninghamRoundBarn_0010)
Hay mow interior roof framing.

Photo #11 (WI_VernonCounty_Bert&MaryCunninghamRoundBarn_0011)
Hay mow interior looking out of barn doors.

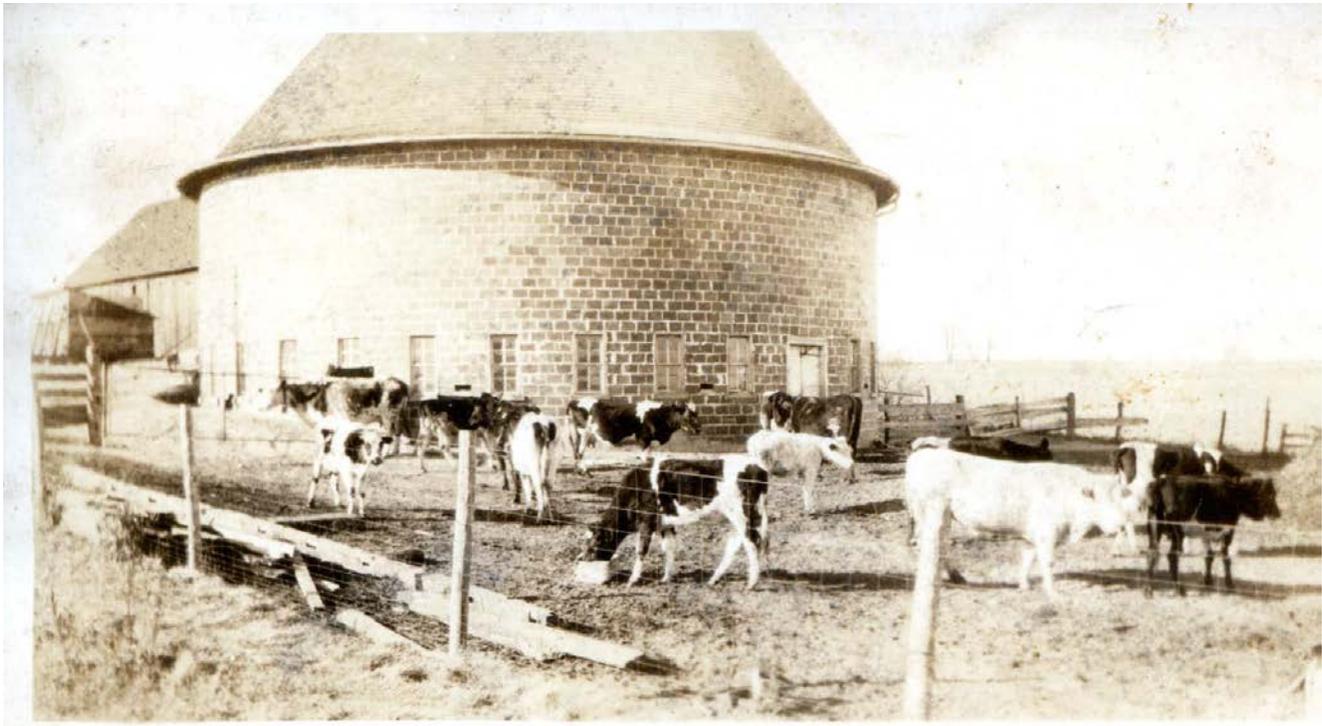
Photo #12 (WI_VernonCounty_Bert&MaryCunninghamRoundBarn_0012)
Silo interior looking up.

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Section figures Page 1

Cunningham, Bert and Mary, Round Barn
Town of Viroqua, Vernon Co., WI



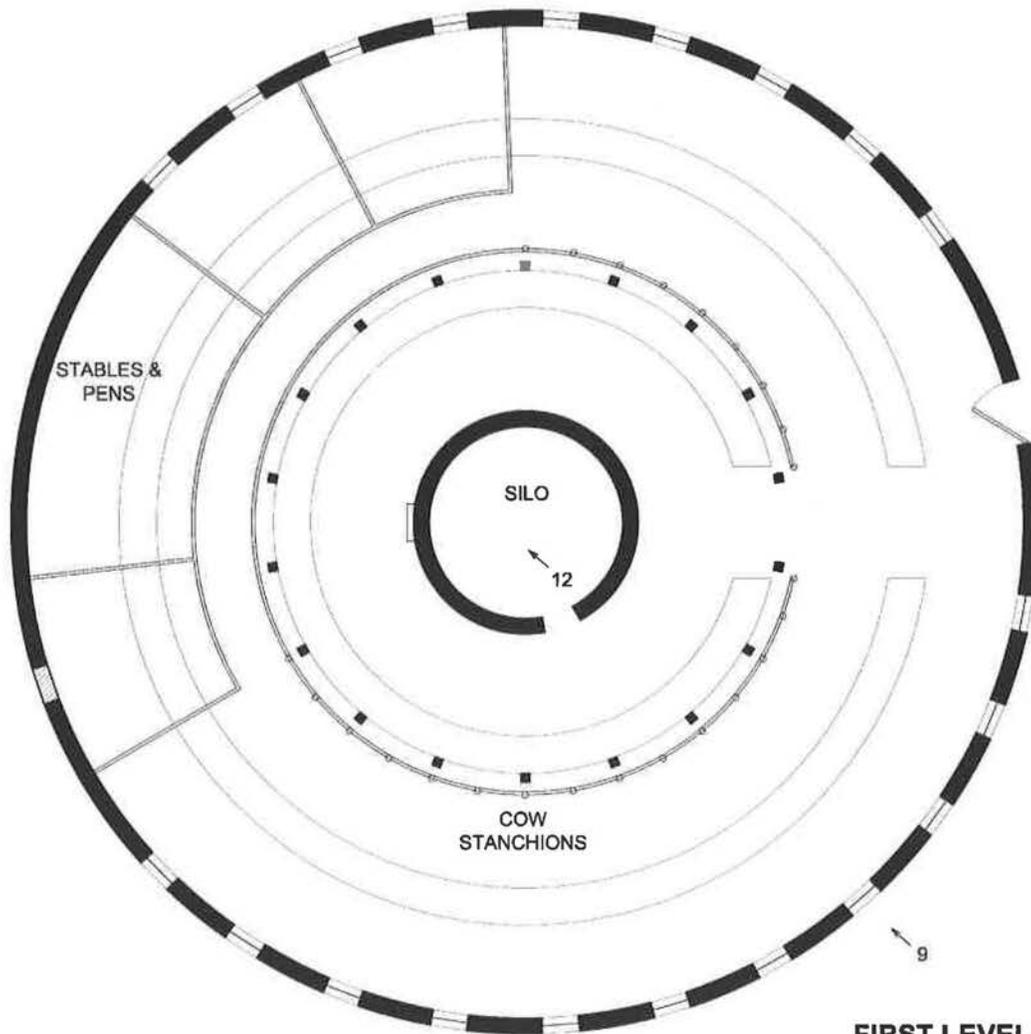
Photograph of the Bert and Mary Cunningham Round Barn from the southeast; dated November 21st, 1919.
Image courtesy of Angela Cina.

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Section sketch plan Page 1

Cunningham, Bert and Mary, Round Barn
Town of Viroqua, Vernon Co., WI



LEGEND

4 → PHOTO NUMBER & VANTAGE POINT

FIRST LEVEL PLAN



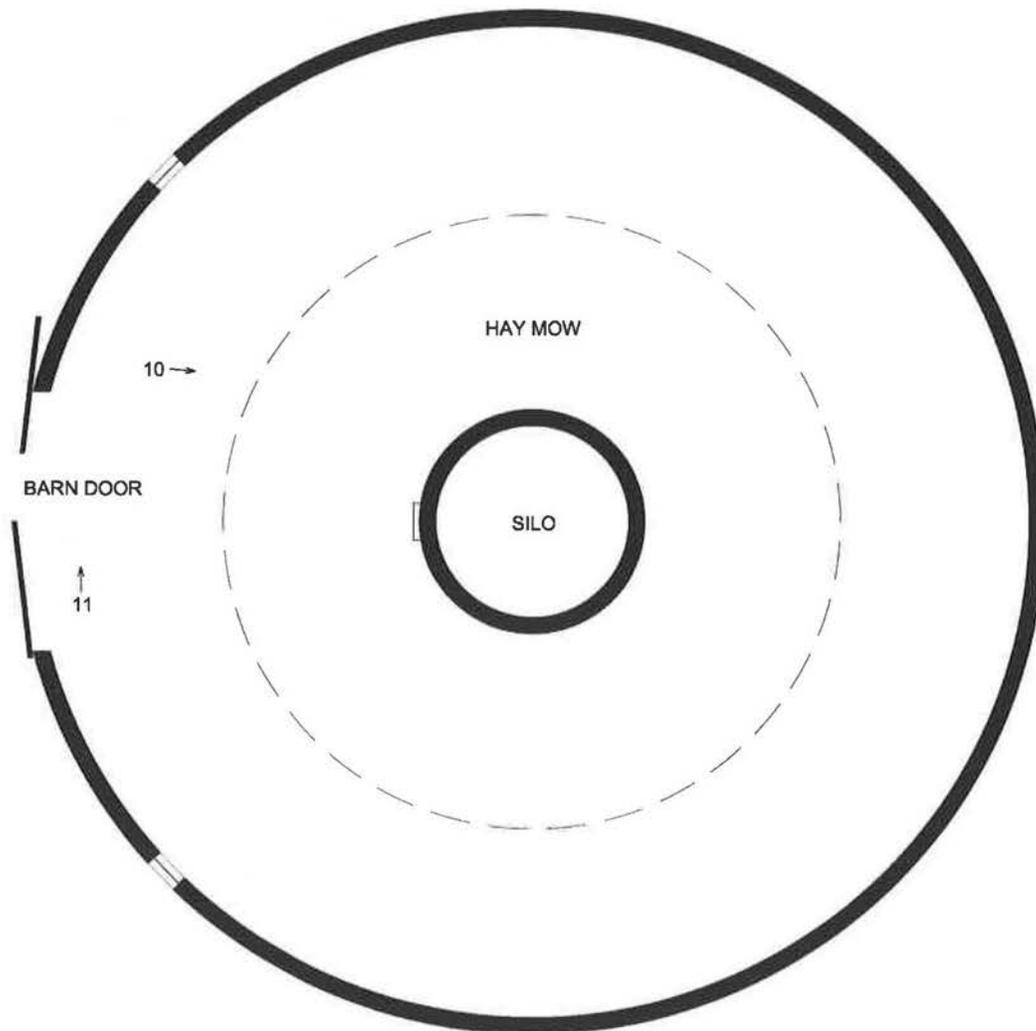
SEPTEMBER 6, 2012

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National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section sketch plan Page 2

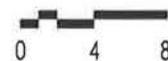
Cunningham, Bert and Mary, Round Barn
Town of Viroqua, Vernon Co., WI



LEGEND

4 → PHOTO NUMBER & VANTAGE POINT

SECOND LEVEL PLAN



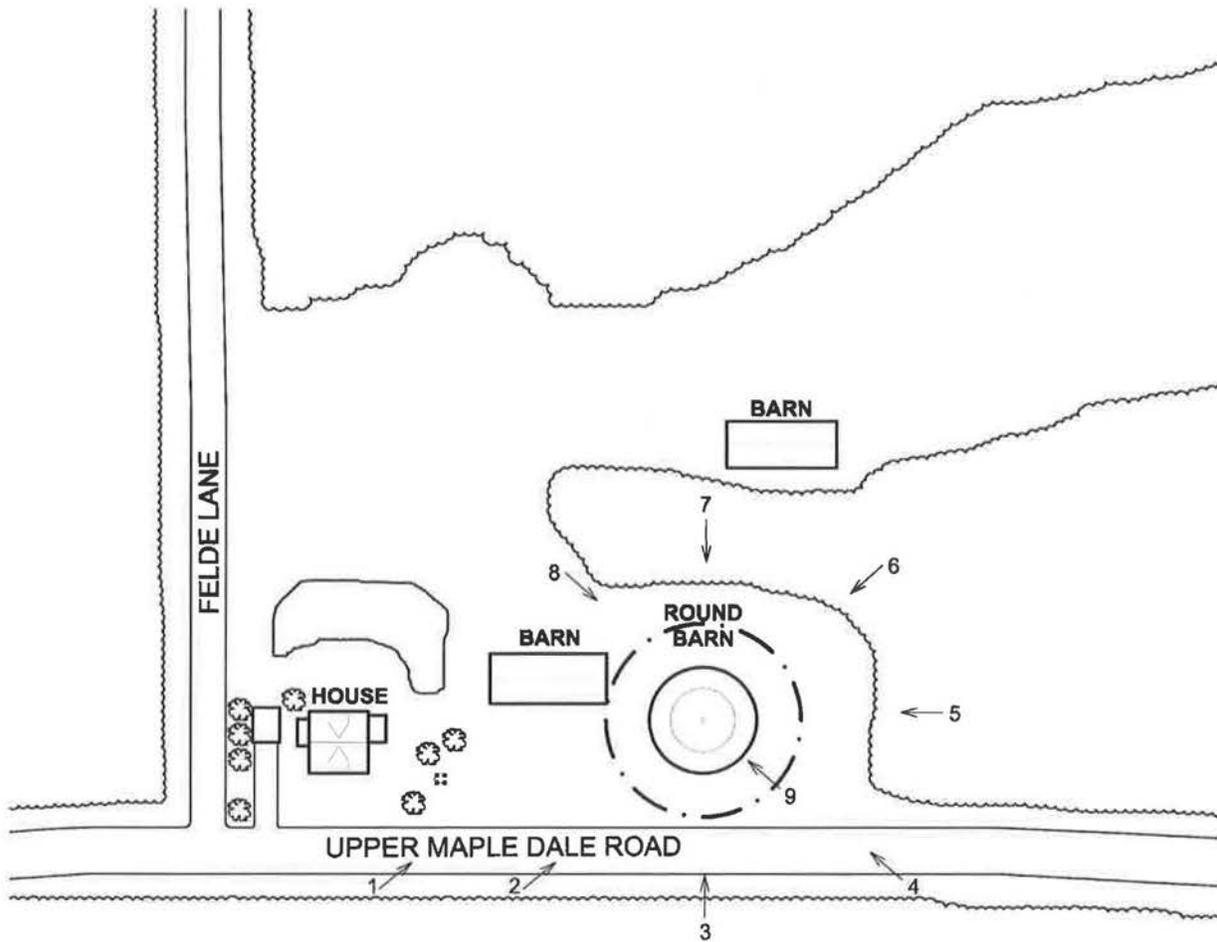
SEPTEMBER 6, 2012

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Continuation Sheet

Section sketch map Page 1

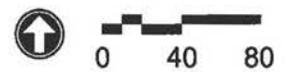
Cunningham, Bert and Mary, Round Barn
Town of Viroqua, Vernon Co., WI



LEGEND

- . - BOUNDARY LINE
- 1 → PHOTO NUMBER & VANTAGE POINT

SITE PLAN



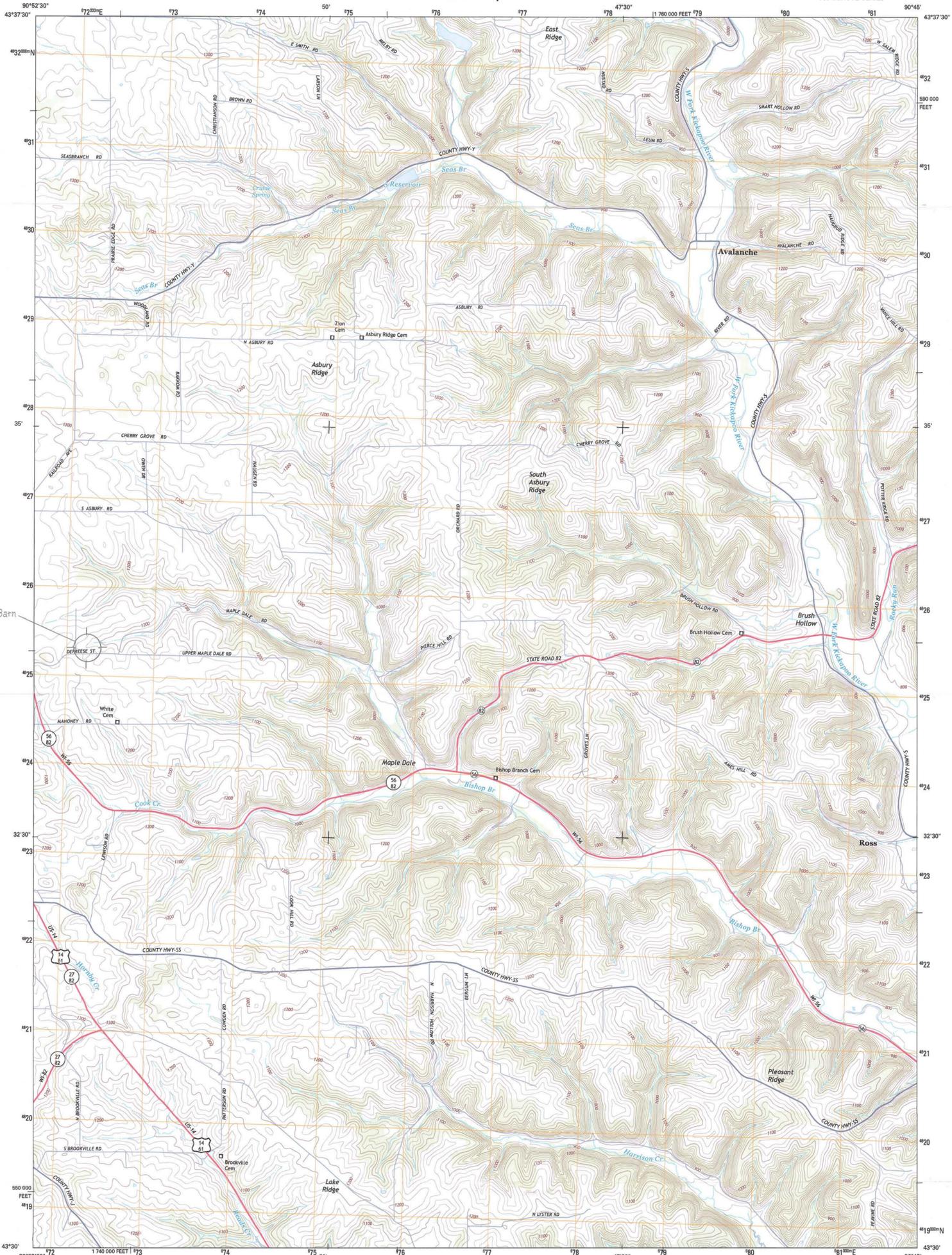
SEPTEMBER 6, 2012



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

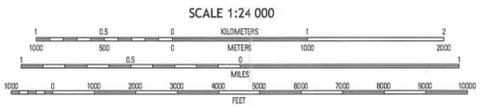
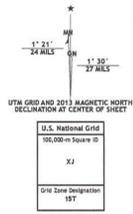


AVALANCHE QUADRANGLE
WISCONSIN-VERNON CO.
7.5-MINUTE SERIES



Cunningham, Bert & Mary, Round Barn
Viroqua, Vernon County, WI
UTM Reference:
Zone Easting Northing
15 672204 4825274

Produced by the United States Geological Survey
North American Datum of 1983 (NAD83)
World Geodetic System of 1984 (WGS84), Projection and
1 000-meter grid; Universal Transverse Mercator, Zone 15T
10 000-foot ticks: Wisconsin Coordinate System of 1983 (south
zone)



CONTOUR INTERVAL 20 FEET
NORTH AMERICAN VERTICAL DATUM OF 1988

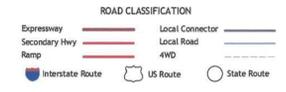
This map was produced to conform with the
National Geospatial Program US Topo Product Standard, 2011.
A metadata file associated with this product is draft version 0.6.12



QUADRANGLE LOCATION

Escoe	Wintley	Dwll
Viroqua	Avalanche	La Puzze
Riding Butt	Readstown	Sugar Cove

ADJOINING 7.5 QUADRANGLES



AVALANCHE, WI
2013

























UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action:

Property Name:

Multiple Name:

State & County:

Date Received: 7/2/2014 Date of Pending List: Date of 16th Day: 8/19/2014 Date of 45th Day: 8/18/2014 Date of Weekly List:

Reference number:

Nominator:

Reason For Review:

Accept Return Reject Date

Abstract/Summary
Comments:

Recommendation/
Criteria

Reviewer Barbara Wyatt Discipline Historian

Telephone (202)354-2252 Date _____

DOCUMENTATION: see attached comments : No see attached SLR : No

If a nomination is returned to the nomination authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.



TO: Keeper
National Register of Historic Places

FROM: Daina Penkiunas

SUBJECT: National Register Nomination

The following materials are submitted on this 1st day of July 2014,
for the nomination of the Cunningham, Bert and Mary, Round Barn to the National
Register of Historic Places:

1 Original National Register of Historic Places nomination form

_____ Multiple Property Nomination form

12 Photograph(s)

1 CD with NRHP Nomination Form Word Document

1 CD with electronic images

1 Original USGS map(s)

4 Sketch map(s)/figure(s)/exhibit(s)

_____ Piece(s) of correspondence

_____ Other _____

COMMENTS:

_____ Please insure that this nomination is reviewed

_____ This property has been certified under 36 CFR 67

_____ The enclosed owner objection(s) do _____ do not _____
constitute a majority of property owners.

_____ Other: _____