

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet

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NAME: Robert Abell Round Barn

LOCATION: Vicinity of Burnstad, North Dakota 38, Logan County 047

CLASSIFICATION: Status Occupied; Present Use Agriculture

OWNER OF PROPERTY: Bert Abell, Burnstad, North Dakota

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION: Register of Deeds, Logan County Courthouse, Napoleon, North Dakota

DESCRIPTION: Robert Abell built this round barn in 1942 as a holding area for his expanding livestock operation. The barn sits in the center of the collection of buildings, near the property's lowest elevation.

The barn has a sixty foot diameter, a truncated conical roof covered with wood shingles, and south side opening. Dimension lumber (2"x 6") gives wall support and forms the 99 rafters. A circle made by six large posts spaced eight feet apart provide vertical support for the roof at the point where the rafters connect. A lamination of six curved 1"x 4" boards make up the sill and wall plate (see photo). The walls are horizontal wood siding bent to shape.

The integrity of the barn is excellent. The only change from construction is the replacement of the bottom sill, required due to rotting. The replacement sill is firmly planted into the ground and not very apparent.

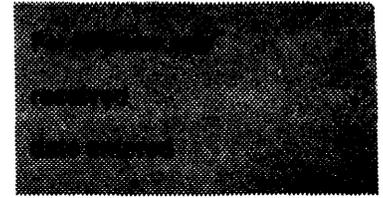
SIGNIFICANCE: Date: 1942
Architect and Builder: Robert Abell

The Abell round barn is an exceptionally significant illustration of the theme of round barn construction in North Dakota. The forty-four year old structure was created apparently without outside influence and represents a transitional structure in the history of the theme and the larger phenomenon of barn construction.

The present owner recalls details of the construction, the cost of \$800 and the absence of plans. He cited the conventionally recognized benefit, the efficiency of space and more square feet per construction dollar, as reasons for its construction. However, many features of the barn are variations on the round barn theme.

The most noticeable departure is the single story construction. The absence of a mow covered by a self supported roof, as well as the use of support posts also were not common round barn construction solutions after the second decade of this century. Its spartan interior of dirt floor and no stalls are also conspicuous.

These abnormalities may be best explained with reference to the other structures on the

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farm. The buildings built on site prior to the 1940's were of stud construction, permanently sited and meant to remain so. On the other hand, those erected after the round barn are of pole construction or were moved to the site, affording flexibility of location and easier mobility as relocation might become necessary. Casual observation suggests that this is true of farm buildings throughout the area. The round barn employs both types of structural systems, stud and pole, and is situated in the center of the farm's temporal continuum. Its hybrid structure speaks of its transitional nature in the architectural history of the farm. Its support system is a product of the vernacular building knowledge possessed by its builder.

It is also a product of a phenomenon which is national in scope, that of designing buildings in the most efficient manner possible. That impulse led farmers to experiment with the octagonal, and eventually the round shape for farm structures. The elder Abell, apparently without direct influence, engaged in that experiment in creating this resource. The barn's present owner, the builder's son, recalls no plans or other design inspirations which might account for the unusual expression. Its anomalous appearance testifies to its creation in a cultural vacuum. Its exceptional importance derives from its presence as an experimental solution to farm economics.

Those same experiments led to the abandonment of the traditional barn during the 1940's for more flexible pole barns and metal frame structures throughout the state. The construction system of this round barn probably would have been conceived as obsolete for any date after the mid-1940's. The Abell barn is architecturally related to the historical barn building practice, and is nominated thusly. Its mow-less roof with post supports introduces the construction system and barn types which succeeded historic barns. Thus, it is an especially important indicator of changing building technologies and farming practices in general. And it is exceptionally significant for providing a temporal limit for the round barn phenomenon specifically.

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA: Acreage of nominated property: Less than one acre.

Quadrangle Name: Lehr, NW N. Dak., 1982

UTM References: Zone: 14

Easting: 463480

Northing: 5135755

Verbal Boundary Description: The nominated area is located in the West half of the Northwest quarter of the Southwest quarter of Section 34, Township 134 North, Range 70 West. The nominated area includes the round barn and the land on which it stands and a surrounding fifteen foot zone of protection.