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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

NATIONAL  
REGISTER

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 Ridgeway, Marion, Polygonal Barn

other names/site number Door Prairie Barn, 091-344-60001

2. Location

street & number IN 35, just north of Cresent Drive  Not for publication

city or town LaPorte  vicinity

state Indiana code IN county LaPorte code 091 zip code 46350

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.)

*F. Robert R. R. R.*

4-19-93

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

Indiana Department of Natural Resources

State of 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 certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

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.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

*Shelley S. ...* **Entered in the National Register**

Date of Action

5/27/93

Ridgeway Polygonal Barn  
Name of Property

LaPorte Co., IN  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

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

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

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

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

Round and Polygonal Barns of Indiana

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

AGRICULTURE: animal facility

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

AGRICULTURE: agriculture outbuilding

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER: nine-sided barn

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE

walls WOOD: weatherboard

roof WOOD: shingle

other \_\_\_\_\_

**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 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)

AGRICULTURE  
ARCHITECTURE

**Period of Significance**

1878 - 1936

**Significant Dates**

1878

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

NA

**Cultural Affiliation**

NA

**Architect/Builder**

Ridgeway, Marion

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

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

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**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

Name of repository:

Historic Landmarks Foundation  
of Indiana



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Section number 7 Page 1 Ridgeway Polygonal Barn  
LaPorte Co., IN

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The Marion Ridgeway Polygonal Barn located in LaPorte County on the southern edge of LaPorte, Indiana, is one of the state's most picturesque and unusual multi-sided barns. Built in 1878 by Marion Ridgeway and referred to as the Door Prairie Barn, Ridgeway's barn is sited on the east side of SR 35 and is surrounded by mature woods to the north and cultivated fields to the east and south. The site is reached by way of a gravel drive, with the nine-sided barn located south of the drive and a rectangular barn located north of the drive. This well-preserved, multi-sided barn retains its integrity in regard to location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association, meeting all of the standards set forth in the registration requirements for multiple property nominations.

The nine-sided, two-storied barn is capped by a sectional cone roof which is then topped by a nine-sided cupola with Gothic Revival/Italianate detailing, also with a sectional cone roof. Each face of the cupola (photo 1) contains a large round top louvered vent that essentially fills the entire face of the side. Within these louvered panels trim pieces have been applied that divide the width in half and splay at the top to resemble a lancet arch, a decorative treatment that is unique among round and multi-sided barns. The original post and beam construction rests on wood sills that are laid on stone.

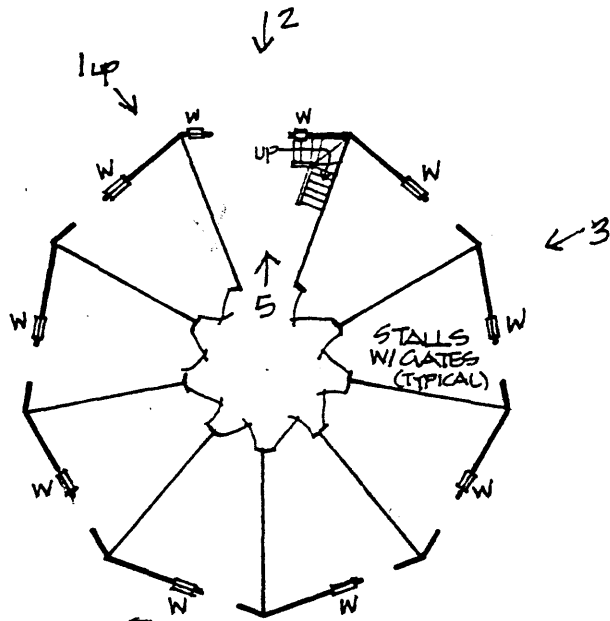
The roof surfaces of the barn and cupola are covered in wood shingles. There is a slight overhang to the roof, yielding the exposed rafters in the soffit area. The wall surfaces are sheathed in the original horizontal tongue and groove beveled siding and there are cornerboards at the juncture of each wall section. All of the wall and roof surfaces are in excellent condition and are very well maintained.

The main facade of the barn is located on the north (photo 2) and is best described as having a large sliding door located off-center to the west on the lower level. Located on both ends of the wall section are long narrow openings with operable wood shutters, with identical openings centered above on the upper level. Also on the upper level is a smaller hay door and the crowning touch to this elevation, a large hay dormer that interrupts the roof surfaces and reaches almost to the base of the

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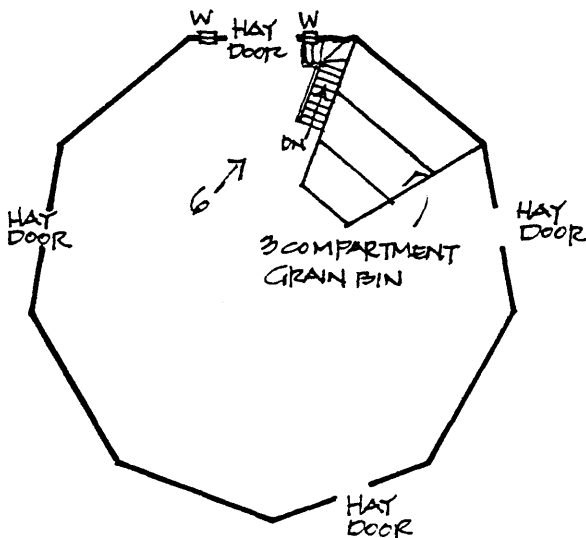


LOWER LEVEL  
no scale

RIDGEWAY (KESLING)  
"DOOR PRAIRIE BARN"

Note: W = window

UPPER LEVEL  
no scale



1878 9-SIDED  
LAPORTE COUNTY, INDIANA  
SCIPIO TOWNSHIP

↑<sub>1</sub> = Photographic key

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cupola. This dormer contains a large outswinging hay door complete with a hay pulley that juts out at the top. The doors are taller in the center section to accommodate the hay pulley. On the east and west faces of the corner are tall and narrow openings with wood shutters. The dormer is capped by a steeply pitched gable roof with exposed rafters.

The remainder of the facades will be related by moving around the structure in a clockwise manner. The first side, described above, is followed by side two with its four light window and four foot wide door. Side three has another four light window next to a door and there is a smaller hay door on the upper level, located above the window. Side four contains another window and door pair while side five has the door and then the window with a smaller hay door above the window on the upper level (photo 3 depicts sides 2 through 5). Side six, the wall that is roughly parallel to the road, has the door and window seen previously and on the upper level is painted: DOOR PRAIRIE 1878 LaPorte, Indiana (photo 4). Side seven and eight both have door and window units with side eight having another upper level hay door above the window. Finally, side nine contains the final door and window combination, thus giving each side of the structure a door and hence the name "Door Prairie Barn".

The name also comes from the many associations in LaPorte County with the word "Door." The county was named "LaPorte" (the door) because in Scipio Township there was a natural "door" between the woods to the north and east and the prairie to the west and south (hence the name Door Prairie). This door was a landmark on the Indian trail through the area, and was near the location of Door Village in Scipio Township.

The interior of the barn (see floor plan) is an efficiently arranged sequence of pens that has remained unchanged since the construction of the barn. On the lower level, the north end of the barn contains the large main entrance doors. Immediately to the east is a set of permanent stairs that wind up to the upper level (photo 5). Arranged symmetrically from this northern bay are eight equally spaced stalls, each with a gate at the barn's center and each containing a door and window on the outer wall. At each of the points of intersection of the inner stall walls are

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large posts that extend to an overhead beam which braces the floor joists of the upper level. The center of the barn is left open to facilitate the moving of animals from pen to pen and to the outside.

The upper level is reached by the stairs on the north and in the bay immediately to the east is a large, three section grain bin (photo 6). This bin corresponds to the size of the animal pen below and does not extend to the roof above. Further, each compartment has a grain chute that extends from the upper to the lower level so that the animals on the lower level could easily be fed. Also, there is another shorter flight of stairs at the top of the main flight that extends to a walkway beneath the hay dormer unit and connecting to the top of the grain bins. This walkway provides access to the large hay doors and makes the moving of the hay and straw much easier. The remainder of the upper level is left open for the storage of hay and straw and easy access is afforded by the large hay doors on the north and the three smaller hay doors on the east, west and south.

Finally, the structural members that make up the barn are a study in engineering. There is a large king post in the center of the barn's cupola, with the king post being braced radially by 2" x 6" king struts, tied back to the main roof. The 2" x 6" rafters are braced intermediately by a large laminated beam which gains support by 4" x 12" crucks that extend at an angle from the beam to the outside walls. The bottom portion of the roof is braced at the top by the beam and at the bottom by the exterior walls which are in turn supported by struts or knees that extend angularly from the tops of the walls to the 2" x 12" floor joists. Lastly, the rafters are laid out straight in between the triangular sections of the roof structure.

Overall, the Ridgeway (Kesling Foundation) or Door Prairie Barn is in marvelous condition and its integrity is without question. The barn's layout and structure have been unchanged since the dedication some one hundred and thirteen years ago so that the barn remains as a reminder of agricultural development within the state of Indiana.



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The Marion Ridgeway Polygonal Barn, located in LaPorte County's Scipio Township just south of LaPorte, Indiana, is significant under Criteria A and C for its association with the development of round and polygonal barns in Indiana (See historic context, "Round and Polygonal Barns of Indiana"). The barn, the second multisided barn to be constructed in Indiana (and now the oldest existing polygonal barn in the state), is an important and direct link to the agricultural development that occurred in the state from 1850 to 1936 (and beyond) and has not changed since its erection in 1878. The period of greatest significance of the barn was from 1878 to the mid 1930s when round and polygonal barns lost their popularity. By 1936, round and polygonal barns were considered obsolete and the last round structure was built in the state to replace a 1915 round barn that had burned (Grant County, Richland Township, extant).

The owner and builder of the barn was Marion Ridgeway. The land was purchased by James Ridgeway (Marion's father) in 1831 from the U. S. Government. The land was passed to Marion who then contracted the help of a local carpenter named Anderson to execute his design for a nine-sided barn that was based on examples Ridgeway had seen in Wisconsin and also in points further east. Ridgeway imported and raised short-horned cattle and exotic horses, with breeds ranging from Morgan to Hambleton to Clydesdales and Percherons. The nine-sided barn was to be the crowning touch of his successful breeding operation and he often advertised his breeds on the side of the barn. Finally, the lower level housed the animals while the upper level stored the hay, straw and grain necessary to feed the stock.

The history of ownership on the barn remained in the family for a number of years. Apparently, Marion passed ownership of the property to his daughter who in turn deeded it to her daughter Lorena Harwood. Ms. Harwood, Marion Ridgeway's granddaughter, sold the structure to Dr. Peter C. Kesling in 1982. Kesling, a LaPorte dentist, has maintained the barn and had it photo-documented to ensure its longevity. Furthermore, Kesling established the Peter C. Kesling Foundation, and has painted the common name "Door Prairie Barn" on the south side along with the construction date and LaPorte, Indiana. The private, non-profit foundation, owner of the property, was established to administer

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the preservation of the barn and supervises its operation and maintenance.2

In Indiana, only three nine-sided barns were constructed with only two of the examples surviving. The first known polygonal barn was the Henley Barn in Henry County, built in 1874, razed in 1973. In addition to the Ridgeway (Kesling) barn, a nine-sided structure was built in Fulton County (Newcastle Township) utilizing the new balloon framing techniques and thus a later model. This barn, still extant, is a small, one storied building that was probably intended as a hog farrowing house. The other example, dated 1901, was in Wabash County (Chester Township) and it was unfortunately destroyed in the 1960s. Interestingly, the Ridgeway Barn is the only nine-sided barn that was constructed during the Octagonal period of 1850 to 1900, with the other two examples being built in the true-circular period of 1889 to 1936.

The Marion Ridgeway Polygonal Barn is an unusual and unique example of a polygonal barn, being one of the two remaining nine-sided structures in the state with only three of the 119 round and polygonal barns built in Indiana having nine sides. Additionally, it is the oldest polygonal barn in the state and the only nine-sided examples that was constructed in the Octagonal period. This barn has all of the essential features that is possessed at the time of its period of significance from 1878 to the mid 1930s. Also, it has undergone no apparent changes since its dedication and thus serves as a direct link to the agricultural past and development in the state of Indiana.

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Ridgeway Polygonal Barn  
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## ENDNOTES

1. John Hanou, research compiled on Indiana's round and polygonal barns from 1986 to present. Archived at Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana, 340 West Michigan Street, Indianapolis, IN 46202.
2. Peter C. Kesling, owner of the Ridgeway (Kesling) barn, LaPorte, Indiana. Interviewed by Jerry McMahan, 18 October 1991.

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## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Hanou, John. Research compiled on Indiana's round and polygonal barns from 1986 to present. Archived at Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana, 340 West Michigan Street, Indianapolis, IN 46202.

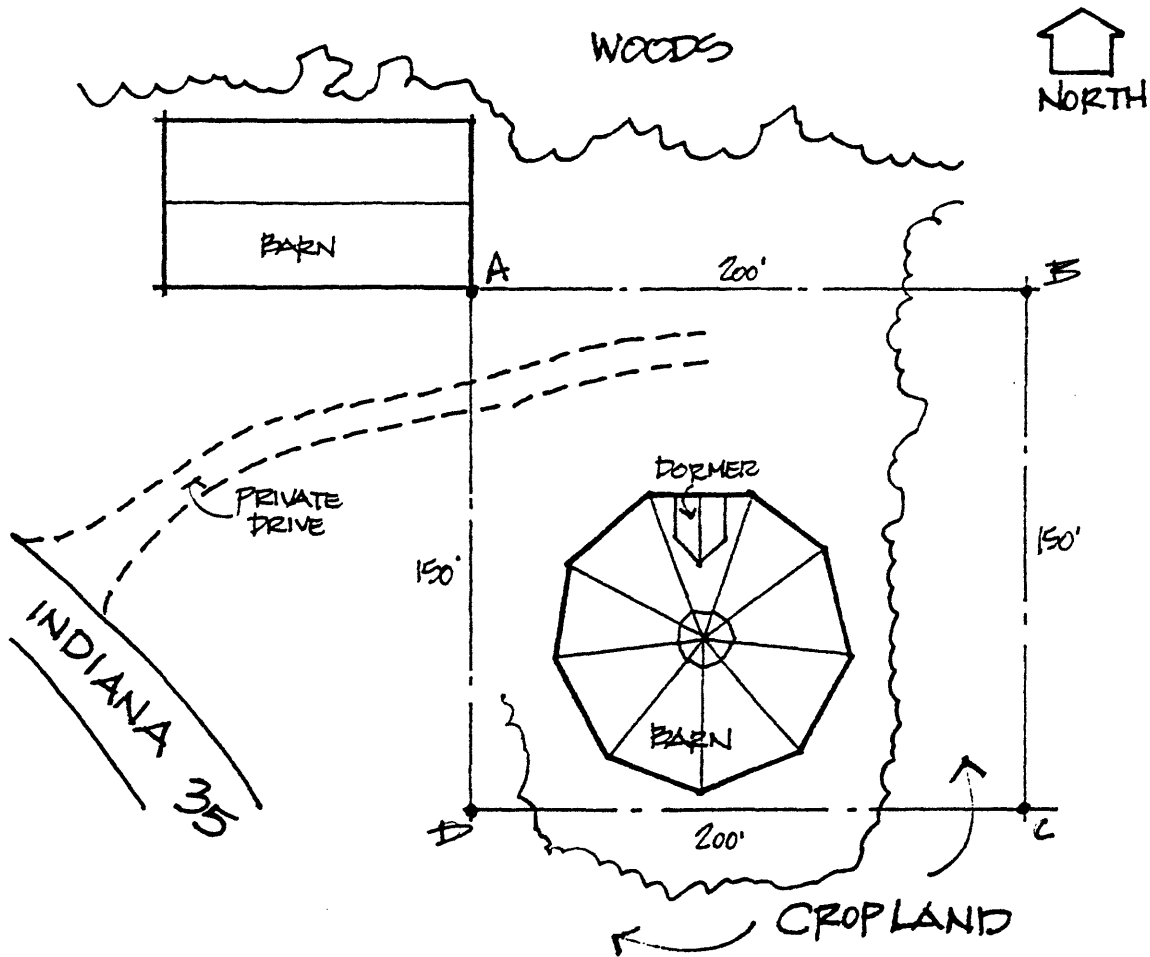
Intensive architectural survey of Indiana's round and polygonal barns. Conducted June to August 1991, conducted by Jerry McMahan, areawide survey of round and polygonal architectural and historical resources.

Kesling, Dr. Peter C. Owner of the Ridgeway (Kesling) barn, LaPorte, Indiana. Interviewed by Jerry McMahan, 18 October 1991.

Soike, Lowell J. Without Right Angles, The Round Barns of Iowa. Des Moines, IA: Iowa State Historical Department, Office of Historic Preservation, 1983.

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LaPorte Co., IN



## RIDGEWAY (KESLING) "DOOR PRAIRIE" BARN

### SITE PLAN

NO SCALE

1878 9-SIDED  
LAPORTE COUNTY, INDIANA  
SCIPIO TOWNSHIP

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Verbal Boundary Description

The Ridgeway Polygonal Barn is located in the NE of Section 12, T36N-R3W of Scipio Township, LaPorte County, Indiana. Referring to the site plan, beginning at a point one foot south of the southeast corner of the rectangular barn (Point A), then proceed east 200 feet to Point B, then south 150 feet to Point C, then west 200 feet to Point D, then north 150 feet to Point A.

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes only the nominated resource.