

The Felhofer Brothers— Charles, Frank Jr., John, Fred, Henry, William, Edward.
(from the North Wood County Historical Society Collection, #102.58)

Frank A. Felhofer, the designer of the barn, was born in 1886 in Medford, WI. He began work as a carpenter for William Friedrichs in his teens. Beginning in 1905, during the period of rapid farm expansion in central Wisconsin, he began erecting timber frame and eventually balloon- framed barns. He helped to construct approximately 435 farm buildings in the area. Many of the original buildings on the Central Wisconsin Fair Grounds were built by the Felhofers. The only two that are still extant are the round barn and the exhibition building. Felhofer was responsible for many other buildings in Marshfield besides farm buildings. He built the local A & P Store, Deichtman Clinic, Nolt Barber Shop, Northern Auto Supply, Leath Furniture Warehouse and the Schmelter Sheet Metal building. Felhofer died at the age of 77 on October 3, 1963.

For tour information contact:

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Round Barn Resources List

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form:

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

Round Barn Photos from National Registry Application:

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

Photograph of Round Barn painted white (1936)

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

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

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

National Register Listing Date: March 21, 1997

State Register Listing Date: July 26, 1996

Property Record at Wisconsin State Historical Society

<https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Property/H116248>

YouTube Video of Round Barn from 2016

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

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

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

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

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

World's Largest Round Barn Winter 2017 Video

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

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

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

For more information contact:

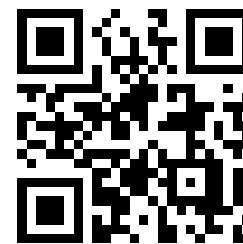
Historic Preservation Committee
207 W 6th Street
Marshfield, WI 54449

http://ci.marshfield.wi.us/businesses/historic_preservation/index.php

Development Services Department
(715) 486-2074

Funded by: City of Marshfield Common Council

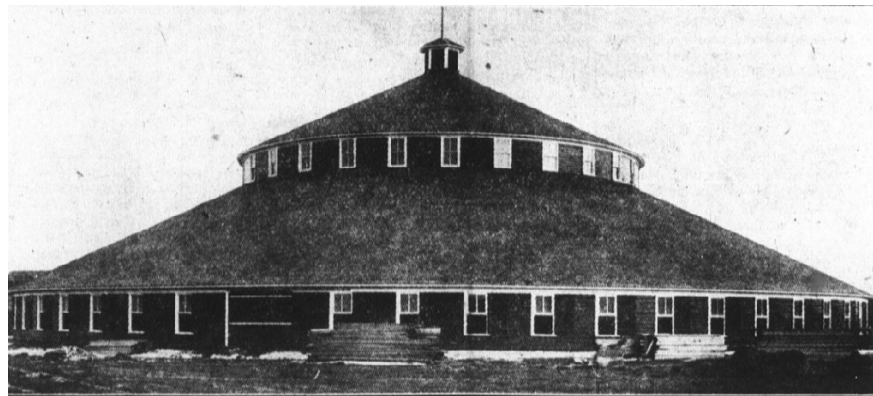
Developed by: V. Schnitzler for the Marshfield Historic Preservation Committee, 2020



WORLD'S LARGEST ROUND BARN

Marshfield Historic Brochure





First picture of the newly finished Round Barn.
(from *The Marshfield Herald*, Marshfield, Wisconsin, 08 April 1916 • Page 1)



Although all of the buildings on the fairgrounds were painted white in 1919, it wasn't until the summer of 1927 that the Breeder's Association, painted the round barn white.
(from *The Marshfield News-Herald*, Marshfield, Wisconsin, 03 Nov 1927 • Page 4)



The Central Wisconsin's State Fair Round Barn with its white upper and red lower paint job, approx. 1955.
(from the North Wood County Historical Society Photo Collection, #110.105)

World's Largest Round Barn

The original plans of constructing a barn on the Wood County fairgrounds for showing their cattle, with the goal of selling them, was that of the Wisconsin Holstein Breeders Association. A centric barn was well suited for the needs of the fair association; it was right economically and it also offered the best viewing arena. Most round barns were built between 1898 and 1920.

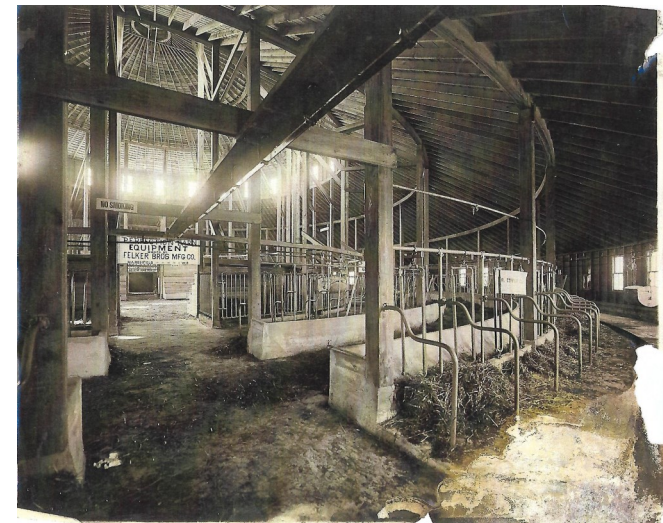
Construction of the round barn, built at the fairgrounds in Marshfield, began on Thanksgiving Day, 1915. The framing was completed during the winter. Floors and stanchions were finished in the spring of 1916. The internal second story was finished prior to the fair in 1917. The building was constructed from the ground up, without the benefit of scaffolding. Frank A. Felhofer, designer of the barn, says: "We just started from the bottom and worked up and in." He went on to explain that they constructed the cupola at the apex of the barn suspended only by the already-built portions of the roof.

It is the largest barn of its kind in the United States and possibly the world. It is 70 feet tall, 150 feet in diameter, 471 feet in circumference and covers a ground space of a little over one-third of an acre. To cover the roof, 120,000 shingles were used. On the inside, two rows of stalls, with the latest improved stanchions of the day, extended around the entire barn, which together with box stalls and calf pens, built on either sides of the entrance, made it capable of housing nearly 250 head of cattle. In the center, a 60 foot circle originally provided raised seats capable of seating 1,000 spectators and in the center of this was a show ring 35 feet in diameter. Originally, there were four staircases, going to the second floor, that was used for rabbit and poultry exhibition and commercial booths. Much of the bleacher seating and three of staircases have been removed as the second floor is no longer used. The entire ground floor, with the exception of the show ring, was made of concrete. Two rows of litter carriers extended around the entire barn.

The barn cost \$6,500, the different breeder's associations paying \$3,000, the county \$1,900, the Wood County Bankers' Association \$500 and the citizens of Marshfield, by popular subscription, \$1,100.

It was to be used by the different breeder's associations for sales purposes, throughout the year. During fair week however, it would be used for exhibition purposes.

The barn has changed appearance over the years. Paint was changed from the original all red, to all white in 1927 and then sometime prior to 1955, the bottom portion was painted red, leaving the upper level, white. According to the *Marshfield News Herald*, it was refurbished in 1968, prior to the fair. In August of 1980, Jean Felhofer Wilcott, the daughter of William Felhofer (one of the original Felhofer brothers that built the barn), got together second and third-generation Felhofers, in-laws and friends (ranging in ages from 13 years to 71 years) to repaint the barn back to its original red. A new foundation was poured in 1987 and the roof replaced in 1989. In 2015, a facelift of another new foundation with new stanchions, a new roof and repainting, took place.



Inside the Round Barn in 1916, prior to the building of the 2nd story.
(from the North Wood County Historical Society Photo Collection #109.11)



A portion of the Show Ring, inside the Round Barn in 1994,
(from the Wisconsin State Historical Society)



The World's Largest Round Barn in Marshfield, 1994.
(from the Wisconsin State Historical Society)