

Article clipped from The Times-Mail

[N newspapers.com/article/the-times-mail/126464972](https://www.newspapers.com/article/the-times-mail/126464972)

Historic round barn helps teach about agriculture, past

By JACKIE FINCH
Hoosier Times

GREENSBURG

Strauther Pleak must have gotten quite a bit of ridicule when he built his round barn back in 1906.

"It just wasn't the thing to do," explains Deb Adkins, Round Barn historian. "I imagine that he was laughed at because he did something out of the ordinary for that era."

But Pleak may have had the last laugh. The structure he built without electricity or power tools is still standing today and welcoming folks to learn about agricultural history.

In 1996, the Reed family bought the property that included the historic barn. After debating what to do with the old barn, the Reeds decided to renovate it and preserve it as a legacy. The Round Barn was open to the public in August 1999.

"Louise and I feel it is very important for the young people of today to understand the importance of agriculture for tomorrow," Richard Reed says.

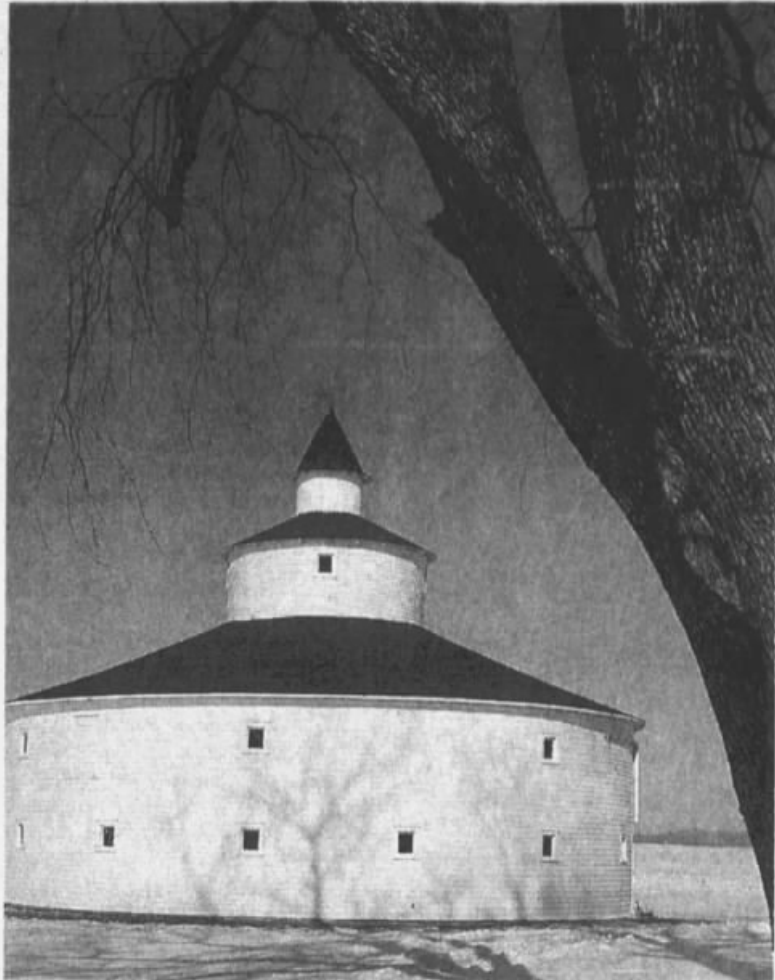
Many families can trace their heritage back a couple of generations and find farming somewhere in their family. But today's youngsters — especially inner city ones — might go through childhood without ever stepping foot in a barn, seeing a live farm animal or learning how food is produced.

At the Round Barn, visitors can learn the interesting history of where Strauther Pleak came from and why he wanted a round barn.

The birth certificate for the original member of the Pleak family shows he was born in Holland in 1726. Johann Blikenstorffer left Amsterdam in 1750 with a sister and two brothers for Jamestown. But he eventually settled near Castletons Fort, now Mount Sterling, Ky.

His abilities as a scout frequently brought him into scouting service and he became one of the best known pioneers of the region, historians record.

One day while scouting for a party of salt makers, he followed an Indian trail to a salt lick. But he discovered



A historic round barn in Greensburg has been preserved and is now used for agricultural education and other programs. It was built in 1906. PHOTO BY JACKIE FINCH

If you go

WHERE: The Round Barn on Moscow Road in Greensburg, Indiana.

WHEN: Call ahead for reservations and programs.

ADMISSION: Call for rates.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: Contact the Round Barn at (800) 373-6064.

built the round barn on his 80-acre homestead a few miles out of what is now Greensburg.

The round barn resembles a three-tier cake. "That makes it very unusual," Adkins says of her historic

Indiana than any other year. The last round barn was built in Indiana in 1936.

Round barns are now considered an endangered species, according to preservationists. Several are disappearing every year. The historic barns cost too much to repair and farmers can't afford to pay taxes on them for storage. Big modern farm tractors and machinery won't fit through the doors.

Only 32 round barns in Indiana are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

"We just couldn't let it be destroyed," Reed says, standing in the midst of his round barn

an trail to a salt lick, but he discovered that a band of Indians had already set up camp there.

The story goes that Blikenstorffer pulled off his high Dutch hat and let loose with a blood-curdling yell, speaking in his native tongue. The Indians were so surprised, they broke camp immediately and took off for the darkness of the forest.

When he was sure it was safe, Blikenstorffer gathered up the tools and equipment the Indians had left behind. He then sold the items at the fort and bought a piece of land.

Blikenstorffer and his wife had 10 children. A son, Fielding, moved to Decatur County in Indiana. The name of Blikenstorffer was changed to Pleakenstalver as the result of officials' misunderstanding when the Dutch immigrant pronounced his name.

Narcus Baron Steuben Isaac Hendry Field Lewis Pleakenstalver (named after many generals) and his wife, Sabina, had 13 children. Along the line, the family named was shortened to Pleak.

It was Fielding's son, Strauther Pleak, who shortened his name and

research.

The barn also features an octagonal silo in the center, a double cupola and horizontal siding. The 18-foot diameter silo, lined with brick and concrete, was constructed first and the barn was erected around it. The silo supports the conical roof.

Why a round barn?

"Because it was used to feed mules, to fatten them," Adkins explains. "Since a mule is narrow in the shoulders and wide in the hips, they could get more mules' heads in at one time to feed them in the round feeder."

The Shakers built the first true round barn in the United States in Massachusetts in 1824. It is said that the Shakers preferred round barns so that evil spirits could not hide in the corners.

Since the Shakers learned to make black ash baskets from the Indians, they also might have picked up the round barn idea by seeing the Indian's use of circles for teepees and wigwams.

The first of Indiana's round barns was built in 1874. The height of the round barn-building boom was 1910, when more round barns were built in

most of his young years.

But saving the barn was not an easy task. "The final restoration of the Round Barn was only accomplished with the help of a great team of people and their foresight," Reed says.

Some of the programs available at the Round barn deal with examples of Indiana crops, weather and how it affects crops, how commodities are stored and sold, the steps taken to grow a crop and the history of agricultural equipment.

Other fun sessions include games for all ages, round barn dances, corn mazes, storytelling, wagon rides and tractor rides.

Who knows, Reed says, what a difference might be made in the life of a child by visiting the Round Barn. The potential for a child is limitless—if he or she is given the right encouragement and vision along the way.

Such a child, Reed says, might grow up to develop a new hybrid for soybeans or corn or maybe help solve world hunger or possibly a cure for illness. "The purpose of the Round Barn," Reed says, "is to maintain our valuable heritage and to pass it on."

st

lu
b
lo
st
th
in
sc
gr

ci
qu
ies
Cl
Pe
Sp
Pr
Lo
Ar

att
sh
ov
we
mc
op
wa
lio
cer
a w

College students need to be wary of 'good'