

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

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



Continuation sheet

Item number

Page

Property Title: Tonsfeldt Round Barn  
Site Number: 113

Location: Plymouth County Fairgrounds  
LeMars, Plymouth County

This property is nominated as part of the the Thematic Resource Nomination Iowa Round Barns: A Sixty Year Experiment. This resource was accepted by the State National Register Nominations Review Committee and I submit it for addition to that thematic nomination.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
David E. Crosson  
State Historic Preservation Officer

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Iowa Site Inventory

Office of Historic Preservation  
Iowa State Historical Department  
East 12th & Grand Avenue  
Des Moines, Iowa 50319

Site Number 113  
District Name Iowa Round Barns  
Map Reference # 113

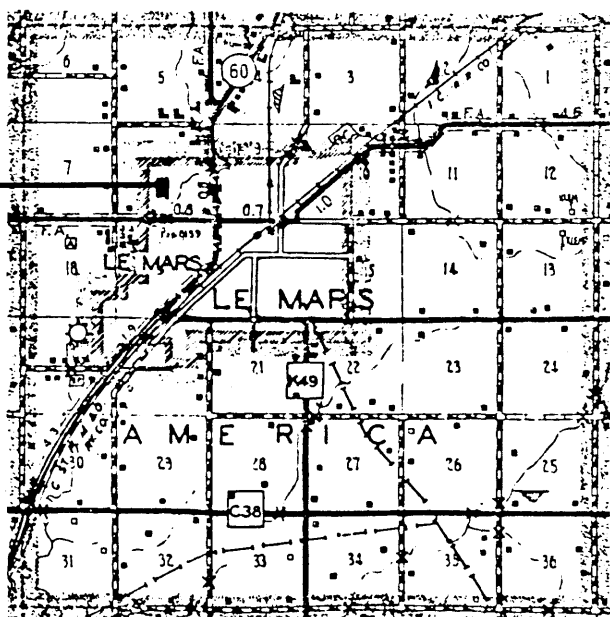
## Identification

1. Site Name Tonsfeldt Round Barn
2. Village/Town/City LeMars Township America County Plymouth
3. Street Address Plymouth County Fairgrounds
4. Legal Location 92 N 45 W 8 SE 1/4 of SE 1/4  
Urban: subdivision block parcel subparcel  
Rural: township range section % section of % section
5. UTM Location: zone 15 easting 730,100 northing 4,741,800 Acreage less than one acre
6. Owner(s) Name Plymouth County Fair Board
7. Owner(s) Address Box 127 LeMars Iowa 51031  
(Street address) (City) (State) (Zip)
8. Use: Present exhibit space Original Purebred cattle barn

## Description

9. Date of Construction 1918-1920 Architect/Builder H. P. Tonsfeldt
10. Building Type:  
 single-family dwelling     industrial     other institutional     religious  
 multiple-family dwelling     educational     public     agricultural  
 commercial
11. Exterior Walls:  clapboard  stone  brick  board and batten  shingles  stucco  
 other horizontal sawed wood
12. Structural System:  wood frame with interlocking joints  wood frame with light members (balloon frame)  
 masonry load-bearing walls  iron frame  steel frame with curtain walls  reinforced concrete  
 other \_\_\_\_\_
13. Condition:  excellent  good  fair  deteriorated
14. Integrity:  original site  moved—if so, when? 1981  
 Notes on alterations, additions (with dates and architect, if known) and any other notable features of building and site:  
Integrity, see reverse. Moved building, see Continuation Sheet #3
15. Related Outbuildings and Property:  barn  other farm structures  carriage house  garage  privy  
 other restored historic bldgs. & fairground bldgs.
16. Is the building endangered?  no  yes—if so, why? \_\_\_\_\_
17. Surroundings of the building:  open land  woodland  scattered outbuildings  densely built-up  commercial  
 industrial  residential  other \_\_\_\_\_

18. Map



19. Photo

Roll \_\_\_\_\_ Frame \_\_\_\_\_ View \_\_\_\_\_

VBD: A circle 80' diameter, based on center point of barn.

# Significance

(Indicate sources of information for all statements)

## 20. Architectural significance

- a. Key structure/individually may qualify for the National Register
- b. Contributing structure
- c. Not eligible/intrusion

N/A

Continuation of 14. Integrity.

Laminated dome roof. Circular interior around central cement/wood stave. silo. Silo - 18' diameter. Barn - 70' diameter, wood shingles. Granary on level Litter track, Oats elevator. Milk pipeline originally. 3 levels.

## 21. Historical Significance

Theme(s) Common Variation; Dome Roofed type.

- a. Key structure/individually may qualify for the National Register
- b. Contributing structure
- c. Not eligible/intrusion

See Continuation Sheet #1

## 22. Sources (for primary and secondary sources, give complete facts of publication: author, title, place of publication, date, etc.):

Review & Compliance File IDOT project F-3-1, Bridge Replacement, Floyd River, Plymouth County  
Mail Questionnaire, Randall Petersohn  
Foster, W. A. and R. S. Stephensen, "Cattle Feeding Barns and Shelters," Circular 74, Iowa State  
College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts, Agricultural Experiment Station, Ames, May 1922,  
pp. 21-23.

Prepared by \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
Organization \_\_\_\_\_

## For Office of Historic Preservation Use Only

### 1. Office Information Sources on this Property

- County Resource File
- Windshield Survey
- National Register
- Grants-In-Aid: \_\_\_\_\_
- Determination of Eligibility

### Review and Compliance Project:

- Other \_\_\_\_\_
- Other \_\_\_\_\_
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Subject Traces

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_
- d. \_\_\_\_\_
- e. \_\_\_\_\_

### 3. Photo Images \_\_\_\_\_

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

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Tonsfeldt Round Barn

Site Number 113

Continuation Sheet #1

## Item Number(s)

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The spectacular self-supporting gothic arch dome roof of this true-round barn is the only one of its kind known to have been built on an Iowa farm. In 1981, in a successful effort to preserve this unique barn, the Tonsfeldt Round Barn was moved from its original location on the former Tonsfeldt farm west of Le Mars, Iowa to the Plymouth County Fair grounds in Le Mars. It is now used during the days of the Plymouth County Fair for crafts, antiques, art, and horticultural exhibits. The barn was originally built to house Mr. Tonsfeldt's purebred Polled Herefords and Tonsfeldt's prized bull, Ito's Perfection. While most true-round barns have conical or gambrel roofs, this dome roofed barn is an example of the diversity and variation found within the theme of Iowa Round Barns. Built during the peak years for construction of round barns, 1910-1920.

# Iowa Site Inventory

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Site Number Tonsfeldt Round Barn, Site #113

Continuation Sheet #2

Item Number(s)

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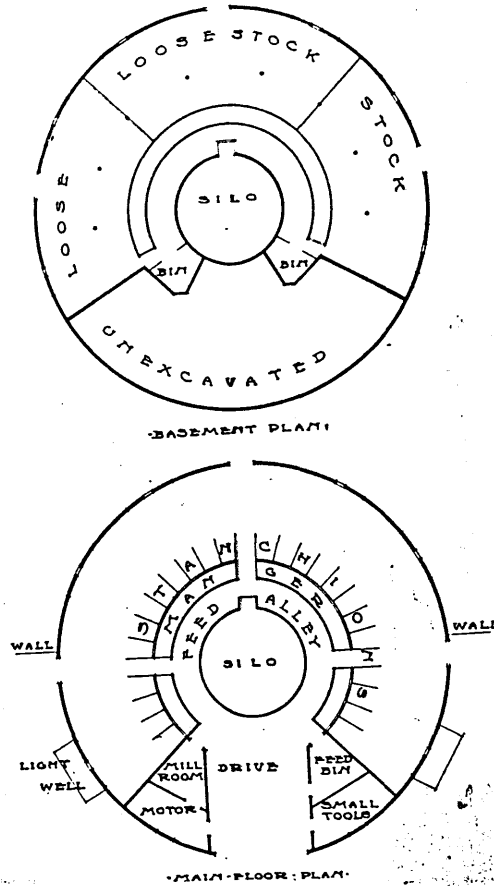


Fig. 26. Plan of round barn

Floor plan

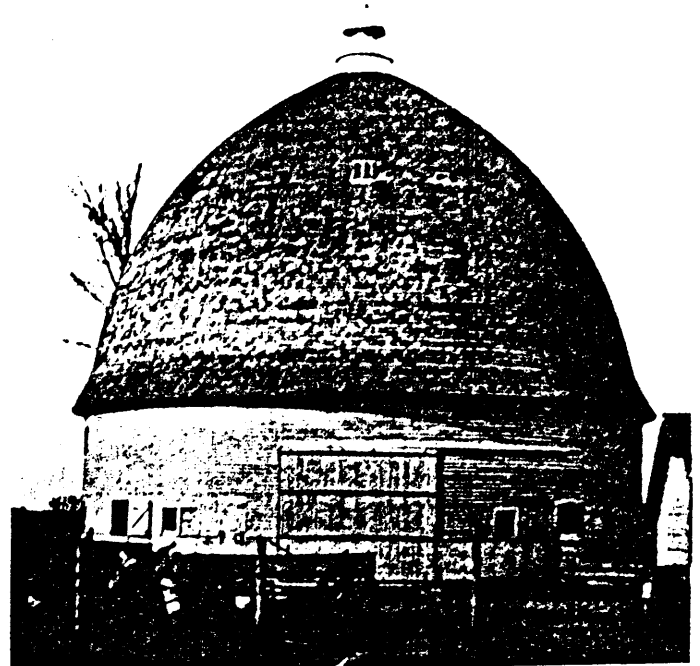


Fig. 25. Round barn

Original Appearance

# Iowa Site Inventory

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Site Number Tonsfeldt Round Barn, Site #113

Continuation Sheet #3

Item Number(s)



Original setting, 1978

#### Criteria Consideration: Moved Building:

This property was at first not accepted by the Review Committee because it had been moved from its original site. I consulted by phone with our NPS Reviewer, Ms. Beth Grosvenor and SHPO was advised as follows: The Thematic nomination did not attempt to take into account the farmsteads themselves, only the barns were evaluated. The loss of association with the farmstead therefore was not a direct issue. The nomination is a historical one, the integrity test being the state of preservation of original barn fabric. This barn is not only externally intact but the rare wood silo which gives it its significance within this nomination typology, was carefully preserved in the move. Lastly because of the rareness of the domed roof profile in the state, it was felt by staff that the preservation of the resource outweighed the loss of site/setting integrity inflicted by the move. The Review Committee agreed at a second review.