



Bonnett built this barn in 1947 from long spruce poles cut from his woods.

**"ANYONE COULD BUILD ONE"**

## "Bent Pole" Dairy Barn

"It's the only barn like it in the world. The best thing is that it was inexpensive to build yet has been as functional as any other barn of its size for 44 years," says Charles Bonnett, Levering, Mich., who recently sent photos to FARM SHOW detailing a unique construction method he came up with for a barn he built in 1947.

"I had no money at the time so I traded labor to a neighbor for a batch of long spruce poles cut from his woods. Total cost of the poles was about \$15. Then I built a bending frame by putting posts in the ground in the shape of the curve of my barn. I bent the spruce poles to fit the frame with the inside of the curve facing south so the sun would shrink those fibers faster than on the outside, which was to the north.

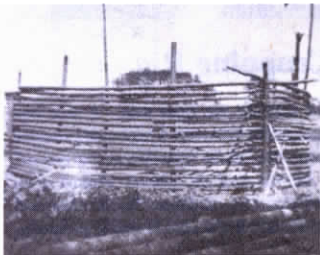
"The poles went into the bending frame in the fall and I built the barn the next spring.

When I took them out they all held to the shape of the frame," says Bonnett.

The poles run all the way from the ground up to a ridge pole on top. Bonnett simply built a support frame and leaned the poles into place, 17 on each side. Then he built the hay loft inside and nailed roofing boards to the spruce poles in a continuous sheet from the ground all the way to the peak. Because of the strength and simplicity of the design, Bonnett says much less bracing was needed internally as compared to most conventional big span round roof barns.

He built a stone wall on one end of the barn and added a feed room and silo on one side. "It's still standing just as strong as the day I built it," says Bonnett.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Charles Bonnett, 11447 Bonnett Rd., Levering, Mich. 49755 (ph 616 627-2150).



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## Toilet Train Your Cat

If you keep a cat indoors, you're familiar with litter box problems. A new book teaches you how to train your cat to use a toilet, eliminating the need for litter.

"It's unnatural for a cat to use the same spot over and over. In the wild they leave a scent barrier of urine and feces at the edges of their territory. Many housecats develop neurotic behavior that can be directly traced to the litter box," says writer Paul Kunkel, who's been traveling the country pointing out to cat owners that training your cat to use the toilet also eliminates all the work involved in cleaning and emptying out the litter box.

Kunkel's method takes 21 days. Most cats catch on fast and most owners love it, he says. The only trick Kunkel hasn't been able to teach cats is to flush.

Here's how the training method works (this is a summary - the book carries de-

tailed, step-by-step instructions): First place the litter box next to the toilet until the cat is comfortable using it there. Then you very slowly raise it up using books, magazines or newspapers for 13 days until bottom of litter box is at the same level as the toilet seat.

On day 14, the litter box is moved over so that one-quarter of the box is resting on the toilet itself. On the 15th day the box is moved even more so that three-quarters of the box rests on the seat. On day 16, the litter box is placed directly over the toilet seat and secured in place with tape. On the 17th day, you remove the litter box, lift up the toilet seat, and stretch a piece of plastic across the rim, leaving a slight depression filled with litter. Then lower the toilet seat and allow the cat to use it.

On the 18th day, a new piece of plastic is stretched across the rim with a 2-in. dia. hole in the center surrounded by some litter.



This mini-house, one of 7 buildings in the village, is furnished with a salesman sample stove and antique children's furniture.

**GREAT NEW ON-FARM ATTRACTION**

## Kid-Size Rural Village

They're not sure how it happened but Varlen and Fern Carlson's hobby of collecting farm antiques turned into a new on-farm tourist attraction that's attracted thousands of visitors during the first two years it's been open. According to all reports, this newest Iowa tourist attraction will be a big hit.

The kid-size village consists of 7 buildings - a 1/2-size church, barn, schoolhouse, blacksmith shop, general store, house and a railway station depot. Each building is authentically outfitted down to the finest detail with antique furnishings collected by the Carlsons during their travels over the past 38 years throughout the country and in Europe.

"We got started when we bought a small house at a farm auction to use as a playhouse for our grandchildren. We furnished it with things we had collected over the years, and then gradually added more buildings to house our collections. On May 1, 1990, we opened the village to the public charging a \$4 admission. We plan to expand by adding more buildings, including an implement dealership, however we do not build a new building until we feel we have sufficient artifacts to make the establishment immediately authentic down to the finest detail," says Fern.

The Carlsons farm 950 acres and have a 4,000-hog farrow-to-finish operation. Their



One of the most popular buildings is the general store.

collecting started with Varlen's collection of full-sized gas engines and tractors. While attending antique tractor shows, Fern became interested in children's furnishings and salesman's samples, which were often 1/2 to 2/3 size of the full-sized article.

The mini-house, for example, is furnished with a salesman sample stove (very rare), and antique children's furniture. Many half-size items are scattered throughout the house, including a mini telephone that actually worked at one time.

The kid-size barn is filled with small bales of straw and harness for Shetland ponies hangs on the walls. When they located a bunch of antique small school desks, they built a school, which is complete with a bell that can be rung with a rope.

One of the the most popular buildings is the general store which is fitted with a small antique heating stove and a kid-size roll-top desk. There's a small post office set up inside the store. As Fern gives tours of each building, she recounts the history of each item and where it came from.

The small church, complete will bell tower, is just big enough to hold a very small wedding party. A number of weddings have already been held at the site. The building has stained glass windows and a 19-key reed organ.

The village is open from May through October and again for a "Christmas stroll" for several weeks at the end of the year. Group and family discounts available. "We think it's one of the most unusual and interesting farm tourist attractions anywhere," says Fern.

For more information, contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Country Relics Little Village & Homestead, Varlen & Fern Carlson, 3290 Briggs Woods Road, Stanhope, Iowa 50246 (ph 515 826-3491).



On day 19, replace the plastic with another piece with a 3-in. dia. hole and use less litter. By the 20th day, the cat should be completely adjusted to using the toilet and you can get rid of your litter.

Kunkel's book, "How To Toilet Train Your Cat", sells for \$5.95. It's available at pet stores or contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Workman Publishing, 708 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10003 (ph 800 722-7202 or 212 254-5900).