

Round barn features 27 windows for natural light on its two levels.



He Built A Round Barn To Honor His Grandfather

Lyle Bernau's grandfather built a large round barn on his Whittemore, Iowa, farm in 1914 that was a useful structure until it burned in 1982. Bernau decided to honor his grandfather and mark the 100th anniversary of that round barn project by building his own circular-shaped barn in 2014. It took Bernau more than a year to complete because of its scale and complexity.

"At the time, I needed a new storage shed, so I thought, 'Why not make it round?'" Bernau says. He drew up his own plans after looking at several round barns for ideas. After hiring the grading and concrete work, he, along with some assistance from friends and family members, did the layout, fram-

ing, lumber cutting, roofing, and siding. The complex roof is covered with 66 4-ft. by 8-ft. sheets of OSB board that were cut into 220 individual pieces. The barn has 27 windows because Bernau says he likes natural light rather than having to flip a switch whenever he's inside. Steel ribbed siding covers the exterior walls. The roof has asphalt shingles.

Bernau spent more than 600 hrs. on the project and says it was "both challenging and fun." The barn has two levels with a third floor, dormers with a lookout window, and a cupola at the top. It's a one-of-a-kind building that's an instant conversation piece for anyone who visits or drives by his property near Westby, Wis.

"People stop to look because they wonder what the heck it is," Bernau says. "It doesn't look like any barn they've seen before."

Bernau says his barn is about half the size of his grandfather's, which measured 50 ft. wide and 30 ft. tall. His grandfather ran a dairy farm and milked cows in his round barn for many years, delivering fresh milk to local residents. After his death, Bernau's uncle milked cows in the barn for several more years. The barn burned in 1982 while it was being updated and remodeled.

Bernau says his grandfather and many other farmers in that area of Iowa built round barns for nearly 40 years, from 1880-1920. Farmers believed they were less expensive to build and more efficient to house livestock. Some of the barns were built around a silo in the middle of the structure, which provided strength against high winds. Farmers also felt they could feed and milk cows more efficiently than in a rectangular barn. The concept went away when milking machines,

barn cleaners, and automatic feeders became popular, and all of those needed a rectangular structure to work efficiently.

Bernau says his barn cost about \$30,000 to build with about \$10,000 for the concrete. That doesn't include labor costs and many hours of sweat equity.

"After working in maintenance for 40 years, I was good at fixing things, but building the barn was a whole different animal," Bernau says. "The shingling was quite a job because every shingle had to be cut, which was a very time-consuming process."

Bernau uses his barn as a shop and for storage. "Most important though, it's not just another building. It's a heritage project that turned out well to honor my grandpa, William Dau. I'm probably not the first one who's done this, and probably won't be the last."

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Bernau spent over 600 hours on his round barn project.

They Built A Cage Around Their Garden

Nancy and Matt Stewart made a screen garden house from salvage materials to protect their garden.



Tired of birds raiding their garden and bird deterrents that didn't work, Matt Stewart and his wife built a cage around their garden. The 12 1/2-ft. wide, 20-ft. long, and 8-ft. tall structure keeps birds out and plants healthy. Not only is it effective, but it's attractive too.

"When we moved from Washington State, we discovered that birds were our enemies in the garden," says Stewart. "Any green shoots were gone. A friend's garden screen house gave us the idea, but we wanted an eclectic design. We knew we wouldn't find that at a big box store."

Searching for surplus scrap material was Stewart's biggest challenge. Seeing an ad for leftover drop panels was a big breakthrough.

"A local fabrication shop advertised panels left over from their manufacturing business," says Stewart. "The unusual designs of the parts that had been cut out with a CNC captured my wife Nancy's artistic eye. We ended up buying 4 by 8-ft. panels for \$25 each."

Once they had the panels, the Stewarts drew up plans for the screen house. They assembled scrap and surplus materials for most of the structure, leaving them uncoated to develop their patina.

Stewart called on skills gained during his 30-year career in a naval shipyard. He also turned to a variety of materials he had stockpiled from friends and other sources, such as a surplus steel yard and Surplus Center online.

"I made the uprights out of used well casing pipe a friend had given me," says Stewart. "Another friend had steel C-channel he had acquired from a warehouse demolition project. It lay in the desert for a number of years and was nicely rusted. It provided the frame structure for the project."

Once the frame and uprights were in place, Stewart added the panels to the outside and 1/2-in. welded hardware mesh to the inside. It was small enough to keep out the birds yet allowed most pollinators through.

Stewart discovered a regional fencing supplier on Craigslist who had a warehouse full of the mesh. It ended up being one of the few materials he bought new.

"We attached the mesh by sandwiching it between flat washers and the panels, welding through the holes to secure the washers," says Stewart.

The finishing touch was a set of 4-ft. wide, 6 1/2-ft. tall rolling barn doors for the entryway. Stewart trimmed a drop panel to

the desired height and fastened the mesh to it. He used the leftover pieces above the doorway, which he framed with 1-in. sq., 1/8-in. steel tubing.

"We modified the plan several times throughout the build to accommodate the structure, location, available materials, and so forth," says Stewart. "We built it over a year and a half period. I documented the entire build on my YouTube channel, Matt the Scrap Whisperer."

The screen house has been a success at more than Stewart and his wife had hoped. "It does a fabulous job keeping out birds," he says. "An unintended benefit is it makes a great snake barrier. They tend to look for a shady place to hide, and our raised beds were an ideal location."

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