

Historic Barns Of Northern Utah: A Self- Guided Driving Tour

A Project of the Bear River Heritage Area



Self-Guided Barn Tour

WELCOME to the Bear River Heritage Area's self-guided driving tour of historic barns. We hope you enjoy it. You can drive the tour in large chunks, or in bits and pieces. There are two rules that will make the tour more enjoyable and safe for you and others:

1. PLEASE OBEY ALL TRAFFIC LAWS AND DO NOT BLOCK OR SLOW OTHER TRAFFIC. ALWAYS PULL COMPLETELY OFF THE ROAD.

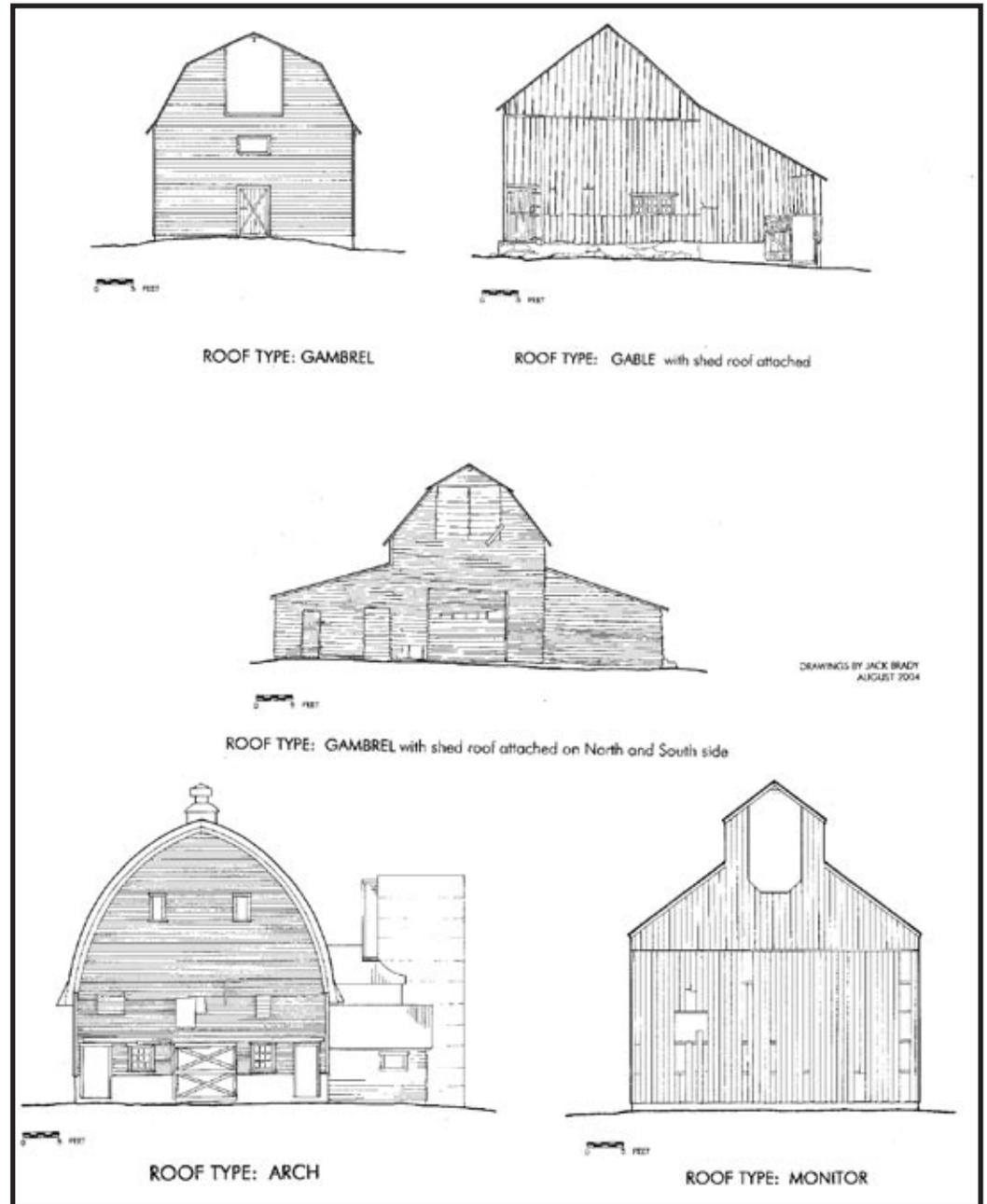
We have tried to choose only barns where there is a safe place to do this. If you don't see the barn on your first pass, continue driving until you find a safe place to turn around and come back. Keep an eye on your mirrors: do not slow or stop traffic while looking for the barns.

2. PLEASE DO NOT ENTER PRIVATE PROPERTY. You are not invited onto the property of any barn owner, except where noted. All private barns on the tour can be viewed from the shoulder of the road, a side road, or a turnout. Please do not open closed gates, climb over fences, or damage property. Climbing fences causes damage that costs the landowner money to repair. If such damage or other problems occur, landowners will withdraw their permission for their barns to be listed in this guide, and a wonderful experience will be lost to the public. Please respect landowners' property and rights.

Suggestion: Take along a pair of binoculars to view buildings that are far from the roadway.

Note to GPS users: You may use the included GPS coordinates to guide you to the barns. All coordinates are for the viewpoint and were taken in the WGS84 datum. Consider the coordinates a general guide, and use the viewing directions to locate the best viewpoint.

Your favorite barn may not be listed in this book. There are several possible reasons for this: (1) the owner may not have given permission for us to list the barn, (2) the building may be located in an area that we did not consider safe or accessible for barn viewing, (3) we may not have been able to locate the owners or fit into their schedules for an interview, or (4) we just didn't get to it because of the sheer numbers of old barns and the limits of our time and funding. Still, we hope you will learn some things from this tour that will help you understand many of the barns you see in your travels, whether they are part of this tour or not.



Above: Barn roof types.

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Front Cover: William Smith barn (#47).

Back Cover: Watercolor overlay on Egan family map by Beverly Byington (#48).

Introduction

An Invitation

In this self-guided tour, you will not be able to enter most of the barns, but you can, through this booklet, learn about aspects of early farming in this region. The story of the family farm with its attendant barns, granaries, sheds, animals, and crops is a rich one, holding deeply ingrained memories for all those who experienced it.

You are invited to imagine the barn's dimly lit predawn spaces, its earthy warm odors of fresh hay, manure, and feed accompanying early morning rituals of milking cows and feeding horses. Gaze with us into the barn's window a lifetime ago and learn about the barn's systems of operation still in place such as rusty cow stanchions, tarnished watering cups and wooden feeding troughs, the metal waste removal bucket and track, the Jackson fork with its ropes and pulleys, or a hay elevator reclining in the loft. Imagine the labor-intensive aspects of running a farm with the use of horse-drawn



farm implements, leather harnesses, ten-gallon milk cans and hand tools. Observe the fascinating workmanship of the doors, windows, latches, gates and locks, handmade with the resources their builders had available. Notice the elements of nature that wore

upon the walls and rooftops of these barns, some to the point of fragility and collapse. Come learn more about the marvelous design and construction of the barns that still grace the landscape of northern Utah.

Barns in the History of the Bear River Region: Tradition and Technology

White settlers first moved into the valleys of northern Utah from about 1851 through 1870, the earliest settlements being in Box Elder County and the later ones in Rich County. These Mormon immigrants faced hardships of nature and economics as they established communities. Barns were large and expensive, so many of the earliest farm outbuildings were smaller—stables, granaries, calving sheds, and other structures necessary to protect the farm's most valuable investments—animals and certain equipment. Horses, the vital machinery of subsistence farmers of the time, needed protection from the elements so that work could continue uninterrupted. Providing shelter for birthing and for the protection of young or sick animals was another important function of early Utah buildings. In these early days, hay was put up loose in stacks out in the open.

As settlements became more established and developed stronger economies, farmers began to build large, multi-purpose barns. A few early

barns that show influences from Europe and the eastern United States still stand in the Bear River region. But by the turn of the century, the most common barn style in this region was the Intermountain Barn, a structure that originated in the Interior West.

In the early- to mid-1900s, dairy farming became a mainstay of northern Utah's economy. Rather than relying on vernacular knowledge of how to build a barn—knowledge that may have been colored by ethnic origins of the builders as well as by the region and conditions in which they built—farmers of the early twentieth century had access to farm journals and other resources touting new styles of barns. Gambrel and arched roofs created more space for hay storage in the loft than traditional gable roofs. Usually larger than their forerunners, these barns were built to efficiently shelter the main operations and resources for a farm that sold milk as its main product—in other words, farming had moved beyond subsistence to specialization.

As economic and health codes changed, the family farm also had to change. Small dairies could not afford the costs of improvements required by the Health Department and Grade A milk standards. Many sold Grade B or Grade C milk to cheese factories and evaporated milk canneries. After World War II, two things affected farms in the region. First, rapid advances in technology increased production with less manual labor, allowing those who had money to buy more animals, land, and updated equipment. This increased production led to surpluses of commodities, causing the federal government to restrict production on farms or even to buy farmers out. Second, small farmers found they could make a better income by becoming employees in other industries, so they quit farming altogether, though they often stayed on the farm property. Old barns were often used as general storage areas on these farms. Lack of time and funds, combined with the fact that the barns were no longer necessary to the economic life of the families, resulted in many of them falling into disrepair.

Recently, other changes have created difficult times for farmers. Adult children that stay home to work the family farm are rare, and those that do are faced with harsh economic realities as more commodities are imported from other parts of the world. Older farmers often need to sell their land so they can



Top Right: Ernest Morgan poses with his crop in Nibley, Utah, in the early 1900s. (Photo courtesy of Jim Morgan)
Left: Farming with horses was common until World War II. (Photo courtesy of Jim Morgan)
Bottom Right: Many old barns are collapsing due to weathering and lack of upkeep.