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Introduction

In southeastern Idaho, barns are a mainstay of the landscape. Their stark outlines rise from surrounding fields; even those that are beginning to lean or that have fallen tell of a way of life not very familiar to most Americans today. Ever since the first white settlements were formed in the 1860s, agriculture has been the predominant economic activity of this region, though the type of agriculture varies with the area, and the barns and outbuildings reflect this variation.

The oldest permanent settlements in Idaho are in this part of the state, beginning with Franklin, which was established in 1860 by Mormons moving northward from Utah Territory. In 1863, Mormon settlement also expanded into what is now Bear Lake County. In Caribou County, the Soda Springs area's first white settlers were Mormon dissidents, followers of Joseph Morris known as Morrisites. They followed Colonel Patrick Connor to the area in May 1863, four months after Connor and his troops had decimated an encampment of Shoshone Indians near modern-day Preston in what is now known as the Bear River Massacre. Oneida County, to the west, was settled primarily by Welsh Mormon immigrants in 1864.

While mining and railroading have been important to this region, it is farming that has had the largest impact on the landscape. The settlers of the 1860s immediately began farming, learning quickly that different parts of the region required different approaches to agriculture. This, along with ethnic influences from the various groups of settlers, has resulted in a rich variety of barn types.

The oldest existing barns in southeastern Idaho appear to have been built around the 1870s. Prior to that, small sheds were used for a variety of purposes. The multipurpose barn, a more expensive and time-consuming structure to build, came later. The location of barns across the landscape also tells something about the history of the region. In the earliest Idaho settlements, a pattern known as the Mormon village was used. Homes, barns, and other outbuildings were clustered in towns, with fields and grazing lands situated outside the town limits. As the Mormon town building era subsided, the Mormon village concept was abandoned and scattered homesteading took its place. Thus the Idaho Mormon landscape consists of very few Mormon villages (mostly in the Cache and Bear Lake valleys) and a large number of self-contained homesteads, with houses, outbuildings, and fields all situated within each homestead's 160 acres. Houses and barns were farther apart, and towns became more diffused, with only small business areas serving many outlying farms.

Types of Barns

Until the early- to mid-twentieth century, most barns were built from traditional knowledge rather than from set plans. Ethnic and regional backgrounds of builders, the local climate and geography, and a farmer's particular needs all influenced how a barn was built. In general, there are some "types" that exist in this region, but there are also infinite variations on types as well as many barns that do not fit any particular type.

In typing barns, it is important to remember that the floor plan and how the barn functioned are in many ways more important than the exterior features. With some exceptions, most barns and outbuildings in southeastern Idaho fall into one of the following categories: (1) sheds and small outbuildings (2) early buildings reflecting influences external to this region, i.e., ethnic or other regional influences; (3) Intermountain barns; and (4) twentieth-century specialized barns.

1. Sheds and small outbuildings

Small sheds, stables, chicken coops, and granaries were among the earliest buildings built by southeastern Idaho farmers. Very few of the early ones still stand; however, a structure often known locally as a half-barn, stable, or shed exists on many farms in the area. This is a shed with a roof that slopes only in one direction, looking like a lean-to without the main barn to lean against. Some of these were built as predecessors to full barns that never got built. Others are the last remaining vestiges of old barns that have been torn down, while some were simply built to stand alone. Some of these half-barns are attached to open-sided hay sheds.



2. Early buildings reflecting influences external to this region

Three early barn types that appear to be influenced by designs from other regions have been identified by architectural historians: the English barn (Number 5), the raised-foundation barn (Numbers 8, 9, and 10), and the Scandinavian log barn (Numbers 32 and 34). The English barn is a gable-roofed rectangular building with large doors in the middle of the two long sides. Inside, it is divided into three bays. There is a cluster of raised-foundation barns in the Franklin area, and they were all built by the same two families. The Scandinavian log barn can be seen most often in Bear Lake County, where many settlers came from northern Europe.

3. Intermountain barns

This barn type can be seen throughout this region. Generally, it has three sections—a large central hay storage bay with a gable or gambrel roof, and two lean-to "wings," one for horses and one for cows. Some versions of the barn have only one lean-to, and others have three, with the third being on the back gable-end of the barn. The most common construction techniques for these barns were post-and-beam or balloon framing. In post-and-beam construction, the weight of the building is carried on a few very large posts supporting heavy horizontal beams. In balloon framing, the weight is carried by many light studs in the wall topped by small beams or "plates." (please see Numbers 1, 15, 19, 23, and 46 and the center illustration on the inside front cover for examples of Intermountain barns.)

The Intermountain barn evolved around 1890 – 1910 to meet the needs of farmers in this region. The door was in the gable end of the building, thus reducing the chance of snow sliding from the roof onto anyone entering or exiting the barn. The new technology of the Jackson fork allowed farmers to load hay to great heights in a ground floor or second-floor storage area. Keeping the hay under the roof of a barn kept it more accessible, unfrozen, and drier than keeping it in open-air stacks did.

Above: A half-barn in Grace. Photo by Angela I. Nielson.



Oneida County Barns

1 Tovey Intermountain Dairy Barn Malad, ca. 1912

The location of this gambrel-roof Intermountain dairy barn lent itself to public view, so the roof of the barn once doubled as a billboard inviting people driving along the interstate highway to stop and “Eat at Earl’s Cafe” in Malad. In the early 1900s, when the dairy boom was underway, this and many other large state-of-the-art barns were constructed using kits or sections that were prefabricated on the ground and then hoisted into place.

The barn has a cement foundation with the inscription “November 16, 1912.” It is thought that this is the date that construction was completed. The lean-to on east and west housed the milking parlor and horse stalls. A large central bay supported by giant squared timbers is open to the ceiling. The lofts are over the lean-tos on each side. The south one-third of the central bay is enclosed to create a tack room, and the large sliding doors on the south side provide access to this area. Hay was once loaded into the barn with a Jackson fork, which still hangs from its railing in the rafters.



Morgan Tovey once served as the sheriff of Malad. He and his wife Gwenfred, who were members of Malad’s large Welsh population, moved onto the farm in about 1930 and lived here until Morgan died in 1973. The barn was not exclusively a

dairy barn, but the Toveys milked a few cows by hand and separated the cream from the milk, which went to the creamery in Malad. They milked Shorthorn cows, which were not the usual dairy cow, but they were happy with the results. Morgan always made a point of getting a prize bull and keeping it with the herd to keep it as pure as possible.

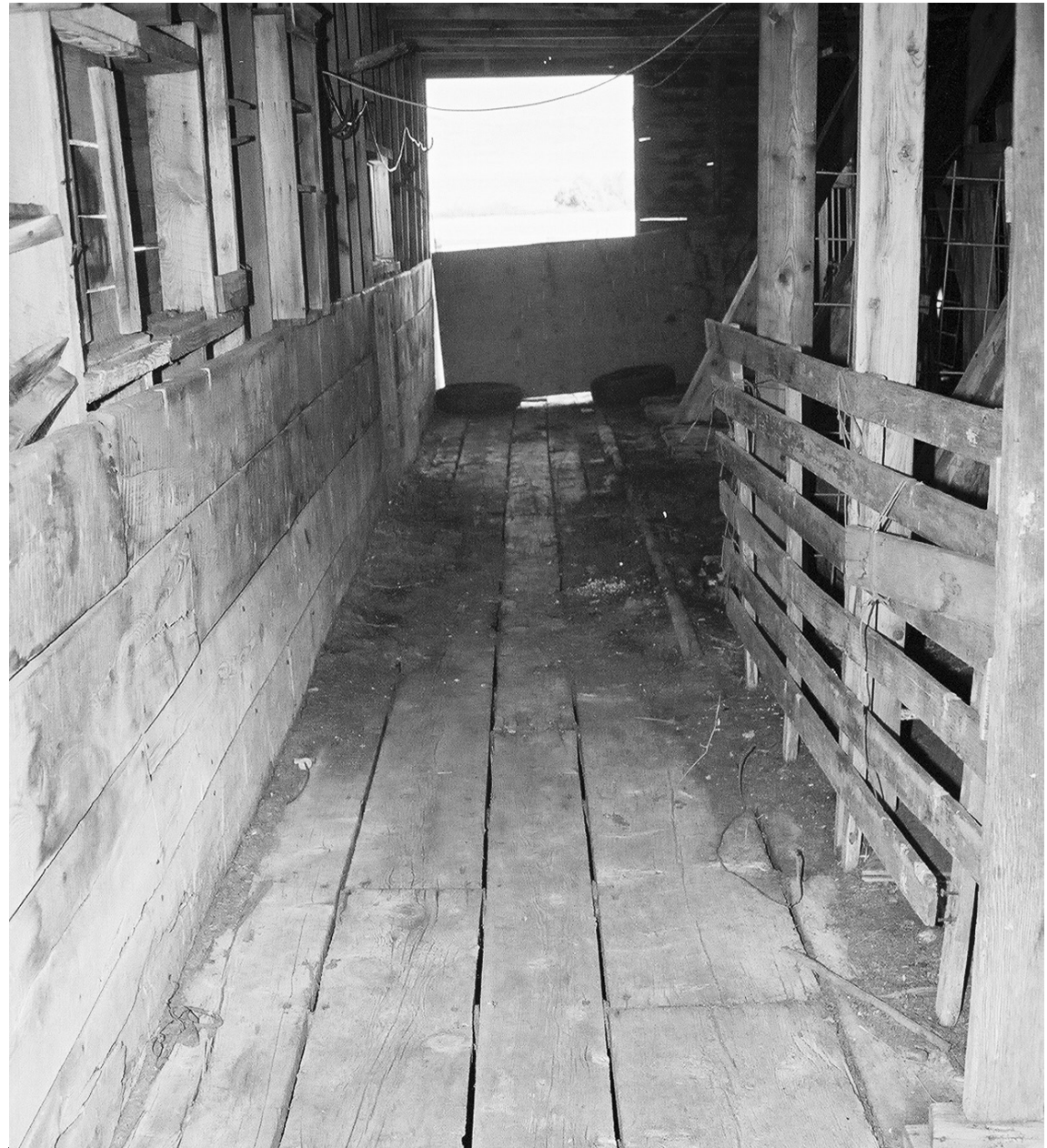
The family raised a few chickens, pigs, and geese. Their six children worked on the farm and participated in 4-H projects. In the barn, they made up plays and performed them on the top of the tack room roof. Some time after World War II, a traveling painter came by and offered to paint the barn for fifty dollars if the Toveys would buy the linseed oil for the project.

After Morgan and Gwenfred, their son John and his wife Myrna ran the farm until 1973, when the present owners bought it. Mae and Robert Evans use the barn to store a little hay and provide shelter for Angus beef cattle. The barn’s type, location and history make it a local landmark and the Evans want to see it preserved on the landscape for all to enjoy.

Address: 325 E. 3000 N.

Viewing directions: View from 3000 North, looking north.

GPS Coordinates: 42°13.695 N. 112°14.330 W. (viewpoint)



Above: Board flooring in the west lean-to.



Oncida County Barns

2 John Erramouspe Barn Malad, ca. 1930

John Erramouspe, a Basque immigrant from Southern France, came to America in the mid-1880s. At that time, many Basques were coming to America in search of a new way of life, hoping to find better opportunities. John first came to California to herd sheep, then moved on to Idaho. He was among the many Basques that made the Idaho sheep industry famous. John married Jeanne Elesonde in 1920 and bought this Malad farm.

While sheep ranching was his main occupation, John also raised other crops to support his family. In the late 1930s he built this small barn and used it for sheltering livestock and storing hay. The farm's five acres were used to grow alfalfa. A small orchard produced apples, plums, apricots, and raspberries to be sold to passers-by. The family also raised chickens, pigs, and cows for their own subsistence. John's three sons helped milk the cows at home and herd the sheep out on the range. His youngest son, Mike



Erramouspe, now maintains the historic buildings and grows two crops of alfalfa hay each season.

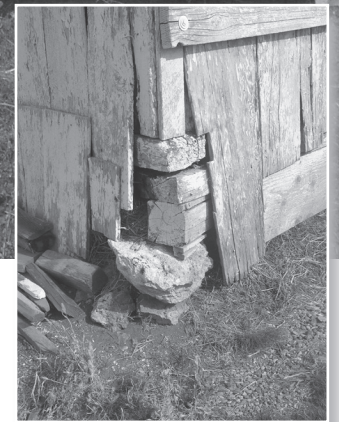
The fact that the barn is banked into the hillside makes the main bay accessible at ground level from the north side through two openings into which loose hay could be tossed. Mike now rolls an old hay wagon up to the lower south side in order to load baled hay. There are lean-tos on each gable end of this barn. The lean-to on the west side served as a manger in John's time, with room for a few cows and hay. Mike modified the barn for its present use by closing off this lean-to and now uses it and the shed on the east side for equipment storage. The rock foundation is also visible on the south side of the barn.

On the northeast corner of the property is a historic log house, now converted for use as a shed. The cabin was built before the barn; there is no foundation, and the years and weather have taken their toll. The logs were harvested from "Power House," a small power plant property northwest of Malad. The chinking between the logs is plaster. On large doors opening into the shed, Mike paints in red the dates of the years he painted the shed. It is convenient to keep a record right on the spot—Mike says the historic buildings are due for another painting in order to help them last.

Address: 668 North 200 West

Viewing directions: View barn from 700 North.

GPS Coordinates: 42° 12.012 N. 112° 14.947 W. (viewpoint)



Above: John Erramouspe visits with fieldworker Rachel Gianni on the south side of the barn.

Inset: Rocks support a corner of the barn.



Franklin County Barns

6 George Hansen and Luther Fife Barns Weston, ca. 1923

In the spring of 1923, George Hansen decided that he needed a barn to hold his livestock, and his mail cart, buggy, and sleigh. George contracted with his neighbor, Luther Fife, who lived on the site just west of his, to build the barn. Luther was known as a master builder and had helped with other buildings in Cache Valley. After Luther finished the barn for George, he decided that he wanted a barn, too. Using the same templates for the arched roof that he had made for George's barn, he built a second barn just like his neighbor's, only it was about half as wide and shorter in length.

George's son Karl wrote about how he helped decide what kind of barn to build, and gives details of the construction:



"Early that spring in 1923, Dad and Luther Fife, and me some of the time, went in Dad's model T Ford all around the Cache Valley Farms looking at different barns. They jointly decided on one with a round roof, gently curving downward and having small eaves on the tailing roof. Some of these type barns can be seen in the Richmond, Utah area yet, and it was down there that they finally got the design they wanted."

In the early stages of construction of the barn, Luther Fife laid out some templates for the curved stringers of the barn's roof, and his men nailed them together. They didn't have any electric saws and all of the wood was cut by hand. When each template copy was finished, they used ropes, block and tackle, braces, and lots of muscle to get the curved stringer in place. It was then anchored down and tied until the next one could be put up. The only piece of machinery that was driven by motor power was a cement mixer, and this was powered by a gasoline engine that sometimes stopped at a crucial time, and they had to resort to manpower.

Both barns provided shelter for horses and cows and stored a large amount of hay in their spacious lofts. George let the town kids use the loft of his barn for boxing. Karl would sweep out the hay dust in the loft and help in the making of a makeshift boxing ring. The only drawback to the boxing ring was that spectators had to crawl up the loft ladder to see the action.

Address: 283 East Depot Street

Viewing directions: The George Hansen barn is located behind the current owner's house at 283 Depot Street. It is best to view the barn from 100 South. The Luther Fife barn can also be seen from this viewpoint.

GPS Coordinates: 42°02.106 N. 111°58.267 W. (viewpoint on 100 South)



Left: Photo by Angela I. Nielson. Above: The gracefully curved bottom edge of the roof may have been practical in directing water away from the foundation, or it may have been simply decorative.