

## 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. Most coordinates are for the barn itself. Please be aware that you will not be able to get all the way to the barn coordinates in most cases, because this would require you to enter the owners' property, which is prohibited on this tour. Consider the coordinates a general guide, and you will need to 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.



*A large dairy barn in Richmond.*

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ROOF TYPE: GAMBREL



ROOF TYPE: GABLE with shed roof attached



DRAWINGS BY JACK BRADY  
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ROOF TYPE: GAMBREL with shed roof attached on North and South side



ROOF TYPE: ARCH



ROOF TYPE: MONITOR

## Introduction

### An Invitation

In this self-guided tour, you are invited to understand how northern Utah's historic barns reflect the lives of those who went before us and forged a lifestyle described as agrarian, self-reliant, and industrious. Although you will not be able to enter most of the barns, 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. You are invited to respect 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. One researcher, noticing that there was a barn-building boom in Cache Valley in the early part of the twentieth century, suggests that these barns were built in a period of prosperity in the valley and right after a very wet period when much hay was lost to rot. Thus there was a move from small specialized buildings to one large, multi-purpose barn. 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.

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.



*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.*

## Cache County Barns

### 12 Brook Ranch Barns Paradise, ca. 1860s – 1920s

Samuel McMurdie, who built these barns, joined the Mormon Church in England in 1852, and shortly thereafter emigrated to Utah, where he, along with his parents, was assigned by Brigham Young to settle in Cedar City. The McMurdies were living there at the time of the Mountain Meadows Massacre, an infamous event in Utah history. Approximately 150 men, women, and children from Arkansas and Missouri were killed by local residents inflamed by the fact that President Buchanan had sent federal troops to Utah to quell what he thought was a Mormon rebellion. The fact that the victims were from Arkansas and Missouri, where Mormons had been subjected to serious acts of hatred, only escalated the feelings of the Mormons. Samuel McMurdie is one of those men believed to have participated in the massacre.



In the aftermath of the Mountain Meadows Massacre, many of the perpetrators scattered, moving to various parts of the territory. McMurdie came to Cache Valley, first settling in Wellsville, then in Paradise. Legend has it that he had scavenged metal objects from the massacre site and brought the metal with him, fashioning it into items used in the construction of the lower barn here, which is the oldest one on the property.

McMurdie built all three barns on this ranch. The first one you approach as you drive into the ranch is the creamery, reputed to be the first built in Cache Valley. The second barn, which is nearest to the viewpoint by the house, was built to house and milk dairy cows. The third barn, farthest from the viewpoint, is the oldest—the one said to contain metal from the Mountain Meadows Massacre. Its construction is post-and-beam, with tongue-and-groove joinery and wooden peg fasteners.

When financial troubles beset McMurdie in 1905, he sold the farm to his friend Barnard White, the great-grandfather of the current owner.

The creamery stopped operations in 1915, and the ranch's milk production was hauled to Logan after that. Over the years, the ranch has produced a variety of crops. In the 1930s, the family raised fish. In the 1950s, they produced turkeys. Pheasants have also been a cash crop. Today, Jon White raises beef cattle, hay, and grain. Architectural remnants of each of these operations can be seen on the ranch today, including fish hatchery tanks and bird enclosures.

Today, the family is working to put a conservation easement on the land to keep it in farming. The ranch is also a good place to spot bald eagles, owls, and Canada geese.

*Location:* 395 W. 9000 S., Paradise

*Viewing directions:* The creamery is on your left (west) as you enter the ranch drive. It has a sign, "White's Trout Farm." Drive or walk to the vicinity of the house where you can view the two barns, looking west. Please do not leave the pavement.

*GPS coordinates:* 41°34.19 N. 111°50.64 W. (Viewpoint)



*Left: The second oldest barn on the ranch.*

*Above: A cupola on the oldest barn, said to have been built in the 1860s and believed to contain metal from the Mountain Meadows Massacre victims' wagons.*