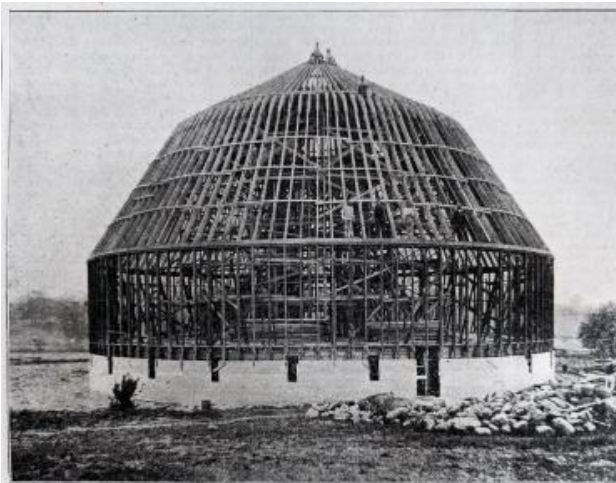


A Vermonter's Round Barn

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Newspaper accounts indicate that several true-circular barns with gambrel roofs were built outside of the State of Indiana prior to 1905. One identified was the F. W. Boettcher barn which was built in 1902 by Indiana's Horace Duncan near Artis, South Dakota.¹ Another that made national headlines is a barn that was built by C.W. Evans & Son in 1903/1904 for Major A.H. Davis on his Faywood estate in Grand Isle, Vermont.

In the October 4, 1902 issue of the *Burlington (VT) Clipper*, it was reported that "in early spring, a large circular barn is to be erected being about 84 feet in diameter." It is believed the design of this barn originated with the Indiana Hoosier builders described above. Davis had strong connections in Louisville, Kentucky² just across the Ohio River from Indiana so it is possible the idea came from Benton Steele's advertisements that appeared in several issues of the 1902 *The Breeder's Gazette*. However, since Davis had moved to England in 1901 it is more than likely that the Faywood Farm General Manager E.J. Parker saw the promotions of Benton Steele and decided to construct a similar barn on the Faywood estate. Strengthening the argument that the idea came from the Indiana builders is the fact that upon inspection of the barn's interior, a circular purlin plate as perfected by Isaac McNamee of Indiana is used to support the barn's studs to the roof rafters. It is the only known true-circular barn in Vermont that uses this type of connection.



A VERMONT DAIRY BARN.



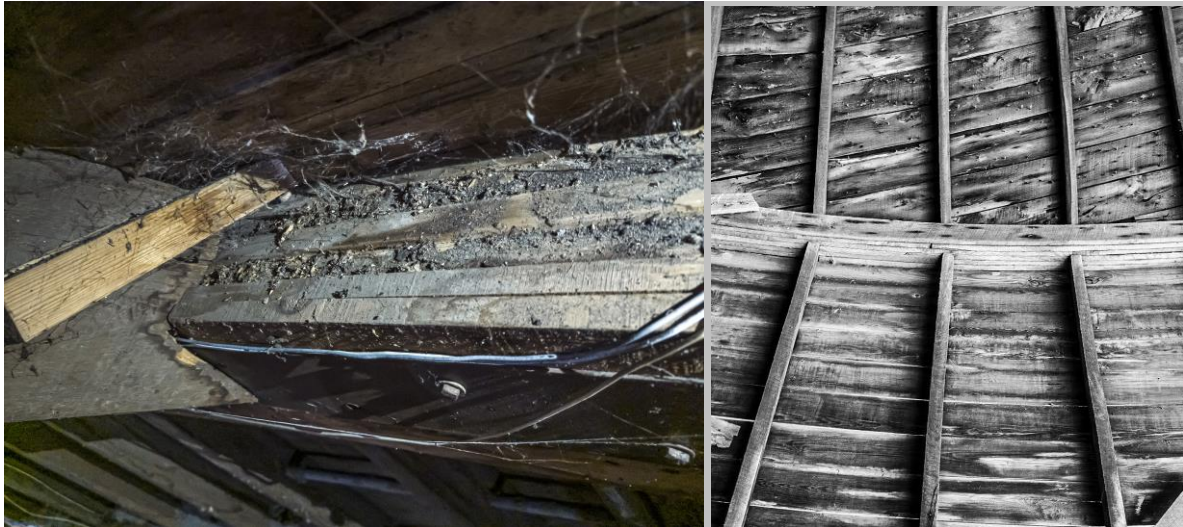
A VERMONT DAIRY BARN.

In a July 1903 issue of a national agricultural newspaper, E.J. Parker, manager of Major Davis' Faywood Farm in Grand Isle, Vermont described "A Vermont Dairy Barn," the 85-foot diameter round barn with a 20 foot diameter central silo that was being constructed at that time. This is the first known photograph of a round barn with a pitched gambrel roof that was advertised in any newspaper journal of the time. About nine months later in a March 1904 issue of the same newspaper, a photo of the finished barn was presented. The barn exterior, its main structure and silo was probably designed by one of the Indiana builders. As is the case with most round barns, the number of windows, the interior structure (stanchions

¹ The barn was actually built in Emmons County, North Dakota where Boettcher's farm was located.

² "The Davis fortune was made in street railways in Louisville. In addition to their home in this city, the family has a place on Lake Champlain, ..." *The Evansville Journal* (Evansville, Indiana) · 18 Jul 1901, Thu · Page 2

and other dairy equipment) was probably designed by E.J. Parker to fit the individual needs of the farm. Photos: "A Vermont Dairy Barn," *Hoard's Dairyman*, Ft. Atkinson, WI, July 24, 1903, page 547 and March 25, 1904, page 163.



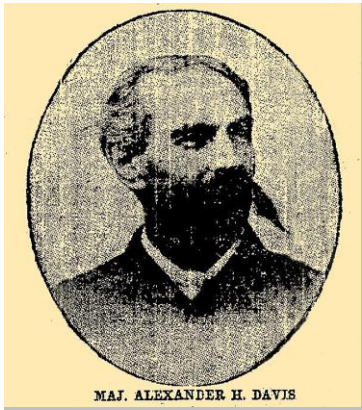
The Davis round barn uses a circular purlin plate to connect the barn's studs to the roof rafters as shown in the photo on the left. The idea was first introduced by Professor Franklin King of the University of Wisconsin in 1892. It was then perfected by Indiana Hoosiers Messrs. Isaac McNamee, Benton Steele and Horace Duncan from 1900 to 1905. The photo on the right provides a better view of what the plate looks like. The hoops were made by setting on edge six thicknesses of wood, then staggering and nailing them together in rings of the desired sizes. Think of it as a huge Hula Hoop. Photos: JTH-2023 and 2019.



The 1905 Rex Flintkote asbestos roofing ad shown here featured the Davis' Grand Isle round barn. The barn was renovated in the 1980-82 timeframe and it was probably at that time that the asbestos roof was replaced with a beautiful slate roof – an unusual feature in any barn. The barn is now used as a low income and retirement home. Image from *The Breeders Gazette*, March 15, 1905 page 538 Photo 2: JTH-2022



Two interior shots of the Davis barn, one of the structure and the other inside the silo, show the magnificent craftsmanship and beauty of the construction. The interior silo is 20 feet in diameter and 85 feet in height, with a capacity of 650 tons of silage. Photos: JTH-2023



Alexander Henry Davis (1842-1918) was a vice Major-General in the Sixteenth Artillery (Heavy) unit during the Civil War. In 1875 Davis took over the Haskin farm in Syracuse, NY and named it Thornden. He also owned a summer home that he named Faywood in Grand Isle, Vermont. When he ran for Congress in 1888 and lost, he then abandoned the Thornden property and split his time between England and his "Villa Floridiana," in Naples, Florida. In 1901 he became an English Gentleman under King Edward VII,³ but he didn't forget about his Faywood estate in Vermont. In 1902 he commissioned Edward J. Parker, Manager of Faywood Farms to construct a round barn on the property. Photo: "Major Davis's Beautiful Winter Home Floridiana, at Naples, Built by a King," *Syracuse Herald*, January 13, 1907 Pg. 7, Syracuse, New York, US.

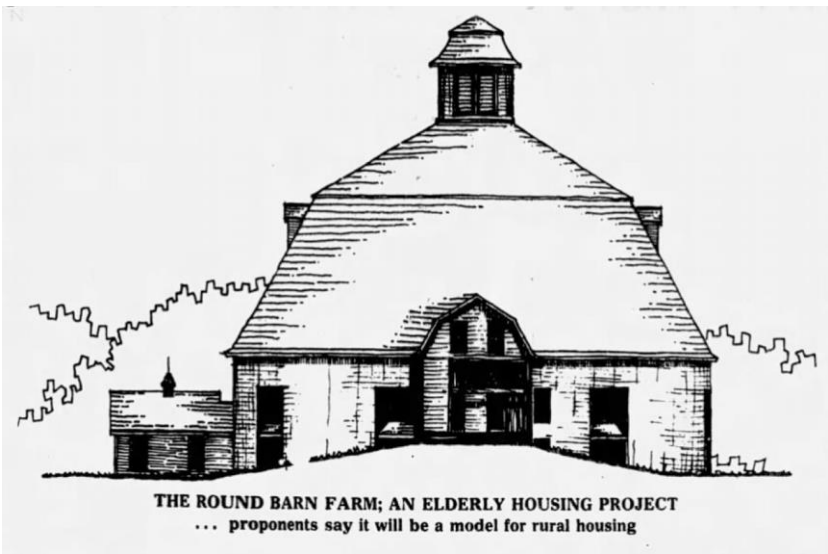
³ See <https://www.syracuse.com/living/2022/08/the-origins-of-syracuses-thornden-park-a-story-of-triumph-beauty-and-tragedy.html> for more information.



E. J. PARKER

Edward James Parker, (1842-1937) was born in Quebec of Vermont parents and in 1892 he purchased his wife's parents' 130 acre farm in Grand Isle. During the 1890s Major Davis began purchasing land next to Parker's farm and in 1901 hired Parker and Parker's son-in-law, Frank Bullis to manage his six-hundred-acre Faywood farm. In 1902 Parker made plans to erect the famous round barn with construction starting in early 1903. The barn was finished in 1904. Photo: "Dean of Vermont Dairymen Arrives For Convention," *The Burlington Free Press* (Burlington, Vermont) · 15 Jan 1936, Wed · Page 12

The builder, Charles Willard and his son, Walter were from St. Albans, Vermont. It is believed a team of at least eight carpenters worked on the barn. When finished, Parker was able to expand the Davis dairy to 75 cows. A milk room was originally located under the bridge; a small gabled milk house attached at the stable level was added at a later date. In 1982 the barn was converted to elderly housing.



THE ROUND BARN FARM; AN ELDERLY HOUSING PROJECT
... proponents say it will be a model for rural housing

The barn was renovated around 1982 at a cost of \$850,000. Image "Round Barn Farm Plan Wins Tentative OK, by Eloise Hedbor, *The Burlington Free Press* (Burlington, Vermont) · 27 Dec 1979, Thu · Page 9