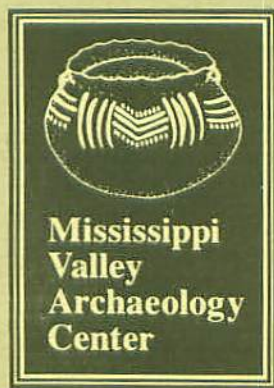


ARCHAEOLOGY EDUCATION PROGRAM

April 2000
Vol. 8 No. 4



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*Thanks to
Barbara Kooiman
for her work with
the Archaeology
Education Program
newsletter
this year.*

The theme of this year's Archaeology Education Program Newsletter is Architectural History. The first issue provided an introduction to the subject, and this issue focuses on Rural Architecture. MVAC's Architectural Historian, Barbara Kooiman, provided content information.

Rural Architecture

Introduction

Ever since the first Europeans settled this region of the upper Mississippi Valley in the mid 1840s, there have been farmsteads and agricultural buildings in our presence. The earliest farmers who settled in the area chose locations with good drainage, rich soil and access to a source of water. The La Crosse River Valley was settled early on, and once the rich terraces near the river were purchased, later settlers chose lands in the smaller valleys and coulees. The ridge tops were, for the most part, settled last.

Early Farm Houses and Outbuildings

The earliest farm houses were log cabins with log barns for the animals. Within a few years, farmers were able to purchase milled lumber which was processed in La Crosse, or brought in by train, to construct wood frame houses. The most common type of construction for wood frame houses was called "**balloon frame**" which was relatively simple to construct, with a frame of lightweight, milled lumber and covered with wood "**clapboard**" siding on the outside, and "**lathe-and-plaster**" walls on the inside.

The earliest houses were built by the farmers themselves or their neighbors who had carpentry skills. These houses, primarily frame or locally fired brick, were simple in form, with **gabled** or **hipped roofs**, and little or no ornamentation on them. Outbuildings were constructed to assist the operation of the farm. Nearly all farmsteads had a barn, and usually a chicken coop, perhaps a hog house, a **granary** and a **corn crib**. All of these outbuildings were generally built from available materials such as stone and wood. The outbuildings were typically constructed near the farmhouse for easy access.

Impacting the Landscape

Farmsteads had a huge impact on the greater landscape, with the addition of roads, fences, wells, windmills, orchards and **windbreaks**. Therefore, farmsteads need to be understood in terms of not just the buildings that the farmers used, but the landscape that they created in working the land for agricultural purposes.

Agricultural practices are changing with time, as smaller farms are becoming consolidated into larger farms, and the old outbuildings are no longer of use. As this happens, and buildings are no longer used, they are disappearing from the landscape, through neglect and demolition. New houses, barns and outbuildings are being constructed in their place. The agricultural landscape is changing.

NOTE: Terms in bold text are defined in the glossary.

Reading the Farm Landscape

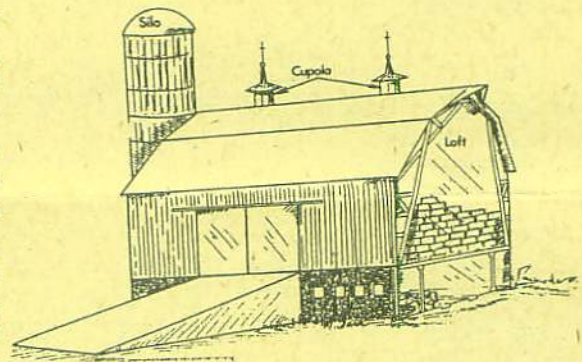
Have the students chose a farm that they are familiar with... perhaps the farm of a friend or relative, and look at the elements that make up the farm. By understanding each of the elements of the farmstead, and their relationship to one another, the student will understand the function of their particular farmstead. Have them write an essay about what they see, or perhaps make a layout drawing of the farm. Have them look at the following features of the farmstead.

House:

Describe the house. How large is it? What is the house made of? Does it have any decorative features on it, or is it plain? Where is it located in relation to the road, the driveway, and the other farm buildings? What does the landscaping look like? Is there a **windbreak**, flower gardens, or a vegetable garden nearby?

Barn:

The barn is typically the most important building on the farm, besides the house. What kind of barn is it? Is it (or was it) used for dairy, tobacco, or other uses? Is hay stored in the upper part? Is there a **silo** nearby? Is there a **milkhouse** attached to it? Does it have a **gable**, **gambrel** or **gothic** roof? What color is it painted? Are the other outbuildings painted the same color?



Outbuildings:

What other kinds of outbuildings are there on the farm? Where are they located in relation to the house and the barn? Are they located in rows, or scattered throughout the farmyard? Are they all painted the same color? Are some of the buildings in poor shape and falling down? If so, why? Can you tell what kinds of animals were kept on the farm by the types of outbuildings built there? Can you tell if certain types of buildings are no longer used because new versions have been built? For example, is there a **granary** that is no longer used to store grain because there is now a **Harvestore silo** or grain bins located on the property?

Landscape:

What kinds of landscape features are present around the farm? Is there a fence around the house yard, or dividing the house from the barnyard? Are there fences to keep animals enclosed around some of the outbuildings, such as the barn, or a hog house? What are the fences made of? Are there trees planted in the house yard, or around the barnyard? Is there a fruit tree orchard planted nearby? Is the house located in a flat area, or on a hill? How has the terrain affected how the farm is laid out? Is the house on one side of the road, and the barn and outbuildings on the other side of the road, or are all buildings on one side of the road?

NOTE: Terms in bold text are defined in the glossary.

Examples of Outbuildings



Corn Crib



Tobacco Shed

Glossary

Balloon Frame: A type of construction which replaced earlier heavy timber or log construction. The balloon frame relies on light weight milled lumber to make a "skeleton" like frame, which is then covered over with clapboard on the outside, and lathe-and-plaster on the inside. This is the most common type of construction for wood frame farmhouses in this part of Wisconsin.

Clapboard: Flat boards which are overlapped horizontally on the side of the house to cover the interior insulation and framework. Most wood frame houses in Wisconsin are typically clapboard covered.

Corn Crib: A crib for storing ears of corn.

Cupola: A dome-shaped roof on a circular base, often set on the ridge of a roof.

Farmstead: The buildings and adjacent service areas of a farm.

Gable roof: The gable is the vertical triangular end of a building from cornice or eaves to the ridge. A gable roof is the roof type formed by the meeting of two sloping roof shapes.

Gambrel roof: A curb roof with a lower, steeper slope and an upper, flatter one on each of its two sides.

Gothic roof: A gothic roof is like a gable roof, only the sides are curved, or bowed out, and meet in a lancet peak at the top.

Granary: A storehouse or repository for grain after it is threshed.

Harvestore: A special kind of storage structure, made of blue enameled steel on the outside, and a layer of insulation on the inside for the storage of grain. The Harvestore works somewhat like a Thermos bottle, keeping the grain fresh until it can be fed to livestock or sold. Harvestores began replacing the earlier silos in the early 1970s.

Hipped Roof: A roof type formed by the meeting of four sloping roof surfaces.

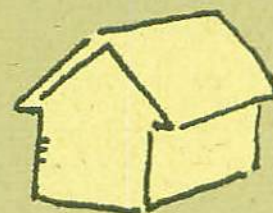
Lathe-and-plaster: Lathe are flat slats of wood which are attached to the interior wood frame of a house, spaced closely together, then wet plaster is applied to the lathe. Today the walls of houses are generally covered with drywall or sheetrock, rather than covered with the labor-intensive lathe and plaster.

Silo: A trench, pit or tall cylinder (as of wood or brick) where silage is stored.

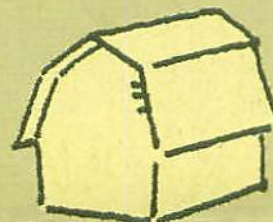
Tobacco shed: A special type of barn, which is generally made with a gable roof, and doors that open on each gable end. They have small ventilation flaps that open on the sides of the barn when fresh tobacco leaves are hung in the barn to dry. The open vents help air circulation in the barn, and enable the tobacco to dry more quickly.

Windbreak: A row of trees planted around the house and outbuildings of a farmstead, especially on the north and west sides where the wind is more prevalent, to protect the buildings from wind and snow, particularly in the winter. Windbreaks are more common on the plains of Minnesota and Iowa, and are found less frequently in the hilly areas of the Coulee Region.

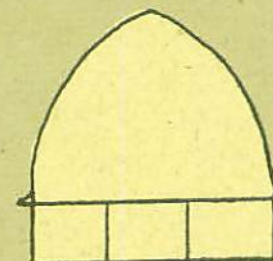
Roof Types



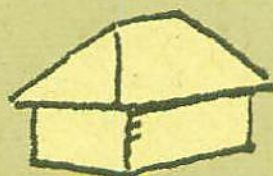
Gable Roof



Gambrel Roof



Gothic Roof



Hipped Roof

Architectural History Resources

These book reviews, websites, and historic places in Wisconsin can be used to supplement historic architecture lessons.

Let us know if you have found any great resources we can share with our readers.

Book Reviews

Title: *Barns in Wisconsin*

Author: Jerold W. Apps and Allen Strang

Publisher: Tamarack Press, Wisconsin, 1977

Age Range: 12 to adult

Good overall source for understanding the wide variety of barns found in Wisconsin

Title: *An Age of Barns.*

Author: Eric Sloan

Publisher: New York: Chapel Hill, 1967

Age Range: 12 to adult

Includes beautiful illustrations by the author of barns and old farm equipment.

Title: *Minnesota Farmscape: Looking at Change*

Author: Russell W. Fridley, ed.

Publisher: St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1980.

Age Range: 12 to adult

Gives the reader a good understanding of the changing, and disappearing, landscape of the traditional farmstead.

Web Sites:

www.agriculture.com/ba/ba!

This is the site for Barn Again!, a national program to preserve historic farm buildings which is sponsored by the National Trust for Historic Preservation and *Successful Farming* magazine.

www.shsw.wisc.edu/sites/oww

This is a State Historical Society of Wisconsin site which highlights Old World Wisconsin, a historic site that educates people on historic agriculture in Wisconsin.

Places to Visit :

Old World Wisconsin, located about 1-1/2 miles south of Eagle in Waukesha County, just off Hwy. 67; 262/594-6300. This is a reconstruction of actual 19th century farm buildings from around Wisconsin. Demonstrations on agricultural techniques, planting, harvesting and everyday living are conducted here during the summer months.

Norskedalen, located about 2 miles north of Coon Valley in Vernon County, off Hwy 162 to CTH Pl; 608/452-3424. This site features log farm buildings and outbuildings from the mid- to late 19th century.

Images in the Archaeology Education Program section of the newsletter were taken from "Barns of the Midwest," by Noble and Wilhelm, published by Ohio University Press: Athens and "Under Every Roof," by Brown Glenn, published by Tieh Wah Press: Singapore.