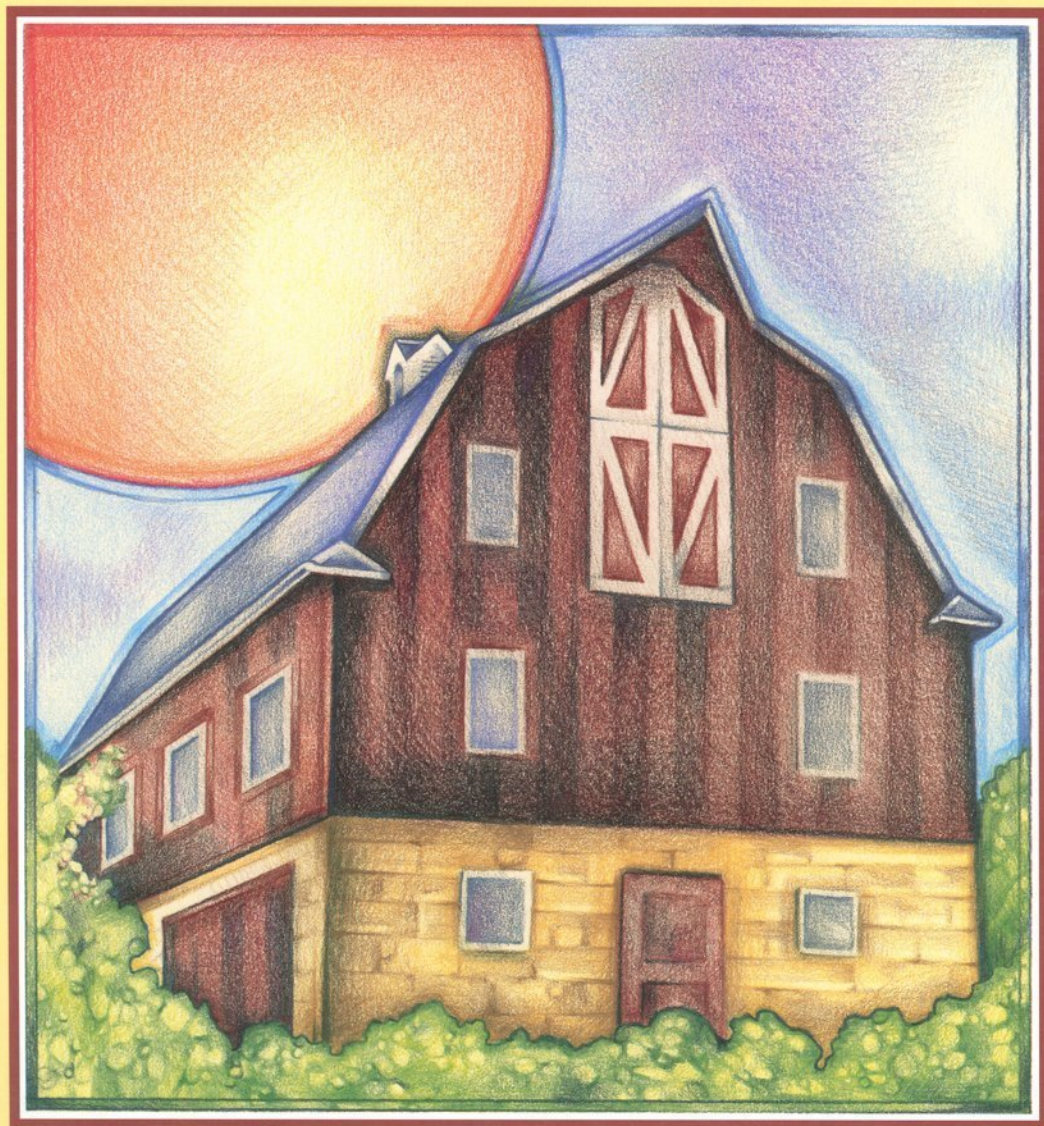


# KANSAS HISTORY

A Journal  
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Volume 22, Number 1  
Spring 1999

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G. W. Whiteman/Arlen Kirkwood Barn, Shawnee County

As James R. Shortridge writes in the introductory article for this special issue, barns "are icons for rural life and for everything positive that we have come to associate with that existence: community spirit, hard work, closeness to nature." They are integral to our romantic notion of agrarian life, and their architecture can be stunning. But barns were fundamentally utilitarian structures, and to understand how the farm economy functioned, we must understand "how our grandparents and great-grandparents constructed these buildings, arranged them internally, and used them as a basic functional unit of their economy." As with other vanishing features of our once predominantly rural landscapes, farm buildings can tell us a great deal about our history and thus must be seriously studied while evidence of their existence and use is extant.

Hopefully, we have made some modest steps in that direction with the publication of this issue of Kansas History. In addition to Shortridge's introductory essay, Cathy Ambler and Judy M. Sweets offer "A Pennsylvania Family Brings Its Barn to Kansas," a case study of "a transplanted Pennsylvania barn form" found in rural Douglas County, and Shortridge adds a survey of round barns in Kansas. One of the featured structures in the latter study is the Whiteman/Kirkwood barn depicted above, which was built in 1883-1884. Perhaps the words that follow, as Shortridge writes, "will encourage people to document the history of the barns in their families or neighborhoods and to create ways to preserve and/or find alternative uses for at least some of these austere but noble buildings."



# KANSAS HISTORY

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COVER: *The barn: a symbol of American agriculture for the past two hundred years. This special issue of Kansas History is devoted to these rural icons (colored pencil illustration by Chris Prouty).* BACK COVER: *Skyward view from the inside of the Fromme/Birney round barn in Kiowa County. An article about round barns in Kansas begins on page 48.*

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*by James R. Shortridge*

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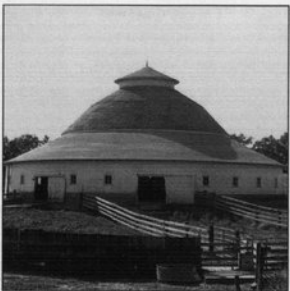
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