

Site Name: Cherbourg Round Barn

CRS Number: K-862

Location: South side of South Little Creek Road, west of Route 9
Little Creek vicinity
East Dover Hundred
Kent County, Delaware

Date of Fieldwork: October 1999 and December 2000

Type of Documentation: Level II: Partial Intensive
Annotated field notes (1 sheet)
Measured drawings--CAD (1 sheet)
Black and white 4" x 5" photographs (8)
Architectural data narrative

Threat: Initial damage to the roof of the Cherbourg Barn occurred during Hurricane Hugo. In August 1999, a second severe storm caused the roof to completely collapse into the ground floor of the barn. Restoration of the roof and second floor began in January 2000 and was completed in October 2000.

Significance: One of the most architecturally distinctive agricultural outbuildings in Delaware, the Cherbourg Round Barn is significant on several accounts. The only barn of its type in the state, it demonstrates an innovative approach to the problems associated with the shelter and nourishment of cattle. The circular plan maximized the ground floor space and facilitated routine cleaning of the living and feeding area. The unusual roof permitted the storage of large amounts of hay in proximity to the feeding area below, while the adjacent silos provided convenient storage for additional food supplements.

The use of poured concrete in private construction is unusual, as it was primarily used for military coastal defense installations and bridge construction. The construction of the round barn was an ambitious project in which the originator broke with local traditional concepts of agricultural architecture to use both new materials and a new design. The result is an

extraordinary engineering feat in which the roof is supported only by the straightforward system of rafters and plates and without interior cross braces or collars.

Description: The Cherbourg Round Barn is located on the south side of South Little Creek Road. An elaborate rusticated concrete block wall and gate marks the entrance to the complex. A long dirt farm lane leads directly to the round barn, where it diverges into two lanes that run along the front and rear of the building. The barn sits close to several other agricultural buildings, forming a tight-knit complex. The surrounding area is primarily agricultural, with many large parcels of cultivated land situated along the road.

Although the main dwelling on the property was replaced years ago with a modern ranch house, the agricultural section of the farm complex is very intact and features several rare building types. Foremost among these is the round barn. Adjacent to the round barn is a milking parlor with attached milk house (*circa* 1930), which projects from the north side of the barn. A large granary (*circa* 1930) sits approximately twenty feet southeast of the milking parlor. A gambrel-roofed dairy barn (*circa* 1930) is located just west of the round barn, on the opposite side of the farm lane. A second milk house (*circa* 1930) and a frame tenant house (*circa* 1940) are situated several hundred feet west of the other outbuildings.

Field notes were made after the August 1999 storm, prior to the beginning of the roof reconstruction. Therefore, the interior was inaccessible and field notes were limited to a site plan of the complex. The architectural discussion below reflects the barn's original configuration, prior to the August 1999 damage, and is largely based on the National Register nomination.⁵⁴

The Cherbourg Round Barn was constructed *circa* 1918 as a dairy barn. The circular, two-story structure features a poured, reinforced concrete wall surmounted by a grand two-pitched conical frame roof with no interior bracing. The seven-inch-thick circular concrete wall measures approximately 72 feet in diameter, with front and rear primary entrances consisting of paired, wood sliding doors. Two secondary entrances are set in the concrete wall at 90-degree angles to the primary entrances.

⁵⁴ Dean E. Nelson, *National Register of Historic Places Nomination: Cherbourg Round Barn* (Dover: Delaware Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs, 1978).

The structure is flanked by two sets of paired cast concrete silos, with one pair located to the west and the other to the south. Each silo contains a grain elevator. The pair to the south retain their original twelve-sided conical wooden shingled roofs. Additional structural support is provided to the silos by a series of 1/2 -inch diameter iron hoops tightened around the exterior walls.

The first floor features a poured concrete platform that measures nine feet wide and encircles a sunken floor of earth. The first floor ceiling rises eight feet above the ground and an additional three feet above the main thoroughfare, traversing the barn from front to rear main doors. The interior is heavily whitewashed and an evenly-spaced series of seventeen nine-pane casement windows light the space. Originally, a feeding trough was located in the circular concrete platform surrounding the earthen floor. A series of paired galvanized iron poles were secured on the inner edge of the platform to form feeder stations for up to eighty cows.

The second floor is reached by means of a vertical ladder. The loft, of immense capacity, was originally used to store hay and other grains on order to feed the animals on the ground floor below. The plank floor is supported by six 8-by-15-inch girders, set on end. Each girder is supported by four cast-iron load-bearing columns, which are positioned beneath lap joints in the joist. The joist ends are set into the cast concrete walls, but do not depend on them for support. All of the heavy timber and plan construction is held together by nails. There is no use of notching or pinned mortise and tenon joints.

The poured concrete wall of the second floor is two inches thinner than on the first floor. The resulting lip forms the support for the exterior ends of the secondary floor joists. Encircling the top of the concrete wall is a cantilevered plate cast as a whole with the rest of the wall. The conical roof rises along two distinct pitches. The ends of the rafters are spaced about three feet apart, where they rest on the plate and converge in the course of their steeply angled rise to meet the second pitch of the roof. At a distance approximately two-thirds of the way to the top point of the roof rests a second plate, this one of wood. Here, the two roof pitches meet and the angle becomes less steep. A circular cupola with a conical roof provides ventilation for the loft. Originally, wooden shingles covered the roof. These have been covered more recently with composition shingles. Six evenly-spaced, six-pane casement windows light the loft.

History: Although not constructed until *circa* 1918, the Cherbourg Round Barn stands on land that was Cornelius P. Comegys' "mansion farm" during the third quarter of the nineteenth century. At that time the property included 376 acres, only several acres smaller than its present-day size. The property remained in the Comegys family into the twentieth century, passing first to Cornelius G. Comegys (son of Cornelius P.) and then to Charles G. Comegys (grandson of Cornelius P.).

In February 1910, Charles G. Comegys sold "all the certain plantation farm or tract of land called Cherbourg" to Harry McDaniel, Sr., for \$15,000. The deed outlining the transaction between Comegys and McDaniel does not offer a description of the buildings on the farm, but does indicate the presence of a graveyard. The Comegys family stipulated that the small graveyard be reserved from farm purposes as "this contains graves and monuments of certain of the ancestors of the party of the first part, which are to remain, as in the past, upon the farm forever, undisturbed by the party of the second part, his heirs and assigns."⁵⁵

McDaniel owned the farm until 1935, and it was during his occupancy that the round barn was constructed. Construction on the barn began in 1912 and was completed around 1918, costing a total of \$6,000.⁵⁶ A 1915 tax assessment for Harry McDaniel, Sr., indicates the size of his substantial agricultural holdings. The aggregate value of his real estate totaled \$20,490, including a 300-acre farm with 30-50 acres of woodland and 20-35 acres of marsh. His farm animals include 6 mules, a bull, a calf, and one horse. McDaniel also owned sixteen cows, suggesting the presence of a working dairy farm, the focal point of which was undoubtedly the round barn.⁵⁷

In April 1935, McDaniel sold the farm to James L. Davis for \$15,000.⁵⁸ Davis and his wife, Hannah, held the farm until December 1954, when they sold it to Stefanie Jackewicz. At this time, the property encompassed 387 acres and included "all that certain plantation . . . known as Cherbourg . . . improvements being a large mansion house, large barns and stables, milk

⁵⁵ Kent County Recorder of Deeds, Book V9, Page 274.

⁵⁶ Patrick Jackson, "Square Deal For a Special Barn." *News Journal*, February 23, 2000, B3.

⁵⁷ Kent County Tax Assessment, Dover Hundred, 1915.

⁵⁸ Kent County Recorder of Deeds, Book R14, Page 310.

house, granaries and other outbuildings.”⁵⁹ Jackewicz retained the farm until September 1959 when it was bequeathed to Anthony S. and Bertha A. Jackewicz.⁶⁰ The Jackewiczs held the farm until January 1984, when it was sold to the current owner, Phillip Cartanza, owner of Cartanza Farms.⁶¹ Cartanza Farms used the barn for storage.

In August 1999, a storm blew in the roof and forced it to capsize on the hayloft floor, which was also badly damaged. Rather than demolishing the barn, the Cartanzas undertook the massive reconstruction of the roof. Completed in October 2000, the new roof is not an exact replica of the original, as it was required to meet current building codes, but it is based on period drawings for round barns. Its exterior appearance mirrors the original, in its shape, its cedar shake shingles, and the cupola at the top.⁶²

⁵⁹ Kent County Recorder of Deeds, Book T19, Page 296.

⁶⁰ Kent County Recorder of Deeds, Book F22, Page 78.

⁶¹ Kent County Recorder of Deeds, Book 238, Page 324.

⁶² Jackson, “Square Deal For a Special Barn.”

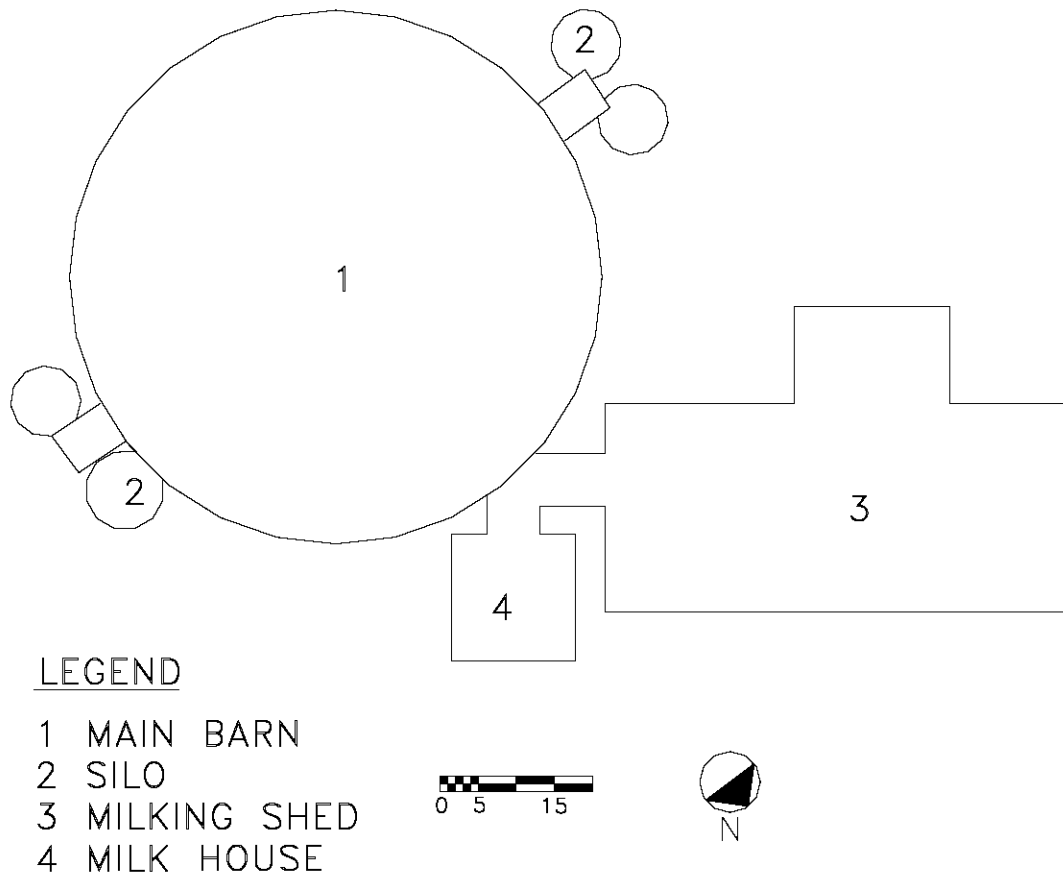


Figure 59: Cherbourg Round Barn, site plan.

MID-ATLANTIC HISTORIC BUILDINGS SURVEY**INDEX TO PHOTOGRAPHS**

Cherbourg Round Barn
South side of South Little Creek Road
Little Creek vicinity
East Dover Hundred
Kent County, Delaware

DE CRS No. K-862

Photographer: David L. Ames

December 2000

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| K-862-1 | Environmental view looking north |
| K-862-2 | View of the south side looking northeast |
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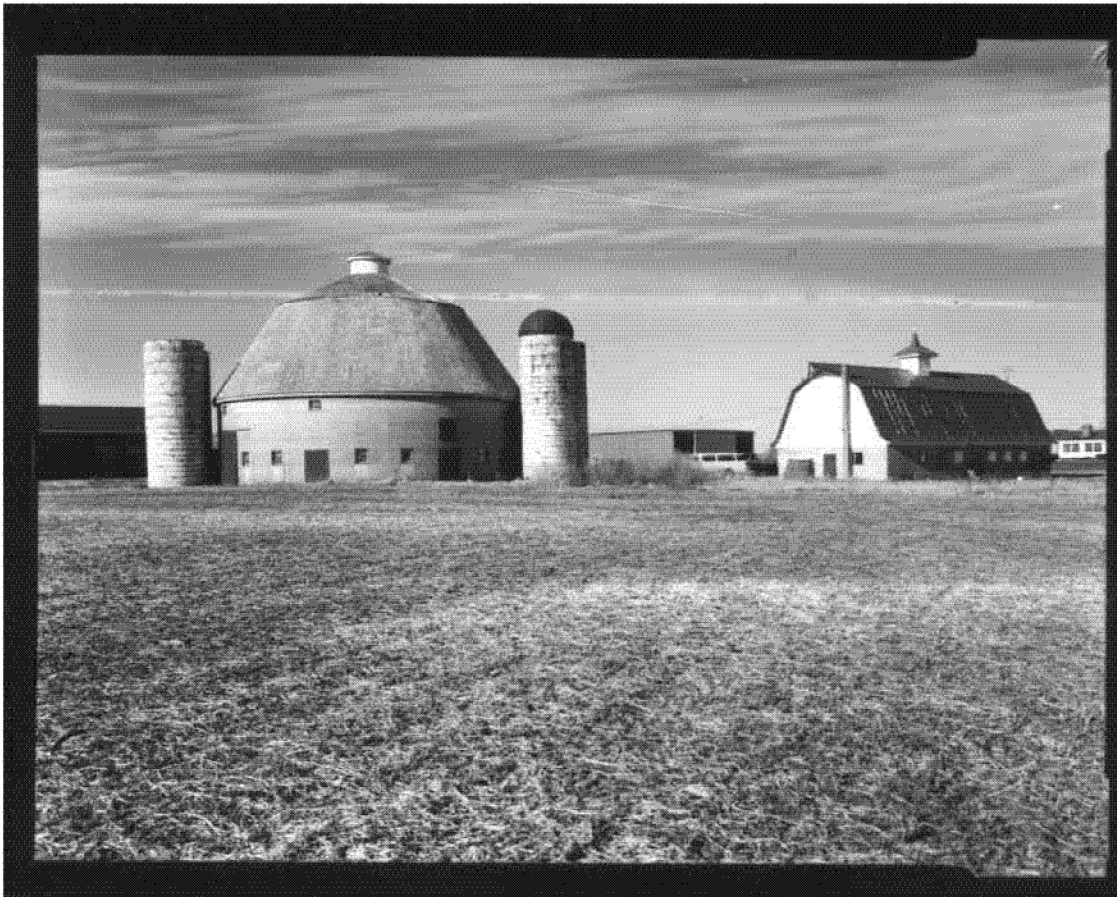


Figure 60: Environmental view of Cherbourg Round Barn, looking north.



Figure 61: Cherbourg Round Barn, view of the south side looking northeast.

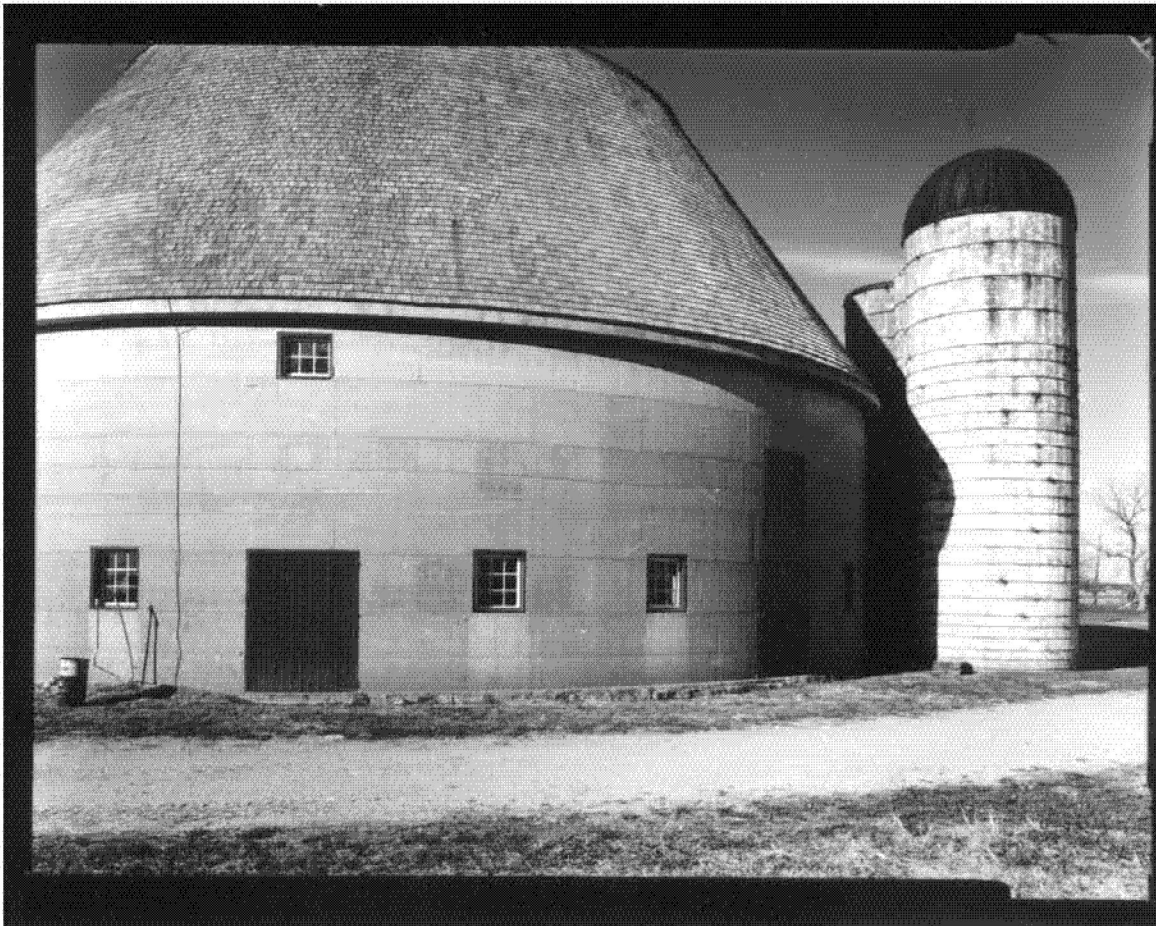


Figure 62: Cherbourg Round Barn, detail of concrete walls on southeast side looking north.

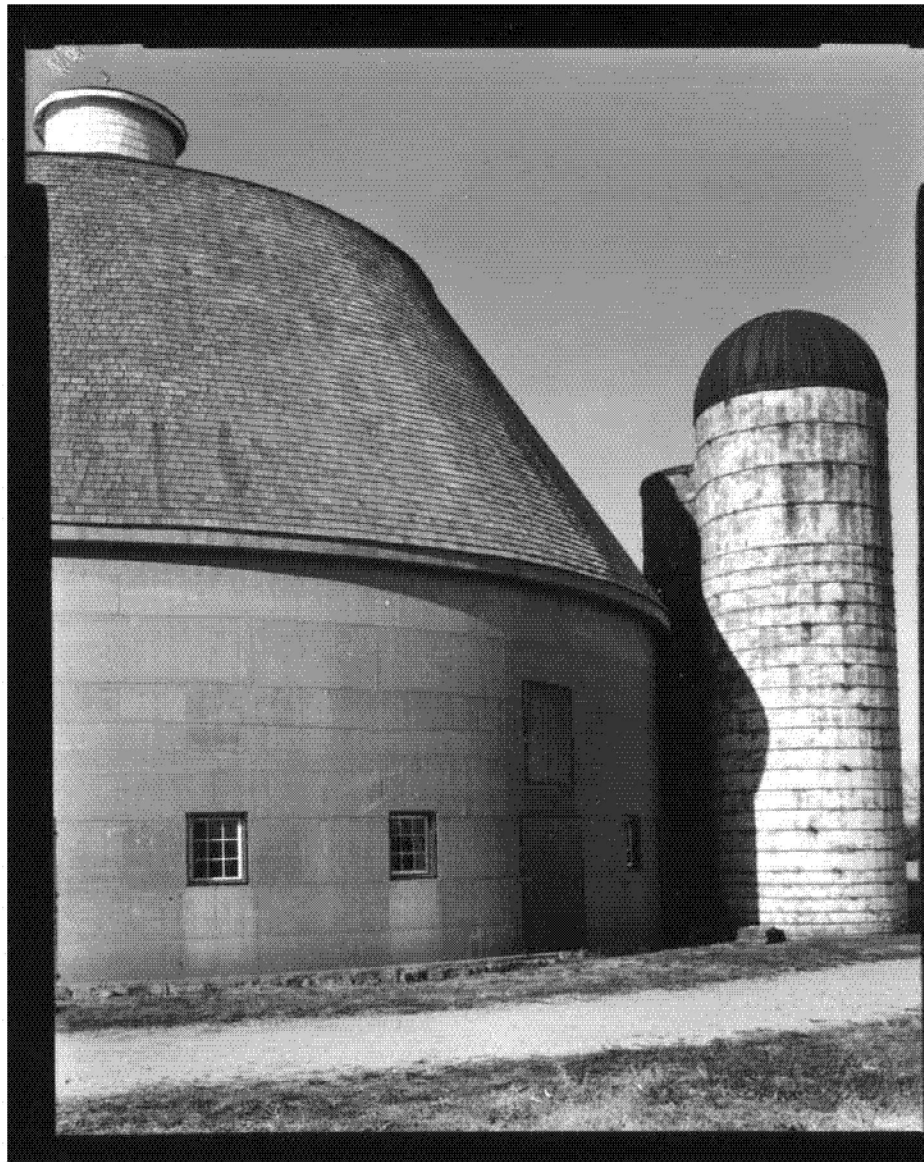


Figure 63: Cherbourg Round Barn, detail of southeast side.

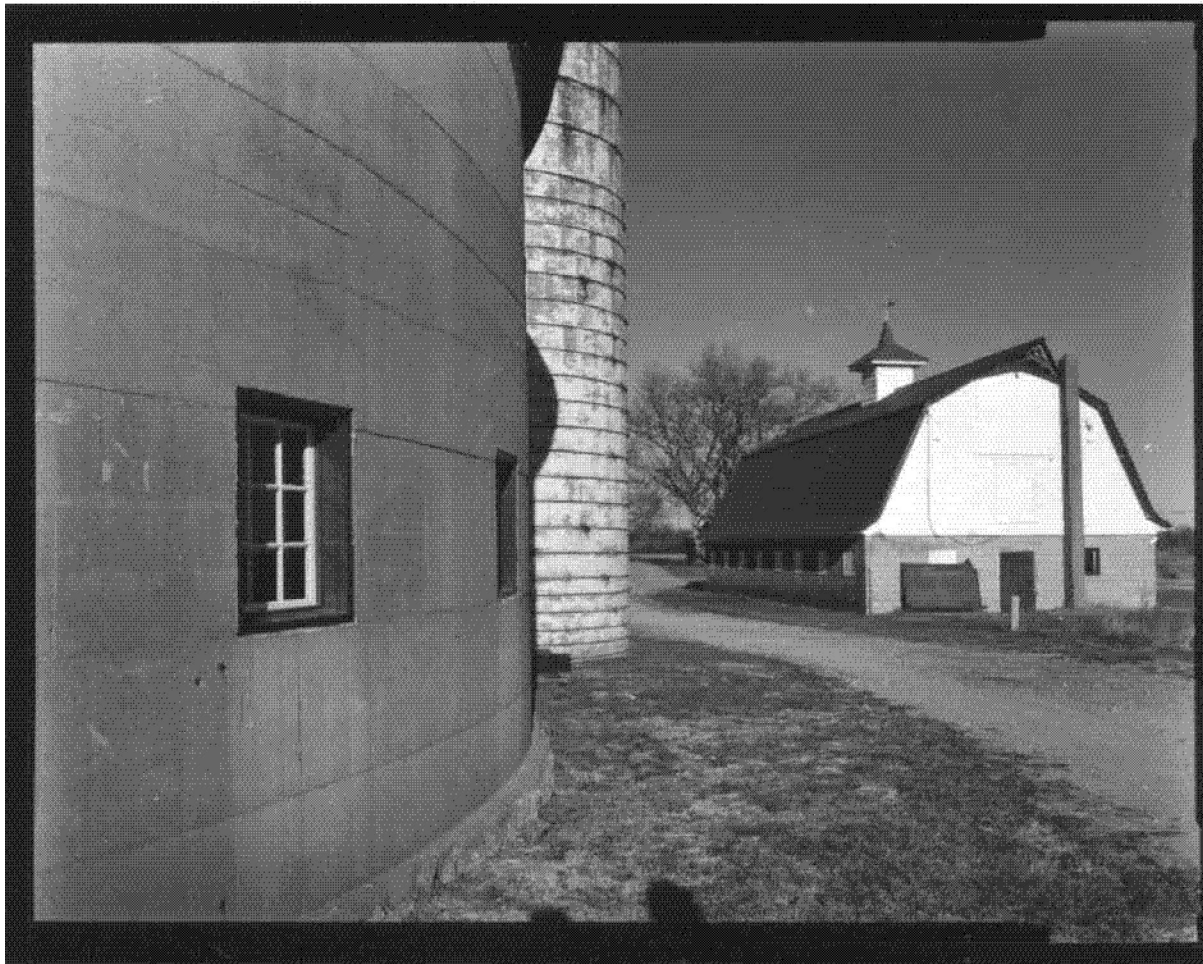


Figure 64: Cherbourg, view of round barn and 1930s dairy barn, looking northeast.

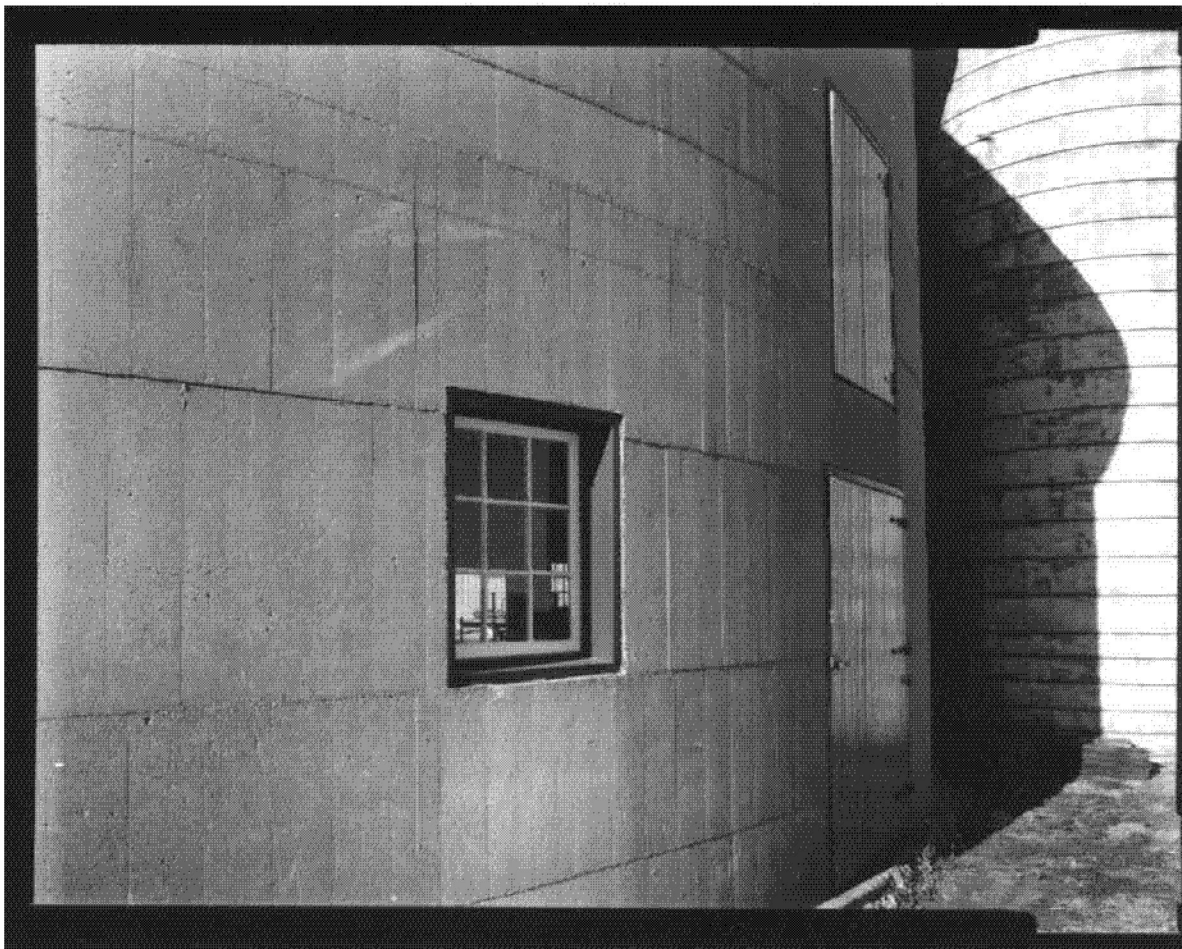


Figure 65: Cherbourg Round Barn, detail of concrete wall and windows.



Figure 66: Cherbourg Round Barn, interior, view of first-floor milking area looking southwest.



Figure 67: Cherbourg Round Barn, interior view of roof framing looking south.