

TEEPLE BARN

Not Just Another Barn

The Teeple Barn, built in 1885, is an extremely unusual agricultural structure, a massive sixteen-sided dairy barn. Located near Randall Road in Elgin, the barn is a local and national landmark, because of its size and unusual shape. Measuring approximately 85 feet in diameter and slightly less than 80 feet tall. The bright red structure with its grey painted wooden-shingled roof dominates the cornfield and smaller barns and cribs around it. The foundation is fieldstone and concrete and the walls are horizontal siding. The original floor is locally fired brick. The roof has a double pitch and is capped by a small wooden pediment that at one time held a red and white cupola. The cupola was destroyed in a tornado during the 1970s, and the prohibitive cost and difficulty in finding workers willing to go on the roof and build a second one have prevented the owners from replacing it. When the cupola was in place, the barn measured 85 feet in all directions, a symmetry which Lester Teeple and his family seemed quite proud of.

The interior of the barn reveals an extremely complex system of timber framing. Large X-bracing is used to support each of the sixteen wall panels, and secondary timbers are nailed on to this framework. A large falsework holds the platforms approximately twenty feet off the ground for the storage of oats, hay, silage, etc. The regular polygonal shape of the entire struc-

ture lends itself to a well-balanced system of trusses. Besides the large X-trusses already mentioned, the roof is framed through circular hybrids of Howe Trusses. Throughout the structure, a system of bridging built from two-foot long 1 x 4s are used to stiffen the framing elements.

Except for the loss of the cupola, the barn is essentially in the same condition as it was when it was built. Although changes in agricultural economics and health codes had forced the previous owners to discontinue their full-scale dairy barn, the structure still housed the family's hogs and cattle.

Some of the brick flooring has been replaced with concrete, and in 1952 four 4-foot concrete buttresses were added to the easterly wall in order to brace it against age and the weight of modern machinery.

The barn is now sitting on the property of the Matsushita Corporation, and while they have no plans for it, we can only hope that they will someday come up with an appropriate public use for this building, which will allow people to step inside and view this unique architectural structure up close and in person.