“Rozell’s Round”

Only about a dozen round or circular-sided (hexagonal, octagonal, etc.) barns remain in Ohio, though dozens of them dot neighboring states – Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin. This is one of them and it’s one of the reasons that drew me to Allen County. It’s owned by Donald Montooth and his wife Darlene, whose great-grandfather came here from Wales. The barn is located in Elida.

When my barn scout Rheuben and I visited Mr. Montooth, he told us that he’s originally from Fort Wayne, Indiana and that he had spent his career in working for a gas company, he always wanted to own a farm. In 1965 his dream came true when he bought this farm, originally 50 acres and home to one of Ohio’s gems, a round bank barn. Donald raised horses, corn, soybeans, and hay, though he now retains only 11 of the 50 acres. A newly-painted white fence surrounds his horses and his barn overlooks them. It was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1980.

Round barns, the rage at the turn of the century, weren’t common – it was more expensive to build one when compared to rectangular barn – but they were far more plentiful then, than now. The original owner, Lewis Feightner, hired Isaac Rozell in 1911 to construct this round barn. He, in turn, hired Eli Meyers as the builder. It’s still in good shape. It’s been painted over the years and it’s had two new roofs since Mr. Montooth has owned it. The brown gambrel domed roof contrasts nicely with the white siding and its round cupola adds another dimension to the scene. Its interior, always a joy to behold in a round barn, features a central tall wooden silo and the original boards radiating from the ceiling, like spokes on a bicycle. A basketball hoop, its net, and a wooden backboard prove that, at one time, young athletes worked on their game in this barn … in between farm chores, that is.

Congratulations to Donald Montooth for preserving and maintaining this Ohio treasure. Hopefully it will stand for many more years, testifying to the carpentry skills of the early Ohioans.