



HISTORIC BARNS

Driving Tour of 19th and 20th Century Barns Washtenaw County, Michigan

FARM LIFE IN WASHTENAW COUNTY

Washtenaw County remains unique in southeast Michigan for its blend of urban centers and rural spaces. While the area's agricultural landscapes are under threat of irreversible development, certain portions of the county retain their agricultural character and rural feel. Key landmarks are barns, silos, machine sheds, and other outbuildings familiar to generations of farming families.

Settlers arrived in Michigan in the 1820s and 1830s, largely from New England via New York State. They brought the building tradition of the New England one-story **gabled barn**. This building originally provided space for grain processing and storage. It was later modified with a raised stone foundation, permitting animals to live at the basement level with access to the yard. The main level was accessible by an adjacent hill or earthen bank.



Campbell Barns, Clinton Road, Bridgewater Township

During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, farming practices changed to meet the demand for milk for a growing urban population. Barn roofs were built with a **gambrel** configuration to increase storage space for hay. Windows were added to provide air circulation and light, and interiors were whitewashed for cleanliness. **Silos** were built for storing and fermenting food for cows. Separate **milk houses** were constructed to store milk before shipping to the creamery. Other technological innovations, such as the invention of the cream



Cody Barns, 670 Textile Road, Pittsfield Township

separator and Babcock test, cows bred for increased milk production, reusable milk bottles, milking machines, and sanitation practices enabled the dairy industry to flourish.

The traditional family farm, so common from the 19th century to the mid-20th century, is vanishing due in part to economic changes and the exponential growth of suburban neighborhoods over the past few decades. In 1920 Washtenaw County had approximately 4,000 farms. By 2002 only 1,325 farms remained. A few farms today remain in traditional production. Others are adapted for special uses, such as horse boarding and riding instruction, landscape businesses, and occasionally, a cider mill. A new and encouraging development is Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), a cooperative arrangement to support local farmers. For more information, visit www.localharvest.org/csa.

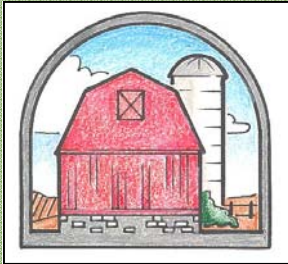
Enjoy these magnificent barns and remember their uses. They are poignant reminders of our agricultural history.

RESPECT, PLEASE!

The historic resources depicted herein are **private property** and are not open to the public. Please respect the owners' privacy and do not trespass.

The tour is intended to be enjoyed from the public right-of-way only.







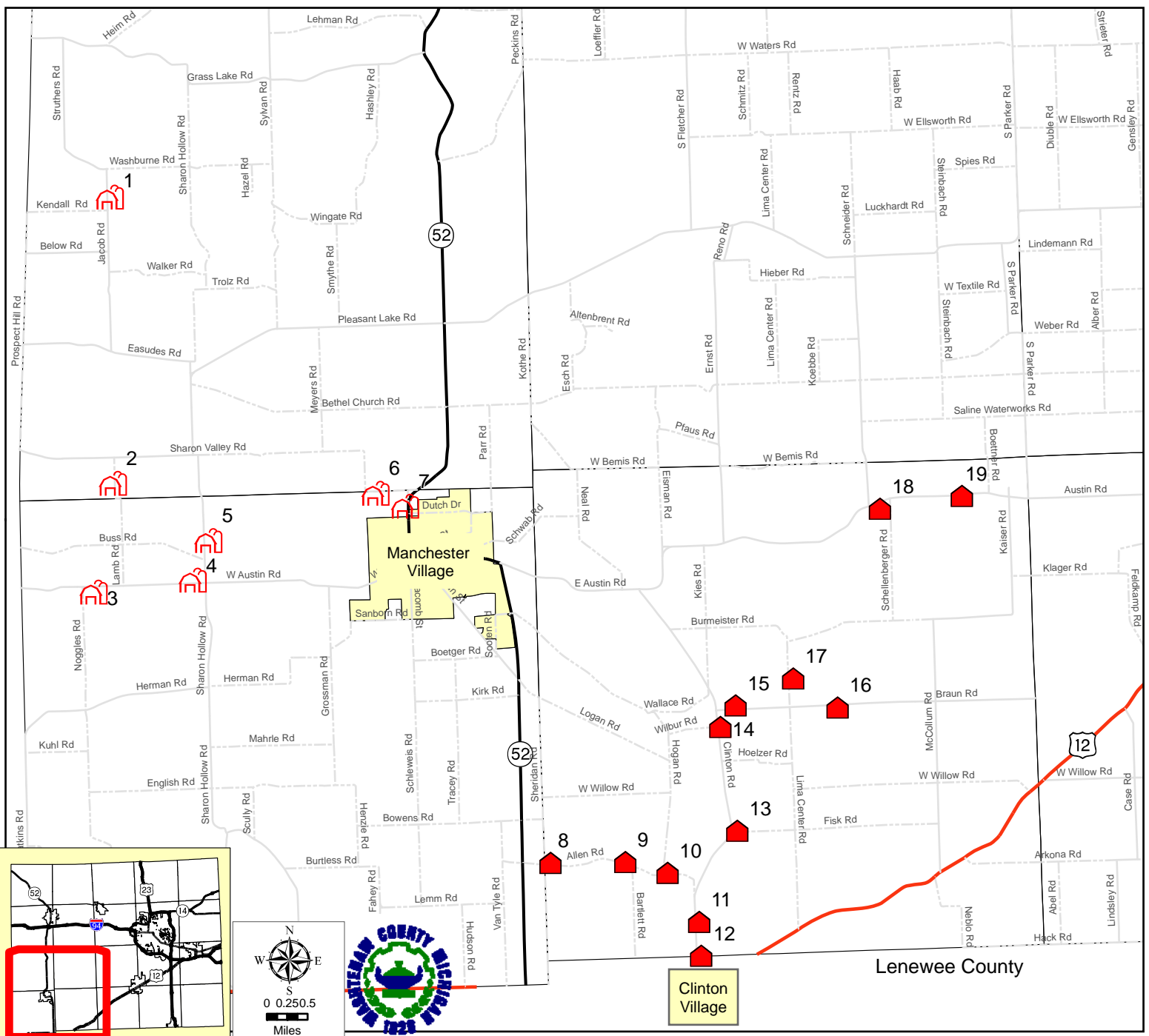
HISTORIC BARNS IN WASHTENAW COUNTY

Driving Tour of 19th and 20th Century Barns

Legend

-  **Bridgewater Area**
-  **Manchester Area**
- 7** **Site Number**

Site No.	Address	7	10950 M -52	14	11930 Clinton Road
1	3427 Jacob Road	8	14470 Allen Road	15	12190 Braun Road
2	6720 Lamb Road	9	14146 Allen Road	16	10993 Braun Road
3	15867 Austin Road	10	12990 Hogan Road	17	10705 Lima Center
4	16991 Austin Road	11	13595 Clinton Road	18	10383 Austin Road
5	7523 Sharon Hollow	12	648 Jackson Road	19	9319 Austin Road
6	19631 Sharon Valley	13	12280 Fisk Road		



FARM BUILDINGS GLOSSARY

Chicken coop: usually a long low building identified by a row of south-facing windows

Bunker: large yards or spaces for fodder storage enclosed with a tall fence or concrete walls

Corn Crib: an elongated rectangular structure with gable roof and sides made of slats

Fodder: livestock feed; also known as silage

Granary: a medium-sized gabled building with one or more doors; resembles a garage without the large doors; often mounted on piers

Machine shed: large garage or barn-like structure for housing farm machinery, sometimes open on one side

Barns: outbuildings for sheltering animals, such as sheep, goats, or horses, and/or hay

Milk house: small building for short-term milk storage before shipment to the creamery; originally of wood; by mid-20th century composed of concrete block

Outhouse: outdoor toilet without heat or running water; usually a very small building with a full-sized door on one end

Silo: used from around the 1900s until the 1970s for storing fodder

Smokehouse: small building for smoking and curing meats; often made of stone or brick; typically from the 19th century and early 20th century

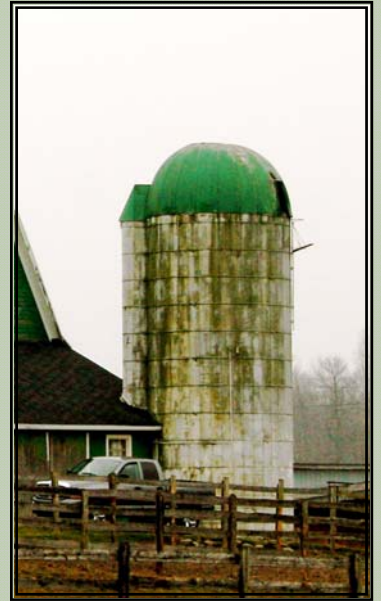
Stable: place for horses to eat and rest; often a small barn

Well house: small building placed over the water source and/or well pump

Windmill: a tall, metal-framed structure with a wheel with numerous slats topped with a fantail; the wheel turned into the wind and generated energy for pumping water from the well for livestock

SILOS AND CORN CRIBS

Silos are usually composed of large concrete blocks or glazed tile with a metal dome roof. They were built into a tall cylindrical shape for the fermenting of fodder, which was fed to cattle during the winter. The gases given off during fermenting occasionally caused



silos to explode and could bring about injuries — one of the many dangers of farming.



Corn cribs were used to store dry corn, which was also used for feed. On some farms, small wood corn cribs were shaped like a

keystone — narrow at the bottom and wider at the top. In later years, large wire mesh cylinders with metal roofs and poured concrete foundation were used for storing corn.

FARMING DANGERS

Farming is respected as one of the most dangerous occupations in the United States. Farmers climb to tall heights, use heavy machinery, perform multiple difficult physical tasks, and spend time around large animals. Accidents can and do happen!

SITE 1. The Porter Barn
3427 Jacob Road, Sharon Township

This architectural gem exemplifies cobblestone construction rarely seen on barns in Washtenaw County. The farm was settled in 1834, by Squire Michael Porter, a prominent citizen who served as District Supervisor from 1839 to 1840. The barn was built in 1853, and features six-over-six windows, rectangular form, and a front gable roof. The walls are random hand split boulders and are 16" deep. Quoins and door and window lintels are composed of brick. A magnificent temple front two story Greek Revival farmhouse, built in 1842, was moved to the rear of the lot and used as a tool shed until it burned down. The existence of such a grand home explains why the barn displays architecturally detailed features not usually seen on Midwestern barns. More information and drawings are available from the Historic American Building Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER), www.memory.loc.gov.



SITE 2. 6720 Lamb Road, Sharon Township



This barn is an example of a late 19th century New England gabled barn with an early 20th century gambrel-roofed dairy barn added onto it. This cobbling together of buildings was a popular construction technique during the first part of the 20th century, when farming practices moved from raising crops and animals for market to dairy farming. The barn features a split fieldstone raised foundation, white painted vertical wood siding, an attached silo, and lightning rods.

SITE 3. 15867 Austin Road, Manchester Township

This remarkable L-shaped barn has a poured concrete and fieldstone foundation. The barn forms an L shape around a gambrel-roofed barn, with a curve at the bottom of the L. The roof is rounded rather than angular like the one in the background of the photograph. Farmers commonly call gambrel roofs "hipped" roofs for the roof's wide side panels.



**BARN FOUNDATIONS
 AND MATERIALS**

Many of the barns on the tour are **raised** barns. They are raised above a substantial foundation like those seen at Sites 2 and 6. Often raised foundations are accompanied by an earth ramp, seen at Sites 14 and 16. **Banked** barns are built into a hill or bank, such as the one at Site 9. Some barns are built both banked and ramped. Others are built **on grade**, like the barns at Sites 4 and 5.

The oldest barns are usually constructed with a fieldstone foundation; sometimes the stone surface was split to form a relatively flat surface on the outside. Beginning in the 1920s, barns were built with poured concrete foundations or concrete block. Some barns have both concrete block and fieldstone combined from different eras.

SITE 4. 16991 Austin Road, Manchester Township



This atypical barn includes a full-length shed addition and a gabled wall dormer. The dormer is flush with the wall of the barn and only partially projects above the roof. The barn has a twin, found at Site 5.

SITE 5. 7523 Sharon Hollow Road, Manchester Township

This barn has the same massing and configuration of the previous example at Site 4, but with more characteristic red paint and a lighter colored roof. The foundation is on grade.



SITE 6. 19631 Sharon Valley Road, Manchester Township

This barn is characteristic of a dairy barn. It is large in scale with a gambrel roof, allowing for an expanded loft interior for hay storage. Small windows on the lower level are necessary for proper air circulation and to insure a healthy environment for dairy cows. The foundation is raised and the barn is ramped.



SITE 7. 10950 M-52, Manchester Township

An unusual barn for Washtenaw County, this building is composed of fieldstone, concrete block, and wood. The curve of the roof, white paint, and shed dormer combine to make this barn stand out.



SITE 10. 12990 Hogan Road, Bridgewater Township

A former dairy barn, this structure has a full-length shed addition. The structure retains two small shed dormers as well as three air ventilators, which helped provide necessary air circulation for livestock.



SITE 8. 14470 Allen Road, Bridgewater Township



Located in Bridgewater Township, this barn is a good example of a southeast Michigan gambrel-roof barn. Typical features include red paint with white painted arches and a full-length shed addition.

SITE 11. 13595 Clinton Road, Bridgewater Township

Note the decorated gothic dormers on the smaller gambrel-roofed barn at Wegner Farms, as well as the metal roofs and white trim on the outbuildings. The fanciful details on these barns combine high style with functional use.



SITE 9. 14146 Allen Road, Bridgewater Township

Gable roof barns usually signal an older structure. Many barns were converted to gambrel roofs with the onset of the dairy farm in order to increase storage space for hay. This barn retains its original shape. Note the large circular opening on the gable end, for circulation and light.



SITE 12. 648 Jackson Street (Clinton Road), Clinton



Formerly a large dairy operation, this grouping of three gambrel roofed barns forms a U-shaped complex just outside the village of Clinton. All of the barns have

metal roofs. This farm is divided by geographic lines: the barns are in Washtenaw County while the Greek Revival farmhouse is in Lenawee County.

RED PAINT AND WHITE ARCHES

Red paint is composed largely of ferric oxide, also known as rust, a cheap ingredient for paint mixing. This additive has certain anti-fungal qualities useful for preventing wood rot. Many thrifty farmers painted their barns this economical color, and passed the tradition on to create the ubiquitous red barn seen throughout North America.

Red barns often have doors and windows accented with white paint. One theory about white painted arches is that they were not just for looks: their light color in contrast to the red background enabled the farmer to see the barn doors in the dark!

SITE 13. 12280 Fisk Road, Bridgewater Township

This gambrel-roofed barn presents the pattern of gothic influenced triangular dormers and double doors seen in this part of the county.



Note the arched windows tucked into the dormers and end gable and the crisp white painted trim on the doors. The fieldstone foundation, attached outbuilding, and ramped entry are also common elements of barn construction in Washtenaw County.

SITE 14. 11930 Clinton Road, Bridgewater Township



This building is a fine example of a dairy barn with gothic dormers and a bulky earthen ramp. The ramp is stabilized with a fieldstone wall, while the lower level is clad in wood siding. The fieldstone, true to its name, was likely gathered in nearby fields.

Farmers commonly used stones gathered from farm fields for building foundations and stone masonry structures.

SITE 15. 12190 Braun Road, Bridgewater Township

This large gambrel-roof barn includes an unusual shed addition resembling a huge shed dormer on the east side. Observe also the corn-crib like wood slats on the outer portion of the south side shed addition.



SITE 16. 10993 Braun Road, Bridgewater Township



Interesting details on this barn include the multiple white arches and trim on the doors, the metal roof and five lightning rods. Fire is one of the greatest threats to a barn. Multiple lightning

rods are used to diffuse electrical charges generated by thunderstorms.

SITE 17. 10705 Lima Center Road, Bridgewater Township

This large gambrel-roofed dairy barn with rounded east and west ends represents the creativity and innovation of the farming community. Local tradition maintains that the rounded portions of the barn allowed for horse teams to be turned around indoors.



THE FARMING ECONOMY

Agriculture has been a vital part of the Michigan's history and a source of prosperity since the first settlers began arriving in the early 1800s. Settlers practiced subsistence farming by growing what they needed to survive: raising nourishing kitchen gardens and larger crops to feed themselves and their livestock. Those valuable livestock, such as horses, cattle, milk cows, sheep, pigs and goats, provided vital resources of transportation, field cultivation, clothing, and food.

As the frontier economy developed, industrious settlers were able to sell their surplus livestock and goods, such as grain, dairy products, eggs, wool, honey, and even maple syrup. The cash earned allowed farmers to donate money toward building churches and schools, and enabled them to build more comfortable houses, purchase luxury goods, and engage in civic, religious and social activities. During the 20th century, agriculture continued to play an important role in state commerce and is still a significant factor in Michigan's economy.

SITE 18. 10383 Austin Road, Bridgewater Township



The unusual color of this former dairy barn and silo roof make them visible from a long way off. Note the ventila-

tors on the roof of the barn, which appear small, but are actually five-to-six feet tall by six-feet wide.

SITE 19. 9319 Austin Road, Bridgewater Township

Uncommon for its color, this gambrel-roofed barn is a typical size and shape in Washtenaw County. Observe the silo at the south end. Domed silo roofs hang with a hook on framing members and are easily blown off. This example remains remarkably intact.



BARN ROOF MATERIALS

A covering for a barn or any building is crucial: it provides protection from the elements. Once the roof deteriorates, the structure soon follows. Early barns were covered with wood shingles. Each shingle was hand-split with a small axe and individually nailed to the barn roof. This type of shingle is still present under many barn roofs today.

*Cody Barn
with wood shingle
gable roof
670 Textile Road,
Pittsfield Township*



Since the mid-20th century, farmers generally cover their barn roofs with asphalt shingles, which are safer in case of fire. Metal roofs, which have a longer life span, are also occasionally used in the Washtenaw County area.



*Gambrel asphalt
shingle roof,
14470 Allan Road,
Bridgewater
Township*

*Gambrel metal roof,
10993 Braun Road,
Bridgewater
Township*



GABLE VS. GAMBREL ROOFS

Generally, the simple **gable** barns seen on the tour (Site 1), are considered to be older barns, built before the dairy farm was common. After the rise of the dairy industry, barns were expanded to increase the space for hay storage; hay was used to feed the cows. As a result, the **gambrel** roof became the norm (Sites 2, 4, 5, and 6).

BARN SURVEYS

The barns featured on this tour highlight only a fraction of those that remain standing in Washtenaw County. Sadly, barns are lost each year due to lack of use, deferred maintenance, and development pressures. While a small number of barns have been photographed and recorded in a formal survey, the majority have not.

The **Michigan Barn & Farmstead Survey** is a volunteer effort led by Michigan State University's Michigan Traditional Arts Program. Its purpose is to record historic barns throughout the state. For more information or to participate in the project, call 517.353.5526 or visit <http://museum.msu.edu/s%2Dprogram/mtap/barn/>

For additional information on historic barns, barn rehabilitation, and workshops, visit the **Michigan Barn Preservation Network** at www.mibarn.net

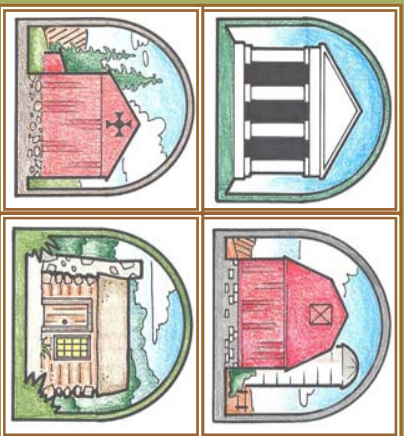
SAY "MOO"

The dairy industry in Washtenaw County peaked during the first half of the 20th century. By the mid-1930s, approximately 65 percent of the farms in the county were dairy operations.

Soon after World War II, modern dairy and crop farms developed due to increased mechanization that followed the war. Because of these changes, a single farmer could manage a large amount of land for crops and handle greater numbers of dairy cows. The advent of machine-assisted milking increased herd sizes exponentially. The tractor also had a major impact on farming in the post-World War II era. It allowed the farmer to grow and harvest many times the amount of crop possible with a traditional team of horses and plow. Ensilage bunkers, which replaced silos after the 1960s, helped accommodate larger amounts of silage for increased numbers of cows on the farm.

On a modern farm, one can see large dairy barns, numerous livestock paddocks, various machine sheds to store heavy equipment, and sprawling bunkers filled with fodder. As a result of increased herd size and cultivation, most farms are no longer small in size.

Washtenaw County, Michigan Heritage Driving Tours



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<http://preservation.ewashtenaw.org/>

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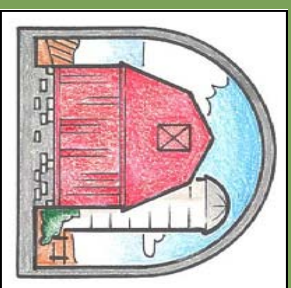
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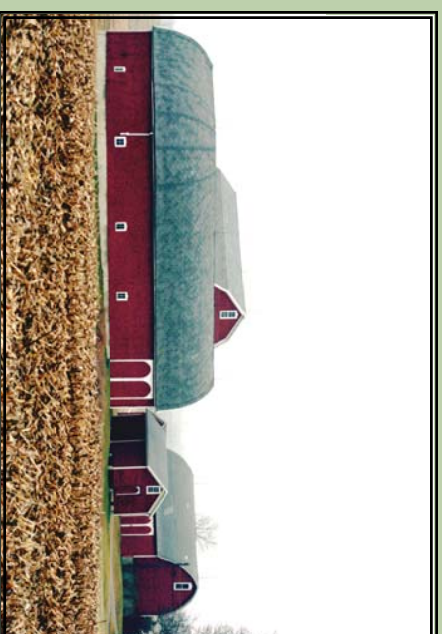
HISTORIC BARNNS



TOUR 3

A

Washtenaw County, Michigan Heritage Driving Tour



15867 Austin Road, Manchester Township