

3.VI.4.j **Michigan peninsula (MI)**

The first heavy settlement of the region lying between Lake Michigan and Lake Erie occurred after 1815 when the territory began to be surveyed and plotted. By 1831 the survey of over 10 million acres was complete and the land divided into 'townships' which each measured 36 mi (9.7 km) square. Each township was composed of 36 equal one-by-one mile plots of land, called 'sections', along the boundaries of which Michigan's original road system was constructed. This grid imprint is retained to date, particularly in agricultural areas, where main roads are one mile apart. The Homestead Act of 1862 granted (for a small fee) farms of 160 acres, a quarter of a section, to the original settlers. Later immigrants, buying land from homesteaders, bought lots of 40 or 80 acres, that is, a quarter or a half of the original quarter section. This is reflected in the checkerboard of rectangular fields characteristic of the farmscape in Michigan's lower peninsula.

Michigan farmsteads may be classified into five types related to the extent of the markets for which they produced, the commodities produced, the means of production, and the technology used in constructing the farm buildings (Dandekar and Schoof). These types evolved chronologically but are rarely to be found in 'pure' form as farm buildings were modified continuously in responses to changes in the technology of agriculture, building and transport (Dandekar). Buildings from various periods are to be found integrally linked to, and used

with, structures of subsequent periods. Farmsteads thus reflect the evolutions in land settlements in the Midwestern region of North America and the resourcefulness of its pioneer settlers.

During the late-19th and early-20th centuries the characteristic farm type in lower Michigan was that of scientific farming catering to a regional market. The buildings on the Raab family farmstead in Bridgewater township are typical of the collection of structures to be found on such farms. The Raab farm, in its prime from the turn of the century to the 1920s, boasted the full array of buildings deemed necessary for a successful diversified farm which met the subsistence needs of the farm family and produced for the local and regional markets. The buildings included the farmhouse, big barn, old barn, horse barn, carriage house, hogshed, chicken-coop, windmill, smoke house, granary, ice house, corncrib and tool shed-cum-wood-shed. The main crops were corn, wheat, oats, hay and barley. Sturdy farmhouses usually replaced an original log house. These two-storey houses generally had a parlour, dining room and kitchen on the lower floor, and bedrooms on the upper floor. The basement was usually directly accessible from the kitchen yard outside and served to store crops, canned meat and other foodstuffs. Some of the first structures to be built on the farmstead were the outhouse, the woodshed, the smoke house, the windmill, the ice house, and the big and smaller barn. The woodshed generally had a fireplace and a workbench and was used as a shop and for storage. The smoke house was used for curing meat. The ice house was used to store large blocks of ice in winter for use during the following summer.

The big barn was usually built with the help of neighbours in a traditional barn raising. The barn bents were raised first, the sections having been put together on the ground, and the barn frame erected in a single day. A gambrel roof, providing more space for hay storage, often replaced earlier gable roofs. Three-level bank barns in the German tradition were typical in this region. They sheltered animals on the lower level which was often built into the side of a hill. The middle level was used for storing grains and for tool storage. It was accessed by an earthen ramp allowing thrashers and other machinery to be wheeled inside. Hay was stored on the upper, or third, level.

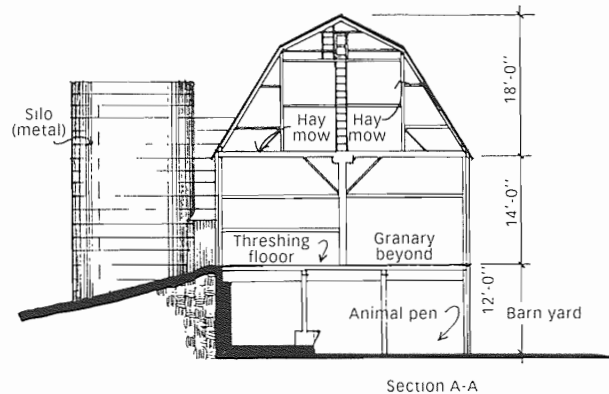
The third level was a loft space created by the tie-beam in the bents between which joists and flooring were added. This loft floor was important for the structural stability of the barn. The loft space was usually accessed by ladders but sometimes, in the larger barns, by very small stairs. Hay was thrown down chutes descending from the loft space, through the middle level down to the basement. There were access doors in the middle level as well. Feed grain from the granaries on the middle level or from the attached silos which delivered feed-corn to the middle level could also be thrown down to the basement level.

Stylized doorways were sometimes outlined in white paint on the long sides of the big barn and the master carpenter would at times cut out, as his signature but also to allow ventilation, a circle, star or other simple shape in the peak of the gable. Most structures on the farmstead were utilitarian and functional, with little ornamentation or decoration. The wood



siding of farm buildings was often painted 'barn red' with a pigment of iron oxide but this was as much to protect the wood as to embellish the structure. HEMALATA C DANDEKAR

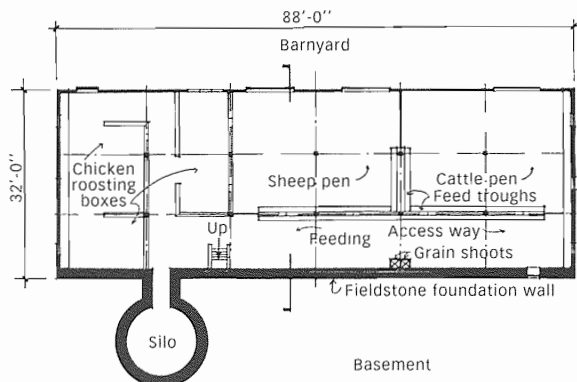
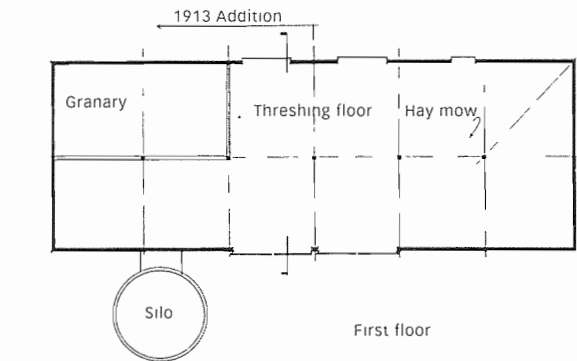
Raab farmstead, Bridgewater township, Michigan.



left
Basement and first-floor plans and section of the big barn, Raab farmstead, Bridgewater township, Michigan, 1913.

See also
1 X 3 A/B
Outbuildings/Farm Buildings (Kazakhstan)

References
Dandekar, Hemalata, and Schoof, Daniel F 1988
Dandekar, Hemalata, 1994



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