

BRADLEY-BORK FARM, BARN
32W660 Fabyan Parkway
West Chicago
Geneva Township
Kane County
Illinois

HABS IL-1274

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

FIELD RECORDS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
Midwest Regional Office
601 Riverfront Drive
Omaha, NE 68102

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

BRADLEY-BORK FARM, BARN

HABS IL-1274

Location: The Bradley-Bork Barn is located on a property with a mailing address of 32W660 Fabyan Parkway, West Chicago, Illinois. This parcel straddles the Kane and DuPage County line and the barn itself is situated on the Kane County side. The legal address for the parcel upon which the barn is situated is: part of the southeast quarter of Section 12, Township 39 North, Range 8 East of the Third Principal Meridian in Geneva Township, Kane County, Illinois.

USGS Quadrangle: Kane

Present Owner: Midwest Industrial Funds

Present Use: Vacant

Significance: The Bradley-Bork Barn embodies the distinctive characteristics of a method of construction that was widely utilized in the early twentieth century for Midwestern dairy barns. Specifically, it is an excellent and intact example of plank frame construction with a gambrel roof framed by a Shawver truss. Plank framing called for two-inch milled lumber that was readily available at lumberyards and joined together by bolts or nails. It was cheaper, faster, and required considerably less skill than traditional barn construction, which featured heavy, squared timbers that were special ordered from sawmills. Plank framing also allowed for taller, wider barns with self-supporting roofs. The Shawver truss, featuring long, diagonal wood braces, was one of the first roof trusses developed for a gambrel roof, which featured a dual-pitch shape that allowed a larger loft space to store hay than a gable roof allowed.

This former dairy barn was originally part of a 113-acre farm that was owned by three generations of the Bradley family from the late 1840s until the 1910s, and later by members of the Bork family from the 1940s through until the early 2000s. The farm straddled the dividing line between Kane and DuPage counties, with 58 acres in the former, and 56 acres in the latter. The barn was built in the early 1900s on the Kane County side of the property.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Dates of construction
c. 1905
2. Architect
Not applicable. Plans and specifications for this barn were likely ordered from a company that published one of the many farm books that dealt with barn design, construction, equipment, and practices.
3. Contractor/Builders
Unknown. The barn was likely assembled by local carpenters.
4. Original and subsequent owners
The barn is situated on land that was purchased by Ebenezer Cook (E.C.) Bradley on June 20, 1846 (Tract Book 43, p. 377). Ebenezer Sturgis (E.S.) Bradley and his wife, Margaret Bradley, purchased the property on June 15, 1876 (Tract Book 158, p. 211). E.S. Bradley died on March 22, 1916. His widow, Margaret Bradley, sold the property to Henry and Eva Jeske on October 1, 1920 (Tract Book 669, p. 285). Henry and Eva Jeske died on December 13, 1925 and the land was taken over by the Batavia National Bank on January 12, 1926 after the Jeske Estate went into Probate (Tract Book 883, p. 391). The land was purchased by R.P. Fischer on December 9, 1929 (Tract Book 919, p. 223). Fisher sold the land to Leslie L. Urch on September 24, 1934 (Tract Book 999, p. 219). Urch sold the land to Stanley and Marcella Skirmont on February 8, 1937 (Tract Book 1047, p. 276). The land was purchased by Louis G. Bork on May 26, 1943 (Tract Book 1190, p. 69). The land had several owners following the death of Louis G. Bork on January 2, 1982, including his son, Louis M. Bork. The property is currently (August 2021) owned by Midwest Industrial Funds.¹
5. Original plans and construction
Upon completion, this two-story barn was situated about 300 feet north of Fabyan Parkway (then called Barton Road) and accessed via a gravel drive. It measured 100'-0" in length, 36'-0" in width, and 50'-0" in height, and featured plank frame construction. A Shawver truss arrangement supported its gambrel roof. The first floor had poured concrete walls and eight-foot-wide door openings on either end. Its east and west facades were lined with paired, fixed-

1. All ownership information in this paragraph was obtained from the Kane County Recorder of Deeds, Grantor-Grantee Tract Book records for varying years.

pane windows, each of which had nine lights. The hayloft was accessed via an exterior ramp, and was sheathed in wood boards, applied vertically. The asphalt-covered roof had a total of four shed dormers: two on each side, as well as two square, ridge ventilators with gable roofs.

Both floors had exposed wood framing and open plans, although the first floor had two rooms on its south end, which may have originally housed horses. The first floor was divided into a central aisle and flanking side aisles, which featured stalls with iron railings. Flooring was composed of concrete (first floor) and wood planks (hayloft).

6. Alterations and additions

Exterior alterations include the removal of original roof ventilators and original wood shingle roof covering. The current asphalt shingled roof covering was installed in 2020. The barn's shed dormers have been altered with aluminum siding and the original windows have been replaced. The current ramp to the hayloft was rebuilt in recent years. Three doors and two windows have been removed and their openings boarded over.

Interior changes are minimal and mainly include the removal of metal stanchions for the dairy cows as well as associated concrete feed troughs and concrete manure gutters that extended along the length of perimeter walls and the center aisle, respectively. Six feed bins that held 500 bushels of grain were installed in the southeast corner of the hayloft that were separated from the rest of the space by a wood partition wall. A manure pit was installed beneath the barn in about 2005, which ran from the barn to two underground tanks that held 10,000 and 40,000 gallons. Concrete flooring in the center aisle of the barn was altered at that time with the installation of metal slats.

B. Historical Context

1. History of the Bradley-Bork Farm

The large, gambrel-roof dairy barn documented for this report was originally part of a 113-acre farm that was operated by three generations of the Bradley family from the late 1840s until the 1910s, and later by members of the Bork family from the 1940s through until the early 2000s. The farm straddled the dividing line between Kane and DuPage counties, with 58 acres in the former, and 56 acres in the latter. The dairy barn was built in the early 1900s on the Kane County side of the property.

The farm was established by Ebenezer Cook (E.C.) Bradley (1796-1891), the son of Stephen and Lydia (Cook) Bradley, who was born in Stockbridge

(Berkshire County), Massachusetts.² During the War of 1812, he served as a Private with Captain John Nye's Massachusetts Militia.³

E.C. Bradley married Abigail Sturgis (1798-1888), a native of Lee (Berkshire County), Massachusetts, on February 25, 1819.⁴ The couple spent the first 26 years of their marriage in Massachusetts, during which time they had twelve children: Charles (1819-1902); Eliza (1821-1846); Harriet (1822-1886); Edward (1823-1872); William (1826-1879); Amelia (1829-1908); Henry (1831-1831); Henry (1832-1910); Ebenezer Sturgis (1835-1916); James (1837-1918); Josephine (1840-1927); and Stephen (1845-46).⁵

In 1846, E.C. Bradley moved his family to northeastern Illinois, where he purchased 113-acres of land that was located about two miles east of the Fox River.⁶ His property straddled the boundary line between DuPage County to the east (56 acres) and Kane County on the west (58 acres). The two townships in which Bradley's original parcels were located, Winfield and Geneva, respectively, were not yet organized at the time of Bradley's land acquisitions. Bradley's property remained in an unincorporated area, outside the limits of the fledgling villages of West Chicago to the east, and Geneva and Batavia to the west.

The Bradley family lived in a two-story wood-frame farmhouse situated on the Kane County side of the family farm, which is extant. Its location is identified on an 1872 Atlas Map of Geneva Township showing E.C. Bradley's 58-acre Kane County tract.⁷ The farmhouse rests on a stone foundation and has both a two-story gabled ell section and a two-story gable-roofed rear wing. It is possible that the rear wing constitutes the original section of the farmhouse and the larger, gabled-ell section facing the Fabyan Parkway (formerly Barton Road) was built later, as the family became more prosperous. All other nineteenth-century buildings on the farmstead have long since been razed, and the appearance of the property during this period is unknown. All nine living Bradley children resided with their parents at the time of the 1850 federal census, which identified E.C. Bradley and his oldest sons, who

2. "Ebenezer Cook Bradley," <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/55419340/ebenezer-cook-bradley>.

3. Ancestry.com, *U.S., War of 1812 Pension Application Files Index, 1812-1815* (Provo, Utah: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2010).

4. Ancestry.com, *Massachusetts, U.S., Town and Vital Records, 1620-1988* (Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011).

5. "Ebenezer Cook Bradley," <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/55419340/ebenezer-cook-bradley>.

6. Ibid. The Grantor-Grantee Tract Books on file at the Kane County Recorder of Deeds Office in Geneva, Illinois, identify June 20, 1846, as the date that E.C. Bradley purchased his 58-acre tract in Kane County (Kane County Tract Book 43, p. 377).

7. *Combination Atlas Map of Kane County, Illinois* (Geneva, Illinois: Thompson and Everts, 1872).

ranged in age from 17 to 31, as farmers.⁸ Only three Bradley children, William, Ebenezer Sturgis (E.S.), and James, lived and worked at the family farm in 1860.⁹ E.S. and James Bradley joined the 124th Infantry Illinois Volunteers Regiment during the Civil War and served together in Company B under a Captain Stafford.¹⁰

The U.S. Agricultural Schedule for 1870 shows that the E.C. Bradley Farm produced 300 bushels of Indian corn and 200 bushels of oats in that year. Its livestock was valued at \$579 and included two horses, four milch cows, six other cattle, twenty-two sheep, and six swine.¹¹ E.C. and Abigail Bradley, then aged 74 and 72, lived on the property alone in that year with 23-year-old Ellen Kimball, a domestic servant.¹²

Ebenezer S. and Margaret (Waddell) Bradley (1845-1926) were married in 1867 and they purchased the family farm from E.S.'s parents in 1876, when he was 41 years of age.¹³ The couple had four children who were raised on the property, Julia (b. 1869), Elizabeth (b. 1873), Robert Ebenezer (b. 1881), and Ruth (b. 1888). They resided at the Bradley family farm until at least 1900, as shown by the federal census for that year, which identified E.S. as a "farmer."¹⁴

Robert E. Bradley became the third generation of the Bradley family to operate the family farm. His parents, E.S. and Margaret Bradley, retained ownership of the property after they moved to a house in West Chicago in the early 1900s. Robert resided in the farmhouse in 1910 as a tenant, with his wife, Eva (Stimple), whom he married in 1905.¹⁵

8. Ancestry.com, *1850 United States Federal Census* (Lehi, Utah: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2009).

9. Ancestry.com, *1860 United States Federal Census* (Provo, Utah: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2009).

10. Joslyn, R. Waite and Frank W. Joslyn, *History of Kane County, Ill., Volume I* (Chicago: The Pioneer Publishing Co., 1908) 319-310.

11. Ancestry.com, *U.S., Selected Federal Census Non-Population Schedules, 1850-1880* (Provo, Utah: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010).

12. Ancestry.com, *1870 United States Federal Census* (Provo, Utah: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2009).

13. Ancestry.com, *Illinois, U.S., County Marriage Records, 1800-1940* (Lehi, Utah: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2016). The 1880 federal census shows that E.S. and Abigail Bradley continued to live on the family farm, where they likely remained until they passed away in 1888 and 1891, respectively. Ancestry.com and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *1880 United States Federal Census* (Lehi, Utah: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2010). Grantor-Grantee records on file at the Kane County Recorder of Deeds Office in Geneva, Illinois (Kane County Tract Book 669, p. 285).

14. Ancestry.com, *1900 United States Federal Census* (Provo, Utah: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2004).

15. Ancestry.com, *1910 United States Federal Census* (Lehi, Utah: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2006). Ancestry.com, *Cook County, Illinois, U.S., Marriages Index, 1871-1920* (Provo, Utah: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011).

The 1910 federal census identified the 27-year-old Robert Bradley as a “dairy farmer,” and he was the one who presumably undertook construction of the massive gambrel-roof dairy barn that is the subject of this report. Its plank frame construction with bolted connections and use of the Shawver truss system identifies the barn as one built in the early twentieth century. The Chicago and North Western Railroad tracks, located just north of the Bradley Farm, provided a means to ship the farm’s dairy products to market.

Ebenezer S. Bradley died on March 22, 1916, at the age of 80.¹⁶ His son, Robert E. Bradley, died on July 21, 1919, at the age of 37.¹⁷ Bradley family ownership of the farm ended in 1920, when Margaret Bradley, Robert’s mother, sold the property to Henry W. Jeske (1892-1925) and his wife, Eva (1895-1925), who were married in 1916.¹⁸ Henry W. Jeske (1892-1925) was the son of Frank and Amelia Jeske, who were German immigrants, and he was raised on a farm in Geneva Township.¹⁹ During the early 1920s, Jeske held a part-time job as an assistant cashier in the First National Bank of Batavia, in addition to owning the farm.²⁰

Henry and Eva Jeske and their five-year-old son, Ralph, were shot and killed by an assailant at their farmhouse on December 13, 1925. The bodies were discovered by Harold Hall, a farm worker employed by Jeske. The killer had cut the telephone wires, looted the house, and escaped in the Jeske’s automobile. Six weeks later, a man named Oscar Otto Johnson confessed to the triple murder shortly before his death from a gunshot wound received from a police officer following a robbery in Joliet.²¹ The farmhouse remained unoccupied for the next quarter-century, although the land was presumably harvested by its owners, or their tenants, during that period, and the dairy barn likely remained in use.

The farm was taken over by the Batavia National Bank in 1926, after Jeske’s estate went into probate. Over the next decade it was owned by R.P. Fischer (1929 to 1934), and then by Leslie L. Urch (1934 to 1937).²² In 1937, the farm was purchased by Stanislaus (Stanley) A. Skirmont (1885-1959), a native of

16. Ancestry.com, *Illinois, U.S., Deaths and Stillbirths Index, 1916-1947* (Provo, Utah: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011).

17. Ibid.

18. Grantor-Grantee Tract Books on file at the Kane County Recorder of Deeds Office in Geneva, Illinois, (Tract Book 669, p. 285). Ancestry.com, *Illinois, U.S., County Marriage Records, 1800-1940* (Lehi, Utah: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2016).

19. Ancestry.com, *1900 United States Federal Census* (Provo, Utah: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2004).

20. “Triple Murder Poses Trail Mystery Pair,” *Chicago Tribune* (December 14, 1925).

21. Ibid. “Dying Burglar Admits Triple Jeske Murder,” *Chicago Tribune* (January 31, 1926).

22. Grantor-Grantee Tract Books on file at the Kane County Recorder of Deeds Office in Geneva (Kane County Tract Book 919, p. 223; Kane County Tract Book 999, p. 219).

Lithuania (then part of Russia), who immigrated to the U.S. in 1902. He married Marciana Kukuraytis (1895-1984) in 1915.²³ Skirmont was a butcher by trade and operated a meat market in Batavia, where he lived in a house at 227 Van Buren Street with his wife and three children, Ellen (b. 1917) and Adelia (b. 1920), and Stanley (b. 1933), from 1930 until at least 1942.²⁴ He identified himself as a self-employed “farmer” on his World War II draft registration card.²⁵

The Bork family’s ownership of the former Bradley farm began in 1943, when the 113-acre property was purchased by Louis Bork, Sr., and his wife, Alice.²⁶ Louis Bork Sr. (1890-1982) was born on September 21, 1890, the son of German immigrants Peter and Mary Bork.²⁷ He was raised on his parents’ farm, located in Leyden Township, Cook County, Illinois, where he worked as a laborer until at least 1920, the year that he married Alice Boesche (1897-1962).²⁸ The couple eventually had nine children: Lucille (b. 1921); Harvey (b. 1922); Harold A. (b. 1924); Wesley C. (b. 1926); Lawrence M. (b. 1929); Leonard (b. 1932); Louis Jr. (b. 1935); Marion (b. 1937); and Willard (b. 1938).²⁹ The Bork family lived for at least twenty years on a farm that was located at the intersection of Bryn Mawr Avenue and Manheim Road, in present-day Bensenville, Illinois.

Louis and Alice Bork lost their savings during the Great Depression, following the closure of the Bank of Bensenville. However, they received a payment of \$21,000 from the U.S. Government in the early 1940s as compensation for their Bensenville farm. The property was one of many farms in the vicinity purchased by the federal government at the start of World War II as part of its efforts to assemble 1,000 acres of land to accommodate the massive Douglas Airport plant (now O’Hare International Airport). In 1943, the couple used the \$21,000 payment to purchase the 113-acre farm straddling the Kane/DuPage County line that was established by the Bradley family nearly a century earlier.

23. Ancestry.com, *Illinois, U.S., County Marriage Records, 1800-1940* (Lehi, Utah: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2016).

24. Ancestry.com, *1920 United States Federal Census* (Provo, Utah: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010); Ancestry.com, *1930 United States Federal Census* (Provo, Utah: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2002).

25. Ancestry.com, *U.S., World War II Draft Registration Cards, 1942* (Lehi, Utah: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010).

26. Grantor-Grantee Tract Books on file at the Kane County Recorder of Deeds Office in Geneva (Kane County Tract Book 1190, p. 69).

27. Ancestry.com, *1910 United States Federal Census* (Lehi, Utah: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2006).

28. Ancestry.com, *1920 United States Federal Census* (Provo, Utah: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010); Ancestry.com, *Illinois, U.S., County Marriage Records, 1800-1940* (Lehi, Utah: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2016).

29. Ancestry.com, *1940 United States Federal Census* (Provo, Utah: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2012).

At the time that Louis and Alice Bork purchased their farm in Kane/DuPage counties, it featured a nineteenth century farmhouse and a massive gambrel-roof dairy barn, which still retained the stanchions formerly used for its cows. The barn was then surrounded by several buildings/structures: a silo constructed with red glazed tiles (east side), a small wood frame machine shop (south side), a wood corncrib on stilts, and a hog barn (west side). A chicken barn and an outhouse were located behind the farmhouse.³⁰ The outbuildings, with the exception of the dairy barn, were later razed by the Bork family.

Louis Bork, Jr., finished his studies at Leyden Park High School in Franklin Park, where he resided with an older sibling, prior to joining his parents, brother Willard, and sister Marion in the early 1950s at the family's new farm. The two brothers worked for their father on the property over the ensuing years. Projects included regularly driving a tractor-pulled wagon up the ramp of the former dairy barn, which was used by the Bork family to house beef cattle, to its hayloft, where they stacked baled hay to the ceiling. They later installed six feed bins at the south end of the hayloft, which together held 500 bushels of grain that was funneled down to a mix mill and used to feed the cattle. Louis Jr. and Willard also made the concrete blocks that they used to build the retaining wall for the cattle yard on the west side of this barn.³¹

The Bork family farmed corn, soybeans, and hay. They constructed a drive-through corn crib with walls of wood slats in the early 1940s and added three adjacent metal grain bins during the 1960s. Other changes during the 1960s included the installation of two tall, circular metal tanks on the east side of the gambrel barn, which held nitrogen fertilizer, both of which were later removed. At about the same time, a large metal storage shed was constructed to the west of the farmhouse, which accommodated bulk fertilizer bays, as was a small, scale house for the family's business as a distributor of nitrate solutions.³²

Alice Bork died in 1962 at the age of 65.³³ Willard Bork died in a tragic farm-related accident in 1973. He and Louis Bork, Jr., had been partners in the Bork Brothers Soil Service of West Chicago and Hinckley.³⁴ Louis Bork, Sr., continued to reside in the farmhouse until his death in 1982, after which it was rented to tenants. Louis Bork, Jr., later attained ownership of the Bork family farm, where he resided with his wife, Janet, in a ranch house that the couple moved to the property in the 1990s. During that decade, the younger Louis Bork began to raise hogs, rather than cattle, on the property. The hogs were

30. Interview with Louis M. Bork on July 20, 2021, which took place in his house.

31. Ibid.

32. Ibid.

33. "Bork," *Chicago Tribune*, May 30, 1962.

34. "Willard F. Bork," *The Daily Chronicle* (DeKalb, Illinois). April 23, 1973.

housed in the farm's massive, gambrel-roof barn, where Bork installed a manure pit that ran to two separate underground tanks. He also had two portable metal buildings constructed to the south of the gambrel-roof barn to accommodate the hogs, which have been removed.³⁵ Bork family ownership of the farm ended in 2009.

2. Midwestern Dairy Barn Architecture

Settlement of the Midwest was accompanied by the construction of barns with heavy timber frames. The skeletal framework of such barns typically rested on a stone foundation and required large timber posts and beams, which consumed interior space in the structure. Timbers were joined together by mortise and tenon joints, with connections secured by a wood peg. Most of these pioneer-era barns had a gable roof composed of timber rafters, rough sawn boards, and wood shingles. Vertically attached boards, some as large as 14"-wide, ran from the sill to the top plate of the wall for siding on timber frame barns.³⁶

As dairy farming spread to the upper Midwest during the late nineteenth century, most of the pioneer barns were replaced by larger dairy barns. Updating older barns was often impractical due to more rigorous sanitary requirements and increased size of dairy herds. The need for large barns and the increasing cost and scarcity of heavy timber necessitated the development of a new structural system to enclose large volumes of space. Plank framing featured the substitution of heavy, square timbers with 2"-wide planks, which were available at all lumber yards. This lower priced, lighter frame technique expanded opportunities for farmers of moderate means to obtain barns.

The walls of plank-frame barns supported loads with vertical posts at each bent, connected by horizontal timber girts onto which vertical siding was nailed.³⁷ A chapter on dairy barns in a 1917 publication titled, *Farm Buildings*, discussed the use of plank framing:

The best and cheapest way to build the superstructure of a barn is to make the frame of two-inch planks. Plank frame construction was adopted because planks are carried in stock in all lumber yards, but timber must be ordered from a saw mill. Special orders cause delay and add to the expense.

The advantages of these skeleton frames developed with use. Two-inch pieces of two by fours up to the largest planks are easily handled. They are put together in twos, threes, or thicker in the making of strong girders where strength is needed, and they are stretched

35. Interview with Louis M. Bork on July 20, 2021, which took place in his house.

36. A good discussion of timber frame barn construction can be found in: Allen G. Noble and Hubert G.H. Wilhelm (Ed.), *Barns of the Midwest* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1995), 48-50.

37. Noble and Wilhelm, 156.

out singly and opposed in pairs in truss work. Great arches are formed by meeting two trusses at the apex. Two men are sufficient at a plank frame “raising” unless greater speed is wanted.³⁸

An essay titled, “Plank Frame Barn Construction,” in *Our Farm and Building Book*, published by the Riverside, Illinois-based Radford Architectural Company in 1915, discussed the method of constructing a plank frame barn:

For girders, it is customary to spike enough planks to make them the necessary size and strength. In this construction, the man works from the bottom up, in the most natural way. Girders and joists are put in place and the floor is laid. Sometimes a temporary floor of loose boards is laid down first, but that is option with the builders.

A derrick consisting of two poles, arranged like a hay-fork hoist, is very convenient for lifting planks and working them into place, on the same principle that steel beam buildings are constructed in the city.³⁹

The Radford Architectural Company sold blueprints and specifications for its “Any Length” barn, which was 38’-wide and featured plank frame construction that could be built any length the farmer required. Floor plan arrangements for dairy barns were illustrated in the company’s 1915 publication for five popular lengths: 48’, 64’, 80’, 96’, and 112’. Such barns could be readily extended as the size of the herd increased.⁴⁰

An early and increasingly dominant form of plank-frame barn construction was developed in the 1880s by John L. Shawver of Ohio, which he promoted through his writings in the *Ohio Farmer* and in the columns of the trade publication, *Carpentry and Building*.⁴¹ Shawver’s new plank frame was distinguished by a roof truss arrangement “which contained a long support post of two members extending from where the mow floor met the sidewall up to the purlin plate that held the roof. Supporting this double-member post was a single-member principal rafter that ran from the plate to the ridge. Each truss, typically spaced twelve feet apart, supported the purlin plate that carried the lower end of the upper rafter and the upper end of the lower rafter. The resulting Shawver truss gave a rigid and strong frame well suited for large barns, wide barns, and those with vertical siding.”⁴²

38. Herbert A. Shearer, *Farm Buildings: With Plans and Descriptions* (Chicago: Frederick J. Drake & Co., Publishers, 1917), 30.

39. William A. Radford, *Our Farm and Building Book* (Chicago: Radford Publications, 1915), 6.

40. *Ibid.*, 4.

41. Noble and Wilhelm, 151.

42. *Ibid.*

Shawver touted the advantages offered by his method of plank truss framing in his 1904 book titled, *Plank Frame Barn Construction*. These included “a riddance of practically all of the interior timbers” as well as “economy of material and labor, strength of frame, convenience of arrangement, and durability of structure.”⁴³ In comparing the construction cost of the traditional barn with his plank-frame barn, Shawver bragged that the latter would result in “a saving in timber of from 40 to 60 percent—a not small item in many localities where timber for building purposes has become a scarce article.”⁴⁴

“When one spoke of plank framing after 1910, it meant Shawver truss design,” according to one historian on Midwestern barn architecture.⁴⁵ The Shawver truss was one of the first roof trusses developed for a gambrel roof, which became the standard for Midwestern dairy barns in the early twentieth century. The dual-pitch shape of the gambrel roof allowed a larger loft space to store hay than the gable roof allowed. The ideal height of the gambrel roof was equal to half the width of the barn.⁴⁶ After 1920, gambrel roofs were also framed by a Iowa truss, which was developed by A.W. Clyde, an engineer with the Iowa State College farm extension service. The Iowa truss offered a stiff frame at a far cheaper cost than the Shawver truss, which required expensive extra-length material.⁴⁷

Plank framing, although a major departure from the timber frame of the past, was superseded in the late 1920s by an adaptation of balloon framing for barn construction, which was a more affordable option for most farmers. As Noble and Wilhelm explain, “Stud walls replaced posts and girts for handling loads, and light-truss, self-supported roofs replaced those heretofore supported at the purlin plates with posts from below.”⁴⁸ The exterior wall treatment of balloon-framed barns also differed from their plank frame and timber frame predecessors, as they were sheathed with horizontal siding, rather than vertical boards, placed side-by-side.

The innovation of balloon framing in the 1920s was accompanied by the introduction of new roof types that reflected the changing need for more loft storage space for dairy and livestock farming. Farmers could store more hay in round-roofed and pointed gothic-roofed barns than in gambrel-roofed ones. Local lumberyards provided preassembled rafters for these new roof shapes.⁴⁹

43. John L. Shawver, *Plank Frame Barn Construction* (New York: David Williams Company, 1904), 5-6.

44. *Ibid.*

45. Noble and Wilhelm, 156.

46. *Ibid.*, 105

47. *Ibid.*, 159-160.

48. *Ibid.*, 156.

49. *Ibid.*, 105.

Barn basements were typically constructed of locally available building materials, usually either fieldstone or quarried stone. By the 1910s, homemade concrete was being used. In many parts of the glaciated Midwest, sand and gravel are readily available, and in the past, were used to mix concrete directly on farms. By the 1920s, barn basements were being built out of concrete or tile blocks.⁵⁰ Agriculturist Herbert A. Shearer noted in 1917 that, “A foundation wall is usually three-and-a-half feet, while a basement wall is about eight feet or eight feet, six inches.”⁵¹

One of the hallmarks of the Midwestern dairy barn is the abundance of regularly spaced windows, each of which commonly featured nine lights. One publication noted a method for placing windows within a concrete basement wall: “The [window] frames work better if they are made the full thickness of the wall so that they fit between the inside and outside forms.”⁵² Another writer specified that, “The windows should be from 4 to 4 ½ feet above the floor and extend to as near the ceiling as practicable. They should be hinged at the bottom and equipped so that they will open inward. This is a good way to secure proper ventilation.”⁵³ In terms of the orientation of dairy barns, “South windows are always excellent, but, unless numerous, do not admit as much light on all parts of the barn as when placed on both east and west sides.”⁵⁴

Hay was loaded in the loft of the dairy barn via either gambrel-end openings, in which pulley systems were used, or through a large entrance on one of its sides that was reached by a ramp.

Barns used for hay storage were prone to spontaneous combustion and needed adequate ventilation. Rooftop dormers and/or ridge ventilators were used to provide light and ventilation to the hayloft as well as to improve the appearance of barns. Often the four sides of square cupolas were pierced by louvers and the cupolas were capped with decorative roofs.

Many publications dealing with barn design, construction, equipment, and practices emerged as the Midwest became the center for dairy farming. One such publication, *Farm Buildings* (1927), included a chapter devoted to dairy barns. Author D. Scoates noted that, “The mission of the dairy barn is to provide comfortable shelter for the cows and have conditions conducive to the

50. Ibid, 102.

51. Shearer, 27.

52. Ibid.

53. D. Scoates. *Farm Buildings* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Edwards Brothers, 1927), 31.

54. *Farm Buildings* (Chicago: Breeder's Gazette, 1919), 31.

production of clean and pure milk. To obtain this, we must stress light, ventilation, and cleanliness.”⁵⁵

Sanitation was a prime consideration in the design of dairy barn as dust “is the enemy of clean and pure milk,” according to Scoates, who writes: “The principal objection to the two-story dairy barn is the dust from the hay stored above; dust in hay carries large numbers of bacteria... The sifting of the dust through the floor can be prevented by having the second-floor tongue and grooved, and the ceiling of the first floor sealed... Keep the walls and ceiling either painted white or white-washed.”⁵⁶ Concrete was considered the best flooring material for dairy barn construction. “It has all the essentials of a good floor except for warmth.”⁵⁷

Dairy barns built for double rows of cows required a minimum width of 36’ to incorporate a central driveway and flanking side aisles with stalls; those built for a single row of cows required a minimum width of 18’. The ceiling of the first floor could range from 8’ to 10’ in height.⁵⁸ The central driveway was accessed by sliding wood doors on either end of the barn.

Farmers had to determine the best arrangement for their double rows of cow stalls: whether the cows should face inward (towards each other) or outward (towards the perimeter walls). Scoates advised: “Where the cows are facing each other, the feed alley should be from six to 8’ wide. In all other cases, from three to five feet is considered ample. Manure alleys should be from four to five feet wide if they are next to the wall. If they are in the center of the barn, have them from eight to twelve feet wide so as to allow a manure spreader to go through.”⁵⁹

Dairy barns typically included a feed room, no smaller than 10’ x14’ in size. The feed room was usually located at one end of the barn near the silo. “If, however, the barn has a two-story part, the feed room should be under the two-story section in order to have grain chutes running from the elevated bins in the second story; this will economize floor space; the feed room should be provided with water, feed bins, scales and conveniences for mixing the rations.”⁶⁰

55. Scoates, 26.

56. Ibid, 28, 31.

57. Ibid, 32.

58. Alfred Hopkins, *Modern Farm Buildings* (New York: Robert M. McBride & Co., 1920), 32.

59. Scoates, 36.

60. Ibid.

Silos are a visually prominent and central feature of dairy farms. With silage, farmers could keep larger herds of dairy cows during the winter, and the cost was lower than with dry feed. Round silos were perfected in the 1890s, come in many heights, widths, and materials. “During the 1910s, round wooden-stave silos were replaced by masonry, poured-concrete, and cement-stave silos. Farm building-design handbooks recommended that silos be placed at the end of the “feeding alley,” or the end of barns, and this is where most dairy silos are found. Alternatively, silos were placed on the long side of barns.”⁶¹

Milk rooms attached to dairy barns were distinctive element of the dairy landscape and were promoted by farm books in the early twentieth century. “The milk room should be placed outside of the barn as it is necessary to keep all odors from the milk. It can, however, be connected with the barn by means of a covered passageway. It should be located as handy as possible with these things considered. The room should be provided with cooling facilities, testing apparatus and quarters for cleaning the utensils.”⁶²

Pole barns, which were developed in the eastern Midwest, became the predominant type of barn in the dairy region starting in the 1950s. These one-story, gable-roof structures feature a rectangular set of poles sunk into holes excavated in the ground and are sheathed with metal sheets. Pole barns were popularized because they are cheaper to construct and maintain, and easier to use, than the multistory barns built with plank and balloon frames in the pre-World War II era.⁶³

3. The Bradley-Bork Farm Barn

The Bradley-Bork Farm Barn is situated on a parcel that straddles the Kane and DuPage County line and the barn itself is situated on the Kane County side (Geneva Township). The barn was almost certainly built ca. 1905 when the farm was operated by Robert Bradley, who was identified in the 1910 federal census as a dairy farmer. He represented the third generation of the family that assembled the 113-acre property in the 1840s.

The Bradley-Bork Barn embodies the distinctive characteristics of a method of construction that was widely utilized in the early twentieth century for Midwestern dairy barns. Specifically, it is an excellent and intact example of plank-frame construction with a gambrel roof framed by a Shawver truss. Plank-framing called for 2” milled lumber that was readily available at lumberyards and joined together by bolts or nails. It was cheaper, faster, and

61. Noble and Wilhelm, 108.

62. Scoates, 36.

63. Noble and Wilhelm, 105, 108.

required considerably less skill than traditional barn construction, which featured heavy, squared timbers that were special ordered from sawmills. Plank-framing also allowed for taller, wider barns with self-supporting roofs.

The Shawver truss, featuring long, diagonal wood braces, was one of the first roof trusses developed for a gambrel roof, which featured a dual-pitch shape that allowed a larger loft space to store hay than a gable roof allowed. Its use in this barn also helps date the barn to the early 1900s, when this type of roof truss was prevalent for large Midwestern dairy barns. Plans and specifications for a barn such as this were widely available for order from a variety of publications. The structure was likely constructed by local carpenters and was originally used to house dairy cattle and a few horses, which were kept in at least one of the two rooms on the south end of the structure.⁶⁴ It is possible that one of these two rooms may have originally been used as a feed room.

This barn measured 100' in length and 36' in width upon completion. Its 50' height was considered ideal for a barn of this size, as farm building publications advocated that the ideal height of the gambrel roof was equal to half the length of the barn. Contemporary writers also considered 36' the minimum width for dairy barns that were built for double rows of cows, which were separated by iron stanchions in side aisles that flanked the central driveway, accessed by 8' side entrances on either end. The cows faced outward, toward the windows and were fed from concrete feed troughs that ran along length of perimeter walls. Concrete manure gutters ran the length of the central aisle. The exposed concrete walls and wood ceiling framing on the first floor were whitewashed, as recommended at the time for sanitation reasons.

The barn was built according to modern standards of the time. The concrete used for its eight-foot-high wall on the first floor was likely mixed on-site. It was 10.5" thick and featured an aggregate of small rocks/gravel. Windows were placed on the barn's east and west sides to obtain the maximum natural light, which was crucial for the dairy cows and facilitated the process of cleaning the structure. Fenestration featured fixed-pane windows, each with nine lights, that were arranged in pairs and start 5' from the ground. Ventilation was provided by two, square rooftop ventilators with gable roofs on the ridgeline, and a total of four shed formers, two each on the east and west sides of the roof.

The barn's loft was used for the storage of baled hay, which was stacked to the ceiling under Bork family ownership. This upper-floor space was accessed via

64. Information regarding the use of the barn for houses came from an interview with Louis M. Bork on July 20, 2021, which took place in his house.

an exterior ramp built of earth and wood planks that was supported beneath by wood posts and steel beams.

Bradley family ownership of the farm was cut short following the untimely death of Robert Bradley in 1919, at the age of 37. The property had three subsequent owners between 1920 and 1943, the year it was purchased by Louis G. Bork. At that time, a round silo constructed with red glazed tiles was situated on the east side of the barn. The two structures were internally linked by a passageway that opened onto a door at the north end of the barn's east façade.

Louis Bork, Jr., removed the concrete feed troughs, manure gutters, and stalls from the barn, which was used to house about 50 beef cattle over the next half-century. His sons, Louis M. and Willard, built a concrete block wall to enclose a cattle yard on the west side of the structure. During the Bork family's ownership, six feed bins were installed on the southeast corner of the barn's hayloft. Together they held 500 bushels of grain that was funneled to a mixing mill in the room below via chutes through the ceiling. The barn was used to house hogs starting in the late 1990s, after which time Louis M. Bork had a manure pit installed beneath its center aisle, which was connected to two underground tanks that held 10,000 and 40,000 gallons. The concrete flooring in the center aisle of the barn was altered at the time with the installation of metal slats.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

This two-story barn is situated about 300' north of Fabyan Parkway and accessed via a gravel drive. It measures 100'-0" in length, 36'-0" in width, and 50'-0" in height, and features plank frame construction. A Shawver truss arrangement supports its gambrel roof. The first floor has poured concrete walls and eight-foot-wide door openings on either end. Its east and west facades are lined with paired, fixed-pane windows, each of which has nine lights. The hayloft is accessed via an exterior ramp, and is sheathed in wood boards, applied vertically. The asphalt-covered roof has a total of four shed dormers: two on each side. Both floors have exposed wood framing and open plans, although the first floor has two rooms on its south end, which may have originally housed horses. The first floor is divided into a central aisle and flanking side aisles, which once featured stalls with iron railings. Flooring is concrete (first floor) and wood planks (hayloft).

B. Description of Exterior

1. Over-all dimensions

The building measures 100'-0" in length (north-south), 36'-0" in width (east-west), and 50'-0" in height.

2. Foundation

Concrete slab foundation.

3. Walls

The first floor has concrete walls that are 10.5" thick. The upper walls of the barn are sheathed with wood boards applied vertically.

4. Structural system

Concrete load bearing walls on first floor and plank frame structural system with bolted connections in upper floor hayloft.

5. Ramp

An earthen and wood plank ramp supported by steel beams on its underside as well as wood posts is located on the east façade of the barn and provides access to the hayloft.

6. Openings

a. Doorways and doors

The north and south gambrel ends have eight-foot-wide door openings: the south opening has a sliding wood door composed of vertical planks and the north opening is boarded over.

The east façade has three door openings: two on the first floor that are boarded over and one wide opening in the hayloft that has a sliding wood door composed of vertical planks.

b. Windows

Fenestration is composed of fixed pane windows, each with nine lights, that have wood muntins and wood frames unless otherwise noted.

Windows on the first floor of the east and west facades are arranged in pairs, with ten on the former and fourteen on the latter. The north and south façade has a total of four windows: two on the first floor and two in the hayloft.

7. Roof

a. Shape, covering

Gambrel roof covered with asphalt shingles.

b. Dormers

The barn has two shed dormers that are sided with aluminum: two each on the east and west sides of the gambrel roof. Each dormer has a pair of four-light windows.

C. Description of Interior

1. Floor plans

The first floor consists of a single space except for two rooms located at its southeast and southwest corners. The upper floor is a single open space except for an area in the southeast corner that contained abandoned grain bins and is partitioned off by a wood wall that lacks doors.

2. Stairways

The barn has one wood stairway with open risers near its southwest corner.

3. Flooring

Flooring is made of concrete (first floor) and wood planks of various width and lengths (hayloft).

4. Wall and ceiling finish

Walls and ceilings are unfinished: the first-floor walls are exposed concrete; the ceilings of both floors and the walls of the hayloft feature exposed wood framing.

5. Openings

a. Doorways and doors

The room at the southeast corner of the barn has two door openings: one each on its west and north walls. The former has a sliding door and the other has a hinged door, both of which are composed of vertical planks. The room at the southwest corner of the barn has two door openings: one each on its east and north walls. The former lacks a door while the other has a hinged, wood paneled door.

6. Decorative features and trim

None.

7. Mechanical equipment

a. Heating

The barn is not heated.

b. Lighting

A single strand of bare light bulbs is strung up along the length of the first floor ceiling.

c. Plumbing

There is no plumbing in the barn.

D. Site

1. General setting and orientation

The barn and an associated group of buildings are situated near the southeast corner of a large, rectangular-shaped parcel that was once part of the historic Bradley-Bork Farm. The remainder of the property consists of expansive grassy areas, wooded areas, and agricultural land. The farmstead remnant straddles the Kane/DuPage County line and fronts Fabyan Parkway, a thoroughfare that features a growing number of commercial buildings and warehouse/distribution centers. A single brick-clad ranch house and brick garage are situated on the east side of the parcel. An office park built in early 2000s is located directly across the street.

Five buildings are situated on the Kane County side of the Bradley-Bork Farm remnant: a nineteenth-century farmhouse; a small, scale house (1960s); a large wood storage shed (1960s); two former portable school rooms (relocated to property in 2000s); and the gambrel-roof former dairy barn that is the subject of this report (early 1900s). A drive-through corn crib (1940s) and three adjacent metal grain bins (1960s) are situated on the DuPage side of the property.

The barn and other buildings/structures on this property are accessed from Fabyan Parkway via a wide, irregularly shaped gravel driveway. The farmhouse, wood storage shed, scale house, and manufactured building are situated near Fabyan Parkway. The barn, corn crib, and three metal grain bins are set back about 300' from Fabyan Parkway.

2. Historic landscape design

The nineteenth-century appearance of the farmstead is unknown as the only extant building that dates to this period is its wood-frame farmhouse, which existed by 1872, as its location identified on an 1872 Atlas Map of Geneva

Township showing E.C. Bradley's 58-acre Kane County tract.⁶⁵ The farmhouse rests on a stone foundation and has both a two-story gabled ell section and a two-story gable-roofed rear wing. It is possible that the rear wing constitutes the original section of the farmhouse and that the larger, gabled-ell section facing the Fabyan Parkway (formerly Barton Road) was built later, as the family became more prosperous.

The massive gambrel-roof dairy barn that is the subject of this report was built in the early 1900s. Its plank frame construction with bolted connections and use of the Shawver truss system identifies the barn as one built in the early twentieth century. By the early 1940s, this barn was surrounded by several outbuildings/structures: a silo constructed with red glazed tiles (east side), a small wood frame machine shop (south side), a wood corncrib on stilts, and a hog barn (west side). A chicken barn and an outhouse were also located behind the farmhouse at that time.⁶⁶ These outbuildings, with the exception of the dairy barn, were later removed by the Bork family.

A drive-through corn crib with walls of wood slats was constructed in the early 1940s and three adjacent metal grain bins were installed during the 1960s. Other changes during the 1960s included the installation of two tall, circular metal tanks on the east side of the gambrel-roof barn, which held nitrogen fertilizer, both of which have been removed. A large metal storage shed that accommodated bulk fertilizer bays was installed to the west of the farmhouse during the 1960s, as was a nearby scale house for the Bork family's business as a distributor of nitrate solutions.⁶⁷

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Maps and Atlases

Combination Atlas Map of DuPage County, Illinois. Elgin, Illinois: Thompson, Bros. & Burr, 1874.

Combination Atlas Map of Kane County, Illinois. Geneva, Illinois: Thompson and Everts, 1872.

20th Century Atlas of Kane County, Illinois. Chicago: Middle-West Publishing Company, 1904.

65. *Combination Atlas Map of Kane County, Illinois* (Geneva, Illinois: Thompson and Everts, 1872).

66. Interview with Louis M. Bork on July 20, 2021, which took place in his house.

67. Ibid.

B. Interviews

Louis M. Bork was interviewed for this report on July 20, 2021. He is a former owner of the farmstead remnant that includes the barn and is the son of Louis G. and Alice Bork, who purchased the property in 1943. The interview took place in Mr. Bork's home, located at 32W660 Fabyan Parkway, West Chicago, Illinois.

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D. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated

Detailed information on nineteenth- and twentieth-century farming in Kane and DuPage Counties can be found in the U.S. Census for Agriculture for varying decades, which include breakdowns of Illinois counties. Kane County Land Atlas Maps, which include Geneva Township, are on file at the Geneva History Museum, located at 113 South Third Street in Geneva, Illinois. The Kane County Farm Bureau published a monthly newsletter called *The Will County Farmer*. Some issues from the early twentieth century have been digitized and are accessible online through Hathitrust. A variety of primary source materials on Kane County history and its settlers have been digitized and can be accessed links found on the Kane County ILGenWeb site: <https://kane.illinoisgenweb.org/>

E. Sketch Plans

Sketch plans for the Bradley-Bork Barn are attached to this report. These include floor plans of the barn.

F. Supplemental Material

The following materials are attached to this report:

Figure 1: First Floor Plan of the Bradley-Bork Farm Barn.

Figure 2: Second Floor (Hayloft) Plan of the Bradley-Bork Farm Barn.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

A. Research Strategy

The research strategy was to review a variety of primary and secondary sources to obtain information on the owners of the barn and on early twentieth century Midwestern barn design, such as Kane County Tract Book records, contemporary newspaper articles and farm books, secondary books on barn design, and federal census records. Site visits to the project area were planned, in order to conduct photographic documentation for use in developing a physical description of the barn.

B. Actual Research Process

The Newspapers.com and the Ancestry.com databases were extensively reviewed for biographical information related to owners of the Bradley-Bork Farm Barn. The federal census was searched for all owners, as were other databases pertaining to marriage and death dates and draft registration cards for both World Wars. The HathiTrust Digital Library proved very useful in finding contemporary publications on farm building design and plank framing/Shawver truss arrangement. A title search was undertaken at the Kane County Recorder of

Deeds office for the parcel upon which the barn is situated. An interview was conducted with Louis M. Bork, whose family has owned and operated the property since the 1940s. A book titled, *Barns of the Midwest* (Ohio University Press, 1995) was an especially helpful secondary source for contextual information on dairy barn design.

C. Archives and Repositories Used

Kane County Recorder of Deeds Office at 719 West Batavia Avenue, Suite C, Geneva, Illinois; Geneva Public Library at 227 South Seventh Street, Geneva, Illinois; Geneva History Museum at 113 South Third Street, Geneva, Illinois.

D. Project Team

1. Supervision

All aspects of this project were supervised and assembled by Jean L. Guarino, Ph.D., Principal of Guarino Historic Resources Documentation, Oak Park, Illinois. Dr. Guarino also served as project historian and authored all written aspects of the report.

2. Sketch Plans and Digital Field Photography

Lucas Howser developed the floor plans for this building using CAD. He also produced the site plan.

3. HABS photographer

All black and white HABS photography was undertaken by Leslie Schwartz, Leslie Schwartz Photography, Chicago.

This HABS documentation project was undertaken to mitigate the adverse effects of a proposed project by Midwest Industrial Funds to demolish this building and construct an industrial park with wetland enhancement at 32W660 Fabyan Parkway, West Chicago, Illinois. The terms of the mitigation were agreed upon and executed to ensure compliance with the Illinois State Agency Historic Resources Preservation Act (20 ILCS 3420).

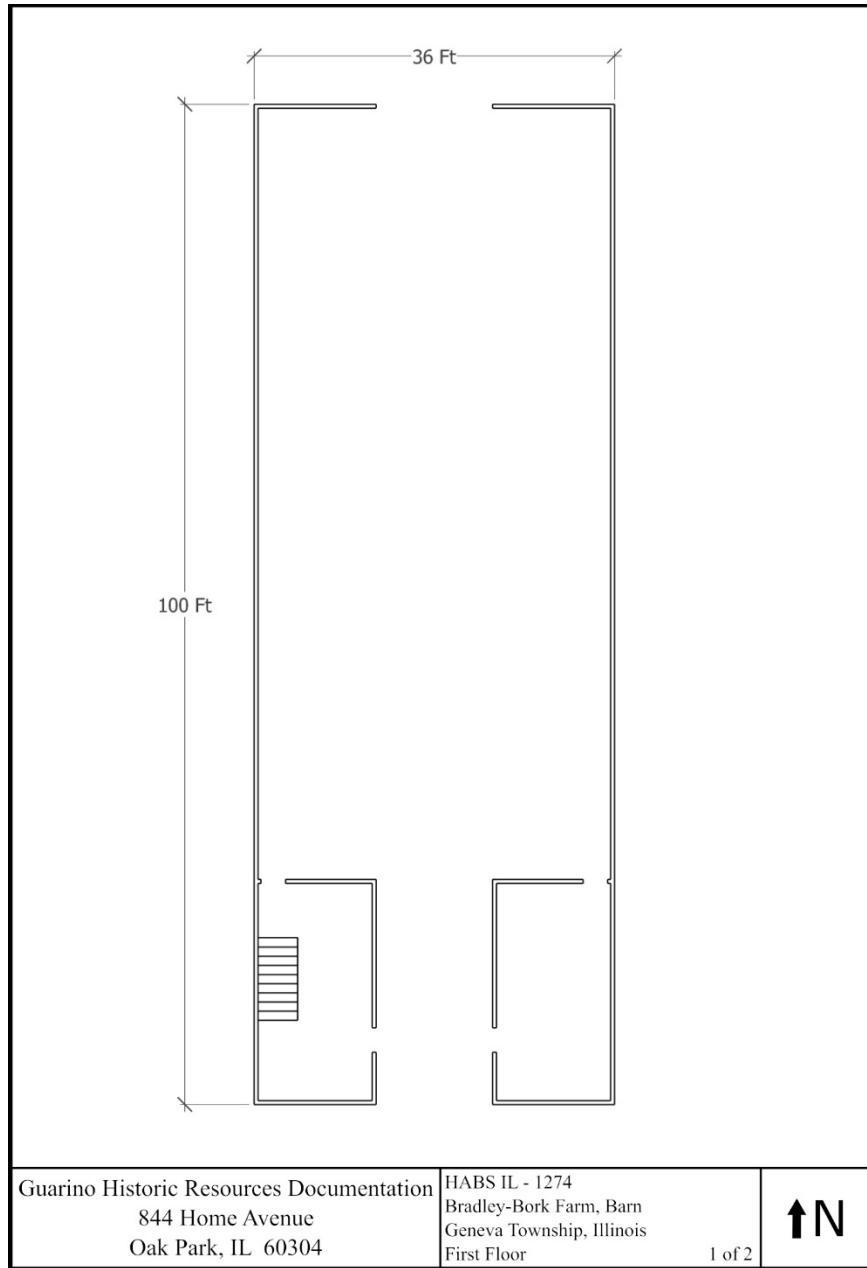


Figure 1: First Floor Plan of the Bradley-Bork Farm Barn, drawn by Lucas Howser, August 2021.

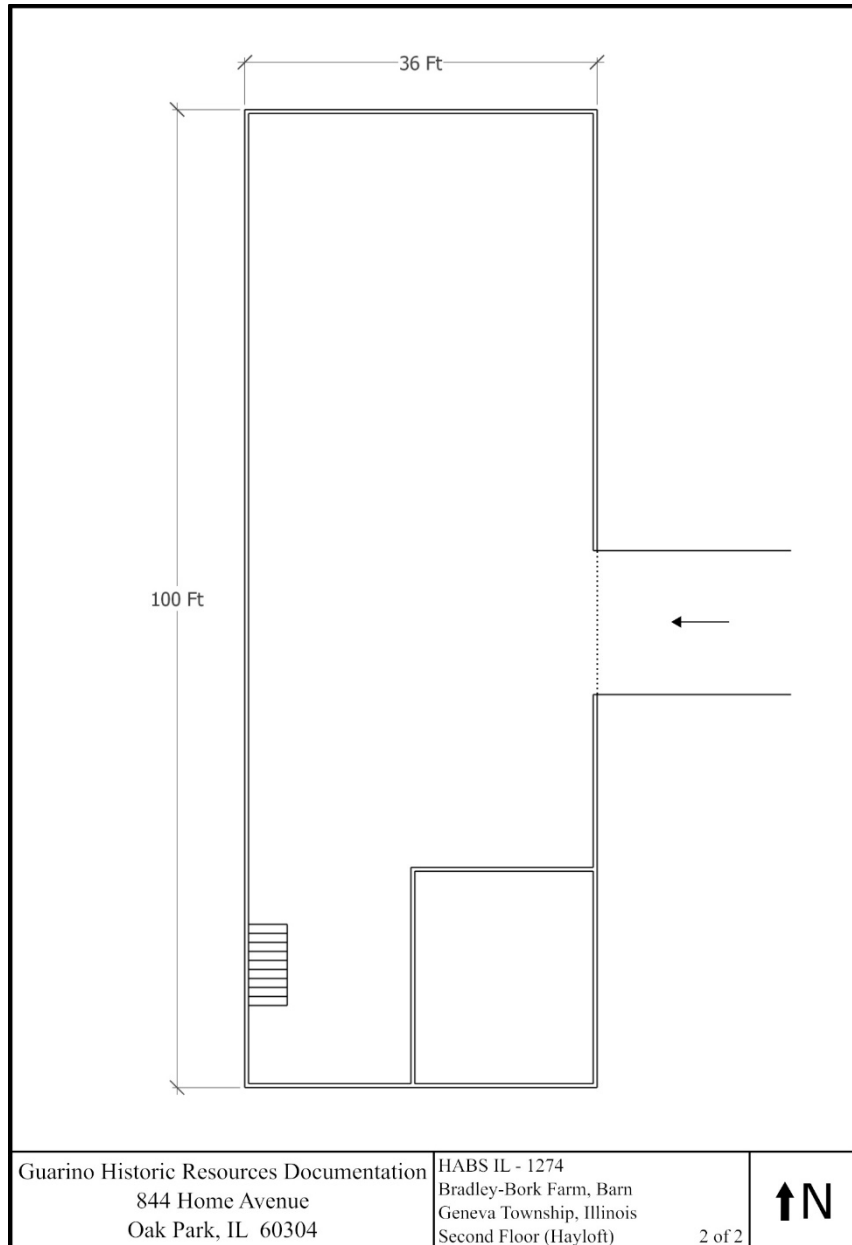


Figure 2: Second Floor (Hayloft) Plan of the Bradley-Bork Farm Barn,
drawn by Lucas Howser, August 2021.

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

INDEX TO PHOTOGRAPHS

BRADLEY-BORK FARM, BARN
32W660 Fabyan Parkway
West Chicago
Geneva Township
Kane County
Illinois

HABS IL-1274

Leslie Schwartz, photographer, July 2021

- | | |
|------------|---|
| IL-1274-1 | View of barn looking northwest. |
| IL-1274-2 | View of barn looking west. |
| IL-1274-3 | View of barn looking southwest. |
| IL-1274-4 | View of barn looking southeast. |
| IL-1274-5 | View of barn and concrete wall enclosing the cattle yard, looking southeast. |
| IL-1274-6 | Detail of barn exterior, looking northeast. |
| IL-1274-7 | Detail of barn exterior, including ramp to hayloft, looking southwest. |
| IL-1274-8 | View of barn first floor, showing both center and side aisles, looking north. |
| IL-1274-9 | View of barn first floor, looking southeast. |
| IL-1274-10 | View of barn first floor ceiling. |
| IL-1274-11 | View of barn hayloft, looking north. |
| IL-1274-12 | View of barn hayloft, looking southwest. |
| IL-1274-13 | View of barn hayloft, looking west. |
| IL-1274-14 | Detail of hayloft ceiling. |



BORK'S FARM

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BORK'S

FARM











