

111-year-old round barn at Round Barn Farm near Red Wing, Minn.



Historic Round Barn Now A Destination Wedding Venue

By Lorn Manthey, Contributing Editor

Tucked amidst forested hillsides, grassy fields and limestone bluffs, the Round Barn Farm near Red Wing, Minn., has grown into one of the most popular wedding venues in the Midwest. Anchoring the location is a 111-year-old round barn and a large country manor home built according to plans drawn in 1861.

Kirk and Wendy Stensrud bought the 35-acre property eight years ago “to open a new phase in our lives,” Wendy says. “Our

youngest was in her final year of college, and we wanted a change from sales and nursing.” Since then, they’ve improved, expanded, revitalized and built more facilities to accommodate weddings and parties of up to 300 people.

“We certainly didn’t have any experience running a business like this, but we were willing to think outside the box and move on from our careers,” Wendy says. “It was an abrupt change from a suburban home, but

we’ve persevered and learned along the way.”

The stately five-bedroom brick house was built 30 years ago as a bed and breakfast. It was formed around a huge two-sided fireplace that uses 18-in. thick limestone blocks from the foundation of the original farmhouse. The natural wood flooring and trim blend beautifully with modern decorating.

The Stensruds picked up where the previous owners left off, adding a large bride’s room to the third floor of the house and a comfortable groom’s room in an outside building. In 2017, they built a 5,000 sq. ft. event center to seat 300 guests out of the weather for a gathering and dinner. A talented excavator carved two-level outdoor grass lawns for outside weddings or parties.

The barn, however, is the centerpiece of special events. “When we acquired the property, the barn was partially remodeled and very unique,” Kirk says, “but it didn’t have restrooms and wasn’t handicap accessible. We replaced the main level floor with new concrete and embedded in-floor heat. The center of the floor, at one time an old silo, now has a circular graphic highlighted with twinkling white lights. It’s the ideal spot for married couples to have their first dance.” Kirk says wedding decorators love to light the main and second floors to showcase the exposed wood walls and roof structure, creating an amazing party atmosphere.

The barn is now more structurally sound and guest-friendly, thanks to recent improvements. One of the stone walls was buckling in 2020. A mason familiar with limestone restoration completely rebuilt a 40-ft. section, finishing it just days before a spring wedding. Restrooms were added to

the main level, the old cistern became the utility room, and new 6 by 6 support beams were installed to reinforce the second floor. The second level entry became handicap accessible with a large door and a covered walkway leading to an outdoor patio.

The venue is marketed personally and online as much more than a historic barn and beautiful home. In addition to brick and mortar, the location has 35 acres of gardens and trails with colorful outdoor scenery. Ceremonies can be held outside or indoors, with receptions inside or spilling into the outdoor areas. Wedding parties also have access to the bed and breakfast inn for accommodations.

The Stensruds are quick to point out that their iconic barn, the last round one standing in Goodhue County, is a strong symbol of the state’s agricultural heritage. “It was built for farming; however, now, along with our other facilities, it provides a perfect setting for special ceremonies,” Wendy says. “We even have a large wooden replica of the barn displayed in the barn’s lower level. It was built by one of the family members raised here.”

EDITOR’S NOTE: A 2010 story in FARM SHOW (Vol. 34, No. 3) explained how Ron Griffith spent 6 years and 3,000 hours building a 1/27th scale model of the historic barn. Griffith cut more than 8,700 wooden pieces for the replica.

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Deere Offers Enhanced Connectivity For Remote Areas

John Deere recently released the JDLink Boost, which provides customers living in remote or rural areas with a satellite connectivity option where traditional cellular or internet services may be limited or unavailable. This option supports a partnership between Deere and the Starlink by SpaceX network.

It can be installed on Deere large agricultural equipment, non-Deere ag equipment, and other fleet vehicles if the customer has an M Modem installed. Without the Deere Display, the customer/dealer would utilize an Equipment Mobile

Application for activation.

“The JDLink Modem captures machine and agronomic data from the machine,” says Senior Product Manager for Connected Fleets Mike Kool. “This data is then broadcast via Wi-Fi to the SatCom Terminal and sent to the internet and cloud via satellite network before it reaches the John Deere Operations Center. The reverse path is followed for messages transmitted from the Operations Center to the machine.”

This capability allows faster real-time decision-making regarding irrigation, fertilization, pest control and harvesting.

It seamlessly sends plans, guidance lines, prescriptions, and work records to in-cab displays and wirelessly transfers data between the machine and John Deere Operations.

The JDLink Boost is currently available in the U.S. and Brazil. Customers can purchase the system through their local Deere dealer for around \$1,000, including a 3-year license and all necessary hardware.

“The John Deere/SpaceX (Starlink) partnership is an industry-first deal,” Kool says.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, John Deere (AgPR@johndeere.com; www.deere.com).



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Autonomous Livestock And Crop Protection

FLOX Robotics has a 24/7 solution to wildlife depredation of crops and livestock. Its FLOX Edge units and Herd drone systems are equipped with AI-driven FLOX Herd software and platform that can identify wildlife species, whether wild hogs, deer, wolves or coyotes. The FLOX system responds with appropriate audio deterrence. If necessary, the Herd drone moves in to encourage the wildlife to leave the area.

“The FLOX Edge units operate autonomously

and independently, and when needed, can trigger the FLOX Herd drone for additional deterrence or herding in open fields,” says Sara Nozkova, FLOX Robotics. “The Herd drone works like an aerial sheepdog, using a combination of visual presence, motion herding patterns, and bioacoustic deterrence to guide wildlife away from crops and livestock.”

Until recently, the FLOX drone-based system was mainly deployed in airports

and transportation-related situations. The company is now working with selected larger farms in Scandinavia. It recently opened an office in California and is seeking a handful of early adopters in North America.

The FLOX Edge unit is a proximity-aware, battery-powered system with thermal and RGB cameras. Connected to the cloud, it performs over-the-air updates, system tracking and event logging. It operates independently for day-to-day deterrence.

The FLOX Herd drone software is currently compatible with the DJI Dock 2 drone deployment system. It operates within a range of up to 2.8 miles and a flight window of 30 to 40 miles. The system can be installed at a specific field or relocated as needed to cover multiple fields. DJI drones are equipped with vision sensors and utilize GNSS satellite positioning. They can be programmed for automated missions or managed and monitored through the FLOX Herd platform.

Using the Herd drone platform, users can monitor connected devices in real time, schedule drone operations, and inspect the targeted area. The platform provides detailed records of past and ongoing operations, upcoming inspections, and visual representations of detection and repels.

According to Nozkova, a typical installation

on a 20-acre field would include three to five Edge units creating a smart perimeter and a Herd drone system. Larger fields might require two or more drone systems with strategically placed Edge units. The number of Edge units depends on fenced versus unfenced fields and hotspots, such as road or path crossings.

“The drone can safely guide animals to preferred locations, such as nearby forests, using pre-programmed routes and AI-driven flight paths,” says Nozkova. “For proactive livestock protection, the drone can actively patrol, intercept and deter predators before they reach the livestock.”

Pricing varies by farm size and the number of devices needed. The early adopter price starts with five Edge units at \$6,000 per year. A subscription to a complete system with a DJI Dock 2 drone and the Herd wildlife management software and platform starts at \$20,000 per year.

Installation of Edge units can be done without technical expertise. However, the drone systems require remote assistance or on-site support by FLOX representatives.

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