

Avian abodes by Amish architects abound in area

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LANCASTER COUNTY
What's the most diverse and elaborate architecture and construction found on a number of Lancaster County farms?

Some might say the large statuesque farm houses with the distinctive three or more residential additions to accommodate succeeding generations.

Others may point to the massive stone and wood barns, whose traditional exteriors mask the extensive interior renovations that have taken place to keep pace with changing technology.

And even a few might elect to favor the newer sprawling single-story open-sided heifer barns or chicken houses that resemble a half-dozen windowless ranch houses stuck end to end.

While each of these is worthy of mention, my vote for "agricultural architectural excellence" goes to a much smaller structure - the bird houses cozily nestled amongst many area farmsteads, principally those of the Amish.

The design diversity and construction craftsmanship that went into these houses atop poles are symbolic of the same pride that can be readily seen built into their much larger neighboring structures - be they barns or tobacco sheds.

And what a diversity of Amish avian abodes abound in this area. The accompanying photos illustrate just a few of them.

They range from tiny one or two-unit structures to high-rises which soar five or six stories and contain 20 or 25 apartments.

They are round, rectangular, square and octagon-shaped. (No pentagon-shaped structure was seen. That's just as well. One such building in the U.S. with occupants continually having their heads in the clouds is enough.)

There's a Victorian-type mansion, like something out of Nathaniel Hawthorne.

Another has a Japanese pagoda motif.

There's amazing detail and they come complete with chimneys, weather vanes, perches and front porches, plantation pillars and New England roof-top captain's roosts.

One even has a long landing perch. Must be for those birds resembling a 747 that need a longer runway to touch down.

Only one thing mystifies me. I'm no domestic expert, but I always thought that birds and Monday morning wash didn't mix.

But many of these bird house poles are also supports for the long farm house washlines.

Perhaps, this is indicative of the agricultural philosophy and

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