

Viewed 67 Years Later

Barn Raising Typical Of American Spirit

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PLUMVILLE — In Plumville the Fourth of July will mean more than just the 155th year of American Independence. While few are likely to remember it, the date will also mark the 65th anniversary of Solomon Weaver's barn raising.

A monument to serenity and longevity, the barn still stands, original siding and all, two miles north of town on what is now Tom Lukehart's farm.

No barn was built in a day. In fact, all the timber for the Weaver/Lukehart structure was cut the winter before. In spring it was planed into beams, and by the time July rolled around, Weaver and a few helpers had constructed the basement and laid the first floor.

But the hardest part of the whole process was the actual raising. For this, folks came from all over. Some from as far away as DulBois (no small journey if you were traveling on horseback). Despite the personal hardship, this was just the way things were done. If a

neighbor needed help, he got it. And besides, barn raisings often turned out to be a major social event of the year.

The crew that came to Weavers that day in 1904 included farmers, millers, a teacher, a preacher and several Civil War veterans. Many arrived before dawn, although others would be coming along all day.

Fashions dictated by necessity meant broad-rimmed straw hats and denim britches. For the women, printed muslin or linen dresses (to the ankle, of course) and linen sun bonnets.

The major function of the barn raising was to set it in place and secure it to all the beams and rafters. The task required a massive amount of muscle as well as a sense of genius on the part of the builders for assembling a three-dimensional jig-saw puzzle.

Often, if a strong enough tree were near the building site, it was used as a winch. After carrying a beam to where it was needed, an intricate series of ropes running from tree to beam to horse was arranged.



Tom Lukehart stands in front of his barn he helped raise as a young man.

Then with a lot of grunting, pulling and praying the beam was hoisted into place.

A barn could be framed in a day, but it would be weeks before it was sided and roofed. A barn raised in July would probably be ready for harvest.

At Weaver's raising somebody had the bright idea of inviting a photographer. And while cameras of various sorts had been in use for years, they were still enough of a rarity to make the picture taking an occasion in itself.

The photo here belongs to Mrs. Annie Heberling of Denton Crossroads, Plumville. But there are several other copies

of it around. As was the custom, the photographer (who remains anonymous) sold copies of his picture to those who appeared in it.

One of the barn raisers and photo posers is Tom Lukehart. Now almost 90, he can't remember for sure just where he was standing when the picture was taken, but the event is as clear in his mind as yesterday.

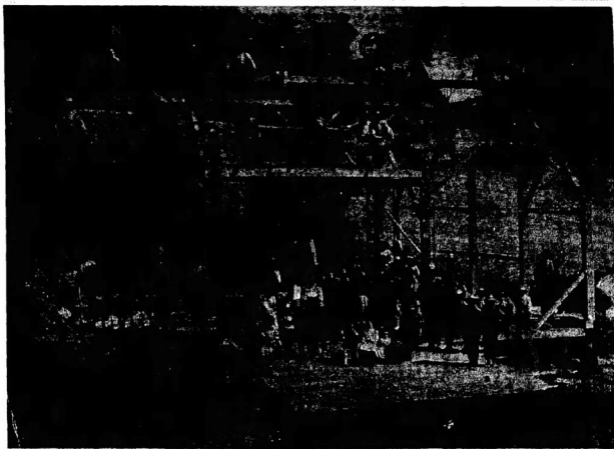
"All the lower part is made out of oak. It's stronger and wouldn't rot as quick. Up above we used hickory," he recalls.

"The barn's been re-roofed a couple of times, but we never

had to do anything to the siding."

Mr. Lukehart and his wife still live in the neat white frame house that sits a short distance from the barn. Mrs. Lukehart is a niece of Solomon Weaver from whom the Lukeharts bought the farm.

Barns like Solomon Weaver's will never be built again. Modern construction methods make them impractical. But they, and the process used to build them, has made an indelible mark in the mind of rural America and, more than fireworks, cookouts or traffic jams, they symbolize the spirit of America in its finest hour.



On July 4, 1904, only a skeleton of the barn was up, but everyone from miles around was present to help.