

OLD-TIME BARN-RAISING IN CLARION COUNTY—HOW THE WORK IS DONE

[By John L. Hunter.]

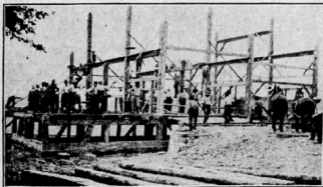
Did you ever attend an old-fashioned barn-raising? If so memory will ever cling to the scenes witnessed and oftentimes when seated alone dreaming of the past you will hear again the cry of "He-o-heave," and the mind will picture the row of sturdy men lifting into place the heavy bents.

A quarter of a century ago, when timber was more plentiful than now, it was customary among the farmers to select tall straight-growing trees from which to fashion the heavier plates and beams for barn structure. In some sections this is still adhered to, though, as a rule, the frame work of the largest barns seen in travel are constructed of planks properly fastened together. Barn-raising in the country is the scene of a gathering of farmers for miles around. Let it be known that Neighbor Smith is getting out timbers for a building in which to store his harvest and the old and young living in his community look forward with expectancy to the day when they will receive an invitation for the raising—the men to raise the structure, the women to as-

cook accompanied by her own or some one else's children.

The foundation or superstructure of the building was constructed entirely of stone, the handiwork of Sebastian Schneider. It was of faultless pieces of masonry and a credit to the builder.

A short time after our arrival the work of raising the barn commenced. As an army looks to their general for orders during an engagement, those engaged in raising the frame of a structure must hearken unto the commands of the boss carpenter, who watches every movement of his men. On this occasion George Zacheral, who has framed and raised more than 100 barns throughout Clarion county, was the officer of the day and under his supervision the big structure rose skyward without a hitch. The work of raising a barn by human agency alone is laborious. The Eisenman barn required sills from 50 to 56 feet in length. To place these in position a row of men would arrange themselves on either side, short hand-spikes placed underneath the sill and at a given word it was lifted from the ground and, keeping step, the men carried it to its proper place. When a bent was planed together it was raised into



SCENE AT BARN-RAISING.

sist in preparing the menu and the men and women of the future to mingle, to meet, play games and partake of the feast to which all look forward to as a fitting climax of the day's event.

It was but recently that the writer, in touring Clarion county, accepted an invitation to attend a barn-raising on the Edward Eisenman farm, near the little village of Marble. It was so large a gathering that it reminded one of a county fair, minus the fakery element. As there are hundreds of The News's readers who have as little conception of how a barn is raised as the average girl graduate does about baking soda biscuits, a few pointers on the subject follow:

In company with S. M. Miller, of Fryburg, we joined the cavalcade that seemingly had met at Marble at an early morning hour, and, heading northward, we soon arrived at the summit of a steep incline at the base of which could be seen a body of men busily engaged getting things in shape for the work that had called the multitude thither. The division to which we were attached made up an army of workmen, seventy all told. This did not include another class of workers, forty in number, said to be the best cooks in Clarion county, each

place by pike poles, so-called from sharpened iron spikes driven into wooden poles. The raising of the bents is not without danger, it being absolutely necessary that the men obey the command of the boss carpenter, who, after the men take up their position along the bent, cries "All ready," followed by a repetition of "He-o-heave" until the bent, weighing tons, gains an upright position.

While this was going on at the Eisenman farm, the cooks referred to above were busily engaged in preparing an old-fashioned Clarion county dinner, one that would make a city dweller open his eyes with wonder, and for fear it might make them dissatisfied with their lot, the superb menu to which all did ample justice is omitted, with the following postscript: To use the society editor's phrase, covers were laid for 125.

Barn-raising in the manner described will soon be but a memory. These social gatherings for mutual help will be spoken of by future generations as the old-fashioned, foggy ways of our ancestors. To us who have attended apple-parings, corn-huskings, wood frolics and barn-raising, we see in its passing the waning of that true sociability that characterized our forefathers.