

Bethinking of Old Orleans

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BARN BUILDING

"I like to have a man's knowledge comprehend more than one class of topics, one row of shelves. I like a man who likes to see a fine barn as well as a good tragedy".

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

Within the last three weeks a magnificent new book entitled "Barns of the Genesee Country 1790-1915" has been released and is available at book stores for \$35.00. It has been authored by Dr. Daniel Fink, a professor at Genesee and represents ten years of research and photography. It covers various types and styles of barns from a greater area around Rochester.

It seems now only appropriate to share with you a bit of information stashed in the county archives which relates specifically to Orleans County barns. From the early 1890's to about 1928 Nathaniel Davis built many barns in western Monroe and Orleans Counties. Prior to residency in Orleans County, Davis was a native of Maine and a shipbuilder. He applied his skills as a shipbuilder to making barns by inverting the same type of construction used in a ship for roofs. This idea he patented as "The Davis Self-supporting Rafter for Gambrel Roofs." This system of construction saved lumber and omitted interior posts which were frequently in the way. It also allowed for more room within the barn and made for more sturdy construction over all.

The drawings which appear with this article are from a little booklet Davis published in 1893 promoting his form of construction. Personally I've seen many barn interiors fashioned in this manner. It is indeed a later form of construction as it omits the purlin beam formally used in gambrel roofs between the lower and upper hips. In his little booklet Nathaniel Davis included some testimonials. Here is one from an Orleans County farmer:

"Seven years ago I had three of the Davis Self-Supporting Roofs put on my barns. The roofs now stand as good as the day they were built. I would not use any other roof on a barn.

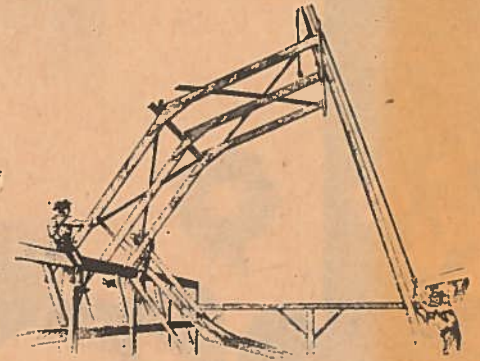
"I use hay slings in my barns and in drawing up a draft of grain I cannot see that the roof moves a particle.

"I advise all that are building barns to use the Davis Self-Supporting Rafter."

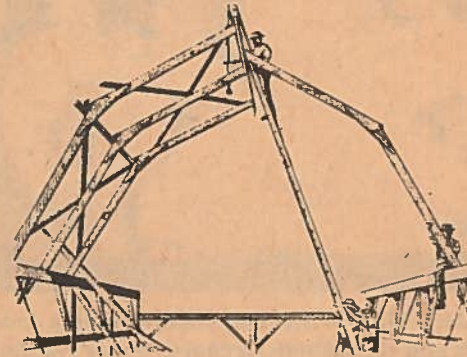
—Charles Perry

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This represents the raising of the first rafters.



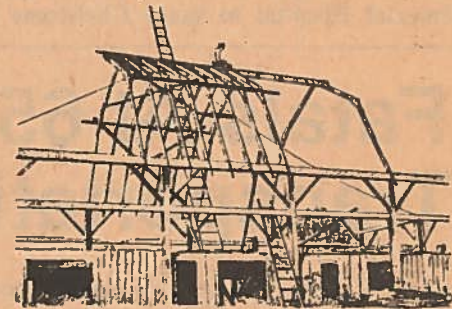
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This shows the raising of the rafters on the opposite side of the rafters

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This shows a section of ridge in its place.

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This shows roof after the rafters are all up.



Anyone wishing a model or price-list, please write to me and I will gladly send them to you.

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