

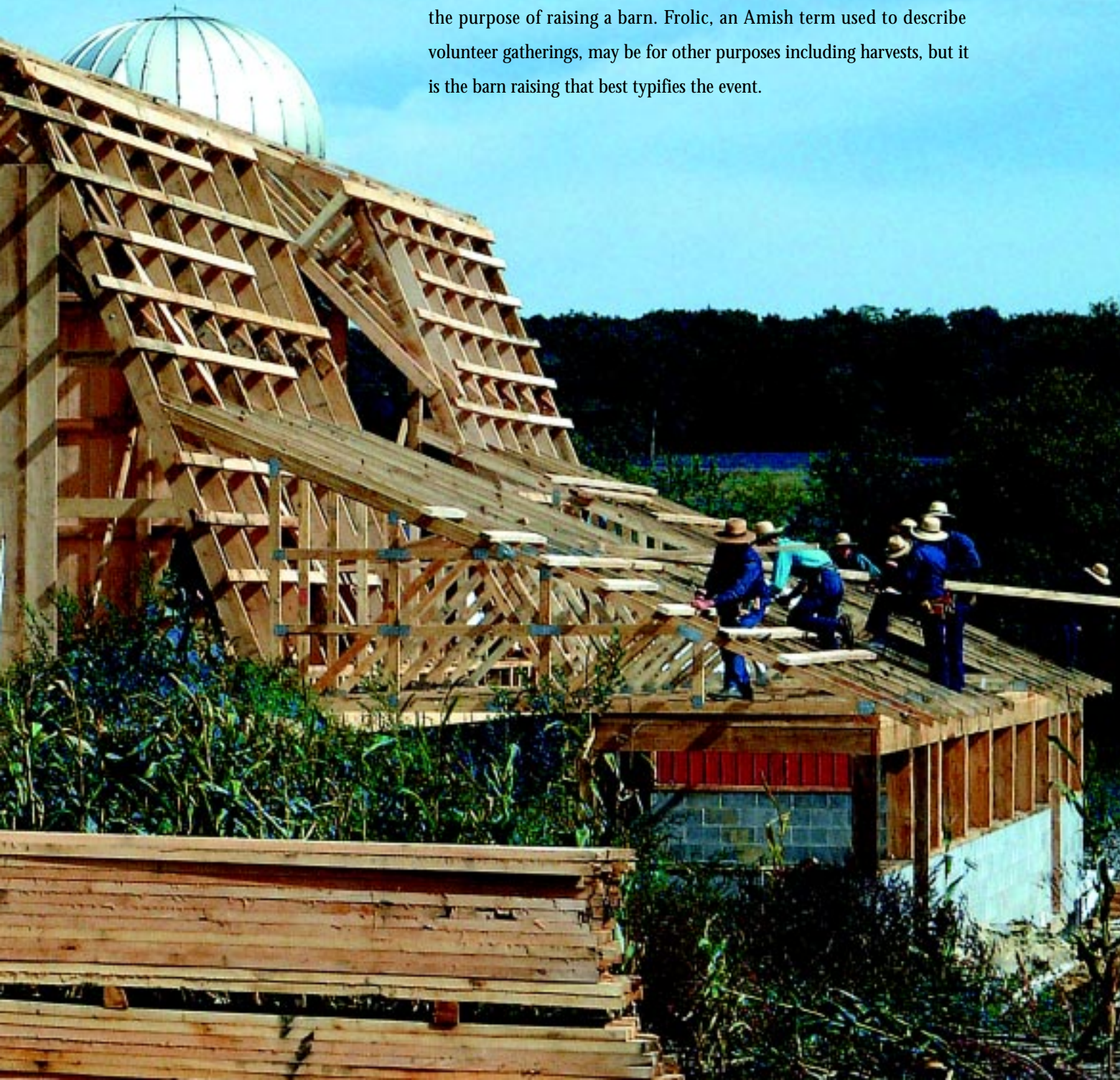
An Amish Barn Raising

Garrett County, Maryland

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Photography by: **Lance C. Bell**



*T*he morning sun shines brightly across the Pleasant Valley landscape revealing a patchwork of colored leaves and light brown fields. Dark clad Amish men, women, and children, walk rural roads, traverse harvested fields, and drive blue or green tractors toward the Curtis Duff Farm in Gortner, Maryland. They have been arriving since 8:00 a.m. By noontime, the sun will shine on 143 Amish residents who have assembled for an October Frolic, a time honored tradition that unites Amish volunteers for the purpose of raising a barn. Frolic, an Amish term used to describe volunteer gatherings, may be for other purposes including harvests, but it is the barn raising that best typifies the event.





Barn raisings are associated with the Amish, but they are not exclusive to that group. Gortner resident, John C. Yoder, recalls that as an Amish youngster in Somerset County, Pennsylvania, barn raisings were community events that united neighbors regardless of religious affiliation. Volunteers would provide labor services for residents who lost a barn through disaster or who wanted to expand their farming businesses. As time passed, labor saving devices reduced the need for volunteers, and the tradition began to slowly fade away. Even among the Amish, traditional barn raisings are becoming less frequent, as cranes help to set center beams and complete other heavy lifting chores. The October Frolic was the only recent traditional barn raising in Gortner, and it provided a welcome glimpse into the past, while providing a service for the present.

Barns are not built in a day, and Mr. Duff's project was actually a two-step process. First, removing an older structure that had outlived its usefulness was necessary; this was followed



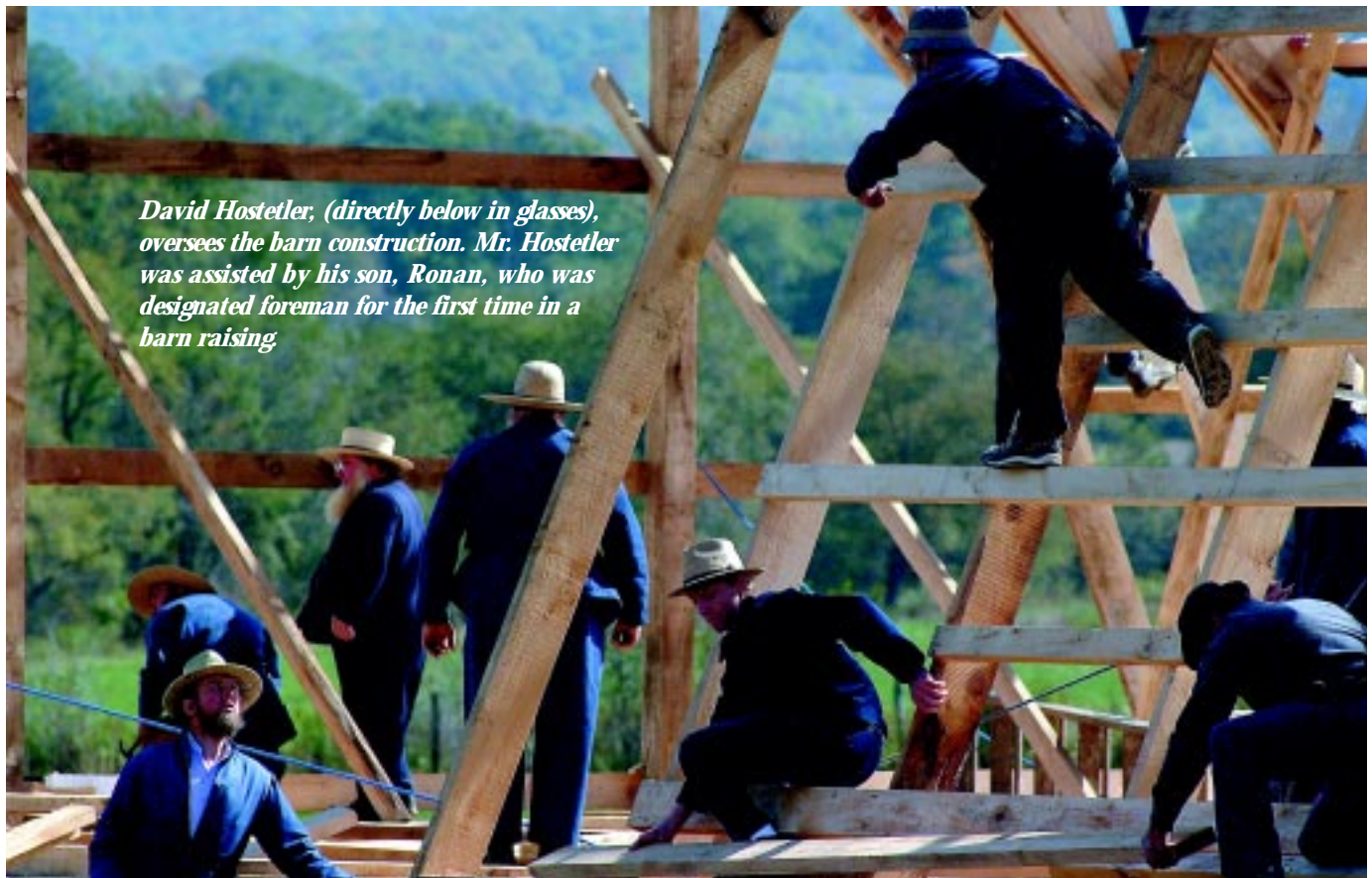
by the building of a new one. Amish volunteers pledged their assistance before work began. According to Curtis Duff, small groups of workers prepared the site ahead of time by completing a series of tasks including purchasing wood, cutting rafters, and laying the block foundation. The Gortner Church Youth Group spent an evening cleaning old blocks, so they could be reused in the new foundation; this reduced Mr. Duff's costs while also practicing an environmentally sound project. Materials were neatly stacked in piles, ready to be assembled by workers during the frolic. Work was completed under the supervision of David Hostetler, from Pennsylvania, who had over 20 years experience in such endeavors. The 60 workers that participated under his direction, erected the frame, walls, and most of the roof in a single day.

Volunteer help was secured by mailing invitations to Mr. Duff's in-laws, residing in Pennsylvania, and through the Gortner



Amish "hotline," a telephone call list that enables members to quickly forward news, prayer requests, and important church news. A two-day notice was provided on the hotline, while a two-week notice was provided for the relatives in Somerset County. "If an individual has a need, they let it be known through the church, and everyone helps out," remarked Mr. Duff.

More than just a construction project, the beautiful fall day provided for a get together, as families were invited to attend for fellowship. Lunch was prepared by the women and served in two shifts to accommodate work schedules. Admittedly, lunch took longer than planned, as families welcomed the chance to catch up on news. The frolic ended by late afternoon and families headed home richer in the knowledge their brethren's barn was completed and their role as tradition bearers had been fulfilled.



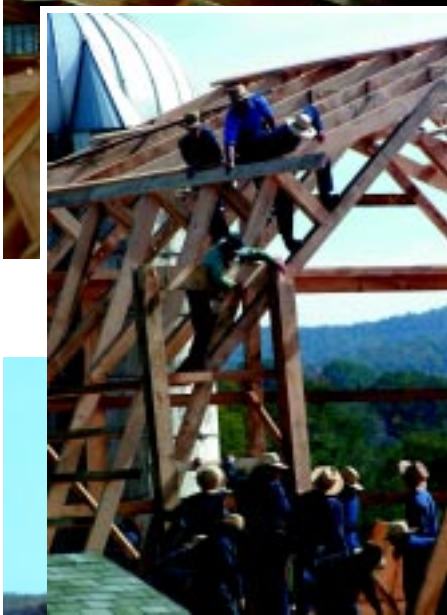
David Hostetler, (directly below in glasses), oversees the barn construction. Mr. Hostetler was assisted by his son, Ronan, who was designated foreman for the first time in a barn raising

The Duff Family Barn Raising typifies the community spirit practiced among the Amish as workers volunteer their expertise in a time-honored tradition.





Craftsmen set the rafters by early afternoon.



As springtime arrives in Gortner, the new Duff barn is ready for the planting season. Curtis and Daisy Duff, joined by sons Levi (front) and Benjamin, enjoy an early spring day.