

# A barn raising without a record

## VINTAGE VIEWS

By Tim Mosher

*Tavistock and District Historical Society*

This is the fifth in this series of Lemp Studio Collection pictures housed at the Tavistock and District Historical Society (TDHS).

Well over 100 years ago, photographers frequently created excellent photo records, but very often, no written record of their subjects survives. Until the digital method came along with date and time stamps etc., the analog method was used. That meant taking photos with light-sensitive materials producing a negative image, processing them in a darkened room with liquid chemicals and printing a positive of what was captured on paper, and sometimes mounting this final photo on a stiff-matt backing. Today, if we're lucky, someone wrote the date, locale and the people's names on the back of the matt shortly after the photographer sold the pictures to the customer. However, very often, people would think this was a special occasion, so they won't forget and didn't record anything in writing.

The original images – the negatives – didn't lend themselves to writing on because they were on tin plates or mirrored or transparent sheets of glass. This is what today comprises the almost 4,000 negatives in the Lemp Studio Collection: glass-analog negatives without written records, each one measuring from four-by-six to eight-by-10 inches.

This photo is a typical example of this: a beautiful image without supporting information, so we can only estimate the date and guess the location. Most of the people are too far from the camera to identify. If anyone reading this lives on a farm with this type of large barn, look carefully at the ground-level configuration of windows where the bank is on the right, and how the three roofs are tied to each other because it might be your barn. Perhaps you have a wind mill or water pump where it is in the picture, too. If you suspect this is your barn or if you have a copy of this photo or information about this, please contact me at my email address below.

At first glance, the photo shows a barn raising, or could it be the removal of it to rebuild at another location? Most likely the former as it was far more common and the barn wouldn't have been very old considering this picture was taken around 1900. The foundation brick looks very fresh as well.

There are 12 women and 94 men in the photo, and not a hard hat or safety harness in sight. They gathered and posed for the



(LEMP STUDIO COLLECTION #0024)

**This large barn required over 100 men and women with a strong sense of community, human muscle and horsepower, and pencil-and-paper skills, to create structures that still stand a century or more later. Photographer unknown.**

photographer with his big camera on a wooden tripod, and one man even climbed to the top of the windmill for the picture. Three men to the right of the centre are well dressed and the women, no doubt, came out of the homestead kitchen to help mark this momentous occasion, posing for the photo.

**This week's History Mystery is:** What is the name of the very old method of finding water for a windmill or the like, that's still practiced today and is disputed by the scientific community? This question is

wide open to all ages. Email your answer to [tim\\_mosher@hotmail.com](mailto:tim_mosher@hotmail.com) along with your name, the name of your community or rural route number, and we'll publish this along with your correct answer in next week's edition.

**Last week's History Mystery was:** What is attached to the short chain that's hanging from two of the men's pockets? It was a photo of a group of eight men enjoying a cool drink, and a bartender on the steps of a local hotel. No one forwarded the correct answer. The answer is pocket watches.

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