

RAISING THE ROOF



Photos by Allyson Oken/Atascadero News

Four men wait atop four posts to fit a hand-hewn beam to a recently reconstructed barn. The antique barn, first constructed in New York in the 1840s was recently purchased and reassembled in Atascadero by local business American Barn & Wood.

From NY to Atascadero

Antique barn is city's new oldest building

By Allyson Oken
OF THE ATASCADERO NEWS

Barn raising is not something seen everyday here in Atascadero, but American Barn & Wood owners, John and Kira Olshefski, are doing just that.

After finding their perfect match, the duo, with the help of family, friends and Pacific Post and Beam have raised a barn built in the 1840s in Conquest, NY.

Their mission for the perfect barn began three years ago and developed into the Olshefski family's livelihood. Kira explained how this all came to fruition.



Bruce Hamill, right, directs Pacific Post and Beam staff who are attempting to use a file to fit a square-end peg into a gap.

See BARN, A2

BARN

Continued from Page A1

"Our business started when we wanted to put a barn on our property," she said. "The first barn that we got ahold of the dismantler abandoned, so we had extra barn wood. That is when we started selling the barn wood and our business began. Since then, we have brought back 21 barns from the Midwest. Then two years later we found another barn that was worthy of resurrection, so it is coming back to life again. We also provide customers with a history of the piece that they have bought. It is a really fascinating job. We do find barns that are worthy of being resurrected. In fact we have two right now that we would love to see put back up instead of scrapped out. If anyone is interested in putting up a barn on their property, we will show them the process that we went through with this project."

With the help of Pacific Post and Beam, the Olshefski's now have the framework for the barn completed and will be adding siding from a barn-harvesting in Michigan. According to Kira, this was originally a threshing barn. It is a typical English barn with what is called a four-bent, three bay style with a swing beam that is typical of New York barn structures. Now, after searching for three years, John is excited to be on his way to completing the project.

"We actually had two false starts and this was the third one, so it was the winner," said John. "One thing that made it more desirable to us was the size. We wanted a smaller barn. Second, the size of the timbers. It had nice big timbers — 10 by 10 timbers. And third was the condition. It was in really good condition, only one bad corner of the roof had to be replaced, which is unusual for a barn of this age. So a combination of the size and condition, as well as a lot of

nice features like the built-in ladder and the double beams, made it just right. We wanted to have another building on the property so this sounded like it would be more interesting than just putting up a little out building."

The interesting thing about this project is the number of people it took to raise the barn. According to Kira, Mennonite barn raising in the 1800s would take approximately 175 men. With the help of about 10 people and a crane, the Olshefski family was able to raise a barn in about eight hours, a feat that would have taken 175 men days to accomplish, not to mention the fabrication of lumber and layout.

While there is something romantic about hand-hewn wood, hand-drawn cut markers, notched boards with pegs and peg holes, all strategically put together to create a structure, for American Barn & Wood and Synda Thurmond-Hamill, it is more than romantic — it's a passion that cannot

be quenched.

"I love doing the research and discovering the history of the barns that come through," said Thurmond-Hamill. "This barn is from Conquest, NY, a city that was founded in 1821. From looking at the building we have kind of narrowed it down to 1840. That was when the village was growing and structures of this type were being constructed. There are also some pencil inscriptions on the beams that a pencil expert told me carpenters in New York were using in the 1840s. I was able to track the original parcel owner and we are trying to narrow down who actually built the barn. So we will have a full history when the project is all done."

For the Olshefski's this project is the culmination of what set them on their path to creating American Barn & Wood. To learn more about this project as it comes to fruition and to see what AB&W have to offer, visit www.americambarnwood.com.