

Amish Barn-raising

By Brenda B. Covert

¹ David and Annie Lapp had watched the roof topple into the blaze with a thunderous crash. The barn burned to the ground. They and their five children had rescued the farm animals; none had perished in the flames. Neighbors would care for the cows, goats, and chickens until the new barn was built. The horses that pulled their buggy stayed inside the fenced pasture. They were comforted knowing that their close-knit Amish community would come together and help them build another barn.



² The oldest children were twins named Rebecca and Amos. One evening they took a stroll to the cow pond and skipped stones. The stones caused ripples that spread out in widening circles. With a flick of his wrist, Amos sent a smooth stone skipping to the other side.

³ "Tomorrow is the big day," he said.

⁴ Rebecca smiled in reply. "It is almost an agony to wait, is it not?"

⁵ "Do you suppose Papa will think I am old enough to help with the building?" he asked.

⁶ "I should think so," Rebecca said. "Papa has seen how hard you work in the field. If Mama lets me, I will minister to those who thirst for lemonade!"

⁷ Early in the morning the neighbors arrived. The yard quickly filled with buggies! The men gathered at the site of the barn's foundation. Lumber, nails and shingles were already there. David Lapp had also hired a crane and a man to operate it. The crane would lift the beams into place, making the men's work a little easier. Amos stood close to his father, but continued to look toward the crane. For a brief moment he was jealous of the man in the crane.

⁸ Amos looked up at his father's face framed by his full beard and topped by the familiar straw hat. "Papa," he said, "why is it that we can drive neither car nor crane, but we can hire one to work for us?"

⁹ David Lapp's blue eyes seemed to penetrate through to Amos' soul. "It is the law of the Ordnung," he said firmly. "We live a simple life. If we were to introduce modern conveniences into our lives, such as automobiles and even electricity, would we not then become dependent upon them? Might we begin seeking to prosper beyond our needs? Might we put money first in our lives, ahead of God and family?" He patted Amos' straw-hatted head. "Our buggy takes us where we need to go. Our fields produce food. We have what we need, and that is enough. Be content with what you have."

¹⁰ Paul Yoder nodded in agreement. "Take a look at yonder wren," he said, stretching out his arm and pointing to the small, brown bird perched on a fence post. "It builds a simple nest for its eggs and eats only what it needs to survive. In its simple life it is content, as you can tell by the music it makes." As if to demonstrate, the little wren began to warble a bubbly tune for the onlookers.

¹¹ After a short discussion, the men rolled up their sleeves and got to work. The older, experienced men acted as supervisors. Young boys ran errands and helped in any way they could. The women and girls began preparing for a noontime feast. The youngest children played close by the house. Rebecca was put to work squeezing the lemons for the lemonade.

¹² Soon the frame of the barn was in place, and trestle tables had been set up in the yard for the noon time meal. The aroma of fresh-baked bread filled the air. The crane operator accepted an invitation to share in the meal as a guest.

¹³ All the men removed their straw hats as David Lapp asked the blessing on the food. Then the women began to serve up plates of stew, pickled cabbage, and applesauce. Thick slabs of bread were quickly slathered with sweet apple butter. Rebecca served her lemonade with a shy smile, dressed in a plain, purple dress covered with a white apron. Her long hair was braided and hidden under her bonnet, and her legs were encased in black stockings and black shoes.

¹⁴ Jason, the crane operator, stopped eating to say, "This apple butter is the best I've ever tasted! In fact, I can't remember when I've enjoyed such a delicious meal. I guess this is why the Amish are famous for their cooking!"

¹⁵ The women's cheeks reddened at the extravagant compliment. David Lapp intercepted a look from his wife, Annie. He spoke gently to Jason. "We humbly thank you for your kind words. We find joy in sharing what we have with our neighbors and friends. It is a part of who we are."

¹⁶ By the end of the day, the barn was complete. One by one their neighbors and friends began to depart. David and Annie stood with their children - Amos, Rebecca, Matthew, Sarah, and Rachel - and waved goodbye.

¹⁷ "We have worked hard today. We have earned our rest," David told his family as they turned toward their house. The youngest children ran giggling across the yard, but Amos and Rebecca followed more slowly, tired but pleased with their day's efforts. Behind them, their parents smiled, proud of the hard workers their son and daughter were becoming.
