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SUN., JUN 24, 2007 - 12:28 AM

Saving a barn

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DEERFIELD -- Against a blue sky brushed with billowy white clouds, Craig Roost stood atop a framework of hand-hewn pine beams that were first fitted together 121 years ago to create a dairy barn on a farm some 20 miles from here.

With his straw hat and suspenders stretched over a white cotton shirt, Roost looked as though he, too, could have been plucked from a 19th century farm.

The barn was disassembled in Cold Spring, north of Whitewater, and brought to Schuster's Playtime Farm, where it will have a new life housing pumpkins and squash grown and sold here.

It also will serve as a welcome center for the corn maze, hayrides, school tours and other activities offered by owners Don and Theresa Schuster.

On the ground beneath Roost, a dozen or so volunteers held ropes attached to a towering gin pole, while a team of two Belgian draft horses stood ready to supply the power to hoist up another section of the frame through an intricately engineered system of pulleys.

"Ready. One, two, three. Whoa!" Roost called out. "Nice and slow, guys."

"This is the way they did it back in 1886," said Lyndon Meyer, of Deerfield, who helped assemble the frames on the ground on Friday and was back to take video of Saturday's barn raising for the local cable channel.

Back then, Meyer said, nearby trees would have been used as "dead weight" for the pulleys, instead of the modern-day tractors that stood in as substitutes.

"It takes you back to a time of innocence," said Donna Carstensen, of Mukwonago, who came to watch the barn raising with friend Linda Hertig, of Johnson Creek.

"It's nice to see the cohesiveness of working together," Hertig said. "We should do more of this kind of thing."

Roost, 37, a timber-frame carpenter from Fort Atkinson, has been restoring old barns for the past five years.

"I want to give honor to what they did back then by trying to save these structures," he said. "Especially when we live in Wisconsin, unless you're a transplant, everyone in this state is related to the farm. We were an agricultural state for 100



Christopher Guess -- State Journal

Volunteer Jeff Schroedl of Fort Atkinson holds a support beam from a dairy barn originally built in 1886 in Cold Spring, north of Whitewater, while barn restorer Craig Roost pounds it into place with a giant mallet at Schuster's Playtime Farm on Highway 12-18 in Deerfield.

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WSJ POLL

Which of these five moments in the history of sports at the University of Wisconsin would you choose to witness in person?

- Jesse Owens competing in the 100, 220 and broad jump at Camp Randall in May 1936?
- Mark Spitz setting a UW Natatorium record in the 500-yard freestyle in 1970?
- Pete Maravich taking 42 shots and scoring 42 points against the Badgers in the Milwaukee Classic in 1967?
- Cassius Clay (Muhammad Ali) taking part in the Pan American Games boxing trials at the UW Field House in 1959?
- Wes Matthews' half-court shot that knocked off eventual NCAA champion Michigan State and Magic Johnson in 1979?

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years."

But with many old farms being divided up and sold, Roost said, the barn is becoming "an obsolete tool."

Some insurance companies also are making people tear down old barns prematurely, Roost said. "If I can do five barns a year for the next 20 years, I'll save 100 barns."

Roost was first drawn to the Schusters' farm by their century-old round barn, which he is now also restoring. They needed another building. But after plans to move and restore a one-room schoolhouse proved too costly, Roost suggested moving a barn.

"I took them barn-shopping one day," he said.

The barn they picked will be about \$40,000, Roost said.

"It makes me sad, all these barns in the country that are obsolete," Don Schuster said. "We just happen to have a use for one so we have a chance to give it a second life."

Plus, Schuster said, "You get a story with this building. You put up a new building, there's no story."

The barns' original makers probably spent months whittling the mortise and tenon joints that hold the structure together, he said.

"It's cool. Look at it," he said. "It's a big Tinker Toy."

"Unless you've got a lot of money, it's hard to put money in a barn just to make it look pretty," he said, adding that a lot of barns are being moved out to the East Coast, where they have become status symbols.

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(Christopher Guess - State Journal)

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Alan Treinen of Lodi and his team of Belgian draft horses, Dick and Dock, raise part of the frame of an 1886 barn through an intricately engineered system of ropes and pulleys

(Christopher Guess - State Journal)

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