

# Community

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## They will build it if you come

### Couple needs a hand raising dream barn

**By Mary Esparra**Times Herald-Record  
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**Slate Hill** – Rich and Natalie Onorati are close to realizing their dream of building a timber-frame barn for their Christmas tree farm, Stone Oak Farm, mostly by their own hands.

The dream started with a gift from wife to husband of a course at Hancock Shaker Village in Pittsfield, Mass., on how to build a timber-frame barn, the way farmers did a hundred years ago. Rich learned how to make joints, hand-drill peg holes for the joints and fit the pieces of lumber together.

“It’s just something we’ve always been talking about for years,” Natalie said. “We love barns, and it will be there for people to warm up [in] when they cut their Christmas trees.”





"It's a dying art," Rich said, of the process of assembling the wood with handmade pegs instead of nails. It's a process so efficient that barns can last a hundred years or more.

A retired forensic unit chief who supervised psychiatric services at state prisons, Rich has been a wood craftsman for years.

In addition to building the family's home in the early '70s, he has also helped furnish it. He has crafted pieces such as chairs, a bench and a corner hutch as Christmas gifts for his wife.

Rich began clearing the land for the barn more than a year ago. Every day for two months this winter, Rich almost single-handedly cut down trees on his farm for the lumber needed for the 40-by-48-foot barn.

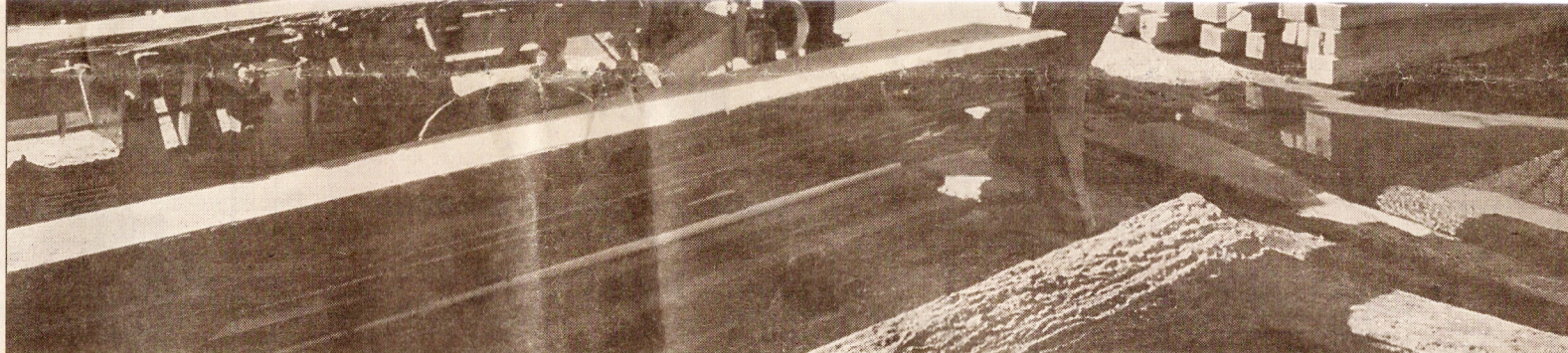
Once the lumber is cut, he hires out the sawing work to the professionals to cut the logs into beams. Original builders of timber-frame barns would hand-hew the wood, "which I can do, but it would take me too long," Rich said.

Rich may have single-handedly cut almost every log needed for the barn, but he can't raise the walls by himself. He's going to need help.

"If we possibly can, we would like this to be a community barn-raising, sometime in late spring," he said.

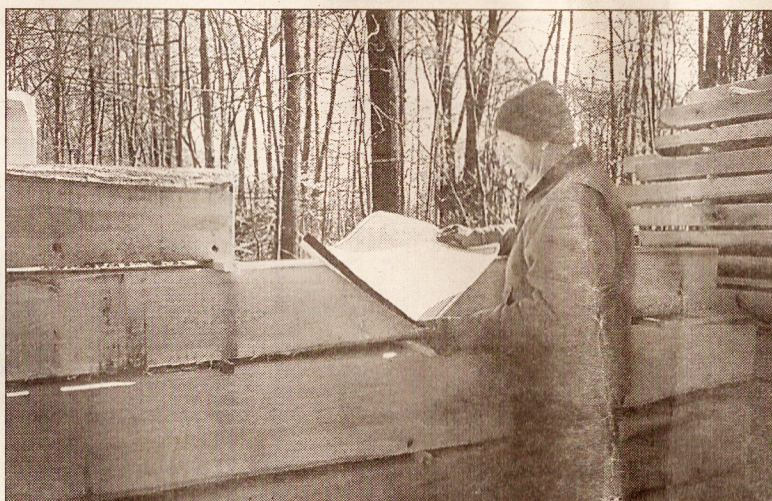
He figures that with help, the barn can be raised in a day. Of course, as in the barn-raising of a hundred years ago, the Onoratis will provide food and drink for the day.

No date has been set, but anyone interested in helping the Onoratis at their barn-raising can call them at 355-4751 or e-mail [stoneoak@warwick.net](mailto:stoneoak@warwick.net).



Times Herald-Record/MARY ESPARRA

**Dan Millis, rear, and Sherm Kortright, front, of Millis Lumber and Logging cut 30-foot tie beams for Rich Onorati's timber-frame barn.**



Times Herald-Record/MARY ESPARRA

**Rich Onorati looks over the plans for his timber-frame barn last week amid stacks of various beams that will be used to construct his barn. The barn will be made primarily of red and white oak.**

## For more information

Rich Onorati is a member of the Timber Framers Guild. For information on the Guild, call 888-453-0879 or e-mail [info@tfguild.org](mailto:info@tfguild.org) or visit their Web site at [www.tfguild.org](http://www.tfguild.org).

Hancock Shaker Village, mailing address: P.O. Box 927, Pittsfield, Mass. 01202-0927; shipping address: Intersection of routes 20 and 41, Pittsfield, Mass. 01201; call 413-443-0188; fax: 413-447-9357; e-mail: [info@hancockshakervillage.org](mailto:info@hancockshakervillage.org).



Photo provided

**Rich Onorati, in school at Hancock Shaker Village, carves a rafter joint.**