

## Glossary of terms used in describing Ontario barns .

### Aisle:

Floor space in French barns (uncommon in Ontario) between arcade posts and long side wall.

### Alley, Alleyway:

A narrow passageway, usually between animal pens in barn stable. A feed alley is the space in front of a row of livestock where feed is distributed.

### Anchor Beam:

Unique to rare Dutch barns. Massive cross beam in the structure known as the centre H . Defining feature is thru-tenons on each end.

### Arcade Plate:

Beam supporting rafters in French barns (Uncommon in Ontario). Comparable to purlin in English barn.

### Arcade Post:

Post in French barn supporting arcade beam, comparable to queen post in English barn.

### Attic:

Space within a building immediately below the roof.

### Barn Bridge, Bridge:

Short strong bridge connecting gangway to second level of barn. Usually necessary to prevent freezing earthen ramp from damaging barn wall.

### Bargeboard:

The board on the outside of a gable wall under the roof edge that covers the ends of the roof boards or rafters.

### Bank Barn:

Any two-level barn built into a hillside such that the second story can be accessed from the higher side of the hill and the ground floor can be accessed readily from the lower side. Almost all forebay barns are bank barns but not vice versa. (See Pennsylvania barn)

**Batten:**

A narrow strip of wood, affixed to cover spaces between boards used as barn siding.  
( board and batten siding)

**Bay:**

The space in a barn between two bents. A four bent barn has three bays.

**Beam:**

A horizontal barn timber. (see post)

**Bent:**

A section of timber frame, usually pre-assembled before erecting and composed of at least two posts and one tie-beam (collar-tie or tie-beam). Most english barn bents are formed and raised to sit crossways to the barn length. Denison frame bents are formed and raised to sit lengthways to barn . Denison frames have no tie or collar beams.

**Brace, Wind Brace:**

A short piece of dimensional timber, usually 4 to 5 inches in cross section and 3 to 4 feet long and normally mortised into two larger timbers that are at right angles to each other. They provide strength and rigidity.

**Buttress, Abutment:**

A construction built to support a wall.

**Byre:**

A cow barn.

**Canted Queen Post Barn:**

A very common type of English barn in Ontario where queen posts are angled outward between tie-beam and purlins (usually being ninety degrees to rafters).

**Cantilever:**

Overhanging second floor joists. Normally used to create an outdoor sheltered area on the lower (usually southern) side of a barn. See forebay.

**Crib Barn, Log Barn:**

A simple pen or crib of logs held together by corner notching or pins and having a shed or gable roof. Multiple cribs may be under one roof.

Cupola:

A small framed box or dome-like structure on the top of a barn roof that may have windows or louvered sides. Provides ventilation and light.

Dormer:

A roofed opening projecting at right angles from a sloping roof.

Dutch Barn:

A style of barn imported to North America by settlers from the Netherlands. Rare in Canada. (Many modern farm barns and sheds are patterned after Dutch barn ancestors). Generally more square than rectangular with great cart doors in gable ends, often with pent roof. Thru-tenons on tie beams and low eaves are diagnostic. Schoharie barn at Upper Canada Village is a good example.

Dutch Door, Stable Door, Half Door, Double Hung Door:

A two part door divided horizontally that allows for opening the upper and lower parts separately.

Embrasure:

Narrow slit opening built into a stone wall.

English Barn, Two Bay Barn, Three Bay Barn, New England Barn, Yankee Barn, Connecticut Barn:

The most common barn type in North America. Normally rectangular shaped consisting of 4 bents and 3 bays with a gable roof and with the centre bay being a driveway that acted as a threshing floor. Large double doors (great cart doors) were located on both ends of this centre bay and the sheathing was vertical boards. Originally only a crop barn built on flat ground with no basement or stable. A lower stable was often added post 1850 when livestock production became an important Ontario farm economic activity.

Erie Shore Barn:

Small, one story plus a loft, gambrel-roofed barn with a side to side runway at one end of the barn creating notable feature of off-centre side wagon doors. Erie Shore barns usually have evenly spaced row of low windows along one side.

Finnish Barns:

Found in Ontario on the Canadian Shield. Often separate hay and cattle barns. Small, relatively tall and narrow with few windows, and gable-end main doors. Roof is usually gambrel style. Hay barns may have outward sloping horizontal log walls to offer more rain protection.

Floor Beams, Joists:

Beams typically arranged in parallel series to support floorboards.

Forebay, Overshoot:

Area created by an overhanging (cantilevered) or post-supported second floor ( posted forebay) on lower (usually south) side of barn . It increased crop storage space while offering weather protection to livestock, stable doors and windows. It is a diagnostic feature of Pennsylvania ( German) barns.

French Barn, Aisled Barn:

Rare in Ontario. A rectangular barn with the great cart doors in the ends. Interior framing follows a nave and aisle pattern similar to medieval churches.

Gable Forebay:

A forebay on the gable end of a barn. Rare in Ontario.

Gable roof:

A gable is the triangle formed on the end of a barn by the roof lines and the top of the wall. A gable roof is the earliest and simplest roof form. It has only one constant slope, front and back. Early slopes were steeper due to thatched roof requirements.

Gangway, Barn Ramp, Barn Hill, Tramway, Highdrive:

Earthen ramp built to provide access to second floor of barn, often having a bridged section ( see barn bridge) near the barn to prevent frost damage to the barn wall.

Gambrel Roof:

A roof having two slopes on front and back, the lower steeper than the upper. This style was developed circa 1870. Some gambrel roofs had a flare at the eave designed to throw water and snow away from wall. These flares are often called Dutch gambrels.

Ginpole, Ginpole Derrick:

Tall supported timber used as a derrick in barn construction. Sometimes stored inside barn above collar-ties for further use if necessary.

Girt, Connecting Girt, Sheeting Rail, Nailers:

Horizontal beams that join bents (posts) of a barn and normally act as nailers for the vertical external board sheeting.

Gothic Roof, Round Roof, Arched Roof:

The curve of this roof is often parabolic but varies widely. Uncommon and usually dated after 1920.

**Granary, Grainbin:**

A wooden storeroom for storing threshed grain. It is normally inside the barn and adjacent to the threshing floor.

**Great Cart Doors, Threshing Floor Doors, Big Barn Doors:**

The largest double doors leading onto the threshing floor area of a barn. On the end (gable) walls of French , Finnish and Dutch barns and on the sides of English barns.

**Haydoor:**

Large door in the top of the gable end-wall to facilitate hay movement into the mow. Often protected by a hayhood.

**Hayfork:**

A mechanical device suspended from ropes and used for moving loose hay from a wagon into the hayloft or mow. This technology was common from about 1880 to 1950.

**Hayhood, Haybonnet, Turkeytail:**

An extension of the ridge of a barn roof to support and or protect pulley attachments used to load hay into the mow through the gable end. (see haytrack).

**Haytrack:**

Wooden or metal rail running lengthways under the ridge of a barn roof. It supports a hay-cart and hayfork which could be moved on the track the length of the barn. This facilitated the placement of hay in the mows.

**Haywheel, Rack Lifter:**

Wooden hoist above threshing floor for lifting full hay rack to hay level in mow.

**Hiproof:**

A barn roof with sloping ends and sides. Often mistakenly used to describe gambrel roofs.

**Kingpost:**

A barn post that supports the ridge-board or ridge-pole of a barn roof. Often bearing on a tie beam. There is only one king post per bent.

**Lintel:**

Horizontal stone or beam bridging an opening such as a door or window.

Litter Carrier, Manure Caddy:

U-shaped, metal, tub-like device suspended from a track that was used to transport manure from within the barn to the outside.

Mortise:

A rectangular hole cut into one timber to receive the tenon from another which when pegged forms a strong joint known as a mortise -and-tenon. A blind mortise extends only partway through the timber.

Mow:

The area of a barn where hay (hay-mow), straw (straw-mow) or unthreshed grain are stored.

Mow Ladder:

Wooden ladder framed as part of a bent to allow access to mow when full of crops.

Mowstead Wall:

Low interior barn wall on side of threshing floor. Usually 1 or 2 squared logs in height.

Mud Sill, Sill Plate, Soul Plate, Sill, Plinth, Groundplate, Groundsill:

The bottom horizontal beam of a barn wall or the projecting base of a wall or post. May be masonry.

Overshoot:

That part of a barn floor that is over the forebay.

Owl Hole:

Holes, normally decorative, cut high in the gable end of barn to allow owls to enter to facilitate controlling vermin.

Padstone:

A large stone placed directly below a weight bearing barn post to bear the buildings weight. (see Plinth)

Pentice:

A variation of a pentroof but smaller and limited to the area over the great cart doors.

**Pennsylvania Barn, German Barn:**

Typically two level, forebay bank barns that are common in parts of southwestern Ontario centred on Perth and Waterloo Counties. The “Standard” Pennsylvania barn has a symmetrical gable profile while including the forebay. The common “Sweitzer” Pennsylvania barn has a non-symmetrical gable profile caused by the forebay extension. Ensminger identifies 3 classes and 21 sub-classes of the Pennsylvania barn type in North America. (see bank barn). Some Pennsylvania barns are indistinguishable from English barns.

**Pentroof:**

An unsupported roof extension attached to a barn wall to provide additional outside shelter.

**Plate, Top Plate:**

The long beam extending the length of the barn frame on top of the outside wall posts.

**Pole Barn, Loafing Barn:**

A single story barn, usually framed by placing poles directly into the ground, having a low roof pitch , wide gables and may be steel covered. May have one open side, (usually south) to allow livestock free access. Used primarily for stored fodder and/or by livestock accessing it to escape inclement weather.

**Polygonal and Round Barns:**

One or two story barns with six to twelve sides are more common than round barns. Most date from late nineteenth century.

**Post:**

A vertical barn timber. ( see beam)

**Principal Rafter:**

Truncated rafter on each bent that extends from end of tie beam to purlin. Part of the “liegender Stuhl roof truss” that is found in some Pennsylvania (German) barns.

**Purlin:**

The long beam extending the length of the barn frame partway along and supporting the rafters. Supported by a queen post or purlin brace at each bent.

**Queen Post:**

Post supporting purlin. Often bearing on tie-beam. If bearing on second level floor then usually bearing directly above stable posts. If angled from tie-beam then called canted queen post. There are always two queen posts per bent and rarely four, but always in multiples of two.

**Rafter:**

One of a series of sloped structural members that extends from the ridge to the plate and eave. Designed to support roof structure.

**Ridge, Peak:**

The very top of a barn roof.

**Ridge Board, Ridge Pole, Ridge Beam:**

The horizontal structural member between the upper ends of rafters. Uncommon feature in Ontario barns.

**Rubble Wall, Fieldstone Wall:**

Wall formed from unsquared stone not laid in courses.

**Runway:**

A smooth, level floor or ground area used for travel by vehicles or animals.

**Saltbox:**

A building where one eave (normally north) is lower than the opposite.

**Scarf Joint:**

A joint for fastening timbers end to end.

**Sill:**

See Mud Sill.

**Sill Mortise:**

Open topped blind mortise cut in sleeper to receive tenon on end of floor beam.

**Silo:**

A tower-like structure in which green fodder is preserved.

Sleeper, Sleeper Beam, Girder, Summer Beam:

A strong internal beam supporting the floor beams and often the queen posts. Normally bearing on stable posts. Often the largest beams in a barn.

Stable Posts:

Large interior lower level posts supporting sleepers and upper story posts.

Shakes or Shingles:

Roof and wall coverings. Generally shingles are sawn on both sides, are tapered in thickness and are thinner than shakes. Shakes are normally split on one or both sides.

Stable:

That part of a barn where livestock is housed (stabled).

Stud:

Normally, two inch lumber used vertically to frame a wall.

Swing Beam:

A large strong tie-beam (collar beam) between opposing posts on an interior bent. Supported only at each end. In Ontario swing beams normally support two canted queen posts, occasionally vertical queen posts and rarely king posts.

Tenon:

A projecting part cut into the end of a timber so that it will fit into a corresponding hole (mortise) of another timber. Normally tenons are cut on beams and mortises in posts.

Three-end Barn, Three -Gable Barn:

A barn with a right angled extension to the main structure, usually built as a straw shed.

Thru-Tenon:

Any tenon that projects beyond the mortised post. Compared to a blind-tenon where the mortise reaches partway through the post.

Threshold, Doorsill:

The metal, stone or wooden member lying under a door of a building. Perhaps originally a plank or board placed so as to contain the straw and grains on a barn threshing floor.

**Threshing Floor:**

A central bay on a barn floor where grain crops were normally threshed. Accessed by the great cart doors.

**Tie-Beam, Collar Beam, Collar-Tie:**

Main bent beam connecting posts at front and back of barn. Part of wall on end bents. Swing beams are specialized tie-beams.

**Trunnel, Dowel, Pin, Trenail, Peg:**

A hardwood pin used for fastening wooden timbers together.

To add permanence to the fastening, the pegs were often squared and driven oversized into a round hole...thus the saying "a square peg in a round hole".

**Ventilator:**

Stable ventilators often exited through the roof with a weather cover, while mow ventilators were either placed along the ridge as cupolas or built into the gables as slatted or screened openings.

**Wisconsin Dairy Barn:**

Large two story gambrel roofed (occasionally round roofed) barns with rows of evenly spaced windows and gable-end doors.

## Tools commonly used in square timber barn construction

**Adz:**

A long handled hoe-like axe used to shape round logs into flat-sided beams, posts or planks.

**Auger:**

Spiral steel cutting tool designed for drilling round holes in wood.

**Beetle, Commander, Maul:**

A heavy hardwood mallet that had the mass to move heavy beams, tighten tenon joints and drive wooden pegs during barn frame assembly.

**Broadaxe:**

A large-headed, flat-sided, single bevelled hewing axe. It normally has a short offset handle.

Chisel:

Several specialty chisels were used in cutting mortise and tenons on beams, posts and braces.

Froe, Shake axe:

An L shaped tool for cleaving wood by splitting it along the grain.  
Resulting shakes used as covering on roofs and walls.

Scoring Axe:

A long handled, heavy, single-bit axe used to cut notches in side of round log down to a marked line before hewing begins.

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