

# Lessons from The Past



Goshen Housing Trust, Inc.

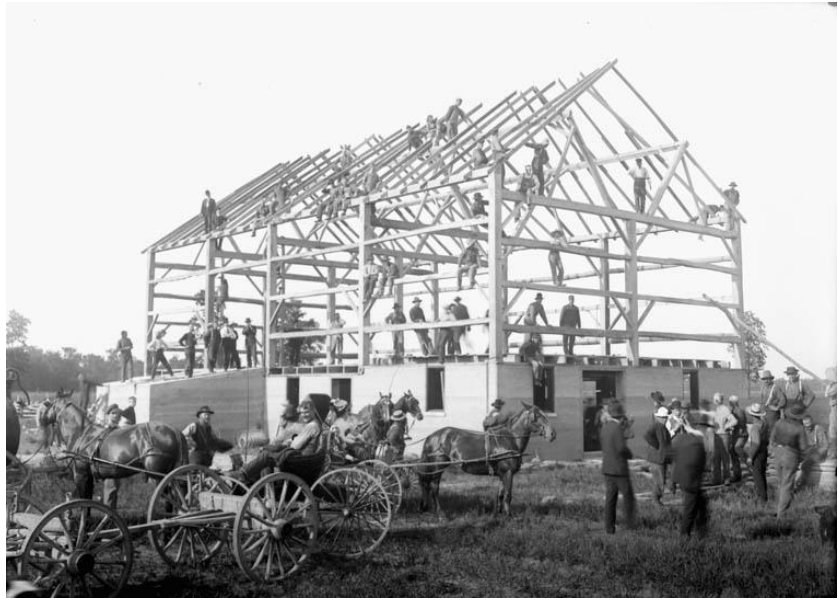
a 501c3 non-profit corporation

[www.GoshenHousingTrust.org](http://www.GoshenHousingTrust.org)

P.O. Box 511

Goshen, CT 06756

New England in the 19th century knew that coming together to help those new in their town would lead to a stronger community. Back then, the challenge was the barn. It was an essential element of any successful homestead. The barn provided a place to work, stored crops and housed the animals. Without a barn, new community members could not become productive members of the community.



A barn was usually the largest structure on any homestead. It was costly to build a barn – more than any newcomer in town had available – and it required a great deal of labor.

The solution was as American as apple pie. The community would come together to help the newcomer to build this all-important element of their homestead. The newcomer's family was responsible for acquiring the materials needed to construct the barn. However, the community did much of the rest – cleared the land, hewed the beams, and built the barn.

Once the barn was completed, the newcomers became sustainable members of the town who gave back to the community that helped get them started. They would also join with their neighbors as they helped the next newcomer build their barn and become a productive member of the community.

Times have changed, to be sure. Nevertheless, the model of the 19th century barn raising has much to teach us today. Today, the challenge is becoming a homeowner. Circumstances have pushed the price of a home in our town well above the level that is affordable by many young families. As a result, new families are not likely to move here, and even our own young feel the pressure to move elsewhere. The average age of our town residents is getting older, our student population is declining, and our organizations find it more difficult to find the volunteers needed to ensure essential services.

The Goshen Housing Trust has a mission to help change this trend. Our goal is to create homes in our community – quality homes – that are affordable by those who will add strength to our community. Like the Barn Raising of old, we think that helping new families to get started here in our town will result in a stronger community.

Our approach, of course, is different, but very similar. Just as the newcomer was responsible for buying the materials for a new barn, today our homeowner buys the building that will become their home. We help by buying the land on which the home sits. It is just about that simple.

For more information or to learn how you can help, visit our website at [www.GoshenHousingTrust.org](http://www.GoshenHousingTrust.org).