

# Valencia Barn

Valencia, Pennsylvania  
Cooperstown Township



**The Past:** *The barn was built c. 1876 by Samuel Ekas (1850-1910). When he purchased the land parcel from his father Thomas, Samuel became the first resident to live on the property. The property was home to the Cooperstown Institute, which hosted educational and musical programs. The land was a prime area for oil drilling. Farming of the land focused on corn, oats and potatoes. Samuel had 2 milk cows that yielded less than 200 pounds of butter.*

*In 1929, John C Norris (1882-1951), a blacksmith, bought the Ekas' home site and barn parcel. The Norris family had an automobile, a gas engine, and a telephone, but no electricity. John Norris' livestock included: 2 horses, 8 milk cows, 5 young heifers, 1 sow for breeding, 15 other swine, 150 laying hens and two bee hives. Given the amount of livestock, it was probable that the barn was in great use and possibly remodeled during his tenure on the farm. After his passing in 1951, children and grandchildren took possession of the*

## Barn Facts:

- Built 1876
- Enclosed eaves-side forebay barn
- 65 feet x 45 feet
- Made from oak, walnut, chestnut, poplar
- Hand hewn beams with some that were two sided sawn (repurposed logs from another building or a local plank road).
- Dismanteled 2018



**Information of Interest:** *Between 1830-1850, lumber, charcoal making, and iron making were leading industries for the area. Farming demands included grain for breweries, dairy products, meat, poultry, eggs, and potatoes. Majority of the farmers devoted 2-10 acres for growing potatoes, an inexpensive food and popular amongst the working-class.*

*An interesting scandal of the time in the county was that of the Biddle Boys. The Biddle's were in jail for the murder of a grocery man in 1901. They were scheduled to be executed, but on the night of Jan 20,1902, the warden's wife, Kate Soffel, help them escape. Some say she was either madly in love with one of the Biddle's or had fallen under his hypnotic influence. She purchased five saws and stood in front of their cells reading very loudly from the Bible to conceal the noise as they sawed through the bars. On the night of their escape, she thoughtfully chloroformed her husband the warden. In 1984, the story was made into a movie entitled Mrs. Soffel. The movie starred Mel Gibson and Diane Keaton.*

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