

Historic area barn destroyed by fire

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A twister in 1945 didn't take down the Parsons' Norwood township barn but a bolt of lightning on May 7 proved to be powerful enough to end its stay in Charlevoix County after over a century.

In 1945, a tornado shifted the barn off its foundation, but the Parsons family shifted it right back. Third generation Parsons family farmer, Dave Parsons said that he worked hard to maintain the structure.

He said the barn was somewhat of a landmark for several years; it sat proudly up on a hill and was visible from US-31 South.

"It's a shame to see old barns fall by the wayside, they are part of our history. I've tried to keep it maintained and it ended up going down anyway," Parsons said.

Parsons grows and sells hay for animal feed on 170 acres of land in Norwood Township. He was working near the barn located off of Parsons Road on May 7 when he spotted billows of smoke.

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(Right) This over-a-century old barn was destroyed by a fire last week. This photo was taken a few years ago. (Above) The fire consumed the barn quickly, making it a fireball in the night sky. The owner of the barn, Dave Parsons, said he believes the fire started from a lightening strike. The barn and the land he farms has been in his family for over 100 years. (Photos courtesy of Dave Parsons)



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He rushed to call 911 and then headed for the barn to see if he could drag any of the family's belongings out.

"At that point there was no way of even getting close to the building," he said.

Parsons said about eight minutes after contacting 911, Banks Township firefighters arrived, but the roof of the historic building had

already fallen to the floor level and the barn was consumed in flames.

Charlevoix city firefighters arrived a few minutes later and could do nothing.

Parsons said he felt fortunate for the steady rain that evening. It was wet around the flaming structure and a brush fire catching was not a safety risk.

In the wake of the fire, the possibility of his business starting on time depends on an insurance adjuster's decision after the two met

on May 10.

Parsons said that regardless of whether or not they choose to reimburse him for the equipment he uses regularly, like the hay bind and rake that were destroyed, antique farming equipment stored in the barn including, a clover and alfalfa thrasher and old horse drawn equipment "with sentimental value," cannot be replaced.

"I can remember riding on the grain binder when I was a kid," he said of one of the machines recently destroyed.



(Above) What was left of the barn following the fire that destroyed it last week. Dave Parsons, owner of the barn, said the fire also claimed several antique pieces of farm equipment. (Below) The barn was almost destroyed by a tornado in 1943. But, it was rebuilt by the Grange. (Photos courtesy Dave Parsons)

