

Student Handout 1: The Pennsylvania Barn

There are many variations of the Pennsylvania barn; however, two features must be present:

- **Forebay:** An overshoot that projects over the lower level doors to protect them from the weather. The forebay is supported by cantilevered beams (supported only on one end) which extend from the main beam anchored in the foundation walls. Due to weight, many forebays are also supported by posts apart from the foundation (see below).
- **Banked:** The barn is built into the ground (or bank) so that wagons, equipment, supplies, and crops could be easily moved into the second floor.



Forebay

Barn is banked

The pioneer farmer in southeastern Pennsylvania typically grew grain crops. As hard work and quality soils provided abundant yields, livestock production was added to the farm. The mixed grain and livestock production called for a more functional barn.

Pennsylvania German immigrants hailed the “Pennsylvania barn” as a uniquely home-grown creation and a marvel of functional engineering. This well-designed, multipurpose storage facility and workspace was the heart of the farm. Livestock could be housed in the lower level and feed for the animals could be stored on the upper level. This system allowed for feeding the livestock in place, rather than letting them roam.