

John Talcott Wells, Inventor of the Wells Truss

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Figure 1. Barbara Chapman, "Wheatland Memories," Democrat and Chronicle, Rochester, New York, issue of 4 November 2011, p. 4, cols. 4-6.

John Talcott Wells, known as Talcott Wells in nearly every census appearance, was born 14 January 1843 in Wheatland, Monroe County, New York. He was youngest son and second to youngest child of Moses and Myra (Goodhue) Wells. Moses had been born in Wethersfield, Connecticut, and Myra in Parma, Monroe County, New York. He was a New England Yankee through and through.

In the 1870 census, his occupation is listed as a farmer. He and his wife are living with their first child. By the 1880 census, he listed his occupation as carpenter. He was a carpenter still in 1900, but now he and all his children over school age had that occupation.

J.T. Wells had become a builder of barns. His company, J.T. Wells & Sons of Scottsville, New York, specialized in the Wells Patent Barn Truss. His patent for the truss design is US patent 401,870. It can be viewed through Google's patent website at <https://patents.google.com/patent/US401870A/en>. What makes a Wells barn striking to the viewer is the unhindered space. The truss supported the full weight of the roof. No vertical columns or supports were needed.

Wells was known for being able to build a barn of any size the farmer needed. He and his sons would arrive at the site and build the foundation and flooring. Then they would mark on the flooring the design of the truss needed. The first truss would be built right on that design to the wood lengths and angles needed. After that all the

other trusses would be built to match. After the trusses were raised and tied together, the barn's exterior was clad.

Although he used the initial J.T. in his patent application and in his construction company, Wells normally used his middle name. He appears in many U.S. and N.Y. censuses as Talcott Wells. His obituary explains that he was a member of the Methodist Episcopal Church – and that he was descended from Gov. Thomas Wells.



Figure 2. J.T. Wells (5th from left) and his sons and others building a barn; "Design-Construction," Wells Barn History, <http://wellsbarnhistory.com/design-construction/>.

THE WELLS PATENT BARN TRUSS.

(No Model.)
J. T. WELLS.
 TRUSS FOR BUILDINGS OR BRIDGES.
 No. 401,870. Patented Apr. 23, 1889.

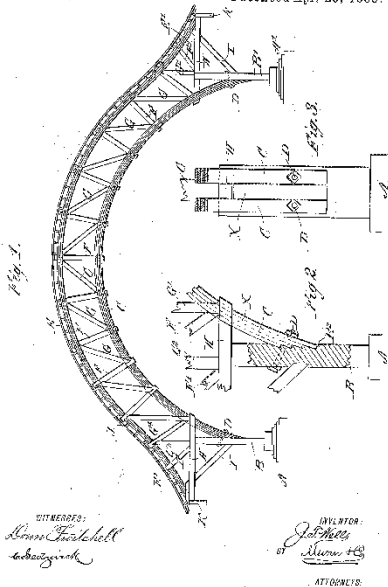
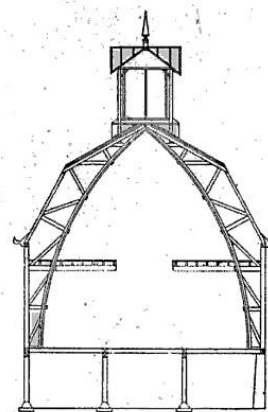


Figure 4. Patent application, J.T. Wells, Truss for Barns and Bridges, U.S. Patent No. 401,870; <https://patents.google.com/patent/US401870A/>



THIS CUT REPRESENTS THE
WELLS PATENT TRUSS
 FOR
GRAIN AND HAY BARN.
 and shows a section over the drive floor, with a Scaffold supported by iron rods from above, which will leave the interior of the Barn free from Posts.

The lower story in the cut represents the basement.

The features we wish to call particular attention to is the absence of all Cross Beams, this allows the load to be run into the Mow as soon as it clears the wagon, the advantages arising from this combination are valuable, it does away with the necessity of hoisting the load clear of the track, thus saving time and travel of the horses, the load does not have to drop from the peak of the barn to the mow, thereby packing so hard as to cause mow burning; the sling fall of Wheat, Oats or Hay hangs near the mow, and the operator can swing it to any part of the mow.

This Barn Frame can be sawed out on the farm with a Portable Saw Mill, if there is timber suitable, such as Spruce, Ash, Red Elm, Soft Maple, Hemlock or any wood that is tough.

This style of barn can be put up without a Mortice, Tenon or Gain, cut in the Sill or the Plate, thereby saving in the cost of labor, there is no large Timber above the Sills, the End Bents are built after an improved plan, which does away with any large posts or beams.

Correspondence solicited.

Working plans, terms and right of use can be obtained by addressing

J. T. WELLS & SONS,
 Scottsville,

Monroe Co., N. Y.

Figure 3. Advertisement for the J.T. Wells & Sons barn-building company.



Figure 5. J.T. Wells and his wife Serena with their five sons.

Serena E. Clark, wife of Talcott Wells, was born 17 August 1848 in Blenheim, Schoharie County, New York and died at the age of 99 on 11 March 1932 in Scottsville, Monroe County. She married 20 February 1873 at her father's home in Blenheim John Talcott Wells, who was born 14 January 1843 in Wheatland, Monroe County, and died 11 March 1932 in Scottsville. They are buried in the Garbuttsville Cemetery, Garbutt, Monroe County, New York.

J.T. and Serena had five sons: Stephen Clark Wells (1876-1963), Noland Goodhue Wells (1877-1954), Robert Royal Wells (1880-1938), Ward Harmon Wells (1882-1957), and John Talcott Wells, Jr. (1886-1962).