



Historic Davenport barn topples

Dan Coyro/Sentinel

DAVENPORT — Unusual northeasterly winds gusting at more than 40 miles per

hour took their toll on Davenport history Wednesday, toppling the 100-year-old

Gianone barn on Swanton Road. The barn was built by Ambrose Gianone, who set-

led on the hill in 1869. In the years that followed, the Gianone family operated a cheese dairy on its ranch. The barn was used for cow-milking. See story Page A2.

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Suddenly, Davenport history falls

By MARK BERGSTROM
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DAVENPORT — By early evening, the normal breeze from the Pacific filtered over Davenport. The kind of breeze which had whistled through the old Gianone milking barn on Swanton Road for more than 100 years.

But, earlier Wednesday, unusual winds were blowing from the northeast, gusting at more than 40 miles per hour.

The gusts hammered at what had through the years become the weakest side of the barn. Many of the old hand-split shakes had fallen off in a hit-and-miss pattern.

The gusty wind poured in through the holes and pressed relentlessly on the opposite wall.

The barn had been built by Ambrose Gianone, who came to Davenport from Switzerland in 1869 and settled atop what has become known as Gianone Hill, overlooking the Pacific from Swanton Road.

Gianone and his two sons, the late Joseph and Emil, operated a cheese dairy from the ranch, beginning in 1913.

Two long rows of stanchions were built inside the barn and more than 100 cows lined up there to be milked.

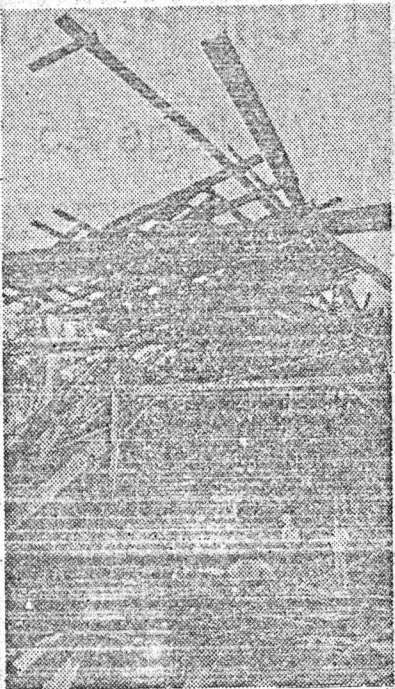
The cheese factory operated until the two sons died. In 1967, the McCrary brothers of Big Creek Lumber bought the land and the next year leased it to potters Al Johnsen and Bruce McDougal.

Several of the old ranch buildings have been remodeled for what is now Big Creek Pottery.

The milking barn remained, but was not a functional part of the pottery.

It was unusual nobody was around the pottery early Wednesday afternoon, said McDougal. A worker left for just 10 minutes on an errand and, when he returned, most of the barn had collapsed.

The old timbers must have groaned in battle, but they were tired and worn.



Dan Coyro/Sentinel

After the winds...

No match for the fresh strength of the gale.

McDougal figures the wrath which poured through the roof blew over the opposite wall and the barn just collapsed.

Lud McCrary had been by the barn that morning and says he wondered if the howling gusts would be too much for the venerable old structure.

From time to time, the McCrarys shored up the barn, trying to slow the deterioration.

"We had been trying to plan what to do with the barn. We wanted to rebuild," he says.

Rebuilding would be a big job. All the shakes on the roof were hand-split. McCrary remembers back to always seeing a ladder up against the side of the barn as the Gianone's constantly replaced the shakes.

Just the portion of roof which collapsed Wednesday is about 1,000 square feet.

As McCrary sifted through the shakes and splintered redwood siding this morning, he picked up square-cut nails, indications the barn had been raised before the turn of the century.

"We'll probably rebuild at least part of the barn now," says McCrary. He sees it as somewhat of a duty.

"It's a part of the community," he explains.