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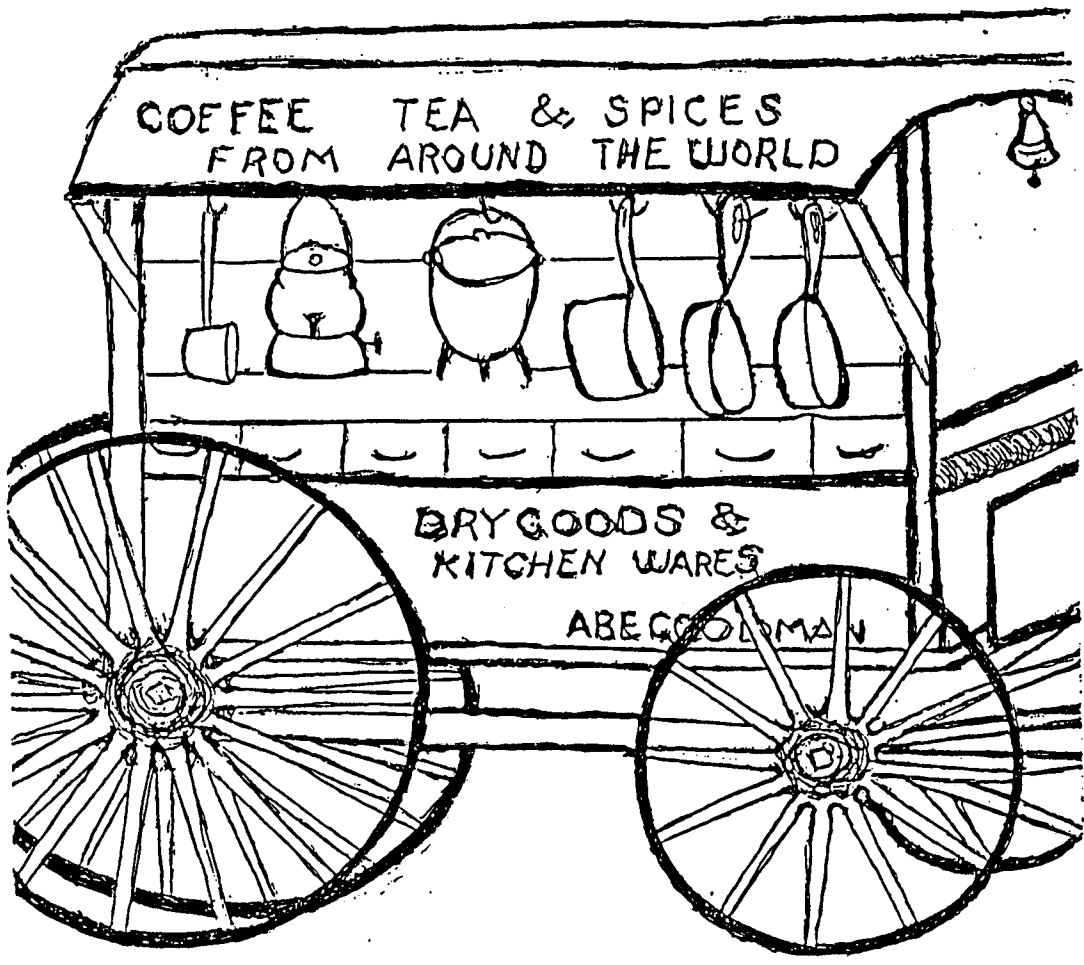
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*Ray Hayes
Remembers*

WISCONSIN



HISTORY
ROOM
977.596
KEY



COFFEE TEA & SPICES
FROM AROUND THE WORLD

BRYGOODS &
KITCHEN WARES
ABEGGOLDMAN

RAY KEYS

THE COUNTRY PEDDLER

When the winter snows had melted and the country roads began to dry, the nomadic country peddler was anxious to leave the crowded cities with his mercantile emporium on wheels and head for the established routes throughout the less populated areas. Areas where shopping malls would not be heard of for at least another hundred years, and a trip to and from the nearest town could take most of a day.

A visit from these super salesmen with their tightly packed wagons were welcome by Johny, six and Grandmother, seventy-nine. Visits from the peddler caused greater furor in those days, than a well planned shopping trip to Macy's or Marshall Fields does today.

He brought needles and pins of all sizes, threads in many colors and buttons of every size; cotton stockings to replace the itchy woolen ones we had to wear to school in the winter, shoe laces for all, and Sunday shoes. Mom had saved enough egg money to buy a piece of pretty cloth for a brand new dress. Grandmother got some stronger spectacles, a shade for the parlor lamp, and there was a pretty flowered chamber pot that would look good in the downstairs guest bedroom. What a sight to see, all of this spread out on the kitchen table. There were log chains, double bitted axes, sheep shears

and iron skillets, not displayed. If what you wanted still wasn't there, just ask and like a magician, with a whisk of his hand, from one of his boxes or shelves, he would hand you what you had asked for.

If you climbed on the tailgate or the seat of his wagon, the combination of odors of bolts of yard goods, linaments, toilet water, bath soap and harness oil, was like a mystic fragrance from a foreign land. The buying and selling (not without some dickering) was just a part of the peddlers visit they all enjoyed. With the experience of the past years, they knew where to expect an evening meal, where there would be a stall and a measure of oats for their horse, and a soft bed with clean sheets for themselves. With the supper dishes cleared away, the whole family was held spellbound, late that night, with the exciting tales of places near and far away. About droughts and floods, bank robberies and gold rushes, little Tom Thumb and his pretty wife, who were traveling with P.T. Barnum's circus, and when President Teddy Roosevelt bought the Panama Canal from France.

After a typical farmer's breakfast, and one or two last minute exchanges or purchases, a pack of school

crayons, an agate shooter or a few clay marbles, longer bows for Grandmother's spectacles: a bet with Johny that he'd be six inches taller by next spring, and a promise from Susan that she wouldn't get married before next spring.

Later that same day or another day there might be a large celluloid comb suitable for wearing in a lady's hair, maybe a round of soap for a shaving mug, a few of Grandmother's favorite cough drops, and maybe a few more clay marbles. Now so many years later I wish I could remember the name that was printed in gold letters on the side of the peddler's wagon. I also wish I had kept just a few of those dear old clay marbles.

GRANDDAD'S POTATO PATCH

I'll always remember Granddad's story of his and Grandmother's first winter on their first farm after they were married. It had been too late in the spring, after they were settled, for them to plant potatoes and have them mature. When fall came, potatoes were so scarce and high priced, they couldn't afford to buy any. The first part of the winter wasn't too bad, Grandmother substituted rutabagas for potatoes, but by spring Granddad was so tired of eating rutabagas, he wouldn't allow them to be cooked in the house again.

All the rest of his life, the potato patch was a must for them, it was his pride and joy. There were always enough potatoes planted for their own use, plus a little surplus for the less fortunate families. In the spring, when he was sorting and cutting the seed potatoes he was reminded of that first winter. The potatoes had to be smoothed skinned, well shaped and there had to be two eyes to each piece. When the moon was in the exact quarter, according to the Farmers Almanac, the potato pieces were dropped in the holes in the ground, which were in straight rows, tamped firmly with a hoe, then he waited for a good spring rain to come.

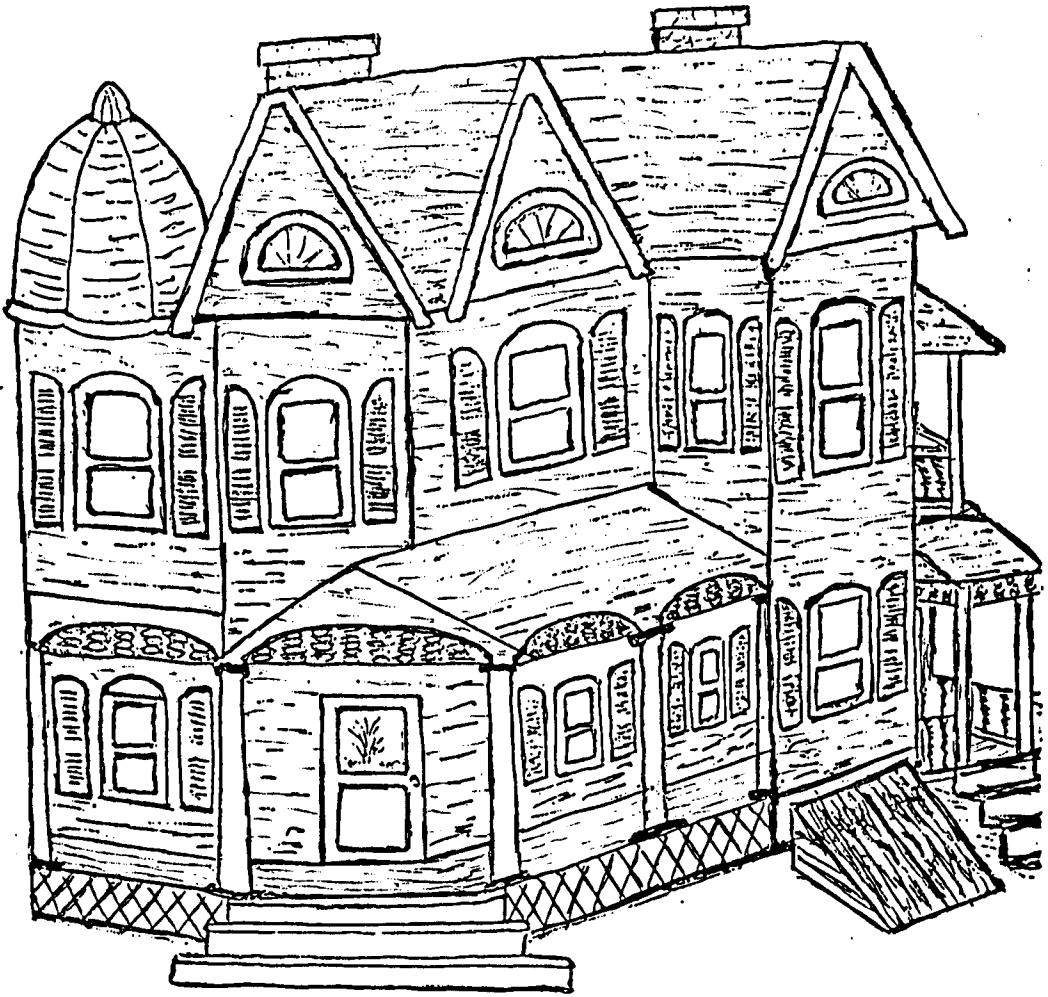
Besides planting potato seed saved from his own

crop, Granddad always tried out a new variety advertised in one of his many farm papers. Some of the seeds were planted earlier to have new potatoes for the Fourth of July. New potatoes boiled "in their jackets", used in potato salad for the picnic, or fried for breakfast, what a treat they were. The old saying "By the sweat of thy brow. thou shall earn thy bread" goes for potatoes also, for without sweat, you don't get a good crop. As soon as the first leaves popped through the ground it was time to start hoeing, by the time the whole patch was hoed it was time to start over again. This time as he hoed, he hilled the ground up around the plants. Then came the job nobody liked, that was picking potato bugs off of the leaves. All he needed was kerosene in a tin can, each vine was looked over carefully and any bugs were knocked into the can, any eggs found on the underside of the leaves were either squashed or picked off and put in the can. When the job was finally done, everything in the can was burned.

The plants grew their velvety-green leaves and blue-white blossoms with yellow centers, in nice straight rows, free from weeds. It was no wonder Granddad took so much pride in his potato patch, it was beautiful.

Grand Dad's Potatoe Patch
Page Three

In the morning Grandad would dig enough potatoes with the potatoe digger that he thought we could pick up in the afternoon putting them in bushel boxes which were put in the cow barn where they would keep nice all winter, and after a few days when we had all of Grandads potatoes picked up we would pick up potatoes for some of the neighbors, and that helped makeing spending money for us just so long as we got through by the time Mom or Dad came to take us back home to get ready to go back to school, and that would be the end of our nice summers vacation at our Grandparents farm for that year.



GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE

At the crest of the hill, one's attention is first drawn to the huge lilac bushes marking the entrance of the driveway. As I walk between them now, I wonder how many times I had toddled, then ran and finally just walked in their shade and admired their beauty, all green in spring, in full bloom in early summer, and snow laden throughout the winter.

I remember Grandmother telling how they were just little shoots when she and Granddad had planted them the year they bought the farm. By now all the robins had left, but I know that all through the summer there had been nests filled with young hungry birds wanting to be fed. There always had been and, I hoped, always would be the avenue of stately pines, their size and waving branches adding a feeling of welcome and great security. Just beyond the pines, in the center of what was once a well kept lawn but now only a mass of old dead grass and tangled weeds was Grandmother's house, standing in a manifest of grandeur of yesteryear.

Although the elements of time had taken their toll throughout the past years, one had only to close their eyes for a moment to recapture the spirit of elegance that had once prevailed. The dusty windows with fluttering shades and sagging shutters seemed as eyes

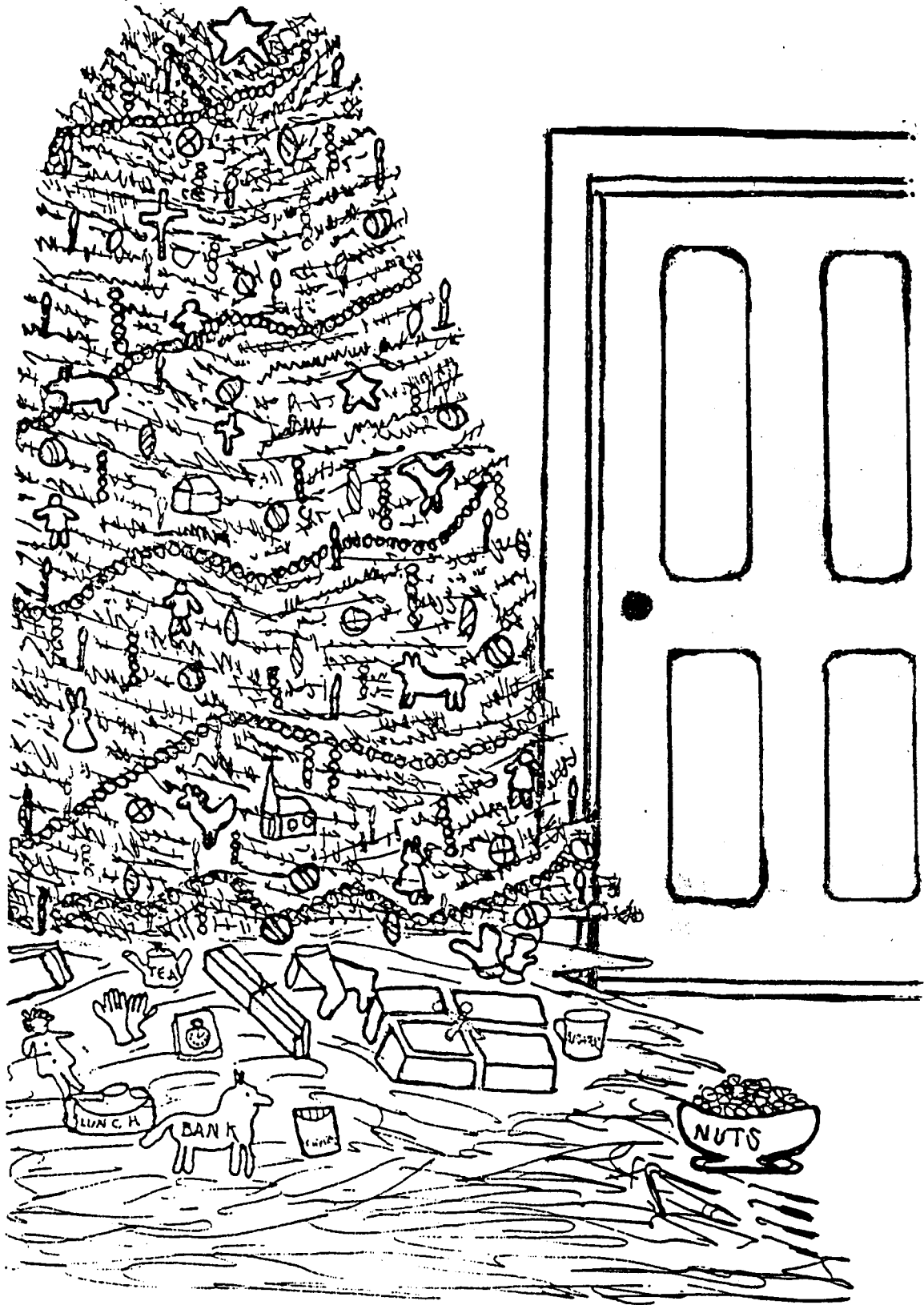
half closed, dreaming and recalling the days of the past when this house had been such an exciting part of so many peoples lives. The big double doors that closed off the living room had been rolled back on their track for many joyful occasions, holidays, weddings, christenings and birthday parties and in sadness when the plain green wreath entwined with plain black ribbon hung on the large front door, when laughter was stilled for a time. There would be fields to sow and sheaths to harvest and the big doors would roll open again and again.

As one looked at the large sprawling front porch with its intricately carved gingerbread trim once shaded with rambling rose bushes and honeysuckle, home for humming birds and song sparrows but now supported by only a few remaining columns, one could hear again the creek of the rocking chairs as women quilted and sewed or just plain gossiped and the heated arguments of the men, on wars, high taxes or the price of grain. What a sight it was to watch the wandering peddler display the contents of his pack in the shade of the porch for the entire family to choose their personal needs.

Down below, behind the lattice work supporting this huge structure, was an area seldom bothered by adults, an area among the spider webs and musty earth where captured frogs and grass snakes were sometimes kept with other treasures, also used to smoke corn silk in homemade corn cob pipes.

As I turned to retrace my walk I stepped aside off the driveway, for a moment I thought I had heard Grandmother's road mare hitched to her buggy taking her once again to her monthly sewing bee.

Not too long a time after my last visit, I was very pleased to receive a heart warming letter telling me that the old house had been torn down, the beautiful woodwork inside had been saved so that it could be used in a beautiful new Baptist church. This is to be built right where the old house had stood for many years. I know that would have pleased Grandmother and Granddad to have such a wonderful organization assume the guardianship of the land and the woodwork that they loved so much, even though Granddad had been a staunch Methodist before he married Grandmother.



Frank Keyser

MY FIRST CHRISTMAS AT GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE

Thinking back over all of the happy holidays throughout my entire life I think the most exciting one was the Christmas we all spent together at my Grandmother and Granddad's farm years and years ago. I'll never forget how the kitchen smelled during the days and weeks before the great event. Some days it smelled of cinnamon and vanilla, others of nutmeg and molasses. There were always a few samples of what was being baked, cookies that got too brown or broken, they had to meet Grandmother's standards. There were fights to see who would get to lick the knives and spoons used to spread the frosting. We didn't have to be reminded to keep the wood box filled with the right kind of wood grandmother used for her baking in the wood burning stove. In the evening, after all of the chores and the dishes were done, we all sat around the table in the kitchen and strung popcorn and cranberries on long strings to be hung on the tree along with the ornaments, animal cookies and gingerbread houses that had been baked.

Oh, how slowly those last few days seemed to pass, but finally the Saturday just before Christmas Granddad hitched his team to the bob-sleigh so that we could go and get our christmas tree. How happy we all were as we

snuggled down in the deep straw and the horses trotted down the lane to the wood lot where there were evergreens of all sizes that Granddad had left after he cut down the larger ones for firewood and lumber. We ran from one tree to the other until we finally found one we all liked. Back home we all helped get the tree into the stand and then set it on the back porch to wait till the final day. After supper we all teased Grandmother until she let us go up in the attic and bring down the boxes of tree ornaments and candle holders, we set them in the front parlor till later. What excitement and fun it was as we wrapped and rewrapped our gifts for each other and when we were all through we were off to bed to try to sleep and dream of the wonderful day to come.

It was still dark outside the next morning when we all rushed downstairs into the parlor, we stood there for a few moments in silent awe as we viewed the majestic scene before us. There was our beautiful christmas tree, the many colored ornaments shining so bright from the light of the flickering candles, our strings of popcorn and cranberries draped around the tree from top to bottom and the gingerbread houses, candy canes and cookies hanging from the branches.

What fun we had exchanging and opening our gifts as Granddad watched very closely that no one bumped into the tree, causing it to tip over and start a fire. There were Ingersol watches, five bladed jackknives, embroidery sets, dolls with china heads and real hair, besides home knitted scarves, socks, mittens and stocking caps, bowls of hard candy and nuts.

When the chores were all done we were ready for breakfast and what a breakfast it was with all of Grandmother's special coffee cakes and stollen. Then it was off to church, we all snuggled down deep in the straw in the sleigh, covered with robes and blankets, and each one wearing some of their new knitted finery. How beautiful the sleigh bells on the harnesses sounded as the horses trotted on their way to town.

After the services and the exchanging of greetings with friends it was back home to welcome more relatives and friends. Places were made in the barn for their horses, the men retired to the summer kitchen to smoke, drink and talk over the topics of the times while the women gathered in the kitchen to add their help to the main event of the day, the christmas dinner. We youngsters were shooed out of the house and told to work up an appetite which we did by making snow forts

and throwing snowballs until we were called in to eat.

The round oak dining room table was pulled out as far as it would go and all the extra leaves were put in. A plank was put between two chairs so more people could sit at the table and us young ones were seated at the table in the kitchen. After Granddad said grace, he began carving the meats, as the many bowls and platters of delicious foods were passed around each of the women's faces had a smile of delight as her particular contribution was admired. I guess we youngsters were the only ones to have room for more than one piece of cake or pie after we were through eating our meal.

After all the dishes were cleared away there was more visiting and story telling until some of the relatives who lived further away began to leave. For those who would stay over night the spare bedrooms were opened up and the cold sheets on the beds were ironed with hot irons to take the chill off. We youngsters shared our beds with our cousins and after a few giggles and whispers we all fell asleep to dream about. . . Next Christmas.

THOSE GLORIOUS HORSE AND BUGGY DAYS

Gone but not forgotten are those glorious days of the horse and buggy. Thank the Lord we still have horses, but only in parades can you see them hitched to the beautiful carriages, buggies, carts, gigs and surreys (with or without the fringe on top). The elaborate stables and coach houses in the cities have been changed to wash racks or spaces for Bear-cat roadsters and limousines. The lofts upstairs where they stored hay or carriages and sleighs out of season, were remodeled into chauffeurs quarters and rooms for cooks or upstairs maids. Horse barns and buggy sheds along the narrow alleys were changed over to garages for Model-T cars and trucks. The courting days of young lovers with a horse and buggy, when all they had to do was find a nice quiet road, wrap the lines around the whip, and let dobbin take his time were over. With four roaring cylinders and clouds of dust the young man had to keep at least one hand on the steering wheel.

Nobody ever forgot the Sunday when Uncle Hank, his wife and three pretty daughters road to church in their shiny new car instead of their faded old green surrey pulled by Hank's team of gray mares. All the chickens along the road flew for shelter and the horses, turned out for the day, ran to the back end of the pasture in wonder.

Even the local funeral director was swept along in the stream of progress, he traded in his ornately designed horse drawn hearse for a motorized unit and the once shiny hacks were parked in a weed choked lot, and the matched teams that had pulled them had to learn how to rake hay, cultivate corn and pull wagons on city streets.

With this new era, many of the smoke dimmed blacksmith shops

switched to repairing automobiles. Where the smug-faced smithy had once pounded out shoes from red hot iron amid flying sparks and the smell of burnt hoofs for the pacers, trotters and other horses, he now was grinding valves, cleaning spark plugs and changing oil. He didn't have time to make rings for the kids from horse shoe nails anymore. Along with the smithy went the harness shops, with the floor shaking from the stomp, stomp, stomp of their sewing machines as the harness maker put together a brand new harness or patched an old one for you. The harness shop was where you could find a bit to fit any horse's mouth, a cord or leather fly-net, a whalebone buggy whip with nickel furls for a dollar, or a cheaper one for thirty-five cents.

Not in big city or little town will you find a livery stable where you can board your horse by the day or the month or rent a horse or a team by the hour or the day, hitched to any kind of a rig for business or pleasure. You won't find a feed store where they sell hay by the ton or a single bale, a bushel of oats or a wagon load, and baled shavings or straw for bedding.

The once busy sales barns with their shrewd owners are just a whimsical memory to a few old timers left behind who remember how the office walls were lined with colorful pictures of Harvester, Zev, and Man-O-War auction bills for the coming sales and next to the roll-top desk you might find Queenie, the coach dog, in a box with a litter of pups. These old timers were pretty sharp, what they enjoyed most was to outsmart one of their own kind occasionally, like the two that traded sight unseen. One got a dead horse and had to hire two men to get it out of the barn and the other got a wobbly three-legged sawhorse.

Most of these traders were honest but occasionally there would be one, not unlike a few of the used car dealers today, who would buy, sell or trade anything that had four legs and was still breathing and sometimes these horses were aided with tar balls, spiked oats or other concoctions only known to horse traders.

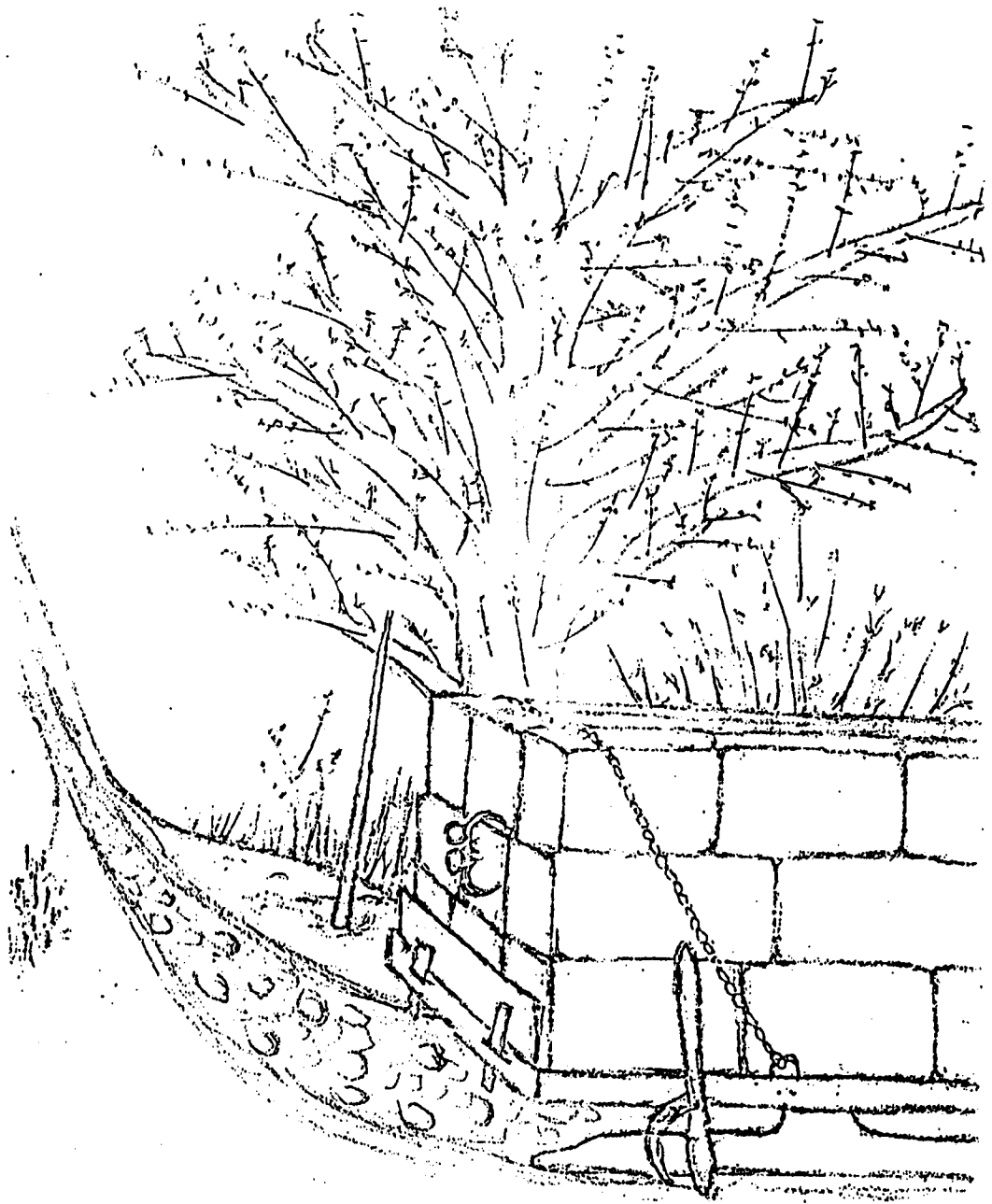
A few old timers still remember "Hay Market Square", but there hasn't been a load of hay hauled in there for over sixty years. Now they sell vegetables, fruit and pretty flowers, but once it was filled with loads of loose hay hauled in from the country. After it was bought, the farmer would haul it to the buyers barn and pitch it up in his hay mow. There were stock fairs that were held in various towns on certain days of every month (like flea markets are today). That was a nice place to go to meet old friends or maybe make new acquaintances and to do a little horse buying or trading. Some deals were made first thing in the morning, but the best ones usually took all day. It depended on who was to get what "to boot". It could have been a buffalo robe or a walking plow, a cream separator or a crate of chickens, but when it was finally over a hand shake and maybe a few nips from a bottle and the deal was closed. Well the fun of buying and trading at the fairs or sales barns, with the boss man leaning back in his chair against the big barn door are long gone and have been replaced with cushioned, air-conditioned pavillions, where a diamond-fingered auctioneer in a stetson hat chants his spiel and prompts his bids. A raised finger, a rubbed nose, or a tug of the ear can raise the bid on a horse a thousand dollars. There isn't any trading, but you may pay with cash or a credit card, if your credit

is good. There's still a few blacksmiths around today, but you don't have to drive all the way in to town to his smoked dimmed shop anymore. Just leave your name on this answering machine and later he will drive his van right up to your barnyard, set up his portable forge, put on his old leather apron, and pound out four new shoes and set them, just like he always did. There's just one little difference though, instead of a single dollar, it's twelve dollars a foot these days. If you want to get a new harness or get an old one repaired, you can still do that too. It may take a half a day's ride to the nearest harness shop but don't expect to get your job while you wait, or a whalebone whip with nickel furls for a dollar, or a linen lap robe big enough for two can't be found but you can still feel the floor shaking from the stomp, stomp stomp of the sewing machine.

New or used buggies can still be bought but the Amish buggy makers have the market cornered, they are artists at making buggies, but be sure to take your checkbook along, because a buggy today cost alot more than \$15.00 like Sears and Roebuck advertised in the nineteen hundred and five catalog.

I guess that all us old time horse and buggy lovers can do these days is dream of the past. I'll bet anyone a brand new single buggy harness against a pair of good pigskin driving gloves that up there in that big green pasure in the sky, there won't be any eighteen wheelers burning diesel oil, leaving a mile-long trail of stinking black smoke. It will be just horses.





MAKING ICE ON THE FARM

It was nice to have an iced cold drink on a hot summer day when you were making hay. The tinkling of ice made a pleasant sound in your glass as you sat on the porch and sipped lemonade in the evening. What fun it was to make ice cream on a Sunday afternoon or to turn the crank on the big ice cream freezer at the church picnic held on the Fourth of July. For all of these pleasures of rural living, there had to be ice. There were no ice men with wagon loads of ice, like in the city, who drove along the streets looking at the ice cards hung in the windows telling how many pounds of ice the housewife wanted for her ice box. There were no refrigerators that made ice cubes right in your own kitchen. Like the old proverb "Where there's a will, there's a way", and ice could be had for those that would put forth the effort to make it. Like all other means of survival by our pioneering forefathers, ice making was just like thrashing or butchering or any other chore, an excuse for neighbors to get together to work, josh a bit, and have a good time.

After a spell of cold enough weather that would freeze over the nearby pond, river or lake to the thickness of about two feet. All that was needed then was an ice saw, a few pairs of ice tongs, maybe a pike

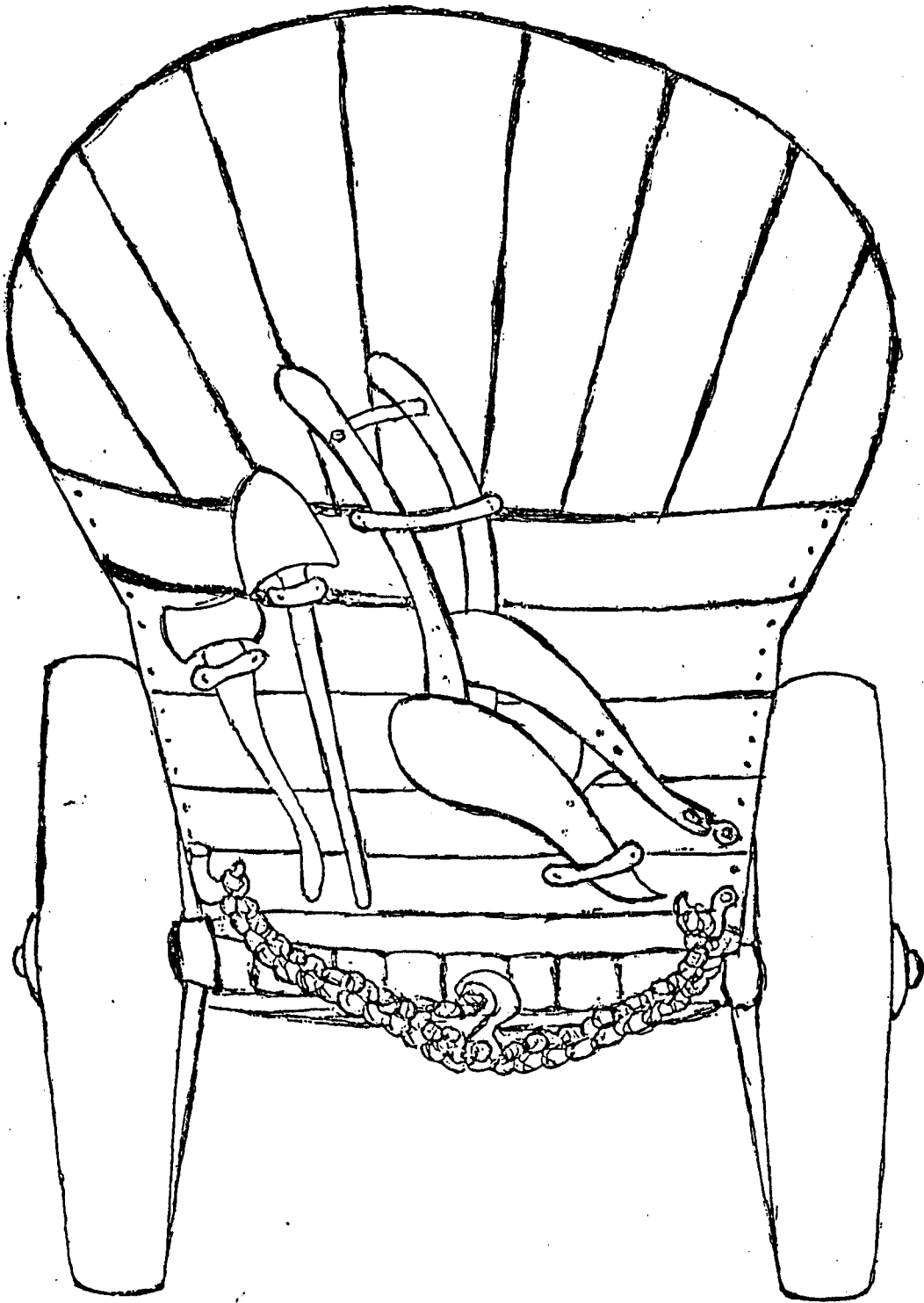
pole or two, a group of neighbors, and their teams of horses and bob-sleighs, and a spell of mild weather.

The most popular ways of making ice, by the farmers back then, was to drive their teams of horses and sleighs right on the ice, some distance from shore, where the ice would be thicker and cleaner. They would saw long uniform strips about two feet wide, chop these across about every two feet making chunks that one man could handle, load them on their sleighs, and haul them home.

Most any building could be used for an ice house, but an old unused log building was the best because of the thick walls and the lack of windows. Here a layer of sawdust or marsh hay was packed between each layer of ice and around the sides until the building was filled, then an extra layer was spread all over the top. There was enough ice for everyone who worked and for all of the picnics that summer too.

The women were always glad when ice making was over. In the cities, where the big commercial ice companies made ice mostly on the rivers. Occasionally a team of horses, used on the big ice cutting saws, would break through the ice, or a man might slip in and the current would drag him under before they could rescue him.

Usually they were not found until after the thaw in the spring. Although Grandmother liked her iced tea on hot summer afternoons, she always thanked the good Lord that that job was done. Some of the older members of the family thought perhaps there might have been someone that Grandmother was close to that might have lost their life while making ice one year.



GREAT GRANDDAD AND GRANDMOTHER BRIGGS

Great Granddad Robert Earl Briggs and his young bride, Elizabeth, migrated from Pittsfield, Michigan to Grand Rapids, Michigan in the year of eighteen hundred and forty nine. They traveled with their two young daughters, Ednie, two years old and my grandmother, Carrie Belle, one, with all of their "earthly goods" in a two wheeled ox cart pulled by a large yoke of oxen.

They bought an eighty acre farm out on the Plainfield Road for the sum of five hundred dollars. Granddad farmed and made some improvements on the place, but located a larger farm with better soil further out on North Coit Road, that he liked better. He told his wife Elizabeth that when the next "Wagoneer" (that's the name they had for pioneer families that came looking for farms to buy) came through, he would invite them to dinner and she should put on the best meal she could with scanty provisions they could afford. It took a few years of waiting but in the year of eighteen fifty three a wagoneer came through stopped and had a good dinner. They liked the Briggs farm and bought it for eighteen hundred dollars making a bit of a profit for the Briggs family.

Not letting the money cool off in his pocket Great Granddad dickered on the price for the other farm of one

hundred and forty acres for the sum of one thousand four hundred dollars and there he and Great Grandmother lived out their lives. Their first set of buildings burned down at different times but were replaced with a better barn and a new brick house which became known as the "White Brick", a landmark for early travelers.

THE KING SIZED TUB AND RUNNING WATER

We all enjoy our tiled and carpeted bathrooms with its king sized tub, queen sized wash bowl, flush toilets and ventilating fans; the many cabinets and illuminated mirrors; shiny chrome fixtures; sweet smelling soaps and bubble bath.

There was a time when we had never seen or heard of any of these things. I saw my first indoor bathroom with running water when the price of corn got up to 40 cents a bushel and hogs hit a nickel a pound. Dad let me go along with him to the city with a load of hogs and we stayed in a hotel over night. At the end of the hall on both floors was a bathroom for everyone to use, with a bowl, a bathtub and a sink with running water.

At home we had a washroom just off the kitchen next to the pantry. For those who didn't go back to the "old swimming hole" down in the pasture it also served as a bathroom with the addition of a wash tub on a Saturday night. The washroom had a wooden sink lined with zinc and a cistern pump mounted on one end and a drain pipe running out through a hole in the wall, where the waste water kept a lilac bush well watered and provided a puddle for the ducks to splash in. There was a granite wash basin to wash in and a soap dish of Lifebuoy soap (the kind that smelled of carbolic). Our city cousins

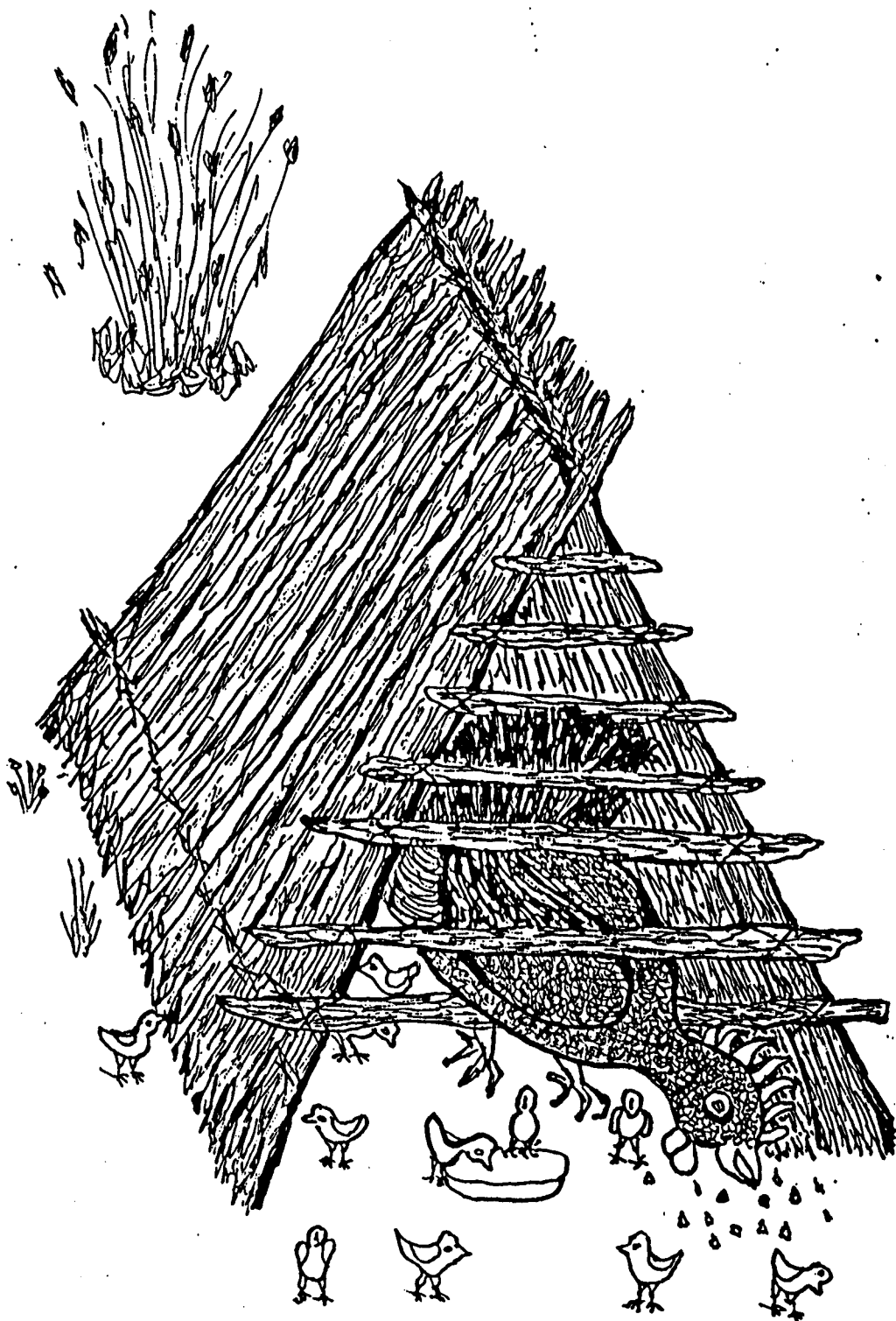
never cared for Lifebuoy soap but if you grew up with it you missed it after you left home. Above the sink was a shelf for Dad's shaving mug, a jar of Carbola salve, a bottle of homemade liniment (good for man or beast), a bottle of bay rum or toilet water, some quinine tablets and a box of Carter's Little Liver Pills. On the wall was a roller towel with either red or blue borders on the sides, when they were new they were kind of scratchy, but they made you feel so nice and clean when your wiped your and hands on it. Next to the towel hung a mirror for you to comb your hair, trim your mustache or shave, for Mom to curl her hair with the curling iron and the girls to fix their hair ribbons in front of.

Mom always said we had it pretty good, when she and Dad first got married, all they had was a wash stand out on the porch in the summer and in the winter they moved it into the kitchen. Well, one year corn finally got up to a half dollar a bushel and hogs were eleven cents, so that winter we knocked out the pantry wall and made the washroom bigger, put new linoleum on the floor, got a cast iron bathtub that sat on legs, a new sink and toilet bowl all hooked up with hot and cold running water, Granddad couldn't believe his eyes.

We quit raising corn, the government said there was a

surplus, and we don't raise hogs now because women don't use lard to cook with anymore. Some times I can't believe the electric bills until I think of all the motors we use, the water softener, the ventilating fan in the ceiling, his and hers electric razors, driers for your hair and even motorized tooth brushes.

Our bathroom got too small again and so did our old bathtub with the legs. It is nice to stretch out in the king-sized tub especially when you don't have to carry all the hot water from the kitchen stove and then dump it all outdoors on a cold winter night, or smell burnt hair from a curling iron. I still shave with Dad's old straight edge razor once in a while, I don't nick myself as much now that we have all the lights and mirrors. I don't think the water is as soft as it was from the cistern and we water the lilac bush with a sprinkler, so there is no puddle for the ducks, we don't have many flies buzzing around the kitchen door either.



Riv Reyes

A CLUCK, A CLUTCH, AND A HUTCH

A CLUCK is a hen who shows she wants to become a mother by sitting on the nest all day, even on just one egg.

A CLUTCH is a setting of eggs, from twelve to eighteen, that are fertilized by a rooster, by being with the hens all the time.

A HUTCH is any kind of a small shelter to keep the hen and her little chicks in until they are big enough to run around all by themselves.

Overhearing two suburban housewives at a nearby table, while eating one day, each telling the other of just a few more items they needed to complete their wall to wall carpeted homes, reminded me of a warm summer day a long time ago. I was on the farm sitting on the porch of Grandmother's house, helping her shuck out a dishpan of peas, fresh from her garden, she was going to cook them for dinner.

Grandmother stopped shucking for a moment, with a pleasant little smile on her face, as she watched a flock of Plymouth Rock chickens scratching around the yard and finally said, "aren't they beautiful". I agreed with her, I knew she was very proud of her flock of chickens. As she started to shuck peas again, she went on to say that her very first flock of chickens were nothing like those out there, they were almost

as colorful as a rainbow, no two were the same color.

They were glad to have what they did because chickens were scarce and there were no stores to buy eggs from, in those days. They liked to have an egg to eat or bake with once in a while. She vowed she would have a flock of all Plymouth Rock chickens some day and that she did.

It took quite a while, and quite a bit of doing, when the time came. One day Granddad invited a hunter to stay for dinner and from their visit Grandmother found out that a neighbor, about seven miles away, had a flock of all Plymouth Rock chickens and some roosters running with them. Well, all Grandmother could think of the next few days was that flock of chickens.

Finally, one cold spring morning, she set out for that neighbor's farm and it seemed a lot longer than seven miles before she got there. After a few cups of coffee and a nice visit, Grandmother was on her way home with two dozen fresh Plymouth eggs packed in her basket, the trip home seemed shorter than the seven miles this time.

The same night they hung a few sacks over some of the windows of their chicken coop, and left some of that days eggs in the nests. On their way out they shut the door so the chickens would have to stay in for a few

days. All of these changes would encourage some of the hens to start clucking. In just two days, they had three or four very fine clucks. They selected a nice warm, dark corner in the barn for the hen to have her nest, and then at night they took the one they thought would be the best and set her on the new nest. She settled down as if at home, they carefully slipped sixteen of Grandmother's special eggs under her and then smiled at each other as the clucking hen took over.

Both being from farms before they were married, they had taken care of setting hens and baby chicks many times, but these were special to them. Grandmother grew eager, waiting and taking care of the hens. The morning of the twenty-first day, they heard lots of peeping, even before they could see the nest. There they were, lots of fuzzy little heads peeking out from the mother hen's fluffed up feathers, she proudly clucking to them.

Well, that's how they got their first flock of all Plymouth Rock chickens and that is all they ever had from then on. She always sent away to get a new rooster every year or two, to get better breeding. She used to even win first prize with her chickens at the county fair. She promised to show me the ribbons some time but we had to get the peas shucked and cooked before the

hungry men came home for dinner.

Well, that's how Grandmother got her Plymouth Rock chickens. I've often wondered if those two housewives ever completed their new homes. I hope so.



8

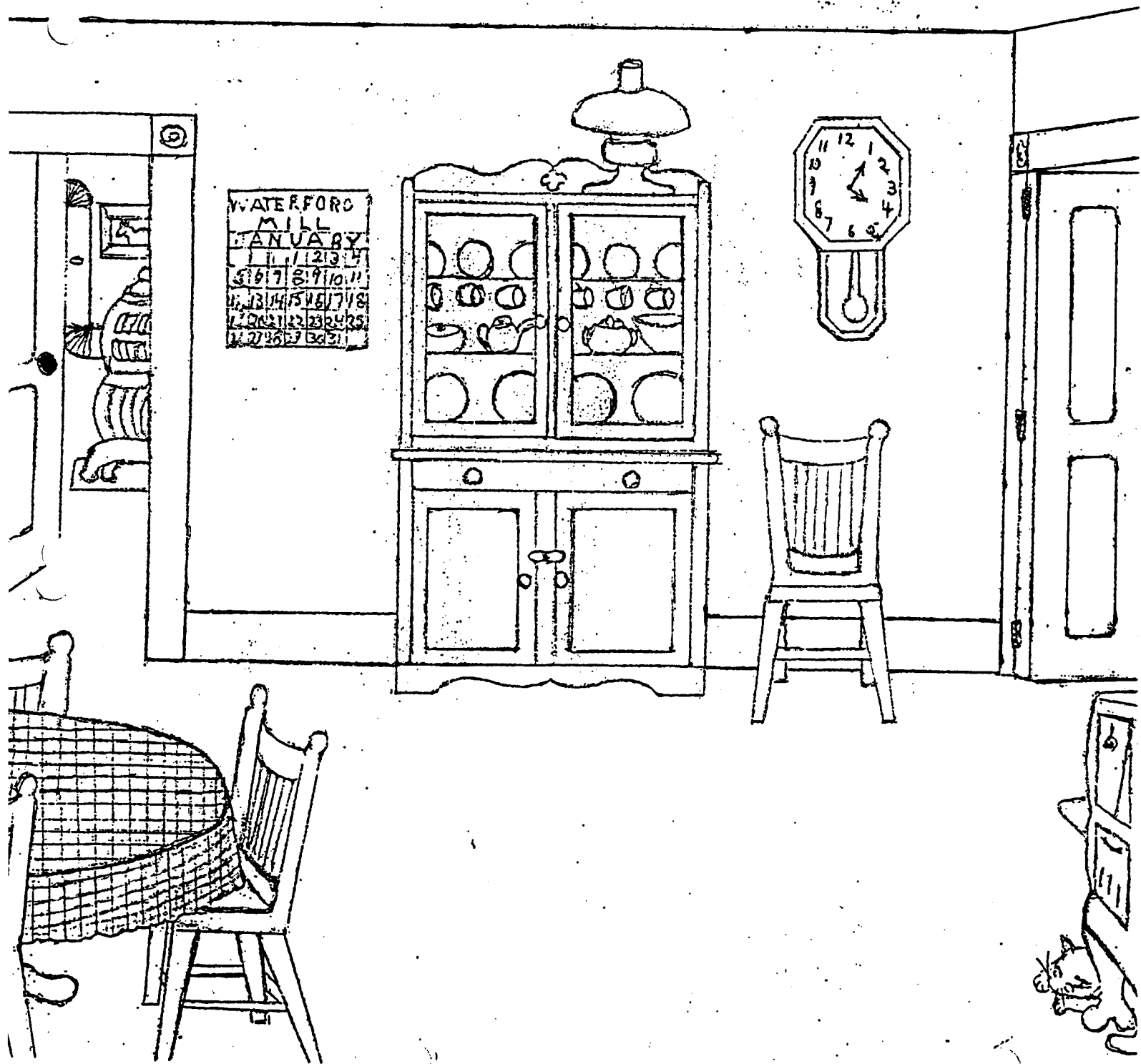
RAY/YES

THE PIONEER WIFE AND MOTHER

Without the pioneer wives many of the early settlers would not have stuck it out and made good while this great country of ours was being carved out of the vast wilderness. Volumes have been written about the great deeds and the hard work the men had done as they went off to work in the lumber camps in winter, how they herded cattle in the west, trapped furs or shipped out to sea, all to earn extra money to keep their homestead going. The wives stayed behind to maintain the home, raise a family and do the chores inside and out. Many a new born baby was brought into the world with only the help of a daughter or son, or no help at all.

There were many times when the crops were planted and if need, be harvested by the pioneer women. Even if the men were home, many of the chores were considered "womens work". Most of the milking was done by the mothers and daughters. After the garden plot was plowed and dragged in the spring, the planning, care, and harvesting of the garden was strictly up to the women and children. One gracious old aunt of mine, whose gnarled hands had done every job there was to be done on their farm was asked which part of the day she liked best, with less than a minutes thought and her eyes still twinkling and a broad smile on her face, she

remarked "I guess it would be from about ten in the evening till five in the morning, there isn't as much work to do then".



The DISH CUPBOARD

The dish cupboard or hutch, as they were sometimes called, goes way back in our early American history. They were made of any kind of wood available by some of the most highly skilled cabinet makers with their large assortment of tools, and by the backwoods farmer with only a jackknife, a hammer, and a saw. Some were stained, varnished, waxed, and polished; others painted, or just left unfinished.

Not being a dire necessity, every new bride didn't have one in her kitchen the day she was carried over the threshold. If there happened to be a carpenter in the family she might receive one as a wedding present, if not, one might be bought or even traded for. Along with the family cow and her very own flock of chickens, the dish cupboard was one of the housewife's most prized possessions. In the early days when most houses didn't have a dining room, the dish cupboard was kept in the kitchen. It was one of the favorite places for the children to hide the thimble when playing the game of I Spy on those cold winter nights.

If what you were looking for couldn't be found anywhere else, it most likely could be found in the cupboard drawer, which was cleaned out every spring at housecleaning time, a collection of bent fishhooks,

rusty pins, odd buttons, broken crayons, and of course, the inside works of at least one alarm clock.

Many a cupboard and its cherished contents were cast out along the trail to lighten the load of the covered wagons as the pioneer families sought new homes in the west.

There is a story of a Mormon woman who lost all she had, except her dish cupboard at a river crossing. Getting a pair of old discarded wheels, she fastened them to her cupboard and pushed it the rest of the way to Salt Lake City.

These wonderful old reminders of yesteryear are still not a dire necessity with all of the new built-in cabinets and modern kitchens, but a few can still be found and they are cherished, as much or more by those who have them, they are rarely sold or traded for now.

Those were the good ol' days.

BLIZZARDS SEEMED WORSE LONG AGO

It is amazing to me how much fuss is made about a little snow storm and the few sub-zero temperatures these days. Children want the school bus to drive to the back door so they won't have to walk to their wind shelter at the side of the road. Mothers worry that the storm will last more than a day or two, preventing from getting to the supermarket in town. The farmer prays that the computerized milking machine won't break down, necessitating him to call a repairman.

Those people should have experienced some of the snowstorms we had when I was a child. We youngsters would rather wade through the snow and take a chance on catching a ride on a neighbors' sleigh going to town to get to school than stay at home and help with all the extra chores. If there was a grandmother around, someone had better get a path shoveled to the outhouse early and then to the chicken coop where warm water had to be carried for the chickens. The eggs were gathered several times a day to keep them from freezing. It seemed that every time you got near the house someone hollered, "bring in some wood for the stove".

There were no meteorologists to tell where the winds were coming from or where they were going, it wouldn't have helped anyway. All the paths that were shoveled

out early, filled up again while you were eating breakfast.

It was half a century too early to have running water in the house, the pump had to be thawed several times a day with the aid of the steaming tea kettle. With woolen mittens, socks, jackets and pants hanging around the big oak heater in the dining room and the cook stove in the kitchen, the house didn't smell quite the same as it did on the days when Mom baked. It took alot longer to fork the hay out of the hay mow than it did for the cows and horses to eat it. It took a strong arm to dig the straw out of the snow covered straw stack, in the barnyard, for bedding after you took the manure out with a wheelbarrow and stacked it on the manure pile.

We could have used the help of some of our city cousins just then, the same ones who always came for a visit every summer and said "it must be fun on the farm in the winter when there not much to do." They could have helped us drag the sled through the snowdrifts twice a day when we slopped the hogs. There were no arguements as to who was going to go to town for pizza, we hadn't heard of them yet. As long as Mom had flour, baking powder, yeast, sour dough starter and sugar she could whip up some kind of a meal that would "stick to

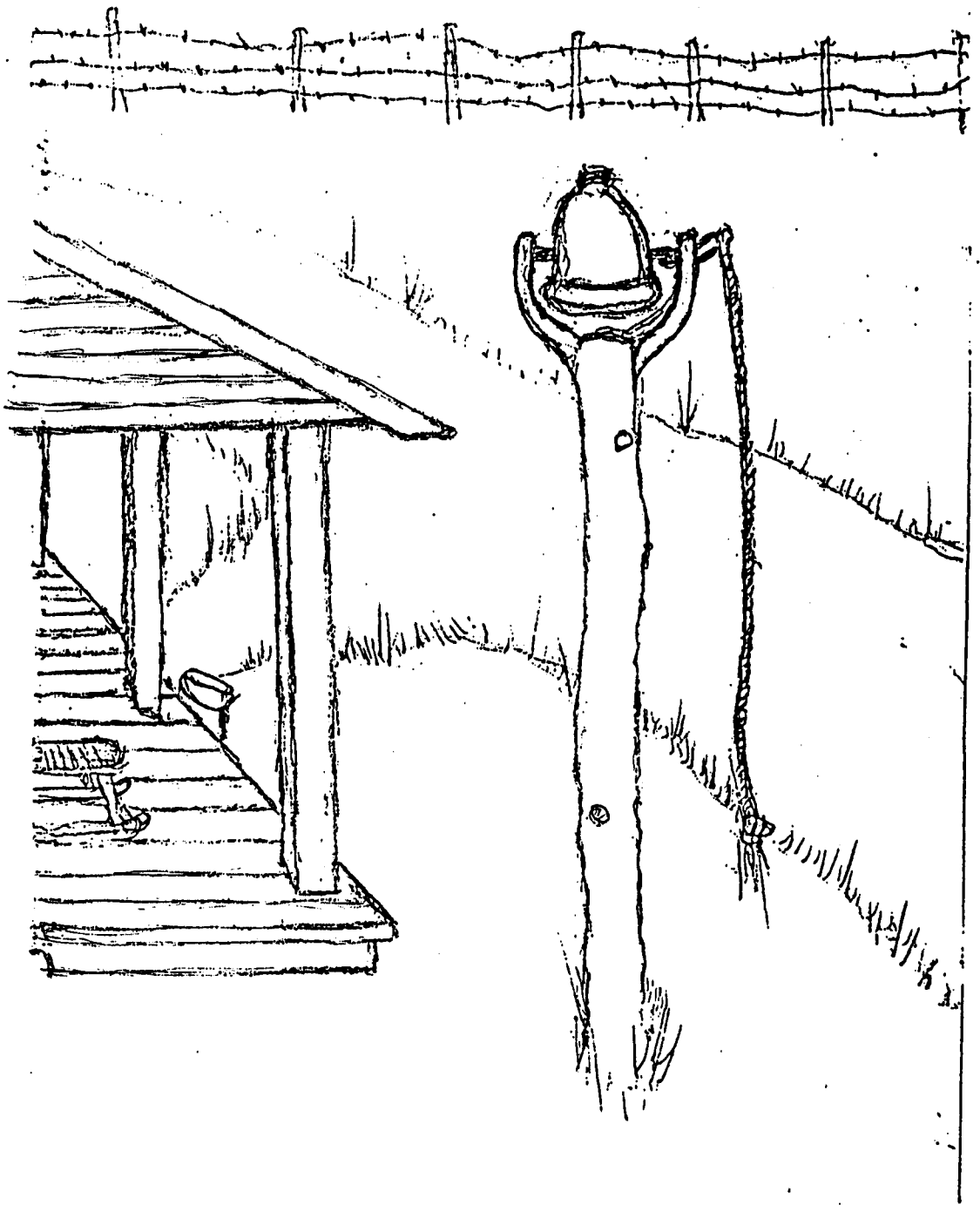
your ribs", so you could go out and face the blizzard.

There were no county trucks with snow plows yet, in order to get the new Sears and Roebuck catalog, the Ladies Home Journal, The Country Gentleman and all the new seed catalogs, we were all willing to get out and shovel the snowdrifts so the mailman could get through with his horse drawn mail buggy and the milk hauler could get our forty cent a pound milk to town.

Eventually the storm would peter out and the sun would shine through the clouds again and the cows would stand around in the barnyard sleepy-eyed, chewing their cud. The horses would race up and down the lane stopping to roll on the drifts of snow. The big red rooster from his perch on the gate post, watched his flock of hens as they scratched around the yard. The dogs lapped their water from the water puddles and the cats came out of the barn to preen themselves on the back porch, in the sunshine. Mom could hang her dish towels out to dry on the lilac bush again.

Somebody might just go out to the machine shed and crack and shell enough black walnuts for Mom to bake a walnut cake. Grandma might start making a new sun bonnet from a pattern in the Ladies Home Journal. In the evenings, Dad checked and rechecked the new seed catalogs to plan the crop for that year. The pictures

in the Country Gentleman were retouched with stubby crayons while other pages were dabbed and stuck together with a variety of jellies. We all settled down to a normal life again, hoping another northeaster wouldn't blow in too soon.



Parker

OUR DEAR OLD DINNER BELL

Aunt Mert glanced at the kitchen clock ticking on the wall, peeked in the oven to check the biscuits and the roast, and stuck a fork in the potatoes boiling in the pot on the stove. Then she went to the kitchen screen door and called out to the youngsters hoeing the garden "one of you get a jar of canned crab apples up from the fruit cellar and the other get a pailful of nice tomatoes and then ring the dinner bell.

Aunt Mert, Mom, and Grandma Ellen all knew from experience just how long it took to finish cultivating a row of corn, draw in a load of hay from down on the flats, finish picking up a load of potatoes that were dug up the day before, or finish patching the lane fence, then unhitch, water and feed the horses.

With the men all washed and combed, all chairs scraped in place around the dinner table. Heads were bowed in giving thanks when the kitchen clock on the wall struck twelve.

Grandma recalled when she and Grandpa were clearing their farm, those first acres were so close to their buildings, they didn't need a dinner bell. She just went to the door and called "Paw, dinners ready". As their land was cleared the fields got further and further away, then Grandma banged an old wagon wheel

with a hammer when dinner was ready, and then finally came the dinner bell. Those days you could buy one from Sears and Roebuck, get one from the country peddler or trade your butter and eggs for one at the country store in town. No one ever thought of them as being beautiful and no two ever sounded the same. Still it was a nice chore to be told to ring the dinner bell at noon. In later years it sounded good when you were back in the fields mowing ~~the~~ hay or stacking ~~the~~ wheat ~~in stacks~~ to hear the bell off in the distance calling everyone home for dinner.

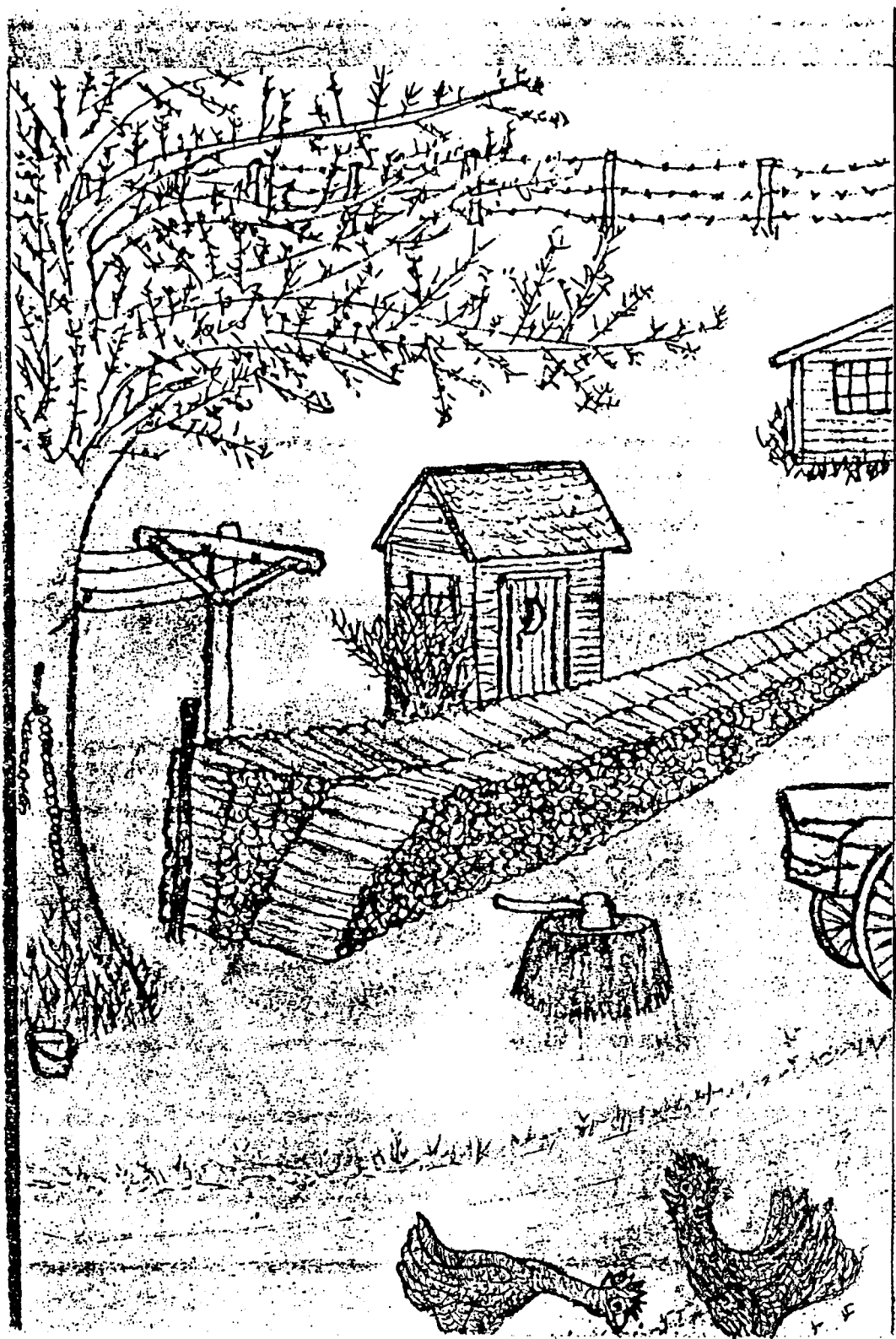
You could tell when it was Monday, Sara Jones, the neighbor, was always late ringing the bell on wash day. All the neighbors were worried because the Parker's bell hadn't rung for two days, till someone went down and found out Dan's wife was visiting relatives in the city, and Dan was "batching it" for a few days.

After Mr. Ingersol invented the dollar watch, slowly more and more of those old dinner bells became silent. But for old timers like myself, who once rang the bell as a youngster, later listened for one when getting a bit hungry and then much later (and many years older) I got to ring one once again to call my grandchildren in for meals. If you want to pick up one of those grand

old bells at an auction or an antique shop, be sure you have quite a bit of cash along, they are a bit higher priced than what the old peddlers used to charge.

WE DON'T NEED A DINNER BELL ANYMORE

Nell checked her wrist watch, it was eleven thirty, she checked the note board to see which field her husband, Bill, was working in today. She got a few packages from the freezer, turned on the C.B. radio and called "Bill", "Bill here, what's up Honey," was the reply. "I'm just putting dinner in the microwave and it will be on the table by the time you get up to the house," said Nell. "Okay, Hon, see you in a few minutes" was the answer. Bill hopped off the tractor at the end of the corn row that he was cultivating and got in the cab of the pickup, drove across the field and up the lane, and as he walked through the kitchen door, he gave Nell a peck on the cheek and sat down at the table, the announcer on the radio said, "Howdy folks, this is the twelve o'clock news". Well, I guess you can't stop progress but I hope no one invents a new "fan-dangle-way" for those pecks on the cheek.



May 1915

OUR NICE OLD WOOD PILE

I happened to stop at a real old fashioned farm auction a while back, it reminded me of how things were when I was a youngster growing up on our farm. It was nice to hear the auctioneer as he worked the crowd for the highest bid. I noticed that there were as many men in business suits as there were in overalls. I thought about antique hunters when an old hand potato planter and an old corn planter brought three times as much as they cost brand new.

I was in for quite a surprise when I heard the final bid on an old round oak heater stove, like the one we used to set up in our dining room during the winter months. Still a greater surprise when I heard what the price of a cord of stove wood brought, it all made me wish I still owned our old stove and our wood lot too. It made you feel good to know some people still liked some of the things we used to have.

On the farm, wood stoves were all we had to cook our food on, do all of the baking, and keep us warm during the long cold winters. Most farms had a wood lot and we were kept busy cutting it down, chopping it up, and stacking it neatly. The farmers that didn't have a wood lot helped a neighbor and took wood in payment for his labor. I'll always remember our old wood pile, it

started at the old gnarled snow apple tree, in the backyard, wound past the outhouse and ended at the chicken coop. In the winter months it was a snow barrier and in the summer it was a good place for the old hens to dust themselves and teach their little chicks to scratch for bugs and worms in the rotted bark and sawdust. Many times the old wood pile was used as a means of discipline, to be straightened up and raked nice and neat.

As you drive through the country these days all the wood piles are missing, there's no place for a big red rooster to perch when he starts out a new day with his early morning crowing. I guess, with all the hens shut up in the laying houses, there's really no use for a big red rooster any more either. With all the electricity, gas and oil that is used for heating nowadays, the art and pleasure of making fire wood is almost gone too. It was a chore that had to be done, some of it was hard work but there was a lot of pleasure too. After we had the team hitched to the big sleigh, all the saws, axes, chains and wedges loaded and last but not least, a big kettle of soup to be heated for lunch, the horses even seemed to want to get started as they pawed the frozen ground, pranced down the lane and across the frozen

creek to the wood lot.

For those who never heard the cawing of a crow from his perch in a high tree top, the rat-a-tat-tat of a woodpecker searching for grubs, the scolding of a blue jay on a frosty morning back in the wood lot in the north forty, or heard the ring of an ax, the sing-song whine of a cross cut saw... well they have missed a mighty nice sound.

There was never any given amount of wood that had to be cut. Whatever was cut was just piled up with what was left from last year. There was always enough left that it all had time to dry out and become seasoned.

Much care was taken so as not to cut any trees that would be good for the future. Only those that might be crooked or growing too close together, and the dead ones, which would make good kindling to get quick hot fires going in the morning, were hauled out.

Every winter the brush piles were burned and in their place a variety of berry bushes would grow up making the wood lot look more like a park. All of the trees that were cut down were trimmed of their branches and loaded on the sleigh, the branches were piled in other piles, which made homes for rabbits and other small animals, until later when they would be burned too. When there

was a big enough load on the sleigh it was hauled back home and stacked near the wood pile to wait till spring when it would be sawed into stove lengths. This was a job for everyone, big and small, to pile up the wood with the rest of the pile. It was everybody's job to keep the wood box in the kitchen filled, especially during the winter, and we always needed extra wood on the baking day. There were different kinds of wood for different kinds of fires. For the big round oak heater in the dining room, that heated the rest of the house, there were big chunks of dry wood for day time and bigger chunks of greener wood that would burn slower during the night. What a great feeling it was to dress in front of that nice warm stove on those chilly winter mornings.

I don't suppose there's too many people around that can remember walking from the barn after doing the early morning chores and watching the blue-white smoke, and smelling it's wonderful aroma as it slowly spirals up from the chimney. I wonder how many remember going on into the kitchen to sit down to a good breakfast of buckwheat cakes covered with maple syrup, bacon and eggs, fresh muffins just out of the oven to be spread with homemade jelly or freshed churned butter. Well,

that's the way it used to be, when all we used was wood
to cook and keep warm with on our farm long ago.

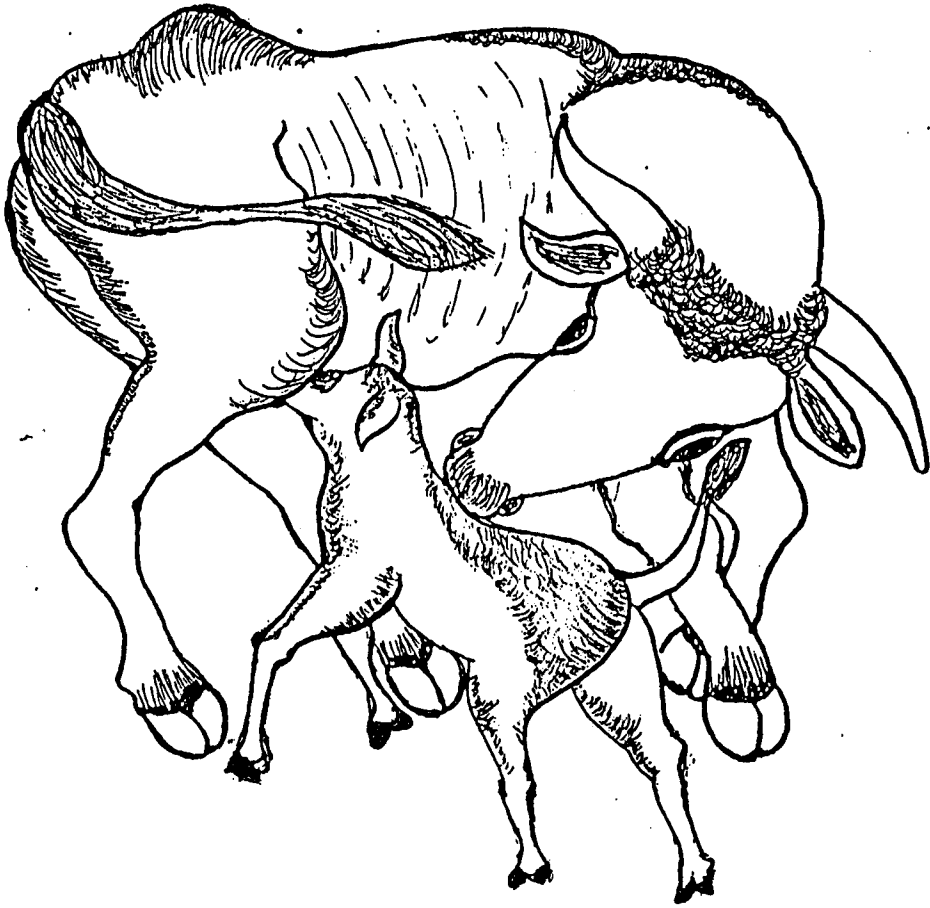


RAYKEYES

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PAYKEYES

THE RIDGE RUNNING COW

Usually whenever Mom or Dad got to telling about their young lives and the early years of farming, they almost always got around to telling the story about their ridge running cow, that was the name Dad finally gave her. They only had one cow, when she was going to have a calf, they would have to dry her up and they wouldn't have any milk for themselves or the pigs they were raising.

So they looked around for another cow to buy, one they could afford. Finally they heard of one quite a ways from home. One afternoon Dad hitched up the team and headed for the other farm, they planned to get there about milking time so they could see how much milk the cow would give should they decide to buy her. Dad had planned it just right and the farmer let him milk the cow that was for sale, she gave a good amount of milk and was nice and gentle. Dad liked her so after a bit of dickering about the price he tied her to the wagon and she was led all the way home. Dad decided to pen her up in the barn with their other cow so they would get acquainted. After milking the next morning, Dad gave them both a good drink from the little creek running through the barnyard and then turn them in a field near the barn that was fenced in with two strands of barbed

wire. In those days, farmers fenced in the fields that they had cleared and were going to plant, to keep their animals and others, like deer, out. Now a days, the farmers fence in their fields to keep their animals in. Well, the new cow must have gotten thirsty and wasn't about to wait until milking to get herself a drink. She got her head between the two strands of barbed wire and headed for the creek in the barnyard, tearing down about three rods of fencing, posts and all. After she got herself untangled and had a drink, she just stood around the barnyard until milking time. Dad got pretty mad, but finally owned up to it being partly his fault.

After that he just let the two cows run loose around the buildings, where there was a lot of good grass to eat. Their first cow was dried up and the new cow was giving a good amount of milk, they had cream for their morning oatmeal and for making butter, and skim milk for the pigs which were doing very well.

Dad had forgotten to ask the farmer if the cow they bought had been bread back, so he had to watch so he could get her to the neighbor's farm where they had a bull. Finally, he knew he would have to get her there the next morning. Well, the new cow, which was soon to be known as the ridge runner, decided she needed to get

there before morning, there were no fences to bother with and her instinct told her the way. When all the nightly sounds had stilled and the evening lamps blown out, a walk in the sandy road which made no sound, brought her to her destination. Bull pastures in those days weren't like they are today, with iron posts and heavy cables. A four or five foot woven wire fence did a pretty good job under ordinary circumstances. the next morning, Dad, with milk pail in hand discovered he didn't have a cow to milk, he didn't need anyone to tell him where she was either. He could see which way her tracks led and he was pretty nervous when he saw his neighbor out in the yard. He figured the neighbor would be pretty upset, but it wasn't as bad as he thought it would be. The neighbor sort of smiled as they both watched the two contented animals eating grass along the bent down fence. Dad was quick to let the neighbor know he would be back to fix the fence as soon as he took his cow home. He was glad the neighbor was satisfied when he was finally finished, it had taken him almost till noon.

Mom had said that this was the best spring and early summer they had had so far. Dad had oats seeded in the fenced in field where the cows had been and it was

growing just fine. He had a good sized field cleared ready for planting corn. He decided to put some collars on the cows so that he could stake them out in the yard, so they wouldn't be able to do anymore damage.

Mom didn't have any eggs to sell for money, they barely had enough eggs for their own use. It was about fifteen years too soon to have a telephone, but if she would have had both, she would have called Dan Daily, the string butcher and told him she would pay him to come and get the cow. Of course, Dan would have thought it unusual to have people pay him to take their animals. Mom had planted sweet corn in her garden which was inside a four foot high woven wire fence. Dad hadn't gotten around to staking the cows that morning. When Mom came out of the house she discovered the first two rows of sweet corn chewed off half way down the stalk.

Well, farmers were never meant to live without catastrophes. Today their computers may break down or their microwave ovens conk out, but an electrical engineer can soon solve these problems. There was a way to solve the problems of having a ridge running cow. Mom cooked up some of Dad's field corn that summer, if picked just right, you can try to imagine that it tastes as good as sweet corn. In the coming years the ridge

runner had two bull calves, which Dan Daily bought for top veal calves to butcher, and three heifer calves, which Dad said got to be the best cows he ever owned.

Someone asked us whatever became of the ridge runner cow? Dad looked at Mom, kind of smiled and told him, one day a young farmer came along with his wife, they were just starting in farming. They were looking for a cow cheap enough to buy. So, I let the farmer milk the ridge runner, she stood nice and quiet and gave a good amount of milk. They liked her, so after dickering over the price, they tied her to their wagon. As they headed towards their home, the ridge runner followed nicely.



PK/KEES

OLD RED OLD BLUE OR THREE TEATED JENNY

There would be very little comparison with the sleek, well fed, pampered dairy cow of today, in their stainless steel milking parlors, with the Old Red, Old Blue or the three teated Jennys of yesterday. Just to mention a few of the thousands that were the foundation of the herds of cows that the early settlers raised. No two looked alike in color or stature or had the same disposition. It would be a safe bet that there would be very few of those old time milch cows, ridge runners, range critters, call them what you might, that could hold put up with all the fussing and fixing that the cows get today.

I don't think there is a milking parlor built that could hold Old Blue, if she heard her new born calf bawling, off some place where she couldn't go. Her butter fat content might have been kind of low but her distruction ability was very high. When a young farmer brought home his first milk cow he'd better have a pair of kicking chains, just in case he intended his wife to do the milking.

Usually after a heifer had raised her first calf there was seldom any trouble getting her bred again. When that time came around and there wasn't a bull at home, someone had better find one or she would find one

herself, with a few rods of fencing and a few fence posts dragging behind her. Most cows were reasonably tame, many times you could see one hitched along side a mule or horse to work in the fields or even ridden to school by a child or two.

As Grandpa and his Grandson walk through the cow barn at the county fair, you might have seen a tear or two in the old gents eye, as the young boy asked "Gee, Grandpa aren't those cows big and fat?" Grandpa might have been thinking about the big green mound in the shade of the large maple tree in the pasture on the farm. Old Jenny didn't go to the butcher when her milking days were over.

"Aunt Betz, Aunt Betz, the Thrashers are coming. The Thrashers are blowing their whistles coming out of Moe's farm." They just got through with Moe's and they are coming here next. Aunt Betz looked at me and nodded. She Said "Yes Raymond, I know what they are doing. They are going to stay here for supper instead of going over to Stuart McGraw's. Because Mr. McGraw is older and don't put on quite as much food on the table that the thrashers like to eat, because they are hungry. So they opt to stay here for supper instead of going over to Mr. McGraw's, which they like and I like.

To a young boy from the city, this here thrashing rig carried down the road, pulled by a big steam engine is the greatest sight to see. Many City kids will never have the privelege of seeing that sight.

They wont do much work here tonight, when they get the Rigs all set up for tomorrow, they will come back tomorrow. I guess the next morning, I got up even before Uncle Wesley did, so I wouldn't miss one sight to watch, and I'm quite sure that this year they might even give me a small job that I could handle.

That will be a Straw Blower, when you blew the straw into the barn and made a straw stack outside the barn in the barnyard for bedding to be used during the winter for the live stock.

Some of Uncle Wesley's neighbors, the bulk of their crew going to their thrashing ring. They had to come with their team of horses, hitched to the Grainbinder to go out in the field to gather up the stocks of Grains that have been shocked there, afterword that had been cut by the Grainbinder. Through the first rain they started to come in with their loads. The loads were thrown into the Grain separater. They started the Grainbinder up, the belts were rolling, the knives were cutting and the screens were whizzing, shaking the little seeds of Barley, Oats, Rye and Wheat off the stocks they grew on. Ending up spouting the Grain into grain sacks. The farmer had the stronger ones to carry up and dump the sacks in the Grainery on the second floor of the Grainery. This system was kept on all before noon, stopping five minutes in the middle for everyone to have a drink of cold water, or lemonade, or something else to drink. Starting up again and working straight through to dinner time. Then we shut down and all washed up. Pumped the water on, we all had to wash with cold water. We washed all the dirt off ourselves, which was a dusty job.

Then we all sat down with our chairs straight under the table to eat dinner. The clock struck twelve on the kitchen clock. How they ate, there wasn't much talking at the table, after they got their stomachs full they would be down joking, talking, kidding and having a good time.

When they were through eating the big meal they had a choice of maybe one or two different kinds of pie, and one of or two kinds of cake. Then they are up, going out to start thrashing again until the little break in the afternoon, when they had another cold drink while resting for five minutes, then they started up again working until late to supertime resting their eyes, then they went home. We ate our supper, did our chores, went to bed early to be up very early the next morning to finish today's thrashing at Uncle Wes'. Then the thrashers moved on to other farms to thrash his grain out. That kept up for maybe another week, until they had everybody's Grain in our neighborhood thrashed out. Then everybody settled down to Fall, getting ready to do planting for the next year. The next job for farmers is to get ready for the cold by chopping down fire wood to run all the stoves' and to make ice to put in the icehouse. They used the ice to make Icecream and to use for cold drinks all through to the next summer.

This is about the end of the Thrashing Story. I hope whomever of you reads it, if you have been on a farm you enjoy it. I hope the people who have never been on a farm will understand what goes on so they will enjoy it! In other words I hope everybody who reads our story about thrashing Grain out on the farm enjoys it. Finished.

Ray Keys died shortly after we transcribed this last article. He wanted to share his memories with all of you!

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