

Bethinking of Old Orleans

C.W.Lattin County Historian



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Smoke Houses

No farmstead of yesteryear was ever complete without a smokehouse. Some were made of brick, a few were of wood and occasionally one was made from a hollowed-out log. The majority were built of stone, either quarried stone, field stone or cobblestone as is seen in the accompanying photo. This cobblestone smokehouse which was built around 1840, was located on the Eagle Harbor Road in the Town of Albion at a farm owned by the late Hartley Johns. Unfortunately this fine example of cobblestone masonry was demolished in 1963. As the month of October is Cobblestone Heritage Month in Orleans County, it behooves us to recognize the folly of wasteful destruction of such unique landmarks.

Now as to the use of smokehouses. In past years, when farmers killed and cured their own meat products, such as bacon, ham, hocks, sausage and dried beef, a smokehouse was a necessity, not only to cure and dry, but to flavor the meat. Various kinds of smokes were used, varying from fresh-cut small maple limbs for sweetness, to hickory and corn cobs.

A smokehouse that functioned properly, was very tightly constructed with no drafts. A large iron or stone pot was set on the floor in the center to hold the fire. This was usually a shovel full of live coals, over which was placed the maple, hickory or cobs. Then the smoke fire was covered with a piece of metal so that the fire could only smoke and not burn or blaze. The product to be smoked was hung above the smudge so as to absorb the pungent flavor.