

Bethinking of Old Orleans

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THE PUMPKIN BIN



This cute snapshot was taken in the fall of 1902 or '03. It depicts my father Cary H. Lattin, as a child with his dog Prince in the pumpkin bin. The photo was taken by a distant relative Sam Crawford, the noted baseball player when he was here on a visit. Crawford played along with Ty Cobb and the Detroit Tigers back in the early days of baseball.

He too, must have thought this made a cute picture - the little boy and his dog in a pile of pumpkins. In the background behind the fence was the swine yard. In the lower left corner we can see the side of a barrel. This was in fact, the swill barrel. For those of you who are not familiar with the term, the swill was where peelings, table scraps and extra milk were dumped to feed the hogs. A trough would have been used for feeding purposes. Hence the terminology "slopping the hogs" when they were fed. Swill was a staple on every farm years ago where pigs were raised. As to the pumpkins in the picture, these were going to be busted up and fed to the pigs as well.

Now, as to the bin. Notice it is a very rustic hollowed out log perhaps five to six feet in diameter. It seems that my great grandfather Bartlett M. Lattin and his next door neighbor on the Gaines Basin

Road, Hiram McOmber, cut down a huge sycamore tree around 1870. Going in on halves together for this project, they removed the tree from out of Kuck's woods near what is now Lakeside Park in the Town of Carlton. This would have been virgin timber and according to the story the tree was over ninety feet tall and branched out into a Y formation with two huge limbs part way up. Mr. McOmber took the bottom portion of the trunk and made it into a chicken coop which was at least six feet in diameter. My great-grandfather used another section of the trunk higher up which was cut in half, for the pumpkin bin you see here. With one of the limbs off the tree he also made a smoke house which is a little over three feet in diameter. Of the three items mentioned, the smoke house is the only thing which remains. It may be seen as part of the collection of agricultural tools at the Cobblestone Museum in the Farmers Hall.

One of the characteristics of sycamore trees is that they become naturally hollow on the inside with rotting during old age. Hence, it was fairly easy to chop out the interior as the new hard growth each season is on the outer circumference.