

2-7-01

The old ice house and tractor shed

The illustration represented here is from an original, acrylic painting done in 1972 by Heather Boyd.

It depicts the old ice house and tractor shed as I remember this scene on our family farm, when I was a kid in the 1950s.

It was a very weather-beaten, old structure, which showed deep crevices in the wood graining from the forces of nature over time. The building had never been painted and was made of rough, sawn lumber from a local saw mill, no doubt.

I believe my great-grandfather probably built the ice house in the late 1880s. It was typical of many farmstead ice houses of that period.

Back then, my family harvested ice from Danold's Pond on Otter Creek, north of Eagle Harbor. The ice was brought across lots by bob sleigh, back to the ice house.

Here it was packed in sawdust to keep from melting. The ice box in my grandmother's kitchen kept cool with it, especially during the warm months.

By the 1930s, my family used electric refrigeration. The only thing I remember the ice house ever being used for was the storage of tomato hampers (baskets). And yes, there was the remains of lots of old sawdust in the building.

The lean-to-shed was an after thought, which I think my grandfather added. I have no idea what its original purpose was.

But after World War II, when my father bought a Farm-All tractor from the John Larwood Implement Agency at Five Corners, he used the shed as a tractor garage.

Next to the shed, under a little canopy, stood a square, red gasoline tank for bulk delivery from Crosby-Whipple Oil Corp. of

Lyndonville.

There was a hand pump on this tank, which you cranked clockwise several times to pump out the gas to fill the tractor. Then you reversed this motion to counter-clockwise to start over so you could pump another gallon.

I remember a built-in dipstick on this tank so my dad knew when to call Crosby-Whipple for another delivery.

It seems we always had a few extra iron fence posts standing nearby. The gate for people to access the barnyard shows to the far right.

The black shepherd dog in the picture is "Pepper," who was one of six in a litter born in our horse barn in 1950. She was our family pet until her death in the fall of 1966.

My father had a story he told about this old shed.

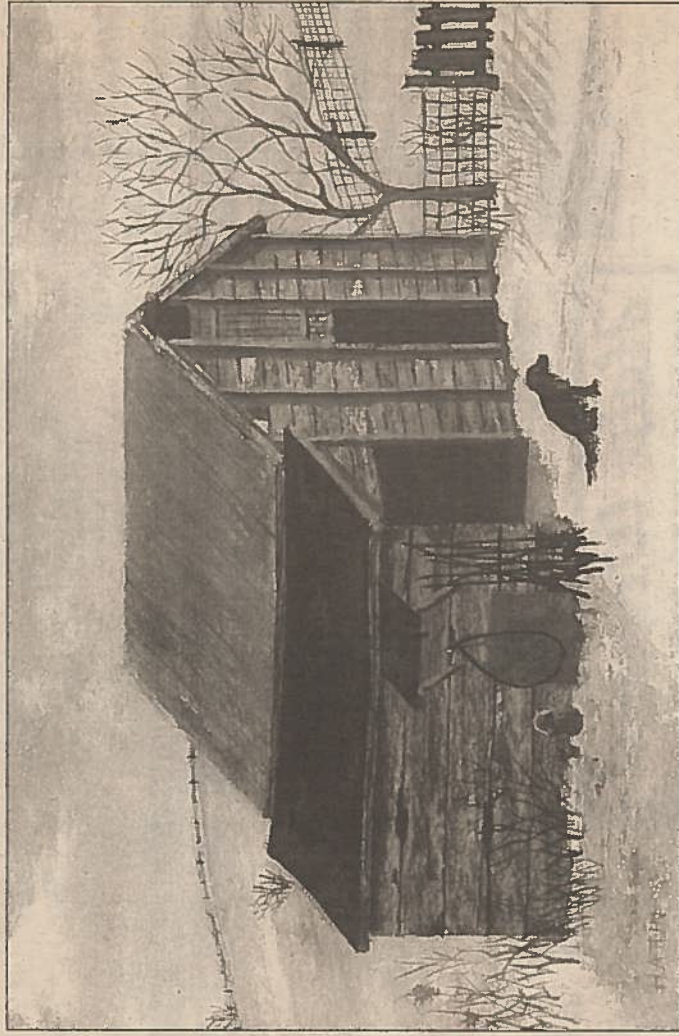
It seems that back in the early 1930s, a tenant farmer in the neighborhood had some pigs. These pigs were always getting out and coming over to our farm where they rooted around and made a general nuisance of themselves in search of food.

I think the tenant farmer thought if they were eating off the Lattins, he wouldn't have to feed them.

My dad drove them home on several occasions and also had alerted the owner to come retrieve them a number of times. Finally, the owner of these pigs said: "Well, the next time they come there, ring 'em."

Sure enough, early one morning when Dad was headed to the barnyard for chores, he noticed the three pigs fast asleep in the shed. Quietly and quickly he found an unused gate and barricaded the open end of this shed so the pigs could not get away.

After the morning chores, he alerted my



grandfather, saying to him: "How would you like to help me ring the neighbor's pigs?" My grandfather allowed as how it would be a pleasure.

Now normally, you would just put a ring in a pig's nose to keep it from rooting around. Farmers commonly did this. However, these pigs got a real ring job.

They not only put rings in the pigs' noses, but also put rings in each ear.

Then my dad made, for each pig, two pieces of heavy wire. He twisted these into the nose ring and then ran one up to each ear ring where they were again twisted into place.

He then went over to the neighbor's and

said: "You can come get your pigs and — oh by the way — we've rung 'em."

My dad said the neighbor man could hardly believe his eyes when he saw his three pigs with their wired ears flopping down. They must have looked absolutely ridiculous.

The pigs, needless to say, were never seen again on the Lattin farm.

About 1960 or '61, after my dad had gone out of farming, I tore this old structure down to clean up the area. With that, the tangible evidence was gone.

However — this little painting — brings back a host of memories of what was once a very utilitarian structure for several generations on our farm.