

BETHINKING OF OLDE ORLEANS

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'It's hard to be poor' in 1919

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Someone who took this snapshot around Waterport wrote in the margin, "It's hard to be poor, 1919." The picture tells us a lot about farm living back at that time.

Here we see a couple using a cross-cut saw to cut up fire wood. This two-person type of saw had to be used in a very synchronized back and forth motion. It was only natural that people used to say, "He who cuts his own wood is warmed twice." It was very hard work and this is how poor people did it.

More progressive farms would have had a gasoline engine and a buzz saw to cut up fire wood by 1919.

Living on a farm in the country 90 years ago meant you probably had a wood burning kitchen range for cooking and hot water.

People were thrifty and the motto "Waste not want not" was at the forefront of their minds. Therefore wood around the farm or from a woods was commonly used for cooking and heating because you had to buy coal.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Farmers were pretty much self sufficient. In part that's because of the lack of electric power which was not distributed to some rural areas of our county until the late 1930s.

Looking deeper into our photo we see poles leaning up against an out house behind the man. Whether the poles are to be used as poles or posts or are going to be cut up for firewood is a guess.

In the distance we can see a chicken coop and a couple of hens in the yard. Again self sufficiency comes to mind. Farmers raised their own poultry for eggs and meat.

Farther back we see, I believe

fruit trees, to the left cherry, peach or plum and to the right, apple trees.

The woman in our picture has just come from the kitchen as she is wearing an apron. Here she did all her own baking, made every meal from scratch, plus preserved foods for future use. Not only did she do all these plus cleaning and laundry but she had to help cut wood, besides.

It was hard to be poor yet somehow that was a way of life for many American families back then. Because of their self sufficiency, thriftiness, hard work and tenacity, they survived admirably.