

My family's old log smokehouse in Gaines

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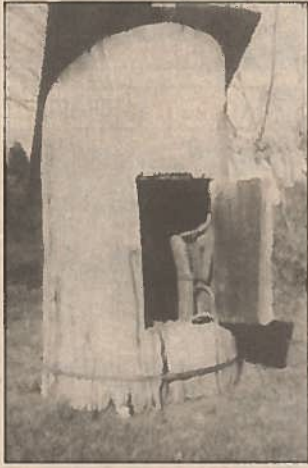
In last week's column I wrote about an early frame house which was once located on my family's farm in the Town of Gaines. This week I'll tell you about the old log smokehouse that was located nearby.

Our photo from 1964 shows the small log building with its door open. The story handed down about this primitive structure is surely an interesting one.

It was perhaps around 1870 that my great-grandfather Bartlett M. Lattin and a neighbor decided to cut down a huge sycamore tree in the area of what is now Lakeside State Park. The two went into this project on halves. The tree was supposedly greater than 90 feet tall and branched out into two large limbs part way up.

My great-grandfather used part of a limb — more than three feet in diameter — to make this rustic smokehouse. The neighbor man used part of the trunk of the tree to fashion a chicken coop, which was more than six feet in diameter, now long gone.

What these two men did was harvest virgin timber for the lumber. It should be pointed out that one of the characteristics of sycamore



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is it becomes, through age, naturally hollow on the inside with new growth season on the circumference. It was during the 1870s that the last virgin timber was removed from the landscape.

One of the boards from this tree, measuring 34 inches in width, was made into a table top by my father back in the 1930s. It has a ragged end on it indicating that it would have been sawed out by an up-and-down saw.

In 1979, agricultural artifacts were gathered together for the collection now displayed in the Farmer's Hall at the Cobblestone Society Museum in Childs. At that time, my father, Cary H. Lattin, donated the old log smokehouse to the museum where it has been

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preserved and placed on permanent view for

visitors to marvel at. It is truly unique and represents a time in our heritage where people were highly ingenious and made the most of what they had.

C.W. Lattin is the Orleans county historian. His column appears every Thursday in The Journal-Register and The Albion-Advertiser.