

## WINTER ACTIVITIES OF AN EARLIER TIME IN THE AREA

When chores were finished the children of the family, tightly bundled against the cold, dragged the Flexible Flyer to the top of the hill and raced each other. Not everyone could afford a sled so Mom's dishpan (if it could be sneaked out of the kitchen), the coal shovel or any other smooth surfaced object large enough to hold a bottom was employed. We can remember turning up the junked fender of a car and finding it worked very well. (The writer still has her wood skis with only a strap into which a booted foot was inserted. No poles were included.)

On a Saturday, when the folks went to town, a youngster might join the town children on the ice of the mill pond. Someone, often a merchant or a member of the volunteer fire department, seemed to manage to have the snow cleared away. The 'big boys' were usually engaged in a vigorous game of hockey which often brought the player within inches of the open water near the dam. This was an added bit of spice to the proceedings. When one got cold, the men around the stove in Ratz's Hardware always made room for a frozen skater. The aroma of drying mittens and socks added its own special odor to that of the store - wood smoke, cigar smoke, fuel oil, etc. Before dark parents and children were reunited under the robes in the sleigh and headed for home. The bells over the horse's back making lots of noise to warn others they were not alone on the road. Often it was necessary to go through the neighbors' fields because much of the snow had blown into the road making it impassable. It took several days after a storm before the farmers had time to take their teams and 'break the roads.'

Among late fall events one might include a husking bee with an unofficial contest to see who could remove the husk off the ears of corn from more bushels than his neighbor. This cooperative activity enabled neighbors to get together for work and fun. When supper time arrived, the ladies put away their quilt frames and the pot luck table was set. The source of the appetite arousing aromas that filled the house all day was evident. These farmers' wives and daughters had spent long hours during the rest of the year, cutting and piecing the tops. If there was space a bit of square dancing could also be enjoyed before the evening came to an end.

The children of the host family might find their bedrooms a little warmer that night than normal after a day like that. However they knew that any water left in the room would be frozen by the time they got up. The next morning, following their parents' persistent calls, it was with dread anticipation that toes hit the cold floor. Taking the clothes they'd wear that day a hurried descent of the stairs was rewarded by being allowed to dress behind the stove. By then Dad, or Mom, had a good fire going and a hot, hearty breakfast waiting. (Marieanna Bair. To be continued. The writer would appreciate additions or comments to this series. 229-6402)

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