

WINTER ACTIVITIES OF AN EARLIER TIME IN THE AREA

Hurrying from a warm bed (in a room where the temperature was near freezing) downstairs to the kitchen where the cook stove was already hot, the three children of the family quickly dressed. Oatmeal (or pancakes, potatoes, ham, eggs, etc.) were already cooking this morning of February, 1900.

Carrying the oil lanterns to push away the early morning darkness the children dashed to complete their chores. Altho' dressed warmly every seam which might admit it was found by the chill wind. Warm water was taken to the chicken house to fill the water fountains. These had been emptied the night before to prevent freezing and breakage. The hens shrieked and scattered if one moved too quickly raising a fine dust. However they soon regrouped around the water fountain (an upside down jar over a dish which allowed air to replace the water as the chickens drank). Occasionally a frozen egg, which had been laid after the last gathering the night before, was found. After thawing the egg could be used in cake batter. The yolk was likely to be rubbery if fried or boiled.

The sheep and calves also needed to be fed and watered before the children started for school. Next month many of the ewes would be lambing and a few days of school might be missed while helping with this event. Sometimes a ewe needed help with the birthing or if triplets were born another ewe, with perhaps only one, needed to be convinced she had twins in order that the odd lamb would not starve. Children were often given lambs for which they were responsible until they were shipped to market and then received the proceeds; or when the wool shorn in the spring was sold.

Calves, for several weeks, had to be fed a mixture of milk and finely ground grain from a bottle until they could be taught to drink from a bucket. Not all calves were cooperative. It was necessary to feed them by hand since the milk from the cows was used by the family, or shipped to the milk factory. Pens were cleaned and fresh straw pitched in. This kept the calves warm and healthy.

Daylight was beginning to show and the lanterns were extinguished on the way back to the house. Following breakfast, the children gathered their books and lunch buckets and began the $\frac{1}{2}$ to $1\frac{1}{2}$ mile trek to school. Hopefully the teacher had the fire in the big stove going well. The students' parents supplied the fuel. They could look forward to the unforgettable odor of drying mittens and socks. (Not all children had sufficient clothes to change from those worn to the barn.) Today they'd make Valentines to give each other and their parents. The Gettysburg Address would be learned and the story of the Father of our country heard again. (Prepared by Marieanna Bair from various resources including "Michigan Memorabilia" by William Pless. Comments and suggestions re these articles are welcome.)

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