



OTSEGO

LIFE AT
THE BRICK HOUSE

1911 TO 1931

OTSEGO HERITAGE PRESERVATION COMMISSION • 1998

LIFE AT THE BRICK HOUSE - 1911 to 1931

PREFACE

While recording an oral history with members of the Otsego Heritage Preservation Commission, Edith (Mrs. Louis) Kluge presented many pages of handwritten notes she had made about living at the brick house in Otsego. She has recorded a realistic description of farm life during the early part of the century. Her intent was to write a book but because her eyesight is now impaired, she had to abandon the project. She very graciously permitted the Preservation Commission to copy and use her notes to produce this book. A minimal amount of editing and organizing of her material was needed. Much of the text, written in "first person", is copied verbatim from Mrs. Kluge's notes. Information from the oral history tapes is also included. Some historical facts about the Ingersoll family have been added since they were the original settlers on the property.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The notes were sorted and organized, pictures were selected, historical facts were researched and text was written and typed by Elaine Norin.

DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to Edith Kiichli Kluge with gratitude for her generous sharing of so much historical information.

LIFE AT THE BRICK HOUSE - 1911 to 1931

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THE OTSEGO HERITAGE PRESERVATION COMMISSION

The Heritage Preservation Commission was established June 27, 1994 by Otsego City Ordinance No. 94-9. It consists of seven regular members and one alternate.

According to the ordinance its purpose is to preserve historic sites and structures which reflect the city's cultural, social, economic, political, visual or architectural history and to work for the continuing education of the citizens of Otsego with respect to the historic and architectural heritage of the city.

This book provides information about the architecture of this house as well as a realistic picture of the economic situation and social activities on an Otsego farm during the period 1911 to 1931.

The commission continues to search for and identify sites of historical significance and records oral history interviews. Many historic pictures, maps and other documents have been collected. These are displayed at the city hall and featured at an annual "Heritage Day" which has been well attended. Two books have been produced; "Otsego In The Beginning - 1852 to 1880" and "The Otsego Cemetery - 1854 to 1996". A column "Historical Highlights" is written and published in the Otsego VIEW newsletter.

At present, commission members are:

Ron Black	Joan Nichols
Janet Bridgland	Elaine Norin
Arlene Holen	Norman Schwanbeck
Frieda Lobeck	Joy Swenson

HISTORY

The 1874 Andreas Atlas states that David Look Ingersoll, who was a farmer, born in Washington County, Maine, came to Minnesota in 1854. He is listed in the 1855 Pheasant (Pleasant in some history books) Grove Precinct census as D. L. Ingersoll with a family of 5 males and 4 females. Pheasant Grove Precinct was renamed "Otsego Township" when Minnesota attained statehood in 1858. Land office records show that David Look Ingersoll filed claims for the 177 1/2 acres in November 1860. He was an active member of the community who served as an assessor and assisted in building the first Wright county road, now County Road 39, part of the "Great River Road". The Ingersoll family lived in a log cabin near the river until they built the brick house. It was near a large elm tree where boats and barges tied up.

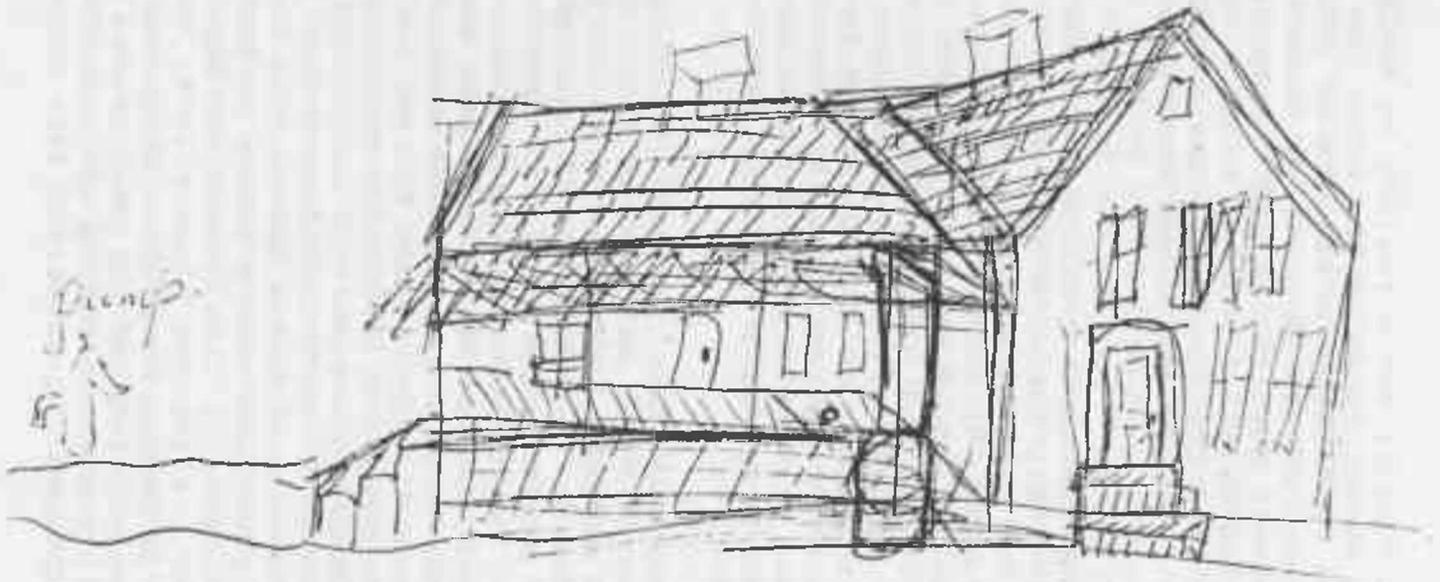
In addition to farming, Mr. Ingersoll established a brick factory on the northwest corner of his farm where clay deposits suitable for making bricks were found. A number of houses were built from these bricks in the local area and bricks were shipped on barges down the river as far as Anoka. The brickyard is referred to frequently in history books and in the Holt Diary. It appears that many farmers worked part-time at this early industry. The Ingersoll house is still in use as a residence in Otsego. It has been completely modernized and remodelled. Another house built with these bricks also survives nearby.

The farm was sold by the Ingersolls in 1901 to Will G. and Guy C. Ridler. Guy married Verna Ingersoll, a granddaughter of David Ingersoll. My grandfather, Joseph Kiichli

(known as "Opa"), was a realtor in Minneapolis who bought farms in the area. He purchased the farm from the Ridders in 1902. When his son, Edward Michael (my father) married Minnie Dorothea Miller (my mother) in 1905, Opa said "If you two will go out there and farm for ten years, the place will be yours". Edward and Minnie accomplished this.

The first years that my folks lived there they worked very hard. Storms and crop failures due to hail and dry weather made for bad times. My brother Ralph was born March 29, 1907 and I was born December 4, 1911. As a child I felt my brother didn't like me. In later years I learned from him that our neighbor, Goldie (Gertrude) Davis told him, before I was born, that he wouldn't get any attention after the new baby came. During my early years, he resented my presence.

When I was about four years old my folks rented the farm out and went to Waconia for about two years. They returned to the farm in time for me to start school. During World War I, food shortages were another problem. The brick house was my home until I married Louis in 1931. We've been married for 67 years now and have three children. An interesting coincidence; Richard and Carrie May Kluge, my husband's parents, had rented the farm just east of ours. Old maps dated 1894 and 1902 indicate that farm was in the name of Lydia Adams. The Kluges moved to Sherburne county before my husband Louis was born. I didn't meet him until much later. After the Kluge's left, the Orion Davis family moved in. They were Ed and Minnie's neighbors for many years. In the 1940's their son Andrew and his wife Olive purchased the house and farm property.



SKETCH BY EDITH



SKETCH BY EDITH

THE HOUSE

The main floor rooms had solid brick outside walls and plastered inner walls. Across the kitchen and dining area was a large screened porch and the entrance to the kitchen. Another entrance led to the living room (parlor), dining room and stairway. We used only the entrance to the kitchen and a back door which went out of the dining room to a shed and then outside. At the end of the shed was the "back-house" (toilet) used in winter. Another back-house was at the end of the path and was used in summer time. Bathroom "tissue" was usually an old Sears Roebuck catalog or tissue wrappings from peaches which were purchased by the crate for canning. Each piece of fruit was wrapped in tissue.

The house was heated by wood burning stoves; a range containing a reservoir to heat water in the kitchen, a heater in the dining room and another in the parlor. The parlor was used as a bedroom in the winter. Some very cold winters we put all the beds in the parlor to keep warm. I understand that before we lived there a brick fireplace existed in the cellar. It came up through the wall between the kitchen and dining room.

The cellar walls were made of fieldstone with a dirt floor. We entered it by lifting the door which was part of the porch floor. Steps led down to another door opening into the center of the cellar. It was smaller than the house. The cellar was used primarily to store food.

The dining room was really the center of living in the old brick house. Today one would call it the "family room". It was about 12 by 15 feet, maybe larger. Most

of our meals were eaten there from a square varnished table covered with oil cloth. It could be extended with four leaves and had five legs. There were six matching chairs. A large roll-top desk with many drawers and pigeon holes occupied one corner of the room. It was Pa's desk, kept neatly arranged and there were some drawers no one ever opened. The top could be rolled down and locked. I believe that Andy Davis bought it when he purchased the farm. A sewing machine operated by a foot pedal was also located here. There were three windows and six doors in this room. The floor was covered with linoleum and woven rag rugs. The wall mounted telephone was the most modern feature in the house. We were on a line with 19 other families. We could hear one another's coded long and short rings; ours was four short rings. It had a crank on the side which you turned to ring others on the line or one short ring to signal the operator. One long continuous ring was the fire alarm. Everyone answered and listened, then went to the neighbor in distress. During long winter evenings, you would often find Ma in her little rocker doing hand sewing, mending or embroidery. Pa would read in his big rocker. My brother and I usually sat in straight chairs at the table doing homework, reading or playing cards.

The kitchen had one large built-in cupboard that went from the floor to the ceiling. Upper doors opened to dishes and lower doors contained food. In later years a kitchen cabinet was added on the west wall. Grandpa Miller, a carpenter, built a flour and bread unit. We had a large sink, but in the winter you could not pour water through it because the pipes froze shut. There was an enameled water pail and matching dipper

on a shelf for drinking water. Everyone used it, even "company". On cold winter nights, it would freeze. On a low shelf beside the sink and cupboard sat two wooden boxes; one for salt and one for sugar. These were made by Grandpa Miller. The door and a window to the porch were on the south wall. Another window on the west replaced a door. A four-burner oil stove with a portable double oven was used in summer. Behind the black wood-burning range a shelf area was used to store pots and pans. I believe that area was previously part of the basement fireplace. There were two doors to the dining room on the east wall with shelves between them.

The downstairs bedroom had two windows and two doors. Nice furniture included an iron bed, dresser, "chiffonier" (a high, narrow chest of drawers) and a wash stand.

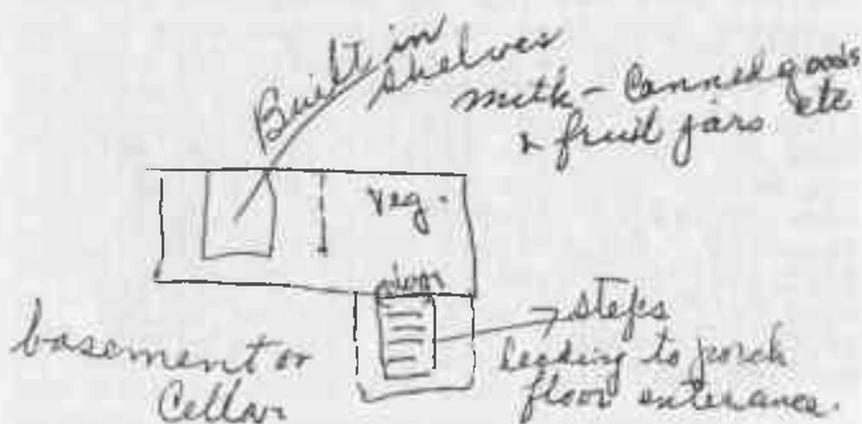
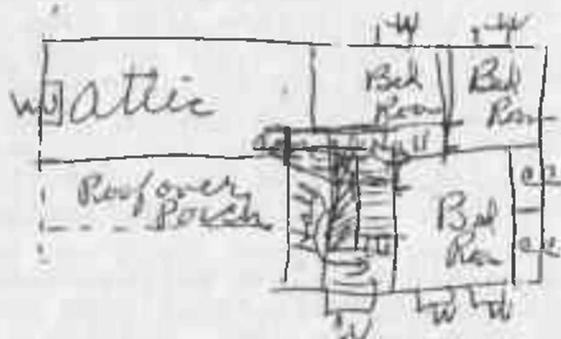
In the parlor a cloth rug covered the center of the painted floor boards. A few rockers, square tables which held oil lamps, and a couch surrounded the rug. One of these tables had glass feet on it. The couch had sides that lifted to make an extra bed. It was padded with extra quilts, had a dark cloth cover and elaborately embroidered sofa pillows made by my mother and Grandma Miller. One table and some picture frames were made by Grandpa Miller. Years ago I refinished one picture frame and used it to display Grandpa and Grandma's wedding picture.

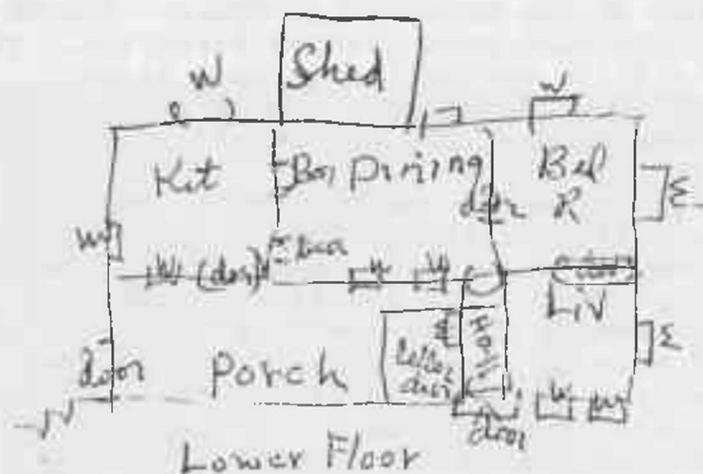
The upstairs bedrooms were cold in winter; no storm windows or stoves. Feather ticks and pillows helped keep us warm. Floors were six inch wide boards. My room was on the north side. A shelf with hooks under it served as a clothes closet. There

was one window and one door. I had a double iron bed. The parlor chimney went through my room. When the rain came from some directions it would seep down the chimney and get the ceiling and floor wet. We used pails or pans to catch the water. Ralph's room was large; two windows, two clothes closets and a large wooden bed. The other bedroom contained a cradle and a trundle bed.

After I was a "big girl" my mother decided to paint all the woodwork and floors upstairs. My room was in pink, Ralph's in tan, the little room in blue and the hall in yellow. We all had to sleep downstairs; no one was permitted to look until she finished. We didn't have dressers or chests of drawers, but many things came in huge boxes, 4 to 5 feet tall and about 30 by 30 inches. These were set on one end and shelves were put in. My mother made pleated curtains from feed sacks, tacked them to the open front and we had dressers! The tops were covered by embroidered scarfs made from flour sacks. Some kids in our neighborhood were envious of the lovely hand made things our mother made for us. She also crocheted lace covers for pincushions to place on our dressers. Ralph's was decorated with his initials; mine with flowers. These were made by filling a sack with dried coffee grounds, covering it with colored cloth and topping that with the lace cover.

The attic was used for storage and on winter wash days, clothes were hung there to dry. The roof leaked at times and we had many pans and pails to put out. Times were hard and there was no money for a new roof.





OUT-BUILDINGS

In addition to the house, a large wooden barn with a "walk-out" lower level of fieldstone and cement was located west of the house on the edge of the hill. Next to it was a large machine shed and a chicken house. We had cows but I never learned to milk them. My mother was in charge of raising the chickens and gathering eggs. These buildings seemed to be targets for wind storms. They were severely damaged several times, but were rebuilt again and again. Finally, one early spring, after these buildings had been damaged by yet another storm, they burned down. The wind was blowing toward the house. The car was parked nearby and got very hot; my father had to push it away. The pump also got very hot so he used feed sacks to protect his hands when he pumped water to save the shed at the back of the house. Fortunately, the wind soon changed direction. The house and its out-buildings were saved. After this my father put a roof over the barn basement but did not rebuild the rest.

A small smokehouse was located on the edge of the hill east of the house. In early days, it was the custom to go upriver and use dynamite to stun the fish. Then they were picked up downstream. We could get 100 or more in an afternoon. These were cleaned and smoked. We picked them off the racks in the smokehouse for snacks. There was also an ice house near the house.



The House before and after porch enclosed





Minnie



Edward



Edward's
corn
crop



Edith in garden by ice house



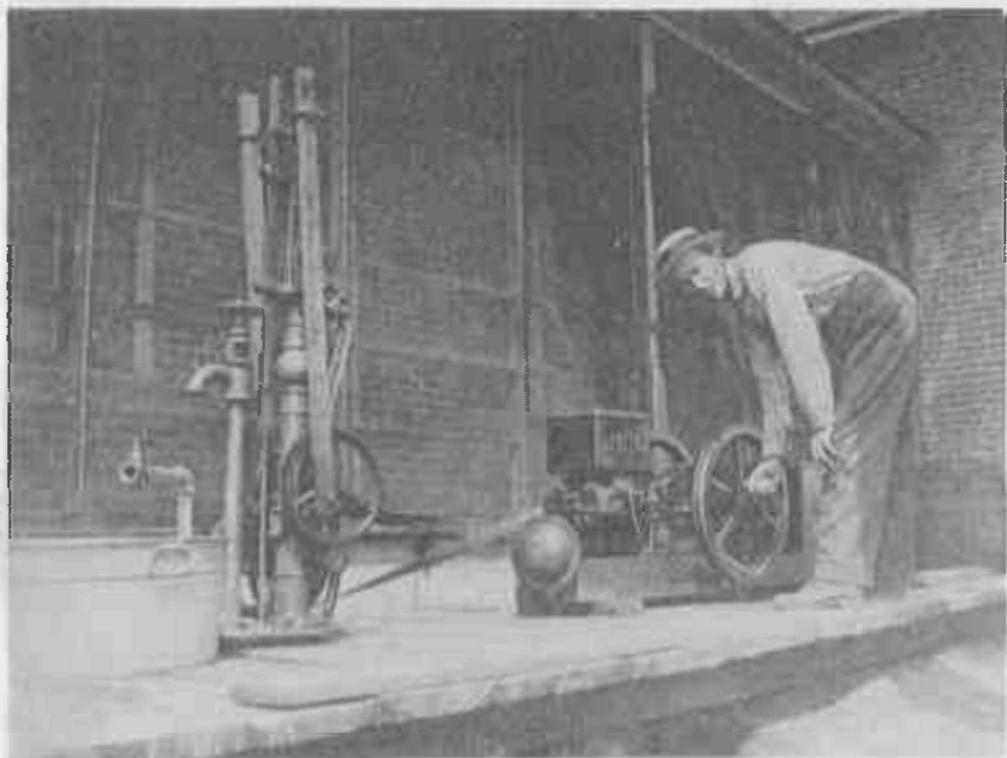
Barn and Shed



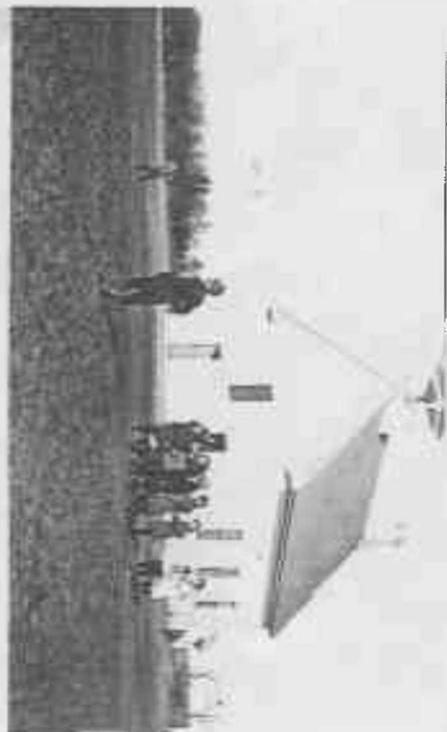
Barn and Shed after storm



Kiichli's car



Edward with gas-powered pump



Otsego School-District 10-June 1926



Edith (ca. 1913)



Edith at door to hall and parlor



Edith and Mrs. Wales at door to screened porch



Ralph
and
Edith
(ca. 1913)

Edith and
Louis 1998



FOOD AND WATER

The cellar kept food cool in summer. There were shelves for canned goods and milk products. Bins were used for storing potatoes, carrots and other root vegetables. Apples were kept in barrels. In winter we'd pile gunny sacks and sometimes hay over the potatoes to keep them from freezing. If it got extremely cold we would put a one-burner oil heater and lanterns in the cellar to save the food. Sometimes food such as carrots and beets were buried in sand in a hole dug into the floor of the cellar.

A small spring ran out of the lower part of the hill. The water was very cold and ran on down to the creek. My father put a huge galvanized tank near the creek and had the fresh spring water go through a pipe and into it. Water flowed out through holes in the upper part of the tank. He sunk a large crock with a wooden cover into the tank. The cold water kept it cool enough to keep butter, milk and food in it. That was our earliest refrigerator. We carried drinking water from the spring up the hill to the house. Later we cut ice blocks from the river and stored them in the ice house. We had an ice box; it was better than the spring but we had to watch the drip tray so it wouldn't run over as the ice melted.

A cream separator was located in the shed. It was a large, heavy machine that separated the thick cream from the milk. It was operated by a hand crank and made a unique "whirring" sound. It required thorough cleaning regularly.

Butter making was another weekly chore. The barrel type churn was filled about 1/3 to 1/2

full of sour cream and hung on a rack frame. We took turns cranking the handle. In the first few minutes we would have to release the gas by pulling the cork out gently. As the cream whipped thick my big treat was a slice of home made bread spread with this sour whipped cream and sprinkled generously with sugar - really delicious. Soon after the cream would make a splashing noise and we knew the butter was separating from the milk. As it chunked together, huge pieces of butter were removed. The cork was removed and the buttermilk poured into a pail. The butter was salted and worked into a ball with a wide wooden paddle. Later it was packed into 2 or 3 pound crocks. Some people used fancy molds. If the cream was pale, usually in winter when the cows had no green grass to eat, we would use yellow food coloring to make the butter look better.

Water for washing and cooking was pumped by hand and carried in pails until we put a tank in the attic. It was filled with a hose from the well. A gas engine was used to pump the water up there.

Much food grown in the garden was canned in glass jars. Even meat would be canned or "fried down". Pork chops and pork steaks were fried and put in small stoneware crocks and covered with melted fat (lard). Placed in the cool cellar this meat would keep for months.

SITES OF INTEREST

"The Hill" behind the house dropped down to a large area of flat land of rich soil. It stretched to the Mississippi to the north and to the pasture to the west. As a small child I enjoyed the steep hill. It was full of hidden surprises. There were many kinds of flowers; early spring yellow cowslips (marsh marigolds), white, purple and dog-tooth violets, jack-in-the pulpits and trilliums. Larger plants included gooseberry bushes, asparagus and small trees. I picked gooseberries, wild grapes and choke cherries for my mother and aunt. Ma made the best red jelly and Aunt Dina made pie for Uncle Charley. I usually got a few cents for doing the picking. One kind of gooseberry had "stickers" all over the fruit and were hard to pick, but of course they made the best jelly. Uncle Charley was my mother's only brother. For years things not wanted in the house or other buildings were thrown over the hill. It was our private dump. I dug up cracked plates, cups, chipped vases, etc. for my playhouse.

Another house was located on the farm west of our buildings. It was near the line between our farm and Spencer's. During the 1920's and 1930's Edwin and Mary Miller, my maternal grandparents lived there.

Our garden was the best in the whole area. When the snow melted and the air became warm, we'd think about gardening and yard work. Tomato seeds and cabbage seeds had been planted earlier, inside, so now we put individual plants into separate pots and lined these up on sunny windowsills. Leftover potatoes were brought up from the cellar and cut up for planting. Out came the rakes and forks. My mother and I would begin to clean up our large lawn. Sometimes my father and brother helped. It was a big chore. The

garden was covered with rich manure from the barnyard. Father would get out the plow and horses and plow up the garden space. Mother did most of the garden work with the help of my brother and myself. As things grew, so did the weeds. We each had a certain number of rows to weed and hoe between. It didn't matter how hot it was, the garden came first and play time later. What we couldn't use, we sold to the city visitors.

The Cane Mill was located in Lily Pond, a ways west of our farm. I think it was run by the Olivers who were related to the Irish family. Mrs. Frank Spencer was Nellie May Irish. A horse or mule walked around in a large circle, pulling the long "sweep pole" that kept the machine grinding. Someone would sit inside this circle on a low stool and feed the stalks of cane into the mill. Cylinders squeezed out the juice which emptied from a spout into large buckets or pots. These were carried to a huge vat for boiling. It finally ended up as "sorghum", a strong molasses type of syrup. Local farmers raised the cane which looked like spindly corn stalks. We used to cut a short length and chew on it to produce sweet juice.

There were three graves surrounded by a fence in the pasture. I don't know who was buried there.*

* It is possible that they were members of the Ingersoll family. The 1860 census lists Lucy Ingersoll, age 3. Her name does not appear on later census records. According to the Otsego Township Register of Deaths, Harriet Demick (Dimmick) age 63 died December 23, 1878. She was listed with the Ingersoll family in the 1875 census as age 59. Leslie Alvin Ingersoll age 1 year 11 months and 10 days died August 6, 1886. Their graves are not found in the Otsego cemetery where other members of the Ingersoll family who died in 1888 and later are buried.

CHORES

Weekly chores were always done on a schedule beginning Sunday evening by pumping water and lugging it to the wash tubs and boiler. We all helped with that so the water would "soften" over night and the laundry could begin early the next morning. Water was pumped by hand or by a gas engine, if it was working and if we had gas. Sometimes water from the rain barrels was used instead of well water.

Monday was "wash day". In summer we washed in the shed next to the dining room. In winter the kitchen was used. The water was heated in a large copper boiler on the kitchen range or the low oil burner stove in the shed. Bar soap, cut into small thin pieces, was put in the boiler to melt as the water heated. Then the soapy water was put in the hand-powered washing machine with a huge dipper. Many a Monday I sat on a stool pushing the long stick back and forth to make the plunger go up and down. The laundry was sorted into several piles; from whites to rugs. Each pile was run through the machine for the number of minutes my mother felt were needed according to how dirty the load was. Some of the wash had to be soaked and sometimes boiled a while in strong soap and lye. Very dirty pieces were also rubbed on the wash board, a wooden frame around some bumpy metal. There was a clock on a shelf; one learned soon how to tell time. A hand cranked wringer was hooked onto the tub. The clothes went between two rollers which squeezed the water out. Everything was rinsed twice; the last tub had liquid "blueing" added to help whiten sheets, towels, etc. In summer the wash was hung on long wire lines east of the house next to the garden. These lines were held by two sets of two poles with a wooden bar across. I had a swing hung from one bar.

Ma had a system for hanging the wash; sheets, pillow cases, towels, etc. in their proper place. The most "undesirable" things always on lines toward the back of the house. One soon learned Ma's method and stuck to it. Every housewife wanted to be the first one to get her wash out on Mondays and to have the whitest wash. My grandmother knew a lady who hung out some dry articles real early, just to be first! In the winter we hung much of the laundry upstairs in the attic on lines strung back and forth across the room. We also had a tall wooden clothes rack made of dowels. Laundry was hung on it and put on the porch to freeze-dry. After a few hours it was brought in and thawed out near the stove. After hanging the wash to dry, we had to dispose of the dirty water. The soapy water was used to scrub the back house, shed floor and porch floor, then rinsed with cleaner water. The tubs and boiler were washed and polished, then turned upside down on benches or hung on the wall of the shed. In summer the cleanest water was carried out to the garden. When the wash dried, it was folded just so and carried back in a woven reed basket or a clean bushel basket lined with newspaper. Ma and I sorted the things that did not get ironed and put them in their proper places in each bedroom and the kitchen. Those pieces to be ironed were lightly sprinkled with water, rolled up, placed in a basket and covered well; ready for tomorrow. Some wearing apparel was dipped in a starch mixture and wrung out. On wash day, dinner was often a pot of beans in the oven or a kettle of soup on a back burner. As I reminisce about wash day, I appreciate the wash and dry things I have now. So much for the "good old days"!

Tuesday was ironing day and one of the bread baking days. Both required hot stoves and kitchen area work. Ironing boards were home-made; wide boards, well padded, with one end propped up on a table or cabinet and the other on the old high chair or each end set on the back of a straight chair. We had two sizes of boards. The sad-irons were heated on the cookstove or on the oil burner on hot days. They had detachable handles. We had 2 sets of 3 irons.

Wednesday was mending and sewing day. The foot-pedaled sewing machine was put to good use.

Thursday was shopping day. We'd take the cream and eggs into Elk River to sell and buy groceries. The five gallon can of sour cream would bring about \$3 to \$5. A pork roast of 4 to 6 pounds would cost about 50¢.

Friday was upstairs cleaning day. The beds would be changed; put the bottom sheet in the wash, put the top sheet on the bottom and use a clean sheet for the top.

Saturday we cleaned downstairs and did the baking for the weekend and company on Sunday. All six lamps had to be filled with kerosene and the chimneys washed. Lanterns were also filled and their globes were cleaned. Saturday was also bath day. In summer we used the shed where we did laundry. A gray metal wash tub was our bath tub. In winter we used the kitchen or dining room beside a stove. The tub was filled with hot water from the teakettle or reservoir on the stove. In winter the stoves were stoked up; sometimes to a cherry red. We rotated like roasting marshmallows; the side by the wall with "goose bumps" from the cold, sometimes almost singeing our butts when we lingered too long near the stove. We dried ourselves

in a hurry, sometimes shocked by the ice cold linoleum if we stepped off the rug. We never had a bathroom while I lived in the brick house. I still have one old tub hanging on a nail in our garage. Maybe I'll use it for a planter and grow geraniums in it.

Sunday was the day we often had "company" from the cities. There were only a few other Catholic families in our area. We went to church in Albertville.

There's always work on a farm; gardens to tend to, lamps and lanterns to clean, chicken house to clean, lots of cooking, dishes to wash, food to harvest and prepare.

Spring housecleaning was an annual chore involving a lot of work. Clothing and bedding was hung outside to air. Dust was beaten out of rugs on the grass. Winter things were cleaned and stored and summer things were unpacked. The cellar was opened and aired.



Ironing Board



SKETCHES BY EDITH

RECREATION

Box Socials were festive events at the local school for kids and adults alike. It was a great way for young men and women to meet. Each young unmarried woman prepared a supper and packed it in a colorfully decorated box. Boxes were trimmed with crepe paper, tissue or sometimes leftover wallpaper. Boxes were placed on a table. The young men bid on the boxes; the highest bidder shared the supper with the young lady who prepared it. The cash collected went to the school.

School picnics were also well attended by families in the area.

In the spring when baby animals; calves, pigs, lambs and cats were born, our neighbor would call me when he had any orphaned piglets or lambs. I'd bring them home in my apron, bottle feed and raise them. I had many pets that way. I sold them before I got married.

Our parents and the neighbors had dances and card parties at their homes. A week after an adult party, the young people would have theirs.

When I was older, we would go to Monticello for roller skating and shows; some of the more grown-up boys had a car.

When I was younger, I played with dolls. Sometimes at home and sometimes with other little girls at their homes.

We sometimes enjoyed ice skating on a nearby pond.

ECONOMIES

Nothing was wasted. Ma sewed rag strips together and rolled them into large balls. These were taken to a weaver and made into rugs which were used everywhere, like beside the beds and in front of the sink. Every week these rugs were taken up and it was hard work to stand on the porch and shake out the dust. The kitchen rugs were shaken every day. We washed them, when needed, in the hand powered machine.

Scraps of woolen fabric from the best parts of worn out clothing were washed and taken to Cambridge woolen mills to be made into filling for quilts - "quilt batts". Quilt tops were made from scraps of fabric pieced together. Scraps were from our own left-over pieces of dress and shirt material, or scraps from apron and dress factories. Women swapped scraps and patterns. Quilt backing was often made from white feed sacks after removing the colored lettering and dyeing the fabric. "Crazy quilts" were made of odd shaped pieces sewed onto washed sugar sacks with fancy embroidery stitches between the pieces. After the pieced tops, filling and backing were sewed together, women would get together to quilt or tie the parts together. It was stretched on a wood frame which was set on the backs of straight chairs. A group of women could sit around it and work on it together.

Coat hangers were made with rolled up magazines and string.

Fabric flour sacks and 10 and 25 pound sugar sacks were used for many things, clothing, pillow cases, curtains, aprons, etc. We also used feed sacks. At first they were white with colored lettering on them. It was really hard to remove the lettering so that we could dye and use them. Years later, the feed came in patterned fabrics. We used "ric-rac" and bias tape to trim many things. Salt came in small cotton sacks, just the size of a lady's handkerchief. After soaking and rubbing off the lettering, Ma would make tiny hems and crochet with colored thread a lace edging around the new "hankie". Sometimes she embroidered tiny flowers in one corner.

There weren't many ways to earn extra spending money. We picked wild grapes, butter-nuts, and gooseberries, gathered extra eggs and vegetables to sell to the city folks. My brother and I fished the river and Pa took the horse and buggy and peddled fish to the Catholic families on Thursday and Friday. These families lived between our house and Albertville.

My brother Ralph and Pa trapped animals such as mink and muskrats and sold the pelts. Pa sold gravel by the wagon load and charged 25¢ to 50¢ a car for people to have picnics in our pasture.

My mother was a mid-wife. She helped deliver many babies. I had to do more at home when she was gone. If the job was close enough, she stayed home and went back daily for a while. I sometimes was a hired girl for new mothers; cooking, cleaning, washing and caring for other children. I'd earn a little that way. One year a lady had me keep her baby at our home while she went on a trip for a couple of weeks.

Ralph and I sometimes picked potatoes for neighbors. We were paid by the bushel; 2¢ to 5¢ a basket plus our meals.

We traded garden vegetables for apples.

SCHOOL

I attended grade school at the one-room school in Otsego, about a mile or so east of the farm. It burned down later, when I was going with Louis. He and I were coming home from Elk River and could see the flames and smoke. It was said that a man who was drunk was seen going into the school before the fire started and later was watching as it burned.

After I finished grade school, I went to high school in Elk River. There were no school buses and no snow plows so the "country" students would work for their board and room or work at a job and rent a room in someone's home in Elk River. Times were hard. I worked for my room and board with a lovely family who were also poor. I washed diapers, cleaned, cooked, "done" dishes and helped with the children. I went home on weekends. My wealthy cousin gave me her old dresses. Ma cleaned and patched them and I wore them to school.

HOLIDAYS

On May first we celebrated May Day. The neighbor girls would stay over night at one or the other's home and make little baskets. We filled them with flowers and would sometimes add a piece of candy. The baskets were usually made from left over wall paper. We would hang a basket on a neighbor's door knob, holler "May Basket" and run. The neighbor would try to catch us and kiss us.

Easter meant a hunt for eggs when we were small children. Ralph always found the most. I remember one year when Ma must have been so busy on Saturday that she didn't get the eggs colored and hidden. On Sunday Pa took us kids for a walk "to give the bunny a chance". Ma said she would stay in the kitchen and not scare the rabbit. It was the longest walk! Pa took us up one field, down another, over this hill, down to the creek and finally back home. The Easter Bunny had just left and the eggs were still warm.

We celebrated Halloween with tricks; there were no treats. We carved faces in pumpkins and lit them with candles left over from Christmas. Party fun was bobbing for apples floating in a wash tub, playing pin the tail on the donkey, making and eating popcorn. We sometimes had friends stay over night. Tricks involved soaping windows, and using a noisemaker to make weird sounds on windows. A favorite trick for the older kids was to tip over outhouses.

I remember Christmases; they were the happiest times we had. There was the big package that came by mail every year from Oma and Opa Kiichli who lived in Minneapolis. We

always waited to open it on Christmas Eve. Our tree was usually brought by Santa, but sometimes Ma and Pa would get it and Santa would put it up while Ralph and I helped our Pa in the barn and Ma "done up" the dishes. When we came back in, our first question was "Has Santa come?" Then, somehow, Pa was late getting in and there would be some noise in the parlor. "Oh, he's here, he's here" we cried. Ma said "Wait, give Santa time. Then Pa came in the kitchen very innocently and said "I just saw Santa leave, let's see what's in the parlor". We all ran. There were lighted candles on the tree and gifts under it. We had strung popped corn to hang on the tree and also made paper chains to trim the ceiling in the dining room. These were made from paper cut in thin strips from an old wallpaper book. We had candy and nuts; we saved half for New Years Day.

Grandma Miller from International Falls mailed us homespun stockings and mittens, wreaths of pine boughs and popcorn balls.

One year my father and brother were out hunting rabbits. In order to climb a tree to look around better, my father engaged the safety catch and hung the gun on the tree. A twig must have caught the catch and unhooked it. As he was climbing, his knee bumped the gun and it went off. The shot went through his kneecap and into his instep. Pa got Ralph to help him put on a tourniquet to control the bleeding. Then Pa used the gun as a crutch, leaned on Ralph and hobbled to the road. They met a man who drove them into Elk River where they got help and he went to the Princeton hospital. That year at Christmas, Pa was in a wheelchair so Ralph and I had to help

the hired man do chores while Santa "sneaked" in, fixed the tree and left gifts. Naturally, Pa promised to stay in the kitchen while Ma "done" dishes. When we came in from the barn, Pa said he thought he had heard a noise in the parlor. We checked and sure enough, Santa had been there.

Somehow, no matter how poor we were, Christmas was always special. When I was in Elk River high school during the "great depression" I worked after school for \$2.50 to \$3.00 a week. Out of that I paid room rent. Out of my earnings I bought candies, nuts and gifts. That year I gave Ma a sugar bowl and cream pitcher. One year I managed 3 or 4 gifts of about ten cents value each, wrapped them and mailed the package to a family in South Dakota. Years later, the mother told me that mine were the only Christmas gifts their children had received that year.