

GRANDFATHER SLOAT'S HOME

by Charles A. Comfort - 1954

"This was a very interesting spot to Newman and me. We went there frequently after school and probably at noon on Saturday.

As Aunt Mary has written, I also remember the flax wheel and its "click" and the hoop skirts hanging in the attic. There was also a gourd with a large hole cut out of the side used as a dipper. In the living room was a drop leaf table between the windows. The children had bought grandma a new stove for that room. It was quite ornamented and had a cast iron figurine on the top. Grandma did not like that figure and had it removed.

The cellar was an interesting place. It was not all dug out but part of the floor was a foot or so higher than the rest. It was rather damp and cool and an ideal place to keep butter. Grandma had an improved chum - sort of a small barrel mounted in a frame and turned end over end by a crank. They also had a dreadful rat trap. All these things were different from what we had at home.

Uncle Emmet had made screen doors for the kitchen. Outside the door were two or three stone steps leading towards the shop. The screen doors were double to swing out without hitting the steps. The well curb was of lattice work and had an opening for the Sloats and for the Clarks. It was actually on the Clark land, but grandfather had built the curb housing the oaken bucket and a heavy stone counter weight. Mr Clark in his old age fearing the water supply might fail, forbid grandfather finally to draw any water from the well. I remember seeing him walk down the hill with a pail drawn from the next neighbor at the top of the hill. Uncle Emmet had the line between the places surveyed which showed the well on the Clark land and the Clark barn projecting over the Sloat land. Uncle Emmet told Mr. Clark if he would please move his barn back he might have the well. Then Mr. Clark discovered the well was ample for both as it had been for fifty years.

The shop was of three stories. The first floor had the tools and the place where grandfather did most of his wagon work. The second floor was open. There standing against the end nearest the house were the parts of a heavy farm wagon all shaped but not bolted together. Newman and I frequently got these parts spread out on the floor in place. Grandfather always put them back with no complaint.

One day I had a bow and arrows made from the bows of an umbrella and sharpened and I was shooting the arrows into the shop ceiling. Grandfather was there trying to get me to stop such dangerous play. I was very persistent but he showed no anger only anguish that I would do something so dangerous.

He had a wonderful character. Uncle Stevie was much like him that way - perhaps so more than any of the others.

He had a wooden bow and a gun-shaped wooden pieces making a cross bow effect. We used this bow considerable.

The two wheel cart - one made by a workman in the shop - I suppose had been used by mother (Annie Sloat) and the others until they outgrew it. Newman and I enjoyed this and eventually brought it up here (to Charles Comfort's place). The wooden wheels had iron tires and an iron shod extra piece for a hub. This cart had been used so much that the wheels had worn the axle nearly half in two. It was painted blue with red wheels and iron work black.

The barn was 24' X 30' perhaps was in back of the house and on higher ground. The horse stood on the main floor in the pen and the cow stable was under this floor. There were about three stanchions and a manure pile in front of the door as was the custom at that time. They also had two pigs and some hens in separate buildings.

One day I rode with him to the mill at Phillipsburg for a grist he had left there before, I think. Perhaps he had taken some wheat to be made into flour or some corn to be ground. It was about two miles and on the way

home he fell asleep and wondered where he was on waking. The horse kept right on and we reached home OK.

I remember the blessing he asked before supper in a very low reverent voice - part of it hardly audible and grandmother's molasses cake. Mother did not make it but grandma always seemed to have some. It was good.

Grandfather was subject to chilblains which were very troublesome. Father and mother gave him a pair of white felt boots at Christmastime. He had no more trouble with his feet. These were the first felt boots I had seen. The men had worn leather boots before that. Soon all wore felts.

Grandfather apparently suffered a stroke. He lay on a cot in the front hall with the family gathered round. He was breathing heavily but lying quiet. Uncle Emmet broke the silence - "He is struck with death". Open doors, open windows and fans were no avail. The blinds were drawn shutting out most of the sunlight. The choir sang "My days are swiftly gliding away". He was carried from the house directly to the plot, thus saving the use of a hearse as he would have desired. Charges for a funeral were itemized like a plumber's bill. - embalming, name plate, casket, ribbon on door, hearse, etc.

Grandmother came here to live. Before long she developed a dropsical condition which event made breathing difficult when she lay down. One night she said, " I wish you boys would get to bed. I don't think I will be here long." She slipped away during the night.

The auction occurred when John (son of Emmet) was perhaps two or three years old - with beautiful long curls. I do not remember who bought the things, but do not know of anything the family bought for keepsakes. Then people were tired of old things. Our house was full of them.

Aunt Mary lived there one summer but missed her mother so she could hardly endure it. The property brought \$ 800. (circa 1905). It had cost \$ 1,000 about 1850."

< <

> >