

News from Nan

NAN'S WRITINGS

NAN'S REMINISCENCES: THE RED HOUSE

JANUARY 17, 2022 | NAN

This post is part of a series of reminiscences that Nan (born 1906) wrote about her childhood in Minden City, Michigan. Most of the pieces were written sometime between 1990 and 1995.



The Red House

I was born in the Red House [the red-brick house where Nan's family lived was often referred to as the "Red House"] in Minden City, Michigan, and I grew up there and was married there. It was a wonderful house to grow up in; it was roomy and comfortable, and full of life and fun.

How the Red House got its bricks

I have been told that the red bricks were from the grain elevator in Forestville, which had been torn down. The plan of the rooms was made by Mother – she sketched what she wanted and the carpenter built from that.



Teams and wagons headed East to Reidel's Elevator and Dock. About 1900.

Forestville, Michigan: Looking east toward the grain elevator, mentioned by Nan above, that probably supplied the bricks for the Red House

There were two stories, plus an attic and a basement. On the first floor were two big living rooms, which could be made one by opening a sliding door between them.

The front room

In the front room stood the piano, and it was partly a music room, where we practiced our music lessons and where we gathered around the piano to sing. The boys [Nan's older brothers] had a band, and band practice was held there. My parents sometimes gave card parties in the front room, and I can remember waking up and being carried downstairs and fed homemade ice cream.

The front room had a big window where we could see the train as it came toward the station. That was most fun in winter when the train got stuck "in the cut," and either a brigade of village men "marched" out with shovels to dig it out, or the snow plow came, with snow sweeping out from both sides into the air!



Huron County Highway MS1. FEB. 1936

Minden City (a town in Huron County) can get a lot of snow in the winter

There were no movies in town until after World War I, but we had live drama. Mother nailed an old felt hat on one of the maple trees that surrounded the property, and out the windows we could watch the many birds that came to feed there.

The barn/garage

One of the windows in the front room overlooked the long driveway that led to the barn. (It began as a barn, but ended as a garage.)



Garage (former barn) behind the Red House

The dining room

The dining room held a big table, which seated eight at almost every meal (like a party!) and around which we read or wrote or did handwork at night, often because the big lamp gave better light than elsewhere.

The kitchen

The kitchen was big and cozy with the warmth of the range (cook stove) and the smell of good things cooking or baking. Off the kitchen there was a pantry, something you don't see much now. The dishes were kept there and some foods – like bread, cookies, or cake.

The basement

The stairs to the basement went down from there, and in winter the “vegetable room” was full of potatoes, carrots, cabbage, and such. In another room there were quarts and quarts of canned fruits, pickles, jams, and jellies – a winter's supply of desserts and “salad.” Pickles took the place of salad, which we

didn't have much, especially after the cabbage was gone. Apples for snacking and for fresh applesauce lasted until almost summer.

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