

Today let's follow the trail of an inanimate object that has taken on a life of its own.

The Generations Keep Rolling Along

Can't you just smell the coal smoke and sense the excitement as the steam engine hisses and rumbles into the little Evarts, Illinois depot? From deep inside a wooden boxcar a crate for Mr. George F. Saaijenga is being unloaded and the year is 1901. The stationmaster's wife, in her long, flowing dress, is keeping a watchful eye as the men unload it. She knows it has to be something very important. Slowly, the heavy crate is boosted up into a wagon and George urges his team toward home, about 4 miles southeast of the depot. At home, the recently remodeled house is waiting for the new item and George's new bride, Hilka, is busy dusting and preparing a place for the valued property. (She is still battling sawdust from that wonderful, new 2-story addition that George built on to the house last year.)

Neighbors help lift the crate to the new north porch and it is carefully opened to reveal a beautiful roll top desk. Oh, it is a beauty and was purchased from far-away Chicago.



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OK, OK, The previous paragraphs are just my idea of how things happened. (Honestly, I'm old as dirt but not ***THAT*** old!) But the basic facts are accurate about this desk.

In the years that followed the desk moved along with the family in the early 1920s to a big white house in German Valley, then after George's passing, it was moved to the first farm east of my birthplace. After Gramma Hilka passed my parents bought that desk from the estate for \$11.00 and moved it back to its original home at 8363 Edwardsville Road.

lard press 0
 sausage grinder 75¢ Clem
 slow cutter - 1.00 Clem
 7qt. canner - 1.50 Clem
 wash boiler - .75 Clem
 tub 1.00 Dorothy
 wash machine - 37.00 Clem
 large butcher kettle - 2.25 Harry
 crocks - 1 each copper boiler .75 Anita
 bread mixer - 0
 bread raiser Iron 1.00 Gene
 cake pan - container
 small rocker top (attic) - 1.00 Rose
 Aluminium tea kettle 25¢ Anita
 desk (roll top) - 11.00 Halbert
 desk (small) - 7.00 Clem
 buffet - 1.50 Ann
 emery - 3.00 Clem
 milk cans
 Gas engine (wash machine)
 motor Sprak 10.00

There it stood almost 45 years in the exact same spot in the dining room along the south wall to the left of the kitchen doorway.

The picture below is far more recent but it will illustrate my memories of what that desk looked like during my childhood. The eight drawers across the top were filled with important papers (and a couple of nasty jokes they didn't think I knew about) and each was labeled in my dad's handwriting. The eight open cubbyholes were used to file paid and unpaid bills.

Everything below that on the right side was Dad's domain. The shallow drawer was full of Dad's old pocket knives, extra seed corn record books, antique pens, the checkbook and his billfold. The little triangle drawer was full of pencils and pens. To the right of those drawers was a Jim-Dandy tall spot to keep the farm record books. On the right side of the desktop was a pile of very old farm magazines, weighted down with a HEAVY glass paperweight. Just under the desktop on both sides were boards, about 11" X 13", that pulled out to give you more surfaces to pile things. On Dad's side, just below the desktop was a door that hinged at the bottom. Behind it were the most marvelous little shelves and Dad had them crammed FULL of whatever dads

want to keep. The bottom drawer was filled with instruction books for every piece of machinery Dad ever owned. (In 1989 I gave those to the Antique Engine Club.)

Mom's side was a fun place for a little kid to browse. That shallow drawer was filled with stamps and return address strips. (In later years she used to laugh that Sam, the dog, would snooze by her feet as she wrote letters, but, as soon as she reached for that stamp drawer, he headed for the kitchen door in anticipation of the coming walk to the mailbox.) Of course, that triangle drawer was packed with pens on Mom's side too. The tall open space along the left side was reserved for telephone books and, after the wall crank-style phone was replaced with a modern desk-type phone, it sat beside the phone books...six or seven years worth of phone books. Usually, the phone sat on a heap of craft magazines and seed catalogs. The top lower drawer was reserved for envelopes and old letters. That was the BEST!!! area to nose thru. She and her relatives wrote to each other at least once a week and all the family gossip was within that drawer. The second drawer was a jumble of notepads, carbon paper (nobody had access to copiers in those days), and the cardboard backs of empty notepads because you never knew when you might need some cardboard for a craft project. That leaves the bottom drawer. Oh, it was a wonderland of boxed greeting cards and wrapping paper...and just about every greeting card that had been sent to that house. (Can't tell you how long it has been since I sent a greeting card by snail mail.)

In the picture below you can see a laptop computer and a modern mouse. Well, let me tell you, that computer has nothing on what that desk could do for its early owners...but they lived in a less demanding world. And they would have LOVED the little girl in the chair in front of the desk! (*That is Larry's daughter, Emma.*)



In 1988 I disassembled my parents' home after Mom passed away and Dad moved to a retirement apartment in Freeport. Because of remodeling during the years after 1944, there was no way it would fit thru the door to the kitchen and it had to be taken apart into 4 pieces.

Eventually, George's great grandson, Larry, took ownership of the desk and had it refinished and restored to its original beauty. It has since resided near Ladysmith, Wisconsin, near Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in Bedford, New Hampshire, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and, now 112 years later, it is currently in Cincinnati, Ohio. Grampa George would be SOOOOOO!! proud! (And so am I.)



In case you are wondering, that's Grampa below:



(And a note from the Editor, here is a picture of this story being worked on from the desk in the story.) L Faist Feb 14, 2021

