

Frank McCarthy's Well.
04-08-2013 by Harry Zirkelbach



In the summer of 1929 our family of four moved from New Brighton, Pa, three miles east from that valley of the Beaver River to the crest of the Bluff on the east. The area, a botough, not a city, was known as Marion Hill.

This was the first house the young family bought. The boy, seven, the girl five.

This would be the first and only time the family lived in the country, not a city. At the moment, none realized this special excursion in life.

The house sat on a small hill east of an unpaved road, on about an acre. Water was provided from a well 20 feet from the rear door, and the outhouse about 50 yards away. Beyond that, land for gardening, separated from a genuine farm further east by a fence and bushes of elderberry, blackberry, grape.

The two story frame wood house's roof drained rain water toward the gutter that edged the street.

Several former neighbors from New Brighton had also moved to this area, and the families stayed friends through all the adventures to come.

One such family, Frank and Josephine McCarthy. Their two daughters our age, attending the same school in New Brighton.

The McCarthy's had bought a vintage stone two story house on the side of a hill. This home had a slate roof, and rain water was collected from the roof, channeled by pipe into a cistern. That water used for cooking and thirst. Well water tended to the "hard"; that from the rain "soft"; the difference showed in taste.

Rain water contains a speck of dust. Even when no other impurity washes from the slate roof, rain eventually builds up a dirt floor, on cistern's bottom.

Mr. McCarthy had determined that his brick lined cistern was one fourth full of this black silt; then when the water from rains was negligible, he chose to remove the well's dirt floor.

The challenge, well entry was too small for an adult. Mr McCarthy and my dad decided I was the "man" for removal efforts.

On the appointed hour, I stood on the hill outside the well with Frank and Dad, was lowered by rope into the well on a board harness like a swing with one rope. I wore boots, carried small shovel, a five gallon bucket.

For a few hours, I would fill the bucket with muck, give hoist order and Frank would raise and empty the content in his garden.

Initially the cistern was gloomy, dark. With time eyes adjust. I can make out all the contours of the well and its bottom. And on looking up, could see the brighter stars of the blue heavens.

Once the bottom bricks were reached everywhere, there was no request to sweep of the remaining dirt, for now the excavated black earth had covered the garden enough that there was no room for more.

The hoist was reunited to the rope On solid land I am blinded by sunlight. For the time and effort I was rewarded \$5.00, a sum meaningless to a seven year old, but useful to Mom and Dad.

i am certain none ever forget their first payday, how earned, the good it did.