

Crosby House

There were, in 19th century Wright Settlement northeast of Rome, many houses like this one. Study has revealed little about this building that is not apparent at a glance. Small, practical, utilitarian, it was probably built to replace a settler's log cabin. His wife could boast three bedrooms upstairs and modern stove heat and cooking convenience downstairs.

The Crosby house arrived at Erie Canal Village on a tractor trailer. Its roof had been flattened so it could pass under obstacles along its trip from 9 mile distant Pennystreet Road. Its sill were rotten, the inside had been partially drywalled, the stairs were missing and there was only a remnant of the first floor partition. The building had become a children's clubhouse at its former site. Found were: a stair stringer, an undisturbed doorway threshold, an apparent stairway closet entrance, some original plaster with traces of yellow paint, several layers of old wallpaper under a board, and some stove pipe holes.

Structural observations and a title search strongly hint at the following thumb nail sketch of the building's history. Built as a family dwelling in the 1840's, the house was originally about 6 feet longer at the kitchen end. This now absent space plus 6 feet of the present kitchen comprised a woodshed. The home was at some date annexed on to a larger building and there was a doorway to it where the south kitchen window is now fitted. At this point it probably belonged to Josiah Crosby, a cheesemaker in Wright Settlement. The house has since been used as a blacksmith shop (a large carriage door was cut where the north kitchen window is, and a forge was built against the wall behind the range). It was a chicken coop (and possible cock-fight rendezvous), a tool shed and finally a playhouse when its last owners, the Donald Austins, donated it.

The Crosby house has seen much of life-- and of course, if it could talk... well, it probably wouldn't mention anything about a rug loom. But it is quite possible that a small village house might have sheltered such a loom in its

parlor, or upstairs. Our loom is over 100 years old and was used to make rug carpets. It has 2 harnesses, which means you are using 2 sets of threads. This limits the amount of design you can make on this loom; some looms have as many as twelve harnesses.

The warp is measured on the warp beam, which is sectional. The threads are then brought up over the back beam, and threaded through the heddles, through the reed, and then tied on to the front beam. The tension is adjusted by the knotting. The weft or filler is wound on to the bobbin or shuttle and passed through the shed, changing the harness after each pass. The filler for rag carpet is cut from rags to about $\frac{1}{2}$ " widths. This can be any material available.

The kitchen is well equipped with a cookstove which has a reservoir for hot water on the side, a pump which pumps water from a cistern in the cellar, a washing machine, churn and assorted cookware. The iron on the stove held charcoal, which was used to heat it. The big oval copper container was used to boil clothes clean which were then hung on the line to dry. The woodbox had to be kept full even in the summer if a family was to have hot meals.

An unusual feature of this house, probably an addition, is the outhouse attached to the parlor. While outhouses often came attached to the house, the woodshed or the back porch were more likely locations.