

**THE OLDER WE GET THE MORE WE REMEMBER THINGS  
GONE  
02/13/01**

My earliest recollection of our house was of the parlor. It is still a somewhat mythical place in my imagination, a circumstance for which there are a couple of reasons.

The home was my great grandparents' and we began to share it with them when I was about two. It was a situation common to many other families in our small village in the 20s and 30s when second and third generations looked after the first.

My great uncle also was a part of the entourage that soon expanded when my two brothers and a sister joined us. The parlor shortly went by the wayside out of necessity when it was needed as a bedroom.

For the short time that the parlor was a part of my world, it remained closed and off limits. It was only used for special occasions such as when we had visitors or when a family member reposed there for visiting hours prior to his or her funeral. I vaguely recall an organ and what I believe to be a horse-chair couch being prominent parts of the furnishings.

A recent radio announcement of which I caught very little of except for the one word "parlor" caused me to recall those early days. Parlor is a word seldom associated with a home today, but was an important part of nearly every home in years past. It was a place for entertaining or formal occasions, events that in many instances take place in today's living rooms or elsewhere outside of today's homes.

We are used to hearing the word used in another context today, such as beauty or funeral parlor. By its very definition it would be perfectly appropriate to call today's living rooms parlors. I would be willing to bet that some of the remaining generation earlier than mine can still be found that do so.

Pantry is another word that easily comes to mind when one begins to reflect on terms and parts of homes prevalent in the early years of the past century. It's easy for a guy my age to conjure up a great many things I grew up with that were considered common, everyday parts of daily life that are no longer with us today.

We had a cistern that had been replaced shortly before I was born when village water was introduced to all those who could afford it. Many people still relied on their

old dug well and pump in the back yard for drinking water long after village water was introduced.

The same was true for sewer lines as some people still maintained the outhouse common to many back yards. They kept them for nostalgic and emergency reasons, long after they enjoyed the convenience and comfort of the inside Ferguson. Outhouses were a favorite target of wayward youths who delighted in overturning them, preferably with someone they particularly disliked in occupancy.

Many of the homes had small barns that were converted to storage and garages after their original use as stables ended. One overly large structure belonging to a more palatial home was rumored to have a hidden storage room under its plank floor. It was there that runaway slaves were sequestered as part of the underground railway system used to convey them to Canada and freedom. It made a great story and true or not, provided us with much mystery and engaging adventure as we speculated on its authenticity and searched for the hideaway. I still like to think these many years later that it was true.

Our village still had a couple of watering troughs scattered throughout the town and the few horses left delivering ice, coal and groceries availed themselves of a cool repast on hot summer days.

Our home, like several others, still sported a hitching post, a reminder of days much earlier when they were a convenient necessity. Ours was a beautiful tapered white marble post with a large iron ring fastened near the top. It provided us with a real challenge to shinny up and drape your middle over its top. I have no idea where it ever went, but I would give a great deal to have it today.

It was a sorry house that did not have both a front and back porch. The hot summer evenings were spent sitting there unwinding from the day's bustle as we watched thunderstorms develop and the world go by.

The church carriage houses, the rural smokehouses, spring houses, wood sheds and root cellars all followed the above fixtures down the path to obsolescence. Like many other things in this life, they are gone, but not forgotten and we recall them more and more as we get older.