

Greatest Labor Saver On The Farm

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A Manure Carrier/A Mechanical Invention Greatest Labor Saver on The Farm

Anyone growing up or working on a dairy farm at the turn of the century, has memories of this labor-saving device (*Webster defines device as: a mechanical invention used for a special purpose*) . . . **THE MANURE CARRIER!**

Recently, a friend found some old post cards and asked if I would be interested. In those, I found this one with the inscription, "Interior of Barn on Farm of August Genrich in Town of Berlin." Undoubtedly, this photo was taken when the interior was completed and before cattle entered. The barn appears newly constructed with stanchions installed the length of the barn on one side and pens on the other made with pipes. What's eye catching is the manure carrier in the center with August showing if off as the newest addition for completion.

While there were many things on the farm to fascinate a young boy, this certainly had to be at the top of the list. Other jobs came and went, but gutter cleaning faced you every day. No more shoveling manure into a wheelbarrow and carting it out. Now, once the bucket was filled, you would use the chain mechanism and hoist the bucket up and proceed to push it along the track (an overhead trolley system) out to the extended track mounted on the exterior of the end of the barn. One end of the carrier track was anchored inside the barn; the other end was attached to a heavy post about 80 feet outside of the barn or on a cable fastened to the exterior to avoid the post option. This bucket/hopper had a pivot lock which would allow it to dump.

As stated, it was a daily chore to shovel the manure from the floor gutters into the bucket. After loading the bucket you would lean into it like a football lineman pushing a training sled. With a might shove, you sent it zooming out of the barn door, on the exterior track to a position where you preferred to dump the load. Once in place you would trip the pivot and with a resounding ploppity-plop, the fresh manure spattered on the ground. The carrier/bucket would then coast back into the barn by gravity for another load. When the gutters were emptied you could hang a hook on the track which kept the bucket outside and not to be in the way for milking. This worked in the summer, but in winter manure would freeze in the bucket so it was kept inside. As winter continued, manure kept piling up and with the option of moving the outside track one created a half-moon shape manure pile. Depending on the number of cattle, the available space for manure became less and less. When that happened, it was dumped at the very end and hand shoveled over the edge . . . hoping spring was not too far off. With temperatures often minus-zero through January and February, this was not the place you would want to be, yet it had to be done because it would freeze and soon you were out of space.

When parents were gone, farm boys, looking for something to do, found it a lot of fun to *give* each other rides in the bucket! Why not? The passenger sat astride the inverted bucket and was shoved out the barn door to the end of the track. Since the terrain dropped off sharply in the cow yard, the carrier track was about fifteen feet off the ground. This made it more exciting than a carnival ride!

With time, the carrier/bucket got worn and the hand operated chain hoist would slip the loaded bucket would come crashing down with a mighty thud . . . spattering fresh manure everywhere! NOT A GOOD THING! The bucket would be flattened on the bottom and its repair was not an exciting task.

I guess we now wonder whatever happened to those contraptions. One thing that led to their demise was that local boards of health and milk processors banned manure piles near a dairy barn. Then came the invention of the barn cleaner! Powered conveyors in the gutters gave the carrier system the final death knell. It was much easier to push a button and have the manure deposited directly into a waiting manure spreader.

I don't know of any antique farm machinery buffs who collect manure carriers, but there must be a few out there. If you ever see an old manure carrier, probably long abandoned, maybe you ought to rescue and restore it. Just don't try to ride on it!

Even with the use of materials at our PVCW Library, we have not been able to locate the August Genrich farm in the town of Berlin. The 1920 U.S. Census for the Town indicates August Genrich being a resident here, but in the 1930 census lists the Gennrich's living in the city of Wausau.

We found Mrs. Gennrich's obituary stating she was the former Emma Fehlhaber, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. August Fehlhaber. It appears there were two August Fehlhaber's. This particular August died July 18, 1948. Can you help?

Gary Lee Klingbeil, Blatt Editor
The Loudon Litter Carrier

Whether a barn was of conventional design or not, if it was built after 1867 chances were good that it included at least one feature from the Loudon Machinery Co., Fairfield, Iowa. Specializing in barn and stable equipment, Loudon was a primary supplier of hay tools, barn and garage door hangers; dairy barn equipment; litter, feed and milk can carriers; cupolas, ventilators and drains.

Illustrations from the 1920 catalog show, the company developed a full science of design and outfitting. In fact, Loudon employed an architectural department that offered, at no charge, advice in all phases of farm building and agricultural engineering; blueprints, floor plans and cross-sectional views; and personal visits from Loudon field representatives.

The first patent ever issued on a litter carrier is held by the Loudon Machinery Company. The Litter Carriers saved farmers considerable time in moving manure from the barn to the manure wagon outside.

