

Mantha milkhouse

By Grace Johnston

This heritage gem is one of Gloucester's few remaining structural treasures. Built of logs in 1869, two years after Confederation, it represents the way one farmer met the need for a cool, clean place, away from the barn, to process the herd's milk. There was no electricity then, no refrigeration, no buttons to push, no plugs to plug in—the cows were hand-milked.

The Mantha milk house on the Innes Road has been tended with TLC since it was last used during World War II, and is worthy of admiration. Five logs high, assembled with dovetailed corners, the 8'x8' structure is held together with a mixture of sand and lime in the crevices and cracks. The whitewashed sides are capped by a little peaked roof which was covered originally with shingles of wood but now of asphalt. It forms a tiny attic in which were stored this and that from the farm operation.

The low entrance through the formerly much-used door, leads one step down to an earthen floor. Within living memory, the shelves to the right and left, were filled with jars of homemade goodies—pickles, preserves, jams and large crocks of a favourite crab apple preserve. Barrels of brine held salted pork, ready for a tasty meal at any time. Under the back window was a little cubicle where blocks of ice were slipped inside to keep



Mantha Milk House—Innes Road

the temperature at a cool level even on hot summer days.

Always in a special place stood the hand-operated separator and churn. After each twice-daily milking, a sufficient supply of raw milk was set aside for the family while the rest was taken to the cool whitewashed milk house for separating. The skim milk was fed to the young stock while the rich cream was saved until there was enough to be churned into butter.

And where was the butter kept after churning?—in a pail at the end of a cable down their deep well! Ah those were the days when necessity was indeed the mother of invention!

Thanks to Juliette Mantha.