

Zachow's Blacksmith Shops

Marquardt's Blacksmith Shop

It is reported that the first blacksmith shop in Zachow was a small stone/brick structure located at the site of the Stark Hotel and Livery where the Henry Dirks house now stands. It was run by a Marquardt and a Mr. M. Marquardt purchased property from Herman Busch in 1906 and built a house south east of the Pensaukee Creek bridge in Zachow. It is believed that this is the same individual.

John Mielke's Blacksmith Shop

This Blacksmith Shop was located at the end of Hilbert Street, where it turned past the Wadhams Bulk Plant, Dirks' Pond and the Zachow Elevator & Lumber Co.

It was a two story building skidded to its present location in Zachow during the winter from its previous location at the Stark Hotel where it functioned as a livery.



Livery converted to a blacksmith shop is located behind hotel. First Marquardt blacksmith shop is on far right. Circa early 40's (Courtesy Dale Dirks)

This move would have taken place in the early 1940's. After the move a basement was added. The basement housed a coal furnace, which was stoked up in winter time, to heat the large shop and housing quarters on the second floor.

In the center of the building next to the large chimney was an open hearth forge. Here the blacksmith would throw raw metal, horseshoes, plow points or other pieces of metal to be softened prior to him forming it into the shape he wanted or needed to fix the particular project at hand.

Small holes in the floor for pegs were evident where horses would be tied while their hooves would be trimmed and "shoes" nailed or affixed after shaping them to the particular horses hoofs.

Behind and attached to the blacksmith shop was a large lean-to where hardwood beams, lumber, 4 x 4's poles and thick rough boards were stored for use and reforming into machinery poles and/or hay wagon planking as the need arose. This shed also housed a large stock of raw angle iron, beams and steel sheeting, used to repair and build almost anything one could dream up to increase productivity in a farm area.

Machinery would be repaired, broken pieces welded or replaced, as farmers from surrounding areas appreciated the local blacksmith as an integral and necessary business in the thriving community of Zachow. In fact, this blacksmith shop outlived many in the surrounding area. Farmers would drive miles to have their customized jobs completed by a real “mechanical engineer” which they were in fact only referred to as “a blacksmith”.



Blacksmith shop circa 1950's

Although the picture does not show one, a door on the second floor opened to nowhere, and I can see John Mielke, who lived on the upper floor, calling down to arriving customers, in a voice only a “village smithy, with large and sinewy hands”, and a voice to match, could instruct passer-bys as to his disposition of the day. He was also reported to have a shot of booze occasionally, with bottles strategically located throughout the shop for ease of access throughout the day. This was permissible, as he was a single man.

After his demise, Harley Hanson ran the Blacksmith Shop, remodeling the attached garage into living quarters. Later Carl Hafeman ran the shop, doing further remodeling of the living quarters, after which it was sold to Westerfeld Oil Co. With them already owning the bulk plant next door, the shop was turned into a sheet metal shop and TBA warehouse, later adding an office to the south side. The basic building still stands.

Written by Leon Westerfeld with suggestions from Dean D. Proper 2010