

NESTLEDOWN

Michael C and Katherine Pecsok The History of Our Home for Twenty Years

In the fall of 1928 we drove to Washington, DC through Pennsylvania with the mountains and farms all so beautiful. Mike wanted to live in the country - a place where our two sons, Robert and Donald, and our daughter, Gladys, (and later Nancy) could grow up with chores to do, have a horse to ride, a cow with plenty of cream and milk, a dog and barn cats.

We looked at many places in all directions not more than twenty miles from Cleveland. We chose Richfield - an old farm with a large dairy barn and many out-buildings, all too old to keep. The house, very close to the road, was originally the home of the first doctor in Richfield. We walked all over those 38 acres with a creek running through, some woods in the back and a large frontage which needed grading by the road. There was a knoll that was a perfect place for the house to be built from the many large boulders in the lovely creek which ended into Furnace Run. Mike could see a lovely stone house from these boulders which would show the beauty of the colors of the sun when they were cracked open. We drove home knowing this was the place we wanted. We bought it. Then some months later the Great Depression happened and for two years we could not sell our house in Shaker Heights. We had borrowed on our life insurance to help the down payment. Banks closed with our cash but we held on. Mike was never out of his job as a salesman with Osborn Manufacturing Company. His salary was cut in half but the prices of everything came down. We always managed enough to eat. Clothes came down. Nancy's socks were 10¢ a pair. Her first coat cost less than a dollar. Our good neighbor lady couldn't sell her eggs at 12¢ a dozen. Folks couldn't afford to drive there to buy them. There were times the Monegans with their dairy farm across the street from Nestledown had not 10¢ in the house but they had plenty to eat. They ground their own wheat and corn and had chickens and their own meat. They were our very good neighbors.

My husband did not despair. On weekends in good weather we packed a picnic lunch and drove out to the farm. Mr Mihaly, the mason who had built our house in Shaker, lent his truck to haul the stones up from the creek through Furnace Run. They were put in big piles on the knoll where we planned to build our house. Mike and his two youngest brothers, Joe and Gilbert, had learned just the right way to crack these stones from their father when they were helping him build the eight bedroom house they had on their farm in Huntsburg. He had learned from his father who was a builder in Hungary. They cracked them with sledge hammers to expose the beautiful "diamonds" inside.

Mike spent his spare time studying books from the library for a house plan. He would have liked to be an architect but did not have the necessary education. He used a large book by Mr Flagg who had built many stone houses in Long Island, New York. He spent much of his time drawing plans and much time at the farm cleaning up. We bought the land from a business man in Cleveland who had bought it for an investment. He had not been able to get the poor family who

were living in the old farm house to move out. They had no money except what they made from selling unlawful booze which they made down near the creek. Mike took over on getting them to move by buying all their chickens and paying them well for them which gave them enough cash to pack up into their old truck and move into Cleveland. The old buildings (barn, rabbit hutch, chicken coops and other out-buildings) we removed after the house was built. There were many fruit trees - cherry, plum, apple, pear and red currants which this man used to make his booze. He didn't own the land - just lived there.

Years went by and Mike's original plans for a larger house had to be made smaller by 2 or 3 feet all around because of the depression. Joe and Gilbert were out of work so they did much of the digging from plans for the foundation. Mr Steve Mihaly and his crew of out of work masons drove out from Cleveland on Mondays to work for the week. They brought their bread and cheese and sausages and drinks. They slept in the full hay mow of the old barn as the old house was unfit to sleep in after the tenants left. Instead of being depressed, they sang as they worked. Mr Mihaly had learned his craft in Hungary and had built many churches and other fine buildings in Cleveland. He supervised the selection and laying of the stones which Mike and his brothers had cracked. He did the stone work of an artist and I claim there isn't another stone house as beautiful anywhere. Our family each had their favorite stones which reflected the light like jewels.

Then the carpenter work was mostly done by Joe and Gilbert according to Mike's plans. The plumber (Gilbert's wife's uncle) from Cleveland was happy to have this job. All the pipes for the water and the plumbing and the heat pipes going to the radiators under each window had to be put in before the hard wood floor was laid. The large mantel over the fireplace was made from a special beam from the old barn. The window frames were made from the well aged wood in the old silo. They were made by a retired cabinet maker in Hudson. The window sills were made from wood from the old barn. The kitchen cabinets were bought at a lumber place in Akron which was closing due to the depression. The roof was according to Mike's plans with skylights. The trim under the eaves was from a carpenter. The roof had very heavy wood shingles - very reasonable at the time. The stones for the fireplace and chimney were specially selected by Mr Mihaly.

Finally we moved in in July 1932. The house was not finished but enough so that we were comfortable. We were able to move from the house we had rented in Brecksville for a few months after we sold our house in Shaker Heights. In those months we spent much time cleaning up. Our original horse and cow barn was taken apart and brought up from Peninsula and reassembled as our barn and then our garage was added. The new tool shed was later built by Mr Buell Davidson. He also did the garage addition and winterized the cottage putting in a heating system and plumbing for the kitchen and bath.

We moved in on July 1st. Nancy was born July 12th in a Cleveland hospital. Mike's Aunt Barbara came out to help. We had some garden which even the workmen helped with. After that first year many improvements came about. The old buildings near the road had to be removed and the driveway to the house made better. The cherry trees and the currant bushes near the road were taken out. We bought a used tractor which Robert and Bob Davis (a school friend) worked a

whole summer grading the front to the road level. Years provided a good garden and we had apples in the orchard.

We had a well-driller who tried unsuccessfully to find good water near the house. He couldn't separate the pure water from the blue silt layer so we found an excellent spring in the creek bed. Then it was necessary to separate the spring water from the creek water which was done by sinking huge cement pipes to surround the spring. These large pipes were rolled down the hill to the spring - quite a task to maneuver them past the many trees in the way. The first pipe smashed to pieces on the way down. A pump house was built to shield the electric pump which pumped the water up to the house. Periodically the water was tested for purity and never failed us. We always had plenty of pure water.

The ditches for the septic tank which drained down to the top of the hill were dug by Robert (age 16), his cousin Jim (age 15) and Don (age 11) who was "water-boy" and Joe, who was supervisor and did most of the digging. He got his crew up at dawn. They ate a dutch-oven full of oatmeal for breakfast and were ready to go to bed by 7 PM. Mike's brother, Alfred, bought us our first horse - a riding horse which proved to be too dangerous to keep so we had other horses, a pony, sometimes work horses. Then we had riding horses and a good tractor. Robert and Paul Parker (a school friend) worked all summer. We had a good cow (part Guernsey, part Holstein) with plenty of cream for butter and drinking milk - at times gallons to give to the Monegans to feed their pigs. Later we had a Jersey cow with horns which liked to chase people.

Mike's customers from Cleveland and Akron would come out on Saturday or Sunday afternoon. Robert would go up town for ice from Sykes Store before going to church and we would make icecream to serve in the afternoon. We had a pony and cart to take the children for rides. Nancy tried to ride the pony but it was trained to pull a cart and would throw her off so after we bought horses that Nancy could ride. One called Spot anyone could ride. Nancy spent Sundays giving children rides. We had a horse and buggy and a sleigh which Dad liked to drive to church and take Grandma Sykes for a ride before coming home.

We planted hundreds of evergreen seedlings bought from the government for a few cents. They couldn't be sold but when they grew to Christmas tree size (after much work and several transplantings) Dad enjoyed taking children on a sleigh ride to pick their trees. We had many picnics for the Osborn Old-timers Club and for White Tool and Supply and Goodyear. The hedge in front was planted by us. It is English hedge rose (floribunda) with red apples that is horse and cow proof. More fencing was put in to divide the pastures.

The cottage was built for extra sleeping space for visiting family and for large picnics indoors. Then when our daughter-in-law, Mary, and her two little girls, Helen and Katy, lived there during the war a kitchen and bath were put in. Robert was sent out to Okinawa as a weather man on aircraft carriers. They were with us for three years of the war and had a happy time in winter with sleigh rides. Nancy was the right age to have fun with them and they had a farm life they still remember.

We had a flock of Shropshire sheep to eat down the grass and weeds and then sold them for Cheviot sheep. Our only profit was the wool we had made into large blankets and crib blankets for each of our children. Amish people south of Richfield made them.

We ended up with two Morgan horses - a six months mare and a one year stallion. Nancy took lessons with Banner, the stallion, how to train and she trained Rose, the mare. These horses were bought from Mr Brunk from Illinois.

Robert Davis lives there in Richfield. He and Paul Parker and Robert and Donald Pecsok spent summers working at Nestledown. Buell Davidson, Floyd Swan and Frank Keckler continued to come to help with building, plumbing and electrical work.

Sorry we had to sell in 1952 for Mr Pecsok's health. We had added acreage to even the back boundary line and had 50 acres when we sold. Subsequent owners converted our garage addition to a master bedroom suite and removed the partition between our kitchen and diningroom.

Michael C. Pecsok, Vice-President of Osborn Manufacturing Company born 1896, died 1954

Katherine Richter Pecsok, born 1898, now living in Albuquerque, NM
Robert L Pecsok, Dean of Physical Sciences, University of Hawaii
Gladys, wife of MGen (Ret) John S Lekson, living in Albuquerque, NM
Donald A Pecsok, retired from Public Health Services, now living in St Louis, Missouri

Nancy, wife of Dr Charles F Merwin, living in Albuquerque, NM

Joseph Pecsok, retired school teacher, living in White House, Ohio
Gilbert Pecsok, deceased

Theodore and Mabel Monegan, Theodore living in Richfield
Mabel deceased

William and Dorothy Sykes, living in Richfield
Grandma Sykes deceased