

Throughout the museum we have tried to reflect as accurately as possible the times and lifestyles of those who lived in Van Buren County during the time period of 1829 to 1929. We wish to share this history with you and your family. So for a great learning experience come on over ... and bring the kids too!

The Building.

Beautifully situated atop a long hill in the center of the county, this fine old 44 room brick and stone building, known for scores of years as the Van Buren County Poorhouse, was built in 1884 to replace the fire-damaged wooden farmhouse previously used as the home for the county's indigent and retarded. It was added to in 1910 and again in the 1920's. With the cooperation of its administrators and able-bodied inmates, its 173 acres were farmed and a prize dairy herd maintained to produce most of the food which, when preserved, prepared and served to themselves, made it almost self-sufficient. As the result of changes in the care of the poor, it closed in 1952. It was then used as the county welfare offices until 1958. Then abandoned to the combined destructive forces of nature and vandals it became the windowless, debris-filled cavern that was finally, in 1972, leased by the county to the historical society. Saved from the destruction of the wreckers' demolition ball and bulldozers by this action, it stands today as a monument to the courage, dedication and belief of those few volunteers (average age over 70) who worked so hard and so long for its rescue and restoration. It serves today both as an historic building and museum.

Our Mission Statement

The Van Buren County Historical Society is committed to the preservation of antiquities and our county's historical information, and to provide a repository for historical artifacts and documents that enrich, our county's history. To inform present and future generations of their existence and to display them for the education and enjoyment of all.



Other buildings on the grounds include our log cabin which is a replica of an original cabin from the Van Buren County area, and the blacksmith works which is in operation on special events, such as Demonstration day

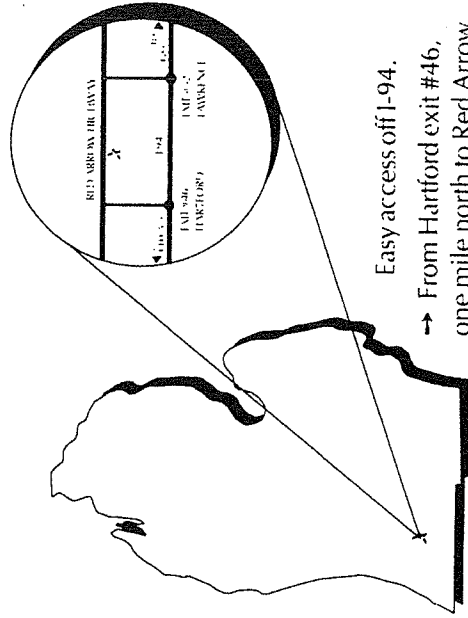
Van Buren County Historical Society

INVITES YOU

to visit

Southwest Michigan's

Van Buren County MUSEUM



Easy access off I-94.

→ From Hartford exit #46, one mile north to Red Arrow Highway, then east.

→ Or, from Lawrence exit #52, one mile north to Red Arrow Highway, then west.

If you wish to contact us:

Van Buren County Museum
P.O. Box 452, 58471 Red Arrow Hwy.
Hartford, MI 49057-0452

Museum - (269) 621-2188 - June-September only on

Wednesday, Friday and Sunday

12pm to 5pm

Other times by appointment

Last tour 1 hour prior to closing

photographs and layout by: Suzanne Breed



The Museum is open June through September.

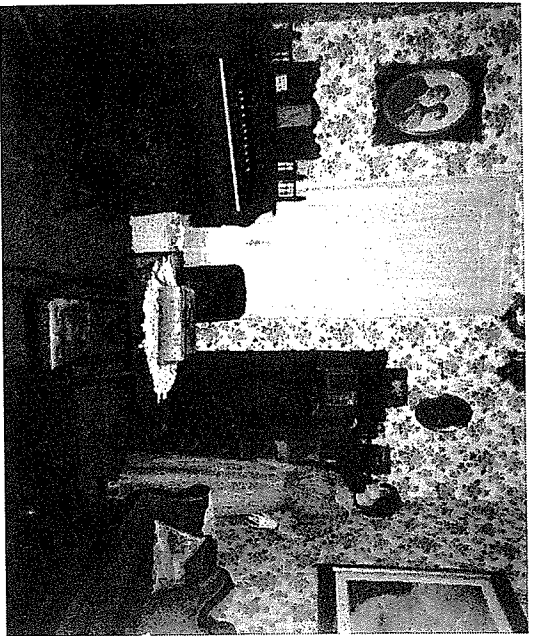
Museum hours:

Wednesday, Friday and Sunday

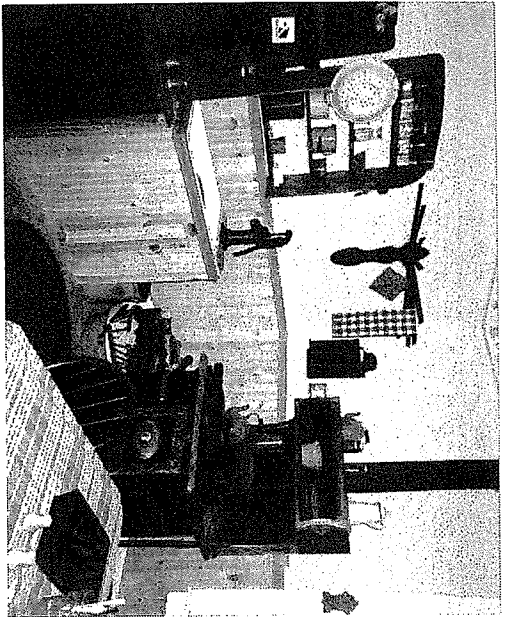
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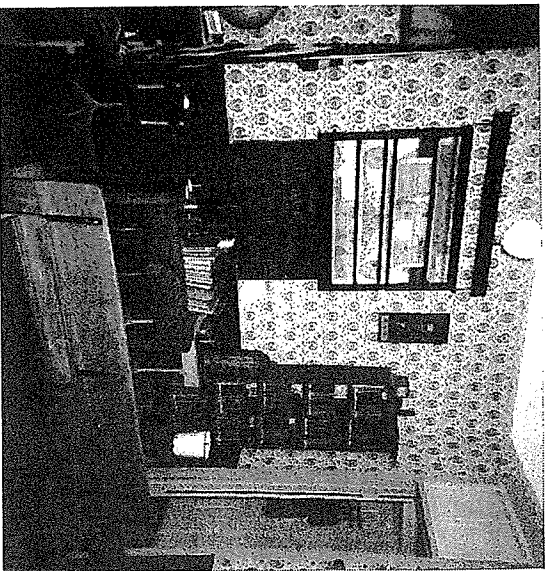
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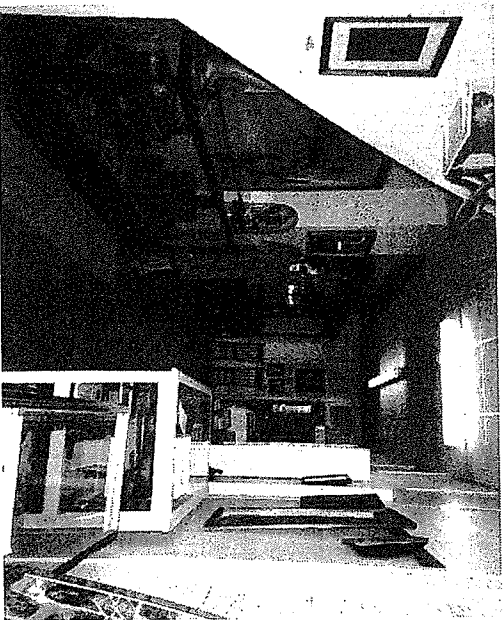
Shown here is a typical example of turn of the century parlor which, with its door kept shut and off limits to the family, was usually only used when 'company' came. It was commonly used to display the family's most prized possessions such as the family bible, the stereoscope, kerosene chandelier and oftentimes the only carpet in the house. Although seldom used, it was kept spotless as a shining example of the moral, religious and conservative beliefs held by the family.



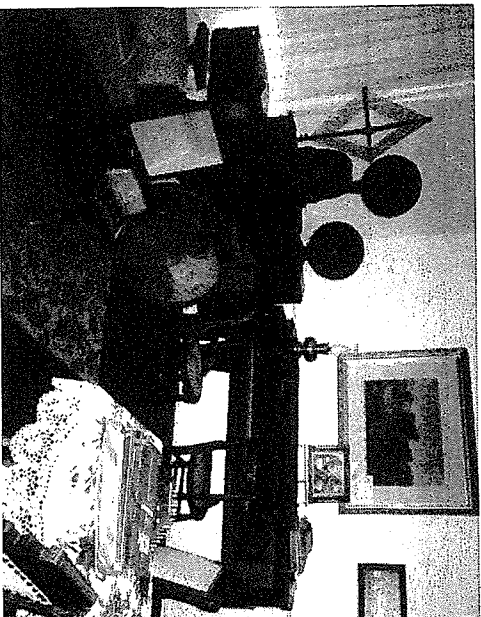
Ah! the old-time kitchen.. what wonderful memories! It was here that the families of yesterday really lived. With the cookstove's warmth and the aroma of fresh baked bread, it provided a welcome haven from the blustering cold of winter. The love that mothers expressed for their families with good old-fashioned cooking always made the family gatherings very special occasions. Shown here is just such a kitchen with its wood burning range, work center, rag rug and table. Many other old-time "conveniences" are on display as well.



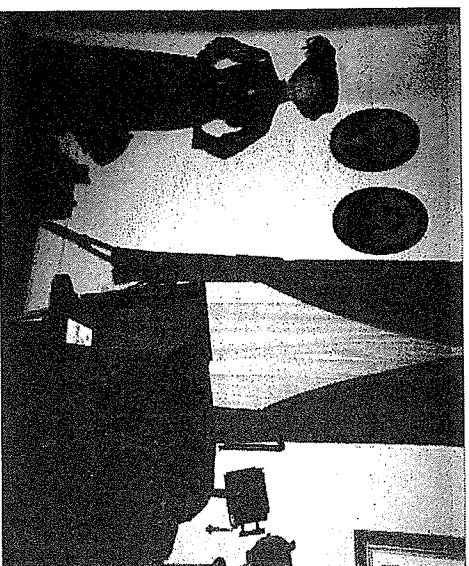
The old time one-room school where the basic three R's were taught by one (usually unmarried) teacher. Strict discipline was maintained throughout the usual eight grades of the country school. Ofttimes the older students helped the teacher by working with the lower grades for her. Many items will bring back memories of those long gone days, including the always present 'switch' with which the above mentioned discipline was maintained.



Our Indian section shows some of the artifacts that have been found in the Van Buren County area. The Indians that were in this Southwestern Michigan area were the Potawatomi.



The music room highlights musical memorabilia including one of the first pianos in Southwest Michigan. See instruments that entertained before the age of television. Many enjoyable evenings were spent with family and friends playing and listening to many of the instruments in this room.



The photographic studio show you how pictures were done in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This was the only way people had of getting a picture of a loved one or for sending to family members in distant places.