Old farm tools; one man's legacy

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Norris Melancon, who lives between Richard and Church Point, is working toward bringing a historical aspect to his hobby that will give his grandchildren a feeling about their ancestors' way of living long ago.

Historical stories about one's family is probably considered the backbone of this tradition. History connects the past with the present and the present with the future. A family's history could have a significant impact on his or her future.

Melancon loves to collect antiques, especially tools which were once drawn by mules. He has started a museum on his property called the "Good Old Days" Museum. He is giving his grandchildren a perspective about the way things were when they were growing up.

This past week, he and his grandchildren began preparing a haystack in a fashion that their forefathers once used. They used old tools to begin their haystack which is approximately five feet high at the moment. Melancon is hoping that the stack will grow to 10 feet.

At the end of the summer, when everything is prepared, Melancon is hoping to film a video that will describe each tool and its former use. He is also preparing to give facts about the tool. If he used the tool during his youth, he will add that information to the documentary. The video will be given to his grandchildren as a keepsake and educational gift.

"I started collecting about a year ago," he said, "some of my tools are over 100 years old." People who heard of his fascination with these tools have been bringing him items for his collection.

Today, he has antique plows, water wells, wash boards, an 'outside' house. grain planters, wheel barrow, dirt scoop fertilizer distributors, barrels, shavers and mowing machines.

Melancon has been busy this summer preparing a section in his field for his display of old tools. He has worked hard to keep the grass from growing in this roped off area where the elements of nature are constantly being battled by him.

He hopes to build shelves to display his hand tools that he has in storage.

"I love going down memory lane," Melancon slowly explains about each tool.

"I quit farming in 1958," he said, "I went to work for the state. This display is mostly for my grandchildren, so that they can see what kind of life I made when I was a boy."

He points to a single row herra and explains how it made fine dirt long ago for planting purposes. Then he motions to a fertilizer distributor that he bought from the Chief of Police in Church Point in the 50s for $5.

"There's a story behind each piece of equipment," he smiled.

He demonstrates a working pump from long ago as he uses the hand pump. It pumps in a deep well pump and then to a jack pump which was once propelled with a gasoline engine.

He points to a saw horse where a large log is placed. When I livied at home, we had to go far to get lumber, so it was easy to cut it into logs and transport it home for firewood. Here we could walk into the woods and cut the trees in the shade before splitting them for firewood purposes.

Then there is a barrel which Melancon says was once used to hold water for scalding pigs. He said that... (See OLD, Page 6B)
the head was always scalded first because it was considered the hardest part to work and the water was usually at its hottest in the beginning.

Then they would pull out the head and the worker scratched the pig's hair off while the other end was scalded.

Before electricity, Melancon explained that 22 farmers would draw numbers when planning a slaughter. He said the farmers wanted fresh meat sometimes. The 21st and 22nd farmers slaughtered the calf, and their meat was always free for their work. A calf was brought to the slaughter site, and the men usually arrived for work at midnight. They slaughtered the calf and everyone received about 10 pounds of fresh meat.

"There were no steaks, ribs, etc., then," he laughed as he referred to the current practice of selecting your meat at the grocery store. "The meat was spread around."

After the slaughter, those two men worked until late into the night cleaning up the area.

Melancon points out various items as he continues the tour. He has a special place in his heart for each piece as he explains about how he found the item and its value to the story about how Melancon grew up on a farm.