

Fur Sheds I Have Known.

I've seen and been in a lot of fur sheds in my life, some were nicer than others, some were pretty rough at best, but all had character and that one of a kind "aroma" that only a fur shed can have. I've seen all the usual ones, garages, basements, backyard shed's, barns, chicken coop's and other farm buildings, root cellars, but there's some pretty unusual fur sheds out there as well. An old fur buyer in Pancoastburg, Ohio, Gerald Remy bought and put up fur in his kitchen. Another fur buyer in that same small village, Jerry Dunn, well his fur shed was pretty much the whole small house he and his wife lived in. I've heard of many spare rooms in houses being used and even a few closets being used. I'm pretty sure someone once told me of using an attic. I know of several trappers who travel out of state to trap that use old abandoned homesteads, ranch buildings, stock trailers, tents, and improvised shelters made from tarps. There's a trapper here in Ohio that has a fur shed made from an old original log cabin that he had torn down, moved and re-erected on his property. It's got a porch, stone fireplace, skinning machine. A shed most trappers would die for. I once was in a fur shed nestled in a valley in the Shade Mountain Range near McCallisterville, Pennsylvania; the most unusual thing about it was the character who owned it!

The most unusual fur shed I've ever had or used was underground. A farm I once lived on near Cozy Corner's had a very large underground well pump house. Most in seeing this full sized door on an angle with poured concrete sides and top sticking out of the ground thought it was a storm shelter or root cellar, but there were three water well pumps and all the other plumbing down in there. There was plenty of room left down in there and it had lights and an electric pump house heater and worked out quite well as a place to skin, scrape, and stretch fur in. I put the furs out in the barn to dry in the cold once stretched.

The first fur shed I can remember was on my grandfather's farm in Pike County near Beaver, Ohio. It was an old coal /wood shed. It had a big door that opened on the far end where they'd dump in coal or wood to be stored out of the weather. There was also a hoist hanging down from the rafters which they used when they slaughtered animals in there. The other end had a workshop in half of it; the other half was walled off with a locked door for "storage". I remember being told to not go in there for any reason. The workshop area was the butcher shop/ fur shed. It had a small potbellied stove, a couple of coal oil lanterns for light and a long work bench. A hewed log fleshing beam was bolted to the wall and floor and a two handled draw knife hung on a nail close by. Cast iron meat hooks were driven into the edge of the work bench and into a few different places and heights on the walls and ceiling beams to hang animals from. It was all pretty simple but effective, I wish I had pictures of it. I still have the drawknife, lanterns, a few of the cast iron hooks and the small potbellied stove to this day. What was most unusual about this fur shed was what was under the pile of coal which never seemed to be used and what was in the storage room. Back during prohibition, my great grandfather made shine in the "storage room" and the still was still in there. Under all the coal, well that's where mason jars of shine were kept hidden. When I was 10 or so we removed a lot of stuff from the shed and it was burnt down along with another shed close to it, which had a quantity of old deteriorating dynamite in it. I would have liked to have seen that still!

The first fur buyer I remember visiting was Marvin Mallow's which was at the end of a long gravel road with the north fork of Paint Creek right behind it. His address was Clarksburg, he had a New Holland phone number, and he was between the villages of Dogtown and Austin, pretty much in the middle of nowhere. The smell of his fur shed was world class! The number of furbearers skinned, fleshed, dried, and bought and sold through there in all those decades would stagger the imagination of any trapper. A big potbellied stove in there was the only heat source I can remember. There was a large skinning/grading table in the main room; another smaller room had a line of fleshing beams. There were a couple of small back rooms, one was Marvin's office, another had bottles of lure and bait in it. Once while I was there and he was on the phone, he handed it to me while he went to check on something. The fellow on the phone said hello and asked if I was a trapper and we carried on quite a conversation until Marvin came back. After he'd hung up he asked me if I knew who I had been talking to which I said no. He said well you've been buying and using his lures, it was E.J. Dailey. Years later they added on to that building then built another building which was an office and housed all the trapping supplies. I've seen semi-loads of traps come in and out of that place. The old original fur house though is what always sticks in my mind, coon hides nailed out skinned open on the walls, the floor literally covered with animals on the carcass to be skinned, piles of skins by the fleshing beams, one pile fleshed, and the other still to be fleshed. The rafters full of pelts hanging down to dry. Old Marvin liked dogs and there'd be quite a few, a couple dozen it seemed at times, laying around on the fur shed floor near the stove, outside the door and elsewhere. I only wish I'd taken some pictures but in the hundreds of visits to that place I never thought to. Marvin and his fur house were both one of a kind.