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Memories are all that's left to harvest at Silvis farm

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SILVIS -- The musty smell of hay still surrounds the old milk shed, barn and hog lot at 10th Street and Colona Road, where cattle amble up for a drink of water, flies swarming.



Photo: Terry Herbig

The old farm at the corner of 10th Street and Colona Road in Silvis once was a showplace. It belonged to the Hynd family and was built at the turn of the century. It was the first in the area to have gas lights. The home has been abandoned since 1999, and it soon will be burned in a training exercise.

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Rusted orange equipment sits on the lot, half-hidden by brambles snaking through the metal tires. The wagons are empty; the corncrib is falling down; and there's not much activity here these days. The land is for sale, waiting to be turned into a development. The house will go up in flames in November, giving firefighters a chance to train for a real emergency.

The memories, however, will stay, locked in the minds of nieces and nephews and their sons and daughters.

William Hynd Sr. began farming the land after his wife, Florence, insisted he quit working in the coal mines. News articles in 1897 said the area's coal mines were nearing depletion.

He and Florence had five children: Ben, Henry, John, Florence and William Jr. The latter two married and had four children each. Two of Florence's children, Owen Stipp and Linda (Stipp) Kirklin, remember visiting the farm, where their uncles Ben, Henry and John farmed, when they were children.

"It kind of brought us all together," Mr. Stipp said.

Three of William Hynd Sr.'s sons never married and stayed on the farm. Henry Hynd was born in 1911 and died in 1975. He farmed, raised chickens and sold eggs. Henry also worked as a janitor at Bowlesburg School, which is located across the road from the farm. Their sister, Florence, died in 1983.

John Hynd, who farmed with his brother Ben, died in 1998. Ben died in 1999 after lying down for a nap.

"He farmed up to the last day," Ms. Kirklin said.

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The last brother, William Hynd Jr., who married and raised a family in East Moline, died after Ben in 1999.

All of them finished high school.

"They were all smart people, and they all went to church," Ms. Kirklin said.

The farm now sits at an awkward spot in time, shuttered by a lack of life and holding onto history while the future draws near. But Mr. Stipp and Ms. Kirklin remember a different home, a stately white house with life around it, laughter in it and good food on the table.

Florence (Hynd) Stipp, Ms. Kirklin's and Mr. Stipp's mother, used to visit the farm every Sunday to cook dinner for the three brothers who lived there. They had plenty of food, including vegetables from the huge garden next to the house, eggs from the chickens, milk from the dairy cows and fresh meat from 100 head of cattle. "They could put on some good meals," Ms. Kirklin said.

"It used to be a showplace," she said. "It was the first in the area to have gas lights."

The house never had indoor plumbing. A pump was connected to the kitchen to provide water for washing dishes, and an outhouse served as the bathroom. A coal stove was connected to a chimney.

"We'd get together and play cards," Ms. Kirklin said. "Grandpa used to sit in the kitchen and feed the kids doughnuts. They were just wonderful people. They'd do anything for you."

When the land is sold, the buildings will come down. The cattle, owned by a longtime family friend, will be moved. The house will be donated to the Silvis Fire Protection District. Eventually, a piece of history that has fascinated passers-by will be gone.

Leaving the house is hard, Ms. Kirklin said, but "we all got our little mementos out of it."

So when it goes, the only thing left will be the memories of Mr. Stipp, Ms. Kirklin and their family of a haven, a place where home once was and family came together.

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[back to top](#)