

Stoneboat

Electronic mail message of 28 September 1998 from Paul Koehler, St. Joseph, Michigan about the stoneboat:

Since this is a heritage list group, I thought Y'all would like to read a page from my unpublished book "WE'RE GLAD THEY CAME" about some memories on the farm in Berrien Springs, Michigan where I grew up. As both my parents were born in Russia and some of the things they brought with them:

A "stoneboat" was made of tree logs about 12" in diameter and the front of the logs were tapered so they would not dig into the ground.

Each log was placed about 4 feet apart and a sturdy cross member was notched about 12 inches from the front. This cross member then had a chain or rope fastened around it and was hooked to a horse or later to a tractor. There was a cross member at the rear also and boards were then attached along the entire length of this vehicle.

A stoneboat was a cheap but useful vehicle to haul farm equipment and produce. We used it to haul grapes, apples, peaches, etc., from the fields to the barn. There were no tires to go flat.

It was called a stoneboat because it ran close to the ground and when you would ride over a medium stone it would roll under the stoneboat until it came out the back end.

Our Dad, at times, would hook a horse to our stoneboat and pick up the "Kids" from school, which was a mile and a half away. He did this when it was very cold and we would not have to walk.

The idea of this vehicle was brought with the Volga Germans from Russia to the United States.

In many cases a stoneboat was used to haul the stones out of the fields so a more productive crop could be raised and the stones would not tear up the machinery. Hence the name "STONEBOAT".

Electronic mail message from J. Bergman

Paul - what a delightful article on an everyday-used farm implement with which we were very familiar on our family farm - one that I had almost forgotten about!

Yes, the tires never went flat, never had any problem getting it started even in -40 degree weather on the flat Saskatchewan prairies, and it would never get stuck in the mud during spring thaw!! Interesting, though, even after we had pretty well mechanized the farm with gasoline & diesel powered equipment - the STONEBOAT would still occasionally be used. One of the unique characteristics of this simple but useful device was that it was so close to the ground. Therefore if some item(s) had to be moved that was too heavy to lift off the ground, it could usually be rolled, shoved or "inched" onto the old trusty, most reliable STONEBOAT. thanks again, Paul, for that memory!