

The Case of the Nazi (?) Farmhand

A drawing on an old threshing machine tells a tale after 80 years

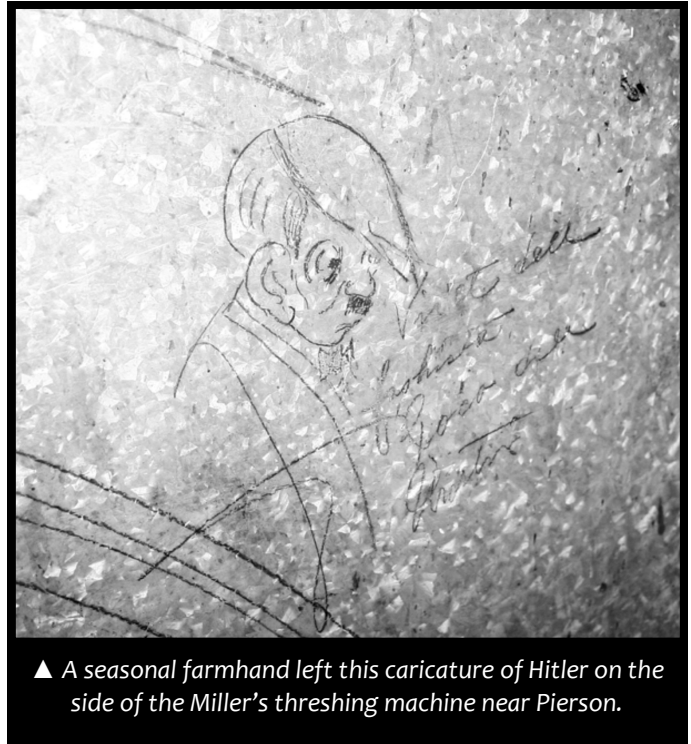
In 1938 Emory and Basil Miller needed help with the harvest. They had been farming their parents' farm, the Henry Miller homestead southwest of Pierson, through the lean years of the 1930's but things were looking up. They had just purchased a new threshing machine and they needed some manpower to help them get that crop off of the field and into the granaries while the weather held.

The solution was temporary harvest help, and sometimes you met some interesting people that way. They came, they worked a short time, and

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they moved on. The young man that showed up that fall had recently arrived from Germany. His name, his background, and his subsequent life have been lost to history. It turns out that he was a bit of an artist, and that he had some political opinions.

Before leaving he decorated the side of the Miller's new threshing machine with a set of pencil drawings. Off to one corner is an Aboriginal warrior with feather headdress, perhaps reflecting what apparently is a long-standing German interest in Native Americans. In another corner



▲ A seasonal farmhand left this caricature of Hitler on the side of the Miller's threshing machine near Pierson.



▲ The threshing machine that acted as a canvas for one German farmhand's artistic expression.

is a scroll. In the central panels of the side of the thresher a smiling sun overlooks an elaborately feathered bird carrying a banner, and off to one side directly under the sun we see a convincingly unmistakable caricature of Adolph Hitler. Was it a cartoon? Or an homage to the Nazi leader?

The thresher has been parked in the shade on the Miller farmyard since the early sixties. All in all those simple pencil drawings have survived eight decades. We can only wonder about the motivation of the artist and his fate as the world approached World War II.

Sources:

Daniels, Neale. Personal Interview.

Photos: Ken Storie