



Plough and Winnower

a g r i c u l t u r a l m i s c e l l a n y

LANCASTER COUNTY ROAST-OX

From *The Pennsylvania Chronicle and Universal Advertiser* of April 4 to 11, 1768 (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania):

“On Wednesday last a large Ox (raised and fed by Mr. Isaac Waine, of Chester County) was brought to this town (by Mr. Singeisen, a Butcher of Philadelphia) adorn’d with Ribbons, Garlands, and gilded Horns. The dumb Victim was led about the Streets, attended by a Crowd of Followers; and on Thursday fell a Sacrifice to the Lovers of fat Beef, weighing (neat) about 1200 lbs.

“The Butchers of this place (determined to support the Credit of their shambles, and to convince us that the opulent and plentiful County of Lancaster has no Occasion to import Beef from other Places) procured immediately several fine Oxen, Natives of this County (one of which was dressed and led about in the Manner already described) and on Thursday they were likewise all killed. Allowing for the Difference of their Ages, and the Time they were kept, these Oxen far exceeded the Chester-County Behemoth. They were young, well-fed, exceeding sic fat, and weighed, upon an Average, about 800 lbs. each.

“This affair has raised such an Emulation here, that our graziers are resolved to raise and fatten, and have our Butchers to kill the best and largest Cattle in the Province, for the Honour of Lancaster, long famous for plentiful Markets — So that we are likely to have glorious Ribs and Rumps — ‘O the roast Beef of Old-England! and, O the Old English roast beef!’ ”

THE HORSEY COUNTY

Lancaster County in 1959 had 1,994 farms on which 9,049 horses and mules were being kept. This is a 1,200 animal increase since 1954 although the number of “horsey” farms dropped by 50 in the same period. Over 13½ thousand tractors augmented the beast-power in 1959.

COST OF LIVING A CENTURY AGO

From the **Columbia Spy**, 10 April 1875:

The comparative cost of living in 1860, 1864 and 1875 is forcibly shown by the following tables of prices for some of the common necessities of life:

	1860	1864	1875
1 ton of coal	\$4.00	\$9.00	\$5.00
1 pound of sugar	.10	.36	.11
1 yard of muslin	.12	.30	.15
1 bushel of corn meal	.80	2.50	.85
1 pound of beef	.15	.25	.15
1 dozen eggs	.12	.30	.28
1 pound of coffee	.20	.60	.28
1 barrel of flour	7.00	11.00	6.25
1 pound of butter	.25	.45	.35
1 pound of ham	.15	.18	.15
1 bushel of wheat	1.60	1.90	1.30
1 bushel of rye	.90	1.30	1.00
1 bushel of corn	.80	1.21	.80
1 bushel of oats	.45	.88	.70
1 bushel of potatoes	.80	1.10	1.00
	\$17.44	\$31.33	\$18.37

It will be observed the cost of living is quite as low now as it was in 1860, the prices for 1860 being gold prices and those given for 1864 and 1875 currency prices.

LANCASTER COUNTY TOBACCO IN FIRST PLACE

Figures released by the U. S. Department of Commerce for tobacco production in 1959 show Lancaster County to be first in acreage and production for the United States. In 1959 the number of acres devoted to tobacco was 27,414 and the production thereof in pounds was 42,244,277. This was a rise of approximately 1,000 acres and 4¼ million pounds since 1954, when our county ranked 5th in acreage and 3rd in production.

In 1839 Lancaster County produced 48,860 pounds of tobacco, or 15 per cent of the Pennsylvania total. Ten years later the County's crop amounted to 378,050 pounds, or 41.4 per cent of the State total. The yield for 1859 soared to 2,001,547 pounds and placed the local production at 62.9 per cent of the State crop. At the end of the next decade Lancaster County produced 77.7 per cent of the Pennsylvania crop, or 2,692,584 pounds. After a spectacular increase to nearly 24 million pounds in 1879, the County's production slumped to less than 20 million pounds in 1889. All this time, however, the County maintained an ever-increasing percentage of the Pennsylvania production. In 1899 the crop yielded 28¼ million pounds; nearly 37 million in 1909, which was about 80 per cent of the State total and 49-1/3 million pounds in 1919. Dropping nearly 3 million pounds in 1929, Lancaster County nevertheless pushed its per cent up to 92.6. Production slumped to a trifle more than 31 million pounds in 1936 which was 96.4 per cent of the State total, and which was 2.6 per cent of the national production. By this time 22,160 acres were being farmed in Lancaster County with a yield averaging 1,400 pounds per acre.

DECLINE IN FARM POPULATION

"You can't keep 'em down on the farm" seems to apply to Lancaster County farm folk, according to a recent study made by the Lancaster County Planning Commission. The study shows that our farm population began declining in 1930, and from that time has dropped from 46,662 to 33,403. That does not mean the county is becoming a lonely and barren place! Persons who elect to live in the rural areas, but not as farmers, have been moving in faster than the farmers are moving out. In the last decade 29½ thousand non-farming persons moved into our rural areas. The planning commission pointed out several factors which are influential in the population shifting. As new housing sprouts up in the rural areas, the new residents demand urban services which result in tax increases—which the farmer must pay on his farm acreage. Moreover, the new residents frequently outnumber the older farming families, and assume political control. At this point the farmer finds he must pay for services which he feels he does not need and he has little voice left in making decisions concerning his increasing tax burden.

DIVERS STATISTICS FOR A WINTER EVENING

Lancaster County has three farms (1959) over 1000 acres in size, and nine which are 500 to 999 acres. The highest percentage of farms are in the 10 to 40 acre class (1,995 in 1959). About 65½ pounds of wool were shorn and 25 acres of pickles were in cultivation in 1959. The four farms which grew 332 bushels of buckwheat on 14 acres in 1954 had given up in 1959. Sixty-six quince trees produced 92 bushels of quinces in 1959. Some stalwart countryman no doubt got a chuckle by having his one gallon of maple syrup dutifully reported as the County's total yield for 1959.

FUTURE FARMERS OF AMERICA

We are indebted to Harold J. Brubaker for the following information on Lancaster County FFA Chapters. Mr. Brubaker has been honored as a Star Farmer, Keystone Farmer, and was selected as the outstanding young farmer in the Northeastern United States in 1964. A pedigree director and manager of Holstein Friesian cattle for several years, Mr. Brubaker is a student at the Delaware Valley College of Science and Agriculture.

The first Future Farmers of America Chapter in Lancaster County was founded in 1930 at Lampeter-Strasburg High School, and was known as the Garden Spot Chapter. Wayne Rentschler started the chapter with twenty boys. At present the Chapter has about fifty members.

Other county chapters are:

Witness Oak Chapter at Donegal High School, Mount Joy (disestablished in 1965); Solanco Chapter at Solanco High School, Quarryville; Pequea Valley Chapter at Pequea Valley High School, Kinzers; Grassland Chapter at Garden Spot High School, New Holland; Manor Chapter at Penn Manor High School, Millersville; Manheim Chapter at Manheim Central High School, Manheim; Elizabethtown Chapter at Elizabethtown Area High School, Elizabethtown; Warwick Chapter at Warwick High School, Lititz; and Cloister Chapter at Ephrata High School, Ephrata.