



THE

CHRONICLE

QUARTERLY

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THE EDITOR'S EDGE

Some people have said that history repeats itself every x number of years. This might be true for philosophies and political thought but it is not true for agriculture and the advances made in crop research and farm implements. The same crops are grown today that the early Weston farmers grew but new varieties have boosted yields beyond what the early farmers could have dreamed of. Also, harvesting equipment has changed to where a modern corn farmer can harvest more acres in 4 hours than his 18th century ancestor could in a week or more.

Farming as the early Weston settlers knew it was *all there was*—a full time job for survival. It wasn't easy, but nobody said it would be, and almost everybody was doing the same thing, and this brought people closer together than they (perhaps) are today.

Herb Day
Editor



Diagram Showing
Motion of Rakes on Rock Island,
1,700 Strokes per Mile.

NOW
Other Loaders
Do It.

OVER 8,000 STROKES
PER MILE.
(Must wear the Rock Island???)
and break the hay. !!)

YOU GUIDE THE TEAM

The Loader
Does The Rest.

Dispenses with hired help and hard work, takes the place of a rake and does the work of four men and a horse besides.

In showery weather will frequently pay for itself with one days use and no one gets "tired out." An interesting book entitled

"Songs of Praise from
The Meadows,"

Written by a thousand farmers who have used them and know whereof they speak, tells all about it. Sent free.

THE ROCK ISLAND PLOW CO.,
Mention this paper. ROCK ISLAND, ILL.

HARVEST TIME IN WESTON

Fall is usually thought of as harvest time. We have visions of farmers getting their hay crop in, of wheat and corn in the shock, orange pumpkins dotting the fields; barrels of apples picked for cider and canning and root crops in the garden ready to be dug.

The truth is that there were many different crops grown in Weston, some of which were grown and harvested by early summer. The type of crops grown was at first determined by the needs of the farmer and his family; later they were influenced by the needs of the market as the farmers grew some of the crops needed by an increasing urban population.

The early settlers grew crops that they needed to survive. These included hay, Indian corn, buckwheat, rye, oats (for the livestock), wheat, and vegetables for their own food, and flax for their home made clothes. Their livestock consisted of milk cows, chickens, hogs and sheep. They also had horses and/or oxen.

Because harvest time came all summer and fall, depending on the crop, they literally worked seven days a week just to survive (they also enjoyed some time at the local taverns dancing and just visiting as we will see when we bring you articles on the tavern life). While farming was a full time job for some farmers, many were also craftsmen and worked as carpenters, millers, blacksmiths etc. to bring in some cash to buy the staples they could not produce on the farm: salt, molasses, rum, tea and coffee.

In the mid to late 1800's, as industry came to Weston many farmers found a market for some of their crops, selling them to the workers who came here to live and work. This ready market, close by, prompted the farmers to plant additional crops such as tobacco, onions, and potatoes and to expand their production of milk, cheese, butter, honey and cider. This further extended their harvest time and efforts, requiring, in many cases, the hiring of farm hands to help with the planting, harvesting, and the hauling of the products to the market area.

The many industries in Weston during the mid to late 1800's caused a road building effort which permitted the movement of finished goods to the markets or at least to the shipping ports along the Connecticut coast. When the markets for Weston's factories and mills dried up because of less expensive products made in states to the west, the population started to decline. The farmer had to find other markets for his crops. With the improved roads now available, they were able to haul potatoes, onions, apples, butter, cheese, and even milk to Fairfield, Norwalk and Westport.

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PICTURE QUIZ

Can you name this?



If you can name the item in the picture send your name to:

The Editor
The Chronicle
P.O. Box 1092
Weston, CT 06883

LAST ISSUE'S QUIZ

The item in the last picture quiz is a corn planter. It was used by holding in one hand and pushing down into the ground. The spring gate on the bottom of the hopper opened and the corn seed came out. The farmer then moved down the row planting in the proper spot. In the old days corn was usually planted in hills and "checked" on a square so the cultivator could be pulled both ways (right angles) through the field without tearing out your corn plants.

Mr. Ray Fitch sent in the following information "The picture in the quiz is of a corn planter, sometimes called a corn sticker. I have two or three and would be willing to give one to the Society. Some farmers would plant two rows of corn at one time, using one planter in each hand, having previously marked out the rows".

LETTERS

We received a letter from Mr. John S. Coleburn of Ft. Meyers, Fla. (He has a summer residence at Compo Cove, Westport). His uncle was James Coley the father of James Coley, who, with his wife Cleora, gave their homestead to the Historical Society. We received this letter from Mr. John Clark (to whom it was sent) who told us that Mr. Coleburn said that he could forward it to us. The information in the letter is a followup on the story we did on the Coley Homestead last spring. Here is Mr. Coleburn's letter:

"In the article on the Coley farm, I can add a little, so here goes—At least one other deed should be available. In the 20's or perhaps in the 30's, the Ct. Light and Power Co. wanted to put a power line over a portion of the land—instead of taking any money for the easement, my uncle James, the father of James S., the building contractor, talked Ct. Light and Power into giving him some adjacent land they owned. Uncle James, at the time, was about as land poor as anyone could be. I remember my mother was furious with him for not taking the cash.

The article is right when it speaks of their fear of fire. In the 1880's the main barn caught fire—some of the field hands bunked in the barn, got drunk, and managed to set it afire. It was filled with hay and contained about half a dozen horses and other animals. It was a terrible fire, and they thought the house would burn too, but they managed to keep it from catching. The worst part was the horses. They managed to get a couple of them out, only to have them break loose and dash back into the burning barn. My mother, Ida Lewis Coley Coleburn, used to tell me that for years she had nightmares, hearing the screams of the horses.

The barn was rebuilt, just as it was originally. This may mean that the present barn is not as old as the Historical Society believes.

When my mother got married in 1899, she sold her half of the farm to her brother for \$1500.

We wish to thank Mr. Coleburn for writing his interesting letter and for John Clark for passing it on to us. We knew about the fire. In the barn there is a wooden sign which states that the barn was built in 1842, burned in 1880, and was-rebuilt.

HELP

DO YOU KNOW WHAT THIS WAS? WE DON'T.

This item was found in the cellar of the old post office. Part of it is missing. It appears to have had parts on an axle and a cover which was hinged and fastened down by clamps, part of which can be seen.

We would like to hear from anyone who can identify this item. It is fastened to a log bench that stands about 24 inches high.



(Continued from page 1)

Harvesting all these crops required long hours and the help of the whole family. As harvesting implements were developed the harvest time was reduced, enabling the farmer to plant more acres or to have time for other pursuits.

The hayloader speeded the gathering of hay; the potato digger greatly reduced the potato digging time; and the sickle bar mower and thresher replaced the scythe and winnow and improved the harvesting of wheat, oats, rye and barley. Local gristmills finished the harvesting of grain into flour and feeds.

One of the non-food or feed crops harvested by many Weston residents was charcoal. This was an important cash crop even though many of the farmers and other residents only worked for someone else in cutting and stacking the wood to be burned.

Harvesting—Early settlers found that it took most of their waking hours in the summer and fall. Their future generations used farm implements which sped the harvest of many crops and made their life much easier. However, the mechanical age and industrial revolution soon passed the Weston farmer by and farming became a thing of the past—in our town.

COLEY HOMESTEAD UPDATE

Those of you who came to the three day Quilt show this month had an opportunity to see what improvements have been made to the Coley Homestead. The kitchen has been redone and the leaking roof fixed. The house has been painted; additional space in the barn has been cleaned out and will be used as part of the museum; and the new driveway and parking lot have been almost finished. The cut in the field for the driveway is much deeper and wider than we expected; however, it follows the dictates of the P and Z. Certainly no neighbors will see cars coming and going when they are down in the canyon. When a buffer zone of evergreen trees is planted and grass seeded along the bank, it will look like it has always been that way (well, maybe in 10-15 years).

POST OFFICE UPDATE

Well, the post office is still up on blocks, waiting for the foundation to be built. We have had some delays in locating a mason to do the work. We still plan to have the post office on the new foundation by thanksgiving.

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FIFTY YEARS AGO

The news from Weston fifty years ago was mighty slim except for the one liners about so and so having tea with so and so; therefore we have taken the liberty of skipping around to other years for interesting items. We will not report on anything that happened less than fifty years ago unless it is an exceptional bit of news.

December 12, 1912

By the breaking of the king bolt and an axle of his carriage, while delivering mail near the residence of John Fitch in the Upper Parish, on Friday of last week, Charles Keene, carrier on route 12, R.F.D., was thrown from the vehicle while his horse, taking one wheel and part of the broken axle, ran some distance down the street where he was stopped by Hawley Williams, near his home. After recovering his equilibrium, Mr. Keene, who had started in pursuit, after delivering a lecture to the horse, attached him to a buggy loaned by Mr. Williams, left his damaged vehicle with Mr. Fitch and completed his route in record time.

July 13, 1917

A telephone has just been installed at the summer residence of Miss Theall, the former home of Mrs. Columbus Bulkley in the upper parish.

My, how times have changed.

THE OLD BUGGY



Mr. Ray Fitch, one of our mentors, sits in the driver's seat of the Society's buggy just before the Memorial day parade. This is the buggy which was given to the society by Mrs. Julie Jones. Lu Harper sits in the mother-in-law seat.

NEXT ISSUE

Pictures from Our Quilt Show
Post Office Update
What's New at The Coley Museum
The Dirt Roads Committee
The Revolutionary Road
Picture Quiz
Fifty Years Ago

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QUARTERLY

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