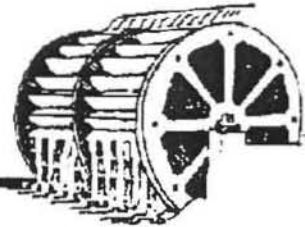


MILLWORK



Sept.-Dec., 2008

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Hanford Mills Museum

Vol. 21 - No. 3

Bringing in the Harvest

by Caroline de Marrais

Fall has arrived and we are heading into winter. Even in this modern world we have been busy with the harvest ... from our gardens at least. Through old diaries and newspapers we can see what harvest time in East Meredith was like in the past.

The harvest really began in the heat of summer with the cutting of oats. On August 13, 1879 Elizabeth Hanford (DJ Hanford's aunt) wrote, "Levi & Charlie went to Merits to see a reaper work. The first one used in our town." Despite this early machine, the Hanfords cut oats by hand (using a grain cradle) until 1898.

Berries were also harvested in August. The hills surrounding East Meredith were filled with wild berries. Mostly women and children went out "berrying," but even the men got in on the job, sometimes taking the children with them. And since August was berrying time it was also canning time. Elizabeth writes about canning berries and jelly (which she



Men harvesting grain with a reaping machine in the late 1890s.

constantly wrote as "jell").

Then came September, and canning continued, as they put up the bounty of their gardens. Besides berries, Elizabeth mentions canning peaches, pears, apple jelly, plums, pickles, tomato pickles, grapes, chow chow (a pickled mixture of green tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, cauliflower, and sometimes string beans), and piccalilli (a pickled mixture of green tomatoes, green peppers, onions, and sometimes cabbage, which Elizabeth spelled as "Pickle Lilly"). Besides her own canning, Elizabeth sometimes went to other people's houses to can

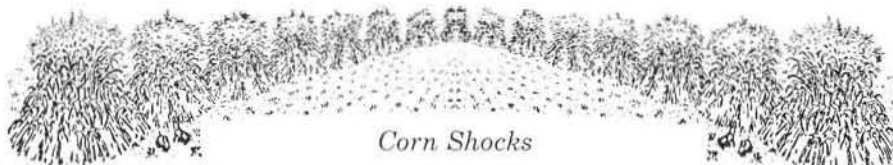
when they couldn't do the work

In September, corn was the big harvest-ing job. Corn was cut by hand (at least until 1896, see the *Millwork* article from 2007, volume 20, no. 3 on the first corn harvester in East Meredith). Bundles were set up in shocks to dry. Some whole corn stalks were also

chopped for animal feed. There was always a race between the farmer and nature, especially when harvesting fodder corn. If there was a frost, the corn was ruined for chopping. Corn was also no good if the weather was dry. Elizabeth wrote on August 25, 1882, "Every thing drying up. Corn almost a failure, no ears setting."

Once corn was in, it was time to dig potatoes. This was probably done with horse-drawn machinery. A potato digger had a point that went into the ground, digging up potatoes and letting them

Continued on page 3



Corn Shocks

In This Issue:

Fall Harvest	Page 1
What's News?	Page 2
2008 Donations	Page 2
Up-Coming Events	Page 3

What's News?

Hanford Mills Museum's historic site is a proud reminder of the mills and industrial complexes that served every town, village and hamlet a century ago. The Museum's unique ability to balance historic preservation, while demonstrating traditional processes using machinery powered by water and steam, has been recognized and applauded. Although we are pleased to earn this praise, and although our audience participation has reached the highest monthly average in over a decade, there is always more to do.

In 2009 we will begin to implement the Museum's new multi-year Strategic Plan which emphasizes expanding community collaborations and enhancing community accessibility and outreach. We aim to celebrate local knowledge and culture while being more entrepreneurial, efficient and sustainable in our operations and programming.

The Museum's 2009 preservation and restoration projects include the installation of a restored horizontal steam engine in the Mill's steam power plant (see below) and the completion of the Feed Mill's extensive rehabilitation. Our dynamic programs and activities will continue to emphasize the historic integrity and thoughtful stewardship of our unique and authentic mill complex. We are also interested in exploring what the history of renewable energy can teach us today.

You can support the "power of history" with a donation to Hanford Mills Museum. With your help, our efforts to preserve and demonstrate the special aspects of history uniquely presented at Hanford Mills will continue. *Please donate online by visiting www.hanfordmills.org or use the annual appeal form you will receive in the mail soon.*



Liz Callahan, Executive Director



John Hamilton purchased this steam engine from James Pratt of Owego, NY (pictured here). John donated the engine to the Museum. It is presently being restored and will be installed next spring. If you are interested in the 2009 steam workshop that will work with the new engine, please contact the Museum. Photograph by Dawn Raudibaugh.

2008 Donations

Hanford Mills Museum would like to thank the people listed below for donating artifacts to the Museum this year. Donations ranged from logging and ice harvesting tools, to domestic items for the John Hanford Farmhouse, to a steam engine donated by John Hamilton, a treadle sewing machine, and a quilt made by Cindy Kinsey. Thank you everyone!

Phil Ashe
 Mark Cerosaletti
 Scott Gravelin
 John Hamilton
 Neil Hourihan
 Wayne Hymers, Jr.
 Ron Jennings
 George King, III
 Cindy Kinsey & Jay Hager
 George Machala
 Judith Mantle
 Greg Onasch
 Larry Palmatier
 Dan Talmedge



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MILLWORK is published by Hanford Mills Museum and distributed free to members. It is edited by assistant director, Caroline de Marrais ☞ printed and distributed with funds from the O'Connor Foundation.

Up-Coming Special Events

Members' Holiday Party

- Saturday, December 6, 2008, 1 to 4 pm

See invitation included in center.

Winter Ice Harvest

- Saturday, February 7, 2009, 10 am to 4 pm

Let's hope and pray there will be ice this year. Come out to join in the harvest. See ad → → → → →

Volunteer Clean-Up Day

- Saturday, May 2, 2009, 10 am to 3 pm

Come out and help get the Museum site ready for another fun-filled year. We have inside and outside clean-up jobs to suit what you want to do, and we'll feed you lunch, too!

Opening Day - Friday, May 15, 2008

Fighting Cabin Fever?
Come to Hanford Mills Museum's ❄️❄️❄️❄️❄️❄️

Winter Ice Harvest

Saturday
February 7, 2009
10 am to 4 pm

A Great Cure for Cabin Fever!



* Take a ride on a horse-drawn bobsled



* Cut a block of ice from the pond using an ice saw

* Help load the Ice House



* Great hot soups from local restaurants

Continued from page 1

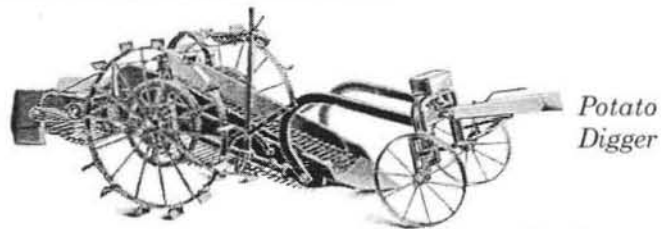
fall onto an open conveyor belt. Dirt fell through while the potatoes were deposited on the ground behind or in a wagon. Potatoes were stored in the cellar in bins. In 1880 Elizabeth noted that they harvested over 100 bushels of potatoes.

Even through there was a lot to do in September, it wasn't all work and no play. At the beginning of the month, teenagers and young adults often went to the Maryland, New York area to help pick hops. This, of course, was work, but it was

also a chance for (chaperoned) young people to have a little fun away from home

with lots of joking around and evening parties. By mid-September the local fairs were in full swing. Elizabeth talks about visiting the Hobart, Oneonta, Schenevus, Davenport, and Delhi fairs. D.J. Hanford went to the state fair which was in Ithaca in 1881.

As October rolled around there was a race to get in the



Potato Digger

apple harvest before the frost. Elizabeth wrote on October 8, 1881, "Our folks gathering Apples in forenoon ... the hard freze we had Wednesday, spoiles some Apples - I fear all are injured." They grew an old variety called a "strawberry" apple. In 1880, she mentions that they gathered over 200 bushels. Apples were also stored in bins in the cellar. Other late fall harvests included drawing pumpkins in from the fields, and pulling and gathering beets.

By the end of October, the work began to relax a little and people could finish their harveting with a little fun. The November 6, 1896 issue of the *Delaware County Dairyman* newspaper reported,

Continued on page 4

Oneonta Fair, c. 1900. The fair-grounds were on the east side of the city. Curved roads in the neighborhood today follow the old fair race track.



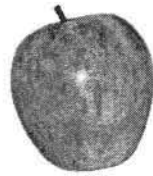
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“Husking bees are the order of the day (or night) here now. 163 bushels were husked in one night last week at Wm. Brownell’s and about the same at M.S. Roberts’.” The cob-corn was stored in bins, while husks were used in mattresses. This was the time of year to clean your mattress cover and restuff it with fresh husks.

Finally, November was the time of year to butcher hogs when the weather was cold, allowing time to process the meat without having to worry about spoilage. Elizabeth Hanford wrote about “trying lard” (melting down the fat from the hog to use in cooking), cutting meat and making sausages, and making head-cheese (a loaf made from the various meats found inside and on a hog’s head). Bacon and hams would have been smoked.

November was also the time to thresh the grains harvested in August. Bundles of dry grain were drawn to the barn where it was run through a threshing machine which beat the grain from the straw. Threshers were usually expensive machines, so a number of farmers got together to buy and share one, or one farmer traveled around the area with his machine threshing everyone’s grain for a fee. By Christmas, everyone’s harvest work was usually finished.

Through the fall, Elizabeth not only writes about the harvest, but she also talks about the rest of everyday life, such as the illnesses people suffered, and the deaths and births that took

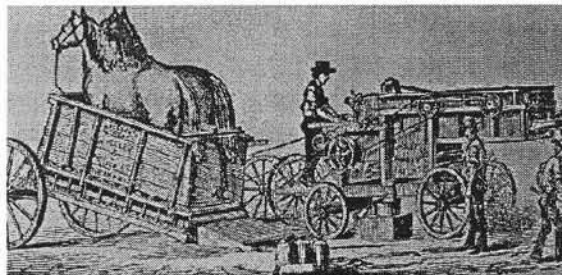


The strawberry apple is also known as the Chenango strawberry apple & supposedly tastes faintly of strawberries.

place no matter the time of year. She writes about making and storing winter butter (since cows at that time did not often produce milk in the winter season when they did not have access to good feed). She also talks about cutting and drawing in firewood for the winter. Besides all this work, she made time in that busy season to visit family and friends, often going away for a week at a time.

In the end, the fall was a busy time for the farmer, but he didn’t take all the work too seriously:

“Now, good people of East Meredith and vicinity, have patience with your [local newspaper] correspondent, for after the threshing season is over I will try and get down to business again and report all your doings before they get musty or stale. But just now this enormous crop of buck-wheat (straw) has got to be put in the bin. After this is done you and your sisters, your cousins and your aunts will receive my undivided attention.”
Delaware County Dairyman,
September 30, 1898.



Before gas engines, threshing machines were often powered by horses on a treadmill. You can see why threshers were an expensive piece of equipment.

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