

Down on the Farm

By Earl and Mary Tripp Noble - March 1999

Farming in the early part of the 20th century in northern New York was quite different from present day farming. It was a family business and quite diversified. Farms were small, maybe 100 or 200 acres, with 15 or 20 cows, which were milked by hand and the milk was delivered by horse and wagon or sleigh to a cheese factory or milk plant a few miles away.



The Noble homestead farm on the edge of Edwards village heading towards Russell. Taken from the hill across the road in 1910. Shows the earlier barn, the other outbuildings and the fifth, and present, house to be built by the family on their property.

At that time, 1919, the monthly electric bill was \$1.00. When we bought a two horse motor to power a milking machine, the bill was raised to \$2.00 a month, although we couldn't use as much electricity in the winter as that fee would allow. That was because there wasn't much milking in winter and we did it by hand. So we bought a battery charger to use for the radio battery. We had acquired the radio in the late '20s.

Our farm machinery consisted of a hay wagon, a milk wagon, a horse drawn mower, a dump rake and a horse fork to unload hay in the barn. Also we had a plow and a set of harrows for tilling the soil. Our four horses provided the power to run these machines.

Earl has come from the time when hay was raked with a dump rake and then "bunched", stacked into piles that could be picked up with a pitchfork and lifted onto the hay wagon.

Almost every farmer raised chickens and hogs and, in some cases, sheep. Of course, the family had a big garden and raised all the vegetables they needed, with perhaps some extra corn and potatoes to be traded for groceries at the stores in town.

Not many groceries were needed because almost everything necessary was raised on the farm except flour, sugar and special treats like bananas and oranges. Even sugar could be acquired on the farm if there were maple trees.

We kept 34 cows, more than most of our neighbors, as well as calves, and 20 young cattle for replacements.

Because our house was the first one out of the village on the Scotland road, we were the first to get electricity. It cost \$38.00 to get the thirteen room house wired. There were no outlets, just a light bulb hanging from the ceiling in each room.



The necessary farm wagon, drawn by the team of horses, commonly used before the mechanization of the farm. Shown in the picture are Warren Noble on the wagon with his daughter, Margaret. Standing at left is Grace, sister of Warren, and next are the parents, Emeline Cassidy Noble and Cleland Noble.

Then the hayloader was invented, which was pulled behind the wagon and picked up the hay and dropped it onto the wagon. A man stood on top of the moving load of hay and distributed it evenly until the load was almost top heavy. The older men couldn't keep their balance on the moving wagon, so "tailing the loader" became Earl's job.



Noble's old barn with the name of the farm 'Fairview Farm' painted over the doors. Three of Earl and Mary Noble's six children shown in the fall of 1958 on the farm tractor - Rosemary behind with Raymond on the left and Margaret on the right.

In the 1950's we bought a hay baler, which was pulled by the tractor we had bought the year before, so the horses were no longer the main source of power on the farm. I remember writing a check for \$2,000 to pay for the baler; the largest check I had ever written at that time. The bales were rectangular and weighed around 50 pounds, light enough for high school boys to toss up onto the wagon.

Now those balers are almost obsolete and fields in summer are dotted with huge round bales that are often wrapped in white plastic and stored in long rows in the field until they are needed for winter feed.

Note: The Earl Noble family descends from the 1819 Scottish immigrants to Edwards, Alexander and Agnes Harper Noble. The farm was purchased by the immigrants in the 1820's from Joseph Pitcairn, and through the years the family built five different houses, from a log cabin to frame houses, as circumstances and life styles changed. Six generations worked the farm before it was sold in 1972 when Earl and Mary retired and moved to the village.

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