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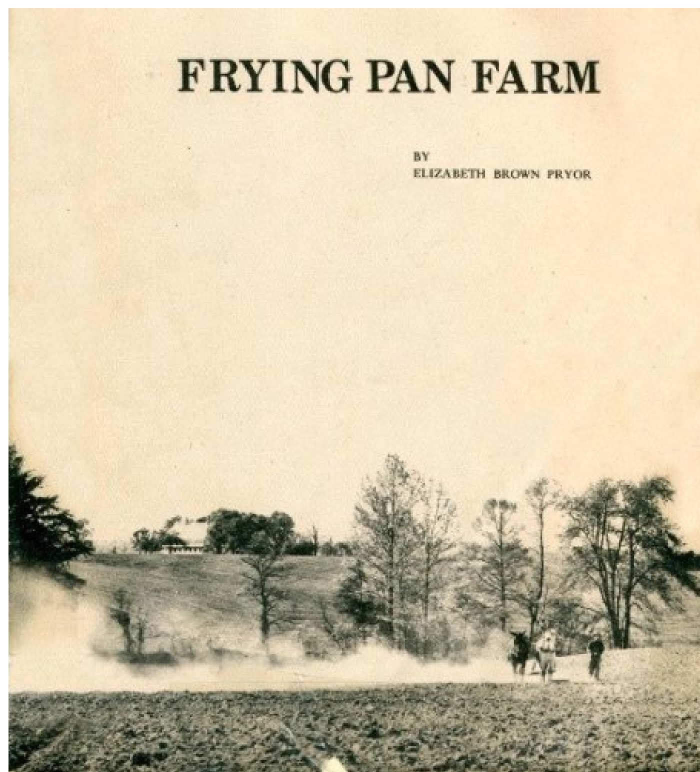

FRYING PAN FARM

By

Elizabeth Brown Pryor

Office of Comprehensive Planning
Fairfax County, Virginia

September, 1979

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Elizabeth Brown Pryor
Fairfax, Virginia
June 21, 1979

INTRODUCTION

[Pg 1]

In 1925 Fairfax County was still predominantly rural in character. Farmers occupied over half of the county's land, living on individual holdings which averaged 62.5 acres. Nearly 85% of these farmers were white and of this group only 15% did not own their own farm. They shared their domain with 3,605 horses, 11,636 head of cattle, 5,408 swine, 171,526 chickens and 178 mules. One-tenth of the farms enjoyed the use of a tractor and 25% had a radio. The average capital holding on land and buildings was $8,229, and the Fairfax County farmer netted something less than $1,000 income annually.[1]

These figures give a skeleton picture of Fairfax County's most prominent citizen in the period between the two World Wars; when the statistics are translated in prose, his shadowy form gains weight. The farmer at this time was a small landowner, possessing a farm only as large as his own family and a few hired laborers could manage. Although his capital holdings were not huge, they were well above the state average. He had the prestige of being a homeowner, and the pride of working his own soil, perhaps the same soil his grandparents had tilled. The rural family raised livestock for their own use, but principally for the market, and favored draft horses over tractors, mules or oxen to power farm equipment. This farmer's time was spent on a myriad of duties and details—his function was not yet totally specialized—ranging from butchering hogs to building chicken coops to thinning corn. He worked for himself, planning the day's activities, relying on his own judgment and initiative to cope with the varying responsibilities he shouldered. His numerical prominence gave him political and social leverage. It was the rural way of life that shaped the county and his demands which needed to be met.

At first glance this farmer's life seems tempered by nature and largely self-contained. The daily routine was established by seasons and sunlight; fortunes were made or lost at the mercy of the wind and rain. A farm was not only the farmer's livelihood and workshop but his home. Thus, unlike the city worker whose occupation was entirely separate from home concerns, country life had a total integration.[2] Moreover, the family farmer possessed a sense of continuity with the long tradition of the small landowner in America. In many respects his life was little changed from that of the thrifty, energetic and shrewd subsistence farmer whom Thomas Jefferson had praised in the eighteenth century as the ideal citizen of a democracy.[3]

[Pg 2]

In both startling and subtle ways, however, the traditional role of the family farmer was changing in the 1920s and 1930s. In Ellen Glasgow's novel Barren Ground, which examines the uncertainties of life on a northern Virginia dairy farm, the heroine, Dorinda Oakley, describes her emotional and economic reaction to the post World War I period:

> With the return of peace she hoped that the daily life on the farm would slip back into orderly grooves; but before the end of the first year she discovered that the demoralization of peace was more difficult to combat than the madness of war. There was no longer an ecstatic patriotism to inspire one to fabulous exploits. The world that had been organized for destruction appeared to her to become as completely disorganized for folly.... The excessive wages paid for unskilled labour were ruinous to the farmer, for the field hands who had earned six dollars a day from the Government were not satisfied to drive a plough for the small sum that had enabled her to reclaim the abandoned meadows of five oaks.... She was using two tractor-ploughs on the farm; but the roads were almost impassable again because none of the negroes could be persuaded to work on them. Even when she employed men to repair the strip of "corduroy" road between the bridge and the fork, it was impossible to keep the bad places firm enough for any car heavier than a Ford to travel over

them....[4]

Thus, social and technical advances that had long been desired in rural areas bolstered the farmer's optimism. Yet curiously enough this same progress often jarred his expectations and financial security. Improved roads meant improved markets, and increased contact with outside communities but, along with the advent of the radio, they resulted in a homogenizing of city and country ways, and lured many away from the farm. Concern for rural welfare prompted all levels of government to design programs to aid the farmer—programs which indeed furthered agriculture, but at the price of well-meaning interference in a previously highly individual sphere. Amid regulations and forms the farmer felt a nagging loss of independence. Perhaps most strikingly, widespread use of gasoline-powered equipment changed the pace of work, made him reliant on outside sources for fuel and parts, and involved investments which often prohibited purchase or encouraged specialization.

Hence, the family farm retained its size and shape but it could no longer revel in complete self-reliance.

The model farm at Frying Pan Park is a representation of this changing way of life. It recognizes especially the role of the family subsistence farmer and his contributions to the economy and solidarity of Fairfax County's rural communities. Although this study focuses on the institutions and personalities of the Floris-Herndon area, it is meant to be generic in scope. Dairying, which forms one emphasis of this monograph, was widespread in the area, and though each district had its distinctive elements, the underlying social values and farming methods were consistent throughout the county. In essence, Frying Pan Farm works much as a snapshot would to recall an important phase in Fairfax County's history. It gives a brief glance at a world we have lost, but which lingers significantly in the region's memory.

NOTES

Introduction

[1] United States Census of Agriculture, 1925, Statistics for Virginia (Washington. D.C., 1928).

[2] See, E. P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class (London, 1966), 76-78.

[3] For an overview of Jefferson's political beliefs, including his admiration for the small farmer, see John C. Miller, The Federalist Era (New York, 1968), 70-83.

[4] Ellen Glasgow, Barren Ground (Richmond, 1925), 448-49.

PART I

Continuity

Tradition and personal experience colored the 20th century farmer's reactions. He was accustomed to a world in which his occupation and social status were assured, and childhood experience probably led him to assume the farmer's role naturally. The rhythms of farm life were based on the immutable round of the seasons. Each day's sun and wind pulled the tiller in its direction as did the unceasing need to tame the growth and habits of beasts and land. Nature was the farmer's clock, and though he bid the land to produce what he desired, it was the earth which fixed his hours and chores. From this close association with nature came a continuity and special bond between farmers, which defied both time and place.

Although the early years of the 20th century heralded a new era of specialization in agriculture, the farmers of Fairfax County persisted in executing the varied functions of general farming. Dairying might be the emphasis on many farms, but it was rarely pursued at the expense of production of grain or food for home consumption. Variety continued to be an important quality of farm work. Families on large and specialized farms still did chores similar to those done by subsistence farmers, though the amount of time allotted for each task might differ. The relentlessness of certain activities, such as feeding the stock, was the same whether the farm boasted one cow or fifty. Thus distinctions between general and specialized farmers were not so clear-cut in this period. The following pages detail the work done on a small dairy farm, yet the kinds and methods of activities also pertain to the farmer whose acreage was devoted solely to general farming.

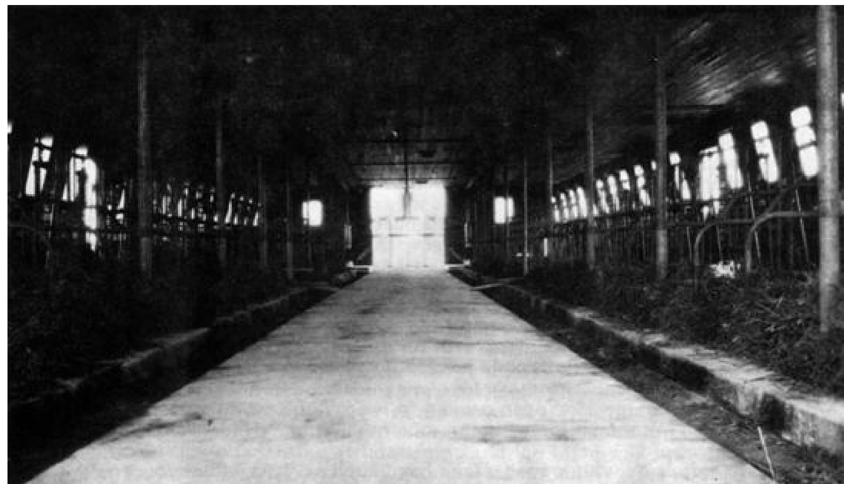
Perpetuity—a continual need to perform certain tasks and watch over specific events on a daily basis—was the most fundamental aspect of farming. The farmer's day began with such

an interminable chore: milking the cows. This twice-daily task was, of course, particularly important on dairy farms and its relentlessness is often the first aspect to be mentioned in any farming recollection. "When you have dairy cows," Joseph Beard, who grew up in the Floris area, acknowledged, "that's a 365-day proposition regardless of whether you're sick or anything like that." Another resident, Margaret Mary Lee, explained it more tersely: "Cows and hens and milk trucks did not take holidays."[5] The first milking was early in the morning and most farmers rose around four a.m.[6] The men and any hired hands usually began milking around 4:30 a.m., while the women prepared breakfast. What might initially appear to the outsider as a pleasing novelty was hard and demanding work. This was especially true in the morning when both the new and often the previous night's milk needed to be hauled to Herndon for the early train into Washington. Ray Harrison, with his brother the owner of one of the area's biggest herds, could milk a cow in six minutes—"quicker than a lot people could do it"[7]—but even at this rate, milking his 80-odd cows was a formidable undertaking. John Middleton, who lived down the road from the Harrisons, estimated it took about 1½ hours for seven people to milk his herd of 40 cows; they barely finished in time for the hired man, who took the milk to Herndon, to grab a sandwich and cup of coffee to eat en route.[8]

Portrait of a confident and successful farmer. Holden Harrison, c. 1935. Photo courtesy of Ray Harrison.

The well-equipped dairy barn owned by the Harrison Brothers, c. 1936. The Harrisons owned one of the county's largest herds. Photo courtesy Holden and Ray Harrison.

A Guernsey bull owned by Wilson D. McNair. Acquired in 1918, it was among the earliest pure-bred stock in the area. Photo courtesy of Louise McNair Ryder.



The interior of a large and well-maintained dairy barn on the farm of Holden and Ray Harrison. The barn could house over 50 cows. Photo courtesy of Holden and Ray Harrison.

The milk which traveled to Herndon was strained to remove any extraneous matter and cooked to about 35° F to retard spoilage and reduce the risk of spreading bacterial infections. This was a real problem until mechanized refrigerators became available, and the farmers had to use considerable ingenuity to keep their milk chilled. Some, like the Middletons, kept the milk in the well overnight, and Wilson McNair wrote that his family stored the milk in tall cans set in cold water. Occasionally more drastic action was needed. "Can you imagine going out to Herndon and getting great big chunks of ice and putting it in a washing tub and setting a can of milk in and keeping it cool all night long?" queried Joseph Beard.[9]

Milk earmarked for home use underwent the further process of separating the thick cream from the rest of the milk. In the days before mechanical separators the milk had to stand several hours for the cream to rise, and it was then skimmed by hand or the milk drawn off from the bottom of a can with a spigot. Mechanical separators streamlined this task by allowing the milk to be separated while still warm, using centrifugal action to bring the heavier cream particles to the bottom of the machine.

While the farmers sat down to breakfast the roads started filling with wagons and trucks bringing the day's milk from the entire area. Like Alexandria and Falls Church, the county's other major shipping centers, Herndon served what was known as a "milkshed" area, that is

a community whose milk could be transported to that locality without spoiling. Here too the freshness of the milk was of crucial concern. Herndon, with its electric cars on the Washington and Old Dominion Railroad, served most of the county's Dranesville district; however, Floris' close proximity to Herndon gave it an added advantage, for even packed in ice water, milk could easily spoil during the sultry summer months.[10]

A farmer with a good-sized herd such as John Middleton would haul eight or more ten-gallon cans of milk to the depot depending on the time of year. The milk was transported in a light wagon with two horses, which generally held only one farm's milk, though sometimes two or more families shared this duty. Rebecca Middleton recalled her brother collecting cans in an early model truck with a canvas top; he traded hauling with the neighboring Bradleys.[11] For a short time a community co-op, based in Floris, was also established to collect milk for shipment to Washington, D.C.[12] As this milk-laden caravan approached Herndon, the small station there bustled suddenly with activity. For at least one local resident, the sight and sounds were memorable. The "banging of the milk cans at the depot," recalled Lottie Schneider, who grew up in Herndon, "... resounded far and wide." "I liked to hear [it] ... for busy men were working and it was a friendly sound."[13]

Milking was, of course, just one of many chores involved on the family farm. After a 6:30 breakfast (still early in the eyes of many city dwellers) there were stalls to clean, equipment to sterilize, other farm animals to be cared for. Most Fairfax farms retained a few animals for home use even when concentrating on milk production. Before mechanization completely revolutionized farm work, draft horses provided the farm's muscle and a fifty-acre farm would need two to four for plowing, raking hay, and cutting wheat with a binder. The feeding and grooming of these animals formed a vital task. Though Lang and Hurst's commercial meat wagon came through Floris and other communities each Saturday, many families kept hogs and chickens for their own consumption.[14] Elizabeth Rice from the Oakton area stated that, despite her husband's reluctance to spend energy on any facet of farming outside dairying, they raised hogs, "kept on the back end of the farm in the woods."[15] In Floris nearly every family also raised hogs and chickens and Holden Harrison remembered that they "used to get about a hundred chicks each spring—we'd eat them all up by fall."[16] Few Floris area farms kept sheep, though census figures show about 1,200 in the county during this period.[17] In addition, dogs, cats, mules and an occasional goat made up the farm population, all demanding the farmer's attention and time.

With the stock watered, fed, given fresh bedding, and possibly turned out to pasture, the farmer could turn his attention to crops and other matters. Census records show hay and corn to be Fairfax County's most important crops. Little of these were sold commercially, however, rather they were used as support crops for the dairy industry.[18] Hay and feed stores abounded in neighboring towns but most dairymen attempted to supply their own straw, ensilage and grain, thus cutting costs by making the most efficient use of their land. This involved raising several crops and a year-round effort of cultivation.

Work began in early spring when a team of horses—later a tractor—pulled a steel plow across each field, turning up the earth into a rough and lumpy mass. Little was known of contour plowing or planting at this time, and the team was driven back and forth in straight rows. C. T. Rice and County Agricultural Extension Agent H. B. Derr both noted that erosion was a major problem in the area at the time.[19] The newly broken ground was then worked with a "drag," generally made of heavy logs chained together and topped with a platform on which the driver stood. The purpose of this implement was to use the weight of the "drag" to break up the soil clods. After this was finished, a field still needed to be worked once more before planting, this time with a harrow. The harrow resembled a large, spike-toothed rake, with two sections, each containing four rows of teeth. Passed over the field, it stirred up the ground and continued the pulverization of the soil to make a mellow, friable seed bed.[20]

These chores were exacting and time-consuming. Neal Bailey, who has spent many of his 66 years in working fields around Floris, estimated that a man and strong team could harrow or drag but a ten-acre field in about 6½ hours. Plowing took even longer. "Most of the land was hard to plow and we had to start as soon as possible in the spring in order to get through before it got too hard and sometimes we didn't make it," wrote Wilson McNair. The majority of farmers could plow only an acre or acre and a half in a day's time.[21]

Fairfax County's soil (principally Chester loam, a clay soil with a slightly acidic base) was deep, fertile and, as Joseph Beard put it, "adapted to growing the kinds of things cows like to eat at a reasonable price."[22] Because it was somewhat acidic, the soil benefitted from the addition of lime and, of course, needed other fertilizers. Fertilization techniques had been known for hundreds of years (George Washington burned oyster shells to obtain lime for his fields), however, their benefits were not always fully understood. Most farmers spread manure and some guano on their cropland, but correct chemical balances for specific crops were achieved only infrequently. Often the small landowner did not have spare fields to lie fallow for a year—the ideal situation for soil enrichment. "We spread some lime a time or two, but not nearly enough," admitted Wilson McNair. "We got burned lump lime and dumped it on the ground in piles of one bushel and when it had slaked we spread it with a shovel." The spreading itself could be a problem, especially when the earliest trucks began to be used in the mid-1920s. A truck hauling seven or eight tons of lime would bog down in a wet field: "The only way you could get out was to dump the lime, and if you dumped the lime you were in the hole you got stuck in." Thus, a lack of understanding of soil building

techniques was coupled with the physical difficulty of fertilization, to inhibit the optimum efficiency of the land in the early 20th century.[23]

With the soil prepared, the crops could be sown. In the fall, generally between mid-October and Thanksgiving, winter wheat was planted. A "drill" or mechanical planter drawn by horses was used, which could be adapted for use with oats, barley or rye. The area had once been a principal wheat-growing region, but in the early 20th century dairymen cultivated wheat chiefly for the straw which was used for bedding. In the mid-1930s, however, the availability of certified seed (seed which was grown to be of a uniform and established varietal type, much as genetically pure livestock was bred) raised the quality of Fairfax wheat and slightly increased the grain's marketability.[24] Edith Rogers, a long-time Floris resident and for many years a member of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, grew wheat on her family's farm to use in chicken feed, and to have milled into flour for home use. It was ground at the Herndon Milling Company.[25] Like the use of certified seed, increased understanding of fertilization and crop rotation practices boosted production of wheat per acre, yet it never gained prominence as even a secondary crop. In large part this was due to the fact that wheat was a less desirable ingredient in cattle feed than was corn or even soybeans.[26]

Corn was planted in the spring, generally in late April. Again a drill was employed, which, planting two rows at a time, enabled the farmer to plant about ten acres in one day. The wide variety of uses for corn made it Fairfax County's most important grain crop and a 1926 report on the area's agriculture observed that "nearly every farm has more or less corn."[27] Not only was the grain a chief ingredient in the dairy cattle's "concentrate" or feed mixture, but it was used to feed horses, chickens and to fatten pigs near butchering time. The leaves and stalks were ground for ensilage or stored in the shock for dry fodder. During the 1920s, County Agent Derr promoted a continual campaign to improve the area's corn production and even introduced a new variety, dubbed "Fairfax County White Corn," because of its local success. He also worked to increase yields of other popular strains, notably Reid's Yellow Dent. In a report on his work in this field in 1925, Derr shows his methods to be not far removed from the early genetic experimentation of Gregor Mendel.

> For the past four years the writer has assisted one of his best demonstrators in improving his crop of Reid's Yellow Dent Corn. The first year the best 50 ears were planted in 50 separate rows and at harvest time the best yielding 10 rows were selected for the next year's work. This work was continued, each year the number of rows being reduced. This year the results show a very uniform type of corn....[28]

Soybeans began to be introduced into the area during this period and Fairfax County farmers also sowed various grasses for summer pasturage and to make hay for winter feeding. Timothy and clover predominated among pasture crops. Some farmers persisted in raising alfalfa, despite H. B. Derr's repeated protests that it was unprofitable on the county's lime-poor soil.[29] A few ambitious farmers even experimented with grasses attempting to find those which produced the highest milk yields and one went so far as to have a special ladino clover seed brought from Oregon because he felt it increased the richness of his milk.[30] As with wheat and corn, improved varietal types and stricter control over the uniformity of the seed greatly aided the cultivator.

Spring plowing on the McNair farm near Floris. The serene aspect of the pre-

mechanization farm is evident in this photograph taken in the first decade of the twentieth century. Photo courtesy of Louise McNair Ryder.

Naturally, the farmer's work only began with the sowing of the seed, for activity continued throughout the year. The work of calving, of pruning orchard trees, digging garden beds, and trimming cattle hooves occurred in the spring. In early summer the corn was thinned from four to two stalks per hill, by using a sharp stick to dig the stalks out. Then, toward the end of June the winter wheat was harvested. Cut with a binder and tied in bundles, it was shocked (put in stacks of ten to twelve bundles, wigwam fashion, with a bundle on top to shed water, or stacked on poles in a mound with the outside sloping a bit to let the rain run off) and left to dry in the field. If threshed by hand after about a month it had to be gathered and taken to the barn for further drying.

In the 1920s, however, only a few farmers still wielded the flail; most threshing was done by steam and later gas-powered threshing machines which travelled from farm to farm. Wilson McNair described these cumbersome and sometimes dangerous machines this way:

> The thresher was run and pulled by a traction engine. They moved slowly only about 2 mi. an hour. The engine had a water tank mounted on each side in the rear to carry water while it was moving from one place to another.... The engines all had whistles and they would blow them every once in a while when they were on the road so we would know they were coming. We had to haul up some wood to fire the engine before we threshed....
>
> In later years we had self-packing and weighing threshers with blowers that moved the straw further from the thresher. One time Mr. Hornbaker threshed for us. We had a small engine and thresher that was pulled by a team. While we were washing up for dinner some one looked up and saw smoke, [on] the other side of the barn where the thresher was. All hands ran up there and pulled the thresher out of the way and saved the wheat that was threshed, but the straw burned up. A spark from the engine had fallen into the straw.[31]

During the summer months of the cultivation process, insect control was also a major consideration. By the late 1930s a few large farms, such as the Harrisons, could hire an airplane to dust their crops, but modest farms of necessity relied on hand labor for this, as most other chores. "As ... new varieties of clover, alfalfa, and other plants came to be used, seems like the insects came along with them," lamented one farmer.[32] The Japanese beetle, introduced into America in the 1920s, wrecked particular havoc with the crucial corn crop. "The Japanese beetle was just awful," recalled Ray Harrison, "it would eat the tassel up which pollinated the corn ... then would get right into the ear of the corn and go right down into the shuckings."[33] Against these pests, and the inevitable destruction of wildlife, weather, and weeds, the farmer had to maintain an eternal vigilance. Much of the growing season was spent in monitoring these destructive forces.

The benefits of this watchfulness became apparent with the harvest. As mentioned above, wheat was the earliest crop reaped but the major harvesting was done early in September. Corn was cut and shocked at this time, and the large task of filling the silo was undertaken. To do this stalks and leaves of the corn were chopped by an ensilage cutter. Like the thresher, this machine was generally owned by an outside agent; it travelled from farm to farm to process each farmer's fodder. The early cutters were powered by steam, but like numerous other farm instruments, gasoline-driven equipment was developed during World War I. On a large farm up to twenty men were needed to keep a threshing machine or ensilage cutter going. Bundles of corn were chopped by the machine and then conveyed to a fan which blew the ensilage through a pipe into the silo. There one to four men tamped it down and guided the nozzle on the blower pipe to insure even distribution. It was dirty work, the corn stalks oozing juice and sticking as tenaciously as burrs to the clothes, hands and hair of those working in the silo. A small landowner might complete the silo filling process in a day, but for large farms it often took the better part of a week.[34]

Just as the spring brought forth a burgeoning activity, so did things happen with a rush in the fall. Haying was done just before the corn harvest, in the hot, late summer days which would cure the new-mown grass in the field. To cut the hay the county's farmers often used a one- or two-horse rake with a single attachment to raise or lower the rake's teeth when passing over a meadow. The dried hay, with its almost overpoweringly sweet smell, was lifted by forks into a wagon, tramped down, then transported to fill bursting barns. The least mechanized farms forked the hay into the lofts by hand but later barns were equipped with a mechanical fork for lifting the hay. Haying had to be done at precisely the right time or the grass would not cure properly and the hay would spoil. The combination of heat, hard, backbreaking work, and the necessity for hurry made haying a particularly fatiguing time.[35]

Most of the harvest was used right on the farm. Like manure, which was recycled to enrich fields and gardens, the grain and hay crops went to nourish the farm's dairy animals. Little was marketed and little was wasted. "That proved to be the best thing you could do," noted

Holden Harrison, "grow as much of your own feed for your cattle as you could. You sold your ... crop production through your milk can."[36]

A shock of wheat on the Ellmore farm near Floris. On this particularly successful farm the wheat was sold for seed to help improve the stock on other area farms. Photo in Annual Report of County Agent H. B. Derr, 1925, Virginiana Collection, Fairfax County Public Library.

This mechanical hay loader on the Harrison Brothers' farm near Floris dates from 1935. Photo courtesy of Holden Harrison.

The fruits of the year's labor came not only from the hay fields but from garden and orchard, whose abundance had to be gathered, preserved and stored in the late summer season. Fairfax County had once been a major truck farming section but the onslaught of insects and competition from large commercial orchards (such as those in the Shenandoah Valley) had relegated this produce to the realm of home use. The A. S. Harrison farm included plum, apple, peach and cherry trees and Margaret Mary Lee recalled that cherries, pears and apples grew in her family's orchard. Sometimes pears and apples were made into cider but most of the fruit was dried or canned for winter use. Many farmers made the extra effort to keep bees under their fruit trees because they aided pollination and produced honey from the blossoms. The Lees were among those who enjoyed the soft hum of the bees among the orchard trees. Margaret Lee especially liked to recall them darting busily between the fragrant white sheets, when the washing was hung in the yard.[37]

The vegetable garden, too, had a prominent place in the farm scheme. Elizabeth Rice noted that "everyone had a good garden, growing such things as sweet corn, limas, string beans, potatoes, tomatoes, and asparagus."[38] Others mentioned lettuce, herbs and popcorn in the family vegetable patch and many farms had grape arbors.[39] Like other areas of cultivation,

the garden plot required care and attention for three seasons of the year. The round of soil preparation, planting, nourishing and harvesting added additional responsibilities to the multitude of duties which already crowded the sunlight hours. Still, the rewards were great: self-sufficiency, economy, and the enjoyment of the earth's fresh bounty.

With the harvest over the farmer would fill the less hectic winter hours with the unending minutia of the farm. Fence and equipment mendings, cutting ice from ponds and rivers, chopping wood, and grubbing up trees all had a part in his busy life. Another burst of activity occurred in early winter when animals were butchered for the year's meat. Most farm families bought their beef in Herndon, but nearly everyone kept hogs for home consumption.[40] Neal Bailey, a veteran of many local butcherings, described them in this particularly detailed manner:

> Two to three meat hogs per year were raised and slaughtered, all about Thanksgiving. Farmers used to do everything by the almanac. Two men would grab a hog and throw it on its back and cut the jugular vein with a butcher knife. The pig was thrown then into a scalding trough—a metal trough with water placed over a wood fire burning in a trench.... In the old days, the local farmers heated rocks red hot and threw them in a big barrel of water. It was a day's work to haul rocks for this. The hair was scalded and scraped off. Then the hog was gutted. Old folks used to take the insides and make chitlins out of them. I never ate them myself. The hogs were hung up overnight in a shed or in a tree where dogs couldn't get it, to let the carcasses cure. The skin was left on the carcass, and next day, it was cut up and salted down in a box. It was kept tight so flies and mice couldn't get in.... Anything that was left in spring was smoked to preserve it through the summer.[41]

A small orchard apiary kept to provide honey and aid pollination of the fruit trees. Photo in Annual Report of County Agent H. B. Derr, 1925, Virginiana Collection, Fairfax County Public Library.

Each family preserved its own meat and as Emma Ellmore related, "everybody had his own pet recipe ... for mixing the salt and the brown sugar—and some smoked the meat and some didn't." Lard had to be rendered for storage in the cellar, sausage hand-ground and canned or frozen, the heads boiled until the meat left the bones, then chopped and pressed into a pan with the pot liquor to make headcheese. Butchering time seems to have been an especially unforgettable occasion, for its details stand out sharply in the minds of many. "After butchering each year, Mother made ... buckwheat cakes to eat with fresh sausage," reminisced Margaret Peck. "Baked on a long black griddle, over a wood stove, spread with homemade butter and topped with corn syrup, they were the right beginning for a winter day."[42] For Floris residents, the smells and tastes of a time seem to whirl the memory backward with particular acuity.

Even in the hectic activity of harvest, a farmer was obliged to move through the evening routine of milking, feeding and bedding his animals. With these tasks completed, and a final check on the barns to see that all was snug, the farmer's day was nearly complete by about 6:00. He ate a hearty supper, then read The Southern Planter, and possibly mended farm machinery or did a little work in the barn.[43] For those who arose at 4:00 a.m. "in all kinds of weather," sleep came early and the house was usually dark by 9:00 p.m.[44]

*

In all of this activity of cultivation, the rush of harvest, and regularity of day-to-day chores,

the farmer worked, not alone, but in conjunction with his family. Unlike the industrial worker, whose employment was discrete and separate from his home life, the farmer's home was his workshop, and his labor directly connected to his sustenance. His family was an integral part of this scheme; far from being removed from the household's form of support, they were intimately bound up in it. Wife, husband, children and grandparents all contributed in their distinct sphere. The term "family farm" was no idle denomination, but a recognition of the importance the entire family played in the smooth operation of the farm.

The relationship of a farm husband and wife was in many ways a truer partnership than that of the urban marriage. "A farmer needs a wife like he needs the rain," is an old farm saying, expounded for decades in the farmer's almanacs. It has now been collaborated by rural sociologists to show that farm efficiency was based largely on the partners' shared duties.[45] The farmers themselves seemed to realize this. In a 1932 nationwide survey of factors which farmers regarded as most important to their success, "co-operation of wives" was ranked second.[46]

The activities of rural men and women were co-equal, not identical. Women rarely worked in the fields except in the press of harvesting when they might drive a horse to pull up the hay fork—"what we've all done, I guess," agreed one group of Floris women.[47] They only occasionally aided the men in the barn. Edith Rogers remembered working with the stock as did Margaret Mary Lee, who helped with milking and also recalled washing the milk storage tank and other equipment. This pleased the local milk inspector who told her, "When women are in the barn, I know the equipment is clean."[48] Except for such intermittent work, the outside duties were left to the men. Instead, most women's activity was to be found in the farmhouse and garden. Her responsibilities encompassed the expected areas of housekeeping, decorating and sewing, and often the less obvious work of bookkeeping or lawnmowing.

The farm woman's most demanding task probably centered around the preparation and preservation of food, a vitally important function, for to waste or misuse food was to negate the hard labor of a year. In the current era of convenience foods, the time-consuming nature of cooking is easily forgotten. Just operating a wood-burning stove was a complicated task, attested to by the directions for laying a fire in a contemporary cookbook.

> To build a fire, first let down the grate, and take up the ashes and cinders carefully to avoid raising a dust, sifting the cinders to use in building the fire; brush the soot and dust out of the upper part of the stove, and from the flues which can be reached; be sure that all parts of the ovens and hot-boxes are clean; if there is a water-back attached to the stove, see that it is filled with water; if it is connected with water-pipes, be sure in winter that they are not frozen; brush up the hearth-stone. Lay the fire as follows: Put a few handfuls of dry shavings or paper in the bottom of the grate; upon them, some small sticks of pine wood laid across each other; then a few larger sticks, and some cinders free from ashes; a few small lumps of coke or coal may be mixed with the cinders. Open all the draughts of the stove, close all the covers, and light the fire; when the cinders are lighted, add fresh coke and coal gradually and repeatedly until a clear, bright fire is started; then partly close the draughts. To keep up a fire, add fuel often, a little at once, in order not to check the heat: letting the fire burn low, and then replenishing it abundantly, is a wasteful method, because the stove grows so cold that most of the fresh heat is lost in raising the temperature again to the degree necessary for cooking.[49]

INVENTORY OF THE ESTATE OF GEORGE W. KIDWELL
December 9, 1925

ARTICLE	VALUE.
8 Grade Guernsey Cows, $40.00 each	$ 320.00
12 Holstein Cows	480.00
1 Bull	50.00
1 Holstein Calf	10.00
2 Black Heiffers, $40.00 each	80.00
2 Small Black Heiffers	30.00
2 Black Horses	100.00
2 Double Sets Harness	25.00
15 milk Cans	15.00
2 Milk Buckets	1.00
1 Strainer	.25
133 Shocks Fodder	39.90
120 Barrels Corn	360.00

6 ⅔ Tons Hay Bailed, $20.00 Ton	133.33
6600 Lbs. Loose Hay @.75	49.50
20 Tons Ensilage	40.00
160 Bu. Wheat @ $1.40 per Bu	224.00
1 High Wheel Wagon	25.00
1 Truck Wagon	20.00
1 Top Wagon	10.00
1 Manure Spreader	100.00
1 Hay Ladder	10.00
1 Blizzard Ensilage Cutter	15.00
1 Gasoline Engine	20.00
1 Milk Wagon	10.00
1 Platform Scale	10.00
1 Set Single Harness	1.00
1 Buggy	2.00
½ Ton $16.00 Rock	9.00
1 Oil Drum	.50
1 One Horse Wagon	2.00
1 Basket Sleigh	3.00
1 Top Wagon	3.00
1 Smoothing Harrow	5.00
2 Single Shovel Plows	1.00
1 Single Cultivator	.50
1 Oliver 2 Horse Plow	2.00
1 Spring Tooth Harrow	5.00
1 Set Blacksmith Tools	25.00
1 Lot of Lumber at Mill House	40.00
1 Lot of Tools and Repairs in Mill House	5.00
1 Cut off Saw	1.00
Contents of Well House	15.00
1 Dort Automobile	100.00
Contents of Garage	25.00
1 Lot of Ladders and Contents of Wood House	25.00
Contents of Tool House	25.00
1 Grindstone	2.00
1 Iron Boiler	5.00
1 Wheelbarrow	3.00
1 Hay Rake	20.00
2 Mowing Machines, $5.00 each	10.00
1 Riding Cultivator	5.00
1 Corn Planter	20.00
1 Lath Mill and Bench	1.00
1 Grain Drill	80.00
1 Hay Tedder	25.00
1 Dish Harrow	1.00
1 Three Horse Plow	5.00
1 Binder	5.00
1 Note dated Aug. 30th, 1921 payable 3 yrs. after date	500.00
Interest on above note from Aug. 30th, 1924, to the present time @ 6%	38.33
Cash in Herndon National Bank	901.88
Cash on Savings Account Farmers & Mechanics National	685.60
Cash on Savings Account The Potomac Savings Bank	549.80
Liberty Bonds	200.00
	5630.59

This inventory, attached to the will of a small farmer, shows the diverse equipment found on the 1920's farm.

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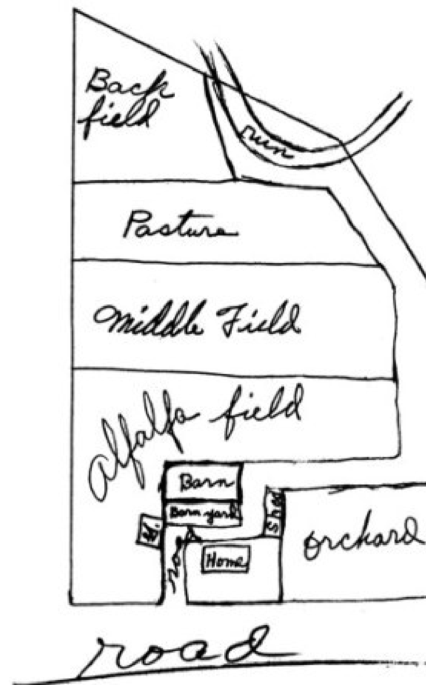

Plan of the family farm of Mason F. Smith, drawn by Mason Smith, Jr., for a 4-H Club project. The farm was bought in 1932 by Floyd Kidwell and now constitutes the nucleus of Frying Pan Farm Park. From Mason Smith, Jr. Livestock Record Books in Annual Report of County Agent H. B. Derr, 1929, Virginiana Collection, Fairfax County Public Library.

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Though the wood-burning stoves often imparted a special flavor to the food prepared on them (for example, one farm cooking devotee opined that no waffles could taste like those from a wood-burning stove[50]), the stoves were fearfully hot in the summer and needed constant refueling and expert attention to heat evenly. Few Fairfax County farm women had the luxury of electricity in their kitchens until well after 1935. Statistics show that only 65% of farm women cooked with electricity even in 1940.[51]

In addition to the large regular meals required by a hard-working family, the farm woman prepared the gargantuan harvest meals shared by all who worked in the fields. Cooking these meals in the late summer heat was a chore which took several days. "An ordeal" one veteran called it and enumerated some parts of the expected menu: corn bread, hot biscuits, pork shoulder, pressed chicken, fried chicken, vegetables and pie. "We'd put food enough together for them—and did they eat!"[52] Even at other times of the year, a farm wife needed to count on unexpected visitors and accommodate her activities to an unforeseen need to entertain. Her adaptability is attested to by Joseph Beard who described the open farm hospitality of the era:

> When anybody came around to your farm in those days, when dinnertime came, you'd say, 'Well, it's time for dinner. Let's go eat.' It didn't seem to matter if you had somebody drop in on you on short notice. Women, ladies, mothers, wives, were accustomed to this kind of thing. It never seemed to upset them. They just took it in stride. They put on another plate and said, 'We haven't got much, but you're welcome to what we have.' They'd go on like this. They would bring out the best they could find. That was the kind of condition that prevailed.[53]

The lady of the house in this period did not merely cook her family's food; she was instrumental in its production and processing. The family garden was generally her responsibility. It was she who planted the early radishes, herbs, flowers and all the multitude of summer vegetables in the cool, moist spring soil, weeded and nurtured them through the summer months, and finally gathered them in the lingering Indian summer days. If there were daughters in the family, they aided her in this as in her other activities. When the produce was finally all picked, peeled and cut, she combined them with vinegar, sugar, and spices to preserve the vegetables as pickles, jelly or canned goods. It was warm and tiring, but highly rewarding work. "Never will I forget the pungent fragrances that

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pervaded the air when it was catsup or pickle-making season," wrote Lottie Schneider.

> When our mothers made apple butter in great kettles each child took a turn at stirring the delicious mixture. The wonderful fragrance made the task easier even though the thickening ingredients sometimes sputtered and caused burns as they popped out on the hands who used the stirring paddle.[54]

The pantry shelves filled with glass jars displaying their highly colored contents produced feelings of pride and plenty in the farm woman.

Poultry keeping also fell to the farmer's wife. There were a sizable number of commercial poultry farms in the county—it was in fact the area's second most important farm industry—but most dairy and general farms kept just enough for their own use.[55] Egg collecting, feeding and cleaning of the chicken house and yard, even killing, dressing and plucking the poultry were done by female members of the farm family. Thrifty women saved the feathers for pillows and coverlets and nearly all sold their excess eggs to the "hucksters" who travelled from farm to farm buying surplus goods. These peddlars also bought rabbits, turkeys, and other poultry, as well as home-churned butter from the farms. This was yet another area in which women utilized and processed the raw materials of the land. Twice a week the cream that had been skimmed and saved was churned (generally in round barrel churns with wooden paddles), salted, and packed in stone jars to be picked up and transported to the Alexandria and Washington markets. One of the early hucksters was Earl Robey who collected eggs and chickens once a week. "He travelled with 2 horses hitched to a covered wagon," wrote one farmer. "In later years he had a model T truck." The money made by the women was theirs to keep, for running the house and personal expenses, and the austerity or comparative comfort of a farmstead was often the direct result of the energy and efficiency of the farm woman.[56]

The rural woman's place was respected and secure on the farms of fifty years ago. The farmer might consider himself the overall manager but he recognized his spouse's vital contributions. "Mutually they both decided to make things go and they did go," wrote one 1930s farm boy of his parents. "Mother did not feel inferior to father and she never felt that he expected her to feel so."[57] If the woman's role and duties were firmly set in this rural society, then so was her status.

An additional responsibility was that of caring for children, but in the farm family this was more clearly a joint obligation of the father and mother than in families in which the male parent left home to work. Too, children were more closely tied to the family as a working unit; they felt both the necessity of aiding their parents with the running of the farm and the pride of contributing in a real sense to the family's well-being. Of course, farm children attended school, but they also shared the pattern of their parents' life. With father and mother they awoke in the early hours of the morning to help with barn or household chores: "It didn't make any difference how small they were, they got up at six o'clock."[58] Many learned to milk before the age of ten. On weekends, summer holidays and after school, they were also expected to help on the farm. Both boys and girls performed the unending job of gathering firewood for the kitchen stove. Carrying water was another constant chore which often fell to the family's children, for as late as 1940 nearly 40% of the county's homes still lacked running water.[59] Farm youngsters learned to drive a team and ride horseback at an early age, and this enabled them to take a horse to be shod, fetch a mower section from the general store, or run other unexpected errands. Margaret Lee stated that as a girl she used to hitch up a mule and buggy each Monday to take the family's laundry to be washed by a local Negro laundress, and pick it up again on Thursday.[60] Girls also helped with the dishes, fed chickens, and cooked while boys tackled plowing, threshing and animal husbandry. One woman recalled the special satisfaction she felt when, at the age of thirteen, she shocked an entire field of wheat.[61] By doing these chores and errands, farm children were not merely assisting in the farm operation. In the emulation of their parents' activity, they benefitted from a kind of on-the-job training which both sharpened their skills for a later farm career and furthered their identity with the family group and farm life in general.

The farm child's close connection to his parents' life and the necessity for performing a variety of chores also acted in some measure as a force for social control: the child who worked with his parents was expected to act in a manner acceptable to them. Furthermore, the close-knit nature of the community reinforced the parents' values when their offspring were away from home. "A farmer was always busy, and his kids didn't run the streets," noted Joseph Beard.[62] Another native of northern Virginia explained the prevalent philosophy in more detail:

> Papa was a firm believer that work was a therapy that kept young people out of mischief. It was unthought of for youngsters to get into serious trouble in those days other than smoking corn silk or grapevine, and that was a punishment in itself. All were assigned specific chores and the youngest started out picking up chips and other small pieces of wood from the 'woodpile' for kindling to start the fire in the kitchen range at daylight in the morning.... As we grew a little older bringing in the firewood was added to the list of chores and when you grew big enough to chop and split cordwood, usually around the age of 10-12 years, one found the chores around the home were endless.[63]

Rebecca Rice, daughter of C. T. Rice, canning fruit in her home near Oakton, Virginia. Note the ice box and wood burning stove, standard features of the early 20th century kitchen. Photo in H. B. Derr Reports, Virginiana Collection, Fairfax County Public Library.

Elizabeth Harrison in her room on a farm near Herndon, Virginia. She refurbished the room herself as part of a 4-H project. Photo in H. B. Derr Reports, Virginiana Collection, Fairfax County Public Library.

The round of chores might seem endless, but farm kids had their fun, too. Joseph Beard and Richard Peck both recall swimming in Horse Pen Run and Peck also reminisced about fishing in the local streams.[64] Margaret Lee was sometimes treated to a baked sweet potato after school; she rode the family mule for recreation.[65] At Halloween, much secret giggling went on as plans were afoot to take an outhouse and sit it on the school porch, or sneak all of the milk cans out of the dairy and set them outside.[66] Skating on the baptismal pond of Frying Pan Baptist Church, and neighborhood events such as picnics, watermelon feasts and oyster suppers also lent excitement to the child's life. Perhaps the most pervasive enjoyment came from the ever-changing delights of the countryside itself. Wrote one resident of the Herndon area: "We could ramble through the woods, finding huckleberries, wild flowers, sassafras roots and stems, chestnuts and lovely mosses."[67]

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Although children provided a great deal of supplemental labor on the county's small farms, the "hired hand" was also an important part of the community's work force. One local resident estimated that approximately half of the farms in the Herndon area used hired labor, and this figure is collaborated by the agricultural census of 1940. Other evidence shows that the largest single expense (about 38% of total farm expenditures) for the owner of thirty or more acres was hired help.[68] In Fairfax County, as in most of the South, this hired labor was composed almost entirely of the community's black residents, though occasionally a family would employ a white man. The Ellmore family, who often had a white man as their hired help, was such an exception.[69]

A homemade sled used for hauling manure to the fields. Note the two young boys who, by driving the sled, shared the family's responsibility for the farm. Photo in Annual Report of County Agent H. B. Derr, 1925, Virginiana Collection, Fairfax County Public Library.

Extra help was engaged in several ways. Larger farms frequently kept one or two men throughout the year, sometimes supplying them with a house and their noon meal as well as a salary.[70] On most farms, however, extra help would be hired at particularly busy seasons by the day or the week. "In the summertime you'd get seasonal help, gather them up here and there, wherever you could," stated Holden Harrison. "If you could carry those men, at least the best ones, over the winter, then you'd have a good force that you could depend on for your summer work, your planting and harvesting."[71] In some cases the hired man would come with his team of horses for which he received additional wages. In another variation groups of workers would organize into crews to perform a specific function (for example, to fill a silo) and travelled from farm to farm accomplishing this special task.[72]

Many of the laborers in the Floris area came from Willard, a community of both whites and blacks, just over the Loudoun County line. About 85% of Fairfax County's black population owned no land in 1934 and supported themselves solely by agricultural labor.[73] Unlike this large landless majority, many of Willard's families owned three to fifteen acres of land. Most of these families grew vegetables on their land and nearly all kept a cow.[74] A few black families tried to support themselves by truck gardening, a difficult task when competing with larger more economical farms. One such farmer, Ernest E. Webb, struggled to maintain his children by selling vegetables in the city market. Biweekly he took his goods by wagon across the low, unstable Chain Bridge and along Canal Road to the markets in Washington, but for this long, exhausting trip his profits were slim: "We made enough to come back home, feed the horses, and feed ourselves a little for another trip."[75] To eke out an existence, most blacks had to supplement any farming income they might have by working as agricultural laborers.

Those laborers who did not have steady employment had to wait for work until they were needed for a specific job. When a farmer wanted extra help, he went to the black community, or sent word by someone else, and detailed the number of men needed and the job to be done. "In the spring my father would go up there [to Willard] or send me up there to see if I could get three or four fellows to help get the spring work going," remarked Holden Harrison. "Maybe you could get them and maybe you couldn't."[76] Sometimes there was a labor shortage, but frequently more men wanted work than there were jobs to go around. Several area residents remembered that if word got out that ten men were needed for a job, often fifteen or more would show up.[77] This was especially true during the agricultural depression of the 1920s and 1930s, which hit blacks far worse than the county's white population. The blacks' landholdings were of inferior quality and generally too small

for efficient operation, and this, combined with their meagre operating capital and inadequate reserves, made the black agriculturalist more dependent than ever on work from the large landowner.[78]

The hired man was expected to arrive in time for the early morning milking and work the lengthy fifteen-hour day alongside the farmer. His chores ranged from making hay to cutting wood and building fences. Neal Bailey recalled that he spent his entire first day as a laborer driving fence posts with a 16-pound hammer. The standard salary was $1.00 to $1.50 per day plus all he could eat for lunch. Some farmers paid by the job rather than by the day though they found the latter system preferable. When the help was not so concerned with completing a task rapidly, farmers believed it produced a better quality work. Occasionally the white farmers shared or traded work with their black counterparts. More frequently, hired hands worked for a share of the fruits of their labor. At butchering time, the hired help might go home with sausage, side meat (bacon) or a pork shoulder for his pay. At berry season they picked a farmer's blackberries or wild cherries for half of the take.[79]

The women and children of the black communities in Fairfax County also worked. Black women took in laundry, picked fruit and sometimes came to the white farmer's houses to help with canning or meat preservation at butchering time. One woman worked as a midwife; according to Margaret Lee, the only one in the area. She delivered Miss Lee's younger sister around 1913.[80] Children as young as nine would thin corn or pluck potato bugs off the dark, leafy plants for 50¢ a day. Girls used to pick berries and pull field cress when it was going to seed, and some children worked in the farmhouses running errands.[81] The Ellmore family often had a young boy to help do odds and ends, and another Floris resident noted that "there was some twins of about twelve years old and we needed a little help so I took one of them in the house and my brother had the other out to help him with things."[82] Neal Bailey recalled going out to help his father cut corn at a very young age and being told to "keep working—you have no back," even when it felt as if it were breaking.[83]

Within these labor relationships the white employer retained the most control since he set wages and hours, and because he worked with the knowledge that the black families were dependent on him for employment. Yet the blacks had their influence too, for the larger landowners needed their labor to keep the farms operating smoothly. The farmer's dependence was apparent in instances such as that related by Ray Harrison, who remembered one Christmas night when no help at all showed up. That night he milked fifty-two cows by hand, something he could not afford to do every day.[84] In numerous ways the hired hands exercised some control over their working conditions. For example, seasoned workmen reserved the right to "break in" a field hand new to the neighborhood, thus both initiating him into local work patterns and assuring that his expectations and treatment corresponded to that of the veteran help.[85] In times of intense activity, the labor supply would be short and the workers raised their prices accordingly. One farmer recalled that during an exceptionally busy silo-filling season the help were "jacking up the price ... ten cents an hour about four times in one day.... They were putting pressure on because they thought they had the leverage there." In this case the farmer called their bluff and sent the workers home, but in many instances, the laborers held sway and received higher wages during peak work periods.[86]

The white attitude toward their black workers seems to have been paternalistic, as was the pattern of most racial relations in the post-bellum South. Though area farmers maintain that their hired laborers were liked and respected—"as much a part of the neighborhood as anyone else"—in conversation capable workers were referred to as "boy" or by the old plantation epithets of "Aunt" and "Uncle." A hearty noon meal was part of the hired man's pay, but the help ate outside by themselves, rather than with the family.[87] Moreover, rather than admit his need for the laborers, the white employer sometimes viewed his hiring in an altruistic light. "I remember my brother went over to these colored people that had been working for him at different times, in the middle of the winter, and told them to come over and cut some wood, and he paid them for it so that they would have something, because they were pretty bad off. So he just made work for them," stated one county woman.[88] Undoubtedly, charitable motives were truly meant, but the outcome was a paternalistic attitude which failed to recognize the mutual dependence of land and labor.

This reliable supply of labor eliminated the county's need for migratory workers, and also reduced the amount of tenancy since most farmers found labor enough to manage all of their acreage. Nevertheless, during the period between 1918-1940, about 10-12% of the white farm population and 2% of the black were tenants.[89] Statistical evidence shows over half of the tenants to be cash croppers in 1925 and 40% in 1940. Many historians believe this to be the least beneficial system for the tenant as his obligation was to pay the landlord a fixed rent on the land regardless of the success of his crop.[90] However, Joseph Beard stated that most of the tenants with whom he had contact when he was county agent in the late 1930s were sharecroppers. By this system, the renting farmer supplied his tools and labor, the landlord furnished the land, and the crop was split.

Fairfax County never harbored the kind of perpetual tenancy described by James Agee's Let Us Now Praise Famous Men, in which families lived in squalor and humiliation with little hope of pulling their way out of debt. This occurred more frequently in the one-crop areas of the deep South where exhausted soil and crop dependency made for a high debt risk each year. Beard maintained that the sharecroppers of the late 1930s were respectable people,

merely renting land until they could afford to purchase their own. In several instances, they were young local couples who went on to buy their tenured land and to become established members of the community.[91] Still, at best, any tenure system was a demoralizing one for the renter because his profits were consistently skimmed off to the landlord.

PART I—NOTES

Continuity

[5] Interview with Joseph Beard by Elizabeth Pryor, Fairfax, Virginia, January 23, 1979; notes from interview with Margaret Mary Lee by Nan Netherton, Herndon, Virginia, March 28, 1978. All transcripts and notes from interviews used in this paper are deposited in the Fairfax County Library Virginiana Collection (hereafter cited "Virginiana").

[6] Notes on interview with Elizabeth and Emma Ellmore by Nan Netherton, Herndon, Virginia, March 2, 1978.

[7] Interview with Holden Harrison, Ray Harrison and Virginia Presgraves Harrison by Elizabeth Pryor, Chantilly, Virginia, February 5, 1979.

[8] Notes on interview with John and Edna Middleton by Nan Netherton, Herndon, Virginia, February 24, 1978.

[9] Interview with Joseph Beard and Holden Harrison by Elizabeth Pryor, Floris, Virginia, March 6, 1979; Wilson Day McNair, "What I Remember," unpublished manuscript, n.d., copy courtesy of Louise McNair Ryder; author's conversation with Rebecca Middleton, Floris, Virginia, April 4, 1979.

[10] John Middleton/Netherton, February 24, 1978; and interview with Joseph Beard by Nan Netherton and Patrick Reed, Fairfax, Virginia, November, 1974.

[11] Ellmore/Middleton/Pryor, March 8, 1979.

[12] "Floris Producers Active," Herndon News-Observer, January 22, 1925.

[13] Lottie Dyer Schneider, Memoirs of Herndon, Virginia (Marion, Virginia, 1962), 10 and 30.

[14] Notes on interview with Richard Peck by Nan Netherton, Herndon, Virginia, February 23, 1978; notes on interview with Virginia McFarland Greear by Nan Netherton, Herndon, Virginia, March 2, 1978; and Schneider, Memoirs of Herndon, Virginia, 10.

[15] Elizabeth Rice to author, Wilmington, Delaware, January 30, 1979.

[16] Beard/Netherton/Reed, November, 1974; Peck/Netherton, February 23, 1978; Ellmore/Netherton, March 2, 1978; and Harrison/Pryor, February 5, 1979.

[17] Agricultural Census, 1925; and Federal Crop Reporting Service, Virginia Farm Statistics, 1935-1936 (Richmond, 1936).

[18] Ibid.; and Beard/Harrison/Pryor, March 6, 1979.

[19] Lehman Nickell and Cary J. Randolph, An Economic and Social Survey of Fairfax County (Charlottesville, 1924), 29-40; notes on interview with Neal Bailey by Nan Netherton, Herndon, Virginia, December 12, 1978; "Fairfax Farmer Threw Away His Plow in 1928 and Amazing Results Have Been Revolutionary," Richmond Times-Dispatch, September 17, 1951; and Annual Reports of County Agricultural Extension Agent H. B. Derr, 1928, 1929 and 1932, in Virginiana.

[20] Bailey/Netherton, December 19, 1978.

[21] Ibid.; and McNair, "What I Remember."

[22] Beard/Harrison/Pryor, March 6, 1979.

[23] Derr Reports, 1928, 1932; McNair, "What I Remember"; and Joseph Beard quoted in Beard/Harrison/Pryor, March 6, 1979.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Notes on interview with Edith Rogers by Nan Netherton, Herndon, Virginia, n.d. (c. spring, 1978).

[26] Beard/Harrison/Pryor, March 6, 1979.

[27] Bailey/Netherton, December 19, 1978; Rogers/Netherton; Derr Report, 1926, 9.

[28] Derr Report, 1925, 2.

[29] Agricultural Census, 1925; and Derr Reports, 1921 and 1924.

[30] "Fairfax Farmer Threw Away Plow."

[31] Bailey/Netherton, December 19, 1978; and McNair, "What I Remember."

[32] Harrison/Pryor, February 5, 1979.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Bailey/Netherton, December 19, 1978; notes on interview with Joseph Beard by Elizabeth Pryor, Fairfax, Virginia, February 27, 1979; and Harrison/Pryor, February 5, 1979.

[35] Bailey/Netherton, December 19, 1978; McNair, "What I Remember."

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[36] Beard/Harrison/Pryor, March 8, 1979.

[37] Harrison/Pryor, February 5, 1979; Lee/Netherton, March 28, 1978; Elizabeth Rice to Mary Scott, n.d. (c. fall, 1978), copy courtesy of Mary Scott.

[38] Elizabeth Rice to author, January 30, 1979.

[39] 4-H Record Books, copy in Annual Report of County Agricultural Extension Agent; Derr Report, 1927; Beard/Pryor, January 23, 1979; and McNair, "What I Remember."

[40] Rogers/Netherton; Greear/Netherton, March 23, 1978.

[41] Bailey/Netherton, December 19, 1978.

[42] Margaret Peck quoted in Out of the Frying Pan (Herndon, Virginia, 1964), 4.

[43] J. Middleton/Netherton, February 24, 1978.

[44] Ellmore/Netherton, March 2, 1978; and Beard/Pryor, January 23, 1979.

[45] See Hills Southern Almanac, (Virginia Fire and Marine Insurance Company, 1929); J. H. Kolb and Edmund S. de Brunner, A Study of Rural Society (Boston, 1935), 36-37.

[46] Ibid., 37.

[47] Ellmore/Middleton/Pryor, March 8, 1979.

[48] Rogers/Netherton; Lee/Netherton, March 28, 1978.

[49] Juliet Corson, Miss Corson's Practical American Cookery (New York, 1886), 4; and Adeline Goessling, The Farm and Home Cook Book (Chicago, 1919).

[50] Frances Darlington Simpson, Virginia Country Life and Cooking (Washington, D.C., 1963).

[51] Virginia Polytechnical Institute, The Housing of Virginia's Rural Folk (Blacksburg, 1940), 26.

[52] Rebecca Middleton quoted in Ellmore/Middleton/Pryor, March 8, 1979.

[53] Beard/Pryor, January 23, 1979.

[54] Schneider, Memoirs of Herndon, Virginia, 30.

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[55] Derr Reports, 1926, 1927; nearly all interviews collaborated this information, see especially Peck/Netherton, February 23, 1978.

[56] Greear/Netherton, March 23, 1978; McNair, "What I Remember."

[57] Unidentified 1930s farmer quoted in Kolb and Brunner, A Study of Rural Society, 33.

[58] Ibid.; Beard/Pryor, January 23, 1979.

[59] VPI, Housing, 26.

[60] Lee/Netherton, March 28, 1978.

[61] Ibid.; Ellmore/Netherton, March 2, 1978; Peck/Netherton, February 23, 1978.

[62] Beard/Pryor, January 23, 1979.

[63] Edwin W. Beitzell, Life on the Potomac River (Abell, Maryland, 1968), 130.

[64] Beard/Pryor, January 23, 1979; Peck/Netherton, February 23, 1978.

[65] Lee/Netherton, March 28, 1978.

[66] Ibid.

[67] Schneider, Memoirs of Herndon, Virginia, 31.

[68] Lee/Netherton, March 28, 1978; and W. C. Funk, "An Economic Study of Small Farms Near Washington, D.C.," United States Department of Agriculture Bulletin 848, June 22, 1920. This study concludes that the farmer with thirty or more acres spent 38% of his revenue for labor, as compared with 10% for feed, 11% for marketing and 3% for insurance and taxes. See Table IV of this study for a complete breakdown.

[69] Ellmore/Netherton, March 2, 1978.

[70] Harrison/Pryor, February 5, 1979.

[71] Beard/Harrison/Pryor, March 6, 1979.

[72] Ibid.

[73] Ibid.; and William Edward Garnett and John W. Ellison, "Negro Life in Rural Virginia, 1865-1934," Virginia Polytechnical Institute Bulletin 295, June, 1934.

[74] Beard/Pryor, February 27, 1979; and Bailey/Netherton, December 19, 1978.

[75] Dana Gumb, "Pioneer Recalls McLean," Echoes of History, (March and May, 1972), 28.

[76] Beard/Harrison/Pryor, March 6, 1979.

[77] Beard/Pryor, February 27, 1979; and Beard/Harrison/Pryor, March 6, 1979.

[78] Garnett and Ellison, "Negro Life in Rural Virginia," 13.

[79] Beard/Pryor, February 27, 1979; Bailey/Netherton, December 19, 1978; Beard/Harrison/Pryor, March 6, 1979.

[80] Lee/Netherton, March 28, 1978.

[81] Bailey/Netherton, December 19, 1978.

[82] Ellmore/Netherton, March 2, 1978; interview with Edith Rogers by Patty Corbat, Craig Smith and Phyllis Hirshman, June 12, 1970.

[83] Bailey/Netherton, December 19, 1978.

[84] Harrison/Pryor, February 5, 1979.

[85] Bailey/Netherton, December 19, 1978; Beard/Harrison/Pryor, March 6, 1979.

[86] Beard/Harrison/Pryor, March 6, 1979; Beard/Pryor, February 27, 1979.

[87] Greear/Netherton, March 23, 1978; Peck/Netherton, February 23, 1978.

[88] Rogers/Corbat, et al., June 12, 1970.

[89] Nickell and Randolph, An Economic and Social Survey of Fairfax County, 75-76; and Agricultural Census, 1925. Nickell gives a 13% tenancy and lists 175 out of 304 tenants to be working on a cash-tenant basis. The Agricultural Census for 1940 also shows a 10% tenancy figure.

[90] Beard/Pryor, January 23, 1979. For a grim but revealing view of what tenancy could mean during this period, see James Agee and Walker Evans, Let Us Now Praise Famous Men, (New York, 1960).

[91] Harold Barger and Hans M. Lansburg, American Agriculture 1899-1939 (New York, 1975), 212; and Beard/Pryor, January 23, 1979.

PART II

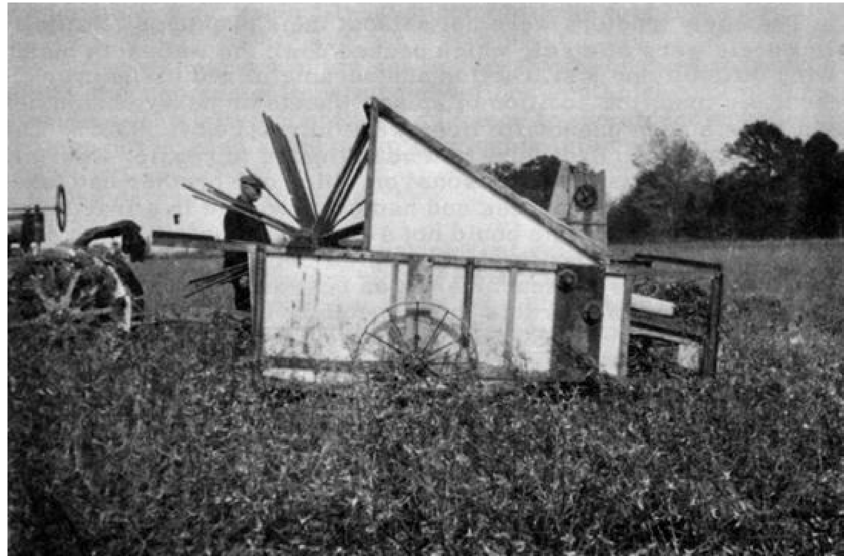
Change

In its seasonal cycle of activity, the close and interdependent family relationships, and the singular self-motivation of the farmer, the early 20th century farm carried on many of the traditions of the past. Except for the change from slave to free labor and the marginal use of mechanical equipment, these elements made up a world in which the farmer of 1890, 1870, or even 1850 would have felt comfortable. But running concurrently with these expected qualities of rural life were major changes which jarred and fractured the constant trends of farming. Change in attitude, technology or society occurs during all periods, but the 1920s and 1930s were a particularly dynamic time in the field of agriculture. Advances in the understanding of plant biology, animal husbandry and soil conservation, together with higher living standards through rural electrification and improved communications, were a cause for optimism about the future of the family farm. Yet these advances irrevocably altered the familiar rural life patterns. To maintain his own station within this changing world, the farmer's outlook and methods would also have to change.

*

Perhaps the most obvious modification of the traditional methods of farming was the increased mechanization of many farm functions during the early part of the 20th century. Not only were plows improved (by the addition of a vertical disk which made for deeper cutting and more thorough turning of the soil) and heavier harrows developed, but gasoline-

powered machinery began to be widely used.[92] The diesel tractor had actually been available as early as 1905, but was not generally adopted until World War I at which time military experimentation improved the engine's construction and worker shortages made the labor-efficient machinery especially valuable. The introduction in 1924 of an all-purpose tractor, which could cultivate as well as prepare the soil, increased the machinery's usefulness and gave an additional thrust to its popularity.[93] The tractor was meant to replace the work of draft horses, the large, gentle creatures who, along with oxen and mules, had supplied the farm's power for centuries. The saving the new machinery incurred was chiefly in time, an intangible element of economics which farmers were just beginning to consider in their appraisal of income and farm value. Often the use of a tractor cut work time by half or more. Ray Harrison recalled that it took five horses and three men several days work to clean out the trees and brush for a potential field; his brother could do it with only one helper in a single day.[94]



A broadcast harvester capable of picking four rows at a time. This mechanical picker was developed by a county farmer, H. C. Clapp. Photo in H. B. Derr Report, 1921, Virginiana Collection, Fairfax County Public Library.

Wheat being mechanically harvested, c. 1925. Few farms could afford the luxury of such equipment at this time. Photo in H. B. Derr Report, 1925, Virginiana Collection, Fairfax County Public Library.

The early tractors were not without their problems. Initially their wheels were of steel, which packed down the wet earth making plowing difficult, or lost traction and became mired in the ever-present red mud; the addition of spiked wheels or heavy chains helped only a little before pneumatic tires were introduced in 1932.[95] The machinery was also expensive and complicated to repair. Few farms were as fortunate as the Harrisons' on which one brother had taken numerous mechanical courses and had even worked in a tractor repair shop.[96] For farmers who could not always correlate time savings with

financial advantage, the large capital outlay seemed unnecessary or even unwise. As the machinery was best adapted to large farms and intensive cultivation, this was especially true in situations where the farmer did not feel overworked, or held few ambitions to expand production.

Thus, Fairfax County farmers were slow to embrace the newfangled technology. A 1924 survey of the county showed that only 10% of the farmers owned a tractor despite County Agent Derr's assertion that the "cutting of wheat with the tractor had been found the most economical way for many reasons. The principle being rapidity and saving of labor."[97] As late as 1936 Derr wrote that the majority of the small farmers could not afford to purchase mechanized equipment and were compelled to continue with their horses. The cost was partially offset by machinery loaned by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), for example, a seed corn grader and wheat smut treater which travelled "like a missionary ... from farm to farm in their crop improvement work."[98] Nevertheless even men such as A. S. Harrison, one of the area's most progressive farmers, were hesitant about the new machines, as Holden Harrison relates:

> He knew I was sort of a tractor bug, and one day he called me in and he said, 'Now son, now we don't use tractors out here, we grow the feed for the horses ... we do our farm work with horses.' But that very spring it got so hot that an old broken down tractor that I rounded up did more work than the twelve horses we had.[99]

Economics, custom and suspicion of objects so divorced from nature's cadence reduced the farmers' enthusiasm for new machinery.

Mechanized milking equipment was also held in suspicion initially. Milking machines were developed around 1900, but a prejudice against them lasted well into the 1920s. Older cows, accustomed to hand milking, did not like the sound and feel of the machines and many farmers contended that they impaired the milk-producing capabilities of some animals.[100] Separators were likewise mistrusted by some who felt that they skimmed the cream inadequately. Moreover, most of the dairy equipment required electricity for its operation and for many years this was not readily available in the area. These factors kept milking machines from being swiftly adopted in Fairfax County. Conversations with farmers of the inter-war period indicate that such equipment was not generally acquired until the mid 1930s.[101]

Farmers learned of the new labor-saving devices by word of mouth, through agricultural organizations, catalogs and manufacturer's salesmen. The latter could be a nuisance to the already preoccupied farmer, but he also acted as an invaluable informational source.

One dairyman explained:

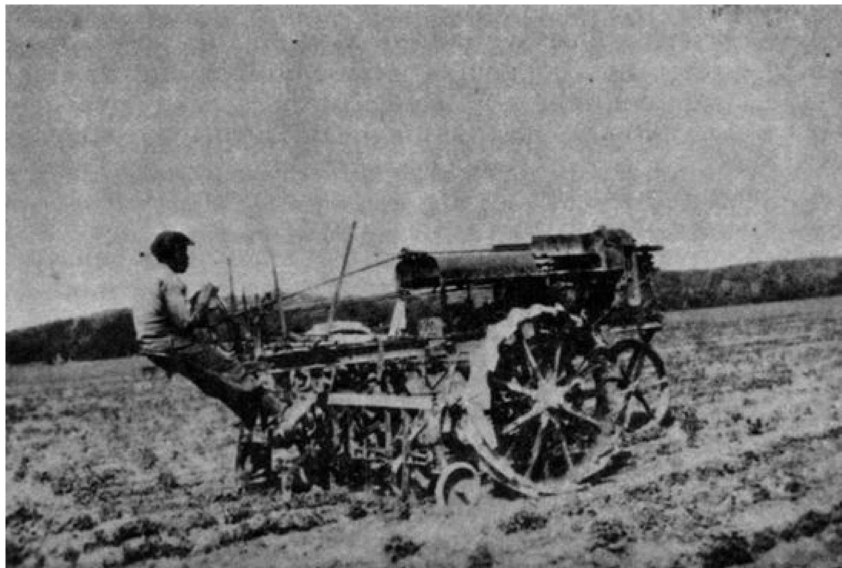
> That was a very useful service that salesmen performed. Salesmen sort of get a black eye from some quarters but they kept the farmers up to date on the new machines.... We had a very good tractor with steel wheels, and a salesman came in and said, 'I'm representing Goodrich Rubber Company. We're making tractor tires now and if you'll let us put a set of tires on your tractor we'll let you try them out, and if you don't like them, we'll take them off and go back home with them.' So we did, we tried them and they worked.[102]

The new equipment, attachments and improvements could be bought on credit, or by deferred payment (that is, extended credit) until a crop was harvested. This was frequently necessary as the machinery was costly. Joseph Beard indicated that a tractor cost about $600 to $800 in 1930. The Sears and Roebuck catalog for 1928 offered an electric milker for $145 (including a ¾ horsepower engine) and a harrow attachment to be used with a tractor for $60. Cream separators ranged from $42.95 to $100 without a motor, which could cost as much as $30.00. "Don't make a horse out of yourself," the catalog cajoled. But with the additional cost of parts, maintenance and fuel, a farmer earning only $1,000 annually could at best hope to equip his farm only gradually.[103]

To offset costs, farmers retained their old tools while gradually acquiring up-to-date equipment. An inventory of the equipment on a fifty-acre farm shows the mix of old and new owned by the typical farmer of this transition period. In 1928 the farm of George W. Kidwell near Hunter was equipped with harnesses, a two-horse plow, and blacksmithing tools, but also a gasoline engine, an oil drum and automobile.[104]

Ultimately, of course, the machines were of tremendous advantage to the large and specialized dairyman. They speeded and streamlined the twice-daily milkings, efficiently strained and separated the milk while warm. Later, the machines cooled the milk to the optimum temperature required to retard spoilage. This latter development was an especially noteworthy improvement over the old well or ice-water coolings.

Similar advances were made with electric incubators and chicken feeders for poultry specialists and improved spraying equipment for orchardists. Warren McNair was a pioneer in the Floris neighborhood in the use of mechanized hatcheries, establishing one which was powered by coal before World War I. Like the dairy equipment, poultry technology offered efficiency and improved production.[105]



A tractor-drawn drill which could plant four rows at a time. This snapshot shows a black agricultural laborer planting soybeans, which were used as high protein livestock feed. Photo in Annual Report of County Agent H. B. Derr, 1922, Virginiana Collection, Fairfax County Public Library.

Wilson D. McNair aboard a Row Crop 70 tractor, featuring rubber tires, c. 1940. In the background is the farm's chicken house. Growing poultry and eggs was the specialty of this farmer. Photo courtesy of Louise McNair Ryder.

Along with a slow-growing recognition of the advantages of automated farm equipment came a quantum leap in knowledge of the agricultural sciences. Some experimentation in plant and animal breeding was attempted around the turn of the century, but the real impetus for extended research was the passage of the Smith-Lever Act in 1914. In Virginia the work was undertaken at the Virginia Polytechnical Institute (VPI) in Blacksburg. The early efforts of the United States Department of Agriculture were enlarged at this time and, most significantly, were made accessible to individual farmers through the county agricultural extension program. Interconnected with the state agricultural colleges, the program used representatives known as county agents to advise and educate the farmers. Working on a personal level, they were able to, in the words of one Fairfax agent, "bring the college to the people." As a result of the improved access to information, new ideas on breeding, animal care, soil improvements, and planting almost inundated the farmer.[106]

Of special importance was an increased understanding of livestock breeding and a change in the desired criteria for a prime animal. As more and more emphasis was placed on pragmatic qualities, the old show points of stature, color or markings lost prestige next to reproductive capacity or productivity. One Maryland farmer who marketed his products in the same areas as Fairfax dairymen, stated the case emphatically. "What does a man want a cow for? Milk! And to get milk you've got to have a ... female animal with some size to her, strong bone, a good bag and a big barrel—a real machine ... producing quality milk."[107] A Fairfax County poultry raiser concurred. Complaining to the editor of the Fairfax Herald in 1926, he wrote:

> As is now being done, fowls are being judged by the show standard rather than from a utility standpoint. As one member [of the Poultrymen's organization] present stated ... one of his birds won the blue ribbon as the best marked bird in her class but shortly after the fair he sold her in the market owing to [her] being such a poor layer.[108]

Actually some disagreement occurred over exactly which qualities should be stressed in breeding. Experts in animal husbandry found that cross-breeding often produced the highest yield of milk, a conclusion which was at odds with those who wanted to emphasize pure-bred stock. In Fairfax County, H. B. Derr followed the latter persuasion. In the end both parties hoped to achieve the same result: a controlled breeding program which would allow the farmer to predetermine the type and characteristics of the stock on his farm.

To improve the county's stock, farmers were urged to breed their livestock with purebred animals whenever possible, and keep accurate records of milk and egg production. An especially successful tool was the establishment of Dairy Herd Improvement Associations which tested the yield and butter fat content of each cow's milk. The aim of these organizations was to identify the high and low producers in a herd so that poor producers could be sold and breeding done to best advantage. Agricultural Agent H. B. Derr moved quickly to establish these groups in the county. By 1920 two of the fourteen Dairy Herd Improvement Associations in Virginia were in Fairfax County, and the result was a continual improvement in the stock owned by Fairfax farmers. Derr reported with pleasure that within the first year of the program 15% of the cows were eliminated and replaced by better stock and that "one dairyman said the first month's test paid for the year's work."[109]

Similar improvements were taking place in the grading and standardization of seed. When Derr first arrived in Fairfax County in 1917, he complained that it was "the dumping ground of about as bad a lot of seed as he had ever seen."[110] Old or genetically mixed seed yielded poor crops and Derr organized volunteer farmers to help test new strains as well as established varieties in the area's soil. The experimentation for crop return and quality and controlled breeding done at the Virginia Polytechnical Institute and similar institutions increased the variety of seed available and made for highly predictable returns. An additional help was the increased dependability of seed distributors. Holden Harrison recalled that Southern States Cooperative was particularly conscientious in this regard. "Other seed companies had begun to improve their seed stocks, but Southern States put the emphasis on it. The seed wheat we got from Southern States outproduced any other that we could find."[111] Whereas traditionally many had merely been saving the most likely ears of corn or a random bushel of wheat for seed, the farmer now demanded certified seed of a variety most responsive to his area's soil type and weather.

Agriculturalists were also making huge strides in understanding the physical needs of animals and disease prevention. The discoveries about bacterial and viral infections made by medical researchers during the 1920s and 1930s were beginning to be understood in veterinary circles and applied to animal care. Mastitis and chicken cholera were among the common diseases brought under control by new drugs. County agents carried medicine and veterinary equipment with them using it both in emergency cases and to instruct farmers in sanitation and preventative care.[112] Health standards, especially for dairy products sold in Washington, D.C., had been stiffened during the first World War, and it was important for the farmer to understand disease prevention not only to save his animals but to keep his produce marketable.

Soybeans on a demonstration field showing the improvements made by the addition of lime to the soil. Photo in H. B. Derr Report, 1925, Virginiana Collection, Fairfax County Public Library.

Veterinarians abounded in the area, but were called in generally for required tests (such as tuberculin) or when the situation was really grave; most farmers relied on their own experience for delivering calves or treating common ailments.[113] Among the prominent vets in the county were Dr. Harry Drake, Dr. Bernard Poole and C. L. Kronfeld. All of these men made house calls, bringing medical kits and medicine with them. Their fee was $2.50 per visit which included the price of follow-up medicine. Perhaps because this fee was prohibitive to some, or through a desire for self-reliance, farmers often neglected to call the veterinarian until an animal was critically ill. "The farmer in what I suspect was fifty percent of the cases lost the animal anyway after the vet got there," acknowledged Joseph Beard,

> because so many times instead of having preventative medicine ... they never called him until things were in very bad shape. I suspect that the vet would have been able to save so many of the animals that he didn't by virtue of the fact that he didn't get there on time.... They weren't interested in prevention; they were interested in the cure.[114]

The farmers were not entirely to blame since preventative medicine was a new concept, the benefits of which were not always immediately obvious. County agents Derr and Beard both waged exhaustive battles to convince local agriculturalists of the advantage of vaccination and show them the proper methods of inoculating their own animals. Derr found the farmers unwilling to do their own vaccinating, preferring to rely on specialists; yet with classic inconsistency they were also reluctant to call in a veterinarian for such a purpose.[115] In the end, the agents found that, like many other progressive techniques which seemed new and unsubstantiated to the farmer, demonstration worked better than rhetoric. An example of this occurred in 1926 when a farmer let some cattle onto a pasture, believed to be infested with a calf disease known as blackleg. When one of his best calves died, he panicked and turned to the county agent. The farmer's animals were all inoculated, as were those on several neighboring farms, and there were no further losses. "This incident has done more to place confidence in vaccinations than several years' talking could do," wrote a pleased H. B. Derr. "There are no more doubting Thomases in that community at least."[116]

Similar work was undertaken to convince orchardists and crop producers of the advantages of preventative spraying to eliminate bacterial diseases and aid in insect control. The county's production of fruits, vegetables and grains had suffered less from direct neglect than from ignorance of proper care.[117] The value of chemical pesticides was just beginning to be understood (their use would not reach major proportions until the years after World War II) and Joseph Beard noted that the agents were frequently "bombarded with all these new advertisements coming from the supplier or chemical company...."[118] The agents refrained from recommending products that had not been tested for at least three years at the State Agricultural Experiment Station, insuring some safety in the pesticides, though Beard admitted that the principles of chemical buildup were not yet recognized.[119] Slowly word travelled through the county of the advantages of protecting crops from disease. By 1930 the program was progressing nicely, as Derr reported to the state agency. Driving through the county one day, he met a successful orchardist whom he had previously urged

to use fungicides. "Derr," the farmer remarked to him, "you sure keep me busy; every time my wife sees your spray notices she makes me get the machine out and go to work, but it surely does pay to spray."[120] Here too the farmer relied on his own verification and judged personal experience stronger than the words of experts.

A wild cherry tree destroyed by web worms. Insect pests such as these were a chief reason for the decline of orchards in the area. Photo in H. B. Derr Report, 1925, Virginiana Collection, Fairfax County Public Library.

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In this period of exciting and crucial advances in agricultural knowledge, the individual landowner was sometimes at a loss to, in his parlance, separate the wheat from the chaff. Radio programs, bulletins from the USDA and VPI, local newspaper columns and talks by visiting experts all vied for the farmer's time, as did the news in The Southern Planter, Country Gentleman and Farm Journal, favorite periodicals in the area. "These programs came so rapidly the farmers just about got familiar with one until another appeared," Derr reported in 1936. "As one farmer put it, 'just one durned thing after another."[121] Furthermore, the information was often confusing, at odds with the handed-down teachings of generations, or juxtaposed with other advice with which it was dramatically opposed. The Herndon News-Observer, for example, carried several articles on "scientific feeding" in its early 1925 issues and advocated crop rotation and strict attention to cleanliness. Only a year later, however, it printed a column advising farmers to feed kerosene and lard to hens to rid them of vermin.[122] In an even more blatant example, this paper contained an article written by Virginia state dairy specialist John A. Avery, which counseled area farmers to increase their dairy herds; the same edition ran a piece by H. B. Derr which bemoaned the surplus of milk then glutting the Washington market.[123] It is not surprising that the farmer, caught in the midst of a bewildering amount of concrete advice and misinformation, sometimes preferred to stick to his ancestors' ways. Thus, the old adages—that corn should be planted when the leaves were as large as squirrel's ears, or that when a hen's comb isn't bright red, it isn't laying—were relinquished with reluctance.[124] The only consistently accepted source on scientific farming seems to have been Virginia Polytechnical Institute's Handbook of Agronomy, which more than one farmer stated he held in one hand while directing the plow with the other.[125]

A particularly difficult question for the farmer to consider was the problem of specialization. General farming had been the rule for so long, and one-crop systems had such a reputation for running farms into debt, that many were doubtful of the advantages of specialization. Here, too, they received mixed signals. On one hand farmers were advised to sink their all into poultry or dairying, only to hear that to concentrate too completely on one area would limit their self-sufficiency and mitigate the integrated quality of the farm. In an increasingly technical world, however, specialization had many attractions. Expensive machinery needed to be purchased for only one kind of production, the farmer could cut down the vast influx of information to only those subjects which directly interested him, and the methods of mass

production, first pioneered in factories, could be applied to his concentrated effort. Moreover, specialization in market commodities produced the cash which had become ever more important to buy equipment, pay taxes and purchase manufactured goods which were no longer made on the farm. In the end, Fairfax County farmers generally effected a compromise: while focusing on one aspect of farming, they retained many of the advantages of the general farmer. Vegetable gardens, poultry houses, orchards, and sometimes sheep all kept their place on the family farm. Even C. T. Rice, who liked to refer to his farm as a milk producing plant, with "little time or space for anything else" kept a few chickens and hogs.[126]

An early specialization in the county was truck gardening. The long growing season and potential markets in Alexandria and Washington in theory seemed to point to success in this field. The list of vegetables and fruits grown for the commercial market was impressive and included potatoes, corn, tomatoes, spinach, black-eyed peas, parsnips and rhubarb, apples and several varieties of berries.[127] One man even grew artichokes, making quite a substantial profit, but decided to move his operation to more productive soils in New Jersey.[128] Yet those who attempted raising large quantities of these crops found it difficult to show clear profits. Fruit growers had to compete with the world-famous produce of the Shenandoah Valley, whose strong cooperative organization gave an added advantage to the area's natural abundance. Hay and forage grains were of decreasing importance in a country rapidly becoming enamored of the automobile. In addition, a slump in farm prices had begun in 1920-21, the after-effect of the inflated agricultural revenues of the World War I years.

A study of small truck farms in the Washington, D.C. area showed that despite intensive labor and a double cropping system, a farmer was often clearing only $500 annually by raising produce for the city markets. The study concluded that it took "the best management and a considerable knowledge of farm practice and markets" to till such a farm to advantage. On the smallest farms it was only the exceptional farmer who could make more than a living without any outside source of income.[129]

Marketing the produce was a special problem of truck farming. The vegetables had to be delivered and sold at the peak of their ripeness and their highly perishable nature made this somewhat difficult in the days before refrigeration. It was generally undesirable to sell through a middleman, and therefore the farmer was responsible for personally marketing as well as raising his produce. Moreover, the trip to Washington was tedious and time consuming, especially in the early 1920s when the condition of the area's roads was at a notoriously low point. One market farmer's trip was described in this way:

> He planted all sorts of garden produce and he had what you'd call a market wagon; it was a covered wagon.... During the day he would fill that wagon with his produce and in the evening he would hook his ... two horses to the wagon to get to Washington. He'd aim to get there by six o'clock in the morning when the markets opened. He would sell his produce as much as he could [directly from the wagon] ... to individuals at the old Center Market.... They paid a higher price. If he had any left over he had to sell it at whatever he could get to the people who owned the stalls.... It took him three or four hours ... to sell his load of produce. Then it was the next night before he came home.[130]

Conditions at the city markets were also less than perfect as large companies tried to dump cheap produce from outside areas on the Washington consumer. Not only did they compete with the local farmer for the lowest prices, but they misused the stall space itself. Even when a new market was built in 1933, this remained a problem. One irate farmer angrily stated to the editor of the Herndon News-Observer that the large retail trucks held all the available spaces while the area farmers "stand out doors (sic) all day and part of the night, trying to eke out money for taxes, interest and other arbitrary costs." The streets were filthy, he continued, and the market protection itself inadequate. "The only pretense of shelter barely covers the sidewalk, leaving the farmer's truck or car outdoors where produce is in danger from heat, cold, or rain."[131]

Partially because of these problems, the specialty which gained in distinction and profitability at this time was dairy farming. There were several additional reasons for this. The land itself was well adapted to the raising of milk cows; its gently undulating terrain—which formed numerous natural water depressions—coupled with the abundance of small streams or "runs," made water easily available. To the dairy farmer who must water his stock regardless of seasonal conditions, this was essential. As previously mentioned, Fairfax County also possessed soil types which worked up well and produced high yields of the pasturage and ensilage crops required to support large dairy herds. And, one observer noted, the weather was favorable for the dairy industry: "The winters are relatively short in Fairfax, thus allowing cattle to stay out often until the latter part of November, returning to pasture by April or May."[132]

These natural assets tell only part of the story for, as stated above, Fairfax County continually produced well above the state per acre average in both corn and orchard fruits and its market crops were considerably varied as late as 1920. Although dairying required more capital initially and more land than did market gardening, it held an advantage in that the plummeting farm prices did not affect milk products as disasterously as crops. The really

great asset that the Fairfax County dairy industry possessed, however, was its proximity to the large milk-consuming markets in Alexandria and Washington, D.C., and the speedy access afforded by rail lines connecting the two areas. Where truck farmers needed to sell their produce personally in order to make the best profit, milk producers sold to distributors, who collected at the depot, making rail transportation a feasible marketing device.

In the earliest days of the century milk was shipped by boat to the city markets, but the lack of river access for many farms and the ease of spoilage on this slow mode of transportation retarded the growth of the commercial milk market. It was not until the old and unreliable steam railway lines, such as the Washington and Old Dominion Railway, were converted to electricity around 1912 and refrigerated cars were widely used, that the shipment of milk became really profitable.[133] Communities such as Floris, situated only a few miles from the Herndon depot, began to flourish as dairy centers when only a few years earlier poor transportation would have made marketing of such a highly perishable product unthinkable. So successful and rapid was the dairy boom that by 1924 over 1,800 gallons of milk were shipped daily from the county to Washington, and its production was the highest in Virginia.[134]

Other factors served to enhance the burgeoning dairy industry. Around 1910 milk pasteurization and bottling plants were established in Washington. This created a large market for whole milk, which had formerly been held in suspicion by many people who believed milk to be a carrier of disease. Another important aspect was the well-directed efforts of the two county agricultural extension agents who, in addition to introducing the previously mentioned Dairy Herd Improvement Associations, encouraged the use of pure-bred bulls for breeding, often acquiring the free loan of USDA animals for the purpose. The use of these bulls was an added incentive for farmers to pay the nominal fee and join the Dairy Herd Improvement Associations, since membership was required in order to borrow a government animal. By these methods and repeated admonitions to "get out of the scrub class and join the pure-bred bunch," the county agents helped Fairfax farmers develop so fine a reputation for quality dairy cows that buyers came from many states to procure these high-testing animals for their farms.[135]

Another factor affecting the rise of dairying in Fairfax County was the early formation of the Maryland and Virginia Milk Producers Association. The organization had been informally started in 1907 as a clearinghouse for grievances among some producers in the vicinity of Washington, D.C., but for many years it "amounted to little more than an occasional general meeting for the purpose of some united effort toward raising the price of milk."[136] In 1920 it was incorporated and a full-time manager employed. Each member paid a fee of one cent per gallon of milk sold (a fund which was accumulated and refunded when a farmer left the organization) and the Association handled the business of selling to the distributors in Washington. By such collective action the dairymen were able to control milk prices more effectively, and their unity assured a measure of security against unscrupulous action by distributors. In the early years of Fairfax County dairying this was a very real threat as former Association member Holden Harrison attests:

> There were four or five principal distributors in Washington. I don't know whether they got together on this or not, but to start out with they had a two price program. They paid you more in the winter than they did in the summer.... The dairy farmer was at the mercy of the milk distributor then. They set prices just as low as they thought the best dairyman could continue to produce.... The distributors were about to starve the farmers out, that's what brought it around. We weren't getting a fair deal. So when we formed this Association the management of the Association could say, 'We've got these farmers lined up. They pretty well depend on us and we can pretty well tell them what to do.' Through that leverage they could pretty well tell the distributors what to do, too.[137]

The Association furthered its prestige—and its bargaining power—by waging a battle against "bootleg," or uninspected, milk being brought into the area from Pennsylvania and New Jersey. It had the additional advantage of stabilizing prices so that the farmer with only a small amount of milk for the market could compete with the larger producer whose more economical methods had previously allowed him to undersell his smaller neighbor. Better methods of testing and pasteurizing the milk were also concerns and the cooperative used its muscle to negotiate loans for its members.[138]

Furthermore, in the late 1920s, the Association became concerned about the drop in prices due to an overabundance of milk in the area and developed a system of handling the surplus. "It eventually built itself into a position where the Association itself either rented or purchased a plant that could take care of surplus milk...," stated Holden Harrison. "This surplus milk was processed into cheese or butter or ice cream or maybe even powdered milk.... They had a plant in Frederick, Maryland, and they would divert whatever amount of producers' milk to Frederick to the processing plant and keep it out of the hands of the distributors."[139] This action had the double advantage of avoiding waste and preventing a profit-lowering glut of milk.

By 1927 the Maryland and Virginia Milk Producers Association was the largest farmer's

cooperative in Virginia. It included 85% of the Washington area producers in its membership, despite the effort of distributors to dissuade some of the better producers from joining. They exercised bargaining control of over $2,500,000 annually. Though they never actually went on strike, their large membership fund gave them a strong bargaining position. "The distributors knew when that fund accumulated to a good-sized sum that we weren't just a fly-by-night outfit that could be pushed around, that we had resources we could rely on."[140] Furthermore, the organization wisely kept its clout by avoiding political issues and exercising minimum control over individual methods of production. Its purpose was to streamline the commercialization of a farm product, and in this effort it was highly successful. [Pg 51]

Northern Virginia's reputation for dairy excellence grew both in local circles and throughout the state as a result of published census reports and statewide comparisons of milk volume and butterfat content. The 1925 agricultural census shows Fairfax County to be the largest producer in the state, with average yield per cow 70% above the statewide figure; in 1940 this margin was even greater.[141] Dairy Herd Improvement Association #1, based in the Herndon area, had especially impressive results. In 1935, for example, it had the second highest overall average in Virginia and included four of the state's five most productive herds. In 1937 the county's high-testing cow, a Holstein owned by Dr. F. W. Huddleston, gave 2,031 pounds of milk (8.6 pounds to a gallon) per month to a statewide average of 620. [142]

As a result of these impressive showings, many local farmers shied away from general farming and began to put their energies into milk production; new farmers were drawn to the area specifically for the possibilities in dairy farming. Of ten families interviewed in the Floris area, all save one connected their family's removal to Fairfax County to the combination of transportation ease and excellent prices afforded by the Washington milk market. "In this period there was an immigration of farmers from other parts of the country, particularly in the Valley of Virginia, who did not have an opportunity to market their farm products and their livestock very readily up there in the Valley," related Joseph Beard, "... the Southern Railway, the Richmond, Fredericksburg and Potomac [Railways were] quite an asset to people who wanted to market their farm products so a lot of them moved up here." [143] Many of the newcomers became outstanding in the field of dairy husbandry, for example, C. T. Rice, a celebrated dairy owner of the Oakton area, whose animals consistently scored highly on milk production. He came to the county in 1915 but "threw away his plow" during the 1920s to concentrate solely on dairying, citing erosion problems and the more constant income of dairying as his reasons.[144] So widespread was this tendency to embrace dairy farming that a traveller riding through the county in 1930 sensed that "it is not farming country at all, because there is very little planting done. We saw few fields in which a crop had been recently harvested ... it is apparently a grazing country."[145]

Despite its spectacular achievements, the Fairfax County dairy industry did not rise with an unchecked ascent but suffered a certain share of problems and setbacks. In one sense its very success was its worst enemy. Although many farmers continued to focus on dairying, by 1926 there was a surplus of milk on the Washington market and the county agent noted that "it appears as if we had sufficient dairies."[146] Still, while prices dropped steadily between 1926 and 1935,[147] farmers continued to increase their yields in hopes of increasing profits by shear quantities of milk sold. One county farmer commenting on the futility of this, remarked: [Pg 52]

> We were getting about 25¢ a gallon for our base milk. Seventy-five gallons a day at 25¢ a gallon wasn't paying the interest and the mortgage on [his farm loan]. So we decided in 1928 that we would put in some more cows and get a little extra money to help pay off this mortgage and this loan. So we started shipping, instead of 75 gallons of milk a day, 90 to 95 gallons of milk a day. Then milk went down from 25¢ a gallon to 22¢ a gallon. Well, we couldn't do that, so we put some more stalls on the barn and built a new silo and put in enough cows to ship 125 gallons of milk a day ... it was only netting us 18 to 19¢ a gallon ... the more we worked, the more we produced, and the harder we worked, it seemed like the less net income we had.[148]

Against this turn of events the state agricultural service advocated poultry and truck farming for those entering the county and urged a more uniform distribution of the county's cattle. Some farmers had too few cows for even their own use. Others had too many and no feed. "A few good cows well kept, rather than a large number poorly fed, will bring in a steady income, that will do much for our farmers in their present conditions," advised County Agent Derr.[149] He also hoped to see farmers concentrate on the butterfat content of their milk and to increase their production of cream for which there was a continual market; the skim milk left after the removal of cream could be fed to calves, pigs or children. Most often Derr cautioned against the dangers of complete specialization at the expense of an integrated farm in which each facet of the farm was both aided and benefitted by every other part. "The old slogan, 'the cow, the sow and the hen,' is a very true one," he wrote, "especially in the South."[150]

Derr did well to emphasize the quality of milk products. A 1932 ruling in the District of Columbia requiring a 4% butterfat content in milk sold there occurred just as Derr was complaining that "with many the quality of the milk is not such a vital question as the

quantity." Holstein cattle, which gave higher yields but less rich milk than did Jerseys or Guernseys, predominated in the county, making the new demand a difficult one to meet. In desperation some farmers tried cross-breeding the two strains with mixed results; the inevitable outcome was to compromise the county's movement towards establishing herds of pure-bred animals.[151]

The mixing of breeds to increase butterfat content was not the only element which undercut the breeding program. One problem, the selling of highly profitable animals, was yet another hazard of success. "Owing to the excellent reports being made by our cow testing associations, numerous buyers from other states have come into the county and by paying almost fabulous prices have taken away quite a number of our best animals," Derr wrote in 1926. "In some cases this has proved a costly undertaking for our dairymen, as by bringing new animals into their herds ... either T B or abortion has been introduced."[152] Another factor working against pure-bred stock was the depression, which for farmers encompassed not only the 1930s, but the entire period following the deflation of World War I prices. With less cash available, many farmers bought poor quality bulls rather than invest the money for a pure-bred animal.[153]

Notwithstanding these setbacks, dairy farming continued to be Fairfax County's predominant (and most prestigious) industry during the 1920s and 1930s. Indeed, it flourished well into the 1950s and was eclipsed only by the overwhelming spread of urban workers into the area in the second half of the century. Until this development occurred, it was the dairy farmer's life which set the style and pace of life in the county.

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Mechanization and specialization of the family farm did not necessarily lighten the farmer's workload. An electric machine could cut several hours per week off milking time, but this time gain was offset by the hours spent on sterilization and maintenance. Threshers eliminated the time-consuming chore of hand-flailing the grain, but the farmer still had to cut and stack his harvest, and it took several men a number of days to run the machine. The grower was at the mercy of the machine's owner as to the day and time he was able to thresh; here again, he lost a measure of independence.[154] The excellent efforts of the Dairy Herd Improvement Associations also produced work for the farmers, especially those unaccustomed to bookkeeping. The landowner who had kept his records in an old shoe box was now expected to record the precise weight and butterfat content of the milk given by each cow, as well as the market value, number of days tested and amount and cost of grain fed the animal. The data shown in the Herd Record Books belonging to C. T. Rice reveal them to be complex documents which required in addition to the above information, hereditary records, descriptions of physical features, and yearly and monthly production averages.[155] The efforts were rewarding, of course, but, added to the farmer's already overloaded day, the recordkeeping could be burdensome. Both Agents Derr and Beard complained constantly of the farmer's reluctance to keep records and in their attempts to increase the area's professional methods and pride, they stressed the need to keep accurate accounts of the farm's transactions.[156]

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The advent of technological application in the farming sector was a cause of both optimism and disquiet. It eliminated some drudgery, it streamlined and modernized, but it also uprooted traditions and added financial and emotional burdens to the already pressured farmer. To cope with the new agricultural methods and outlook, farmers increasingly chose to relinquish some of their independence and band together to solve their problems.

"Hard Work Made Easy and Quick" wrote a local farmer on the back of this photograph. The mechanical hay loader eliminated the taxing work of pitching hay into a barn loft, c. 1935. Photo courtesy of Holden Harrison.

PART II—NOTES

Change

[92] Barger and Lansberg, American Agriculture, 1899-1939, 212.

[93] Ibid., 201-202.

[94] Harrison/Pryor, February 5, 1979.

[95] Ibid.; Bailey/Netherton, December 19, 1978; Barger and Lansberg, American Agriculture, 1899-1939, 212.

[96] Harrison/Pryor, February 5, 1979.

[97] Nickell and Randolph, An Economic and Social Survey of Fairfax County, 75-76; and Derr Report, 1925, photo section.

[98] Derr Report, 1936. In 1940 there were still only 298 tractors in the county. See Agricultural Census, 1940.

[99] Harrison/Pryor, February 5, 1979.

[100] Barger and Lansberg, American Agriculture, 1899-1939, 221; Richard Peck was among those in the Floris vicinity who believed that the early machines "ruined" a good cow; see Peck/Netherton, February 23, 1978.

[101] Harrison/Pryor, February 5, 1979. The Harrisons bought their equipment quite early—around 1924; McNair, "What I Remember"; Peck/Netherton, February 23, 1978; J. Middleton/Netherton, February 24, 1978; Bailey/Netherton, December 19, 1978.

[102] Advertisements in Herndon News-Observer; and Holden Harrison quoted in Harrison/Pryor, February 5, 1979.

[103] Author's conversation with Joseph Beard, April 25, 1979; and Sears and Roebuck catalog, 1927-1928.

[104] Inventory of property of George W. Kidwell, April 6, 1928, Fairfax County Will Book Liber 11, 343-344.

[105] McNair, "What I Remember"; and notes on conversation with Joseph Beard, April 16, 1979.

[106] Beard/Pryor, February 27, 1979; Congressional Record.

[107] Russell Lord, Men of Earth (New York, 1931), 80.

[108] "Poultry Men Confer," Fairfax Herald, February 26, 1926.

[109] Virginia Agricultural Advisory Council, A Five Year Program for the Development of Virginia's Agriculture (Richmond, 1923), 29; and Derr Report, 1920.

[110] Derr Report, 1926.

[111] Beard/Harrison/Pryor, March 6, 1979.

[112] Derr Reports, nearly every year. See, for example, 1932, 11.

[113] Beard/Pryor, January 23, 1979; and Harrison/Pryor, February 5, 1979.

[114] Beard/Pryor, January 23, 1979.

[115] Derr Report, 1932, 11.

[116] Ibid., 1926, 8.

[117] Ibid., 1925, 6.

[118] Beard/Netherton/Reid, November, 1974.

[119] Ibid.

[120] Derr Report, 1930, 29.

[121] Ibid., 1936, 16; and notes following interview, Beard/Harrison/Pryor, March 6, 1979.

[122] "Farm Notes" and "Scientific Feeding," January 22, 1925; and "Rid Houses and Hens of Vermin," October 21, 1926; all in Herndon News-Observer.

[123] Ibid., April 14, 1932.

[124] Bailey/Netherton, December 19, 1978; and The Southern Planter, April, 1930.

[125] Statements of Holden Harrison and Joseph Beard in Beard/Pryor, February 27, 1979; and Harrison/Pryor, February 5, 1979.

[126] "The Way Out for the Farmer," Washington Star, June 19, 1932; Agricultural Census, 1925; Nickell and Randolph, An Economic and Social Survey of Fairfax County, 71; "A Unique Fairfax County Farm," undated newspaper clipping (c. 1945) belonging to Mrs. Mary Scott; Elizabeth Rice to author, Wilmington, Delaware, January 30, 1979.

[127] Funk, "An Economic History of Small Farms Near Washington, D.C.," 4.

[128] Derr Report, 1935, 10. Mr. D. H. McAslan made about $500 the first year from a $143 investment.

[129] Funk, "An Economic History of Small Farms Near Washington, D.C.," 6-7; Nickell and Randolph, An Economic and Social Survey of Fairfax County; and Derr Report, 1927, 13.

[130] Description of A. S. Harrison by Holden Harrison, Harrison/Pryor, February 5, 1979.

[131] "Fairfax Farmer States Facts," Herndon News-Observer, March 1, 1934.

[132] Nickell and Randolph, An Economic and Social Survey of Fairfax County, 29-30.

[133] Nan Netherton, Donald Sweig, Janice Artemel, Patricia Hickin, and Patrick Reed, Fairfax County, Virginia: A History (Fairfax Virginia, 1978), 480-483.

[134] Nickell and Randolph, An Economic and Social Survey of Fairfax County, 26-27.

[135] "Pure Bred Bulls," Herndon News-Observer, May 17, 1928, 1; and Derr Report, 1926, 6.

[136] "History of the Maryland and Virginia Milk Producers Association," Herndon News-Observer, May 4, 1933.

[137] Ibid.; and Beard/Harrison/Pryor, March 6, 1979.

[138] William Edward Garnett, "Rural Organization in Relation to Rural Life in Virginia," Virginia Agricultural Extension Station Bulletin 256 (Blacksburg, May 1927), 11; and Nickell and Randolph, An Economic and Social Survey of Fairfax County, 83.

[139] Beard/Harrison/Pryor, March 6, 1979.

[140] Garnett, "Rural Organization in Relation to Rural Life in Virginia," and Ibid.

[141] Agricultural Censes, 1925, 1940. The 1940 figures show milk production per farm in Fairfax County to be 400% above the average in the state.

[142] Derr Report, 1937; and "State Dairy Herd Improvement Association," Herndon News-Observer, August 8, 1935.

[143] Beard/Pryor, January 23, 1979.

[144] "Fairfax Farmer Threw Away His Plow in 1928 and Amazing Results Have Been Revolutionary," Richmond Times-Dispatch, September 17, 1951.

[145] Oliver Martin, On and Off the Concrete in Maryland, Virginia and West Virginia (Washington, 1930), 26.

[146] Derr Reports, 1926, 6, and 1927, 13.

[147] Milk prices dropped from $4.05 per 100 gallons in 1920 to a low of $2.10 in 1932. By 1935 they were still low, but had risen some to $2.25. The prices given are July figures; January listings were generally a bit higher. See Virginia Farm Statistics (Richmond, 1936), 59.

[148] Beard/Pryor, January 23, 1979.

[149] H. B. Derr, "Helping Farmers," Herndon News-Observer, April 14, 1932; and Derr Report, 1927, 13.

[150] Derr, "Helping Farmers."

[151] Derr Report, 1932, 5.

[152] Derr Report, 1926, 6.

[153] Derr Report, 1932, 6.

[154] McNair, "What I Remember"; and 16th Census of the United States, 1940, Agriculture—Volume I, Statistics for Counties (Washington, 1942).

[155] C. T. Rice Herd Record Books, 1923-1937, in possession of Mrs. Mary Scott.

[156] Derr and Beard Reports, nearly every year, see especially 1926, 1932.

PART III

Professionalization and an Increased Standard of Living

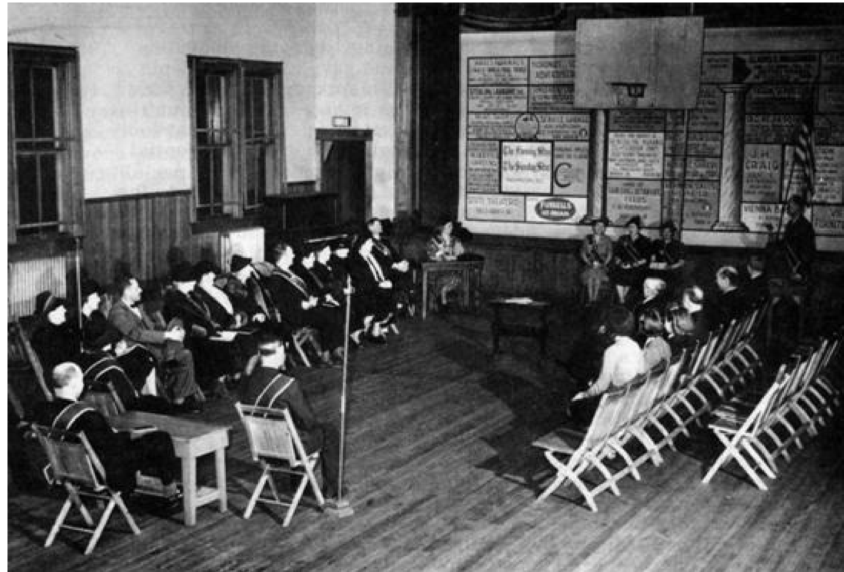
Specialization, whether in truck farming, dairying or poultry raising, streamlined the farmer's work and gave him an in-depth body of knowledge in a particular field. This expertise made for occupational prestige and increased status in non-farm communities; acknowledgment of the farmer as a professional developed markedly during the 1920s and 1930s. Detailed knowledge had been essential to the general farmer but it was not widely recognized as a specialized skill. The professionalization taking place was also due to the farmer's own recognition of his unique role and his attempts to enhance it through farmer's clubs, educational opportunities and community projects. It also reflected a larger concern in the nation with upgrading standards and promoting solidarity among discrete occupational groups, a remnant from the movement towards efficiency and proficiency of the Progressive Era.[157]

An important advance for the farmer was the increased opportunities in agricultural education. The Hatch Act had provided for agricultural programs to be established in the Land Grant Colleges, and ensuing legislation in 1917 called for farm courses to be added to the high school curriculum.[158] This significant step was resisted for a short time in Fairfax County, where the school board preferred to teach Latin rather than agriculture in the schools, a policy held in disdain by local farmers: "Latin was of no use unless you want to go around the barn and swear at some creature in an old language."[159] When vocational training was finally adopted in 1919, the chances for farm children to keep up with the burgeoning technology and sharpen their acquired skills were immeasurably increased. In Virginia practical skills were taught but so were a program of social studies dealing with the quality of life in rural areas, focusing on problems of transportation, recreation, resource protection and consumption patterns.[160] Such official sanction for agricultural education was a recognition that farming was not merely a plodding or unskilled activity, but an exacting science which required intelligence and application to master.

Extensive study of agriculture in high school or college was the ideal, of course, but a number of programs were developed to further the established farmer's basic skills. Ray Harrison went to Baltimore to take a farmer's course in veterinary medicine and Wilson D. McNair travelled all the way to New Brunswick, New Jersey, to learn the most advanced methods of poultry farming. McNair later enrolled in a two-year course at VPI. Another farmer, Fred Curtice, from the Navy area, had degrees from Cornell University and took veterinary courses from George Washington University.[161] The county agent also designed extension schools for interested farmers. In February, 1933, for example, a two-day poultry school was attended by 75 farmers who heard reports by local farmers, talks by experts

from USDA and VPI and workshops on topics such as "Egg Grading," "Growing the Pullets," and "The Poultry Outlook for Virginia."[162] Less intensive programs were also offered, such as the free showing of a dairy-oriented film, "Safeguarding the Foster Mothers of the World." "A profitable evening is promised," announced the film's advertisement, "especially to those interested in the economical production of milk by up-to-date methods."[163]

[Pg 60]



The Fairfax County Grange meeting at a schoolhouse near Fairfax, c. 1940. Photo, Library of Congress.

[Pg 61]

Perhaps of even greater benefit to the farmer's image and expertise was the growth of local farmer's organizations and cooperatives. The largest and most prominent nationally was the Grange, a farmer's association initially started in Washington, D.C., in 1867. Fairfax County boasted four chapters of this organization, formed in the late years of the 1920s. The Grange interested itself in agricultural activities and civic matters and it was upon its recommendation that the county agent was appointed.[164] Of more immediate concern, however, were the local farmer's clubs, and the unofficial associations of orchardists or dairymen who met to discuss surpluses, crop problems or the need to advertise. The farmer's clubs were the outgrowth of community groups which sprang up spontaneously in the county from the mid-nineteenth century on, but which were expanded and formalized by H. B. Derr in the mid-1920s. As he described them they were

> unique in their plans in that they are composed of twelve families and they meet once a year at each home.... They meet in time for dinner and after dinner ... the men go over the farm and discuss current farm problems. Then they return to the house and listen to some speaker who has been invited for an informal talk.[165]

Broadening and sociable, the clubs became an outstanding feature of Fairfax County farm organization.

The minutes from the meetings of Farmer's Club #1, which was based in Herndon and was made up predominantly of members from the Floris area, show the variety of subjects discussed. A meeting in March, 1921, included a lecture on contagious abortion (a disease chiefly affecting dairy cows). Road conditions were discussed in April, 1924. Problems of milk cooling and the effectiveness of the agricultural high school were topics in March, 1928, and the following month state legislator H. E. Hanes addressed the club on farm issues and voting procedures in the upcoming elections. The club members also joined together to buy seed in quantity in order to reduce cost and effort.

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Informative as the meetings were, of equal importance was the bond of friendship and professional affiliation which the farmer's clubs fostered. By working closely with men of similar interests, a network was built up which increased the agriculturalists' pride and effectiveness; not only could the farmer identify with the attitudes and problems of his associates, but could work with them to fulfill mutual needs. The sincere respect felt among members of this group is shown in the following tribute, written after the death of one associated farmer, S. L. Chapin:

> Be it resolved: That we pause to drop a tear of sympathy and love, to express in our humble way the deep feeling of our loss. Bold and fearless in the expression of his opinion, kind and considerate at all times, and under all conditions. His life and association with his fellow men were full of love and tenderness.... To his bereaved family we tender our deepest sympathy and may the recolections (sic) of his cheerful disposition ever remain fresh in our

memories, as we recall many pleasant incidents of his associations.[166]

As farmers organized, they reinforced their own values and occupational identity, and what is more, they combined their efforts to work for the change they sought most. The Maryland and Virginia Milk Producers Association is an obvious example of this. Smaller cooperatives, many of them outgrowths of the farmer's clubs, sprang up throughout the county, though none of them had the longevity or impact of the Maryland and Virginia Milk Producers Association. A Floris Milk Producers Association was founded in 1925 to operate and repair milk collecting trucks and the Dairy Marketing Company and Fairfax County Farmer's Service Company (which featured cooperative buying of seed) started a few years later. None of these bodies remained permanent features of the area's organizations, but all helped the farmer to see the advantage of collective effort. The professional attitude adopted by the farmers' groups is evident in the stringent standards required in their service contracts. No longer was an informal gentleman's agreement sufficient. Farmers expected seed to be of a certain weight and quality, milk to be delivered "at a coolness satisfactory to the dealer," and sanitary measures to be strictly followed.[167] In effect the cooperative movement enlarged the farmer's working partners to include not only his family and hired labor, but the community as a whole.

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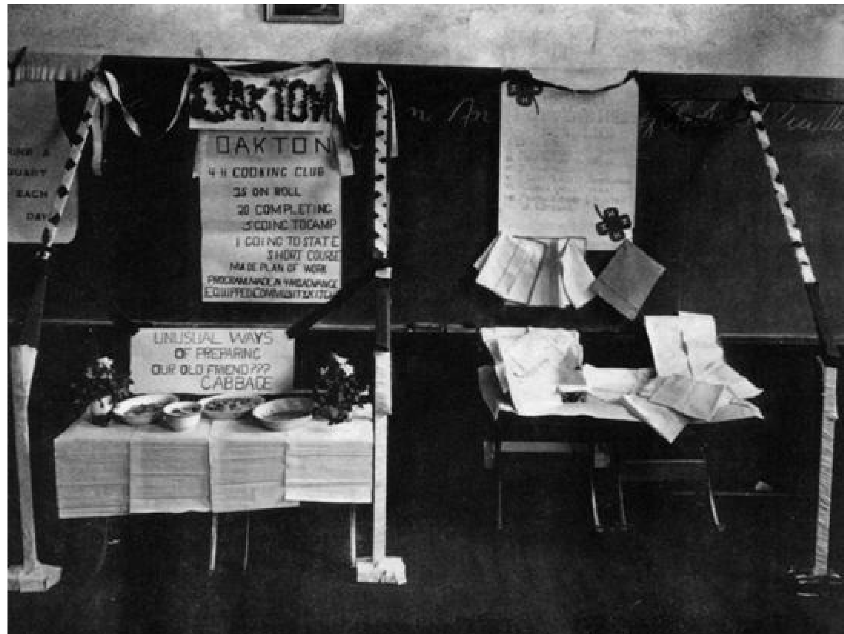
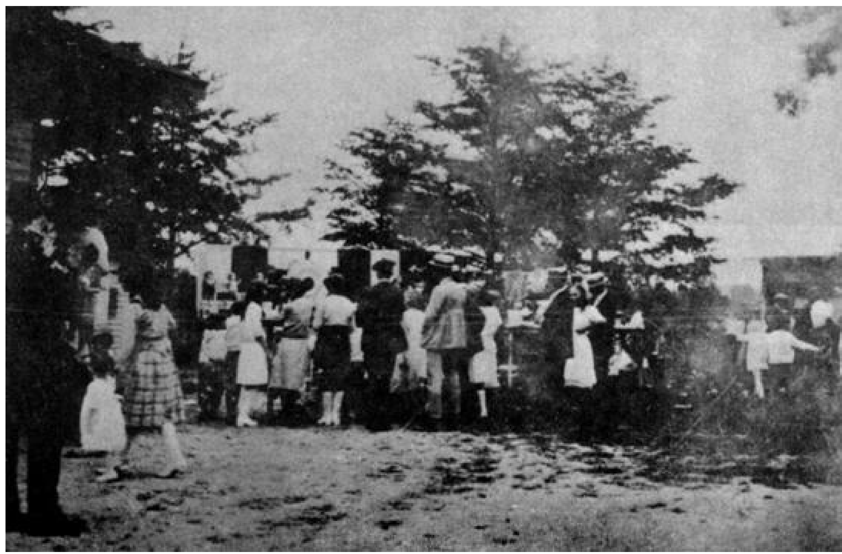
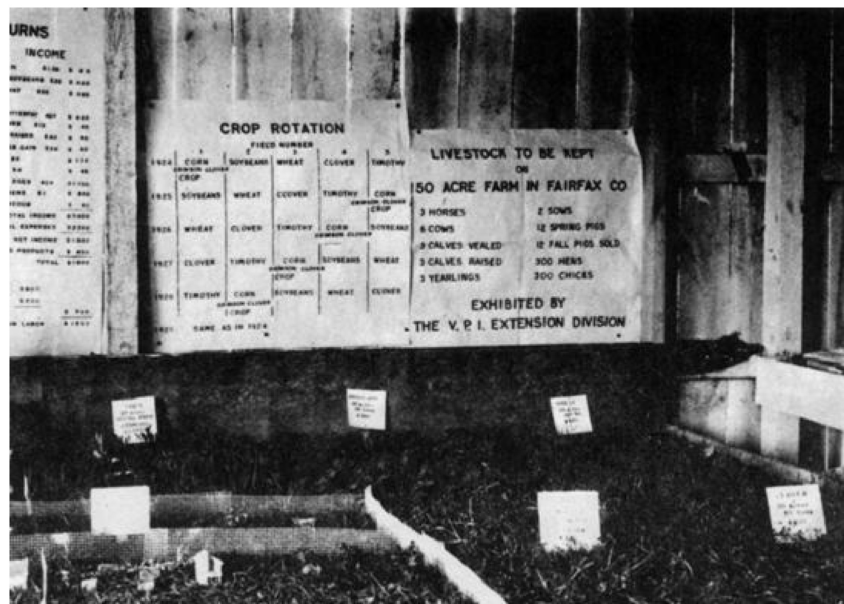
The Floris Home Demonstration Club, 1930 winners of the County Championship for most effective club. Photo in H. B. Derr Reports, Virginiana Collection, Fairfax County Public Library.



A 4-H Club display at the county "Achievement Day," showing the stress on nutrition of the Oakton and Pope's Head Clubs. Photos in H. B. Derr Report, 1930, Virginiana Collection, Fairfax County Public Library.



A community fair, c. 1922, similar to those held in the Floris area. Photo in H. B. Derr Report, 1922, Virginiana Collection, Fairfax County Public Library.



A suggested model farm for Fairfax County developed in 1924 by County Agent H. B. Derr. The model includes crop rotation, annual budget and a schedule of livestock feeding and purchase. Photo in H. B. Derr Report, 1924, Virginiana Collection, Fairfax County Public Library.

Women and children were also encouraged to professionalize. Working jointly with the agricultural agent was a "home demonstration agent" who gave advice, lectures and demonstrations geared toward increased economy and convenience for the homemaker. Home Demonstration Clubs were organized in each community to acquaint farm women with the newest research on food preservation, household efficiency and organizational skills. Courses in fancy needlework and cake-baking were sometimes featured but the home demonstration agents' work more frequently took a pragmatic bent. The seriousness with which the homemaker was regarded, and the new image of professionalism which she hoped to evoke is evidenced in the schedule of classes led by agent Lucy Blake in early 1938:

January	Home Lighting and Wiring
February	The Homemaker as Planner—Her Job and the Planning Center
March	Schedules and Deadlines
April	Citizenship
May	The Homemaker as Handyman
June	The Homemaker as Buyer[168]

In addition, the clubs raised money for neighborhood beautification and worked on community projects. The Floris Club annually canned fruits, vegetables and meats for a hot school lunch program and also donated their time to serve it. As in the more male-oriented Farmer's Clubs, the organizations fostered pride and identity among the farm women, as well as concretely improving conditions on the farm.[169]

The home demonstration agent also ran the county's 4-H clubs, branches of a nationwide organization founded in 1903. Four-H members dedicated their "heads, hearts, hands and health" to improving rural conditions; the club's goal was to give practical training to children whose life was likely to be spent on the farm. Boys were schooled in agronomy, mechanics and animal husbandry and pursued individual projects in these fields. Girls also worked both with groups and individually in such areas as "food for health," clothes remodeling and room improvement. Summer camps, rallies and fairs were also sponsored by 4-H Clubs. At one camp, held near Woodlawn, the week-long program included workshops in canning, basketry and utilization of dairy products, a sidetrip to see fireworks, and those perennial camp favorites of swimming, "weenie roasts" and stunt nights.[170]

The 4-H Girls Camp at Woodlawn. Fewer boys were able to attend such camps since their labor was needed on the farm. Photo in H. B. Derr Report, 1925, Virginiana Collection, Fairfax County Public Library.

The cream of the crop of Fairfax County girlhood on a float meant for the Piedmont Dairy Festival parade. Photo in H. B. Derr Report, 1930, Virginiana Collection, Fairfax County Public Library.

The 4-H Clubs never caught on in Fairfax County to the satisfaction of the home demonstration and agricultural agents. "The past year has not been a banner year for club work," wrote Derr in 1926. "Four clubs were organized ... but the agent is inclined to think that with a number of [members] this was done to be excused from a study period. The small amount of work done on their projects seems to substantiate this belief."[171] The clubs grew slowly partly because they overlapped the work of the Floris Vocational High School and the

Future Farmers of America Club, founded in 1927.[172] There is also some evidence that parents were reluctant to release their children from farm work to attend meetings.[173] For those who did join, the meetings seem to have been fun and profitable. "Not only do you learn from 4-H how to make a home and a living," an enthusiastic member commented in 1933, "but you also learn how to make life worthwhile. We now realize more than ever our duties, as the child of today will be the adult of tomorrow."[174]

As is evident in the above quotation, groups such as the 4-H or Future Farmers of America encouraged a child to identify with and improve on rural life. These organizations not only stressed occupational pride, but benefitted the community by training leaders who had early experience with professional farming techniques.

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Aside from the need to influence milk and produce prices, two chief concerns of the farmer's organizations were the establishment of electricity throughout the county and the improvement of the area's roads. The move towards rural electrification was a popular one across the nation, cited continually as the one item most useful to the farmer for advancing mechanization and of greatest importance in raising the farm family's standard of living. With electricity the family could use a radio, rid themselves of smoky kerosene lighting and enjoy the use of more efficient and cleaner stoves and refrigeration. The pragmatic desire for electrical equipment to operate milking machines and water pumps was intensified by advertisements such as one which appeared in the Herndon News-Observer claiming that electricity would make life "convenient and happy" as well as add fifteen to twenty years to the farm woman's life.[175]

Unfortunately, the route to establishing electrical facilities in the county was not an easy one. Some farmers used small gasoline engines to produce power, but these, the "contrariest little machines," were unreliable and frequently too weak to run milking equipment. Derr reported that 98% of the farmers desired this convenience but the expense seemed prohibitive. Commercial electric companies were reluctant to build lines through sparsely settled areas, and the farmers were forced to finance their own power plants. In 1933 the federal government began a program to subsidize local electrification programs and make them financially viable the only drawback being the undue amount of red tape to go through involved in qualifying. "The cost of building new lines was found to range from one thousand to two thousand dollars a mile," stated a discouraged Derr. "We were hardly prepared to be told that the farmers ... must organize a farm cooperative ... borrow the money from the Government and build their own lines to be self-liquidating in twenty years at 3% interest."[176] Difficult as the process seemed, the farmers had little choice if they hoped to electrify their neighborhoods. In this instance, an organization was not only an advantage for success in furthering the community's amenities, but a necessity.

That the Floris community was one of the earlier areas to enjoy the benefits of electrification was a result of great effort on the part of its citizens. A franchise for an electric power plant was granted to Herndon in 1915 but never materialized, and prior to 1924 the nearest generating operation was in Alexandria.[177] A group of farmers from Loudoun and Fairfax Counties, headed by A. S. Harrison, hired an engineer and travelled throughout the Dranesville District to encourage farmers to contribute time and money towards an electrical plant. Eventually they raised enough cash to form a stock company and a power line was built between Alexandria and Herndon, and subsequently on to Leesburg.[178] The initiative shown by the Floris farmers was rewarded by a distinct advantage over non-electrified communities. As late as 1940 over 35% of the county's farms were without electric power. A survey conducted in that year showed these non-electrified areas to be the least productive, and most depressed in morale and way of life.[179]

Water and sanitation systems were also difficult to establish despite concerted efforts by the home demonstration agents. Slightly over 10% of the county's farm homes contained "complete water systems" in 1932, though a larger percentage had partial plumbing facilities. Even in 1940, only 19% of the homes in the Dranesville area (and 40% in the county as a whole) boasted running water. Low as these figures seem, however, they were the highest in the state. Because good water was abundant in the area, farmers saw less need to campaign for extended water mains or sewer lines, in spite of their advantages for health and convenience. It was not until the population boom of World War II that really modern utilities were established in the county on a large scale.[180]

Of greater significance was the effort to better the county's road system. Southern roads in general—and Virginia's in particular—had been notorious since their inception for ruts, abrupt endings and, especially, mud. In 1918 there were only a few miles of surfaced road in Fairfax County, and any roadbuilding or repairs were made at the discretion of individual landowners.[181] The inconveniences caused by the poor roads became legendary. One woman remembered the roads being so rough that eggs would break on the way to market, and another, Emma Millard, stated that conditions were bad enough that "you would lose your boots when you went through so much mud and had to go back and retrieve the boots."[182] When automobiles became more common on the county's thoroughfares, they increased the problem of dust, deeply worn grooves and splashing muddy water. At the same time they pointed up the necessity for improvement. The early solid tire vehicles could barely operate in the thick red Virginia mud, thus greatly retarding transportation of produce and milk. "If

you had three drops of rain on the road, [the tires] started spinning and you couldn't go anywhere much without chains," recollected one early farmer. "Every truck carried a set of tire chains in the event it rained. In the summertime if it rained, you stuck right on the first little grade you hit." Not until 1922 did farmers attempt to haul their goods in trucks, and even then they "broke more axles than anything else."[183]

Farmers were acutely aware of the situation and some of their earliest united efforts were focused on road improvement. Records of Farmer's Club #1 show the topic to be the subject of discussion at several meetings a year, beginning in 1909. Initially they tried only to interest the county in undertaking repairs but as conditions worsened, the landowners began to appeal to county judges and the Board of Supervisors for bond issues to surface Little River Turnpike and other main roads. Resolutions, such as the following from a Herndon-based club, were regularly sent to government officials:

> Resolved: That we, Farmer's Club #4 ... favor petitioning the circuit judge of the county to order an election for the purpose of determining whether bonds shall be issued for the sum of $50,000 for the construction of a macadam road from Little River Turnpike at Chantilly to the Leesburg Pike at Dranesville, and as much more as possible.[184]

In some cases the clubs even worked together to build their own roads.[185] After ten years of pressure by farm groups, a bond issue was presented to the voters to pave the Leesburg Pike, the road from Chantilly to Herndon which ran through Floris, and a thoroughfare extending beyond Herndon to Mock Corner. The weight with which area residents viewed this issue is shown in a statement made by the Herndon Chamber of Commerce: "If this bond issue fails, it will be the greatest calamity that has befallen this community in many years." Happily the bond issue did pass and this, plus the statewide road program sponsored under the leadership of Governor Harry F. Byrd from 1926 to 1930, eliminated the bulk of the road problems. Only a few years later, in 1928, Fairfax was one of the foremost counties in Virginia in the area of transportation, with over 160 miles of surfaced roads.[186]

Larger Image

Improved and unimproved roads in the Herndon area, c. 1930. Note that the only surfaced roads ran between Herndon and Centreville. Map surveyed by the Office of the County Engineer, Fairfax County. Copy courtesy of Library of Congress Map Division.

Stuck in the mud on one of the county's roads, c. 1911. Photo, Virginia Department of Highways and Transportation.

[Pg 72] Surfaced roads were an obvious boon to marketing but they also had a number of unexpected positive effects. Conscientious and efficient as the farmers had tried to be, the county had worn a rather untidy appearance for several years. A traveler observed that "the fences are not as trigly mended or the buildings as trimly painted as in the [Shenandoah] Valley. A haystack is merely a pile of hay and not a neatly fashioned cock...."[187] County agent Derr also admitted that "in at least 75 percent of the farm homes there is little or no attention to the improvement of the home surroundings." The extension service worked valiantly to mitigate this problem by offering courses in landscaping and home maintenance, but to their surprise they found that the chief stimulus to home improvement was the repair of roads. Those areas which appeared most untidy were found on unimproved thoroughfares, which Derr maintained had a depressing effect on the farm family. "There is a direct correllation (sic)," he noted, "between the improvement of the roads and the painting and fixing up of things around the house."[188]

Another beneficial side effect of the surfaced highway network was the birth of the roadside stand for selling surplus produce, dairy and poultry products. There were some distinct advantages to the stands, as farmers could sell directly to the customer without the costly use of a middleman, and did not have to transport his goods to city consumers. A count made in 1937 found 210 roadside stands in the county.[189] Earlier, the Herndon News-Observer had reported the success of the new markets which lent themselves "to the disposal of second-grade products or fruits and vegetables too ripe for distant shipping [and had] grown to an unusual business ... for the farmers fortunate enough to live along popular highways." Business indeed seems to have been brisk; by 1926 the farmers were pocketing over $2,000 per month from the roadside markets.[190]

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New discoveries in technology, educational opportunities and a refurbished transportation network were naturally considered advances in their time; they could be loosely headed under the term "progress." But progress does not run along a perfectly straight path, rather it dips and weaves ignoring some people and places in its circuitous route. Consequently, many of the changes so eagerly embraced by the farmer of modest means were the very factors which eventually crowded out the family farm. The farmers of Fairfax County were for the most part unaware of their impending doom, being instead optimistic and relatively prosperous during the 1920s and 1930s. But the small, varied and preindustrial farm could not compete for long against the lure of city wages, highly mechanized and specialized [Pg 73] farms, and the inroads of the city into rural areas.

Mechanization most drastically altered life on the family farm. Work rhythms and patterns, previously geared to hand labor, were disrupted, and even the sounds on the farm changed. Older cows, for example, disliked the noise of the electric milking machines, and Wilson McNair wrote that

> horses were generally scared of traction engines with their hissing steam, etc. When the engine met a team it would stop and one man would lead the horses by the bridle past the engine.... At the railroad crossing in Herndon there was a bell that rung when a train was coming. Our pony, if the bell was ringing when we crossed the track coming home would break into a dead run. You couldn't hold her.[191]

To the interim farmer, caught between completely automated equipment and the tradition of hand labor, the change in work habits, knowledge and goals could be more than vaguely disquieting.

As mechanization increased, many began to speak of agriculture in industrial terms, believing that "factorizing" the farm would solve its problems. This meant dispensing with any unnecessary tasks, such as raising sheep or making soap, and as much as possible replacing manpower with machinery. Technical terminology started to creep into farm talk. C. T. Rice referred to his dairy as "a milk producing plant,"[192] ancient terms such as "culling" became "selective breeding," and even the animals were referred to as machines, which if "poorly constructed must be ... discarded by the good breeder."[193] To independent-minded farmers, who, as Sinclair Lewis had observed, jealously guarded the ability to escape the mill and turmoil of the city, this industrialization seemed the ultimate compromise. The findings of the Commission to study the Condition of the Farmers of Virginia (1930) show the rural values of a most fundamental character to be those most prized by the agriculturalist:

> Among these are: a) The advantages of the country for bringing up a family ... a greater sharing of responsibilities, a closer knit, more stable family life.... b) The satisfactions ... of contacts with forces of nature, of caring for plants and animals, and of seeing them grow.... c) Greater freedom from various types of restraints, including somewhat greater control over time and freedom of personal action; also less intense struggle to keep up with or ahead of others.... d) somewhat greater freedom from illness, together with a better prospect of attaining old age. e) Greater security against unemployment as well as less prospect of falling into absolute want.[194]

Yet in the post-World War I period the farmer had increasingly to commercialize and mechanize his business to remain solvent and to "citify" his life, destroying in numerous instances the standards he held dear.

"I used to 'farm' some and made money at it; now I'm 'engaged in the pursuit of agriculture' and can't make ends meet," commented one U. S. Secretary of Agriculture, echoing the sentiments of many small landowners.[195] The new farm mechanization was, in many cases, not particularly well adapted to the family farm in this period. Gasoline-powered tractors, harvesters and other equipment worked most economically on the large, level acres of midwestern farms, and the east coast farmer with modest landholdings could not hope to compete on the market with the streamlined efficiency of western farms. Mechanized farming was also capital intensive. Besides the initial cost of equipment there were expenses for maintenance and fuel. Whereas the farmer had been able to raise feed for horses or mules inexpensively, he could not grow gasoline.

Farmers usually had to borrow money to purchase equipment and sometimes they over-indulged. "I know one or two that did," said Joseph Beard.

> When you have several thousand dollars invested in machinery, and you only use it three, five, ten, fifteen days a year, the rest of the time it's sitting idle ... it would have been ... better if they had hired their work done from someone else rather than put that much into it.[196]

More cash was needed to buy manufactured goods as the farm became less self-supporting, but prices for raw materials remained low during the agricultural slump of the 1920s and 1930s. "Agriculture was much less distressed when the farm was a self-supporting home," reflected the Washington Star:

> But when factories began producing commodities in quantity the farmer could buy them easier than he could make them at home.
>
> At first glance this looks like an admirable situation. But the hitch arose when the farmer found himself unable to maintain a fair basis of exchange.[197]

The result was that many farms of long-standing ownership had to be mortgaged. In the space of one year (between 1924 and 1925) county mortgages rose a dramatic 30% and by 1940 they had risen another 20%.[198] Worse yet, a small but significant number of farmers and farm laborers were beginning to leave the countryside altogether to work in the city.

The Kidwell farm and Floris vicinity shown in an aerial photograph taken in 1937. Photo, National Archives and Records Service.

The county's improved transportation system was partially responsible for this. Access to markets had been facilitated by surfaced roads but an easy avenue to city jobs was also opened. Short and regular hours, higher pay and city amenities were strong attractions to the farmer who had had to work "from daybreak to backbreak" for a scanty living.[199] In recognition of this problem, Derr wrote plaintively in his annual report of 1925:

> The worst feature is the fact that our small farmers in the main have such a hard time to get along that many of them are actually training their children along more lucrative lines, and occupations other than farming. Many of these farmers have sold their farms or abandoned their leases and moved into the cities and are earning more money per day than they made per week in the country. Another important factor in this exodus from the farm is the fact that so many of our farm boys with good health and strength, and not afraid of hard work are making good in the city.[200]

Continuing on, Derr quoted one discouraged farmer: "One of my daughters is making 22 dollars a week, and my wife is talking of getting a job too. My wife can earn more in the city than I am getting so I guess I will take care of the house and let them go to work."[201]

Ironically, additions such as electrification, intended to improve the rural standard of living, seem to have done little to check the migration. USDA and United Nations studies show that the very amenities which should have made life in the country more attractive often resulted in a large flow of the population towards urban areas, a trend which continues today in developing countries. Even increased education, which had as its goal professional quality in agricultural training, sometimes simply broadened the farmer to possibilities outside his own realm. Sociologists and agriculturalists have found these repercussions puzzling and have not discovered clear-cut reasons for them. Perhaps with country and city life being ever homogenized by the use of radios, automobiles, consumer goods and the interflow of people, the step of leaving the farm to try city life seemed less foreign and formidable. In Fairfax County the proximity of Washington and Alexandria made it especially tempting.[202]

It was not only farm owners who left home for city jobs, but the farm laborers. The effect of this exodus was devastating to the county's small farmer. Initially the scarcity of help meant cutting back additional farm activities, the products of which were not earmarked for the market. Rebecca Middleton remembered, for instance, that farmers stopped raising their own hogs chiefly because of the difficulty of hiring laborers to help with butchering.[203] As labor shortages grew, the available help raised their prices significantly, eventually outpricing themselves for most farmers. As Joseph Beard observed, this trend did not affect Fairfax County in a really dramatic way until after World War II, "by virtue of the fact that most farmers raised anywhere from two to five children. Most every farmer's hired hand raised from two to five children. Now there just wasn't room on this farm to employ ten to twelve children." With such large families the drain to Washington did not so clearly affect the farms at the outset.[204] Nevertheless, the trend retains its significance, for the high cost of labor, which contributed greatly to the demise of the self-supporting farm, had its roots in the optimistic improvement of transportation systems in the second and third decades of the

century.[205]

The improved roads carried yet another liability: an increase in land value and the consequent rise in taxation. In 1923 the average acre in the county was worth $5 to $10; it had more than doubled in value by the end of that decade.[206] Taxes rose accordingly. The editors of the Fairfax Herald complained in 1926 that in addition to the cost of living which had risen 78% from 1913, they paid federal taxes which were 200% over the pre-World War I figure.[207] The farmer also carried the burden of cost for his much-desired roads. In addition to bond issues, there was a Virginia state gasoline tax which fell heavily on the farmer with his gas-driven machinery and need to haul produce to market.[208] Taxation, like labor, machinery and manufactured goods, called for additional cash, which was more and more difficult for the family farmer to raise. "There's only one thing that has driven the dairy industry out of Fairfax County, and that's taxes," concluded Holden Harrison. "The land was suitable, the location was suitable, but who's going to run a dairy on $10,000 an acre land?"[209]

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An editorial in the Fairfax Herald for September 6, 1935, reflects well the changes seen on farms of the depression era.

> Housewives throughout the county are becoming more and more incensed over the steadily rising prices of foodstuffs, particularly meats.... In many places housewives are actually boycotting merchants who attempt to sell meat at the present price level. The blame for the present rise in prices lies directly at the door of the Raw Dealers and Brain Trusters. These smart young gentlemen had a theory and in pursuance of that theory they slaughtered a great number of hogs, in order to keep prices at an unnaturally high level. They succeeded only too well.[210]

That the farm family was no longer raising its own meat, that they had lost a good deal of control over the quality and availability of their daily necessities, that housewives viewed themselves as important and cohesive enough to organize a boycott, that farm commodities were no longer strictly under the regulation of the farmer, and that the government's interference was beginning to be questioned and resented were signs of radical change in rural economic and social structure. The farmer was no longer so isolated, nor so overtaxed with sheer physical labor. The price he paid for these advantages was diminishing control over a way of life which had begun to slip away.

PART III—NOTES

Professionalization and an Increased Standard of Living

[157] Thomas A. Bailey, The American Pageant (Boston, D. C. Heath, 1966), 416.

[158] United States Congressional Record, 1914, 1916, 1917.

[159] Beard/Pryor, February 27, 1979.

[160] Kolb and Brunner, A Study of Rural Society, 424.

[161] Harrison/Pryor, February 5, 1979; McNair, "What I Remember" and "Fred Curtice, Fairfax Dairy Farmer," Washington Post, October 24, 1978.

[162] "Poultry School at Fairfax," February 16, 1933; and "Two Day Poultry School a Success," March 2, 1933, both in Herndon News-Observer.

[163] Advertisement in Herndon News-Observer, June 4, 1925.

[164] Beard/Netherton/Reed, November, 1974.

[165] Derr Report, 1925, 14; and 1937 Report.

[166] Minutes of Meetings, Farmer's Club #1, Herndon, Virginia, October 1, 1909 to January 13, 1935, copy courtesy of Rebecca Middleton.

[167] "Dairymen to Meet," Fairfax Herald, August 30, 1935; "Floris Producers Active," Herndon News-Observer, January 22, 1925; Derr Report, 1927; for an outstanding example of a contract such as the one described, see contract between Burden S. Athey and Windsor Lodge Farm, Huntley, Virginia, May 31, 1933, in possession of Mrs. Mary Scott.

[168] Lucy Blake Report, 1938, 7.

[169] See all of the annual reports of home demonstration agents, especially Sarah E. Thomas Reports, 1933 and 1934; and Lucy Steptoe Report, 1936.

[170] For 4-H Club activity, see annual reports of home demonstration agents; and "The Short Course," Fairfax Herald, July 16, 1926.

[171] Derr Report, 1926.

[172] "Floris 'Aggies' Organize," Herndon News-Observer, January 13, 1926 (sic, 1927); and Ellmore/Middleton/Pryor, March 8, 1979.

[173] "Influence of Club Members," Herndon News-Observer.

[174] Muriel Wheeler, 4-H Record Book, Herndon Club, 1933, in 4-H Record File, in Virginiana.

[175] 15th Census of the United States, Agricultural Summary, 1930; Kolb and Brunner, A Study of Rural Society, 387; and advertisement in Herndon News-Observer, March 26, 1925.

[176] Derr Report, 1935, 13; and Harrison/Pryor, February 5, 1979.

[177] Harrison/Pryor, February 5, 1979; and Rita Shug, "The Town of Herndon," unpublished monograph, George Mason University, May, 1973, 8.

[178] Harrison/Pryor, February 5, 1979.

[179] VPI, Housing, 26.

[180] Ibid., 14 and 26; "Farm Home Water Supply for Fairfax County," Herndon News-Observer, June 23, 1932; and Netherton, et al., Fairfax County, 519.

[181] Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, Historic Progressive Fairfax County in Old Virginia (Alexandria, 1928), 35; Harrison/Pryor, February 5, 1979.

[182] Greear/Netherton, March 23, 1978; and interview with Emma Millard, by Dana Gumb, November 15, 1972.

[183] Beard/Harrison/Pryor, March 6, 1979.

[184] Minutes of Farmer's Club #1; and Resolution of Farmer's Club #14, n.d., copy found in Minutes of Farmer's Club #1.

[185] Derr Report, 1925, 14.

[186] Publicity Committee of Herndon Chamber of Commerce, "Facts Regarding Bond Issue Every Voter Should Know," 1924, copy courtesy of Holden Harrison; Robert T. Hawkes, Jr., "The Emergence of a Leader: Harry Flood Byrd, Governor of Virginia, 1926-1930," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, LXXXII, July 1, 1974, 281; Historic Progressive Fairfax County, 35.

[187] Agnes Rothery, Virginia: The New Dominion (New York, 1940), 124-25.

[188] Derr Report, 1925.

[189] Lucy Blake Report, 1937, 7.

[190] "Improved Highways are Big Aid to the Farmer," Herndon News-Observer, December 30, 1926.

[191] McNair, "What I Remember."

[192] "A Unique Fairfax County Farm."

[193] "Cows Like Machines," Herndon News-Observer, April 28, 1932.

[194] Report of the Commission to Study the Condition of the Farmers of Virginia to the General Assembly of Virginia (Richmond, 1930), 35; and Lord, Men of Earth, 147.

[195] Jere Rusk quoted in Joseph Schafer, The Social History of American Agriculture (New York, 1936), 159. This book also contains an excellent summary of the problems mechanization produced for the small farmer.

[196] Beard/Harrison/Pryor, March 6, 1979.

[197] "The Way Out for the Farmer," Washington Star, June 19, 1932, section 7, 3.

[198] Nickell and Randolph, An Economic and Social Survey of Fairfax County, 53; and Agricultural Censes, 1925 and 1940. The figures are 21.9% mortgaged in 1924, 28.4% in 1925 and 30.25% in 1940.

[199] J. Middleton/Netherton, February 24, 1978.

[200] Derr Report, 1925, 8.

[201] Derr Report, 1921, 1.

[202] National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, Proceedings of Long Range Study Committee I-III, November 1967-March 1968, (Washington, D.C., 1969); and Rural Electric Fact Book (Washington, D.C., 1960).

[203] Ellmore/Middleton/Pryor, March 8, 1979.

[204] Beard/Netherton/Reed, November, 1974.

[205] See Ibid., Derr Reports, 1926 and 1928; and Schaefer, The Social History of American

Agriculture, 162.

[206] Virginia Agricultural Advisory Council, A Five Year Program for Development of Virginia Agriculture (Richmond, 1923), 17; and Fairfax County Land Record Books, 1930-1931, in Virginiana.

[207] "Tax Rate," editorial in Fairfax Herald, April 23, 1926.

[208] Hawkes, "Harry Flood Byrd," 281.

[209] Beard/Harrison/Pryor, March 6, 1979.

[210] Editorial in Fairfax Herald, September 6, 1935.

PART IV

The New Deal

One of the most important changes to influence farming in the years between the two world wars was the new interest the government took in agriculture and its problems. For many years the nation had considered agriculture to be not just the fundamental, but the ideal way of life. It was with a start, therefore, that people began to realize, soon after the turn of the century, that rural population was in fact decreasing, and that farm life fell short of the rosy dream of pastoral independence so cherished by Americans. A survey of farm conditions undertaken during the administration of President Theodore Roosevelt revealed that many rural areas lacked the most basic amenities offered in cities and that low farm prices retarded the agriculturist's efforts to better his condition. Farm conditions improved during the World War I years when the cries of "Feed the World" expanded markets and expectations. Inevitably, though, this increased agricultural production became a liability, for when the European and domestic markets shrunk at the close of the war farm prices fell drastically. Many farmers, hoping to offset the low prices with higher yields, took advantage of the new technology to produce bumper crops; the result was an additional surplus and even lower prices. Throughout the 1920s, the farm situation remained critical.[211]

The stock market crash of 1929 marked an extension and exacerbation of the grim farm conditions rather than a sudden decline. It rocked the farmer's market, of course, by further decreasing the amount of raw products being sold; unemployed workers bought less of everything, and often kept gardens themselves. More crucial than the crash of 1929 to the farmer's well-being in northern Virginia were two severe droughts, one in the late 1920s and the other in 1931. The latter was particularly harsh. Wheat planted in October did not come up until April, and one woman recalled that the cherry trees failed to blossom until the late fall.[212] Thousands of tons of hay and grain feeds had to be brought in from other parts of the country to feed the livestock, at enormous cost to the farmers. The combination of these unfortunate elements meant more mortgaged farms and tighter belts for the county's farmers.[213]

Relief came in the form of the Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA) which went into effect in the spring of 1933. One of the earliest of Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal policies, it offered a radically new approach to farm recovery. Whereas earlier governmental policies had relied on tariffs or half-hearted attempts to buy up surpluses to protect farm profits, the AAA promoted a scheme of "artificial scarcity." This was accomplished by price supports and through elimination of price-depressing surpluses by paying the growers to cut down their crop acreage. Payments were financed by taxing food processors, such as millers, who in turn shifted the burden to the consumer.[214]

Many of the AAA provisions were aimed at the large producers of the lower south and midwest, but they also had their effect in areas of smaller farms such as Fairfax County. Few county citizens were in absolute want during the Depression, in part because the effective work of the Maryland and Virginia Milk Producers Association insured steady milk prices. Yet these and later policies were embraced as being the only available hope for turning around the farm situation. "They were distressed enough so that they were willing to cooperate in a considerable degree with anything that would help them out."[215]

Implementing the programs created some initial problems. A system of acreage allotment had to be devised for each farmer, and this involved setting up an intricate bureaucracy which included a county committee (made up of three local farmers), new responsibilities for the county agent, and close association with representatives of the new federal programs. Confusion existed about the allowances made in the act for home consumption and the process by which allotments were decided. To arrive at the allowances for wheat, for example, the farmer had to complete two forms, on which it was necessary to compute his average yield for a three-year period (1930-1932) then adjust it to relate to a five-year

nationwide average; this figure, reduced by 15 to 20 percent was his allowed production. The ultimate decision was made by the members of the county committee who had been elected by the taxpayers. "I've often wondered whether our judgment was accurate enough to really be used, but it was used," commented Holden Harrison who sat on the board.[216] The AAA county committee sought to be equitable in its determinations, but as in any process which tries to fit a series of requirements to individual cases, the decisions sometimes seemed arbitrary or unfair. Derr cited a case resulting from the Potato Act (which required a farmer to pay a penalty for yields exceeding his allotment) in which an older couple had "had poor luck with their potatoes for the base years; [they] almost wept when they learned that their future lease would be only forty bushels and they would have to pay a tax on what they sold over that amount."[217] Snags also occurred in the administration of the farm loan program, designed by the government to aid farmers in the purchase of seed and fertilizer. Not only were elaborate accounts of mortgage, store and personal debts, unpaid taxes and notes required (sometimes for a loan of $25.00), but repayment of the loan was set for dates such as July 1, when the crops were not yet harvested and ready cash was scarce. As a result, much of the money designated for aid to Fairfax County was never applied for.[218] To the farmer, accustomed to deciding for himself what and when he would plant, and unfamiliar with the niceties of bureaucratic finagling, the government sometimes seemed more geared to interference than assistance.

In reality, the programs affected Fairfax County less than other parts of northern Virginia. Statistics from the Virginia Department of Agriculture and the USDA show that only 71 wheat adjustment contracts were taken out in Fairfax County in 1935, compared to 233 for Fauquier County and 351 for Loudoun County. As each of these neighboring counties contained over 2,000 farms, these are small figures indeed.[219]

The federal government set few limits on milk or poultry production, the county's two main economic sources, so the benefits of the AAA programs were often indirect. The principal effect was to force farmers to set aside about 15% of their land from wheat or corn production. Because Fairfax County farmers marketed little of their grain production, the outcome was that they received a bounty for planting another crop on this acreage, or allowing it to lie fallow and be fertilized. The policy resulted in a strong soil improvement program in the county, which was additionally aided by the cooperative buying power of the county committee. This meant, for instance, that purchases of lime needed to improve Fairfax County's acidic soil could be had for $3.50 a ton, the cost at the quarry, plus handling charges.[220]

Of even greater benefit to Fairfax County farmers was the moratorium on mortgage and even interest payments during the Depression's most severe period. Individual banks, such as the National Bank of Leesburg, which held many farm mortgages, also voluntarily followed the government's policy of leniency on collection of farm debts. This relieved much of the stress on the area's producers, allowing them to retain their land and, in some cases, even improve their holdings.[221]

The Depression years saw the advent of a radical new policy of government influence in farm affairs. Where laissez-faire had been the federal rule (and the farmers' desire), a control was now exercised over production, marketing and farm improvement. Though the farmer might believe this mitigated his independence and tied his judgment to that of an impersonal bureaucracy, he was forced to accept Uncle Sam's interference. The role of the government in designing agricultural policy proved to be a lasting one, still felt by the farmer of the 1970s.

PART IV—NOTES

The New Deal

[211] Barger and Lansburg, American Agriculture, 1899-1949, 72-112.

[212] Beard/Harrison/Pryor, March 6, 1979; Rogers/Corbat, et al., June 12, 1970.

[213] Beard/Harrison/Pryor, March 6, 1979.

[214] Bailey, The American Pageant, 842-43.

[215] Rogers, Corbat, et al., June 12, 1970; Ellmore/Middleton/Pryor, March 8, 1979; Joseph Beard quoted in Beard/Harrison/Pryor, March 6, 1979.

[216] "Wheat Production Control Plan," Herndon News-Observer, July 27, 1933; "Wheat Allotment Based on Averages," Ibid., August 17, 1933; Beard/Harrison/Pryor, March 6, 1979.

[217] Derr Report, 1936, 4. The Potato Act, which would in fact have been disasterous for small farmers, was actually before any crop was harvested. However, its effect was still to create some hostility to government programs among farmers.

[218] Derr Reports, 1930, 1931, 1934.

[219] Virginia Farm Statistics (Richmond, 1926, 1930, 1936).

[220] Beard/Harrison/Pryor, March 6, 1979.

[221] Ibid.

PART V

Community

Beyond the family, with its special working relationship, the neighborhood community was the chief social unit for the farmer. It made available services the family could not provide for itself and added sociability and security to the farmer's life. It also had some influence on the tenor of his work because a dynamic community spirit prompts individual enterprise. The Floris neighborhood on which this study is focused was such a vigorous community. Fairfax County was filled with similar crossroads which gave an identity to each farming area and, with post office, blacksmith and general store, fulfilled the farmer's simple requirements. Floris seems to have shown an outstandingly progressive impulse, however, and a social interaction which made it an area of particular cohesiveness and community longevity.[222]

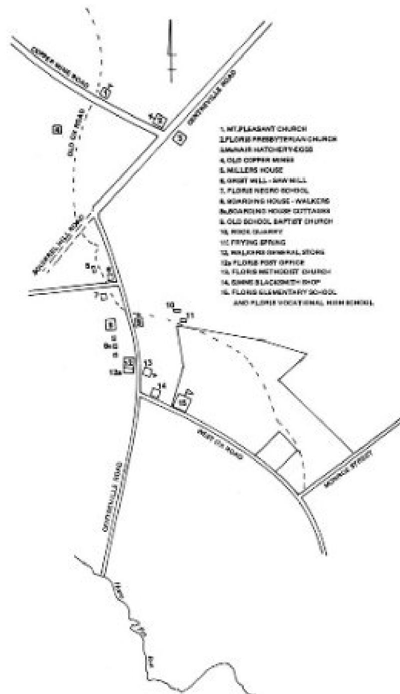
The root of community interaction is neighborliness—an interest in and concern for other people. Villages contain the same variety of human relations and personality as large cities, with the advantage that the smaller number of people are more easily known and understood. There could be irritating aspects to this (privacy was not always available in abundance) but also a warm familiarity. The people of Floris were so well acquainted that each man's favorite kind of pie was community knowledge.[223] Lottie Schneider, who grew up near Herndon, gave a charming description of village life in her book, Memoirs of Herndon, Virginia:

> Everyone was interested in his neighbor. We shared our joys and sorrows, were sympathetic to each other. When we went down the street we knew everybody and would stop to greet each other. There was a village atmosphere of friendliness and kindness. How often I pause over every memory and savor again the charm of the friendly neighbors, the school and church relationships, the simple everyday happenings which like a weaver's shuttle steadily wove the lights and shadows into the tapestry of life.[224]

Neighborliness went beyond social interaction; it was also the basis for mutual aid and cooperation. Work on hauling projects, barn raisings and emergency assistance was readily available. "If somebody got sick and couldn't milk his cows, why the neighbors would go over and help him," related Joseph Beard.

> I remember the neighbor next door to me had the flu, and everybody thought he was going to die and the snow was about twenty inches deep.... There was a wife left there with three ... small children, not of school age. My father not only did our work, but he went over and did their work too.[225]

Mutual assistance, concern and hospitality were the bedrock of community relations.



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A map of the Floris community, c. 1930, drawn from memory by Joseph Beard.

Rapid communications made information on everyone's activities neighborhood knowledge. County agent Derr noted that it was "remarkable how rapidly news travels, whether good or bad," and that this was in fact an asset to his work.[226] The postal agent and telephone operator were two other information catalysts. The postmaster, Thomas Walker, was notorious for reading the postcards which passed his way, and often called the recipients to inform them of impending visits by relatives, or tidings of birth or death.[227] Telephone lines were put up in 1916, "strung on trees, just old poles up and down the road"[228] and this greatly speeded channels of gossip and necessary information. The telephone operator worked from her own bedroom and was the source for all the latest news. "If you didn't know what was going on in the neighborhood, all you had to do was ask the telephone operator," one Floris resident observed. "She knew everything."[229] In a more pragmatic sense the operator was depended upon for help during emergencies. The fear of isolation, a chief liability of rural areas, was much reduced by the improved roads and telecommunications of the first decade of the 20th century.

The telephone operator was particularly helpful in locating rural doctors when they were needed in an emergency. Like the veterinarians, doctors were not relied on for minor illnesses but were called on in extreme cases. Jack Day and William Robey were among the doctors who travelled by horse and buggy (and later in early model Fords) to make housecalls. They were loved and accepted by the community: "We thought of a family doctor about like we did our minister."[230] Fees were usually $1.00 for a housecall though farmers would sometimes offer a bushel of corn or a chicken in payment for their treatment.[231]

The doctors contributed a great deal to the well-being of the community. Rural families, however, were resourceful in finding home remedies for many ailments. Some of these were long-respected herbal preparations, but others were used more because of tradition than effectiveness. Frances Simpson described the special folk medicines of her family near Herndon:

> When an epidemic was reported in the village during the winter, she prepared the dreadful smelling asafetida bags which she tied about our necks under our dresses. They were supposed to ward off diseases.
>
> When my sisters and I had colds, mutton tallow plasters were put on our chests and fastened to our underwear. These sticky, clammy plasters were worn until all signs of cold had disappeared.
>
> Sulpher and molasses by the spoonful were given in the spring 'to help clear out our systems....' Calomel was an often used remedy for the liver until the doctor forbade its use.
>
> My mother had a bad case of erysipelas and her leg was in a fearful state. Nothing seemed to help it. One night she dreamed my sister Dora, who had recently died, came to her, told her to make poultices of cabbage leaves wrung in hot water and apply them to her leg. She followed instructions and in due season her leg was healed.[232]

G. Ray Harrison, c. 1925. Photo courtesy of Ray Harrison.

The Harrison family's mule team on a shopping trip to Herndon about 1914. A young Ray Harrison is riding in the wagon. The stores in Herndon provided basic supplies and services for the Floris community. Photo courtesy of Ray Harrison.

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The Floris community was an early outgrowth of a mining settlement near Frying Pan Run. Robert Carter, of Nomini Hall in Westmoreland County, owned the land which he believed contained rich copper ore. Though roads were built and several mining attempts made, the mineral proved to be of poor quality. The access offered by roads built by the miners (for example, West Ox Road on which Frying Pan Farm is located) opened the area to agriculture. The first permanent community was formed by a group of Baptists, who successfully petitioned Carter for permission to build a church on his property. One of their early churches, a simple, frame structure built in 1791, still stands near the center of the community.[233]

The origins of the area's unusual name are obscure—some believe either Indians or early miners who camped in the vicinity mislaid a frying pan and named the creek after their loss. Others feel that the circular shape of a round pool into which the run flows influenced its appellation. Until 1879 the community at the crossroads of the West Ox and Centreville Roads was also called Frying Pan, at which time it was thought too undignified a name. It was rechristened Floris, according to one source, after the prettiest girl in the neighborhood. Another story relates that summer boarders near Frying Pan Post Office thought such a lowly name would cause ridicule among their city friends. They called the

town Floris, which means "flower" in Latin, to tone up the image of their warm weather "resort." By the time of the name change, the village had expanded somewhat from an 1801 description of "four log huts and a Meeting House,"[234] but it retained its small personal character. In the 1920s and 1930s it consisted of a blacksmith shop, general store and post office, a boarding house, three churches and two schools, as well as the surrounding farms.

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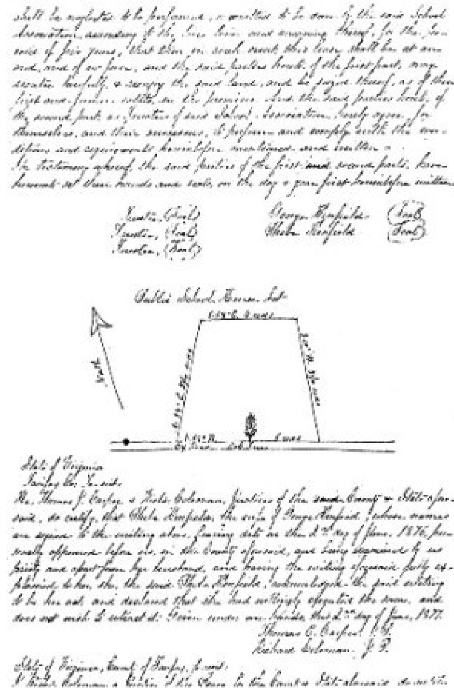
The focal point of the Floris community during this period, and the factor which gave it a countywide importance, was the Floris Vocational High School. The school was the result of the Smith-Hughes Act, passed in 1917 to organize agriculture and home economics courses on the secondary level of education. H. B. Derr tried unsuccessfully for two years to establish such a course in Fairfax County but met with little support from the members of the school board, who favored traditional academics. It was finally through the farmer's clubs and community leagues (forerunners of the PTA), especially those in the Floris area, that Derr was able to convince the county of the program's potential. By 1919 farmers and merchants had donated some $17,000 to start construction of a building, and in honor of the special efforts of agriculturalists in Floris, it was decided to locate the school there.[235]



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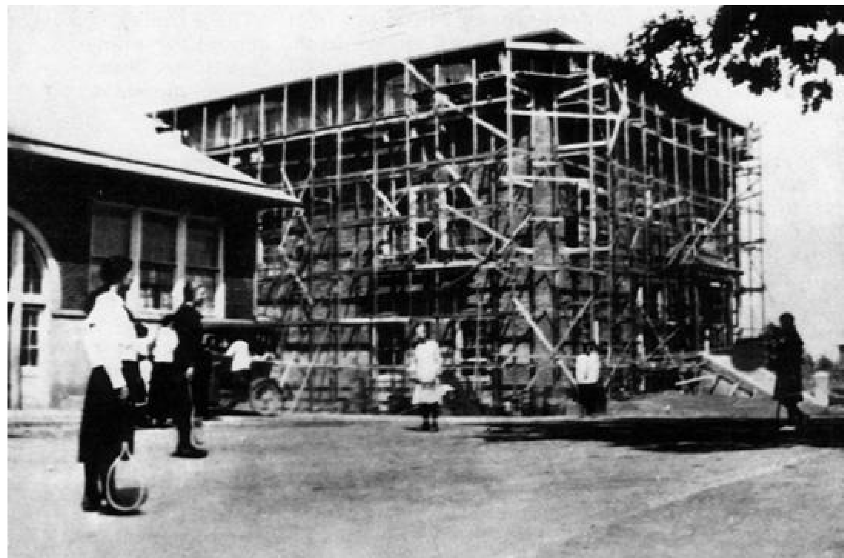
A sketch of the plot of land originally deeded to the school board in 1876 by George Kenfield for a Floris school. Fairfax County Deedbook H-5, p. 617.

Mr. Jack Walker, the engineer in charge of the construction of the Floris School 1920. Copy of photo in Virginiana Collection, Fairfax County Public Library.



Floris Vocational High School under construction, c. 1920. Note the tennis game being played in the front of the old building. Copy of photo in Virginiana Collection, Fairfax County Public Library.

The Floris Vocational High School was the third to be built in Virginia.[236] It was extended from an existing, two-year high school, founded in 1911, but the property on which it was built had actually been deeded to the school board over forty years earlier. In 1876 George Kenfield deeded about six acres of land to the Frying Pan School Association and the property remained in school use through several owner changes.[237] One- and two-room schools stood on the land until 1911 when a larger building was completed.[238]

The citizens of Floris had worked together to raise money for the vocational school; they also contributed their skills and time to its construction. Under the direction of two (often dissenting) contractors, a Mr. Sheffield and Jack Walker, pupils and parents helped to raise the three-story brick structure, and later to build a smaller agricultural shop a short distance from the main schoolhouse. The school was open to the entire county but the immediate community continued to feel a special interest in it. The Floris Home Demonstration Club served hot lunches in the school for many years and around 1924 they sponsored the hiring of a music teacher at their own expense until the county and state finally gave support to the teacher.[239]

Floris Vocational High School was an immediate success. In 1924 it had 150 pupils, evenly divided between primary and secondary grades, and hailing chiefly from the Herndon area. Students walked or rode horseback to reach their classes; some, such as Virginia Presgraves Harrison from Loudoun County, boarded with local families.[240] The high school offered the standard curriculum courses of English, American and European history, algebra, geography, physics and chemistry. Courses in higher mathematics (plane geometry and trigonometry) were optional as were English history and foreign languages. The school differed from the county's other secondary institutions in the varied agriculturally oriented courses it taught. Boys learned the principles of agronomy, animal husbandry, soil control and veterinary science, and were expected to put the theoretical knowledge into practice with test animals and acreage on their home farms. They also sharpened their skills in agricultural shop courses. Under the guidance of Ford Lucas and, later, Harvey D. Seale, they were taught carpentry, motor repair, blacksmithing, indeed, everything from building chicken coops to "how to put a roof on a barn and keep it from leaking."[241] Classes for the girls also stressed the relationship between theory and practice. The rudiments of nutrition, food preparation, fabric and clothing construction, were carried over into "Hominy Hall," a house owned by William Ellmore, which housed the kitchen and serving areas for domestic science courses. The girls spent several hours a week in this building, gaining proficiency in the work which would probably occupy most of their lives. Like the majority of the students' homes, Hominy Hall had no running water, and baking was done on a large, wood-burning stove.[242] The classes were taught by, among others, May Calhoun and Louisa Glassal. Elizabeth Ellmore, principal of Floris Vocational High School in 1929-1930, noted that because of the school's personal nature the teachers had a fair amount of leeway in the character and depth of the courses they taught—as much, in fact, as their students would allow them.[243] One early teacher found the pupils very apt indeed, with abilities equal to those of the town children she had previously taught. Stated Lulah Ferguson:

> So far as the interest was concerned you'd find that maybe those children in Falls Church were a little more interested in affairs in general, a little better informed generally, than these were, but so far as their attitude towards studying or wanting to know, you wouldn't find any difference. These country children were really just as eager or maybe more so than some of the small town....[244]

The championship girl's basketball team of Floris Vocational High School, 1924-1925.

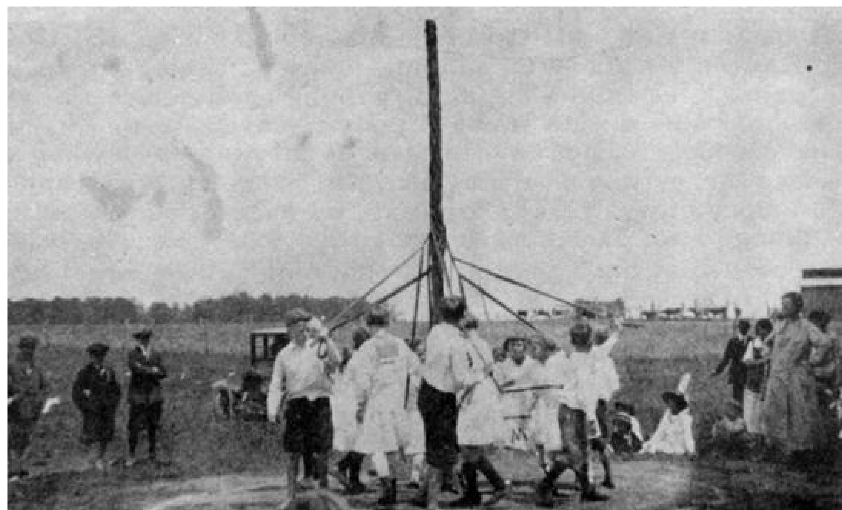
The "Floris Follies," a minstrel presented at the Floris school in March, 1939. Such activities were usually staged to benefit a community activity. Photo courtesy of Louise McNair Ryder.

The students of Floris Vocational High School, 1924. Identified in July, 1970, as follows: Top row left to right: Jay Leith, Warren Rosenburger, Jessie Torreyson, George T. McWhorter, III, Marie Poland Bonde, Stella Sibley Jones, Eunice Milam Middleton (teacher), Audrey Barton, Kelsie Hornbaker; Second row: Irving McNair, Louise Melcher Ritter, Kate Patton Kincheloe, Sarah Patton Middleton, Rebecca Middleton, Bradley Shear, Gilbert Presgrave; Third row: Amy Rogers Nixon, Elsie Andrews Brown, Georgeanna Brogden Harrison, Camilla Carson Harnsburger, Kneeland Leith, Irene Rogers Deuterman, Welby Nalls, Wade Bennett; Fourth row: Frances Leith Greenwade, Lena Andrews, Gladys Robey Embrey, Emma Ellmore, Gem Thompson, Alan Allison Fleming, Howard Armfield, George Harrison, Allan Shear, Edgar Reeves; Fifth row: Sue Creel, Grafton Utterback, Richard Lee, John Keyes; Sixth row: William McWhorter, Martha Smith, Harriet Moulthrop Cheek, Erline Bready, Oliver Keyes, Withers Murphy, Charles Austin, John Hessick, Joseph Beard; Seventh row: Ruth Higdon, Rosalie Smith, Eleanor Bowers Matthews, Mary Smith Douglas, Daniel Nalls, Ralph Armfield, Turner

Hornbaker, Frank Kidwell, Carroll Murphy; Eighth row: Bessie Beard Garrett, Ruby Hyatt, Gladys Utterback, Elma Middleton Nalls, Ned Sutphin; Ninth row: Katherine Hummer, Bernice West, Lillian Adrian Munday, Ruby Ambler Bocato, Elizabeth Powell Austin, Mae Blevins, Virginia Presgrave Harrison, Dora Cox Robey, Kathlene Adrian Presgrave. Photo courtesy of Emma Ellmore.

Studious or not, the Floris pupils also had their share of fun at school. Richard Peck recalled playing several pranks during school hours, such as catching copperhead snakes and letting them loose in the classroom, or mixing together soil samples painstakingly collected for County agent Derr. Much to the mischievous students' hilarity, a puzzled Derr remarked, "I had no idea the soil was so uniform out here."[245] Though afternoon farmwork occupied most of the pupils' spare time, some extra-curricular activities were also offered. Plays were given annually by the senior class, an example being the 1925 production of "Home Times" billed as "very attractive" by the Herndon News-Observer.[246] The Floris Vocational High School also boasted highly competitive athletic teams, especially in basketball and track. For a school of its size, it showed unusual competence and enthusiasm, winning both boys' and girls' county basketball championships several years running. In 1928 their track team competed with 800 high schools in the state, finishing fifth overall and claiming two of the seven records which were broken.[247] In this, as in the academic standing of the vocational school, the community's dynamism and interest influenced its high degree of excellence.

Graduation exercises were also community events. The students worked for weeks planning a memorable evening for proud parents, friends and relations. The 1927 graduation from Floris Vocational High School featured an invocation by Reverend Glenn Cooper of the Floris Methodist Church, valedictory and salutatory addresses given by Virginia Presgraves and Joseph Beard, respectively, and a talk on the promising future for farmers by Professor Walter Newman of VPI which the local paper described as "worthy of the attention of any farming community in our state." These formalities were followed by musical selections, including a duet by Gilbert Presgraves and Joseph Beard, who sang the school song, "Our Old High." Next came the presentation of diplomas "in a most pleasing fashion." Wrote the Herndon News-Observer: "Each student was complimented on his success while his classmates were roused to great hilarity by some well-directed humor."[248]



A maypole dance held at the Floris Elementary School in 1923. Celebrations of this sort were held each May 1. Miss Katie Grok is the teacher on the right. Photo courtesy of Margaret Mary Lee.

A 1910 photograph of the Floris Elementary School, built in 1900. The building was replaced by a two-year high school the next year. Copy of photo in Virginiana Collection, Fairfax County Public Library.

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Floris Vocational High School graduated its last class in 1930. The previous year the school board had voted to consolidate the county's schools. The school consolidation movement was aimed principally at small one and two-room schoolhouses; by combining these local institutions, better facilities could be afforded and, consequently, teachers of high caliber attracted. The county's farm families had clamoured for just such a reorganization for many years, but the measure was contingent on the availability of good roads because rural children would have to travel some distance to the new district schools. The purpose of the judgment as passed did not really pertain to the Floris School, yet it came under the school-board's jurisdiction and consequently the Floris High School pupils were moved with those of Forestville to join Herndon High School.[249]

Agriculture courses were also offered at Herndon High School, for example, in 1933, 43 boys were enrolled in farm-oriented programs. Yet, the closing of the Vocational High School was a decisive loss for Floris. The school had been built and maintained by local money and labor and was thus a strong focal point in the neighborhood. It had encouraged community self-esteem and the area's pride had been reflected in the strong academic programs the school produced. The district high schools were less personal in nature and broader in scope; they did not so accurately fulfill an individual locale's needs. An illustration of this was the rigid adherence to school attendance regulations at Herndon High School. Whereas a neighborhood school would often allow a farm boy or girl to be excused from classes during peak work periods of harvesting or butchering, the new consolidated schools were less flexible. In one case a student who persisted in helping his family was continually kept behind and never did graduate. Like other "progressive" movements, consolidation of rural schools advanced the quality of life in only some areas. It made available more modern equipment and a wider range of teachers and curriculum, but in social relations and community benefit, the advantages were not so clearcut.[250]

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The Home Economics and Future Farmer's Club of Floris Vocational High School in the mid-1920s. Photo courtesy of Emma Ellmore.

The other main institutions which gave character and definition to the Floris community were the churches. There were three places of worship there in the 1920s and 1930s, all of them protestant. The old Frying Pan Baptist Church had been a continuous congregation since the mid-eighteenth century. They were the least social and most dogmatic in their religious practice; members of the other churches used adjectives such as "old school" or "hard-shell" to describe the Baptists. After the turn of the century and during the Depression, the Baptist Church was less regenerative than the others in Floris and most of the members were older people.[251]

Less doctrinaire, the Floris Methodist Church and Floris Presbyterian Church, were a more active part of the community. The church buildings, with their large seating capacity, made natural auditoriums for farmers' meetings, lectures and entertainments. The two churches cooperated in sponsorship of an Epworth Youth League, which, though it held its Sunday night meetings in the more centrally located Methodist Church, was non-denominational in character. The Reverend Glenn Cooper reported in 1927 that "the Floris League, being an independent and a community organization does not take up any denominational work, but is interested in local charities and its own entertainment."[252] The Presbyterian and Methodist churches also worked together in planning holiday programs and avoided conflicts by considerately scheduling their important festivals on different dates. At Christmastime, they were especially careful to plan their carol programs so that the entire community could attend both services. As there was a great deal of intermarriage between the two churches, this also reduced family strife.[253] Both groups welcomed members of other faiths. One Presbyterian recalled an occasion when his father greeted a new family just moving into the neighborhood and invited them to attend the local services. "This man said, 'Well, you know I'm a Roman Catholic.' My Dad said, 'It doesn't make any difference what you are, we'd sure like to have you come if you can.' This was the general attitude."[254] Indeed, so ecumenical had the organizations become that the General Conference of the Methodist Church became somewhat alarmed. As early as 1905 this body noted that although its members were leading quiet, orderly lives and attended church services frequently, still the congregation was "not satisfactory in some very essential respects." "Our people have been in the past and are now very negligent and indifferent as to the duty of informing themselves about our doctrines and church policy," stated the minutes of the church's quarterly conference. "There must be a more general study of the church discipline and a larger circulation and a close and careful reading of our church papers."[255]

The churches were rarely used for political purposes. Instead, the farmers relied on their farmer's clubs to exert this kind of pressure and seemed to feel that the religious bodies should concentrate on paving the spiritual road to heaven rather than the connecting road to the market. In addition to the regular activities of Sunday school, Bible classes and regular worship services, however, these institutions fulfilled a strong need for fellowship and social interaction.

Sunday school picnics and ice cream socials were perennial favorites sponsored each summer by the churches. The picnics were frequently held on attractive parts of neighboring farms, or sometimes as far away as Seneca or Great Falls. Each family would bring a large hamper of food, but the fried chicken, watermelon and pies were spread out on the tables to be shared by everyone. While the parents gossiped or talked politics, the children played and sometimes went swimming. These picnics, like other community events, were held

jointly by the Methodists and Presbyterians.[256] The ice cream socials, however, were another story. Here a mild rivalry set in as ladies vied with one another to produce the most admirable cake, and even a slight competition arose over the ice cream. An area resident confided that there was some speculation about which denomination's members owned cows giving the creamiest milk, thus producing the "most sinfully rich" ice cream.[257] No doubt this comparison diminished in importance when one was faced with the wide variety of homemade flavors, using fresh fruits and extracts. Sometimes in early summer the socials would feature strawberries along with the ice cream. On a quiet summer evening, with the fireflies flickering like beacon lights and a whispering breeze lapping at tableclothes and skirts, these must have been particularly pleasant events.[258]

Significant holidays also brought about special church programs. At Easter the churches were banked with flowers and a singular rejoicing occurred, and on Mother's Day an appropriate program was offered. The 1926 service included a suitable sermon and original Mother's Prayer by the minister and several selections by the choir, among them "When Mother Sang to Me," "Don't Forget the Old Folks," and "Our Mother."[259] The year's main celebration was, of course, at Christmas. Each church had a Christmas tree, cut by an adult, but decorated with "feet and almost miles" of popcorn strings by the neighborhood's young people, including those just returning home for the holidays. The warm ambiance of these services is evident in the following description, recounted by Joseph Beard:

> They always had the little people from what you consider the primary grades on up to sixth or seventh grade recite some little poem or some story or something of this kind. You nearly always had a chorus or choir, small, of people in the neighborhood that would sing Christmas carols. You always had a minister who read or recited the Christmas story from the Bible.... The churches were lighted with oil lamps, and they would put candles on the Christmas tree, wax candles and they would light those wax candles and then blow out the lights. It's a wonder we never set the church on fire.... But there would be this beautiful tree with all these lights on it, and hidden down under the tree somewhere would be a great big crate of oranges. Santa Claus usually came in and ... he would ring sleigh bells and walk down through the aisle and make some kind of remark. He would have a sack on his back. This always held tiny little sacks of candy. They started with the smallest children and gave each one of them one orange and one sack of hard candy. They went on up the line as far as the oranges and the candy lasted. If you didn't have a crowd even the adults would get a sack of candy and an orange, but if you had a large crowd, why it stopped at whatever age it ran out along the line. This was an affair at which the program would probably take an hour, an hour and fifteen minutes. But it was cold in there you know ... they'd have a great big, old pot bellied stove, but it was in one place in the church. Everybody couldn't sit around that stove, so you sat there in your overcoats sometimes.[260]

Miss Gladys Thompson and the Floris Community Orchestra, 1929. The members at this time included: Front row: Haley Smith, Louise Cockerill, Louise McNair; Second row: Richard Peck, unidentified, Miss Gladys Thompson (director), Jack Patton, Mary Peck, Franklin Ellmore; Back row: Helen Presgraves, Ethel Andrews, Mary Win Nickell, Elizabeth Ellmore, Helen Peck. The old car in the background is the one in which Miss Thompson first traveled. Note the old four-room schoolhouse also in the background. Photo courtesy of Louise McNair Ryder.

Other groups offered activities to fill the farm family's leisure hours. An elementary school teacher who taught music as a sideline, Gladys Thompson, organized an orchestra about 1928. It consisted of her violin pupils and other musically inclined citizens and was called the Floris Community Orchestra. Twelve violins, and mandolins, saxophones, piano, drums and banjo made up the group which played for school plays and community events. They also put on an annual recital and one year even gave a vaudeville show. "I remember she used to fill up her small one-seated roadster with music students going to practices and performances," fondly wrote a member of the orchestra, Louise McNair Ryder. "One of my greatest pleasures was clambering into the rumble seat with my violin."[261]

Musical groups also sprang up spontaneously. One, which Joseph Beard referred to as a "little old hillybilly band," included besides himself on fiddle, Virginia Presgraves (piano) and her uncle Austin Wagstaff on ukulele. Richard Peck played banjo and saxophone for the group. They played together over a period of several years, using no sheet music, but becoming so comfortable with each other's playing that they could anticipate the variations and style of their fellow musicians. They practiced in the schoolhouse, playing country tunes such as "Camp Town Races," "Old Black Joe," and "Shortnin' Bread" for their own amusement. They rarely entertained an audience.[262] Sometimes too the school or an unofficial group sponsored musical events, a notable one being the concert by "Al Hopkins and his Buckle-Busters," a celebrated country band from North Carolina.[263]

In addition, serious organizations like the Farmer's Clubs, Community League or church-affiliated women's clubs, mixed work and play by sponsoring picnics, quilting bees, and oyster suppers. The record made of a pleasant outing by Farmer's Clubs #1 and #4 to the Great Falls in 1913 was typical of many excursions in later years:

> It goes without saying that all present had a very enjoyable day. The children spent much time on the swings and Merry-Go-Rounds while the older members spent the day in viewing the falls.... While still others enjoyed fishing.[264]

Home Demonstration Clubs also put on their share of entertainments, with buffet suppers and skits, rounding off one year with a "husband-calling contest."[265] Even the business meetings themselves were social occasions at which dinner and friendly conversation were mixed with more critical concerns.

Oyster suppers were a regional specialty held all over the county, of which Floris sponsored its share. They were often money-making events (as were the ice cream socials) at which dinner cost from twenty-five to fifty cents and featured stewed and fried oysters. Lottie Schneider recalled the bustle of preparation for an oyster supper given in Herndon, involving the setting up of tables and benches and flower arrangements, and the difficult choice to be made between fried or stewed oysters and the many different relishes brought by each lady.[266] The suppers in fact generally held an overabundance of food. Again, Joseph Beard described the scene:

> There were always a few who didn't like oysters and they always had ham for those.... Anything that you would have in a farming neighborhood like that, when you sat down to eat it was just like having a Thanksgiving dinner. Everything from sweet potatoes to scalloped potatoes to macaroni and cheese to string beans to corn-on-the-cob to tomatoes [would be served]. Most anything that could be raised or produced in a vegetable garden or in a truck patch they'd bring. Then we had custard pies and lemon pies and apple pies.... [267]

The money made at the oyster dinners was used for school projects, to buy church furnishings or aid in mission work.

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Professional interest and pleasure were likewise combined at the various fairs held in the area during the late summer. The county sponsored a fair at Fairfax Courthouse until 1933 which featured new farm machinery, exemplary produce and livestock, and a gay carnival atmosphere. The Herndon News-Observer gave a colorful account of the county festivities in its September 23, 1926 edition:

> The first day was largely devoted to judging, the second day saw a large picnic by Dranesville farmers, the County Chamber of Commerce and the 4-H Clubs frolicked on the third day while the visible and invisible empire [of the Ku Klux Klan] held sway on the last day. Good racing cards filled much of the afternoon. The prizes were more substantial and the performances proportionally good. Every exhibit building was loaded with all varieties and grades of exhibits, while the livestock was as equally interesting in its magnitude and diversification.
>
> The flower department was carried partly out of the building where loving hands [had] specially devoted time and energy toward perfection. The woman's department, with nearly a thousand entries, was a wonder of culinary

> art. The poultry building with every squeek and squawk imaginable, fairly dazzled the farmers and their friends, who came to see what Fairfaxians and their friends are doing. Certainly no other fair in Virginia presented an arena of keener competition and the prize winners deserve to be most highly congratulated....[268]
>
> The midway was a swirl of ferris wheels, merry-go-rounds and every variety of game by which you might separate yourself from surplus funds.

The region boasted a similar fair held generally in Prince William County and having the dual purpose of promoting and celebrating the dairy industry. The Piedmont Dairy Festival, as it was called, was modeled after the famous Shenandoah Apple Blossom festival and was jocularly known locally as the "Cow Blossom festival."[269]

Floris itself held a substantial fair in the years following the decision to stop running a county exhibition. It grew out of the yearly "Flower and Vegetable Show" which had been sponsored by the 4-H and Home Demonstration Clubs and took place on the school grounds. The community divided itself into committees which met year-round to plan the produce and homemaking judgings, livestock shows and entertainment and the result was an event of countywide interest. A program from the 1939 fair lists among the categories "three summer squash," "best adult clothing," "best buttonhole," and "best Holstein heifer." Prizes consisted of cash (usually one to two dollars) or practical items such as five gallons of fly spray. Ironically the award for the best team of draft horses was three gallons of oil.[270]

A good deal of pride in everyday achievements resulted from the contests. Elizabeth Rice, writing of the excitement caused by the fairs, recalled the year she entered a devil's food cake in the county exhibition and "received the blue ribbon and a prize from Swann's Down Company of a cake mold, measuring cups, spoons and a box of Swann's Down cake flour." "I still feel 'up' over it," she concluded.[271] Others took their entries a little less seriously. Emma Ellmore remembered the year her mother simply cut a tangled mass of clematis from the back trellis, stuck it in a white vase and entered it in the flower-arranging contest, to win a blue ribbon from judges who admired its exceptional artistry.[272] The day was concluded with a "tournament," in which the neighborhood's young manhood vied with one another for the honor of crowning their lady queen. Lance in hand, "Sir Lancelot" or "Sir Frying Pan" rode at a gallop on a "steed" (often a draft horse) attempting to spear a ring suspended above the track. The winner reigned at the square dance that evening which capped the day's entertainment.[273]

Blue ribbons and fair championships were respected and admired by the neighbors and gave the recipient a certain amount of status. In a community in which no one had much ready money, this evidence of leadership or skill counted for a great deal. One person suggested that a large family gave a farmer a certain standing among his peers, and that homemaking was equally respected with the outdoor work. A clever manager was perhaps most admired of all. As Joseph Beard remarked: "There are some people who have very little money, but have the ability to use it in the right place at the right time and get a great deal more out of it than others. I suspect that the person that had the highest standard of living with what they had to do with was respected more than any one thing."[274]

Farmers from the Floris area also held private entertainments, such as the Peck family reunion of 1927, or the bridge parties which became so fashionable in the late 1920s and 1930s.[275] On rare occasions they travelled to Washington to see a show or to shop. More often they went to Herndon which had long catered to the farmer's needs. Stores, grain companies and mills, blacksmith and livery stables built their business on fulfilling the farmer's everyday requirements, while ice cream parlors and movie theaters provided pleasant distractions. The latter was an especially popular form of entertainment for young couples on dates. Frances Simpson recalled the excitement of going to the movies and the unique personality of the Herndon theater:

> What a fascination was that theater or 'movie hall' as it was called.... It was a real treat to go with our friends to the movies at the movie hall, not that we always saw one when we got there. Sometimes the reel would break, other times a tremendous storm would come up and the electric power would be shut off, leaving the player piano to carry on alone in the darkness while we crept home with flashlights, and more than once an angry skunk sought refuge under the movie hall causing the audience to disperse in three minutes flat. Still, it was great fun.[276]

All of these community events—ice cream socials, fairs, Community League meetings, and school events—were attended by the whole family. Social activities were less strictly drawn along age lines than they are today; young and old enjoyed the same amusements. The ladies chatted while preparing the dinners at Farmer's Club meetings, and the children came along and played together. Funerals and weddings were also family events for children were expected to learn of life's joys and sorrows through participation. This too encouraged community cohesiveness, as all parts of the society were included in its rituals, and children learned at an early age that they played an active role in the neighborhood's well-being; there was a place for them within the community which would last the length of their life. Strong evidence of this community identity is seen in the large numbers of Floris young people who, even in the face of urban opportunities, elected to stay on the family farm, or

chose careers in the agriculture-related fields of veterinary medicine, extension work or fish and wildlife protection.[277]

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Floris and the other closely knit agricultural villages of Fairfax County were exceptionally unified and supportive. Yet even these communities had fringe groups, which were not entirely fulfilled within the neighborhood or accepted by the majority of farmers. In some cases, this was caused by under-stimulation and exasperation at the slow patterns of rural movement. "We were bored to tears," wrote one Floris resident of the long Sunday afternoons spent discussing nothing but politics.[278] More frequently an individual was ignored or shunned by the society because of personal problems which had become a community nuisance: drinking, drugs or sexual indiscretions. The families of such social deviants were pitied and aided, but the offending individuals were avoided—"To whatever extent we could we would ostracize them." In one extreme case the neighborhood took the law into its own hands and lynched a man suspected of rape. "This man may have been innocent as you look back on it now but they thought he did it and they got rid of him right then," related one local citizen. "They just wouldn't put up with that. It just wasn't tolerated, that's all."[279]

The largest group outside the community's mainstream was the black agricultural workers. Except in the realm of employer/employee relations they had little social intercourse with their neighbors. Floris Vocational High School was not open to Negro students and the schools that were available to blacks were much inferior to those which taught white children. No high school existed at all for the blacks and the one-to three-room schools that existed were "in the most dilapidated condition," with no water, heat or adequate toilet facilities.[280] Edith Rogers made a revealing comment about the quality of the teachers when she stated that she knew of one that had a degree.[281] In extension activities blacks were also often overlooked. The first black 4-H club was organized in 1934 without the help of the county agent's office, and it was only after two years of exceptional work that he belatedly recognized its existence. "The colored club at the Vienna School was organized, but we did not expect much from it," Derr reported in 1936.

> A few days ago we were considerably surprised to have the Principal of the School send in her report ... Nearly every colored boy and girl nine years up to eighteen did some work ... Taking it in we feel it is a credible showing for a colored school that has not received its full share of assistance in club work. [282]

Black activities in churches and farmer's clubs were similarly ignored.

Some black families appear to have been respected for their industry or farming ability. The George Coates family near Floris was one. White neighbors exchanged work and admired the Coates progressive techniques, but still "never went so far as to sit down to dinner with them."[283] Blacks were excluded from the area's fairs, socials and concerts, except in rare cases when a rope kept the audience segregated.[284] Among themselves they, of course, had their own entertainments, but in general the broader opportunities and amusements of the county were closed to the blacks.

In the inter-war period another group was increasingly on the fringe of the established community. These were the urban migrants who came along the new roads and railroad lines, seeking an escape from city stresses. The earliest to arrive were summer residents, then came the part-time farmers who wanted country air but city pay. Finally the unabashed suburbanite who looked only for a quiet place to rest between bouts of urban employment moved in. Nearly all came seeking how they could benefit by living in the country, not what they could contribute to it. At first county residents welcomed this influx with open arms; they saw the expansion as a boon to employment and markets. Only later did they begin to realize that, in small ways and large, the forces of economic expansion would alter the shape of their community.[285]

Those who migrated chiefly in order to farm were welcomed by the county farm families, but those who were unaccustomed to country ways caused some problems for the rural folk. An editorial in the Fairfax Herald for April 23, 1926, bemoaned the loss of many of the county's lovely wildflowers, for the suburban residents frequently ignored trespass rules to pick the flowers.[286] Also alarming were the differing habits and manners of the city migrants and threat of an infiltration of "unusual and often undesirable" people. Hearing rumors that a nudist colony was to be established in the county's Dranesville District, the Herndon News-Observer declared stoutly

> We have a lot of objectionable people in the county, who have spilled over from Washington, but we will at least require that they bring their 'duds' along before they can hope to experience a cordial reception.[287]

A more critical matter was the importation and propagation of insects from the city, such as the oriental fruit moth, which thrived in the carelessly kept backyard plantings of suburbanites and then wreaked havoc in commercial orchards. County agents Derr and Beard spent considerable time advising these newcomers and helping them plant their gardens.[288]

Aside from these minor alarms, the urban influx had really serious consequences for the farmers of Fairfax County. As the numbers of non-farm residents grew, political interest lines began to be drawn and in some cases the farmers began losing control over local governing policies. This did not happen in all areas; for example, the County Board of Supervisors consisted solely of farmers well into the 1940s. However, in some vicinities there were definite political repercussions from the suburban population, such as in Herndon, which although commercially oriented, had always been sympathetic to the farmer's views. In the years after the arrival of the electric trolley, city workers and farmers battled at the polls over mayoral candidates and council representatives; by the 1920s the town council was dominated by businessmen and professionals.[289]

This growing tendency towards political alienation for the farmer was foreshadowed in a letter of complaint written by the Farmer's Club #1 to the Governor of Virginia in October, 1909:

> The attention of the Fairfax Farmer's Club No. 1 has been called to the fact that the delegates from this county to the Farmer's National Congress are not farmers, one being Sheriff of the County, the other a merchant—both reputable citizens but neither interested directly in agriculture.[290]

Like the other changes shaking the farmers' world, the loss of government influence created a disturbing sense of impermanence and estrangement. This, coupled with the previously mentioned tax rise (which was exacerbated by the influx of people, all purchasing land and creating a rise in prices due to demand) indicated to the farmer that he was losing control over a world which had for generations remained secure and settled. Ultimately, these forces crowded him out altogether, and simultaneously destroyed most of the pastoral communities to which the suburbanites had hoped to escape.

PART V—NOTES

Community

[222] For an extensive study of community relations, see Kolb and Brunner, A Study of Rural Society, 75-139.

[223] Beard/Pryor, January 23, 1979.

[224] Schneider, Memoirs of Herndon, Virginia, 35.

[225] Beard/Pryor, January 23, 1979.

[226] Derr Report, 1930, 16.

[227] Ellmore/Netherton, March 2, 1978.

[228] Beard/Pryor, January 23, 1979.

[229] Ibid.

[230] Ibid.

[231] Andrew M. D. Wolf, "Country Medicine in Fairfax County, Virginia, at the Turn of the Twentieth Century," unpublished monograph, January 23, 1976, copy in Virginiana, 5-6.

[232] Frances Darlington Simpson quoted in Out of Frying Pan, 26.

[233] Louise Ryder, "Some Thoughts about Frying Pan Baptist Church," unpublished monograph, June, 1972; and "How Frying Pan Park Got Its Name," Fairfax Herald, n.d. (clipping), and miscellaneous notes on Frying Pan by Louise Ryder, June, 1977, courtesy of Louise Ryder.

[234] John Davis quoted in Ryder, "Some Thoughts about Frying Pan Baptist Church," 4; Schneider, Memoirs of Herndon, Virginia; and Ryder notes.

[235] Derr Reports, 1919 and 1925; and Beard/Pryor, February 27, 1979.

[236] 14th Census of the United States, 1920, National Archives and Records Service.

[237] Fairfax County Deed Books, Liber E-6, 48-51; and Liber H-5, 616-617.

[238] Nickell and Randolph, An Economic and Social Survey of Fairfax County, 70-71.

[239] Ibid.; Beard/Pryor, February 27, 1979; "Floris Home Demonstration Club," Herndon News-Observer, March 10, 1932; Howard Simmons, "History of Floris Vocational High School," unpublished monograph, n.d., copy courtesy of Elizabeth and Emma Ellmore; Ellmore/Middleton/Pryor, March 8, 1979; and Gladys T. Spencer to Mrs. Ernest Ryder, February 15, 1979, copy courtesy of Louise Ryder.

[240] Harrison/Pryor, February 5, 1979; Nickell and Randolph, An Economic and Social Survey of Fairfax County, 71; Peck/Netherton, February 23, 1978; Greear/Netherton, March 23, 1978.

[241] Simmons; Ellmore/Middleton/Pryor, March 8, 1979; Beard/Pryor, February 28, 1979; and Harrison/Pryor, February 5, 1979.

[242] Simmons; Ellmore/Middleton/Pryor, March 8, 1979.

[243] Ellmore/Middleton/Pryor, March 8, 1979.

[244] Interview with Lulah Ferguson by Steve Matthews, Falls Church, Virginia, August 16, 1971.

[245] Peck/Netherton, February 23, 1978.

[246] Herndon News-Observer, March 12, 1925.

[247] Simmons, "Floris Retains High Rating at Blacksburg," Herndon News-Observer, April 20, 1928.

[248] "Commencement Exercises in Our County High Schools," Herndon News-Observer, June 16, 1927.

[249] Simmons; Minutes of Farmer's Club #1, June 6, 1910; and Ellmore/Middleton/Pryor, March 8, 1979.

[250] Rogers/Corbat, et al., June 12, 1970.

[251] Ryder, "Some Thoughts About Frying Pan Baptist Church"; Beard/Pryor, January 23, 1979; Beard/Harrison/Pryor, March 6, 1979; and Schneider, Memoirs of Herndon, Virginia, 8.

[252] Floris United Methodist Church: An Historical Account, 1891-1974, (Herndon, Virginia, 1975), 40.

[253] Beard/Pryor, January 23, 1979. [Pg 113]

[254] Ibid.

[255] Floris Methodist Church, 23.

[256] Ellmore/Middleton/Pryor, March 8, 1979; Beard/Pryor, January 23, 1979; Harrison/Pryor, February 5, 1979; Peck/Netherton, January 23, 1978.

[257] Telephone conversation with Louise Ryder, January 25, 1979.

[258] Ibid.; R. Middleton/Netherton, February 24, 1978; Ellmore/Middleton/Pryor, March 8, 1979; Beard/Pryor, January 23, 1979.

[259] Ellmore/Netherton, March 2, 1978; and Herndon News-Observer, May 13, 1926.

[260] Beard/Pryor, January 23, 1979.

[261] Gladys Spencer to Louise Ryder, February 15, 1979; and note to author by Louise McNair Ryder, n.d., (spring, 1979).

[262] Beard/Pryor, January 23, 1979 (notes taken after interview); and Harrison/Pryor, February 5, 1979.

[263] Beard/Pryor, January 23, 1979; and Peck/Netherton, February 23, 1978.

[264] Farmer's Club #1, Minutes, August 21, 1913.

[265] Lucy Steptoe Report, 1924.

[266] Schneider, Memoirs of Herndon, Virginia, 27-28.

[267] Beard/Pryor, January 23, 1979.

[268] "Fairfax County Fair," Herndon News-Observer, September 23, 1926.

[269] Derr Report, 1931; and Peck/Netherton, February 23, 1978.

[270] Program, Fifth Annual Floris Community Fair, Thursday, August 24, 1939, copy in Beard Report, 1939.

[271] Rice to author, January 30, 1979.

[272] Ellmore/Middleton/Pryor, March 8, 1979.

[273] Nearly everyone spoke enthusiastically of the Floris fair. See especially Harrison/Pryor, February 5, 1979; Beard/Pryor, January 23, 1979; Ellmore/Middleton/Pryor, March 8, 1979.

[274] Ellmore/Middleton/Pryor, March 8, 1979; and Beard/Pryor, January 23, 1979. [Pg 114]

[275] "Family Reunion at Floris," Herndon News-Observer, May 5, 1927; "Events in Floris," Herndon News-Observer, March 21, 1935.

[276] Simpson, Virginia Country Life and Cooking, 52.

[277] Among those who chose such careers were Joseph Beard and John Beard (county extension agents); Franklin Ellmore, on the staff of Virginia Polytechnic Institute; Chester McLaren, head of agricultural education at Virginia Polytechnic Institute; and Jack Patton, of the Fish and Wildlife Commission in North Carolina; see Ellmore/Middleton/Pryor, March 8, 1979.

[278] Peck/Netherton, February 23, 1978.

[279] Beard/Pryor, January 23, 1979.

[280] E. B. Henderson and Edith Hussey, History of the Fairfax County Branch of the NAACP, October, 1965, 7-8.

[281] Rogers/Corbat, et al., June 12, 1970.

[282] Derr Report, 1936.

[283] Beard/Harrison/Pryor, March 6, 1979; and Beard/Pryor, February 27, 1979.

[284] Peck/Netherton, February 23, 1978.

[285] See, for example, "The Future of Fairfax County," Herndon News-Observer, October 20, 1927.

[286] Editorial, Fairfax Herald, April 23, 1926; and Beard/Pryor, January 23, 1979.

[287] "The Nudist Camp," Herndon News-Observer, October 8, 1933.

[288] Derr Report, 1937; and Louis A. Stearns, "The Present State of the Oriental Fruit Moth in Northern Virginia," Virginia Agricultural Extension Bulletin 234.

[289] Netherton, et al., Fairfax County, 483.

[290] Farmer's Club #1, Minutes, October 21, 1909.

PART VI

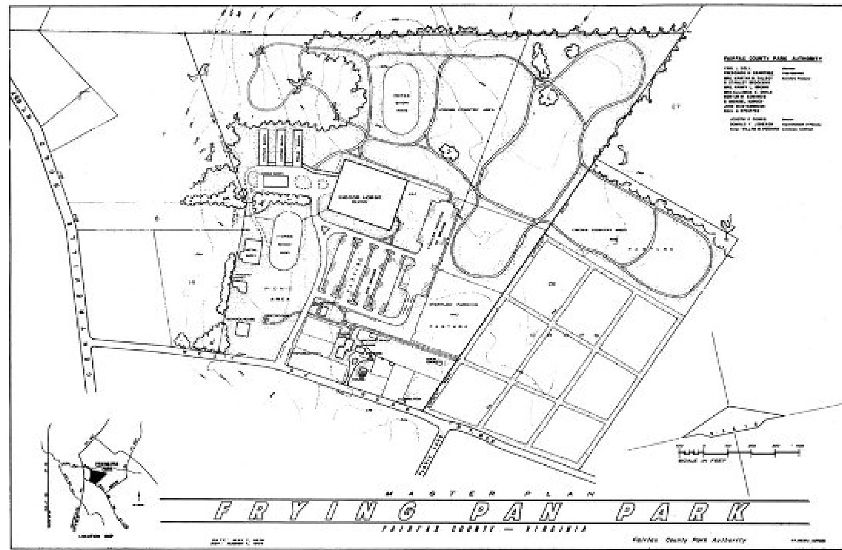
Frying Pan Park

The population boom of the post-World War II period (with the consequent demand for land), the huge jump in land taxes, and competition from larger, more efficient farms, spelled doom for the family farm in Fairfax County. The county's farmers had spent much of the inter-war period adjusting to the new agricultural modes, but they could not adapt to the burgeoning metropolitan area's desire for expansion. The construction of Dulles International Airport in the late 1950s further depleted the county's agricultural areas, wiping out both the Willard community and much of the farmland around Floris. Even those farmers who had noticed the trends of twenty years felt a nagging sense of loss and resentment at the passing of their traditional way of life.[291]

Frying Pan Park is an attempt to give citizens a glimpse of their heritage by recreating the familiar patterns of family farming. Its location (near the corner of West Ox and Centreville Roads) in the still-quiet Floris center makes it ideal for interpretation of the more tranquil past. The park's purpose is primarily educational and historical, however it also offers recreational activities. These include equestrian facilities, bridle paths and nature walks, as well as the model farm.

The idea for such a park began in 1957 when Joseph Beard, then the county agent, began proposing uses for the old Floris School property which was no longer needed by the county schoolboard. He advised the Fairfax County government that the land and school buildings be established as a youth center. As such, it would be available to the Future Farmers of America, the 4-H Club, scouting groups, and similar organizations to stage fairs, hold meetings and provide recreation.[292] This proposal was accepted and in 1960 the land was deeded to the Fairfax County Park Authority whose powers of police protection and maintenance were superior to those of the individual young people's organizations. An independent citizen board was also established at this time and the Park has been continually administered by the Park Authority and Frying Pan Park Supervisory Board.[293] The latter consists of representatives of agricultural, homemaking and youth organizations such as the Agricultural Extension Advisory Board, the Fairfax County Granges and the Future Homemakers of America. Under their direction, the 4-H not only began to clean the grounds, but staged a few tentative activities. The early success of the events, coupled with a growing interest in the park by equestrian groups, led the Fairfax County Park Authority to acquire bits and pieces of adjoining property throughout the 1960s and 1970s, enlarging the original holding of 4.39 acres to 87.6 acres. They also constructed several buildings for use in livestock exhibitions and horse shows.[294] A model farm, strongly advocated by the

county agent, Grange and other farm-oriented groups was also proposed in this first decade. A dearth of development money and popular pressure to expand the equestrian facilities combined to delay its inception.[295]



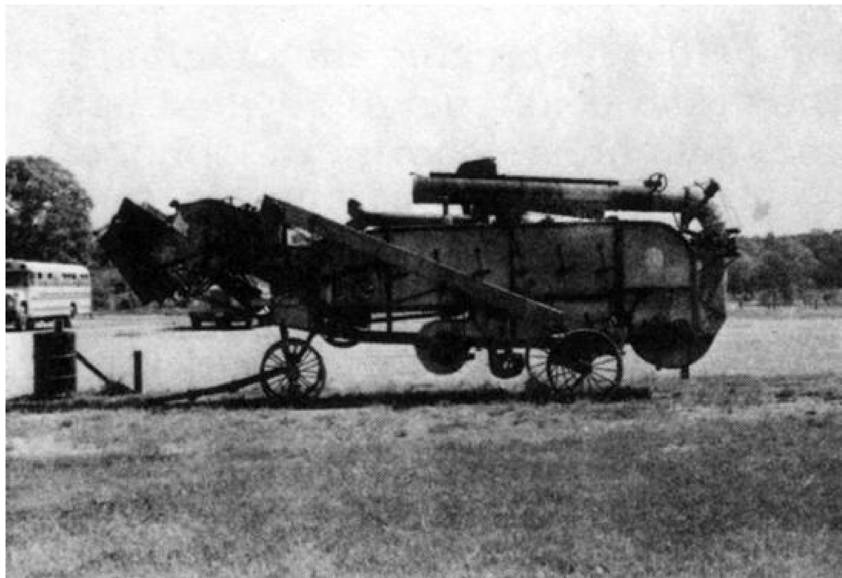
Larger Image

Master plan of Frying Pan Park showing ideal arrangement of the model farm, exhibition halls, and equestrian facilities. Fairfax County Park Authority, 1974.

In 1965 the Park Authority bought the Floyd Kidwell farm next to the original school tract which consisted of some 40 acres with several farm buildings. The Kidwells had owned the property since 1934; their farm being the very sort of family operation that proponents of the model farm project hoped to show.[296] Money was still scarce for the farm's development, however; therefore, most of the land was earmarked for equestrian use—only a third was set aside for the model farm. Additional acreage, purchased in 1974 (and again in 1977) and the acquisition of the Kidwell farm buildings made more extensive and authentic cultivation possible; the farm was finally established in 1974.[297] Because the land was pieced together from numerous sources, the farm is presented as a representation of small-scale farming in the county, not an exact recreation of the Kidwell farm. In its patchwork composition, it echoes the trends of the county for few farms stayed intact during the fluctuations of the 1920s and 1930s, but were added to or diminished depending on the cash flow.

Model farms originated in Scandinavia, where entire villages were preserved during the late 19th century in order to save the folkways which were rapidly eroding in the wake of industrial development. In this country the earliest efforts at such preservation took place in the 1940s. They had only scanty growth until a thoughtful article by Marion Clawson was published in Agricultural History in April, 1965. This piece alerted preservationists and historians to the possibility of such projects and influenced the establishment of nearly one hundred such "open-air museums," among them the National Park Service's Turkey Run Farm near McLean, Virginia.[298]

Frying Pan Farm differs from most of these restorations in its portrayal of 20th century farming, a time and way of working that many older people can still recall. Rather than show the slow and hand-operated life of a pre-mechanization farmer, Frying Pan Farm shows the farm in a dynamic transition. In the words of the supervisory board, it recreates a time that "had not given up the idea of home-cured meats, home vegetable gardens, home orchards, apple butter, sorghum molasses ... but it was considering the use of farm tractors, milking machines, and tractor-drawn equipment...."[299] The farm thus portrays crop and pasturage rotation, and some mechanized activity with a 1940 tractor, yet the farmer harvests his grain with a horse-drawn binder. Most of the equipment is from the pre-World War II period and animals have been chosen or bred to conform to those available in the 1930s. A volunteer program, established in 1976, aids the farmer in tending the large vegetable garden, and the livestock which consists of poultry, hogs, rabbits, goats, sheep, dairy cows and draft horses. Frying Pan Farm cultivates corn, wheat and hay crops and includes a late-19th century farmstead, a frame barn, shed, henhouse, and rabbit hutch and a machine and separator shed. An orchard and additional crop acreage and fencing are planned. Far from being a zoo or a site of isolated craft or mechanical demonstrations, the farm is operated daily as if agriculture were its only aim. Crops are grown not merely for show but to feed the animal stock and manure is used to fertilize garden and grain fields. The visitor who stops by the farm does not see a prearranged interpretive display, but chances on the farmer performing that day's necessary work: milking, haying, repairing fences, or plowing.[300]



This early threshing machine is one of the pieces of period equipment owned by Frying Pan Farm. Photo, Virginiana Collection, Fairfax County Public Library.

Laura Parham and Kim Stanton work in the vegetable garden at Frying Pan Farm. Volunteers do much of the garden work at the site. Photo, Fairfax County Park Authority.

The farmyard at Frying Pan Farm in early fall. The barn houses livestock such as horses, pigs, sheep, goats, and dairy cows. Photo, Fairfax County Park Authority.

The farm boasts one structure not properly belonging to it, but nonetheless most relevant to the interpretation of early 20th century farm life: the Moffett Blacksmith Shop. The shop was owned by Henry Moffett and stood in Herndon for 70 years, from 1904 until the Frying Pan Park Supervisory Board bought it in 1974. At this time the shop was torn down and reassembled near the model farm as a memorial to their former chairman (and donor of the funds to save the Moffett Shop), Hatcher Ankers. Henry Moffett, realizing that the advent of the tractor and automobile would eliminate the need for his business, displayed considerable foresight by collecting blacksmithing tools all over the Washington area. His shop now houses some of this equipment and another portion is in the Smithsonian Institution, though Moffett no longer does any smithing. The park offers courses in ornamental iron working at the shop.[301]

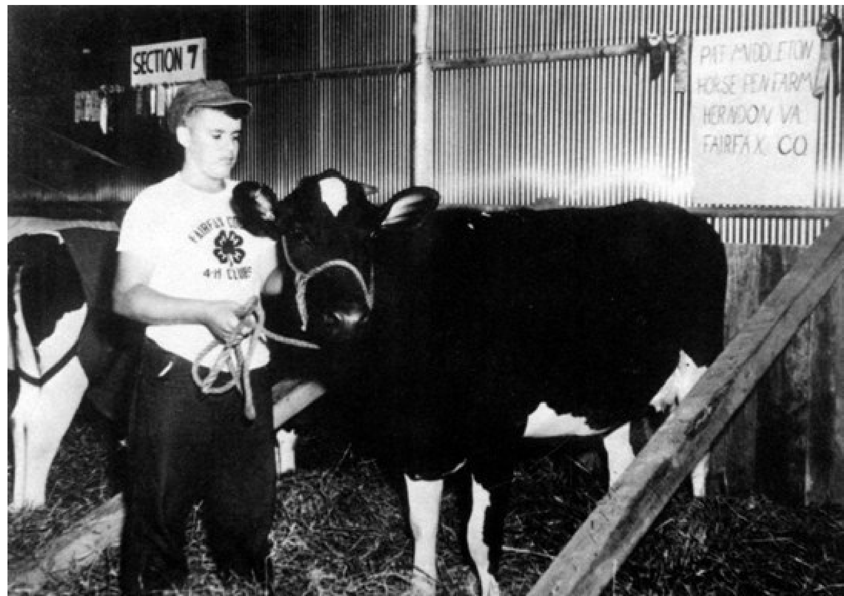
The presence of the Moffett Blacksmith Shop at Frying Pan Park emphasizes the interdependence of farmer and smith. The machinist of his day, the blacksmith repaired wagon tongues, and mended heavy plows and other farm equipment. As late as the 20th century, the smith produced tools, and ornamental items in addition to his steady business of shoeing horses. His work required a sensitive understanding of farming and the quirks and habits of the farmer and his animals. Henry Moffett himself owned a farm, giving him special insight into the agriculturalist's needs, a factor which may have been partially responsible for the comparative success and longevity of his business. "I had more trade than any man around here," Moffett admitted. "During the Depression we showed more profit per man than any other business." Blacksmithing was a trade which required skill, but also courage, to wield heavy instruments, work with molten metals and face stiff competition and the sometimes ugly customers. Henry Moffett seems to have combined these qualities with a rare integrity. When competition became keen among the many Herndon forges, Moffett refused to resort to the accepted practice of defaming the other smiths to build up his own business. Stated Moffett, "I figured if I can't make it without bringing somebody else down I shouldn't bother."[302]

The farmer's house at Frying Pan Farm. Photo, Fairfax County Park Authority.

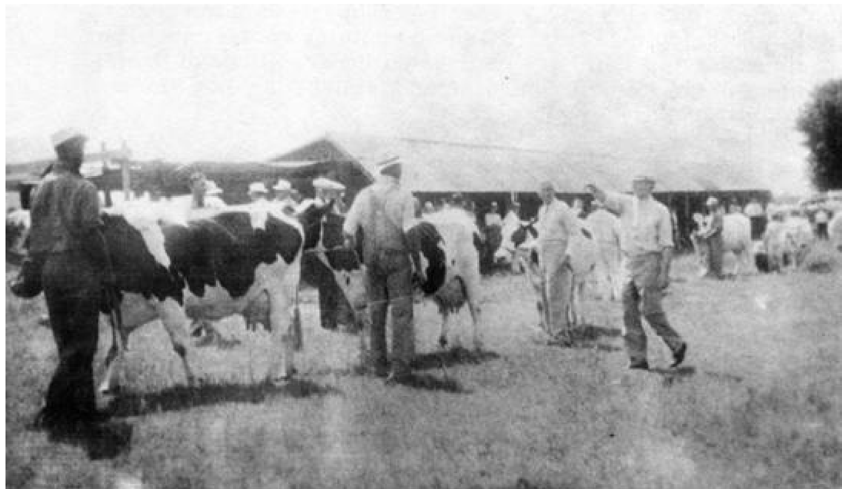
Two young girls meet two young goats at an exhibition at Frying Pan Park. Photo, Fairfax County Park Authority.

John Hopkins, a park employee, demonstrates the use of period blacksmithing tools in the Moffett Blacksmith Shop. Photo, Fairfax County Park Authority.

[Pg 121]



Pat Middleton, a contestant in a 4-H Club fair, held at Frying Pan Park. Copy of photo in Virginiana Collection, Fairfax County Public Library.



A cattle judging on the grounds of the Floris school, 1950. The shed, built in 1918, was used continually in the early twentieth century to house exhibits and fairs. Copy of photo in Virginiana Collection, Fairfax County Public Library.

The continuance of farming and limited blacksmithing in the Floris area provides a continuity with earlier eras that is also reflected in the equestrian and youth activities of the park. The site of the old Floris School was used during the 1930s for the Floris Community Fair and has for several decades been the site of the 4-H fair, which features many of the same activities as earlier exhibitions. A description of the 4-H fair of 1976 reads much as the accounts of 40 years previous:

> Highlight of the opening ceremonies on Thursday evening, August 5, will be a goat-milking contest.... The program will open 7:30 p.m. with the posting of the colors by twenty 4-H members on horseback.... Projects on exhibit will include everything from animals to a rocketry display.... Six performances of local dance and instrumental groups have been scheduled and square dancing will take place at 2 p.m. Saturday. Horse shows will run continuously in the park's two rings during both days.... In addition the Extension Homemakers Club will present more than 20 working crafts exhibits on how to make everything from cottage cheese to doll-house furniture....[303]

In addition, several minor judgings are held each year. During 1970 for example, events at the park included a poultry judging, four dog shows, four sewing club events and one rabbit show.[304] Agriculturally oriented youth groups are also encouraged to meet at the park, and the master plan for development of Frying Pan Park calls for space for home economics and mechanical shops, areas for crafts instruction, an agriculture library, and dormitory rooms. In all of these pursuits, Frying Pan Park carries on the traditions of professional training in the field of agriculture established by the Floris Vocational High School.[305]

The use of park space for equestrian activities likewise mirrors the county citizens' continued interest in rural pleasures. The horse shows and facilities are the park's most popular feature, drawing over a thousand people per day for some events. Fifty-five equestrian events were staged in 1976, and the schedule now includes three Class "A" weekend shows sponsored by the American Quarterhorse Association, and judging for points in dressage, jumping, and other standard events. The construction of an indoor show ring was begun in the summer of 1979, and is expected to further expand the park's activities, especially providing space for winter shows. The park also expects to continue its program of week-long camps for pony clubs, and its extensive network of bridle paths.[306]

Frying Pan Park is unique both in its attempt to interpret a style of living which has not yet completely vanished, and in its combination of educational and recreational facilities. Its aim is not merely to display old-fashioned implements or provide for the enjoyment of a special interest group. Rather it seeks to maintain a tradition of interest in rural life and culture by continuing to pursue it actively. The trials, hopes, and quiet pleasures of the countryside can be best appreciated where the farm is a living entity. The richness of the farmer's achievement is evident to the park's visitors through fairs, horse shows, and simply in gazing at a lushly billowing field of corn.

Dressage competition at Frying Pan Park, 1978. Equestrian activities have proved to be among the most popular events at the park. Photo, Fairfax County Public Library.

PART VI—NOTES

Frying Pan Park

[291] Netherton, et al., Fairfax County, 544-568; and Beard/Pryor, February 27, 1979.

[292] Joseph Beard to W. T. Woodson, Fairfax, Virginia, March 26, 1957, copy in Frying Pan Farm files, Fairfax County Park Authority (hereafter cited as FCPA).

[293] Copy of deed, December 6, 1960, in Land Acquisitions files, Frying Pan Farm, FCPA; and telephone conversation with Joseph Beard, April 26, 1979.

[294] Additional land was acquired as follows: .9726 acre on condemnation award from Floyd Lee, July 5, 1962 (cost $1,250); 38 acres bought from Floyd Kidwell, June 26, 1965 (cost $1,500 per acre); 5.2771 acres on condemnation award from Emma Neal Lee, January 29, 1965 (cost $3,958); 3.5684 acres (including house and outbuildings) bought from Floyd Kidwell, March 26, 1970 (cost $34,275); 19.0766 acres bought from Annie May Poole Whittier, September, 1974 (cost $80,121.72); and 21.63898 acres on condemnation award from Robert E. Clark, May 31, 1977 (cost $173,000). It is interesting to note the rise in land prices during these years. See Land Acquisitions records, FCPA.

[295] Beard/Pryor, February 27, 1979.

[296] See deed between Asa E. Bradshaw and Floyd Kidwell, in Fairfax County Deed Books, Liber L-11, 297.

[297] Memorandum from Frying Pan Park Supervisory Board, April, 1972; notes from Farm Committee, June, 1972; and "Proposed Plan for Kidwell Farm," Frying Pan Park, January, 1974, all in Frying Pan Park files, FCPA.

[298] John Schlebecker, Living Historical Farms: A Walk into the Past (Washington, D.C., 1968), 5-16.

[299] Memorandum, April, 1972.

[300] Interview with John Hopkins, farm manager, March 6, 1979.

[301] "Henry Moffett: 'A Mighty Man,'" Washington Star, April 18, 1976; notes on interview with Henry Moffett by Nan Netherton, Herndon, Virginia, n.d., (1978).

[302] Ibid.

[303] "4-H Bicentennial Fair at Frying Pan Farm," Fairfax Journal, August 6, 1976.

[304] 1970 Annual Report, Frying Pan Farm files, FCPA.

[305] Master Plan, Frying Pan Farm, 1977, copy in files, FCPA.

[306] Annual Report, 1976, Frying Pan Park; untitled memorandum, May 3, 1974, both in files, FCPA; and Hopkins, March 6, 1979.

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