

HARWINTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

MAY 2018

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The Barn Corner

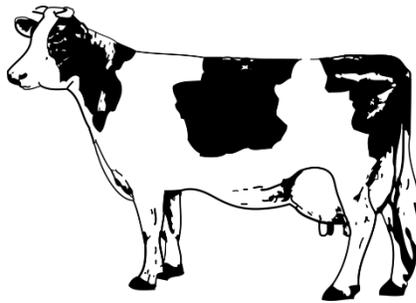
The Importance of Having a Milk Cow

By Dave Ryan

Cows were an important part of early Harwinton farm life.

In his book "History of Harwinton" Raymond Bentley lists butter, cheese, and "fat calves" (milk-fed surplus baby calves raised for veal) as sources of cash income for early farmers. But milk was not on the list. Without adequate refrigeration, raw milk (milk that has not been pasteurized) would not keep long enough to sell without spoiling.

On display in the Historical Society's barn museum are several cow stanchions (long, narrow rectangular support frames). They are located near the wagon in the back half of the barn. On a family farm the would be mounted in a barn to milking.



metal or wood stanchions hold a cow steady for

Having a family cow or toward making a farm self-cows could have plenty of fresh and various cheeses, as well as a veal and beef. I can remember homestead, milk products were "refrigerated" on the wooden steps leading to the earth-floor cellar. Because the cellar temperature was a constant 40 to 50 degrees, milk could be stored there, and meat could be smoked or salted and hung by beam hooks in the same basement.

cows was a major step sufficient. A family with whole milk, cream, butter supply of readily available that on our family

In addition to milk, cheese, butter, veal and beef, the cows supplied plenty of manure, which was spread on fields in the spring to enhance the vegetable garden and pasture land.

Owning milk cows did not come without effort. A farmer had to be available to milk the cows morning and night for at least 305 days - no sick days allowed. The 60-day "break in milking" was because of the cycle of the cow. In order to produce milk, a cow had to be inseminated (made pregnant). From the onset of pregnancy to the birth of the cow took most of the non-milking days, plus the farmer had to watch for when the cow was in heat, thus being able to be made pregnant again. When the time seemed right, a bull (the farmer's or a neighbor's) was used to inseminate the cow, starting the process all over again.

Cows, continued on page 3

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May 6th: World War I Program

“The War to End All Wars”

As we await the 100th anniversary of the ending of World War I, many historians agree that the “Great War” was one of the most “senseless” conflicts in all of history. From 1914 to 1918, some 10 million people died in a meaningless slaughter. In its causes, its military strategies, and in its final peace treaty, the First World War did little but pave the way for the rise of Adolf Hitler and an even bloodier war.

Join Dr. Karl Valois from the University of Connecticut for a discussion of the conflict that was supposed to “make the world safe for democracy” and that would be the war “to end all wars.”

Sunday, May 6, 2018 from 2 to 4 p.m.

at the Harwinton Library

Bentley Drive off Route 118

CONNECTICUT OPEN HOUSE DAY

SUNDAY JUNE 9TH

NOON TO 4 P.M.

THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY WILL OPEN

THE BARN MUSEUM

AND

ONE ROOM SCHOOLHOUSE

THE HUNGERFORD MUSEUM

50 BURLINGTON ROAD (RTE 4)

WILL ALSO BE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

NO CHARGE AT EITHER LOCATION

VOLUNTEER HELP NEEDED!

Cows Produce a Mountain of Manure continued from page 1



Manure had to be shoveled frequently. One cow might produce a mountain of manure equal to as much as 14 tons in a year. The barn had to be kept relatively clean or "mucked" (dirt and manure removed) daily. Keeping the milking area clean was important, especially if one sold or gave milk to customers or neighbors.

The cow barn was kept warm and free of drafts in the winter months. A draft-free barn would usually be adequately warm, although the farmer often made the cow pens on the warmer south-facing side of the barn, preferably with a window to help ensure sufficient warmth from sunlight.

Milking the cow took two strong hands and nimble fingers. When first learning, patience on the part of both the milker and cow was necessary. A beginner could take up to 40 minutes to milk a cow (the udder had to be emptied completely), but experience made the job go faster. An experienced milker could milk one cow by hand in just 7 minutes.

I can remember my family buying whole, unpasteurized milk from a farmer who delivered on a milk route from his pick-up truck three days a week. He kept the milk cool by covering the bottles with a thick blanket. The cream in the unpasteurized milk rose to the top of the bottles. My parents skimmed off the cream in their coffee. The remainder was simply shaken in the bottle and put in the refrigerator to be used as partly skimmed milk. To my knowledge, no one on this route ever got sick from drinking the raw milk. I know the farmer was very careful, but we were also probably very lucky.

While it may take 5 or 10 minutes today to pick from the myriad of choices in the grocery store milk section, it requires much more time to care for and milk the family cow every day, twice a day.

As time went on, methods for milking and caring for cows improved, which made the farmer's job easier and more efficient. Some of these changes will be discussed in the next newsletter.

Sources consulted: Raymond Bentley, Richard M Bacon, "The Forgotten Arts" Yankee Magazine, 1975

May Trivia Question: Who were the first residents of present-day Burlington?

Answer on page 4

Correction: The name of a source for the Looking Back article on Collis P. Huntington in the April newsletter should have been Henry Steele Commager. His last name was incorrect.

Looking Back in Harwinton History

Partners Set Up Clock Making Shop

By Joyce Peck

Before there was Seth Thomas in Thomaston, there were Edward Hopkins and Augustus Alfred in Harwinton. Hopkins and Alfred were brothers-in-law and partners in the clock-making business sometime about 1834, according to Harwinton Town Historian Roger Plaskett. Hopkins family members were among the very first settlers in Harwinton.



There is some debate among various sources as to the exact dates of the Hopkins-Alfred clock-making operation. Some sources list the dates as 1820-1827 and others 1831-1844, Plaskett noted. A Harwinton quit-claim deed indicates the transfer of the land and clock shop from Hopkins to Alfred took place in 1841. Historians believe that Alfred stopped making clocks in 1841 but continued to make clock faces until 1844. In any case, the business was eventually turned over to the now well-known Seth Thomas.

Thomas was born in 1785 in Plymouth and died in Thomaston in 1859 where he was buried in Hillside Cemetery. He established the Seth Thomas Co. in Thomaston and is considered the pioneer of mass production at his clock factory.

Hopkins and Alfred were imaginative and creative industrialists. They set up shop on the Naugatuck River where water from the river was held back by a dam and channeled through a canal to the waterwheel to power machine tools, Plaskett explained. Their tools included a large lathe, two pinion lathes and three smaller turning lathes.

Something Old Is New Again!

Historical Society Coin Purses Available for \$4

Just squeeze these sturdy coin purses to access your spare change, extra key, guitar picks, pills, earrings or rings. We have them in black, red, blue, green and navy with a sketch of the one room schoolhouse on the back. They will be available at future historical society events or by calling 860-482-7978



Answer to trivia question on page 3

Answer: The first residents of Burlington were members of the Tunxis Tribe, part of a confederation of Algonquian Indians. According to legend, the area (Burlington) was used as a hunting ground.