



JAMAICA BANANAS start their ripening process enroute to consumers in the United States and other lands. Here boatmen load a refrigerated ship at one of the island's many banana ports. In some areas, lighters such as these carry the green bunches to ships anchored off-shore in deeper waters (Jamaica Tourist)

Sugar Cane is Cash Crop, Goat Staple of Jamaican Farmer

(Special to Lancaster Farming)
by ERNEST J. NEILL

HALF WAY TREE, Jamaica—"Keep left, mahn!" To the Yankee, driving on the left hand side of the street, there's a feeling of uneasiness at first. With Mitch piloting the Prefect—a small, British Ford, this word of warning was almost constant. Driving rules are strict, and even with an international driver's license some delay is encountered in obtaining a Jamaican permit.

But the Prefect functioned to perfection on mountain roads, through the flatlands west of Kingston, deep into the Grand Cayman Estates where sugar cane and bananas are grown commercially.

Seeing a native walking along balancing a bunch of green bananas on his (or her) head, perhaps a bundle of sugar cane, an armful of stove wood, even a wash tub filled with fruit wonders one. When asked about casualties in this national sport, one native—perhaps it was "Sonny Boy," the Montego Bay boatman—answered, "Only in jousting, or perhaps during the Junkanoo (John Canoe) festivals"

Every home has its goat. Here is a milk supply and often the young kids wind up in the cook pot. It's difficult to distinguish any farming plots among the country homes—which range from thatched roof huts to frame homes of monotonous architecture. But often there are a few banana trees, a few coconut trees.

Sugar cane is still the Number One agricultural product in this island, and at the time of our visit the fields were "caming." Miss Wallace explained—the stalks were taking on the divisions you see in corn stalks before tasseling. Some wild cane was in tassel as October opened, and it was recalled that in Puerto Rico in late November entire fields were in tassel.

You might imagine bananas and coconuts grow wild, but assurances were given each tree is private property. Some residents

its Antarctic Seas. Early in the morning the "beep-beep" of the tiny train indicated the future cargo was coming to town. Natives trudged down the roads with green bunches atop their heads, in perfect balance. Going price at the moment was a shilling a hand, with a minimum of nine hands accepted per bunch. With the shilling worth approximately 14 cents U.S., the producer would receive approximately \$126 for a stalk of bananas.

It is customary here to see youngsters chewing on a piece of sugar cane stalk. To them it's candy. Two schools of thought advance from this practice, one that it develops strong, white teeth—while others point out the dangers of sugar to teeth. Perhaps one might deduce the jaws benefit most.

Clumps of bamboo grow everywhere, along streams, high in the hills—and across a valley a group of bamboo trees gives the appearance of gigantic green feathery fronds waving softly in the

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told there is a nine-months' jail term for those violating this law, picking some one else's bananas. Banana harvest was underway throughout the island. At Port Antonio much activity was in evidence at United Fruit Co. docked

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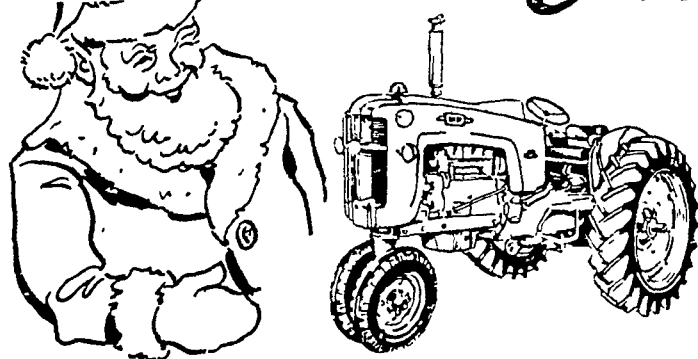
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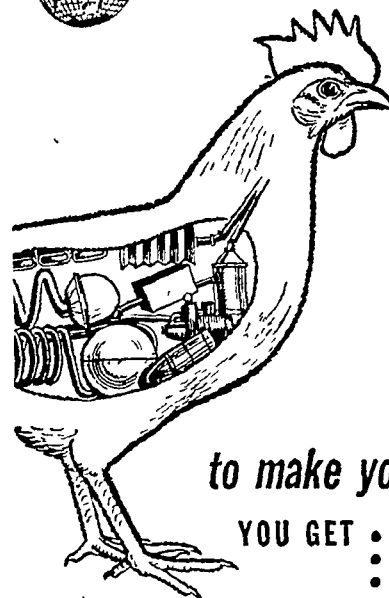
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