

Landis Valley Farm Museum is waiting for approval to farm

By SALLY BAIR
Feature Writer

The people of the Pennsylvania Farm Museum at Landis Valley don't farm - but they would like to.

Yes, there is a small garden and there is cooking, and on special days there is apple butter making and basket weaving, and they have even tried their hand at growing their own flax and rye. But there is no demonstration farming being carried on, and they would like to correct that.

According to John B. Brooks, curator of crafts and education for the museum, a lot of research has been done on the methods and crops of the early Pennsylvania Germans. The first era they would like to depict is that of 1750-1760. This would be the middle period of their Settlers' Village which shows life between the years 1725 and 1775.

Brooks said, "We would like to interpret the farming as that done in the Lancaster County area in the hinterlands."

Brooks called their idea "demonstration farming," and said the museum would like to be a true "living history farm," showing the way life was actually lived.

Acknowledging that their space is limited, the curator said crops could be grown on a small scale and a wider

variety of livestock could be added to their present flock of chickens and a few sheep.

One of the earliest crops grown by settlers as they cleared the land was maize, or corn, because, as Brooks explains it. "This could be grown without using a plough." Vegetables were also planted early on a settler's farm.

Homestead Notes

Then "as soon as they could," they would try to grow grain. Brooks said grain was used both for themselves and as cash crops, and pointed out, "The early farmers were not merely subsistence farmers, but were commercial farmers on a small scale." He said they consumed about 80 per cent of what they produced and used the rest in trade.

Other crops produced included rye, which the museum currently grows on a limited scale; buckwheat, which was especially common among those of Scotch-Irish descent; and barley and oats. The museum would like to grow a

little of each. A large orchard was a necessity, so the museum has 35 fruit trees growing.

That part of the settlers' crop which was used as a "cash crop" was in reality used as part of an elaborate credit system, according to Brooks.

"People kept very complete records and credit slips notes and other records indicate that the early Germans used a modified barter system," he explained further. He also said in most cases the exchange of goods was not direct, but credit was good over an extended period.

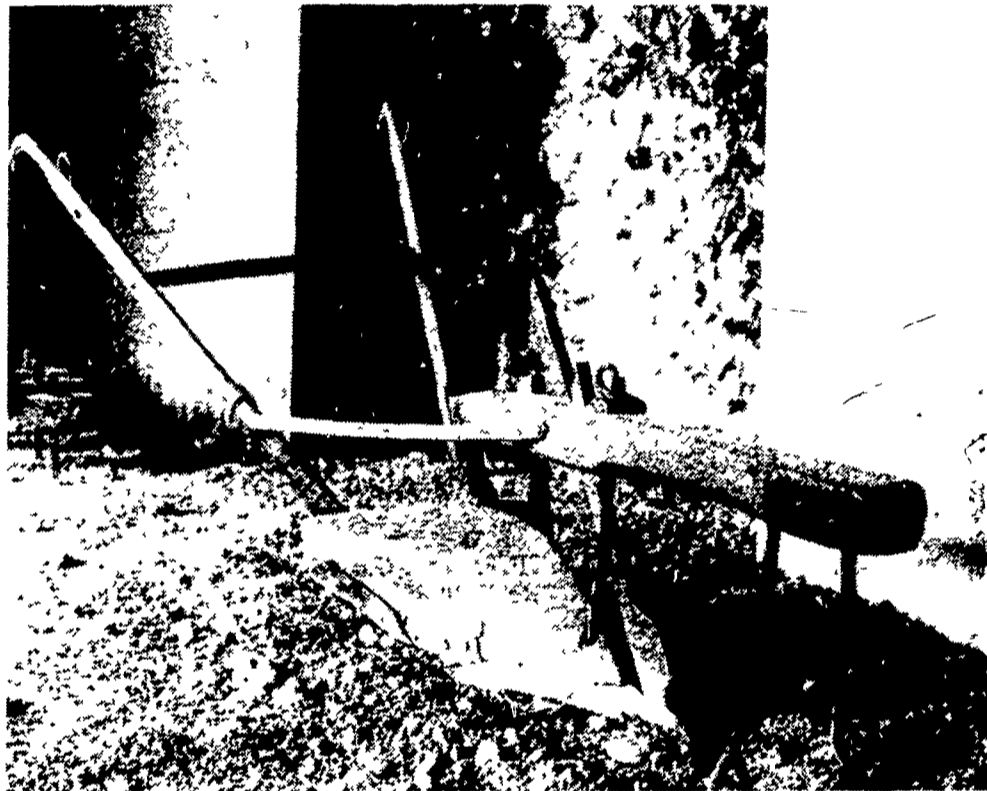
The museum has tax records from 1771 which recorded every land owner, his acreage, cattle, and other livestock. In Manheim Township there is a record of Benjamin Landis, a forerunner of the Landises who lived at the museum site, who owned 900 acres of land, 20 head of cattle, and 16 horses. He was prosperous by standards of those days and by no means typical.

The majority of farms on those tax records, Brooks related, "had between 100 and 200 acres, about four head of cattle and four head of horses." He explained that the formula for land use was commonly one third in cultivation, one third in pasture and one third in woodlot. The maintenance of a large woodlot was a necessity because of the multiple uses to which woods were put in those days.

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At the Settlers Village, a hay barracks was constructed to store the hay. The roof can be raised and lowered according to the amount of hay being stored.



A wooden shovel plough of the type used by the early German settlers in this area is shown at Landis Valley.

My Thoughts and Welcome to Them

(With apologies to James Thurber)

Nutsey was a loveable lush

By JOANNE SPAHR

George, my pet rooster from last week's article, may have had spunk, but my cat Nutsey (noot-see) was a drunk. And, in all fairness to the cats around the barn, I have to tell her story. While last week's write-up about George was true, it was nevertheless a small incident out of time. Actually, I don't like roosters all that much for pets, and have always preferred cats to any other type of animal.

Nutsey was my favorite of all time, I think. Her name is a fractured form of Pennsylvania Dutch for "naughty." Unique name, wouldn't you say? Not really. When you have a whole barn full of cats with the name Naughty, Little Naughty, Stinker, Stinky, Little Stinker, and Stinky II, Nutsey doesn't really stand out as anything unusual — it's just the same old thing said differently.

In fact, my neighbor used to amuse herself during the days when our parents would get together by trying to distinguish between all the Nutsey's and the Naughty's and the Stinky's. It was really tough, especially since her cats had distinctive names like Henry Wellington the Third,

and so forth. Also, our cats made it tougher because they had never learned the art of color coordination and were all calico or spotted grey and white. With similar names and colors, it was a real guessing game for outsiders to differentiate between the cats on the farm.

But, this particular Nutsey stood out. It had nothing to do, of course, with her name, I don't think, but rather her color — she was purple. And, she was a lush.

Through age, her brown coat had picked up a purple tint, and the shots of whiskey Dad forced down her throat to keep her alive on many occasions had tainted her upstanding reputation. More than once, Nutsey was on her death bed and Dad would squirt her with some whiskey and the next thing we'd know, she would be up on her feet, tottering a crooked line to the barn, grumbling all the way. I often wondered what nasty tales the cats told behind her back. With a drinking problem and purple hair, the possibilities for jabs in the back were endless.

Good old Nutsey. One day she wandered off in a drunken stupor and never returned. And we've never had a cat quite like her since then.



John Brooks, curator of crafts and education, discusses his hopes for a living history farm.