

Early ingenuity churned out dairy farming inventions

BY DICK ANGLESTEIN
LANCASTER — Dairying was literally going to the dogs a little over a century ago.

This quaint description doesn't have anything to do with the financial status of the farming economy at the time.

It has more to do with the ingenuity of early farm families in trying to relieve some of the tedious drudgery that characterized their daily lives.

And in these efforts, some imaginative dairy farmers tried to utilize the family dog.

Traditionally, one of the most tedious tasks on a dairy farm of the past was the churning of butter.

An early dairy wife described it this way:

"If I had my choice of ironing the week's wash or churning butter for market, I would be hard pressed to make up my mind. Both occupy so many of my waking hours that they also haunt a good bit of my sleeping hours."

Another member of a dairy

family, who obviously had weary arms from the churning, put it into less kindly terms.

"Butter has to be the work of the Devil. But he doesn't need to worry about making it since it won't keep down there."

It was statements such as these that likely prompted a rash of farm-born inventions that ushered in the dairying era of "dog power" during the latter quarter of the 19th Century.

While this epoch of pooch power never really made any permanent inroads into ag technology or even lasted that long, it was a time of unique early ingenuity delving into the dilemma of dairy drudgery.

The accompanying drawing shows one such effort to get the Fidos of farming directly involved in the making of butter.

This colossal, cumbersome and complicated contrivance shows the lengths that some dairy farm families would go to get away from churning.

And equally as ingenious as the

mechanics of this dog wheel must have been the efforts to keep the dog in the proper spot and provide the proper motivation to keep the wheel moving.

Any present-day dairy farmers interested in trying this method on a much smaller scale might attempt rigging up such an apparatus to the wheel found in the cage of the family's pet hamster or gerbil. Of course, a teaspoon of cream would be about the maximum capacity of a gerbil-powered wheel-churn.

Another similarly massive dog-power invention featured a round, revolving platform set on its side at an angle. The dog walked round and round and the circular action relayed the power through a system of cogs, gears and walking beam to an upright or rotary churn.

But these attempts out of the past to get around the chore of churning were not limited to putting the pooch to work. Some of these wheels were equipped with "motors" that were one-lamb or one-goatpower in size.

Another dairy farmer devised a foot treadle that was attached through a network of levers to the dasher handles in the churn.

Thus, a tapping foot could turn out the butter while busy hands mended a shirt or stitched a quilt.

It's even said that churning contests were held during hoe-downs to get some extra use out of the wildly stomping feet.

Here, in southeastern Pennsylvania some dairy farmers put their barrel-shaped churns on rockers. Then, an active youngster could be convinced that the churn was really a rocking horse and imaginary rides not only kept the

tot occupied but sloshed out another batch of butter.

One evening, a dairy farmer watched the similar action of a rocking chair and the rocking churn. The next day, each was connected to the other by a system of levers. Thus, rocking the baby to sleep was combined with butter churning.

When stationary gasoline engines came into vogue about the turn of the century, butter churning finally became really automated.

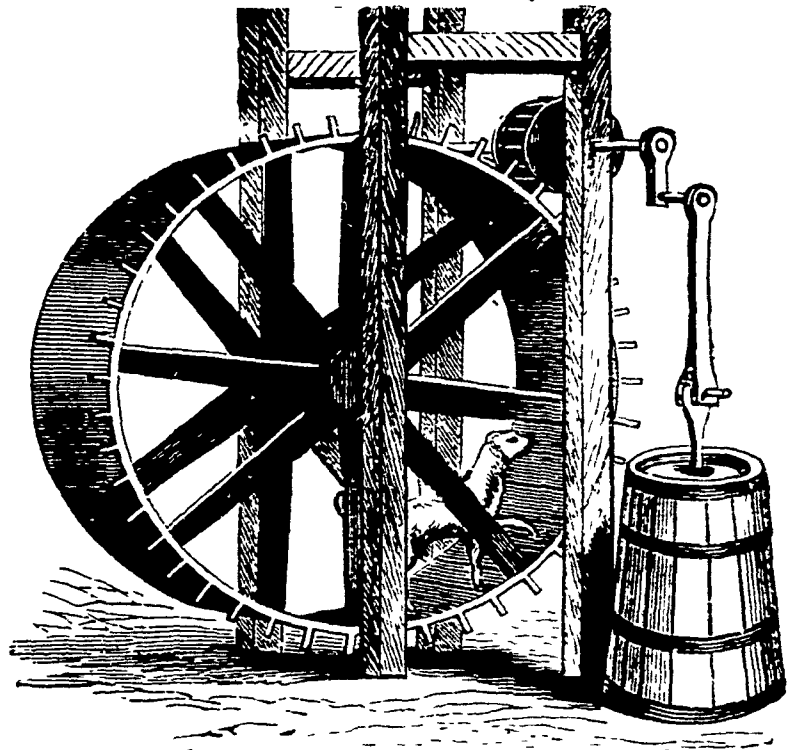
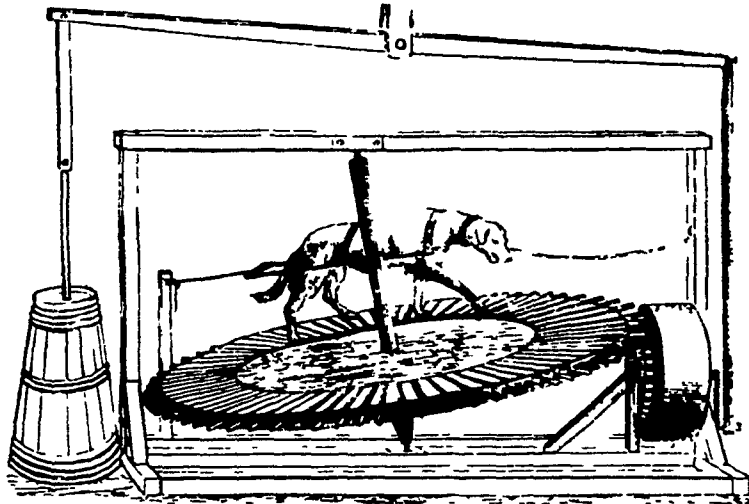
The most ingenious of the churning innovators out of dairying's past was the farmer who lashed a jug of cream to each wheel of his cart or wagon. He

claimed a butter production capacity of better than a pound per mile.

But due to the rough roads of the day his idea never spread much beyond his own stony, rutted lane. In fact, the idea was generally spread over a good bit of the lane.

These are but a few of the technological tries of early dairy farmers at improving the chore of churning.

A part of dairying's colorful past, they had their place in their day as another small step in the steady scientific advancement that has moved today's industry into the era of computerized feeding and embryo transfers.

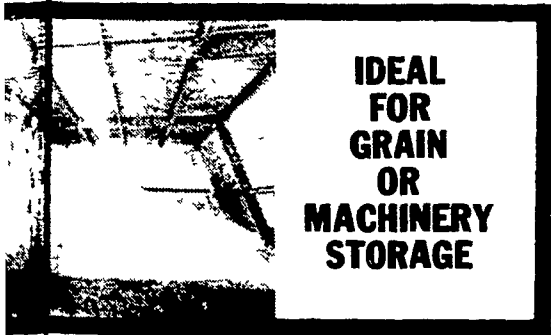


DOG-POWER

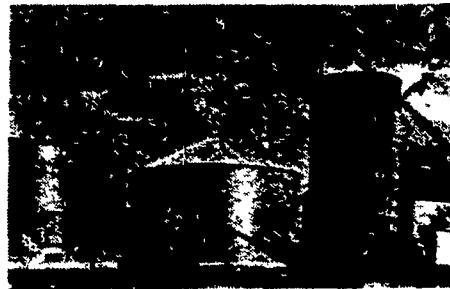
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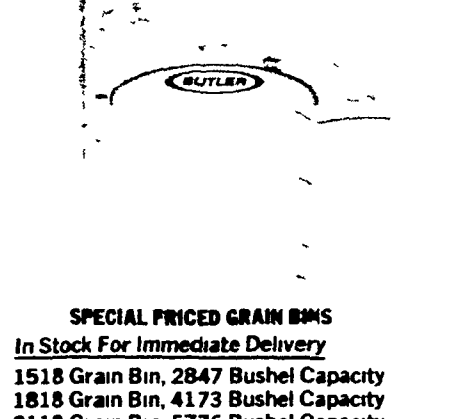
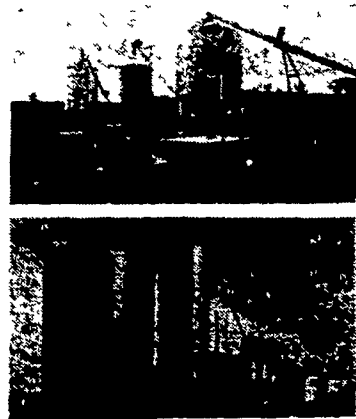
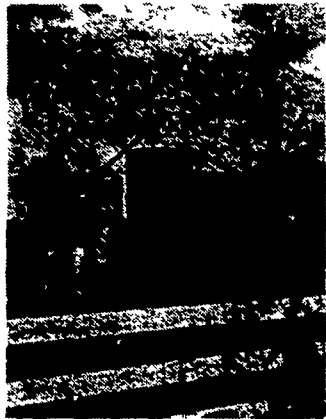
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