



Nornhold demonstrates how to use a flax brake. The brake breaks the outer fiber of the flax stem into small pieces.

Flax Culture

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process, he says it is the most rewarding.

"It's fun. Every time you get fiber coming out of the plant, they (observers) say, 'Wow.'" Nornhold brakes flax for Heritage Day.

Scutching, or striking the flax with a wooden scutching knife while held against an upright board, is done after the flax has been broken. This step removes much of the woody husks from the fiber. The remaining outer fiber, according to Nornhold, is removed by hackling or combing the fibers.

Flax hackles were boards, approximately three or four inches wide by a foot in length, set with a bed of 3-inch iron spikes. The flax fiber was pulled through progressively finer hackles until all excess fiber had been removed. At this point the strands of fiber

called tow, which looked much like blonde human hair, were twisted into a "strick" to be stored. The strick, like wool, was spun into yarn and woven on looms into cloth.

The advent of the cotton gin in 1793, Nornhold reports, marked the beginning of the end for flax culture since after that time cotton goods could be purchased cheaply.

But today, he observes, words like flaxen haired, tow head and scutching, with which children are still occasionally threatened, live on in our language as reminders of another era.

Flax culture demonstrated by Nornhold and other aspects of colonial culture may be seen at the Hower-Slote House during Heritage Days in early October.

Franklin County 4-H Shepherds

The Franklin County 4-H Shepherds met March 24 at the Franklin County Extension building.

The club was divided into two groups by age. The older group was quizzed on the care and feeding of market lambs, different grains and their nutritive value, basic health requirements and the characteristics of different breeds of sheep. The younger group discussed feed and minerals, and the nutritional requirements of

market lambs at various stages of growth.

The Shepherds Club is planning a field trip to Belmont Ridge near Gettysburg to see the prize-winning Merino and Shropshire flocks of Charles and Barbara Platt. The trip is tentatively scheduled for April 26.

Refreshments were served after the meeting.

The next meeting will be held April 28 at the Extension building.



Nornhold scutches flax that has just come from the flax brake. Scutching removes most of the outer fiber or hull of the flax plant.

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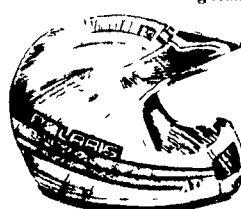


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