

# What's Cropping Up At New Morning Farm?

HUSTONTOWN (Portion of Huntingdon Co.) — Jim and Moie Kimball Crawford grow a lot of different things on their Huntingdon County farm.

One of their most successful crops must be the innovative, can-do attitude which has enabled them to prosper at small-scale vegetable farming.

"We're a very diversified, direct-marketing vegetable farm," Jim told a crowd of about 65 during a recent Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture (PASA)-sponsored field day at New Morning Farm.

"There are very few vegetable farmers in this area. But we felt that we wanted to farm on a small scale, and we knew we wanted to grow vegetables. We're able to farm the way we want to farm, and we have a direct relationship with consumers."

Throughout the field and building tours, the Crawfords detailed the techniques and equipment, from a custom-designed hydrostatic harvesting wagon to the practice of providing customers with as much farm-based information as possible, which have worked for them in the field and at the marketplace.

"The thing that was always our biggest problem is that there were no models," Crawford said. "We just weren't sure, so we were always trying things."

The results, after 28 years of organic farming, are systems and equipment that are "low-tech, but carefully chosen low-tech."

Things may seem very simple,

but they are "appropriate for us and our scale," he said.

One of the most deceptively simple pieces of equipment on New Morning Farm is the harvesting wagon. Powered by a 1950s-era Tuff-Built hydrostatic tractor, the wagon sports a conveyor belt created from an aluminum ladder.

As the clutchless Tuff-Built creeps along through the rows of vegetables, harvesters pick the vegetables and place them on the conveyor. Workers on the wagon then put the produce directly into packing boxes. The wagon has a roof for shade, workers are close enough to talk to one another, and there is no need to drag boxes through the fields.

"Everything is right next to where you're working," Crawford said. "The main negative is maneuverability, so you have to plant accordingly."

The conveyor belt design can be adapted to fit any wagon. The only other consideration would then be propulsion. A creeper gear is a helpful feature, he noted.

For direct marketers like the Crawfords, efficient storage and packing of produce is critical.

"It's a material-handling problem when you get to a certain point," Crawford said. "Why this building is the way it is relates to the truck (used to haul produce to market)."

New Morning Farm's custom-designed packing shed, with a concrete floor, loading dock, two coolers (each with a range of optimum holding temperatures for specific produce), and lots of storage space, has been a "big

labor-saver," he said. The use of pallets and a pallet jack allowed him to load two trucks in 20 minutes.

Though having appropriate equipment and buildings is critical, so obviously is having a product to harvest. The Crawfords, with the help of a couple of year-round employees, interns, apprentices, and seasonal workers, plant about 25 acres into about 40 different crops which are typically harvested from May through December. A variety of season-extension methods are used, including staggered plantings. Beans, for example, are planted 10 or 12 times.

"That gives us the harvest we want for our market," Crawford said.

They start all their own seeds, with the exception of strawberries. They don't use a transplanter, but, as Crawford said, "we've gotten really good at doing it by hand."

A number of different weed control devices are used, including "plenty of hoes," he said. Botanical pest control such as Bt keeps bugs at bay. Soil fertility is enhanced with mushroom soil, chicken manure, and a little lime.

So it's planted, it's harvested, it's packed, and stored.

Then what? "After we grow this stuff we have to sell it all," said Moie.

There is more to that than just hauling vegetables to the nearest street corner. New Morning Farm sells at several growers-only and other markets, and has been going to the same Wash-

ington, D.C.-area market for 27 years.

As with the other farm equipment, the technology for the sales end of things is very basic. But finding what works best in the marketplace has also been a series of trial and error.

Sometimes it is necessary to pay more to get a product that suits your needs, Moie noted. The purchase of a high-end electronic scale and calculator, for

instance, significantly reduced human error in figuring the sale price. Stackable tables with adjustable legs have been a boon as well.

Through it all, the satisfaction of selling directly to consumers, of having a "personal connection" with the people who eat the food they've grown, and of farming organically and sustainably, are all what keeps things growing on New Morning Farm.

## Cattle Associations Sponsor Field Day In Western Pennsylvania

AMITY (Washington Co.) — Recently over 300 people from seven states attended the co-sponsored cattlemen's field day at Blossom Valley Polled Hereford Farm. The Pennsylvania Cattlemen's Association, Washington County Cattlemen Association, Pennsylvania Polled Hereford Association, Mason-Dixon Polled Hereford Association, and the Grazing Forage/Lands Conservation Initiative sponsored the combined event.

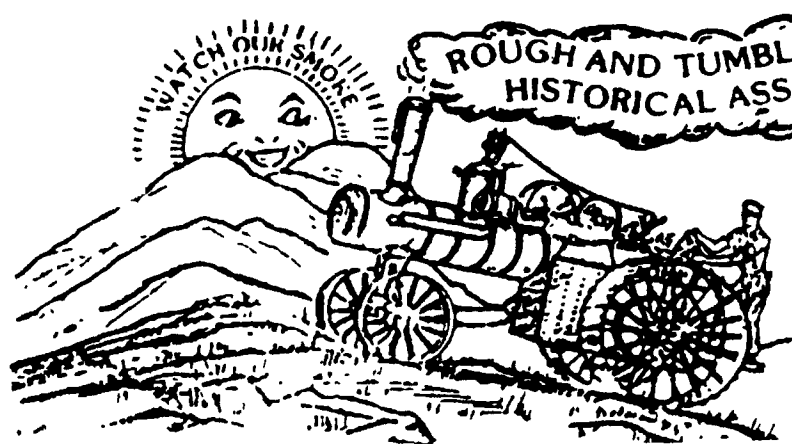
Mr. and Mrs. Dan Dye, hosted the event and provided an excellent schedule of events and speakers.

Noted scientist and scholar,

Dr. Temple Grandin of Colorado State University spoke on the virtues of proper cattle handling practices and challenged those present to employ practices more in line with animal behavior patterns. Cara Gerkin, head of the USDA meat grading division, and Paul Slayton, Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Beef Council, each addressed the crowd with issues and changes relating to the industry.

The Dye family, along with their farm managers, Mike and Jenny Neef, provided lunch, door prizes, contests, music by a local blue grass band, and a fun auction for the benefit of the junior associations.

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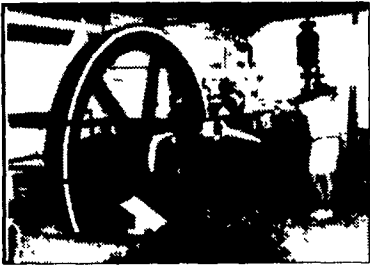
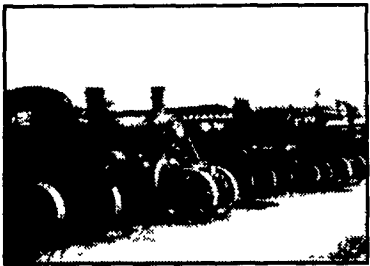
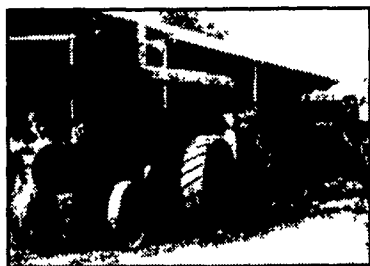


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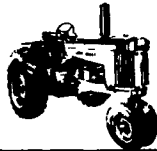


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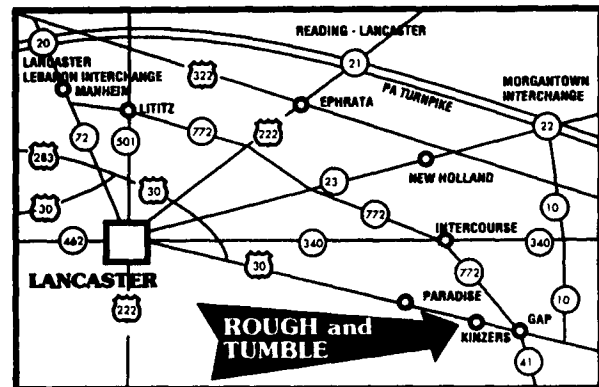
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