

Growing tobacco in cuspidor days

by Hazel Crankshaw

The plants grew in long, long rows and every farm child hoed them. Tobacco plants. One could almost measure their daily growth.

They grew tall and taller, and father, mother, and the children went afield to "sucker" and top them.

The leaves were attacked by fat, green, and juicy worms and every kid in the countryside, sooner or later, picked the pests. Hard-hearted boys squashed them or pulled them apart. The gentler sex squealed at the sight of them and shook them from leaf to can for later destruction.

What separated the men from the boys was the hard work of cutting off those enormous tobacco plants at their base, spearing them onto laths, heaving the laths onto tobacco wagons, then unloading and hanging them in tobacco barns.

The outdoor work was finished before frost, but when winter closed in, work began again. Stripping was a family affair and winter days and evenings were spent in the tobacco cellar.

Only the sales transaction belonged to dad. In a sense, that was cooperative

too, for many a Donegal Township youngster was sent to college on the money earned by tobacco growing.

Tobacco was one of the Township's major crops for more than a hundred years. Not only was it bread and butter for the farmers, but men from Maytown worked in the fields and in tobacco cellars.

A cigar industry in Maytown was the natural outgrowth of being surrounded by fields of tobacco. In a town isolated because no transportation was available, cigar shops provided work for many of the townspeople, men and women. Some shops employed 15 to 18 workers. Numerous husband and wife teams worked at the trade in a room in their homes.

The first cigars must have been pungent pieces, for they were made entirely from local tobacco. In all probability, they were sold only locally. Later on, local tobacco was used for filler; wrappers were of finer texture and mild aroma. These were made for city trade.

There was another industry—packing the stuff for the chewing trade. Those cupidors! The brass ones are still with us, highly polished and treasured as

antique pieces.

The cigar industry began its phase-out in the early 1920's, when machine-made cigars and cigarets began to dominate the market. Tobacco growing continued as a staple until more recent years, but it is giving way to other crops.

The work of planting and growing has been simplified by new methods, but the hard work of harvesting still calls for brawn and fortitude. Today's tobacco cellars are still filled with acrid dust, but the work seems lighter now that a radio is standard equipment.

Farm methods are changing; our attitude toward tobacco is changing. Who knows? I may be relating the story of a soon-to-be-discarded farm crop.



Cleaning Grandfather's gun

by Jay Greider

The gun has played an active part in the history of the revolution, the formation of these United States and the preservation of our democratic ideals. Now is the time to look in the attic behind the rafter and bring forth the old weapon commonly referred to as "Grandfather's Old Gun." This is the year to bring it to light and clean, oil, and preserve it.

To clean the antique, go

easy. It is not meant to look brand new. The wooden stock may be cleaned with a panel cleaner available in any grocery or hardware store. After a good cleaning (use sandpaper only in extreme cases), use brown wax shoe polish to shine it to a dull luster. To clean the metal parts and the barrel, use an oily rag and a lot of elbow grease. In extreme cases light steel wool and oil may be used. Care should be taken so that excessive rubbing does not

make the metal shiney. The gun is probably over 100 years old and should look its age. If any parts are missing, some original and reproduced parts are available. Take the gun to a gun shop or antique dealer for information on who sells them.

These restored weapons make good conversation pieces. They can be displayed over fireplaces, on pegs over doorways, or just standing in a corner. Show it with pride and preserve it for your children.

An hypothetical letter to a prisoner

by Margaret Landis

(Author's note: I have written here, in the form of a letter, what I believe might be a description of the arrival of the news of the signing of the Declaration of Independence in this area approximately two hundred years ago.)

To Sergeant John Meloney (Known as Macaroni Jack) Aboard Prison Ship-----New York Harbor

Written at-----, Sunday, the fourteenth day of July, in the year of our Lord one thousand seventeen hundred and seventy six.

My dearest Husband:
The Right Reverend-----has graciously consented to write this letter for me this day to tell you that your family are all well and that the crops are growing nicely. I am kept very busy spinning and weaving. The girls sew the shirts fairly well, though Sufanna's stitches are yet too large, but she is young and will soon do better. The shirts are not of the quality I am accustomed to making, but they should do well enough to clothe our men.

We were greeted on our approach to the church this morning by a very joyous peeling of the bell. This was occasioned we were told at the beginning of the service by the signing of resolves in Philadelphia much like those of our Affociators in this area. The hymn singing today was particularly joyous in view of this good news. Son James has announced that he will leave in the morning for Hanover to see about enlisting. He is quite determined since hearing the good news, though I feel he is young and we will sorely miss his strong arms at home at harvest time. I trust we will have no more Indian troubles.

We pray daily for your release from your captivity and your return to us. We are most grateful to the kind reverend for writing this letter for us.

Your loving wife----X her mark

(The sequel to this letter would be Mistress Meloney walking home with her family--lifting the skirts of her "Sunday best" muslin dress to ward off the dust from the road. Her large

leghorn hat would help to shade her face from the July sun's hot rays as she kept pace with her eldest son whom she would be loathe to send off the next morning. He would probably be wearing his father's Sunday coat into which he had grown since the latter left for the campaign in Quebec almost a year before. The younger boys would be dressed in jackets and breeches she had made for son James six or eight years before, and she would wonder how these boys with the aid of their aging farmhand, herself, and the girls could handle all the work to be done when he, too, had left to join the army. However, since it was now a true army of an independent nation, there would be mixed feelings of sadness

and joy, and they would start to sing as they walked--first the solemn "Doxology" because it was Sunday and they believed in a "nation under God", and second a gay tune such as "The Haymaker," a jig tune, or our very own "Yankee Doodle", that song which immediately conjurs to the mind the picture "The Spirit of '76" and which at least one story tells us was written by an Englishman to deride the dress of our rag-tag, independent, individualistic Continental Army.)

Mrs. Landis has followed the early American use of the long "s" in the letter, here represented by the modern "f".



VALUABLE PROPERTY FOR SALE

The subscriber offers at public or private sale, the following valuable real estate.

One farm, situate in Mount Joy Township adjoining lands of Peter Horst, David Painter, David Kolb, Peter Heistand, and others, containing one hundred and ninety seven acres and fifty perches.

160 ACRES OF

said land is cleared and in good condition, the remainder is well trimmed. Thereon is erected

TWO SWISSER BARNs,

and one dwelling house, one and a half stories high, a stone spring house and two never failing wells of water, and about one hundred choice fruit trees.

One lot of ground situated in the town of Richland, Donegal Township, on which is erected a small dwelling house, being lot number forty-four, as marked in plan of said town.

The above property will be sold at private sale, at any time between now and the sixth day of December, and if not sold by that time it will then be sold at public sale, at the house of David Martin, Innkeeper, in the town of Richland. Persons wishing to view the premises, or to have a description of it, are requested to call on Mr. Martin, who will give every satisfaction, or upon the subscriber residing about one mile and a half from the village of Bainbridge on the road leading from said place to Elizabethtown.

Possession of said property, will be given to the purchaser on the first of April next.

MICHAEL HORST

THREE CENTS AND A HALF REWARD

RANAWAY from the subscriber in Conestoga township on Thursday the 12th inst. - an indented apprentice to the Wagon Making business, named

CHRISTIAN SHENK;

The above reward and two chews of Tobacco, will be given to any person who will return him to his master, but no charges paid.

SAM'L BINKLEY

Conestoga, November 19, 1828

Tory ballad

"These hardy knaves and stupid fools,
Some apish and pragmatic mules,
Some servile acquiescing tools,
These, these compose the Congress!

"When Jove resolved to send a curse,
And all the woes of life rehearse,
Not plague, not famine, but much worse
He cursed us with a Congress."

Tory Ballad, 1776

"Q. What king of men composed the Congress?
A. It consists of obscure, pettifogging attorneys, bankrupt shopkeepers, smugglers, etc., etc."

Tory Catechism, 1778

the above is from THE POLITICAL SENTINAL - Wednesday, November 19, 1828 Printed and Published by JAMES CAMERON Near the Farmers' Bank IN THE CITY OF LANCASTER.