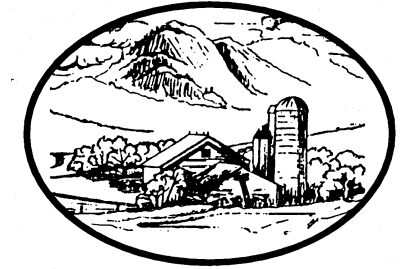




Pawlett Historical Society
P.O. Box 113
Pawlet, Vermont 05761

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**PAWLET
SCRAPBOOK**



Pawlett Historical Society

February 2022

A message from the President...

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NEWSLETTER

Sarah Rath
Susan Hosley

As we begin 2022, COVID-19 has reminded us that we need to remain vigilant and protect each other. The Pawlett Historical Society decided to hold the first board meeting of the New Year via Zoom.

We don't know what this year will bring but there are a few events that we are confident will take place. After a two-year absence the PHS Tag & Bake Sale is planned on for June 11th and if you would like to donate items (no electronics or clothing, please), drop off will be June 10th. Watch for details in our next newsletter.

Stay tuned for the Ice Cream Social in August at the Chriss Monroe Chapel – we plan to have a new exhibit and a speaker. Please join us for our next old cemetery clean-up day on September 17th. Last year we had many volunteers and met new people, all who helped bring to life the unique carvings on the gravestones.

The Pawlett Historical Society would like to thank all who donated to our annual appeal and those that renewed their membership. Your generosity not only supports the day-to-day operations but also the special activities and events that are planned. We look forward to the year ahead.

We would also like to thank Barry Meinert for his stewardship as past president of the Pawlett Historical Society these last four years. His leadership will be hard to follow.

Rose Smith, President

COMING EVENTS

May: Speaker event, date and speaker TBD

June: Friday, June 10 10 AM to 4 PM drop off for Tag and Bake sale (No electronics or clothes)

Saturday, June 11, PHS Tag and Bake Sale 8:00 AM to 1:00 PM

Pawlet Farming in the 1940s and '50s

Bob Young, 2018

According to the US Census there were between ninety and one hundred active farms in Pawlet in 1940. Some of the names would be recognizable today: Waite, Nelson, Mason, Leach, Mars, Moore, Sheldon, Smith, Hulett, Kelly, Gould, Cleveland, Cramer, and Herrick. A vast majority of these farms would have been dairy farms, and that will be the focus of this account.

By way of introduction, I am H. Robert "Bob" Young. I was born in 1941 and spent my formative years on a dairy farm about a mile north of Pawlet village. That farm had been in my mother's family since 1858 and was originally a sheep farm. The barn has been taken down, but the house still exists. The address is now 4876 VT Route 30. I shall attempt to describe what dairy farming was like up until the time I left for college in 1959

By the middle 1940s, many farms had converted to the use of tractors. Horse-drawn farm machinery was being phased out. In my earliest memory, about 1945, our farm had a Farmall H tractor, a team of horses, a Holstein bull, and about thirty milking cows, primarily grade Holsteins. The total herd, including calves, heifers, and cows, numbered around sixty. The farm included about forty acres of tillable land and about thirty acres that were used for pasture.

At the time described above, milk was shipped to the creamery in ten-gallon milk cans. The creamery in Pawlet was located on the Danby-Pawlet Road just to the northeast of its junction with Vermont Route 133. Most farms were using milking machines, although some smaller operations may have been milking by hand. The milk was carried from the stable to the milk house in pails.

Hay was put into the barn as loose hay. As a boy of about five or six, I can remember being given the job of holding the horse reins for loading hay in the field. I imagine the horses knew more about where they were to go than I, but I do remember it was important to swing wide on the turns. If one followed the windrow exactly on the turns, the hay loader following the wagon would fail to pick up the hay. Once the wagon was taken to the barn, the hay was unloaded into the hay mow by hand with pitchforks. Once the hay became too high in the mow to access with pitchforks, a mechanical hay fork grapple was used in combination with ropes, pulleys, and an overhead track to lift the hay and carry it to the desired place in the mow. At a fairly young age, I was given the job of using either a horse or a tractor, to pull on the rope lifting the hay into the mow.



Sherman Young Farm, Spring 1963

Corn was also harvested in a much different manner than today. Once the corn was ready for harvest, the outside two rows of corn were cut by hand using a corn knife. Sufficient interior rows were also cut by hand to gain access for a tractor and corn harvester without trampling the standing corn. The corn harvester was pulled by a tractor and took a single row at a time, gathered a number of stalks together, tied them with twine, and deposited the shock on the ground. Then the corn shocks were loaded onto a wagon and taken to the chopper/blower at the silo. It was important not to feed the chopper too fast or the ensilage would plug the pipe going to the top of the silo. Not all farmers owned all the equipment needed to do some routine farm jobs. This was true for our farm, as we did not own either a corn harvester or a chopper/blower. In our case, three farms combined to do corn harvesting cooperatively each year.

During the mild portion of the year, cows were pastured night and day when they were not being milked, but heifers were pastured full time. Calves were kept in the barn year-round. Heifers were brought into the barn in the winter. Cows and heifers were let out into the barnyard once a day where there was a watering trough. The bull was kept in a pen. Two sides of the bull pen consisted of unmortared stone walls. The other two sides consisted of two-inch thick planks except for a single vertical opening just wide enough to allow for feeding. Some of those planks showed impressive signs of being gored by bull's horns over time. The horses were kept in stalls adjacent to the bull pen.

In the barn, cattle were fed grain year-round. They were also fed ensilage and hay, as needed, to supplement their foraging in the pasture. Manure, along with used bedding material of straw or sawdust, was collected in the gutter behind the

The following is a list of businesses which once thrived in downtown Pawlet. Platt Herrick, resident sage and storyteller, sent us this to help us envision what the town used to look like. Thanks Platt!

Past Industries in Pawlet: Platt remembers

Carl Robinson carriage factory in large building on Route 133. Carriage factory later converted to frozen food locker plant and meat processing owned corporately by the customers. Later Myron Waite took it over and added a slaughterhouse.

Grist mill and cider mill on west side of millpond in village; grist mill water powered, cider mill engine powered.

Present Post Office and residence beyond were originally connected in the middle to form one continuous structure for J. McGowan Ford dealership and later J. Towlies' John Deere and New Idea dealership. Still later, J Rodovice car repair and then J. "Doc" Young's car repair.

Franklin Hotel, now Mach's Market, on the west side of School Street

V. Young's Grocery Store next to north end of Hotel.

Blacksmith Shop and Clothespin Factory on the south side of Hotel.

Hotel Barn on east side of millpond.

Tom Week's store east side of School Street; later Edgar Haskins' Plumbing and Propane Business.

General Store on first floor of present Masonic Building; the General Store was operated by Russell Clark.



View of School Street from Route 30



Mill Dam, Pawlet, Vt.

Later John Mach had his first Grocery Store there before he bought the Franklin Hotel.

Hardware Store (Winchester) across from Hotel Barn

"Allone Inn" rooming house between Hardware Store and Masonic Hall.

Art Brown residence with auto and carriage repair garage on Route 30 south (still in village).

Telephone office in residence of William Porter, now Mr. McKenzie residence.

Sheldon Orchard and Store just south of village on Route 30.

Lackay sawmill north side of School Street Bridge (Rupert Mountain Road).

Crescent Valley House Hotel south side of School Street.

"Red Mill" grist mill on Route 30 just beyond "Spanktown".

Blacksmith shop at farm in Spanktown now owned by Nate Smith.

In later years Grimmond milk plant built on Danby-Pawlet Road east of junction with Route 133. Later H.P.

Hood, later B.Gould Slaughterhouse, now Town Highway Garage.

Not really a business, Town Farm on Route 30 south of village for homeless and jobless people. They could work on the farm to help with expenses; supported by the town.

stanchioned cattle in the barn. This manure was shoveled from the gutter into a manure spreader behind a tractor for the length of the gutter. The manure could accumulate at such a rate that it required removal once a day in the winter. It was normally spread on an available field as soon as the manure spreader had a full load. Spreading this manure at -10 degrees with a notable tail wind could be a memorable experience! Sometimes the manure was piled for spreading at a later time.

The normal field crops were hay and corn. I can remember my father growing a field of oats early in my life and taking the harvested crop to the grist mill in Pawlet village where Luther Clark was the miller. The harvesting must have been done by someone else, as our farm did not own a combine. I presume the oats were used primarily to feed the horses. By the 1950s, it became more common to plant a field of alfalfa for its improved nutrient value over such hay crops as timothy or fescue.

Up until the early 1950s Vermont Route 30 in front of our house was a gravel road. I'm not sure of the exact year, but it was paved by 1953 at the latest.

Baled hay came into common usage in the late 1940s. More hay could be stored in the same space with less manual labor. For most of the time that I was on the farm, we did not own a baler, but had a neighboring farmer do the baling for us. In the place of the hay fork grapple, rope, and pulleys, a bale elevator was used to deliver the hay bales to the higher levels of the hay mow.

The hay conditioner was another innovation that came into common use in the hay field sometime in the early 1950s. At that time, a hay conditioner, also referred to as a crimper, was a stand-alone piece of equipment consisting of two rolls that picked up the newly mown hay from behind the mower in a separate operation. The idea behind hay conditioning was that the grass stalks would be crushed open at intervals along their length, thus resulting in faster drying hay. This often cut the time between cutting and baling by one to two days.

Innovation also took place in the harvesting of corn sometime in the late 1940s. Instead of taking shocks of corn to a chopper/blower at the silo, the corn was chopped in the field and blown into a wagon or truck with high sides that traveled behind or alongside the tractor-pulled field chopper. Then, chopped corn was fed into a blower that conveyed the corn through a pipe to the top of the silo. Around this time, it also became customary, in planting the corn, to leave two or more rows unplanted in the middle of the field and at the

Sherman Farm House ca. 1915



edges to eliminate the need to cut the corn before starting to chop.

I believe my father gave up his horses some time prior to 1950 and his bull sometime in the early 1950s. The switch to the use of artificial insemination soon proved its advantages in increased milk production and I'm sure my parents felt relief in not having to worry about a bull around their three young children. The addition of a second tractor, an Oliver 55 diesel, took place sometime in the early 1950s. This allowed for two people to mow and condition hay at the same time.

About 1958, a significant remodeling of the barn took place. The old wooden stanchions were replaced with new metal ones. At the same time, water bowls were added so that cows could help themselves to water any time they pleased. A new gutter was built to accommodate a mechanical gutter cleaner and the distance between the stanchions and the gutter was increased because cattle were becoming bigger and longer. New steel support posts were also installed to help carry the weight of the overhead hay mow and hay. The bull pen was removed as well as the horse stalls and a wall for hanging harnesses. This additional space was used for providing new calf pens. At the other end of the barn, a formerly-open area was enclosed for cattle housing and a calving pen. These improvements were probably mirrored, in one way or another over time, in many of the other area dairies.

Sometime in the mid to late 1950s, a conversion from milk cans to bulk storage tanks took place. Creameries would no longer accept milk transported in cans. This entailed the remodeling, expansion, or outright replacement of the milk houses that were normally attached to the barn where the milk was produced. Rather than having milk cans

shipped every day, a transport truck would come and collect milk from the bulk tank every other day. Around the same time, a conversion was taking place for the delivery of grain. Grain had been delivered to the farm or up at an agricultural cooperative in 100 pound burlap bags. Farmers were now installing bulk grain bins and having their grain delivered in large bulk quantities.

As I left for college in the fall of 1959 I could not help but notice that my father had timed the installation of a mechanical gutter cleaner and a mechanical silo unloader for completion just prior to my departure!

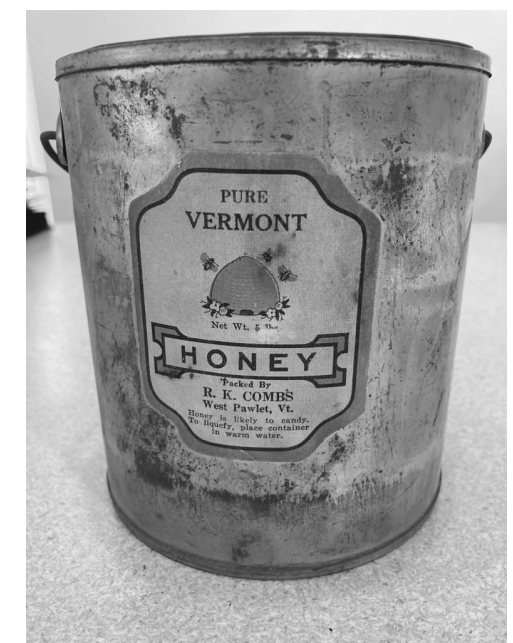
The farm described above was able to support a family of five, with the addition of one laborer, during the 1940s and 1950s.

Bob Young, December 2018



Welcome Back Rhonda!

Rhonda Schlangen has rejoined the Pawlet Historical Society board after initially serving from 2011-2015. She is interested in the community history of Pawlet and the stories and experiences of people who lived here before us. She loves learning about everyone from the Abenaki whose ancestral lands Pawlet is sited on, to the family that built the home in 1877 where she and her family now live. She is excited to support the PHS' efforts to bring these stories to our communities. When she is not gardening or walking her dog on the D&H Rail Trail, Rhonda has a consulting business, working remotely with philanthropies and non-profits in the US and other countries.



Did you know this beekeeper, R.K. Combs?

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