

May 2008

Historical Homestead Down on the Farm



The 1870s Homestead Farm comes alive in spring when the animals arrive. All of our livestock are borrowed from local farmers and spend the spring, summer and fall at the Nature Center.

This year, you'll find pigs, sheep, cattle and chickens at the Homestead. Settlers of the 1870s kept these animals on their farms to supply meat, milk, eggs, lard, wool and leather.



The March 24, 1870 edition of our local paper, *Bartram's Cheek*, reported: "Mr. Cressey...yesterday butchered a pig of the Chester White breed, weighing 600 lbs. when dressed." One reason for growing a hog that large was for the quantity of lard or fat that could be harvested from such an animal. Lard was used for cooking and baking, making soap, and sometimes even candle making.

Draft Horses

While some animals supplied food for a settler's table, others were an important source of power to get big jobs done. Farmers owned oxen and draft horses to pull wagons, sleds and plows, skid logs through the woods and to operate stump-pulling machines.



By 1870, most Midland County farms used draft horses instead of oxen. While horses were more expensive, they could pull faster and became the preferred draft animal for most American farmers in the mid-19th century.

While horses and oxen are not kept at the Homestead Farm, they are a part of our Fall Harvest Festival. The next one will be held in Fall 2009.

Visit the Information Desk for program information.