

## **A Year on Crystal Spring Farm**

**by**

**Ruth-Alice M. Seebold Spangler**

I would like to share with you a year on the Clarence Christopher Seebold Crystal Spring Farm of 175 acres west of New Berlin during the 1950s and 1960s. Our source of water is from a crystal clear spring that is on the farm, giving it its name. The farm was bought by Christopher Seebold III in 1837, Christopher Seebold IV 1870, Christopher Seebold V 1884, and Clarence Christopher Seebold 1936. It has been owned by the Seebolds for the past 176 years. The late Clarence Christopher and Margaret Seebold are my parents, who headed my family when my sister Nancy and



In June we used the Case tractor with a sickle bar and a hay rake.

I were growing up. Here is a year-long account of the rhythm of work on a farm, seen from the perspective of a young daughter in the household. The farm remains in my family today.

### **Producing Milk**

Each morning my parents had to get up early to go to the barn to milk the twenty-one cows and also had to milk the twenty-one cows every evening. The two milking

machines had to be carried from the milk house in to the barn. In the barn there were two rows of cows. One milking machine went on one side and the other milking machine went on the other side to milk. You put the machine on each cow's teats and continue to each cow. When the milking machine container became full, you would empty the milk in a bucket. Then you would carry it to the milk house to pour the milk through a filter in a strainer into a milk can. After each morning and evening when you were finished milking you had to wash the milking machine. In the evenings, the cans of milk were put in the spring water overflow trough to cool and to keep them cool till morning. Later my parents bought a milk cooler that would cool the milk overnight.



Tractor, baler, and wagon full of hay in June. Dad is the on tractor, sister is on the hay wagon, and I stand on the ground.

Every morning Dad would take the milk in four milk cans to New Berlin Rosedale Dairy Co. When that closed he took the milk to Dairymen's League Co-operative in Mifflinburg. Sometimes I went with him. In the evenings of the winter months, while the cows where milked, my sister Nancy or I gave the cows chop, silage, and hay to eat. We also gave chop, hay, and water to the calves. There were also a number of cats at the barn that liked to have some of the milk. After the cows were milked in the summer

they would go out to pasture to graze. Each day they were put in different fields to eat grass. They would be in the pasture all day till it was time to milk them, around 4:30 pm. Then you would go to the field and call them by name or call “come boss, come boss,” etc. They would hear you, start to walk toward you, and keep walking right into the barn. After you milked them in the evening during the summer, we would put them in the orchard over night, close to the buildings. In the winter months, we put them in the barnyard overnight.

Every spring someone would come and spray the inside of the barn white with lime to disinfect or sterilize the barn so we could sell milk. The milk inspector always came around to see if it was done. The procedure is called whitewashing the inside of the barn.

I had my own calf that I named Trigger. I would lead, comb, pet and feed her. She grew up to be a milking cow and had two sets of twins, and we had another cow that had one set of twins. We thought that was a little unusual. When it came time that we had to sell her, my dad cut off her horns and now I have them as bookends. We had our own bulls. My dad fed them hay in a trough and watered them from a bucket. I thought all the bulls we had were scary.



Cow “Trigger” with twins, Ruth-Alice, and mother.

### **Poultry, Eggs and Pigs**

We also had pigs, ducks, and chickens. You would feed the pigs chop with whey (liquid from making cheese at Rosedale Dairy Co.) or pig chop with water that was put in their trough. The pigs would also eat corn off of corncobs. My mother raised ducks and dressed them to sell. At one time she had as many as 145 ducks to dress (killed and cleaned) and sell. My mother would buy 300 peeps from Mattern Hatchery and raise them to full maturity. The peeps were put in a building called a brooder house. There



Flock of ducks in the yard getting ready to take a swim.

was a coal stove, and a big metal circle (called a hopper) that they could get under to keep warm. After the peeps lost their yellow down, grew their feathers to full maturity, and started to lay eggs, it was time to move them to a different house called the chicken house. By then the matured chickens that were in the houses would have started to molt (lose some of their feathers) and stopped laying eggs so it was time to sell them. The houses had to be disinfected to kill any chicken lice by sprinkling lime around the place they roosted and around on the floor before new chickens were housed in the chicken houses. We had two chicken houses that housed about 150 laying hens each. You had



to go in the chicken houses and reach in the hens' nest to collect the eggs every morning and evening. There was straw in the nests and also on the floors. The eggs had to be washed, weighed, and placed in crates so they were ready to sell. A Mr. Speck came around by truck to pick up the eggs. My sister and I went along to the mill to get chicken feed so we could pick out the printed fabric bags, which were full of feed. After the printed feed bags where empty they were washed and used for dresses, pillowcases, sheets, quilts or anything to sew.

### **Farming the Fields**

In early spring it was time to plow, harrow and disk the fields. This preparation was to get the ground fine so there are no lumps and ready to plant. After the fields were plowed a tractor and an open wagon were driven to the field to pick stones. Stones too big to stay in the plowed field had to be picked up, put on the wagon, and hauled away. The crops to plant were oats and corn. The corn was planted when the dogwood trees were in bloom. The wheat (winter wheat) was planted in the fall. Another thing my dad did was to cultivate the corn after it had grown some to kill the weeds. The cultivator was attached to the front of the tractor, because you had to drive between the rows. You really had to watch carefully so that you would not hit the corn stalks. You would not cultivate after the corn became knee high.



Dad is with his only Farmall tractor chopping corn for the silo in September.

You also looked at, and fixed, the barb wire fence around the fields. When the crops start growing, if you could see yellow wild mustard it was time to walk through the field and pull the mustard. Wild mustard is a weed that should not be in the field with the crop when the crop is harvested.

In June, you would get started to make hay. First you would cut the grass (clover or timothy) with a Case tractor that had a sickle bar attached to make rows. The sun would dry the cut grass, and then we used a hay rake to rake it so it would finish drying. To rake we used the same Case tractor to pull the hay rake that turned in circles, lifting up the grass so air could circulate through it, getting it completely dry, and putting it in rows ready to bale.

A tractor pulled a baler and wagon. The baler picked up the row of dry grass and made bales that came out of the back of the baler. Someone on the wagon, behind the baler, had to reach with a hay hook and pull each bale onto the wagon. You stacked the bales as high as you could reach, filling the wagon full. After the wagon was full you unhitched the wagon from the baler. Then you took another tractor, hitched



**Self-propelled combine emptying grain from combine bin  
in to truck box in July.**

it up to the wagon, and pulled it to the barn. There you unloaded the wagon by lifting each bale into the haymow or hayloft. If the bales got too high you would use an elevator. You would lift each bale up, and one at a time, put it on the elevator. The elevator takes the bale up and drops it in the haymow where you put the hay hook in it and pull or lift it and put it in an orderly fashion. The dry grass is called hay that the cattle eat for food.

In July, it was time to combine wheat. You would use a combine that was pulled by a tractor. There was a landing on the combine where you would stand with a burlap bag under a bin to catch the grain. When the bag became full you would close the bin and tie the bag closed. You would continue until the landing became full. Then it was time to transfer the bags to the truck and take them in to the barn's granary bins. My dad eventually traded in the tractor-pulled combine and bought a self-propelled combine. The self-propelled combine put the shelled wheat in a bin. When the bin became full it was dumped into my dad's truck. When the truck box became full you would take it to the barn and unload it in the barn bins.

In August, it was time to combine the oats. The same method was used as to combine wheat. Combining wheat and oats also makes straw. The straw is the stalk below the heads of grain of the wheat or oats. The straw comes out of the back of the combine and drops to the ground. You would use the hay rake to rake it into rows like we did with the grass and use the baler to make bales of straw. You put the bales on a wagon and bring it to the barn and there unload the wagon in what we called a straw shed. The straw is used for cattle bedding. The shelled wheat and oats are called grains that are ground into feed, and some is sold.

In September, it was time to fill the silo with chopped up corn. You would take a tractor to pull a corn harvester and wagon. The corn harvester would chop the corn ear and corn stalk into small pieces and blow them into the wagon that is pulled behind the corn harvester. When the wagon is full it is time to take it to the silo and unload it into what is called silo filler. That machine had an auger and blower that would blow it up into the silo. When you take it out of the silo it is called silage and you give it to the cattle for food in the winter months.

When October arrives, it is time to pick the ears of corn off of the corn stalks, using a tractor pulling a corn picker and a wagon. The corn picker cuts the ear of corn

off of the corn stalk, takes off the corn husks, and throws the ear of corn onto the wagon. When the wagon is full you take it to the corn crib, unload the ears of corn into the corn crib using shovels and then by elevator.

In the fall my parents would saw trees to length to fit in the cook stove. They threw the cut wood into a small building called the wood house. Through the winter we carried the wood by arms full to the back porch and put it in the wood box. Here it would be easy to access when needed.

### **Winter Work**

In November, around Thanksgiving, it was time to butcher the pigs that had been fed whey and ears of corn. My dad took a gun to the pig pen and shot the pig in the head to kill it. Then he pulled the pig behind a tractor to the spot where they would do the butchering. They laid chains across and down in a rectangular wooden trough called a scalding trough. The chains were to support the pig carcass with the chain ends hanging over the trough's edges. They filled the scalding trough with scalding hot water and



The head butcher and his helpers



placed the dead pig in the trough. They used the chains to turn the pig side to side or over so it was easier to scrape off the hair with a hog scraper. Then they hooked the pig's back legs on the tripod hog hanger and set it upright.

Next it was time to cut the underside of the pig to be able to remove the insides. They kept the stomach, intestines, liver, heart and kidneys. They took out the liner of the stomach. Later they filled the stomach with potatoes and sausage or potatoes and cabbage and baked it for a meal called filled pig stomach. The intestines were scraped and cleaned usually by the woman to encase sausage. The head meat, liver, heart, kidneys and the pig feet without the hoof were cooked outside in a big iron kettle till done. Some people saved the pig feet for later to make souse. (To make souse you scrape, wash and clean the pig feet. Cook till meat is tender. Pick meat from the bones and put with some of the cooking liquid, vinegar, salt and pepper and chill overnight. After it is chilled it is ready to eat.) They dipped the cooked meat and the bones out of the iron kettle with a slotted ladle and put it on the meat bench. Then you would separate the meat from the bones and grind the meat in a meat grinder. This was used to make scrapple and pudding. Lard was made from the fat of the pig. The rest of the pig is cut up for pork chops, spare ribs, and fish (a tender piece of meat that they called fish.) Hind quarters and front shoulders were sugar cured. This is what we call ham. Scraps of meat and sometimes the one shoulder were used for sausage.

At the butchering, there usually were relatives, family, and maybe a head butcher to assist. Butchering usually started early in the morning after the milking of the cows. The ladies would cook a big meal and at noon everyone would come in and sit around the table to eat a delicious meal. After they were finished eating, they would head back out to the butchering site to finish the butchering.

In January or February, my father and mother would clean clover and timothy for seed to plant in the spring. They ran the seeds through a fanning mill to separate all the weed seeds, so they didn't plant them with the good seeds. They put the good seeds in burlap bags and tied them shut so they would be ready for the planting season. Also through the year my parents ground up corn and oats in a grinder called a hammermill to make chop feed for the cattle.

During the winter months, was also the time to sew clothes, crochet, tat, embroidery, knit, cut and piece quilts, and then quilt them. Plow and shovel the snow.

Also in the summer months my mother had a big garden. Some years the garden became so large it overflowed into a field. I can remember string beans planted in the corn field. After the garden matured came canning and freezing of the vegetables. My sister Nancy and I always helped in the evenings to do the barn chores. And we always helped in the summers with other things.

There is a lot of work living on a farm.

### **Farming Today**

Farmers today still work hard, but there have been a lot of changes. For instance, in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century there is not as much work required baling hay. Now they bale big round or rectangular bales and use a fork lift to move them. They do not plow the fields. Instead the fields are sprayed to kill any live plants before the seed crop is planted by “drilling” or punching the seed into the ground, a cultivating method called “no till.” Most farmers shell the corn instead of harvesting the corn on the cob. Now farming is specialized: Farmers milk a lot of cows, raise a lot of chickens for eating or for eggs, raise a lot of pigs, or do grain or grass farming. Tractors and combines are bigger. GPS computers are in the self-propelled combines and tractors.



Ruth-Alice with her dog “Whitey” and one of the pet cats