

THRESHING

Threshing grain was a big event on the farm, both for the grown-ups, and for us kids. It was thrilling for us to see the big steam/engine pulling the threshing machine into our yard where it would be stationed for two or three days to separate the grain from the straw. Following the steam engine was a water tank drawn by horses, the water a necessary component for providing the engine's steam power. A "water boy" was assigned to tend it and draw the water from the well to keep an adequate supply. Ten or twelve neighbors reciprocated in this cooperative effort of threshing. Each brought a team of horses and a hayrack with which to collect the bundles from the fields. Usually two men were needed to load the hayracks with the oats, barley, or wheat, and several more to guide the bundles through the thresher. XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
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XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX Others manned wagons into which the grain was loaded then as it was separated, and/hauling to the granary where they shoveled it from the wagons. directed + ., The hay was blown directly into the upper part of the barn through a spout/into an open door to the hayloft. When the barn was filled, an outdoor "haystack" was "made" requiring two men to spread the hay and countour it so that it would compound and stand in an upright position.

As there was always a certain urgency to complete the threshing as soon as the grain was "ripe", and before weather threatened with rains, 20-30 men with their teams were required to get the job done as soon as possible, and with/horse-drawn machinery, time for two or three days was of the essence. Making the meals/for so many men was an equally large effort for the women. Dishpens of potatoes were peeled and set aside in cold water until time for cooking, usually as mashed potatoes. Roasts and chickens were prepared, bread baked, molasses shopping for flour, sugar,/and needed supplies was done in advance. Many times, Aunt Marthe Yelk would come to help with the cooking and serving. Several pies and cakes were baked and mother's homemade pies were always praised. The big dining room table was set, I think even with white tablecloths, and all of the silver knives, spoons and forks in the house marshalled for setting the table. Canned goodies, the homemade pickles, pickled peaches, and jams were offered along with the hearty portions of food that the hard-working and hungry men consumed eagerly. The wash tubs would be set up on a wooden stand under a tree in the lawn for the men to "wash-up" before coming into the

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their faces, hands & arms
house for "dinner". Before they washed, they looked like chimney sweeps, /covered with
the dust from the grain. Many of them tied kerchiefs of "rags" around their necks to
keep the dust from getting under their shirts.

Filling Silo

Filling the silo with the corn shredders was another communal effort of
the neighboring farmers, but one that didn't require as many men to accomplish. The
metal "spout" into the top of the silo would be set up and attached to the shredder run
by a (tractor ??), or steam engine?? for power. The corn cobs would be stripped from
the stalks while standing in the field, and then the stalks would be shredded for silage
and fed to the cows daily during the winter months when they couldn't graze in the woods.
The fermented silage had a distinctive, pungent smell that permeated the yard.

Pea harvesting.

Peas needed to be harvested at exactly the correct time to insure a fine
sweet, tender quality of peas. The pea crop would be cut with a _____, picked up with
forks by hand labor and loaded into a hay rack to be taken to the pea viney a mile away
from our farm. There the peas were separated from the husks, and then transported into
the canning factory in Sun Prairie where they were canned. During that period, we always
had fresh peas to eat for a couple of weeks. Cooking peas became a specialized effort
in our household as our dad dictated the length of time for cooking them. He raved and
rented if they were overcooked, accusing our mother or us kids of spoiling the peas as
he would reiterate that they really only needed to be brought to a boil, and served
brought to a boil
immediately. Of course, the raw peas needed to be ~~soaked~~ in soda first to remove the
bitterness, and then reheated with butter. It seemed the peas were never quite right,
but he would direct their cooking as long as we had fresh peas. Our brother Cy has
carried on that tradition as he is as persnickety about cooking peas as was our Dad.

Butchering done on the farm was also a community effort with neighbors assisting each
other in slaughtering the animals before taking those parts of the carcass to the butcher
that needed to be cut into bacon and quarters for roasts etc.

Wood-cutting for the wood stove and furnace was usually done with the help of neighbors
as well, and reciprocated. First, the trees were cut down, branches and twigs removed,
the trunk cut into logs, and then split for firewood and kindling, all done by hand, and
back-breaking effort, as was most farm work before automation.