

Chapter 13

MEMORIES OF SUNBURY TIMES

One of my memories is going out to the pasture with cousins Pat and Jim to bring the cows in to the milking barn. We got behind them and they seemed willing to go. The boys had me make several attempts to milk a cow they picked, usually one that kicked, while learning to sit on a one-legged stool and hold a milk bucket between my legs. A favorite thing for some of us was a cup of really fresh warm milk.

A part of this experience included being handed a scoop shovel for the cleanup. It seemed to me that the cows should have done their business out in the pasture. On one very cold day we went out barefooted and found it necessary to warm our toes in what we called fresh cow pies.

Harvey remembers times when many of us picked blackberries in the woods across the highway. Some were sold to a grocery in Delaware, and many of the pickers took some home to make jelly, jam, or process for canning and, in later years, freezing. He added that we must have hand-pumped enough water to fill the Ashley water tower.

It was on one of those trips when I was about eight years old that we were taking blackberries to the Delaware Grocery. Pat, Jim and I passed a couple of young blacks while walking down-town. Attempting to be friendly, Pat said something that must have been misinterpreted. A little later the larger of the two came to the car, opened the door and put his fist directly into the center of my face. He hit the other two and took off. My nose bled for a long time.

Often after watering and milking the cows we might get a reward. After getting one of the adults to go to town for a block of ice, we would hand crank a freezer of ice cream. The youngest would have a turn first, usually fifty to a hundred turns, and as the ice cream stiffened and the turning became more difficult, the older boys stepped in to finish it.

A meal at Aunt Jo's was a treat. Uncle Thurman made sure that you tasted everything on the table. Harvey said they went to Thurman's for Christmas and he learned to eat oysters. This tradition went back many years. Uncle Hubert told about his first experience with oysters:

In 1914 Dad took HH and I to town to get some things including oysters. He got a gallon of standards for a dollar and a gallon of selects for a dollar and a quarter. Mother used the standards for soup and fried the selects rolled in cornmeal. Either way all our family liked them, they were a real treat. TG was always great to do things different. He always wanted to eat some raw and did whenever Mother would let him have some. He got me to try it. First he put one on a cracker and had me put cracker and oyster in my mouth all at once. I could not handle that! The next time a day or so later he had me lay back my head and open my mouth wide. He dropped in an oyster and down it went before I knew what had happened. After that there was no problem.

Maxine (Hayes) Stimmel remembers the time Uncle Thurman brought a new pony into the house and led it around the dining table.

We were at the farm several different times in July to help with threshing. We rode on horse-drawn wagons to the field where the wheat had been cut and bundled. Sometimes the bundles had been placed in shocks. We used a pitchfork to lift the bundles to the person on the wagon where they were carefully stacked to make a full load. We all climbed up and rode to the threshing machine near the barn. The shocks were thrown into the thresher where the wheat seed was separated from the chaff. The seeds came out a side shoot where someone had to remove each bag as it was filled. The left over stalks were blown out into a huge straw stack. This would be used for bedding in the pens and stalls in the barn.

Anyone who ever slept at Grandfather's house may remember when he took a key to wind the clock. There were two places to wind. One was for the spring that kept the time and the other was for the spring that made the clock strike every hour all night!

The Ohio State Fair

The Warners have a long history with the Ohio State Fair. In 1911 MH entered a light grey



The Midway Ohio State Fair, Columbus

stallion. This was the first year that MH and Louisa Belle took some extra time to look at flatland farms and towns around the state. Thurman rode with horses in the rail car another time. Hubert told of sleeping in the stall next to their animals Aunt Ethel told of being lost when "quite small" and rescued by a policeman. Uncle Hubert was the Superintendent of the Beef Cattle Department and the 4-H Beef Cattle Show.

When we attended the State Fair, Dad would get Dave and me up before six in the morning. We usually walked the entire fairgrounds and rode a few rides. Dad was most interested in the new farm machinery display. He would study the new developments and tell us how they had planted or harvested in prior days. We always walked through all the livestock barns. I remember once we watched Uncle Hubert judge cattle.



We always stayed for a “night show,” sometimes inside the Coliseum and sometimes outside in front of the Grandstand. Both places had horse shows. Outside included fireworks. The inside of the coliseum pictured here was large enough for sulky races or 2 six-horse stage coach teams to maneuver. I remember there was always a course for horse jumping. In later years the Ohio State Fair was changed and renamed to the Ohio State Exposition and lost much of rural flavor.

Inside the Coliseum Ohio State Fair

Dad discouraged us from “wasting money” on the games along the midway. We usually spent a few pennies in the Penny Arcade. One machine could test your grip. Another was a lot of pages that rotated to appear as something was moving. I liked the punching bag that recorded the strength of your punch. Dad would comment about what we had to show for spending our money.

Sometimes we ate something from the vendors but the church sponsored eating places were preferred. Dad would usually tie knots in the corners of his handkerchief and lay it on his head to lessen the sunburn. In the afternoon we had some soft ice cream and a Vernor’s Ginger ale (the only time we could drink from a bottle. Mom’s anti-drink attitude carried over to include soda pop etc.) A favorite souvenir was a red glass cup engraved with a name and a date.

Miracle Day January 17, 1952, Sunbury Ohio

About midnight, a winter storm dropped marble sized hail. Lightening had been violent and had hit a tree in the front yard. After the storm passed, Eskham Hayes checked the house and attic before he went to bed. During the night, steam pressure built in the hot water heater. Apparently the thermostat had been damaged and did not shut off. At ten minutes before seven the next morning, the tank exploded, lifting and scattering the contents of the entire house. Then things and people dropped, some in the front yard and some into the basement.

No one was seriously injured as the house and roof were first raised by the force of the explosion spilling the occupants out of the upper floor and dropping some into the basement. The smell of fuel oil made Eskham scramble up and out to shut the



valve on the outside tank. Ethel reached out and felt the broken fruit jars of the peaches she had canned last summer and placed on shelves in the basement. While she was lying there under the broken beams she thought, “Wouldn’t it be awful if I lost my life by burning since my sister had died because of fire.”

Thirteen-year-old Mary Lou Hayes was quoted in the newspaper:

Our beds just slid right out (from the second floor) into the yard after the big explosion. My sister Shirley, age six, was sleeping on the first floor. Big boards fell across her bed, pinning her in. She didn’t move and it was lucky she didn’t, for if she had gotten out of bed she would have fallen into the basement through holes in the floor which surrounded her bed.

Another reporter wrote, quoting Maxine Hayes:

I know I was awake, or at least partly awake, when the house exploded because I heard the explosion. I remember thinking that it must be a bomb. Then I realized that I was flying through the air on my mattress. As I passed by the tree in the front yard, I realized it was something else beside a bomb because the tree was still standing. I remember being scared, awfully scared, but at least I remembered to hang on to my mattress. That’s probably all that saved my life.

Shirley slept through it all even though parts of the spindles from her crib were now stuck in the ceiling. She had been folded into her mattress and pinned there by some wall timbers. Eskham Jr. was also pinned in his bed and just quietly talked with his mother until they were rescued.

When they all got together and saw what had happened to their house, they realized that it was a miracle no one was hurt. Later Eskham and Ethel stood in a part of the kitchen that still had a floor. Eskham said “We started out with nothing and now we have four kids.”

Ethel said, "From then on we were at peace, we felt as if 'Someone' was guiding us so we started over."

Ethel would later write, "We were moved with what things we could pick up into a house in Olive Green that had been vacated by an elderly lady. She left a bed and a few chairs and a table. That night a truck drove in and they had a davenport and chair that our Sunday School class had bought at a garage sale and gave to us. Later we were given an envelope of money from the church and we went to Columbus and bought a bedroom suite and they held it till we had a house to put it in. I think in our sixty-five years together we have had many miracles and I feel it is all because of our Faith in the Almighty God."

Warner Reunions

Aunt Ethel told us that after the brothers were married her mother asked them to come home for Thanksgiving dinner so they could stay home to have their own Christmas. The family grew too large to meet at home. Aunt Ethel told of trying to have family Thanksgiving with just her generation. Leaving the kids at home turned out to be a bad idea.

The gathering time and place was changed as families grew. Many in our generation remember gathering at the Grange Hall near Aunt Ethel's home. We met there during the 1940s and into the 1970s or longer? We called it Olive Green but it was really in East Liberty. It was a real family gathering. We got to know each other. We played ball, pitched horseshoes, held a talent show and shared recent family events. Grandfather sang *Old Black Joe*. He stood straight and tall and just sang out (this was before his diabetes). Each of the children was supposed to do something. Some told jokes. It may have been the "outhouse" that caused the location to lose its popularity.

Juanita recited: "Roses on my fingers, Slippers on my feet, I'm Daddy's little sweetheart, Don't you think I'm sweet?" Mildred and Elvira sang *I'm a Little Teapot*. Harvey sang and played his trumpet. I played *The Chariot Race* on the piano. Mary Lou and Maxine sang *I'm a Little Teapot*. Dorothy played *The Chariot Race*. Andy brought his trap drums. Many of us recited poems, performed in skits or told jokes. We usually stayed for supper.

When Elvira (Warner) Covey requested recipes and memories for *Memories in the Kitchen*, Linda (Warner) Bischof wrote:

Thinking back as a grade school child, I have fond memories of spending the day with everyone. We had lots of good food to eat and played tag. When we had the entertainment hour, I remember the four of us singing, *School Days*. Duane sang a solo, Deanna, I think played her clarinet, and I did my acrobatics. But we all got a little older & it was not cool any more. I remember eating lunch & dinner, playing baseball in the park, the men playing horseshoes and the interesting debates over the placement & score of its landing. Aunt Ethel counted the hairs on her brothers' heads, contests were held and our Mother took home the best nail hammer. The "outhouse" was horrible but then came walks to Aunt Ethel's house to go to the "bathroom". That was a great day! Of course it goes without saying Uncle Eskham's ice cream was also great. Uncle Roger and Uncle Rodney changed their clothes and successfully fooled all of us.

My personal thoughts: I was looking forward to seeing cousin Myron & trying to figure out how I could sit with him when we are eating, & being disappointed when I didn't. Being in grade school, how interesting could I be? But Myron always talked to me & seemed interested in what I was doing & always made me smile & laugh & "that" made the reunion a good day. I always love him for making me feel special. I was always impressed when Grandpa Warner would walk in & sit in the chairs on the side wall & I would sit beside him & have a very small conversation & I remember the first time he did not show up. ... Linda Warner Bischof

In 1973 the responsibility for planning the annual event was passed to the next generation. My brother Dave accepted the task for the RJ clan and appointed my sister Elvira as Chairman. We each received our instructions well in advance.

FROM: Chairman of the Annual Warner Reunion for 1973 Elvira (Warner) Covey

TO: Workers for the Annual Warner Reunion for 1973

SUBJECT: Assignments

- 1 GRANDMA 1. figure out proportions needed for drinks and instruct Bob.
2. perform as Hostess on THE day!
- 2 DAVID 1. make arrangements for Pavilion at Bryan St Park on set date
(suggest doing this in Nov) 2. perform as Host on THE day!
- 3 MARY 1. ferret out info that would lead to award ceremony such as: furthest traveled to attend, furthest traveled last year, last to have a baby, next to have a baby, last married, oldest--forget that--Mom has it. Youngest, most weight gained/lost, most hair lost, etc 2. help with second mailing.
- 4 ROBERT 1. acquire containers for drinks to be mixed in and transport to park.
2. Follow Grandma's instructions.
- 5 JOAN 1. draw list of family list--names & addresses and send to Dick before Jan mailing.
2. give second copy to Lynn.
- 6 DICK 1. print flyer to be mailed in Jan from Fla.
2. plans games, prizes, and award ceremony.
- 7 BARBARA-RICK-DEBBIE 1.address flyers in Jan. 2. assist in planning games, etc.
- 8 ROD 1. draw up MAP with instructions to be mailed late May/early June
2. print map
- 9 ANDY & MARK 1. make road signs 2. put signs at park entrance and leading to Pavilion on THE day pick up signs after.
- 10 LYNN 1. write May reminder; mail out reminder late May/early June (include Rod's map)
- 11 CHERI, MERI JO & CINDY 1. come up with method of identifying each branch of the family 2. make some form of identification for each person to wear (such as headbands with feathers if Indian theme is used)
- 12 READE 1. keep everyone smiling now and at the reunion.

In 1991 the preparatory list for the reunion was: Paper table covering, masking tape, coffee maker (24 cup), 2 gallon tea container, (we used 6 gallon in 1990) Sugar, cream, sweet & low and dispensers, napkins, plastic spoons, forks, knives, foam cups, clean up rags, tablespoon to measure tea, long handled spoon to stir tea and lemonade, paper towels, serving spoons, garbage bags, dish soap, table decorations, name tags, signs.

Reunions have been held in various places like: State Parks, the Legion Park in Heath, Uncle Thurman's farm in Utica, at RJ's cottage on Lake Erie at Lakeside, Ohio, the Grange Hall near Aunt Ethel's for many years. Harvey said, "We had 'real' chicken then!" And of course Eskham's ice cream. We ate all we wanted. In recent times the Warner reunion has most often gathered at the United Methodist Church in Sunbury, Ohio.

The Dessert Contest



Some of us have observed how the food items on the reunion table have changed with the times. Why labor over a hot stove when a restaurant or grocery has ready prepared food? Does a free range chicken that has been slow cooked in a cast iron skillet on a home stove really taste better? (I vote, yes)

I remember the time that Uncle Hildred called attention to a noticeable decrease in the number of home baked pies. It was several years later, Harvey announced a dessert contest for the "Best Dessert." (This of course required outside judges.)

I always look for cousin Ruth's elderberry pie. It is one of the few berries that I remember my uncles talking about picking while they lived in Calais.

Warner Ice Cream

Now there's another great story about Warner ice cream. Aunt Ethel tells us that the first stage of the ice cream making began in Woodstock. She would take up a collection from who- ever was present and coax someone to go the icehouse at Brice Lake for a block of ice. This was ice that had been cut from the lake during the last winter and stored to sell. The block of ice was placed in a burlap bag and crushed with a hammer or the side of an ax so it could be packed in a hand-cranked ice cream maker. Salt was added to the crushed ice and care was taken not to get the ice water on the ice cream when the top was opened.

Later others of us did the coaxing when we were visiting the farm in Sunbury. There was a commercial icehouse that made ice in Sunbury. In later years the recipe that had started in a hand-cranked ice cream maker was used in a modern machine. Uncle Eskham combined a generator and a soft ice cream maker to provide ice cream for us at the Warner reunions. The flavor was special and we all loved it.

Eskham and Ethel made a casual decision to make ice cream for a church event in 1993. Once the public discovered Warner-Hayes ice cream it became an annual activity for Memorial Day and Fourth of July occasions. The popularity of the ice cream soon meant making 60 gallons for Memorial Day, 75 to a 100 gallons for 4th of July and 100-125 for Labor Day.



Ethel and Eskham Hayes

By the time making the ice cream was passed on to the next generation, Mary Lou (Hayes) and Kenneth Mackley, the demand was for 160 gallons of ice cream for each event. Some was stored at home and sold to relatives and friends in between the events. As of the beginning of 2008 they had made and sold 5750 gallons and raised \$58,518.44 for the Sunbury United Methodist Church.

Apple Butter Time

Making apple butter is another Warner tradition. Aunt Ethel continued the event that her



Joan and Harvey Warner

father had started in Woodstock. On a Saturday in early fall, various members of the families would appear with bushels of apples. Golden delicious and Jonathan were preferred. They also brought apple sauce, cider, cinnamon, red hots for color, and sugar. Several families own the necessary copper kettles. Harvey came one time with only one can of applesauce!

Uncle Eskham would cut and stack many small pieces of wood in preparation. There was always homemade bread for the taste test. The ingredients in the kettles were stirred constantly, sometimes for seven hours or until Uncle Eskham said it was done. It was then carefully poured into jars, capped and turned upside down to cool.

During the cooking down process various members of the family were given the opportunity to enjoy the stirring. Here Uncle Eskham (with cap) Mary Lou, and grandson Ryan, supervised by his father, Tim Mackley, are doing the stirring.



This picture was featured in the Sunbury news about 1996.

Marylou, Uncle Eskham, Tim, Ryan

Palm Sunday Tornado at RB's farm in Ashley, 1965 by Muriel Warner
(Pictures taken by Harvey have been added to her story)

Sheila, Gary, Beulah, Roger, Jim, Rachel, Muriel, and Paul were over to Grammies and Grampies for a dinner as Carroll's family was home for the holiday. We left in the evening, leaving Jim and Rachel to spend the night there with their cousins. The rest of us decided to stop at the farm and see Mother and Dad Warner if they were up – which they were.

After visiting too long to be keeping the folks up - Dad had early morning chores to do - Gary went to his car to get an umbrella as it had started to rain and was thundering and lightning. When he came in and Muriel saw how hard it was raining, she went to the closed-in back porch to get papers to cover the women's heads. As she got there she saw sticks being driven through the window glass. Not having time to even think about what was happening, she ran back to the dining room area just as the wind blew out the stairway window, blew the stair door open and blew the drapes high into the room. Then the electric went off and the house was shaking.

Muriel yelled, "Get down on the floor!" Why, she doesn't know, but everyone did so. Dad, Mother and Muriel were against the inside west wall in front of the buffet. Gary, Beulah and Roger were more in the center of the room but Sheila and I were directly between the west bedroom door and the dining room china closet full of Mother's good dishes sat on the north wall just beside us. A window on the east side of the dining room was straight ahead of us. The tornado hit at 11:30 pm and no one had time to talk, wonder or think.

Aloud Muriel said, "God help us." We heard the huge evergreens crash to the ground on the north and east side of the house. Huge pieces of stored timber in the chicken house 50 yards west of the house came crashing through Dad and Mother's west bedroom windows and the glass and

window frames ended up on their bed where they would have been sleeping had we not stayed so late! Some of the 2x4 timbers went straight through the west bedroom window - through the door to the dining room, over Sheila's and my heads and on out the east window! Sheila's wig and shoes were off, glass was everywhere. The china closet had fine glass all through it but not a dish was broken.

After this first burst of wind we decided to crawl to the basement but another blast came just as fast and we cowered on the floor again. When it quit we did go to the basement. Gary carried Sheila as she had glass in her feet. Gary went back up to get Sheila's wig, shoes and his umbrella. "No use losing it, it's a good umbrella."

All through this there was an eerie orange-colored light. We could look out of the basement window and see the devastation -- silos destroyed, a very sturdy new block building gone, cars wrecked, trees down, Dad was saying he was ruined -- all the 380 head of cattle would be dead. When it appeared that the storm was gone, I took dad to the porch and with a flash light I carefully went to the barn. What a beautiful sight to see those green eyes looking at me, none seemed to be down and I was glad telling Dad and what a relief to him.

Gary took his car and he and I started for Delaware to tell Uncle Hubert to get help. Uncle Hubert and Dad each owned half interest in the farm. The electric company was already there cleaning trees from the road and they helped us get around them. It was a relief to see everything was alright in Ashley but no one seemed to be up so Gary drove to Delaware in the pouring down rain and the blinding flashes of lightning. The hotel was open so we went in and called Uncle Hubert. I told him what had happened - I know he thought I was stretching the point. I asked him to get help and bring us some hot coffee as Dad had asked me to do. I think he turned on the radio and got some kind of news telling him the tornado had struck Radnor and ruined farms clear throughout the area. Two people had lost their lives. The tornado had set down in Westfield, about two miles west of the farm and destroyed a church as well as other houses and barns in that area.

Uncle Hubert came right away and checked that the cattle weren't out and also secured a gate. After surveying the damage, he went back to Delaware to wait till it was light and to make necessary phone calls to Uncle Eskham Hayes to get him to work on the electric to feed the cattle as well as the rest of the down wires.

The electric company were putting up new poles and wiring as fast as possible. Uncle Hubert also called the company who had put up the silos to come to repair them temporarily so the cattle could be fed.



The Feedlot Before the Tornado .

In the meantime Gary had taken Beulah, Sheila, and Roger back to Marion to get some rest and check on Marion and Becky who were at home. Mother and Dad each lay down on a davenport to try to sleep till daylight and Paul and I went

upstairs to lie on the bed. It was hard to rest as we could see the sky through the roof where wood from the old chicken house tore off a lot of the slate roof.



In the morning we were able to see more of the damage.

Gary's new mustang looked like it had been sand blasted and had to have a new paint job. Part of a silo dome had lit in the center of our windshield and with other damages, the insurance company called our car totaled. Dad's car was in front of mine and only had a few dents. Mother's car was in the corn crib and it had collapsed on the car which we thought would be ruined but it was protected and actually was alright. A grove of one hundred mature catalpa trees southwest of the house were totally flattened. Experts who later came to evaluate the damage said by the way the trees fell there actually were two tornadoes. All of us who were there could readily agree to that!



A cupola on the barn was blown away and never found. The barn was leaning nearly a foot to the east and the metal roofs on all of the buildings were gone. The three silos were damaged. One was clear down, another was half blown off down to the silage level and the third was cracked from top to bottom with the roof gone. All three had to be replaced. Heavy rings from the silos were hanging on telephone poles several miles away.

There was much more damage - too much to list and the fact that the insurance company paid \$31,450.00 to rebuild attests to that. Many neighbors brought tractors and one brought a

bulldozer to help get rid of the rubble and burn the waste. Three days after the tornado hit, forty Amish men came from Plain City with chain saws and cans of gasoline.

They cleaned up all the fallen trees, trimmed the damaged ones and moved on. Their work was appreciated as well as all the others who helped.

The cattle were always very flighty after their experience. Wright Patterson Air Force sent training flights on a route which passed over the farm and then turned back again. The sound of the planes sent the cattle running to the other side of the field. When the air force was consulted they did change their training route. Nevertheless the cattle did have to go to market early.

As for those of us who were there, the tornado is a vivid memory that none of us ever forgot. We all thank the lord that we are here to remember how fierce the forces of nature can be. When that tornado warning sounds now we have the basement door open and watch those storms from the South West! ... Muriel Warner



All that was left of the three silos

the



*This aerial view was taken after the house and buildings were restored.
Note the cupola was not replaced. Also note the garden to the right of the house.*

Even RJ got some enjoyment by putting on the necessary boots and doing the chores with the modern push-button operation. One of the tasks that he undertook caused him to fall on the inside of the feedlot. Mom always laughed as she told about helping him to clean off the “chewed grass”. You can take the boy away from the farm but....



RJ

(Note: This farm had belonged to the parents of Marie, the wife of RB. When it became available RB and JH went into a partnership and bought it. They developed a beef cattle feedlot operation. Over time they had increased the size of the feedlot and by the time of the tornado they were feeding 380 cattle.)

A Hurricane hit Ohio in 2008

I include this picture just to tell about Hurricane Ike. This hurricane came across the Atlantic, devastated Haiti and Cuba and became the third most destructive to hit our continent. It did damage in Texas and as it was moving north it combined with a weather pattern that brought it up the Mississippi Valley and across Ohio with winds of 145 mph. More than one million Ohio homes and businesses were without electricity following the storm.



My Barn in Xenia, Ohio

We were without electric power for nine days from September 14 until September 23. We cooked with our camping equipment, hauled water and showered in town.

Passing of an Era



Gone is the “outhouse!” Many generations started the day with a trip out the path. Someone had to empty the chamber pot that had been used inside during the night.

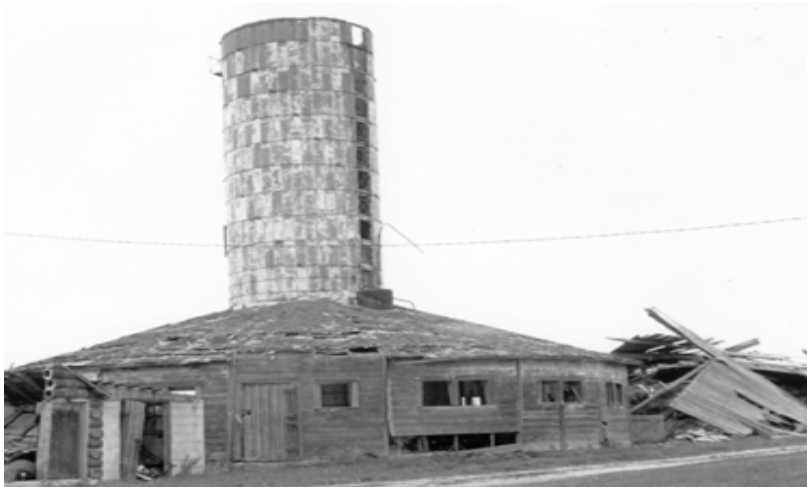
Many like this were built by the government to provide employment as WPA projects during the 1930s. The material cost was about thirteen dollars. Building these was an attempt to make a clean, non-smelly, fly-free facility. There was usually an old catalogue available; Granddad’s always had an old bucket of very raspy looking corncobs in one corner and a bag of lime in the other.



Sunbury Barn Going Down

As farming changed, the next owners of TG's farm turned to raising corn and beans and abandoned the hard work of maintaining a dairy herd.

The neglect and lack of upkeep is quite evident in the dairy barn that once provided an income for a large family.



Gone

By the turn of the century even the big barn had been abandoned. There was no need to house and feed horses. Raising livestock was no longer profitable. Both nature and vandals had taken their toll. The great barn came down without expressing any appreciation for those who had labored to build it.

Thomas Jefferson's dream of an America filled with family farms became instead a land of sprawling towns and cities. Most of the businesses and schools in both Calais and Woodstock have also been torn down. In part, this story is about the success of those who lived in the twentieth century and their contribution to the American culture.