

Life on the Farm: Records, Reports, and More

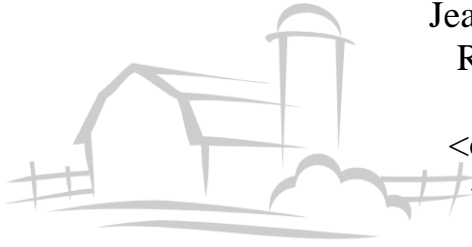
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Farmers were our first settlers. They created the first towns, invented implements that touched other industries, & established a unique approach to life in general.

In other countries, farms were maintained by groups within the community; in the new country, farms were maintained by individual families, making America a country of individualists (as opposed to the collectivist cultures of “back home”).

RESEARCH TOOLS TO LEARN ABOUT FARMING ANCESTORS

- Plat maps of the community
- Deeds
- Court records
- Wills and inventories
- Tax lists
- Extension Service Annual Reports (microfilms through NARA)
- Federal and state censuses
- Agricultural censuses (1850, 1860, 1870, 1880)
 - Often two pages of information – don’t neglect second page!
- City directories
- History books/websites for the region

FARMING TERMINOLOGY

- Farmer = rents or owns (OA – “own account”)
- Farm laborer = works on a farm, but may not be his/her family’s
- “works on farm” = may be a sharecropper or working a neighbor’s farm as a paid laborer
- In 1880 (US Census), supposed to be listed as “owner,” “tenant,” or “sharecropper”

ENEMIES OF THE FARMER

- Bad weather
 - Tornadoes
 - Flooding/torrential rain
 - Drought
 - Hail
 - Devastating winter
 - Dust storms
- Insects
- Unscrupulous/unsympathetic bankers

Short list of Resources (additional bibliographies provided on some of these references):

Mary Bellis, "Agriculture and Farm Innovations," *About.com*, updated February 2021, online at <https://www.thoughtco.com/history-of-agriculture-and-farm-machinery-4074382>.

D. Clayton Brown, "Prosperous Farms and Happier Homes: Arkansas Agricultural Extension Service, 1911-1966," *Prologue*, Vol. 30:2, Summer 1996, Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration [on-line] from <https://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/1998/summer/arkansas-extension.html>.

FamilySearch WIKI – search for "farmer" and other descriptors to narrow topic, https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Main_Page.

Frank D. Gardner, *Successful Farming: Traditional Methods and Techniques for Every Farm*, New York: Skyhorse Publishing, 2013.

"History of Agriculture in the United States," *Wikipedia*, 8 April 2016, on-line at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_agriculture_in_the_United_States.

"Historical Timeline," *Growing a Nation: The Story of American Agriculture*, 2014, on-line at <http://www.agclassroom.org/gan/timeline/>.

Claire Kluskens, "Agricultural Extension Service Annual Reports, 1909-1968, and Related Records (rev. December 2013 ed.), *National Archives and Records Administration*, PDF, on-line at <https://www.archives.gov/files/research/federal-employees/reference-reports/ag-extension.pdf>.

Debora MacKenzie, "How Your Ancestors' Farms Shaped Your Thinking," *New Scientist*, May 2014, <http://www.newscientist.com/article/dn25538-how-your-ancestors-farms-shaped-your-thinking.html>.

Jerry Manriquez, "Hints & Helps" page, "Agricultural Schedule Headings," undated, *Corona Genealogical Society*, online at <http://CoronaGenSoc.org>.

Dave Manuel, "Inflation Calculator," 2016, on-line at <http://www.davemanuel.com/inflation-calculator.php>.

Sam Moore, "Ten Agricultural Inventions that Changed the Face of Farming in America," August 2008, *Farm Collector*, on-line at https://www.farmcollector.com/equipment/ten-agricultural-inventions-in-farming-history.aspx#ixzz32xZCTFNH_

Claire Prechtel-Kluskens, "Extension Service Annual Reports," *NGS Magazine*, Vol 35:1, January-March 2009, Arlington, VA: National Genealogical Society, pp. 43-47.