

Carroll County Times "Carroll's Yesteryears" Articles

Carroll's Yesteryears
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Traditional role of horses is theme of folk festival
By Joe Getty

"That's as old as Harris' mule," was once a familiar saying around New Windsor. It was used when people wanted to refer to something as being really old.

Old traditions of horses and horse power are the theme of the 1992 Goshenhoppen Folk Festival. The historical society is sponsoring a bus tour to this Pennsylvania German festival on Friday.

The early settlers of Carroll County brought with them many of the traditions and crafts that are demonstrated as part of the Goshenhoppen Folk Festival. Many aspects of daily life at work and in the household were influenced by horses and horse power.

Horses, draft horses, oxen and mules provided the power for many agricultural activities in the fields and around the barn. Mid-19th century technology converted horse power for operating equipment.

A circular power sweep for two or four horses ran threshing equipment at the barn. This form of horse power replaced the process of hand flailing on the barn floor. Many farms in Carroll County used horse power in rigs like the one shown in the photograph of Samuel M. Hoff farm near McKinstry's Mill.

At the Goshenhoppen Folk Festival, there will be exhibits and demonstrations of farm equipment relating to horse power. There will also be stage programs relating to the folklore of horses as well as other Pennsylvania German traditions.

The festival has two large areas of demonstrations. On the north side of the New Goshenhoppen Park are the tradesmen who demonstrate crafts and occupations. Demonstrations include a blacksmith, farrier, cooper, pumpmaker, turner, housewright, broom-maker, thatcher, carpet-weaver, and an itinerate sharpener and peddler.

I took my two sons to the festival last year and they both agreed that the most fascinating demonstration in the trade area was the traditional family farm hog-butcher. At age 8, Justus was interested in hearing the butcher describe how all organs of the hog were used for household purposes and very little was discarded.

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While this demonstrations usually depicted a 19th century butchering using bell scrapers and a scalding trough, a new feature was added last year to demonstrate an 18th century style butchering.

On the south side of the park are demonstrations of home skills. Traditional needlework, quilts, lacemaking, and clothing are shown by interpreters in period clothing. The traditional Pennsylvania German practices for other home chores, such as laundry, cleaning and stuffing straw mattresses are also demonstrated.

A large portion of the home skills area is devoted to the preparation of foods. My son Nathan, age 6, enjoyed tasting the samples of cooking, baking, canning and preserving through traditional Pennsylvania German recipes.

One demonstration was cooking a chicken suspended by a string from a tripod over an open fire. Nathan kept wanting to return to that booth, but we left before the chicken was done and he did not get a sample. However, he was satisfied as we bought the local cookbook and prepared a chicken on a string in the backyard after we got home.

At the center of the festival are food booths featuring Pennsylvania German delicacies. Offerings for sale, include shoe-fly pie, apeas cake, Pennsylvania birch beer, peppermint water, soups, pretzels, corn on the cob, sausage sandwich on homemade bread with fried onions and green peppers, cider, watermelon, fresh squeezed lemonade, peaches and ice cream, and apple dumplings.

Those attending the historical society bus tour will enjoy a church supper served family style. The menu includes smoked ham, potato filling, dried corn, pepper cabbage, homemade bread, fruit pie and ice cream.

For information and reservations for the Goshenoppen Folk Festival bus tour, contact the historical society at 848-6494. As for the story of Harris' old mule, my great uncle Nathan Baile wrote in his journal the following explanation:

"This mule was owned by old John Harris of Uniontown, whose son John was the blacksmith at Medford for many years. This mule, when he was very old, died one night. Next day a farmer with two horses and a chain around the old mule's neck, dragged him to the bone yard in Zollickoffer's woods, where it was intended that he would make tough eating for the dogs and buzzards. But two days later, Harris got up in the morning and found his mule standing in the stable, very hungry. He was put back in the stall and used until Mr. Harris died, and then the

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mule was sold to Perry King, the ‘bone man.’ The old mule worked another 10 or 15 years pulling the bone wagon.”

Photo credit: Sarah Prine Andrew

Photo caption: Greg Goodell is an intern at the Historical Society of Carroll County. He is a history major at Johns Hopkins University.