

### “Mehring’s Pneumatic Foot Power Milker”

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by Jay A. Graybeal

Nineteenth Century American agriculturalists, inventors and industrialists developed a seemingly endless number of inventions to improve farming activities. One local inventor, William Marshall Mehring of York Road (now Keymar), received U. S. patent number 488,282 for a “Cow Milker” on December 2, 1892. Several years later, he distributed a printed circular that described the merits of a foot-powered version of his milker along with the accompanying illustration:

“The above cut is of our latest improved Milker. The cut is rather poor and does not do justice to the machine. We use the same kind of cups as we do on the Hand Power machine, but the operator does his own pumping. This machine is best adapted where grown persons do the milking, and as it takes but one person to operate it, it is a greater time saver than the Hand Power. You set the pump along beside a cow, or rather in between two cows. After sitting on the seat you place your feet on the treadle which works the pump. The treadle works similar to a see-saw. You now work the pump with your feet, and place the cups against the cows teats. The cups will rapidly suck on. You can milk two cows simultaneously just as well as one cow at a time. After a few milkings the cows will stand just as well to be milked from the left side as from the right.

The pump and frame weighs 30 lbs., the hose and cups for each cow 2 ½ lbs., total 35 lbs. The question is often asked, how fast will the machine milk? The answer will depend upon a variety of circumstances, but the most important is the operator. The speed will vary from two to three times as fast as by hand milking. The more ingenious and intelligent the operator is, the greater speed he will make. Strength or activity is not so much required. Fresh cows will milk quicker than cows nearly dry. Small teats are milked as fast as large ones. In hand milking, because a great many heifers are tedious to milk, they are ruined by careless milkers. With the machine such cows could be milked as well as others, and the cow saved. Another advantage, and not the least, is the cleanliness of the milk. It is a well known fact that however careful the milkers are in hand milking, a great deal of stable filth, hair and dandruff from the cows find its way into the milk. The much talked of stable odor comes from the dirt in the milk, and not from the air. Immediate straining removes some of it, but much is dissolved in the milk, and remains to taint it and start fermentation. The absorption from the air is so slow and so little, as not to affect the milk. The teat cups of the machine fit air tight around the teats, a cover could be put on the milk pail, and then no dirt could get into the milk. The teat cups are smooth and not rough on the cows teats, like the squeezing and thumbing of hand milking.

The human hand can perform almost an infinite variety of work, but it is ill adapted to draw milk from a cow; the acquired practice is evidently as severe on the cow as it is tedious to the person milking. The better method is to obtain the milk in a natural way, that is, by regulated suction, as is demonstrated by the cows offspring. The machine works on that principle. The machine is intended to milk all four teats at once, but if you desire, you can close the spigots and milk only two or three teats at once.

The milker pumps are also excellent force pumps, and can be used for other purposes on the farm. They are good to throw water to sprinkle a garden, to outen a fire and to clean water pipes. Full printed directions, how to operate and care for the milker, are sent along with each machine.

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## Carroll County Times "Carroll's Yesteryears" Articles

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Cut down your expenses by saving time and labor.  
Preserve the even shape of the cows udder by milking all four teats at once.  
Cure kicking cows by milking them by a more natural method.  
Increase the price of your milk and butter by producing a clean article.  
Increase and improve your dairy.  
There is nothing inserted into the teats, the teat cups fit air-tight over the teats.

For further particulars address the agent. Or enclose a stamp to the manufacturer,  
Wm. M. Mehring, York Road, Carroll Co., Md."

The circular also included several glowing testimonials from users including one from Jacob R. Funk of Waynesboro, Pennsylvania:

" 'On the first day of April, 1896, I visited Mr. Mehring's home. I stayed over night and saw him use the Foot Power machine in the evening and in the morning the Hand Power machine. I was so well pleased that I bought a Foot Power machine immediately, without taking in on trial, and it has given perfect satisfaction ever since. I had but 8 cows when I got the machine, now I have 12 and expect to keep a few more. I have been doing all of the milking myself with the machine, except when I went away, then Mrs. Funk milks with it. If I had to do it by hand I would not keep more than 6 or 8 cows. In the Summer I do not strip the cows after the machine, but sometimes I do in the Winter. I find that the machine is not rough on the teats, and does not injure the cow in any way. It is also very easy to keep clean. It is very durable and will cost but very little to keep in order. I believe that in a few years no first-class dairy will be without one.' "

Mehring's milker was a predecessor of today's modern milking machines that allow the dairy farmer to have a much larger herd of dairy cows than his counterpart of a century ago.

Mehring's Pneumatic Foot Power Milker.



*This illustration appeared in William Mehring's circular advertising his patented pneumatic milking machine. Historical Society of Carroll County, from a copy courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution.*