

# Out Behind the Barn Newsletter



Through the years the Troy Sale Barn has been an integral part of the history of Western Bradford County and its' people. Farmers would send their livestock to the Sale Barn after studying the prices of the livestock sales much like a person might do with the stock market today. Many young men (now older!) can claim the Sale Barn as their first job. When they reminisce about their youth, they are sure to remember working or attending the Sale Barn on Wednesdays.

In checking the records of the sale barn, several names stand out and two of them are Neil & Doris Bixby. Neil was born on a farm on Leona Road. He graduated from Troy High School in 1933, Doris graduated in 1936 and the couple were married in 1937. They bought a farm near Bailey's Corners. The couple sold this farm in 1949 and moved back to Troy where Neil became superintendent of Glenwood Cemetery. Neil also began working at the Sale Barn in the early 1950's.

In August of 1959, Fred Scott and Jerome Benson asked Neil to become the barn superintendent and after making sure it would not conflict with his duties at the cemetery, he accepted the position. The barn became a family affair as Doris also began working in the office of the Sale Barn around this time and worked there for the next 40 years. Their son Don also worked at the barn for 20 years and two of Neil's grandsons, Mike and Tom, spent their summers working at the barn.

Neil's job was more than working at the barn on sale day. Neil was responsible for the barn upkeep, taking care of animals that were brought to the barn early or left at the barn after the sale, which happened quite often. The barn had to be cleaned each week after each sale and he was responsible for hiring people to work at the barn. The salary for all this work was \$45 a week!

In 1969, Neil began keeping a record of sales at the barn, and the record for January 1, 1969, showed that there was \$30,000 in sales with extremely cold weather. The following week on January 8, 1969, 425 calves, 157 cows, several feeders, and bulls went through the sale at the barn. Most of the animals sold at the barn during this time were cows, bulls, heifers, calves, and steer but hogs, chickens, sheep, horses, ponies, rabbits and goats were also sold!

On May 7, 1969, his diary stated that the sales were \$40,000 and the top bull sold for \$27.50 and the top cow \$25.50! January 7, 1970, Neil recorded his biggest sale with 199 cows, 391 calves, 13 heifers, 26 bulls, several steers. Neil wrote that there were so many animals that they had no place to put them. He also made a notation that this was before the outside pens were built—that shed structure still stands on our patio today!

A sale was held on June 21, 1972: 117 cows, 220 calves, 21 bulls, 10 heifers, 3 hogs, 9 steers, and one pony. His next entry was for the following day, June 22, 1972 and it read BARN FLOODED 4 FEET OF WATER IN CALF PENS, which was due to the historical Saint Agnes hurricane. When the barnworkers began remodeling the calf pen area, all the wood used was pressure treated wood just in case neighboring Smead Creek decided to flood the calves' pens once again, the damage would be at a minimum and cleanup would be much easier.

September 27, 1972, the barn proceeds were \$87,000 breaking the record of \$85,000 set on September 23, 1972. On February 28, 1973, Neil wrote that the proceeds were \$94,000, a new record that was to be broken the next week on March 7, 1973 at \$94,850. However, this record did not last long because later August 8, 1973, the proceeds were \$103,000 and Neil made a quotation that this was the most money ever! This record did not last very long because the next week on August 15, 1973, the proceeds were \$104,000. Just think about the economic impact the barn has had on our area for over 100 years!

On October 24, 1973, the state police visited the barn when the barn had 14 feeders come in for sale. The feeders were stolen from a farm in Auburn, New York. Two weeks later, November 7, 1973, the F.B.I. visited the barn investigating more stolen feeders in New York State.

**To be continued on page 4...Remember, your donations ensure the sustainability of the barn for the next 100 years!**

# The Closing of the Creameries by Bill Bower, Bob Storch & Crawford Holmes

*In 1832, lumber was one of the leading industries in Bradford County. However, when most of the forests had been cut down, dairy farming became the leading occupation, with butter becoming the number one product.*

In the very early days, a farmer worked from before dawn to sunset. After the milking was done by hand, the milk was poured into a wide pan so that the cream would rise to the top. The cream was then skimmed off the top and kept cool with ice from the icehouse, which had been filled the previous winter. However, the ice didn't keep the cool temperature needed for very long and often the good cream was wasted. The skimmed milk was given to the farmer's pigs.

By the late 1870's, butter became one of the main products in the area. Almost four million pounds of butter were produced in 1870. Milk began appearing on the list as an important product. Farmers were beginning to sell surplus milk to the new cheese factories that had sprung up in the county. These cheese factories also produced butter, which had a longer shelf life than milk. Because milk had to be used almost immediately, this excess milk was taken to collection areas, where cheese and butter were produced. Near the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, Bradford County was known for its butter production. By the early 1900's, Bradford County's butter was of such a high quality that it was being sold at a higher price in New York City and Philadelphia than butter from other areas. The US Naval Academy was also using butter from Bradford County. Butter was "King" but it was not long before milk became the leading dairy product of Bradford County.

In the early 1900's, small farms were the norm. Since the farmers were limited to what they could do by hand and with minimal equipment, a typical dairy farm seldom had more than five to twenty head of cattle.

Although early farmers produced almost everything for their own needs, milk was produced to supply the needs of the local population. Milk needed to be transformed quickly into a more stable product, such as cheese and butter. A farmer or family member would drive their wagon to a local cheese plant, often called a buttery, where they would drop off the milk. These milk processing plants were *everywhere*. Back in the 1900's, a cheesemaking plant could be found about every three or four miles down the road. Since the farmers lacked the cooling ability, they had to get their milk into a product such as butter and cheese that had a longer shelf life. This trip made by horse and wagon was also a reason the plants were not far apart.

People with money made their own butter. According to the Heritage Village Farm Museum, The Gregory Inn was built in 1822. A woodshed that was connected to the back of the house was torn off and replaced with a milk room and a buttery. In 1839, Dr. Parson Parks purchased the inn and named it Alparon. Later, Dr. Parsons remodeled the milk house, which became an office, where he could see his patients. (At an unknown date, the Alparon Dairy began delivering raw milk in the area.)

The Silverdale Dairy was located at East Canton which was far from the railroad. Here, the dairy separated the milk, sold raw milk and made cheese and butter. In 1947, the Pasteurized Milk Ordinance was passed, and it became illegal to sell raw milk.

At first the milk was transported in large drums; later these drums were replaced by five-gallon milk cans. This period, from the 1920's into the 1950's, saw huge changes across the dairy industry, including much technological innovation. Electricity came to the area, and by the early 1950's, approximately half of Bradford County farmers had electric milkers. Electricity brought refrigeration, allowing milk to be stored for longer periods. Also, machinery allowed farmers to keep larger herds. The dairy farmers began supplying milk nationwide in fluid and processed forms. Back in 1928, there were 10,270 horses and 200 mules on Bradford County farms and only 790 tractors. By 1950, there were only 4,125 horses; a large increase in tractors helped to do most of the farm work. In the 1980's, almost every farmer had a tractor but not many had working horses. The advent of the motor truck simplified the transportation problem so the milk could be sold to a milk station further from the farm.

The milk collecting stations in the area were located near the railroad lines. The farmer would either take his milk to the creamery or pay someone to do so. After the farmer milked his cows in the evening, he put the milk in a can submerged in cold spring water to keep it cold. The first chore in the morning was for the farmer to milk the cows again. This milk was also put in a can and along with the previous night's milk, it was taken to a collecting station. At the creamery, there would be a line of those delivering milk. The farmer unloaded his cans, which had his number painted on the can. As the can moved on rollers inside the building a worker knocked the lid off the can with a rubber mallet and smelled the lid. If the lid had a bad odor, the can was taken off the line and set aside. If the lid passed the smell test, a sample of the milk would be taken to be tested later. The milk in the can was poured into a vat. Every can would go through the same process. The lid of the can was put on another moving line along with the empty milk can and taken to an area where they were washed. When all of the farmer's milk had been poured into the vat, it was weighed so that he could be paid. The farmer retrieved his empty washed cans, with lids intact, and headed back to the farm.

After peaking in number in the early twentieth century, farms in Pennsylvania plunged from 225,000 to 59,000. More than 170,000 Pennsylvanians left rural regions in the 1920's and more than 300,000 in the 1960's. The reason the state could accommodate so many farms was that most were small, family operations. The average herd had only 25 dairy cows. By 1963, one-third of those farms had closed, and by 1970, the number had been cut by nearly two-thirds.

Over the years, a variety of factors contributed to this decline; however, the one that started the plunge was the mandated adoption of an electric-cooled tank that chilled large quantities of milk on farms. This was solely an industry mandate.

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## Closing of the Creameries continued...

The state government's only involvement was issuing and enforcing sanitary regulations regarding the tanks. Starting in the 1950's, milk handlers saw that bulk tanks could reduce their costs, and they urged farmers to install stainless steel bulk tanks. Eventually, it was required. The new tanks made it easier for the handlers to collect milk and cut their costs. The milk companies offered free milk transportation to entice the farmers to install these new tanks. The cost of the shiny new tanks, however, was incurred by farmers. Many farmers instead of purchasing the shiny new tanks went out of business after deciding the investment was too expensive. Purchasing a stainless-steel bulk milk tank was a major investment for a small farm!

With Canton and Troy situated in the heart of a large dairy county, and the railroad nearby, the collecting and processing of milk became the prime industry. The size of the farms increased, and the number of cows a farmer could milk increased. The number of people available at milking time and the lack of refrigeration were the limiting factors.

When the size of the dairy herds increased, the surplus milk was sold to a creamery or a milk station. During the latter part of the 19th and early 20th century, Bradford County butter enjoyed an excellent reputation. There were several creameries in the area processing milk, and one such creamery was the Silverdale Creamery at East Canton, which also had skimming stations at Beech Flats and Case's Corners, north of East Canton. Their butter was shipped in tubs or firkins of various sizes to Philadelphia and other cities. The Silverdale Creamery was sold to the Rosedale Company and the buildings were torn down. The creamery at Canton, which processed milk from local farms, made cottage cheese.

At one time, Sheffield Farms had milk plants in Canton, Grover, and Alba. Later, The Dairymen's League had a plant at Cedar Ledge. The last local milk plant to close was Grover Farms. However, the cheese plant in East Smithfield was the last place to collect milk. Sheffield was one of the first dairies to send milk out of the area by train. At first, the railroad cars were packed with ice to keep the milk cold, and later, refrigerated cars were used. Sheffield sent most of its milk to New York City, and eventually merged with Slawson & Decker, making it the largest dairy in the world. Sheffield sold 20% of all the milk sold in New York City.

The depression of the 1930's saw the elimination of many marginal farms and the consolidation of many others, yet the dairy industry remained one of the most important industries in the entire area. Several things occurred in the 1920's and 30's to change the operation of a farm, such as Roosevelt's New Deal instituted the Rural Electrification Act which brought electricity to the farm, and electricity opened a whole new way of life. Not only could the farmer throw away his kerosene lamps and lanterns, but he could now have milking machines and electrical appliances of all kinds. The motor vehicle for transportation and improvements in farm tractors made it possible to farm more acres with less manpower. The improvements in hybrid seeds and fertilizers increased the yield of crops, enabling the farmer to have even larger herds, and improved breeding practices made cows more productive.

Dairy farms have changed drastically in the past hundred years. From the small subsistent farms of the early settlers to the later 19th and early 20th century farms, with the horse being used for work and transportation, to the late 20th century farms dominated by the tractor, modern farm machinery, refrigeration tanks, tank trucks picking up the milk in bulk and taking it directly to a processing plant, the modern dairy farm today is a small manufacturing plant.

In 2022, Pennsylvania ranked 8th in total milk production nationally, with the Commonwealth's 468,000 cows producing nearly 10 billion pounds of milk annually. The state's annual milk production per cow is 21,259 pounds, or about 2,501 gallons, per cow. At 5,000 dairies, the state has the second largest number of dairy farms nationally, having more dairy farms than any other state except Wisconsin. Today, the number of cows in Pennsylvania continues to decrease. Cow numbers in 2022 averaged 468,000, or 6,000 cows less than 2021. The dairy herd in the Commonwealth has been decreasing steadily for many years. In the last 10 years, the state's herd size has shrunk 12% or by 65,000 head. The general trend over the last 10 years has been for increased milk production per cow. Since 2013, milk production per cow has increased 4% or 820 pounds (96.5 gallons).

As small family farms closed, some sold their land to the remaining farmers, who found they had to expand and increasingly mechanize their operations to survive. Farmers increased their herd size to reduce their per-gallon cost of producing milk. With larger herds, farmers switched from growing cash crops, such as oats and wheat, in favor of hay, corn and silage crops to feed their animals. The closing of these small farms caused a ripple effect in Bradford County's economy. Farm equipment places closed, feed mills did less business, dairy supplies sales declined, labor market declined, cattle sales declined, thus forcing the closure of the Troy Sale Barn, the Valley Stockyards in Athens, PA and others.

The small family farm is vanishing, along with it was a way of life, where a man could raise his family by working the land. The farmer would expect a son or daughter to take over the farm when he became too old. There are still a few family farms in operation today, but most of these farms have become big business. The face of agriculture has changed; let's do what we can to support the family farms still in business!





## Neil Bixby & the Barn,

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On July 30, 1975, Neil recorded that a mule was sold. (The only mule sold at the barn while Neil was Superintendent). Other unusual sales were on November 26, 1975, when Neil recorded selling 18 pigeons. And on March 19, 1976, 10 dozen eggs were sold. On July 7, 1976, Neil recorded selling chickens, ducks, and turkeys.

In September of 1977, Neil's health deteriorated, and he had to retire from the sale barn. Doris continued working in the barn's office and she retired several years later. Neil passed away in June of 1982.

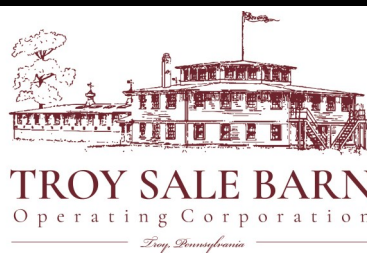
We are thankful that Neil took the time to record these Sale Barn records. In doing so, he preserved part of the Troy Sale Barn history and the history of our area.

-Submitted by TSBOP Board President,  
Bill Bower



### Mission Statement:

To preserve and promote the historic, rich agricultural and rural heritages of our community—offering a gathering spot to highlight local artisans, farmers, community members and school groups. From wedding venues to quilt shows, archery leagues, farmers markets, FFA events, square dances or art shows and farmers' markets, the opportunities for the Troy Sale Barn's utilization are tremendous whether it is for cultural, historical or recreational activities.



**Consider purchasing  
a granite engraved  
paver in honor of  
someone!**

## Mark your Calendars!

Cornhole League—Mondays 5:30 pm

\*For more info, contact Mike Porter  
570-250-6929

Archery League—Wednesdays 6 pm

\*For more info, contact Kristi Warren  
570-404-1713

Square Dance 2/17/24

Comedy Show 2/24/24

ARCC Vendor Event 5/11/24

Hometown Christmas 11/30/24

### Schedule Your Event at the Troy Sale Barn!

Reservations for **2024** event season are filling up the schedule quickly!

If you are interested in hosting your gathering here please call/text Nicole Harris for more information.

**Cell (570) 337-0815, email  
troysalebarn@gmail.com or visit  
our website www.troysalebarn.com**

**Rates start at \$250 per day for showers,  
birthdays, anniversaries, reunions, etc!**

### Please consider donating to the Troy Sale Barn!

The Troy Sale Barn Operating Corporation is a certified 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that is committed to reviving the Troy Sale Barn into a valuable community space. An undertaking of this magnitude can only be completed with the support of our community partners and residents interested in the cause. Any and all donations are fully tax deductible the proceeds going directly to the capital improvements of the Troy Sale Barn. Please contact us for more information!

**Fill out this form and return to donate: 50 Ballard Street, Troy, PA 16947**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Sponsor a Patio Paver in Memory of: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Large Paver (\$500) \_\_\_\_\_ Medium Paver (\$350) \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Small Paver (\$250) \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Become a 2nd Founder of the Sale Barn \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (\$5,000)

*\*Please make checks payable to the Troy Sale Barn Operating Corp. We also welcome charitable distributions from trusts and estates.*

**Antique & art donations for the barn to showcase our agricultural heritage are welcome!**

**Please contact Nicole Harris 570-337-0815 or email troysalebarn@gmail.com**

**For the latest upcoming events or to track our progress, visit our website [www.troysalebarn.com](http://www.troysalebarn.com) or check us out on Facebook!**