



Nineteenth Century, A Century of Change

Crops and Livestock

After the Civil War, farm animals, poultry products, and fruits replaced tobacco as major cash crops. By the end of the century, corn, wheat, oats, and hay had become the main crops. The soil was perfect for pastures and hay crops, so beef, dairy cattle and hogs were common livestock.



Effects of the Civil War

Before the Civil War, tobacco was grown on every plantation, but the results of the war changed farming. A major result was poverty. A total of 3,309 slaves—a huge source of farm labor—were freed in Orange County. With less people to farm the tobacco, farmers had to find crops that required less labor to harvest. This new start proved to be an advantage for the county. A diversity of crops and livestock was produced which meant a more balanced agricultural area.

Depressions of 1867-1898

From 1867-1898, Southern American farmers faced almost continuous depression. Many farmers were unwilling or unable to adapt to the changing situations that the end of the Civil War brought. Their main problems were based in the marketplace. Farmers all over the United States joined a national group called the Patrons of Husbandry, or the Grange. The organization focused on influencing state legislation related to farming. The Panic of 1873 brought more economic problems. As a result, many Grange members could no longer afford memberships, and some probably left farming.

Threshing Machines

Threshing was done to free the kernels of wheat from the head and chaff, which are the seed coverings. The first machines only threshed. A person was still needed to separate the straw—that is the stalks of grain, with a rake and remove the chaff with a fanning mill or winnowing baskets. By the late 1840s, a fan for winnowing was added and the combined thresher-separator-winnower appeared on farms.

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"The earth belongs in usufruct to the living."

—Thomas Jefferson in a letter to James Madison, 1789