



Twentieth And Twenty-First Centuries

Continuing Progress

Crops

In the beginning of the twentieth century, corn, wheat, oats, hay, and apples were the main crops. Small amounts of rye and barley were also planted. Today, the main crop is corn. Hay, alfalfa, rye, wheat, barley, sorghum, and small amounts of oats are also grown. Wine grapes have become a specialty. Orange County grows more acres of wine grapes than any other Virginia county. Major changes during the first quarter of the twentieth century included increased hay crops and the establishment of orchards.



A new turkey chick arrives in Orange.

Livestock

Orange County has had a good climate for raising livestock. In the beginning of the twentieth century, there was a large increase in the amount of livestock and poultry. Livestock included dairy cattle, beef cattle, a few sheep, and poultry. Dairy farming has been the most important source of income during the twentieth and into the twenty-first century. Corn, barley, oats, and grain crops have been grown on the county's farms and fed to the livestock.

Farm Labor

In the beginning of the twentieth century, there was a shortage of farm labor because of better industrial employment and the agricultural depression. Large landowners paid higher wages, which caused a labor shortage on smaller farms. An average farm laborer earned \$40 per month and board (food). A tractor operator earned \$50 per month with board. The average rate for day laborers was \$2. Family has always been important to help run farms. Children have been an important part of the farm because they have helped by feeding farm animals. Small numbers of people outside the family have also been hired. Today, an average dairy farmer makes about 50 cents an hour.

Steam and Gas Engines

Before the twentieth century, animals, such as horses, powered machines. By the twentieth century, tractors with steam engines and then gas engines were used. Steam and gas powered machines were favored over the use of animals because they were stronger and the amount of power did not depend on forward movement. Gas engines required less maintenance than steam engines. Gas tractors were popular because they started easily, worked efficiently, and stopped easily. With this change, food production more than tripled.



"The soils, the climate, the elevation, and the natural vegetation combine to create in Orange County one of the most attractive landscapes to be found anywhere."

—From Ulysses P. Joyner, Jr.'s book, Orange County Land Patents, 1985.

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