FOOD AND EVERYDAY LIFE

ON KENTUCKY FAMILY FARMS 1920–1950

JOHN VAN WILLIGEN & ANNE VAN WILLIGEN

Food and Everyday Life on Kentucky Family Farms 1920–1950

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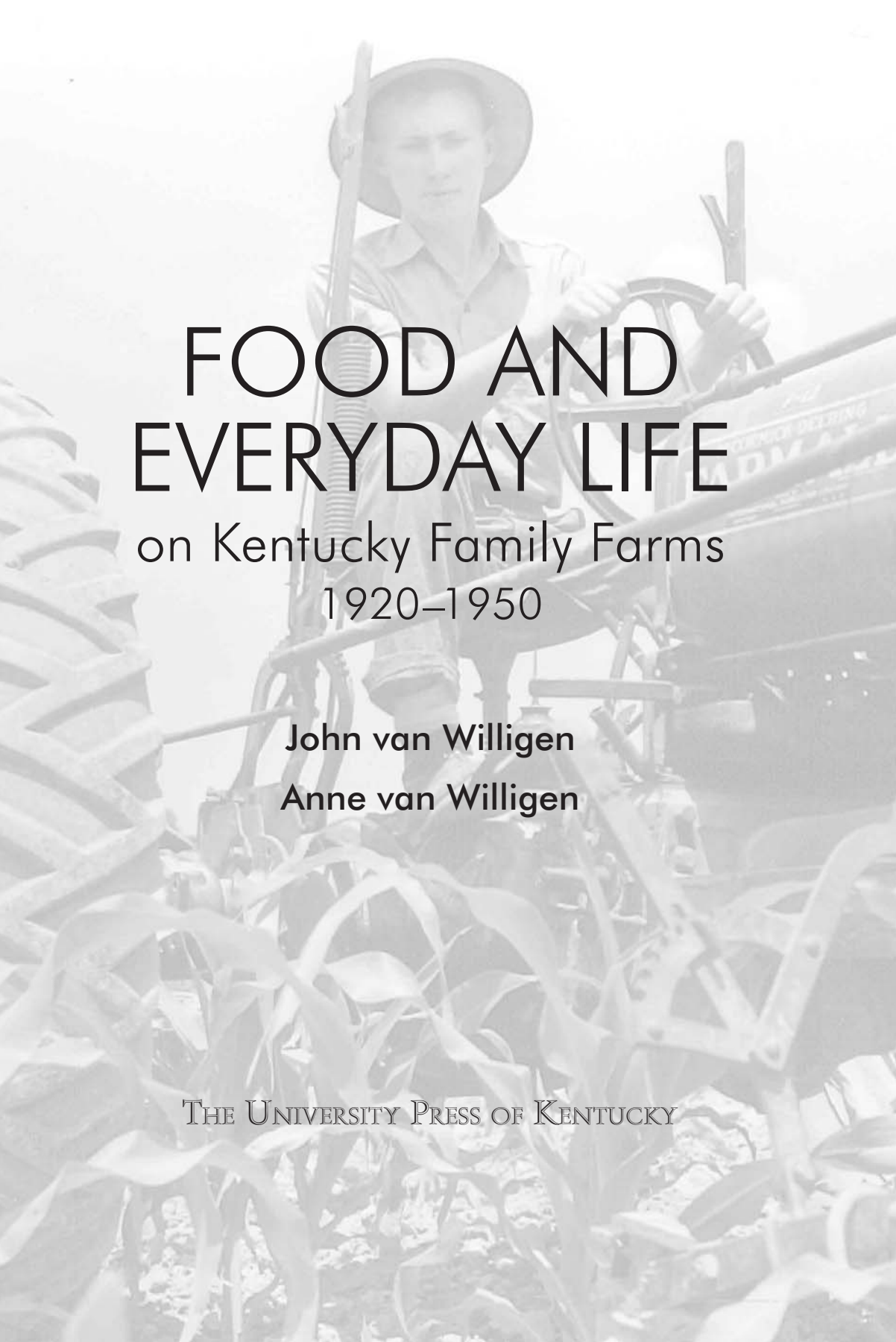

FOOD AND EVERYDAY LIFE

on Kentucky Family Farms 1920–1950

John van Willigen

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The University Press of Kentucky

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For Elizabeth Jeannette Walsh
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Editors' Preface

In the field of oral history, Kentucky is a national leader. Over the past several decades, tens of thousands of its citizens have been interviewed. *Kentucky Remembered* brings into print the most important of those collections, with each volume focusing on a particular subject.

Oral history is, of course, only one type of source material. Yet by the very personal nature of recollection, hidden aspects of history are often disclosed. Oral sources provide a vital thread in the rich fabric that is Kentucky history.

This work is the sixth volume in the series and is the second to focus on one of the most important aspects of Kentucky's history and culture—rural life on family farms. During the past several decades the commonwealth has experienced a sharp decline in the number of family farms and a transformation in the daily lives of its rural citizens. Through oral history interviews, *Food and Everyday Life on Kentucky Family Farms* captures the memories of a time when family farms dominated the state's landscape, its economy, and its culture. John van Willigen and Anne van Willigen place these memories in the context of larger social and cultural issues of market economies and community relationships. The result is a book that helps us understand change and stresses again the human element in history.

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Preface

This book documents aspects of everyday life on Kentucky family farms as experienced from about 1920 to 1950. The focus is on the foodways, which means that discussions of food production, preparation, and preservation dominate most chapters. The book is based largely on interviews conducted in the early 1990s by the Kentucky Family Farm Oral History Project in an effort to create a record of past life in rural Kentucky.

Foodways are the practices, knowledge, and emotional patterns of a community or other group associated with food—its production, preparation, and consumption. One could also say that foodways are the part of culture that deals with food. One way to start thinking about foodways is to consider the very act of eating. In sitting down to a meal with family (or eating alone, standing in front of the refrigerator, for that matter), all sorts of foodways come into play. In this book we have gone beyond cooking and eating to include raising, preserving, buying, and foraging for food.

Foodways, especially the foodways of historical Kentucky farms, are a very comfortable topic. These ways of doing things are emotionally evocative, and they resonate with feelings of nostalgia for the most pleasant aspects of the past. For a number of years the senior author has been lecturing on the topic for the Kentucky Humanities Council Speaker's Bureau. When he gives his talk, it consistently evokes reminiscences of childhood experiences at the breakfast or dinner table, in the garden, and on the farm. Although many people in the audiences are native-born Kentuckians, many are not. Yet the response is warm irrespective of where the audience members were raised. People just like to talk about food and their early lives.

Here, we focus on food and everyday life as known and practiced primarily in the decades between the two world wars. Life in this pe-

riod provides a nostalgic template for the "good old days" and is iconic in many ways. This is certainly true of the foods. Food, as it was prepared back then, represents a kind of cultural archetype that influences our conception of traditional southern country cooking. We are all familiar with the national restaurant chains, such as the Lebanon, Tennessee–based Cracker Barrel Old Country Store, Inc., and the Louisville, Kentucky–based KFC, which are manifestations of the pattern. The community life within which these foodways existed represents to many an idealized American life—authentic, genuine, and good.

Although many old-time foods are still valued, the structural context that produced and gave considerable sense to these foods has changed. The conditions that produced the foodways of these early-twentieth-century communities have all but disappeared, yet the foods linger as the residue of an earlier era. Food practices that were integrated into community life as basic survival behaviors are continued as symbolic nostalgia. Taste preferences brought about by necessity became a template for good cooking and even an emerging cuisine. Foods that were requisite parts of Kentucky farming life evolved as a means of expressing ethnic identity as people moved to cities both within and outside the region. In a sense, there has been a tendency to turn certain old-time food practices into the representation of a way of life. Some foods that were once part of families' and communities' basic subsistence have been transformed into commercial products. Foods initially produced for home consumption grew into cottage industries or became thoroughly commercialized. Some remained culturally framed niche products, such as country ham, sausage, and sorghum syrup. Other important home-produced products, such as milk and grain, became completely commoditized as industrial products.

Although this book is about Kentucky, it is important to remember that the commonwealth is not one place but many. There is significant diversity in the foodways of the various regions of Kentucky. The foodways in the Cumberland Plateau of the eastern mountains are different from those in the rolling topography of the Bluegrass region of central Kentucky and in western Kentucky. Because the economy has an important impact on foodways, and because the regions of Kentucky have important economic differences, regional variations are to be expected. There are contrasts in terms of scale, extent of market orientation, amount and kinds of off-farm employment, and class structure. In central and western Kentucky, the scale of farming op-

erations was larger, reflecting a greater orientation toward the market. In eastern Kentucky, farm families were more interested in producing food for household use, and many individuals worked off the farm in mining and lumbering. Class differences can be seen in the narrations. For example, it is clear that some of the narrators from the central Bluegrass had large landholdings. They often refer to having help in the kitchen, and they were early adopters of electricity. Although we chose not to emphasize regional and income differences, the list of narrators provides each person's home county and region (eastern, central, or western Kentucky) to allow interested readers to interpret what is said in terms of those factors. Interviews from eastern and central Kentucky tend to predominate, with fewer from western Kentucky.

One striking regional difference in foodways relates to the role of corn and wheat in the diet. Eastern Kentucky interviews contained more detailed and concrete information about corn production and the use of corn for the table. Central Kentucky narrators were far more committed to biscuits than cornbread, and, as one would expect, they also spoke of growing wheat. Although both types of quick breads were prepared and consumed in both regions, everyday consumption patterns were different. In central Kentucky, some narrators spoke of having biscuits every day, even for every meal. In particular, the "beaten biscuits" referred to by people from the Bluegrass seemed to be a marker of high status. In any case, regional differences are part of the story told in this book.

The book is based on the transcriptions of the Kentucky Farm Family Oral History Project of the University of Kentucky's Oral History Program. These materials were compiled in 1990 to 1994 by a team of researchers of which the senior author was a part. We would like to thank members of the Family Farm Project team, including Susan Abbott-Jamieson, Thomas Arcury, Kathleen M. DeWalt, Loraine Garkovich, Sara Quandt, and Shaunna Scott. They contributed a great deal to this book through their work on the project. Thomas Arcury and Sara Quandt played an important leadership role in this process. Field staff of the project contributed a great deal through their interviewing skills. These persons included Elizabeth Albert, Andrea Allan, Sonya Anglin, David Coffey, Steve Fricker, Zack Lewton, Jennifer Mooney, Stephen Mooney, Maureen Mullinax, Gun Roos, David Rotenizer, and Nancy Shreve. The assistance of Terry L. Birdwhistell and Jeffery Suchanek of the University of Kentucky Oral History Pro-

gram was crucial at various stages of this project. Their advice as oral historians was always welcome. The Kentucky Oral History Commission, directed by Kim Lady Smith, provided important support for the transcription of tapes as well as for the initial inception of the Family Farm Oral History Project.

We would also like to thank readers of the book as it was developing: Kathleen M. DeWalt, Ronni Lundy, Orloff Miller, and Jacqueline van Willigen. They all provided useful guidance and encouragement. Mary Winter and Charlene Smith assisted in finding and obtaining photographs at the Kentucky Historical Society. We appreciated the opportunity to present some of these materials through programs of the Kentucky Humanities Council, directed by Virginia Smith, and the Kentucky Smithsonian "Key Ingredients" Museum Program, coordinated by Kathleen Pool. Edward and Susan Walsh and Juliana McDonald generously shared family cookbooks.

Another source of information used in the book are the ethnographic field notes the senior author compiled while working in a Bluegrass county from 1978 to 1980. The notes, which are based on extensive key informant interviews and participant observation, were used in both *Tobacco Culture: Farming Kentucky's Burley Belt* (1998) and *Gettin' Some Age on Me: Social Organization of Older People in a Rural American Community* (1989). Other sources include archives at the University of Kentucky and the Kentucky Historical Society, Works Progress Administration (WPA) records archived at the Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives, and U.S. census records, especially the U.S. Census of Agriculture. Historical magazines, newspapers, seed catalogs, and cookbooks were also useful. The photographs in the book are from the Library of Congress's Farm Security Administration collection and from the Kentucky Historical Society.

Much of the text of the book is either derived or directly quoted from transcriptions of the tape-recorded interviews. Most transcriptions were done by experienced, professional transcribers at the University of Kentucky Oral History Program. The transcription process was designed to produce an accurate verbatim text, including the use of a line-by-line review process by a person other than the transcriber. The interviews quoted here have been edited for readability. Multiple starts, hesitations, and repetitions have been removed, and words have been added in brackets or reordered when necessary for clarity.

Despite the concern about accuracy, there are a number of sources

of bias. The foundation of the book is the narrative of Kentuckians who experienced family farm life, rather than the authors' somewhat more interpretive perspective. Although this reduces the authors' role in framing the text, it creates its own bias. Most important, the researchers and the authors exerted selection and choice at various points in the process in terms of structuring the interview guide, training the interviewers, selecting the people to be interviewed, deciding which transcript text to include in the book, and editing the interviews.

Another source of bias derives from the fact that, for the most part, the narrators were reporting recollections from their childhood—knowledge obtained largely through observation or participation. It is important to remember that these were reflections many years later by persons who experienced these activities as children. Although they observed many things, their participation was often limited by their age at the time. For example, because of the dangers associated with lye, they tended to only observe soap making and did not actually take part in it. Likewise, they remember eating sorghum and biscuits and having fun at the skimming, but they had no experience actually making sorghum, which was done by older men with special skills who are long dead. Their memories can also be selective. We realized this when reading field notes about a man's recollection of huckster trucks, which were something like grocery stores on wheels that traveled circuits in many Kentucky counties. Whereas his account of the varieties of candy the huckster carried was extensive and detailed, he was less knowledgeable about the other goods available. Thus, it is important to consider the source and the circumstances of these accounts.

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Chapter 1

Farms and Rural Life in Kentucky

The image many people have of rural America is of the family farm. The role of the family farm in the creation of American social values is important. It is seen as a "storehouse of the traditional values that built the nation; self-reliance, resourcefulness, civic pride, family strength, concern for neighbors and community, honesty, and friendliness" (Garkovich, Bokemeier, and Foote 1995, 9). Because it is a source of defining social values, the family farm has become a cultural icon with which people have many positive associations. Like many cultural icons, however, it is far more variable than people imagine and may have associated problems that are not part of the image.

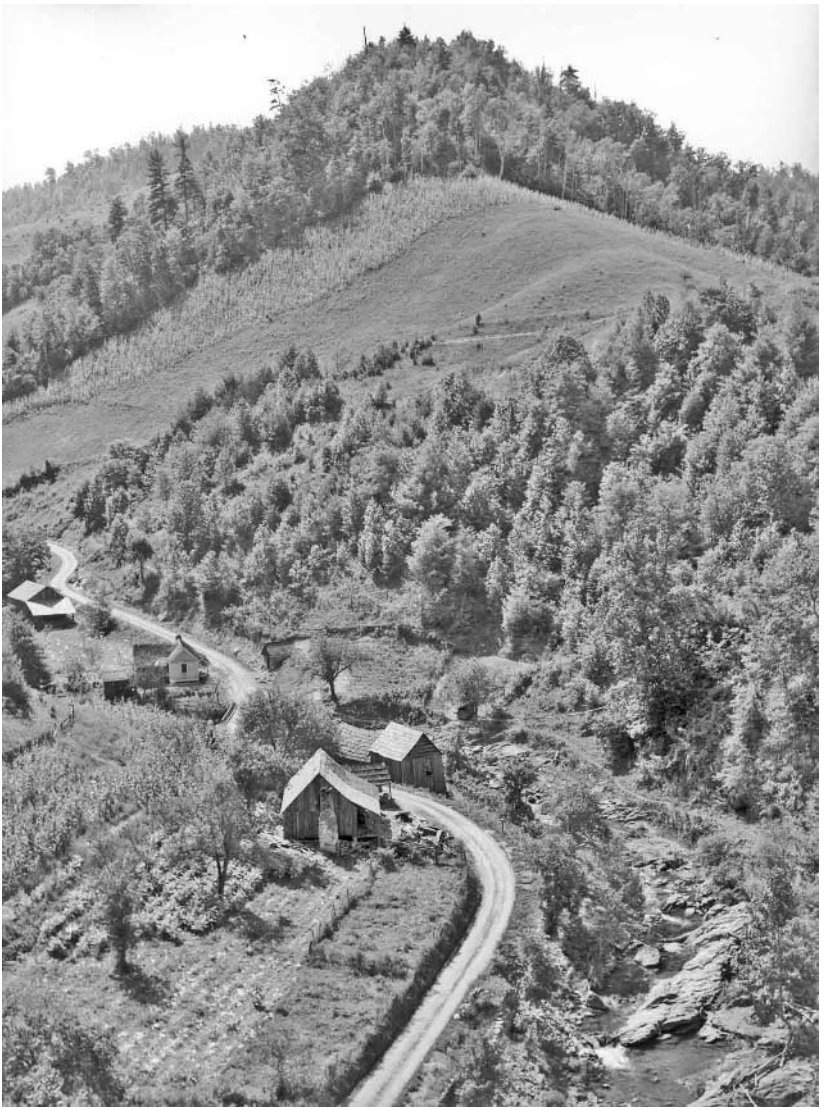
Defining family farms is difficult because of rapid change and great variation; the category is fuzzy and evolving. In general, the farm enterprise is sustained by a family group, usually a married couple and their children. There is complex intergenerational collaboration and a generational division of labor—mother and father do the farming, sons and daughters do the chores. The children are enculturated to both farm and homemaking practices. Inheritance and other forms of the intergenerational transfer of assets are important. Members of the family make most management decisions and carry much of the economic risk associated with weather, pests, market, and labor. Although much of the farm and household work is performed by the family, in some places, hired hands and household help provide supplementary labor. Dorothy Cox, from Anderson County in central Kentucky,

spoke of her concept of a family farm: "I milked. I helped in the fields. Whatever had to be done. Every day. I never had a public job. Always at home. But I could do anything that had to be done on a farm. I think that's where they got the idea of family farms. Because a family worked on the farm. Every member of the family worked on the farm. My children learned to work on the farm."

The idea of a family farm also includes the notion of relatively stable land tenure, often through ownership but also through sharecropping. Family farms usually follow mixed farming strategies, growing at least some of their own food as well as that produced for the market. Although off-farm employment occurs, the farm is an important part of the family's livelihood. Family farm households often have richly cooperative relationships with their neighbors. This potential for neighborly cooperation is relatively high because the families' enterprises are often similar in size and use the same production system; most family members work on the farms, and there is an emphasis on egalitarian values. In fact, in the recent past, when off-farm employment became especially important, collaboration with neighbors became more difficult.

It is clear, then, that a family farm is not just a set of things, relationships, and practices but a set of values. "The family farm is more than soil and livestock. It is also traditional meanings and values attached to the land" (Garkovich et al. 1995, 18). It is more than items that can be enumerated in a list; there is a kind of "I will know it when I see it" configuration that is beyond words. These characteristics endure in contemporary family farms and are rooted in the farms of the period covered by this book. There are significant differences between the present and the past, however. The family farm of today is very different from the family farm of the 1920s through 1940s. Neither can claim to be more authentic than the other, because the family farm is shaped by the specific conditions of the time.

Family farm life has some major advantages, but it requires a high degree of commitment to make it work. Dorothy Cox expressed her views on this: "I think it's great. There's no other life like farming. There isn't anything else like it, from the time the whip-poor-wills holler, to the independence you have on a farm. You're just tied down as much as you want to be tied down. The more conscientious [you are] about your work, the more apt you are to make a success of it. The guy that goes fishing off the farm every day is not gonna be very successful. But he's



Farmsteads along creek with corn and tobacco in eastern Kentucky, 1940. (Marion Post Wolcott, Library of Congress, Farm Security Administration)

gonna be awful independent. I think you have a closeness with your family that you'd never have otherwise. And I partly believe that's because the mother was always home. The first thing they ever said when

they walked in the door from school, 'Mama.' That's the first word they holler when they come through the door. To see if you's in, knowing you'd be there. And now the children don't have it. The little boys and girls that lived on a farm had little chores they had to do. They had the dog to play with. They came in and took off those shoes, took off their jeans that they wore to school, put on their little overalls and head out to do whatever they had to do. Go play or else go help do this and go do that, and they were busy. They weren't just bored to death watching television. Farm life in general is bound to be the happiest life. But can I say it really is money-wise? Look what happened to Calumet with all the money they had. They went bankrupt. You cannot live a sophisticated, high-class, mink-coat life and survive on a family farm."

Although there has been much change, farming and family farms remain important in Kentucky. Agriculture is Kentucky's largest industry, with over $4 billion in sales in 2003, and family farms are a major contributor. From several perspectives, Kentucky has many farms today. It was fourth in the nation in terms of numbers in 1991, but most of the farms were small; three-quarters of them were less than 180 acres. The number of farms in Kentucky has been declining steadily since statistics have been collected, and the decline accelerated after World War II. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (1999) indicated that there were 270,626 farms in Kentucky in 1919; by 1997, the number had decreased 70 percent to 82,273. As the number of farms declined, the average size increased. The average farm in 1919 was 80 acres; by 1997, it was twice that, 162 acres. These statistics only hint at the profound changes that occurred in this era, when the shape of social and economic life was radically transformed.

These processes of social change resonate with the ideas of humanist Wendell Berry on the transformation of rural American life. His conception is based on his experiences as a Kentucky farmer and an essayist on conservation and social issues. In general terms, he speaks of the *unsettling* of America (Berry 1977). What Berry calls unsettling is a process of social devolution caused by changes in the relationship between human communities and the land on which they live and the energy they use. These changes, in turn, transform people's worldview and values, which he believes reduces the sustainability of human life. Unsettling is manifested in soil erosion, contamination of the food chain, atomization of social life, and fewer future opportunities for humans.

Berry's conception of process has an important cognitive component. He describes the transformation of meaning in at least two frameworks. One is the relationship between humans and work. Work is related to meaning, and in the process of unsettling, work and meaning become separated. The second framework is the meaning of place. He speaks of the need for those living in a community to be aware of their own place. He makes this point in a discussion of literary regionalism but notes that it pertains to living in general. He quotes Thomas Hardy in *The Woodlanders* to describe a native's relationship with place: "Winter in a solitary house in the country, without society, is tolerable, nay, even enjoyable and delightful, given . . . old association—an almost exhaustive biographical or historical acquaintance with every object . . . within the observer's horizon." The unsettled America does not allow the development of these kinds of understandings. As Berry expresses it, "if the land is made fit for human habitation by memory and old association, it is also true that by memory and association men are made fit to inhabit the land. At present our society is almost entirely nomadic, without the comfort or the discipline of such memories, and it is moving about on the face of this continent with a mindless destructiveness, of substance and of meaning and of value" (Berry 1970, 68).

An important element in his theory is the concept referred to by anthropologists as *delocalization.* In the past, life on American farms was more independent and self-sufficient. As farm communities became dependent on remote sources of energy and on goods manufactured in far-off cities, there developed a greater commitment to consumption rather than to production. This created a state of "helpless dependence on things and services and ideas and motives that we have forgotten how to provide for ourselves." It is because of this that "all meaningful contact between ourselves and the earth is broken" (Berry 1970, 77).

Energy has profound social and cultural effects and is important to Berry's ideas. "Our conversion to fossil fuel energy subjected society to a sort of technological determinism, shifting population and values according to the new patterns and values of industrialization. Rural wealth and materials and rural people were caught within the gravitational field of the industrial economy and flowed to the cities, from which comparatively little flowed back in return. And so the human life of farmsteads and rural communities dwindled everywhere, and in

some places perished" (Berry 1981, 128). In this framework, mechanical solutions to technical problems replace social solutions.

The negative effects of unsettling can be reduced through "adequate cultural controls." As Berry (1970, 133) states, "the present problems of the world are the result, not of human stupidity, but of human intelligence without adequate cultural controls." An important type of cultural control is what Berry refers to as disciplines. Some disciplines are technical and narrow, and although these are important, they are secondary to more general disciplines, such as community and faith. Without these primary disciplines, the secondary disciplines would stop functioning properly. Technology needs to be tamed by the operation of community sanctions (Berry 1970, 152).

The primary cause of the process of unsettling is the reduced effectiveness of cultural controls. Secondary to this and derived from it are other causes. One is the change in worldview from a cyclical view to a linear, progress-oriented viewpoint. As Berry (1970, 139) characterizes it, there are "two fundamentally opposed views of the nature of human life and experience in the world: one holds that though natural processes may be cyclic, there is within nature a human domain the processes of which are linear; the other, much older, holds that human life is subject to the same cyclic patterns as all other life." And, he continues, "the linear vision places its emphasis entirely on the rising phase of the cycle—on production, possession, life. It provides for no returns. Waste, for instance, is a concept that could have been derived only from linear vision" (1970, 144).

Wendell Berry's holistic understanding of the system can be seen most clearly in his conception of culture. He emphasizes that food, an important product of farm households, is a complex "cultural product" and that seeing it only in narrow economic terms is destructive; thus the underlying culture becomes "unhealthy." A "healthy culture" consists of "a communal order of memory, insight, value, work, conviviality, reverence, aspiration" (Berry 1977, 43).

The narrations that form the substance of this book depict the experiences of Kentucky farm families as they lived through the processes Berry describes. Before we consider these, let us begin the story of these changes by looking at the basic outlines of the history of rural Kentucky from 1920 to 1950.

Through and through, it was an era of hard times. There was a sharp recession following World War I, associated with a dramatic fall

in agricultural commodity prices. This was the rural manifestation of the Great Depression. The urban version of the Depression was associated with the stock market crash of 1929 almost a decade later. Hard times were addressed by individual choices and by collective government action. As many people migrated to cities, government programs and policies were developed to handle these issues, especially from the mid-1930s onward.

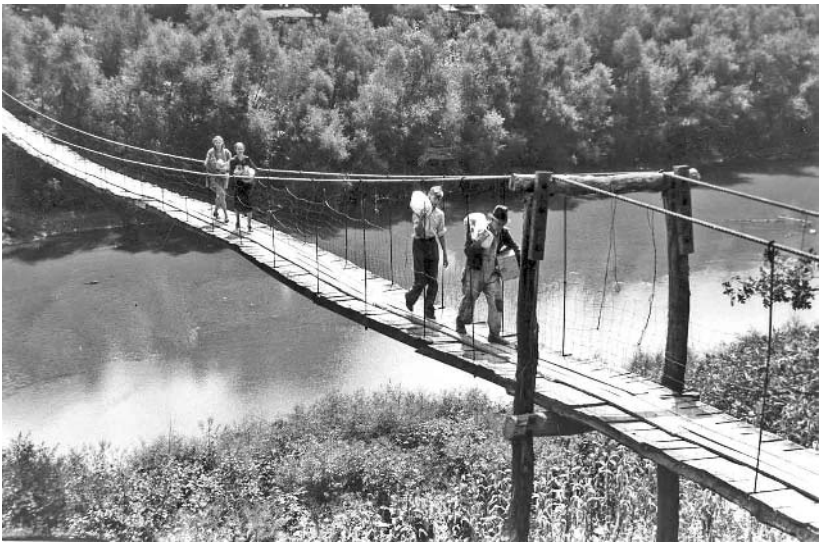
To deal with the nation's economic problems, there was an extensive change in agricultural policy associated with President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal legislation (Blakey 1986). In 1933, as part of FDR's program to improve rural life, the Agricultural Adjustment Administration paid farmers to not produce crops. The underlying legislation was declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court and replaced with a legally workable version in 1936. (This served as the basis for U.S. agricultural policy until recently; much of it has now been dismantled.) These policies provided a means to control the production of a number of agricultural commodities, including tobacco, cotton, hogs, milk, corn, wheat, and rice (Daniel 1985). All these commodities, except for rice, are produced in Kentucky. Through a market quota system, price guarantees, and commodity storage arrangements, farm incomes were enhanced, and some of the commodities were distributed as food aid to the poor.

Associated with government attempts to increase farm incomes were efforts to improve farming practices and rural life in general. Most important was the agricultural extension program founded at the University of Kentucky's College of Agriculture. State appropriations started in 1912 for this program (Smith 1981), which initially included agricultural short courses, the establishment of agriculture classes in high schools, and the encouragement of farmer associations, such as the Kentucky Corn Growers' Association. The core of the university's extension efforts came about through passage of the Smith-Lever Act of 1914. This provided the means for county-level agents of the Cooperative Extension Service to provide instruction and demonstrations in agriculture and home economics (Smith 1981, 117). Although these programs had manifold goals, their primary concern was raising farm incomes through increased crop and livestock yields and intensification of management. Extension agents communicated recommendations derived from the university's research program, funded in large part through the Hatch Act of 1887. (This legislation still pro-

Farmhouses in Scott County, 1940. (Marion Post Wolcott, Library of Congress, Farm Security Administration)

vides research funding for the University of Kentucky, Kentucky State University, and land-grant agricultural colleges in other states.) A secondary goal was to improve rural life through public education about diet and health, food safety, and homemaking. Home demonstration agents, who were employees of the university's extension service, introduced new foods and recipes to rural Kentucky communities and organized homemaker clubs. This organizational work began in 1914 (Smith 1981, 266) and continues today.

This was also a period of massive technological change. Many of the people interviewed started their lives without electricity and running water. Some spoke of "grease lamps" and dug wells that would not seem out of place in accounts of biblical times. Cars, trucks, and tractors went from being novelties whose sightings were reported in the local newspaper to ubiquitous necessities. Radios were introduced, and suddenly people could follow the Reds and listen to the Grand Ole Opry or Lum and Abner on their Crosleys, Atwater Kents, or RCA Radiolas.



Carrying home groceries and supplies across a swinging bridge, Breathitt County, 1940. (Marion Post Wolcott, Library of Congress, Farm Security Administration)

During this time, there was a profound transformation in the way energy was used. Agriculture was based almost entirely on animal traction at the beginning of the period, and although animals were still used into the 1950s, tractors became dominant. There were also important government efforts in support of electrification. In 1935 the Rural Electrification Administration (REA) was established, and the Rural Electrification Act was passed in 1936. The REA accelerated the process of federal funding for the electrification of the countryside through rural electrical cooperatives. (Currently there are twenty-six rural electrical cooperatives providing energy in Kentucky, and they are still important.) Working in conjunction with the REA was the Tennessee Valley Authority, which made inexpensive electrical power available to areas in western Kentucky. Electricity meant new kinds of stoves and refrigeration, along with cookbooks and cooking classes about how to use them.

Transportation was radically transformed as well. The number of automobiles registered in the state skyrocketed during this period, increasing from 19,500 in 1915 to 300,000 in 1928 (Klotter 1996, 96). In parallel, there were significant improvements in the rural road

system in the 1930s. One political goal was to have all the county seats connected by paved roads. Nevertheless, some isolated areas of the state were very slow to get this improvement.

In this era there were significant changes in the distribution of Kentucky's population (Klotter 1996, 36–41). There was significant migration from rural to urban areas during most of the twentieth century. At the beginning of the century, 78 percent of Kentucky's population was rural; by 1990, the rural population had dropped to 48 percent (Ulack, Raitz, and Pauer 1998, 81). One of the consequences was that many rural Kentucky counties showed a population decline at census time, while the population of the state as a whole consistently increased. (Kentucky's population growth is lower than the national average, however.) Population changes were not uniformly distributed. For example, out-migration resulted in some county populations getting older; in others, the African American population declined significantly because of migration to places such as Detroit, Chicago, Dayton, and Cincinnati.

All in all, American farm life in the early twentieth century was more independent and coherent and far less dependent on the outside world. The nostalgic image of Daddy bringing a bucket of warm milk home from the family cow barn was transformed in the 1960s and 1970s to him bringing home a plastic gallon jug of homogenized milk from a Kroger's. As people's lives become more complicated, they forgot how to do many things. We hope that this book helps readers grasp how much rural Kentuckians of this period had to know and how much they could do—from plowing a field with a team of mules to baking a jam cake. In spite of hard times and limited resources, they got on just fine.

During the lives of the interviewees, the agricultural economy underwent an intensification of production and pervasive mechanization. Farm produce became almost entirely for the market. Farming techniques changed to get more from the land, usually by the increased use of chemical fertilizers, pesticides, and fuel. Parallel to these processes was the more fundamental and general delocalization of the economy. The county economy became increasingly linked to the national market. These linkages were expressed in a variety of ways. First, an increasing portion of the economy was monetized and expressed through market relationships. Second, more economic relationships were subject to governmental regulation. There were more and more

rules about how one could make a living. Third, there was a shift away from agricultural production and toward industrialization and industrial employment. Some people migrated to places where there was factory work, and as roads improved, some began to commute. These changes had consequences.

Much of what the narrators have to say is about these consequences, including changes in the arrangement of their daily lives. Farming itself changed by becoming a part-time occupation that relied on machines and fuel rather than a full-time investment of the human energy of family and neighbors. Along with this, the typical farm operation became less complex, and fewer types of commodities were raised. Farms became much larger but, in a way, simpler.

Because a much smaller portion of the farm's bounty was actually consumed on the farm, men's and women's relationship to household economic production changed profoundly. Women had a larger role than men in the production and preservation of home-consumed food in the early days. Gardening, egg production, poultry raising, milk and cream processing, and food preservation such as canning, drying, and cellaring were the work of women. Day in and day out, season after season, women put food on the table by growing it and by producing and selling other commodities to provide a steady flow of cash into the household.

The social nature of economic life was transformed in other ways. The changing fabric of community life led to less work sharing among neighbors. Communities became increasingly disarticulated. Because of governmental regulations related to sanitary requirements, fewer farmers produced food for direct sale to consumers. The local community thus became less equipped to meet the needs of its population. More and more, people's needs for goods and services were met at the end of a long trip. The occupational structure of the community changed as well, with fewer farmers relative to those working in the manufacturing and service sectors and more women employed outside of the home and farm. As a result, commuting became more important. These transformations were ubiquitous in all of rural America. They were both the cause and the consequence of the unsettling that Wendell Berry wrote about.

Through their knowledge and hard work, Kentucky farm families made a living. This involved raising grain crops such as corn and wheat,

which they consumed and sold. Pasturage was important for the livestock that provided milk, meat, traction, and cash. Cows, pigs, and chickens were raised on most farms. Large gardens were typical, and some farms had orchards and grape arbors. Produce from the field and garden was sometimes supplemented with wild plants and what could be derived from fishing and hunting. Tobacco raising provided much-needed cash to pay the mortgage and taxes and to buy some basic commodities. For the most part, men and women did different tasks, although they often worked side by side in the fields.

Farms of this period produced much of what they consumed. This is what made them so complex. Although production for the market was important, vital economic flows occurred within the farm rather than from farm to market. Much of the farm's produce did not leave through the farm gate; food went from field, garden, and hog lot to the kitchen, where it was preserved and prepared and then consumed at home. Farm and household wastes were often recycled, and there was relatively little solid waste.

Women, men, and children did a great deal of work to keep Kentucky family farms operating. This was accomplished with a simple technical infrastructure. Although the farms we discuss were similar, there were important differences. For example, some parts of the state were better off economically, and that made a difference.

Chapter 2

In the Kitchen

Work in both kitchen and field started early in the morning. Daily chores were often completed before breakfast was eaten. Breakfast cooking required that the woodstove be fired up. "They always got up before daylight. They would milk by lantern light, lots of times. While Daddy went to the barn to milk Mother would get breakfast. And you had to get your stove hot to bake your biscuits. It would take a long time to get breakfast ready. And of course we always had a big breakfast, 'cause you had to have a big breakfast if you worked hard" (Glen Vanoy, Casey County).

The children also had work to do in the morning. Florene Smith (Letcher County) recollected, "My sister and I would have to wash the dishes before we went to school. And then the brothers, they'd have to feed the hogs and do their end of it. And then, of course, we'd go to school. We'd hurry so we'd get to play with our friends before the bell rang. That also made us hurry and get our work done because we had to do it."

Most women did both farmwork and food preparation, which meant that they often had to rely on cooking practices that allowed them to spend time in the fields. "Early cooking related to the participation in farmwork. Of course, if they plowed tobacco, by that time Mother would have the dishes done. She'd be right out there hoeing tobacco and chopping out between the hills, you know, where they couldn't get to with a plow" (Vanoy). The cooking that was done early in the morning often involved starting to prepare food for dinner and supper. This was especially true during the summer heat. They might put on a kettle of green beans that would cook most of the morning and then make cornbread and potatoes.

Three Meals a Day

Breakfast was a big meal, with a number of dishes. "I'd always get up and get a big breakfast. We fried meat, made biscuits, made gravy, fried eggs. And I always had somethin' sweet on the table and our butter, you know. We called it breakfast, that's the first meal, you know." Meat was a common part of the meal. "I've seen my mother get up and dress a chicken for breakfast. Without refrigeration, you just couldn't have a chicken, you know, dressed the night before. And with the meat, she always had either bacon or ham. Or country-fried steak for breakfast because she felt like my dad and the boys worked and they needed a good breakfast. We always ate tomatoes for breakfast, just plain tomatoes. Just with our regular meal. We had oats in the wintertime. We'd cook oats if anybody wanted them. But most of the time, we had eggs and meat for breakfast" (Lina E. Wells, Casey County).

The midday meal, called dinner, was usually the largest and most elaborate meal of the day. The mothers did the cooking, but because they also did farmwork, they would have to stop working and return to the house to fix the big noontime meal. "Women got to learn how to make dinner out of almost nothing. I guess they'd learned to do that over the years. But you would think, 'Well, what are we gonna have today?' And then she'd have green beans, and she'd have corn, and she'd have sweet potatoes, fried sweet potatoes, and, oh, just, you know, a meal. Just when you'd wonder what we was gonna have. And she always baked cornbread, and that was so good" (Vanoy).

The foods served at dinner varied seasonally. Primarily, there was a shift from fresh to preserved foods. In the early spring, various greens were served. Fresh garden produce dominated the midsummer table. During the summer, fresh green beans were cooked, but during the winter, dried or canned beans took their place, along with soup beans—what we call pinto beans. Fried chicken was more common in the summer, and fresh pork often appeared on the table in early fall. Later, the cured sausages and hams were eaten. Desserts changed with the seasons too. Rhubarb pie was often the first of the fruit pies, because rhubarb can be harvested in early spring. Cherry pie followed, and then later in the summer there would be apple, blackberry, and peach pie. Dried apple pie was a frequent winter dessert.

The most elaborate meal of the week was Sunday dinner. Sometimes, preparations might start the night before or early that morning.

The mother might even stay home from church to see that everything was properly prepared, because it was important to have the food ready when the family got home. Guests were often invited, such as neighbors or perhaps the preacher. According to Ralph Lobb of Hart County, "The biggest difference [between Sunday dinner and other meals] would have been in the meat. We were probably more likely to have fried chicken on Sunday than you did during the week with some families. At the time I grew up in, the Sunday meal would have been more different than the regular weekly meal. . . . Mother [sometimes] had a store-bought item for the Sunday meal. It might have been salmon, canned salmon. It might have been a baloney, which was something good and better than country ham. Or it might have been a dessert. Jell-O. Or it might have been a fresh fruit, if it was wintertime."

For Christine Sims, Sunday dinners consisted of all home-produced ingredients: "Of course there was nothing bought, it all came from the home. We had biscuits. There was always some sort of meat." Pork could be served all year long because it could be cured as sausage, ham, or shoulder. The "other parts," such as chops, "you ate before it got too hot." Ham was prepared by either baking or frying. Once it was baked, cured ham could spoil, so it had to be used up. Sims said, "If you baked a whole ham you had to have a large family to use it up in the length of time it would be fit to use"(van Willigen 1978–1980).

The evening meal, called supper, frequently consisted of leftover food from dinner. There was some concern about food spoilage, so people would cook enough for both meals and then warm up what remained to eat in the evening. If there was nothing left over, a simple meal of bread, milk, and mush might be served.

There were a number of explanations for the meal preparation pattern. Slow cooking, started in the morning, and the use of leftovers for supper made women available for farmwork and child care. Also, cooking enough in the morning for the whole day kept the kitchen from getting hot and uncomfortable during the summer. "And then at lunchtime we'd come home for lunch, and mother would always cook a hot meal. Then we'd eat leftovers for supper. But, you know, in firing up that stove, the house would get so hot you couldn't sleep, especially in the summertime" (Smith).

Because of the lack of refrigeration, they had to be very careful about keeping leftovers too long. They generally did not save cooked

food much beyond supper of the same day. "In the summer we just had breakfast and [the] noon meal cooked, and we'd eat what we [could] because you couldn't save it. . . . We had no refrigeration. And so [my mother] would cook beans or meat or whatever we cooked, then we'd eat that for supper again. She [was] very adept at making just enough because otherwise it would go to waste. And she was very thrifty and very economical with everything, not just food. But she would sew our clothes and make them from old clothes that people would give her. We didn't have it easy. We lived very poor, but I didn't know we were poor. I mean, it was just that everybody was on the same level to the point that we didn't realize we had it hard. We didn't know any different. We were happy, that's all that mattered, I guess" (Smith).

Breads

Quick breads, such as biscuits or cornbread, were important foods. They might even be part of every meal, serving as a kind of boilerplate (bad metaphor, in the case of biscuits) for the cuisine. Some ate one or the other more or less exclusively, whereas others ate biscuits in the morning and cornbread later in the day. For some, biscuits were eaten only on Sunday or when special guests were present. Other biscuit eaters said that they were served at virtually every meal. When asked to describe a typical dinner, Christine Sims said that on their farm on Central Ridge in Robertson County, they "always had biscuits, baked in an iron stove in the kitchen. When the children was home, a twenty-five-pound sack of flour wouldn't last much over a week" (van Willigen 1978–1980).

Flour was often purchased in large quantities. "It come in fifty and hunnerd pound barrels. [Flour] didn't come in little bags like it does now. It come in barrels. [There] wasn't many people that could afford 'em. Like of a mornin' for breakfast, the biggest portion of people always had cornbread for breakfast and maybe on Sunday mornin' you would have biscuits. I mean that would be about as much flour as you [could] afford to buy" (J. Henry Ogans, Breathitt County).

There are many recipes for biscuits. Ross Moore of Robertson County used to send small recipe booklets to friends and neighbors at Christmas (van Willigen 1978–1980). One of his biscuit recipes from the 1960s is reproduced below:

Ingredients
2 cups self-rising flour
3 tablespoons lard
¾ cup milk

Procedure
Measure but do not sift the 2 cups of self-rising flour. Cut or rub 3 tablespoons of lard into the flour. Add the milk a little at a time. Mix well. Turn the dough on to a lightly floured surface and roll out to about ⅓ inch. Cut with a biscuit cutter and bake in a 400-degree oven for about 15 minutes on greased baking pans. Heat the greased pans in the preheated oven. When placing the biscuit on the hot pan, touch one side of the biscuit in the hot fat and then turn over. This makes the tops brown attractively while it enhances flavor.

It seems that most biscuits were made using the strategy of a "little bit of this, a little bit of that." Recipes, when used, were internalized and then just put together by feel.

The amounts of biscuit eaten at a meal could be substantial. "After there got to be a big family of us, I called it, eight children and two old ones. My mother had a step stove and she had a big square pan that set up on four legs and it held forty-two biscuits. Forty-two. Dad'd have four, and Mom have four. And us kids, two apiece" (John Clarkson, Casey County).

Biscuits were always served with something. The table was usually set with some sort of jam or preserves and "cow butter." Some spoke of the special delight of hot biscuits and sorghum syrup, and others served biscuits and gravy. "My mother [would make gravy]. She could take an old-fashion big skillet. It'd hold a gallon. And she'd make a skillet of what I call white gravy. And you take that, and boy, that caused your tongue to stick a way on out, a little bit further than usually to get a bite with" (Clarkson).

Some called this classic country dish "bulldog gravy." Virgil Fair (Casey County) recollected, "Bulldog gravy, that's white gravy made out of milk and flour. Bulldog they called it, just thickened gravy in other words. You take, put ya in some grease, just regular hog lard, in a skillet and add the flour around and stir it until it gets brown. Then pour your milk in there and keep stirrin' and it'll thicken just like, you

know, make paste. We'd cook it thick as it's goin' to get. That's what they call gravy. Poor man's dish."

Although it is unlikely that these rural Kentuckians did much measuring when they made gravy, the amounts of fat and flour are equal in actual recipes. The contemporary Martha White recipe for "perfect cream gravy" is ¼ cup drippings from frying sausage, bacon, chicken, or pork chops mixed with ¼ cup flour and 2 cups milk.* If one were to substitute butter for the drippings, the Martha White recipe is similar to that for a classic French béchamel, although the fat-to-flour ratio is 2:3 rather than 1:1 (Child, Bertholle, and Beck 1983, 57).

Within Kentucky, beaten biscuits were more common in the Bluegrass region. Mary Louis Evans of Clark County discussed this regional specialty: "My grandmother made beaten biscuits. I mean, you know, that was a staple for them. They're a hard biscuit. White. They've been beaten and you serve them with country ham. Slice them and you run them through a kneader for close to half an hour until the dough blisters. They don't have baking powder in them. You beat the leavening into them. And they're pretty much of a Bluegrass phenomenon. But anyway, it was this area where they had the beaten biscuit and it was very popular. [The dough blister] makes a big pop when it goes through [the kneader]. It incorporates air in the dough. The dough is satiny and stretchy. And you screw your rollers down as it works, until you can get it thinner and thinner, and then when you're ready to bake them, you have to open them back up to get the right size to roll 'em out for your biscuits. I've got a kneader. All the Evanses have kneaders. Every family had a beaten biscuit kneader. [The frequency with which you served them depended on] how much hired help you had or how many children to turn the handle. If I had to do it all myself, I wouldn't serve them very often, but my husband had a motor put on ours because he likes beaten biscuits. And he thought that was the best way to get them. When my children were little, they turned the kneader, before we had the motor put on. They turned it and I ran [the dough] back and forth through the kneader. But then my grandmother, I think, just beat it. Or else the hired girl did. She

* Martha White is a 100-year-old firm established originally in Nashville, Tennessee, that sells wheat flour– and cornmeal-based products in a number of states, mostly southern. Its Web site, www.marthawhite.com, provides product information, recipes, and cooking tips.

just beat the dough. And beat it and beat it. So it depends on whether you had a cook to do it or a hired girl or children to turn the kneader. But it was something that you didn't have necessarily every day. And some people don't even like them. But our children cut their teeth on 'em and they'd rather have 'em than candy." Beaten biscuits occur elsewhere in the South as well. They were apparently eaten by people who were better off economically and could afford domestic help because, as Mrs. Evans attests, they were very labor-intensive to prepare (Egerton 1993, 218–21).

Cornbread, like biscuits, was also important. Although cornbread started out as something of a poor relation among the quick breads, its status is different today. Lela Noe of St. Helens (Lee County) said, "Today, 'course they's a lot of people who like cornbread and butter and ever'thing like that, or syrup or molasses. . . . It would be a delicacy. But back then, it was a must." Variations in cornbread recipes could be the source of considerable contention. Debates included egg versus no egg, white versus yellow cornmeal, with sugar or without, and the issue of adding wheat flour to the recipe. It seemed to be something like a Republican-Democrat sort of thing. To hear women tell it, some men imprinted on a cornbread recipe in their youth and had little tolerance of any deviation, leading to conflict once they got married. Nancye Stamper (Lee County) recollected her experiences as a newlywed trying to "get it right" in terms of her husband's cornbread preferences. Their struggle was over the use of eggs. She said, "I cooked a few things different after I got married, because your husband grew up on different things. . . . See, his mother didn't use eggs in her cornbread, but I do. I use one egg in my cornbread. And he said, 'Oh, it's not good.' So what I did, I said, 'Okay, I'll try it [your way].' [But] I fixed it just exactly like I been fixin' it. Now, I said, 'Now how's that cornbread?' He said, 'Now that's better.' I never said a thing. See, he didn't know the difference. And I had tried it before without an egg, and it's just not as good. And he'd say, 'Well, my mother fixed such and such,' and said, 'I wish you'd fix it like she could.' Well, I would try, you know, to fix it like she would do it. I mean I've not had any complaint with my cookin'."

There was also the choice between yellow and white cornbread. Lela Noe provided a story about her cooking: "My dad, when he would come home from work, I was responsible for having supper ready. And I had this brother, Dale, he knew that Daddy did not like cornbread that was yellow. He always liked cornbread. So, one night my corn-

bread was yellow. And Daddy, he said, 'Well, what's happened to that cornbread?' Well, I didn't know what was happened to it, because I had done the same thing. And the next night he come home the cornbread was yellow, worse. And so he kindly got aggravated and he said, 'The next time I come home and you fix supper and you've got cornbread this yellow, I'm going to give you a whipping.' Which I knew Daddy would never whip me, he never did. I can never remember my dad whipping me. But my brother was sneaking around and putting soda in the cornbread when I was doing something else with my meal. And that night my cornbread was golden yellow and when Daddy come home for supper, I was absolutely crying because I knowed he worked hard and I always wanted to have a good supper. I didn't know what was wrong with the cornbread. Daddy come in and he sat down at the table and he looked at the cornbread and he just pushed his plate back. And he said, 'I want to know what you're doing to that cornbread.' Well, I started crying. I didn't know what was wrong with the cornbread. And my brother, when he seen how upset I was, it was funny to him so he tells Daddy what he had been doing to the cornbread. That ended that little episode because I had got to where I could make extra good cornbread."

We found a recipe for cornbread in a handwritten collection created by users of the Pack Horse Library in Jackson County, Kentucky, in the 1930s. The Pack Horse Library was a Works Progress Administration (WPA) program that provided library services to remote households in eastern Kentucky. The recipe follows:

Ingredients
1 egg well beaten
3 cups buttermilk
1 level teaspoon salt
1 level teaspoon soda
3 cups cornmeal

Procedure
After beating the egg, add the milk, salt, and soda. These are to be mixed thoroughly until smooth. The batter is to be put in a greased muffin pan and baked in a hot oven until browned. This recipe was provided by Delia P. Young of Datha, Kentucky.

There was also a variation called "gritty cornbread" or "grit bread." Nancye Stamper described making this: "A lot of times for supper what we'd have, just as a snack for supper, [was] gritty cornbread. In the fall, when you could grit bread. The corn has to be just beyond the milk stage, and that is where you take your thumbnail and there's no more milk in the corn when you put your thumbnail in a grain of corn. Then you take that and have a gritter. It's somethin' like a nutmeg gritter. And you take that ear of corn and you grit that and you make your meal. And we called it scalded cornbread. You take that meal, and you boil your water. You put salt in it. And you make it in patties. You can either bake it or fry it. [Mother] would use that sometimes as a touch-up for something that she had left over for lunch. As a bread, see. Rather than havin' to go make biscuits or light the oven. See, in hot weather, if you had a stove, you didn't have an electric stove then. You had to kind of manage your own way, just like you do now if you don't have air conditioning. So now, we learned all that stuff, and ever' day wouldn't be the same, you know. You don't want the same thing ever' day."

Home-baked yeast breads were rarely mentioned in the interviews but they were also eaten. Lina Wells noted, "Now, [my mother] made homemade bread, too. . . . But if she had homemade bread, we usually had it at nighttime."

Although recipes were important to cooking, precise measurement was not, and recipes were rarely written down. Women learned their recipes and cooking skills from different sources. Observation was important. Edith Jackson of Todd County recalled her experiences: "I picked up recipes from all over. I've always loved to cook. I had watched my grandmother so I'm a grandmother cook. I had watched what she did, and I tell you what, I think I'm hard to teach. I remembered from what I had seen her do and how she had done and that's how I really learned to cook. And then the rest of it was kind of on my own. I would get a recipe and I always would fix it. I remember the first cake I tried to make; it didn't do well at all. I had to learn by mistakes. So when my husband came in I was just sitting here crying because I had messed my cake up. And I was crying so hard. I had put too much sugar in it and it had fallen. And he said, 'Now, sugar, don't sit here and cry.' He said, 'If you do it, just get rid of it and do it again.' He said, 'This is the way you've got to learn and do it.' I think that was the last really bad mistake that I made on

cooking. And he ate that because he said, 'It's good. It's just too sweet, that's all.' Said, 'It's just fell, but it's cooked, you know.' It just had this sink in the middle of it. And so the next time I made it, it did good and now I [make] cakes and sell them. After I learned how to bake a cake I've made money with it. It wasn't a great deal but I've done it for several people."

Garden Produce

Plentiful garden products were used in a variety of ways. Tomatoes were used for juice, and stewed tomatoes were often part of a typical meal. Tomatoes were also scalloped with butter, sugar, and bread—usually biscuit. Some tomatoes were used as preserves, and special garden varieties were selected for this purpose. During the season, sliced or quartered tomatoes were always on the table.

Beans were an important part of the diet. Green beans—both cooked fresh from the garden and canned—were frequently served and

Church members peeling and slicing tomatoes for a picnic supper at St. Thomas's Church near Bardstown, Nelson County, 1940. (Marion Post Wolcott, Library of Congress, Farm Security Administration)

much loved. "All the family loves green beans. Usually, they're from the cannin'. Except when they're real fresh in the spring. And I just cook 'em down, stew 'em down, and put the seasonin' and the salt in. 'Til the water's all cooked out of them" (Sterling Smithers, Casey County). By seasoning, Mr. Smithers meant cured meat. Christine Sims said, "That's how we used our middlin's"—the cured bacon (van Willigen 1978–1980). She could not recall green beans being cooked any other way; they always had seasoning meat in them. After a winter of eating canned or dried beans, fresh green beans were a welcome change.

Perhaps more important were the various dried beans. These included beans that were dried in the pod and threshed; beans that were dried in the pod and reconstituted, pod and all; and dried beans bought from the store. Glen Vanoy spoke of his experience with store-bought pinto beans: "We always bought beans, in the fall, when they sold the tobacco, or in the winter. Well, it was early fall, because sometimes they'd have a hog to sell early in the fall like that. And Mother would always buy a hundred pounds of pinto beans. They'd come in a bag, [a] great big burlap bag, a hundred pounds. She just bought one sack a year. And so, by the time they were just about gone, they would be so dark when you cooked them and all. But we ate a lot of pinto beans. I guess the iron helped us a lot. And, of course, we always had potatoes. She grew the potatoes . . . in the garden. We always had potatoes and pinto beans."

Beans and potatoes were a common combination that might be served every day. Alvin Leach of Paris (Bourbon County) said, "It's like I often told people, beans and taters, beans today and taters tomorrow. Taters the next day and then beans, you'd switch. But I add a little to it, you always had meat. Always had some kind of meat, but you had beans and potatoes about every day."

Cooking dried beans involved soaking and seasoning. "Mother'd measure out how ever many she was gonna do, like two cups or three cups, and she would look through and see if there was any bad beans, and she would wash them, through two waters generally, and then in the next water she would soak them for overnight. And that way, it didn't take nearly as long to cook. And you get 'em started cooking, and you scoot 'em back on that old woodstove, and just let 'em cook slow. Oh, they were better than pinto beans that you have now that you try to put in the pressure cooker and get ready in twenty minutes. She would cut off a chunk of bacon, side bacon, and then cut it down,

you know. And that's the way she seasoned her beans" (Vanoy). White beans were cooked in the same way. If the meat used to season the beans was too lean, some lard would be added.

As we discuss in chapter 10 on food preservation, some varieties of beans were dried in the pod. These were sometimes called "shucky beans" or "leatherbritches." This required a special process that was more common in the mountains. Florene Smith of Letcher County said, "And then you'd break 'em up in the wintertime. You'd soak 'em in water, you know. And you'd rinse 'em. You know, clean 'em. Put 'em on and cook 'em. They're good. Well, after you clean 'em, you put 'em in a kittle [kettle] with water, and I put lard. Now you can use oil or somethin', but to me, if you want 'em good, you gotta have lard. And I put a piece of meat in 'em. Salt meat. Salt bacon. And I put my salt. And I like to put a little seasoning, like maybe pepper. Maybe jist a little bit of hot pepper. Maybe a little bit of garlic. And you cook 'em until they're tender. And then you jist git you a big plate full, and you git your onion and a piece of cornbread, you eat it. Now that's the way I like it. If you got canned beets, you know, pickled beets? I like to eat beets with 'em."

Greens, both wild and garden grown, were frequently prepared. Like green beans, these were typically prepared with seasoning meat. Cured hog jowl was preferred by some. John Clarkson said, "My mother'd always keep them hog jowl back 'til green pickin' time comes. Dandelion and poke and first one thing and then another. Mustard and, you see, you raised a heap of greens in my time growin' up." A dish called either wilted or killed lettuce was a typical preparation. Lina Wells recollected, "My daddy loved wilted lettuce. And we kept lettuce growin' as much as we could, you know. And the green, little green onions to make the wilted lettuce. And then we went out into the fields and picked those greens, lamb's-quarters, dandelion greens. I see 'em, I know to pick 'em, but I can't give you the names of all of them. My daddy liked it with the lettuce and the onions and the radishes and the bacon. Little bits of bacon. And the drippin's. And an egg scrambled up in it. And some vinegar added. And pour all that over the lettuce. [Add some] cornbread and that would be probably all he'd eat. But he'd get everything he needed."

Corn was another frequently eaten vegetable. Many interviewees mentioned fried corn or creamed corn, although this is different from the commercially canned product of the same name. Fried corn was

Meeting and picnic lunch at Pine Mountain settlement school near Harlan, 1940. (Marion Post Wolcott, Library of Congress, Farm Security Administration)

preferably made with field corn (usually grown to feed livestock), but it could also be made with sweet corn. The kernels were cut off the cob when in the milk stage* and prepared in a skillet with lard, bacon fat, or butter. Lina Wells gave these directions: "You put your little bacon drippin's in the bottom of your skillet. And cut your corn off and put [it] in there. And just enough water to barely cover it. And then put your little pinch of sugar. My mother put sugar in every vegetable she cooked. Just a pinch. She said it brought out the flavoring. And she was a good cook. And you put salt and pepper over it. And then you just sorta have to watch it that it doesn't stick. Let it cook until the water sorta cooks out of it."

A contemporary recipe for skillet corn appears in one of Ronni Lundy's cookbooks. It calls for 6 ears of fresh corn, 4 tablespoons of

* Botanists classify the development of grains in terms of stages. The milk stage is early in the process as the grain is being filled out. In this stage, the covering of the kernel is very tender, and the grain is moderately to well filled with a milky liquid.

butter or bacon grease, 4 tablespoons of half-and-half, salt, and pepper (Lundy 1999, 100–101). She advocates cutting off the tips of the kernels and scraping off the remaining portions with a spoon. The butter or bacon grease is melted in a heavy skillet over medium-high heat. The corn and whatever "milk" was scraped off is added, followed by the half-and-half. The idea is to reduce the liquid to thicken the mixture. After cooking for 8 to 10 minutes, add salt and pepper and serve.

Beets were not eaten as often as greens beans and corn but were found on the table on occasion. A simple boiling and buttering recipe was common. In addition, beets were often cooked with "a kind of sauce [that] was made with sugar, flour, and vinegar," according to Christine Sims (van Willigen 1978–1980). This is the familiar Harvard beets recipe. A recipe derived from a 1952 homemakers' club food lesson was published in *Pride of Kentucky: Great Recipes with Food, Farm, and Family Traditions* (Kentucky Extension Association 2003). The sweet-and-sour sauce is prepared by combining ⅓ cup sugar, ½ teaspoon salt, 1 tablespoon cornstarch, and ½ cup water in a double boiler and cooking the mixture over boiling water until it is thick and smooth. Then stir in ½ cup vinegar and add 2 tablespoons butter, 1 teaspoon finely minced onion, and 3 cups hot, diced, cooked beets and cook for 20 minutes. Beets were also served pickled, and beet tops were eaten as greens.

There were limited numbers of spices and other flavorings available. Some spices were purchased, such as black pepper, cloves, and cinnamon; others were raised at home, including red pepper, sage, and dill. Lina Wells recalled, "I don't remember us havin' spices like thyme and marjoram and all those back then like we do now. Other people may have had 'em. In cities, they may have had 'em. But I don't remember us ever havin' those. My mother always had sage and cinnamon and cloves, and those kind of spices. She didn't [grow the sage]. She bought it. She grew dill to make the dill pickles." In addition to herbs and spices, cured pork in its various forms was widely used to flavor foods. When people referred to "seasoning," they meant that cured pork or lard was included in the recipe.

Dairy Products and Eggs

Dairy products were worked into the diet in a number of ways, including several creamed or scalloped vegetable dishes. Home-canned

tomatoes were often part of a recipe using flour or biscuits, butter, and cream. Scalloped potatoes were baked with rich milk or cream, butter, flour, and salt and pepper. Cookbooks of the era had recipes for scalloped cabbage and spinach. Custard and cream pies were also favorites of farm families because they made use of eggs and cream. And some people spoke fondly of their mothers' cottage cheese. In addition to being used for cooking, cream was often separated and sold, and skim milk was fed to hogs.

Eggs were eaten frequently and were prepared in a variety of ways, depending on the season and the meal. Mary Eleanor Isgrig (Bourbon County) said, "Sometimes on the weekends we'd have hard-boiled eggs that were cut in two, and in the summertime they'd be dressed eggs. But in the wintertime they'd have cream sauce on them. And we would eat eggs and eggs and eggs. It's a wonder we haven't all died of heart trouble. We ate a lot of eggs, especially Sunday night supper we'd have eggs. Hard-boiled eggs with cream sauce."

Another use of milk and eggs was to make custard. Nancye Stamper recalled, "We had boiled custard. That's something that we carried over [from the old days], and the kids loved it. You make it from eggs and sugar and milk. We'd have it whenever we wanted to. . . . But you had boiled custard more in the wintertime because at the time I'm talking about, we didn't have too much refrigeration. In the wintertime, you could just set it outside in the snow, or in the little wood house that you'd have or a smokehouse, where nothing would get in it. And see, it would get cold on its own. . . . It takes an overnight process to really cool the eggs that's in it. See, you have about twelve eggs to a gallon of milk. And then you have the sugar and then you put vanilla in it."

An occasional summertime dessert was ice cream. Making ice cream with a hand-cranked freezer was fondly recalled by Christine Sims of Mt. Olivet (van Willigen 1978–1980). Her father would sometimes take the family's horse-drawn buggy to Cynthiana to get ice to make it. The recipe that she shared (enough to make a batch in the ice cream makers of the time) called for 6 beaten eggs, 1 quart cream, 2 cups sugar, and vanilla. She emphasized the need for the cream to be especially thick and noted that the recipe did not use "powder" or evaporated milk. Her family usually served the ice cream with cake.

Meat and Poultry

Meat was an important part of the diet and might be eaten at any meal, but it was not necessarily eaten every day. Pork and chicken were far more common than beef and lamb. Meat was usually cooked on top of the stove, often panfried in a skillet. Beef became more important after the advent of freezers. Various cured pork products were frequently eaten. Although meat was eaten often, it was not central on the plate or on the table; ideally, meals included lots of side dishes. That pattern is found today in the mainstream "meat and three" restaurants.

Ham might be called country ham or old ham. These days, people refer to "city ham" to contrast the typical commercial brine-cured ham with ham dry-cured in the traditional way. Although cured ham and bacon were often used to season vegetable dishes, the intact presentation of a ham on the dinner table was a rare event reserved for holidays. Perhaps because of the ascendancy of turkey on Thanksgiving, ham was often served at Christmas dinner. "You would always count on a baked ham for Christmas at least. Probably Thanksgiving, whenever there was going to be company, relatives getting together," said Christine Sims (van Willigen 1978–1980). Ham also had the advantage of providing slices for sandwiches and for frying.

There were a number of ways to prepare ham, including panfrying, baking, and a simmering process called "putting the ham to sleep." Recipes often instructed the cook to begin by cleaning the ham's surface with a stiff brush and warm water. Putting a ham to sleep took twenty-four hours and required a fifty-pound lard can—tall enough to accommodate an entire ham—with a tight-fitting lid. The can was filled with sufficient water—spiced with brown sugar, cloves, and vinegar, if desired—to immerse the ham. The ham was simmered in the water for forty-five minutes, after which the heat was turned off and the lard can was wrapped in blankets or old rugs (the "putting to sleep" part) and left for twenty-four hours. The ham was then boned and sliced. Country ham could also be boiled and then baked, often with a glaze of honey, ground cloves, and mustard. Ham might be prepared a few days in advance.

Chicken was a favorite meal and was frequently eaten fried, roasted, and as chicken and dumplings. The method of cooking related to the life stage of the chicken, and there was a tendency to cook chicken on

the stove top. Because Clarice McKinney's family (Rockcastle County) sold eggs, they tended to eat more large hens cooked as chicken and dumplings. To her, fried chicken was a special meal. "The roosters, why we'd eat them, or either sell [them] when they got up big. We gen'ly [generally] kept two or three to have for the holidays. Gen'ly [Mom would] fix a big hen, though, for the holidays. But she'd gen'ly fix a hen because dumplin's are so much better than dressin' made out of a big fat hen than they are from just regular chicken, you know." With roasted chicken, it was common to make dressing. Nancye Stamper said, "If you had chicken, then [Mom] made her dressing. And she'd bake cornbread, especially for that, and then put [in] leftover biscuits. You didn't have any bread to put in that. And she grew her own sage for stuffing."

Some people brined chicken prior to cooking it. Dorothy Cox of Anderson County recalled that this was what her mother did: "If you're gonna have company, Mother would dress a hen on Saturday, you know. Although you didn't have 'frigeration, she'd dress it late in the afternoon and put that hen in salted water strong enough that it didn't spoil. And then you soaked it the next morning to get the salt out of it a little bit, and cooked it." The practice of brining chicken is sometimes cited as a good fried chicken cooking secret. So it is interesting to learn that it was also a means of keeping the chicken from spoiling overnight.

Desserts

There was a big commitment to desserts, and a number of different pies and cakes were prepared. One common dessert was fried apple pie—an extension of fried apples, which could also be eaten alone. Sally Hounshell of Lee County spoke of her current use of apples: "When I put my apples up, I'll make applesauce or apple butter. Or I'll peel 'em and freeze 'em. Or maybe sometimes I'll even, you know, fry a big skillet full. We like fried apples. And I'll fry too many, you know, on purpose, and I'll put 'em in plastic containers. Put 'em in the freezer. Now whenever I get ready for a bowl, I get 'em out and put 'em on the stove and heat 'em up. You make up your batter. It's similar to biscuits. Whenever you take your flour and your eggs, your shortenin' and water, or whatever. You make it up like that. And then you take your floured paper or board or whatever you use. You roll it out in little

pieces of dough. You have it, you know, not very thick. And then you put you a big spoon of apples on one side of that. And then you'll take this side and you'll turn it over. And I like to take my finger, and I'll go around the edge. Now [some] likes 'em better fried, and you put 'em in a skillet with a little oil or lard, or whatever, and you fry 'em good and brown on that side, and then you turn 'em over and fry that side. And they're real good. Hand pies, that's what Grandma called 'em, hand pies. And you fix them like that. Make the little pies. Now she used to bake 'em a lot, you know. Instead of fryin' a whole big bunch. She'd put 'em in a pan and bake 'em. And they was good. I guess maybe they didn't have as much lard or oil, or whatever. But they turned out good."

A classic rural Kentucky dessert was jam cake with caramel frosting. These dense, flavorful cakes were associated with Christmas and were often given as gifts. Some women even baked them in order to sell them. Lina Wells described her experience with jam cake: "I make a jam cake like my grandmother did. I have a recipe and you can use either blackberry or strawberry jam. I made five of 'em at Christmastime. I made two for my sister in Indiana. She wanted to give them to friends. You use a basic recipe with eggs and butter and sugar and flour. And your different spices that you have. Cinnamon and cloves. And then you can use either [a] cup of blackberry jam or else you can use a cup of strawberry jam. I think the blackberry jam is better. You use buttermilk instead of sweet milk. First do your flour and your baking powder and all that sort of stuff, then your liquid. After you get all of that mixed up and all of [the] spices, then you add your jam, and then you put your nuts in. And I have a recipe that calls for diced, mixed fruits. And if I put those in, I put 'em in last. And then you bake it."

In 2002 Leveda Davis of Hope (Montgomery County) gave us this classic recipe for jam cake:

Ingredients

1 cup butter or margarine [most of the jam cake recipes we collected called for butter]
1½ cups sugar
4 beaten eggs
1 cup blackberry jam
1 cup buttermilk

3 cups self-rising flour*
1 teaspoon each nutmeg, allspice, and cinnamon
1 tablespoon cocoa
½ cup raisins
½ cup black walnuts

Procedure
Cream the margarine (or butter) and sugar together until fluffy. Add the eggs, jam, and buttermilk. Sift together the flour, spices, and cocoa. Beat these dry ingredients together with the butter mixture. Add the raisins and walnuts. Bake in a tube pan for 1 hour at 350 degrees.

In the classic version of this Kentucky dessert, caramel frosting was used, as Mrs. Wells advocated: "Then you put caramel icing on it and it's yummy. The caramel icing came from my grandmother, too. But my mother-in-law uses the same recipe. Back then, people you know used pretty much the same thing. So she had the same recipe as my grandmother had." Mrs. Davis's recipe called for 1 cup brown sugar, ½ cup margarine, and ¼ cup milk or cream. Bring this to a boil; then add 1 teaspoon vanilla and enough confectioners' sugar to achieve the proper consistency.

Another cake from the Christmas season was stack cake. Nancye Stamper described dried apple stack cake as her mother made it: "What it is, is really just a cake. I'd give anything had I kept that recipe. She made [the cake] out of molasses . . . and put the dried apples between [the layers], and she'd have maybe seven or eight [layers]. The cake'd be tall. With the thick slices instead of the thins that they make now. She'd use the [dried] apples in the cakes. And you put nutmeg and cinnamon and sugar in 'em. And then you coat your crust with butter and sprinkle a little sugar on the outside of it, see. And then she would make those and stack them up. 'Cause they would keep 'til after Christmas. And have a whole big stack of 'em. She'd make 'em one whole evenin'." Stack cake seemed to be more common in the mountains, whereas jam cake was more common in central Kentucky.

* This recipe is unusual in that it calls for self-rising flour. Mrs. Davis specified White Lily self-rising flour.

Other Christmas Specialties

Christmas often involved elaborate baking and other food preparation. Sterling Smithers of Liberty discussed Christmas baking: "At Christmastime, [Mother] would bake [and] we would help her. We would all bake a week or so before Christmas. And we'd have all that stuff. Pies and cakes and dried apple pies. And we'd have all that ready when Christmas Day came. We didn't have to do so much cookin' on Christmas Day. You know, you just wouldn't bake solid all the time, but when you had time, you baked. You had your cakes and things. Now the grandchildren thinks if they are more than one day old that they're stale. If they had lived back with us, they'd have been happy to have 'em. Whatever was cooked, we enjoyed it. I don't know whether you'd say it was, wasn't fresh or not. Which didn't really matter to us. It was good. It was temptin' for us children [to have all that food around]. Well, we just learned that [it] was for a certain time."

The vegetables served at Christmastime reflected both the commitment to an elaborate holiday meal and the winter season. Nancye Stamper described the foods they ate at Christmas: "At Christmastime you had the vegetables. You had the soup beans and you had potatoes. Both kinds. We had sweet potatoes and Irish potatoes, and you had your onions. They were staples because you always had 'em. Well, for Christmastime, now, we'd have a ham, and we'd have chicken and dumplings, or we would bake a hen and have that. . . . Mother would make dried apple pies and fry 'em. And then she would make pans of these fried apple pies and bake 'em. It's the dried apples that you put your cinnamon and your allspice in, and sugar. And then you can put that in a crust and bake it. We would have a ham, and we'd already cured that from our own smokehouse. And then you have your chickens. And that would probably be your chicken and dumplings. And then your sweet potatoes. We would either fry the sweet potatoes [or make] sweet potato casserole. Mother made a sweet potato pie that was out of this world. And then we used baked sweet potatoes. So we used different varieties, I mean different ways."

In central Kentucky, oysters seemed to lurk in the background of the tradition. In some families, it was common to serve scalloped oysters at Christmas. Lina Wells said, "Every Christmas, we went to my grandmother's, my mother's mother, on Christmas

Day. I always remember she had scalloped oysters. We bought a lot of oysters. My daddy would buy 'em by the gallon bucket. She had a little bowl of scalloped oysters. I know that it's something that we always cooked at Christmastime. And it's a good dish and most people like it. Especially men like the oysters. Sometimes my mother would have oyster stew, you know." This taste for oysters may have been related to the trading links that emerged between Kentucky and New Orleans and the Gulf Coast. Many Kentucky agricultural commodities, including ham, lard, butter, soap, and tobacco, ended up in New Orleans as early as the 1790s (Clark 1992, 54–87). There was steamboat traffic both ways. We found a recipe for scalloped oysters in *A Book of Recipes,* compiled and published by the Woman's Guild of Christ Church Cathedral in Lexington in 1926:

Ingredients
1 pint oysters
1 cup stale bread or cracker crumbs
½ cup milk
½ cup melted butter
dash Tabasco sauce
salt and pepper

Procedure
Layer the bread crumbs and the oysters, starting with the former. Then pour the milk, scalding hot, with the butter, Tabasco, and seasonings, over the layers. After the liquid is absorbed, add a few more crumbs moistened with butter. Bake until the crumbs are brown.

School Lunches

An extension of the kitchen was preparation of the children's school lunches. Most students went to one-room schools in the neighborhood, and lunch was invariably packed from home. Christine Sims, who taught at a Robertson County school, discussed her observations of what children ate at school: "Mother had to get up and get an early breakfast and bake biscuits to fix the children's lunches on. A lot of the things in the lunch boxes were eaten as they walked to school. They

School lunch in lard buckets in Breathitt County, 1940. (Marion Post Wolcott, Library of Congress, Farm Security Administration)

would have some kind of fruit; it was mostly meats though." The fruit was almost always apples, although sometimes there would be pears in season. Store-bought fruits, such as oranges, were rare. Lunches generally centered on biscuits or cornbread; store-bought bread appeared later. Fried sausage, ham, jams and jellies, fried potatoes, fried chicken, or just butter was added. Children carried their lunches in "tin dinner boxes." The differences in family circumstances were evident in what the children brought to school for lunch. "There was a lot of swapping of food when they would gather together, particularly at noon to have their main meal. It was just a big family, and so if one wanted to give something that they had to another child, they would . . . swap. So it was a very congenial bunch," Mrs. Sims said. She recalled that the students seldom brought anything to drink, although later some would bring flasks with milk or tea. "It was a very economical way of living. There wasn't much money spent. But still they were well nourished. They had plenty of eggs. They had plenty of meat. What they didn't get at school they got at home. I think the children were really better nourished than today when they use all this snack food" (van Willigen 1978–1980).

Some packed their lunches in lard buckets. John Preston of Letcher County said, "We took our lunches and everybody had a lard bucket, a five-pound lard bucket if it was just two or three children that took their lunch. If it was a bigger family they had to have an eight-pound lard bucket. My mother took a nail and made holes with my initials. [The holes] would let the steam escape. And in fixing my lunch, she'd always, just about every day of my school life when I took my lunch, she'd make me a, I think they call 'em moon pies. She'd take a piece of dough and lap it over, put our fruit filling in between, usually apple, and lap it back that way and crimp it with a fork and then put holes in it with a fork to let the steam escape and bake it real brown. And I could trade that for anything anybody had. That was one of the main things that we took. And then one of our neighbors up the way, you could always count on her fixing biscuits and, she called it apple butter in their lunch. That was what they always had. But I'd trade my pies for that any time. That was different. One family sent one of the bigger boys home—there was several children in school—to get their lunch, and they'd bring kraut and they'd bring fried potatoes and they'd bring cornbread and this meat with a streak through it, what we call breakfast bacon now, but it was salt-cured pork. They'd bring that. And to get a piece of that and a piece of cornbread I'd have traded my whole bucket. I mean we all would."

School lunches generally consisted of what was prepared for breakfast at home. According to Ralph Lobb of Hart County, "What they carried to lunch for school was the same thing that was cooked for breakfast, because that didn't require extra preparation. So, for eight years every day for lunch I had six biscuits, and I haven't wanted one since. Two biscuits had pork on 'em, and two biscuits had blackberry jam or some other jelly, and the other two biscuits provided the variety. And if it was summertime we always had a tomato. And if it was past frost a potato boiled with the jacket on it, plus the six biscuits. We had a lunch basket. Some used a pail that lard was bought in, called a lard bucket. We didn't buy lard, so we didn't have a lard bucket. The family cookstove was fired at four o'clock every morning and my mother had all the daughters big enough to help cook the breakfast and the lunch. The lunch basket was fixed as part of the preparation for breakfast. And it wasn't something different than what we ate for breakfast. They just cooked enough extra for lunch."

The teachers in small country schools would organize fund-raising

Pie supper attendees at Quicksand School, Breathitt County, 1940. (Marion Post Wolcott, Library of Congress, Farm Security Administration)

events such as box suppers and pie suppers. Box suppers involved the auctioning of boxes containing sandwiches, little puddings, and pieces of cake. These were big events that everybody attended. Proceeds were used to pay for school supplies, which might include wall maps, water coolers, globes, sports equipment, dictionaries, or even basic facilities. A teacher in Robertson County recalled paying for a cistern and pump that way. The teachers could decide how the money was spent.

At pie suppers, young unmarried women and older schoolgirls would bring fancy pies and cakes (often with icing), and the boys would buy them at auction. This represented a kind of courtship activity. According to Ralph Lobb, "The high bidder got the food plus the person who brought it as a social partner for that night." If two boys were interested in the same girl, the bidding could get aggressive, and the two or three most popular girls could account for most of the evening's proceeds. Christine Sims said, "If some girl was real favored, the boys of course would bid on her pie. If they knew there was some special good cook there, the men were interested in getting

that best pie. There was competition" (van Willigen 1978–1980). Doris Jones of Grayson County spoke of the connection between food and school fund-raising: "They'd have little fund-raisers. They'd have ice cream suppers. Little stands outside and they'd sell ice cream and maybe soft drinks and then they'd have pie suppers. This school [was] just a little one-room building, but it had a little stage at one end. They would fasten a curtain across that stage and the girls would all bring pies. . . . A girl would get behind that curtain, and they'd hold a lamp behind her. That would show her shadow through [the curtain]. And the audience, people would bid on that pie. And so whoever bought your pie, that's who you ate your pie with. And sometimes your pie wouldn't bring much and then sometimes it'd bring quite a bit. It was a fund-raiser maybe to buy books or something else for the school. And it was a lot of fun. They probably just had one each school year. It would be in fall."

Former teachers recalled many types of pies, including fruit pies, especially apple and peach, and an array of sugar, eggs, milk, and butter pies, including custard, sour cream, butterscotch, and chess. The most elementary recipe was "transparent pie," with a simple filling of butter, sugar, and eggs. Christine Sims recalled sour cream pie being made with raisins, eggs, and sour cream. "I learned to make that from one of the patrons that I had when I was teaching school. If a real bad rainstorm came or the creek got up too bad for me to walk the water gap and get on my way home, I would go up to her house and stay all night" (van Willigen 1978–1980). A recipe from that period called for 1 cup thick sour cream, 1 cup raisins, ½ teaspoon cinnamon, ¼ teaspoon cloves, 3 egg yolks, and 1 egg white. The instructions were simple: "Mix all the ingredients together: bake in a rich pastry; chill; cover with meringue made of the whites of two eggs and two tablespoons of sugar beaten until stiff, put in oven to brown" (Woman's Guild of Christ Church Cathedral 1926, 50).

Bringing food to the table required a lot of work. Women were usually up before daylight to prepare a hearty breakfast for the men in the family. Then they would plan the rest of the day's food—the large midday meal (dinner) and the smaller evening meal (supper)—around what farmwork they needed to do. Meals were sometimes complex, sometimes simple. Some involved an assortment of vegetables, breads, and meats; others consisted of a simple pot of soup beans and some

cornbread to round it out. Bread of some sort was served at all meals, accompanied by toppings such as white gravy, sorghum, butter, and preserves. Food varied seasonally, with lots of fresh foods in the summer and preserved foods in the winter. Although some folks did not have a lot, they seem to have liked what they had.

Chapter 3

Housework

The effort, knowledge, and skills required to operate a Kentucky farm household of this era were substantial. This effort was largely unaided by labor-saving machinery, and most of the work was done by women. When the food was cooked, the dishes done, the clothes washed and ironed, and the children properly tended to, these women would then take their place alongside their husbands hoeing corn or stripping tobacco. Housework was a crucial aspect of the total farm enterprise. Without the efforts of women, the system would not work.

Food Storage

Early in this period, people had no mechanical refrigeration. They relied on what was available, such as the coolness provided by springs and wells. "Since there was no refrigeration at that time, milk and stuff like that, you put it in about the coolest place you could find. Some people had a spring, many people had dug wells. And what I mean by dug wells, those are wells that were large enough, that they were dug real large and they was walled up by rock. Large enough that a human being could get down in 'em. So we put this milk in a bucket that had a good lid on it, and you put a rope to it right. Of course, you had a well bucket to draw water, and you'd lower it down in the well. And you'd let the bottom of the bucket go about two inches in the water and that kept the milk as cool as the well was. And they done that from mornings, the milk to keep it from souring before supper time" (Henry B. Turner, Lee County).

A variation of this strategy was to use a milk box in the well house

New farmhouse and barn near Morehead, Rowan County, 1940. (Marion Post Wolcott, Library of Congress, Farm Security Administration)

to keep food from spoiling during the day. "We had what we called a well house, adjoining the well. And there was a milk box in there, that we put our milk in to keep it cool. We would go in so many times a day and there was a stopper, a wooden peg about so long that you would pull out of the back of that milk box, let the water drain out, and then you'd put it back and pump fresh water into that, around the milk and the butter and whatever else you had there, so it wouldn't sour before supper. [The milk box] was about two feet wide and about eight feet long. You could put a lot of milk and butter. Your butter would just melt, if you didn't. I remember chicken and dumplings would sour so quickly. You put milk in your dumplings. And you had to set those in there 'til supper, too, because they spoiled so easily. And corn. Corn would spoil easily. So things like that, that you needed to save for supper, you could do it that way. You'd have little blocks in there, or little bricks, if you had a brick. And you would set your food on that" (Glen Vanoy, Casey County).

Some families had icehouses where they stored ice cut from ponds

in the winter. These cellar-like structures were partially underground, with a building erected around them. The ice was stored with a protective layer of sawdust or straw that slowed the melting process. "In the wintertime, they [would] go to the lake. They'd go down there and take the saw and saw this ice out in blocks and take these tongs and pull her out. Take it down there and put it in. And put sawdust over that and put another block on top of that, down in the ground, and then cover that all up," according to Nelson Witt of Bourbon County. With the insulating cover and careful management, the ice could last until midsummer.

In some parts of Kentucky near towns and small cities, manufactured ice was obtainable. People could go to town and buy a block of ice or perhaps have it delivered, if such service was available. This created a market for iceboxes, which were early, wooden versions of the refrigerator. There were at least two doors in the front of the icebox—one for the food and the other for the ice. The inside, which was often lined with galvanized steel plate, was equipped with shelves and insulation. The ice chamber had a drain, and people kept a little pan underneath to collect the water from the melting ice. Narrators recalled buying iceboxes and then pitching them "over the hill" when electricity came—an action they came to regret when, years later, iceboxes became valuable as antiques, selling for hundreds of dollars.

William Singer recalled: "We had what you called an icebox. It was just like a refrigerator. It was insulated and cold and everything except it had a place in the bottom where you would scoot two or three fifty-pound blocks of ice. The iceman would deliver two or three times a week or whenever you needed [it]. We were close to Georgetown [in Scott County]. We could run into town ourselves if we ran out and get a couple of blocks of ice. We had an ice plant down here in the bottom. Right down here on the Big Spring Branch, they had a big ice plant there that served all of Georgetown and the surrounding community. I guess about the mid to late thirties is [when] we got our first refrigerator and did away with the icebox. We used an icebox up until the time that we got our first refrigerator."

Water

Household water was obtained from wells—both dug and drilled—and from springs. In some localities, people collected rainwater off

the roof and stored it in a cistern or in barrels. In some places, these sources of water are still used. Some houses used a combination of water sources. Singer, from central Kentucky, said:

> We had a well, a drilled well, which was about 140 foot deep. And we had a water tower that was about 80 foot tall. It had a tank in it. We had a gasoline engine that pumped the water up to the top of the water tower and filled up the tank, which the tank was probably around a 400-gallon tank, and then that gravity pressure ran the water up in the attic of the house. There was a water tank there, and then it ran gravity pressure down from the tank in the attic of the house down to the bathroom, the kitchen, and everything. It was pumped out of the well into the water tower and then gravity-pressured down to the kitchen and the bathroom and everything in the house. We had a big cistern right at the back of the house, and the cistern was used as backup water. It was probably one of the larger cisterns in the county. We used that as a backup in the winter. It was handy. It was cistern water, I liked it better than the well water. The well water had a touch of sulfur in it. If you like sulfur water, it's good. If you don't like it, you don't. All of our drinking water came out of the cistern. All the other was used for baths and dish washing and everything. And we had our hot water tank was in the kitchen. And we had a wood/coal-burning stove, and the water run through the back of the stove, and as you cooked breakfast, dinner, supper, you heated the water that way. It was helped by the kitchen stove.
>
> [The cistern] was filled up by rainwater. It was filled up off of the house. It had gutters off the house that ran in the cistern. And then it had a purification [device to filter the water] before it ran in the cistern. Had a big barrel that was filled full of charcoal and filters. [It was about] four and a half feet high, and that filtered the water before it went in the cistern. Ran through the charcoal. But what we'd always do, if it came a hard rain, you would let it rain real hard for fifteen or twenty minutes or so and that would wash the roof off. 'Course, you had a bypass that went out in the yard, just a drain out in the yard, and you'd figure your roof was[n't] clean where birds had been roosting on it or something. And then after it had rained,

> like I say, ten or fifteen minutes, you would switch it over and let the water start running through the purifier in the cistern. 'Course we never in my lifetime can't ever remember us ever having [to] haul any water in the cistern or even, you know, pumping the well water in the cistern, anything like that.

Typhoid was a significant health problem caused by contaminated water from springs and wells. In the old days, people may not have had a clear conception of the relationship between water and disease. Water sources were evaluated in terms of whether the source was reliable, tasted good, and, in the case of springs, was cooled. Henry Turner spoke of the situation in eastern Kentucky: "People either got [water] out of a spring or got it out of a well. If [a man] didn't have his well, he carried [water] from somewhere. Now, here's my theory. I don't know whether I'm right or not. But back when I was raised up by my grandparents, I can take a mile square around me. Now, that was about as much as a kid knew very much about when he was little. Now, every house that I knew of had a dug well, [one] that was . . . dug and walled up with rocks. There were people that had moved in there and built them houses about the age of my grandpa. I knew them people by name, and I don't know any of 'em hardly that didn't live up to seventy and eighties and ninety years old. Every [person in every] house lived to be an old age. Most people that had died then at a young age had died with diseases like smallpox, typhoid fever, and stuff like that. . . . I've always thought that [their longevity was] because they had their own wells and their wells wasn't contaminated in any way. They had one bad drawback, that was the sanitation deal. A lot of families, over half the families, didn't have outside toilets. They just used over the bank, behind the barn. [My grandparents] eventually [had one]. But [when] most people started building 'em, they'd build 'em over the branches and creeks, and that way they never did have to clean around [the area]. Every time the creek washed, it washed 'em out, and they didn't realize that they was contaminating these streams."

It was important to separate the outhouse from the water supply, and outhouses had to be moved periodically. Charles Shouse of Powell County spoke of the process: "Everybody used lime, they, I think about ever so long, so often you moved it. Dug a new hole [in the] same general area. [We would move the outhouse] maybe four or five foot, I mean, and then they'd fill this up, cover it up. You'd cover it up

with lime then dirt, rock, may throw some rock stuff, but mostly just dirt on it."

Some people used water witching to help them decide where to dig or drill wells. This practice was likely more common where water was difficult to find and where information about groundwater was not available (Vogt and Hyman 2000). Clinton Brandenburg (Lee County) described the process of finding water this way: "Take a stick, go out through the ground and find out where to dig a well to hit your water. We didn't have no water lines. He [a water witch] could find a water stream, tell you where to dig that well. Some people don't believe in a water witch, but I'm a firm believer 'cause my daddy done so. He's found every well in this community around here back in his day. He'd tell you whether there was any water there or not. Now, you see it, you'd know. I seen him take that stick and have it in his hand and twist it right in two. The bark would wring right off of it and he'd be a grippin' it. Down it'd go. Right there you dug your well. That stick stem went that-a-way. And the water was right there, too. I dug after him. I know. Some people don't believe that, but I'm a firm believer. Well, this young generation, they'll say, 'There ain't nothin' in that. That's superstitious.' I don't care if it is superstitious, I hold on to it."

Soap Making

Making soap making was a common task for women early in the period. The primary ingredients were "grease" from hogs and lye.* For the most part, the fat used was a by-product of cooking, excess lard or fat that could be rendered from meat scraps. Clarice McKinney of Brodhead (Rockcastle County) said, "You take your meat scraps, or if you've got lard left from one year to the next. . . . And you'd cook the meat scraps and get the fat out and strain that out." People did not use lard directly from the rendering process to make soap. Cured pork that went bad and meat that was just too fatty were used. Henry Turner reported that in his family, they made soap "maybe twice the year. They

* The chemical process of making soap is called saponification. It involves the reaction of a strong base, such as sodium hydroxide (commercial lye) or potassium hydroxide (lye obtained from wood ashes), with triglycerides, or fatty acids. The process results in a soap that includes water and glycerol. Boiling removes some of the impurities. The descriptions provided by the narrators lack specifics about the ratio of fat to lye, but it needs to be fairly precise, depending on the type of animal fat used.

made enough, you know, to do them. [We made soap] after they'd kill hogs. And had the scraps, you know. [We made it] in the fall. And then in the summer, if you had any lard."

Lye was obtained from wood ashes or purchased at the store, as described by Marjorie Carlton of Anderson County: "We made two kinds of lye soap. We had an ash hopper. It was made with boards in a 'V' shape and a little trough here. And you put your wood ashes out of your stove, filled it with those, and then you poured water over it, if it didn't rain and things on it, and it ran in a little kettle of lye, just a brown-looking lye out of those ashes. And then you took that with the lard or grease, and boiled it down, and it made a soft soap. It was a good soap. And then [we] got to making cold water soap, where we'd take bought lye and grease, and make that. And then we'd put it in a cardboard box, and when it set up, then we could cut it out in cakes, and pull that cardboard off of it. I've made soap lots of times. But you couldn't beat that lye soap. It'd be brown looking, soft, but it would just lather. And a lot of people washed their hair with it. They loved it. It was good soap."

Even though families made soap only once or twice a year, they were continually concerned with collecting and storing fats, which most of the narrators called "grease." Florene Smith of Letcher County said, "I remember any extra grease that we would have from cooking, we'd put it in the soap can. We used to call that the 'soap bucket.'" This was nothing more than a lard can that was kept airtight. For those who used wood ashes in the soap-making process, these too had to be accumulated, often in large volumes; one source mentioned three barrels. Typically, wood ashes were saved over the winter for soap making in the spring, often in April (WPA n.d., Ballard County files).

The big cast-iron pots used for soap making are still being made and are quite valuable; they can be seen serving as decorative planters on people's front lawns throughout the state. Florene Smith described their use in soap making: "You take a gallon of water and put it in the pot. When it's still cold, you pour in very slowly two cans of lye. And then when this is all dissolved, you add a gallon of grease and two more gallons of water, and you stir this until it makes a stream. [Using] a big wooden paddle, you stir almost constantly until it makes a syrupy stream from that paddle when it's held up above the pot. And when it does that, it's done. And you take the fire out from under it and you let it cool." Some preferred to stir the cooking soap mixture with a sas-

Old wash kettle and new barn at Morehead, Rowan County, 1940. (Marion Post Wolcott, Library of Congress, Farm Security Administration)

safras stick (WPA n.d., Ballard County files). The soap could also be ladled out into containers to cool.

Using the right proportions of ingredients was very important. Smith noted, "When it cools, if you didn't have the right proportions, grease would come to the top. If you had too much lye for the [amount of] grease or the meat skins . . . then you had a syrupy solution in the bottom that was lye. It would eat you up if you got it on your fingers or anything. I remember my mother would never let us children around the kettle when she was pouring in the lye. To me lye was very dangerous. It had the crossbones and the skull on the can. You didn't let children mess with lye. It was really a risky business." Because of this risk, soap making was an adult chore. Smith continued: "But then after it was made, [Mother would] take the fire from under it and she would cover it over with a piece of metal. It was always [kept] in the barn lot, I guess to keep the other animals out of it plus protect it if it rained that night, or [to prevent] nothing flying and getting in it. And then it was a sheet of roofing that she would put over it. So then the next day when it was cool, she'd go and she'd take a big butcher knife and she would slice it in about two or three inch slices all the way and make it checkered. And then she'd take her hand and she'd scoop out. It's real

slippery. I mean, you know how soap is when it's wet and soft. She'd take her hand and she'd push out the first cake. And it would just be a kind of a triangle. And then she'd push down the next cake and it'd punch out the whole center layer. And then she would take that and lay it on boards and chop it into cake sizes. It would be big slabs really. And then we'd dry it"

This soap was used for clothes washing, dish washing, and general household cleaning. If possible, people avoided using homemade soap for bathing; they preferred store-bought soap for this purpose. The soap had other limitations. "It made awful dish-washing soap because it didn't lather at all. And if your water wasn't super hot you just couldn't do [it]. Boy, we'd have to start immediately after we ate to washing the dishes. No waiting around or giggling at the table. You had to get up and wash the dishes while the water was hot, while the stove was hot. We always sat dishpans of water on the stove while we were eating. We'd let the fire go out as a general rule to conserve wood. When the meal was about cooked, no more fire was tended. But the water was put on to heat for washing dishes. We had two pans, one for the washing and one for the rinsing. But I remember that lye soap. It would cut grease but it'd leave a kind of a scum at the top. And it would cling to the last dishes if you didn't hurry and get them through while the water was hot. And we didn't really have that many dishes. We'd just have one plate and one fork. And you know, there wasn't all that many utensils either. In fact, I guess we really didn't have that much to eat. We'd have three or four items and that'd be it, besides the jellies and the things you covered back up and kept in the cupboard. We usually bought soap to bathe our bodies in. We'd buy cakes of soap for our bodies. But we washed dishes, washed clothes, scrubbed floors, and washed walls, [just about] everything we washed was in lye soap. It makes good soap. In fact, I use it when I go to the garden and work right now. I come home and wash in lye soap. It takes the poison ivy off. If you wash within two hours you don't get poison ivy" (Smith).

Store-bought soap was used first for hand washing. In some communities, the use of manufactured soap was associated with better incomes and being more cosmopolitan. "Just about the only people that had a cake of [store-bought] soap, what we called, to wash your hands in, that was somebody [who] come in from town and brought 'em a cake or lived a little better in the community than anybody else. Everybody else used homemade lye soap. It's a real good soap to wash

clothes with. And it was good to wash your hair with. Especially good if you had lice in your hair. And there was a lot of kids that had lice at that time. It was easy to tell the family that had it because all these little girls, if they had lice in their hair, their mother would cut their hair. Cut it real short" (Turner).

Taking a bath was a less frequent (and less private) occurrence than it is today. "We'd all gather 'round on Saturday night, takin' a bath in a galvanized washin' tub. And they always started with the youngest first, and me bein' the oldest, then I had five [siblings], I was the fifth one takin' a bath in the water. So that happened ever' Saturday night regardless of how bad the weather was. Had to get in front of that fireplace grate and take a bath there" (Stephen C. Bullen, Rockcastle County).

Clothes and Laundry

A large portion of women's workload had to do with caring for clothes. Women often followed a weekly schedule of housework. Mary Isgrig (Bourbon County) spoke of her mother's workload and how it was structured: "She had a daily setup of things. On Monday she washed, and she washed all day Monday. And then if it wouldn't dry sometimes she'd hang the clothes outside. And it would freeze, you know, it'd be so cold. Just freeze solid, but it would get dry finally. And sometimes it would be raining and she'd have to hang it indoors. And the whole house was full of clothing. And then on Tuesday she ironed and that took all day. At first, she didn't have an electric iron. She just used the old cast-iron irons that you put on a stove, you know, and then keep putting them back on. And then on Wednesday she usually baked breads and all kinds of rolls and things like that for use during the week. On Thursday she sewed and mended the clothes. Maybe on Thursday and Friday we went to town. On Saturday she cleaned. Cleaning took all day because it was a big house and she did not have an electric sweeper. We had to sweep with a broom or take [the rug] out and beat it on the line. And Saturdays she usually spent with the children doing things and allowing us to do things. And Sundays sometimes we went to church."

People had a lot fewer clothes than they do today, and they changed them less often. Clothes were homemade or bought through mail order and recycled from child to child. J. Henry Ogans of Breathitt

County described the clothes his parents bought for him: "I got two pair of overalls and a couple denim shirts a year. We would order these clothes from [different mail-order companies].* You could get them little blue shirts that would cost but twenty-nine cents apiece, pure cotton. You see 'em now. They cost anywhere from twenty-five to fifty dollars now. That's what they cost. And you could buy them little overalls for thirty-nine to forty-nine [cents]. The big heavy 'ns was forty-nine cents. And that was your clothin'." His shoes were simple and suitable for work. "Most generally, I got one pair of shoes a year. Lucky to get that. And that was in the fall of the year. We'd try to sell somethin' or borrow a little money at the bank or somethin' to get us a few school clothes and get us two pair of overalls and a pair of these old roughers. That old shoe that had a cap on the toe. And it was just old rough shoes. They wasn't even dressed. When I put them things on of a wintertime, after it come one snow or one rain, it was so muddy, that mud-hole road goin' back and forward to school, that them shoes never dried out. From the time that I put them on 'til they wore out. When I come home of a night, I'd wash 'em up right good of a wintertime, set 'em in front of a big wood fire and try to dry 'em out. You could get the outside dry, but they'd still be damp on the inside. And the next mornin,' you'd put 'em on and when you got to school, you'd wash 'em off again. But durin' the day, you was in a good dry schoolhouse, and your feet didn't get cold, but your shoes was still wet. I know I've told a lot of people and a lot of 'em didn't believe ya, that I put a pair of shoes on and they was never dry from the time I put 'em on 'til they was wore out."

Girls clothes were also quite limited. Clarice McKinney said, "'Course, I didn't have too many dresses. But I could remember one year we could afforded more, but one year Mama ordered me two dresses from Sears. And I wore them that year to school. And I gen'ly had one pair of shoes a year. Get 'em new in the spring and when we didn't go in the wagon to church, well we'd walk [barefoot] and go across the fields. And [there] was a creek and Mama always took a rag and she'd wet the rag at the creek and we'd wipe our feet off . . . [before we] put our shoes and ankle socks [on] then. Put 'em on when we got ready to go out to the road to go up to the church house. And then

* This narrator mentioned Spiegel, May Stern, Alden's, and Chicago Mail Order. These mail-order businesses started around the beginning of the twentieth century.

Young woman on front porch of a Nicholas County farmhouse, 1940. (John Vachon, Library of Congress, Farm Security Administration)

when we got back out of sight, well, we pulled our shoes off and carried 'em home. And one pair a year is gen'ly what I had of shoes."

People had to dress warmly in winter. "We wore those union suits, long sleeves, long legs. Part of the time I wore fleece-lined. And long-sleeved dresses. My mother sewed. She made all my clothing that she could make, and hers, too. All of our clothing. And we wore those long stockings, and I wore boy's shoes most of the time with these hooks on 'em? The very roughest, heaviest shoes you could get. Part of the time I wore boots up to my knees. And the other girls wore those things, too. I didn't feel like I stood out among the crowd. Just lucky to have them. Some of the children had to wear these rubber rings for garters to hold their socks up like they used to can with. But I was always fortunate, I had elastic. I guess I was, in a way, dressed a little better than most of 'em because [my parents] just had the one child" (Ella V. Preston, Letcher County).

Girls developed their sewing skills with the help of their mothers

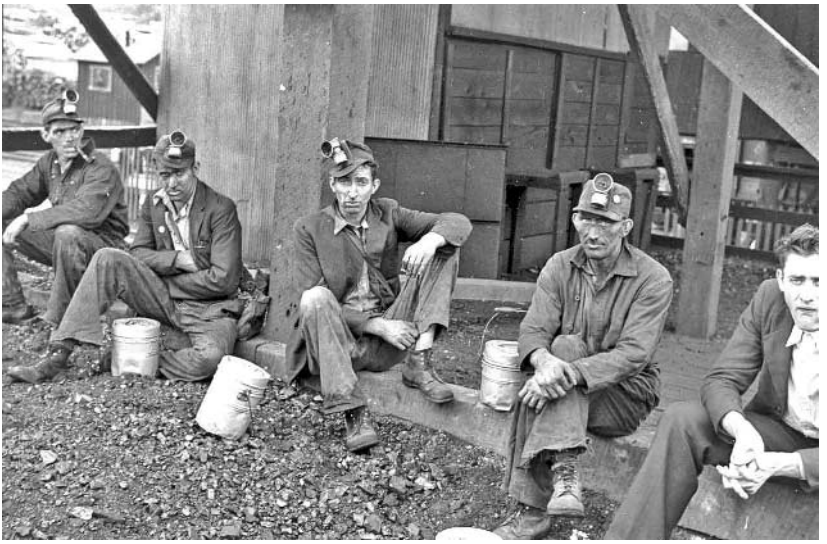
and aunts. Clarice McKinney recalled: "When I was little, I begged to sew on the machine. First things I made was the apron with the bib. And with a string around the neck and built-up slips. I made that for my great-aunts. [My] great-aunt in Louisville, she'd make most of my clothes. Mama didn't make too many clothes. But I've still got my grandmother's sewin' machine. It was a treadle. It was moved here from Missouri in a wagon. She had bought it new, but just 'fore she moved back, she wanted me to have that, and I still have it. That's what I learnt to sew on."

Clothes washing without modern appliances was hard work, and again, those big black cast-iron pots came into play. Flossy Lutes (Lee County) described the process of washing: "Most every home had a cast-iron black kettle. And they'd put 'em out in the backyard and they'd have it on a frame or on rocks, a rock under each end. Put it up quite a ways off the ground, and you then would build a fire under that kettle, and you would fill it up with your water. When that water got hot, you'd have these washtubs and a washboard. And you put the white [clothes] in first and start scrubbing the spots and scrubbing 'em on the board. Then there was another tub beside that had a rinse water, and you rinse 'em through that. And then you take those white ones and put 'em in that kettle and boil 'em a while to make 'em white and to get the stains all out. Sheets and towels, everything like that. Then you took your colored clothes and washed it in that same tub of water where your white ones were, because you washed the white clothes, the clean clothes, first, the cleaner ones, tablecloths and things. Then you did the colored clothes on the board and you rinsed them through that rinse. We made up our bluing.* That was something by the name of bluing that you blued your clothes. And they said that made 'em white, made 'em bright. So we'd have another tub of bluing water, and then we made the starch. We would take flour and cold water and let it come to a boil and stir it on the cookstove until it got clear. Then we would thin it down and put on this other stand and, after we blued the clothes, the wearing clothes, the shirts and pants and dresses—of course, women all wore dresses then, they didn't wear pants—we'd

* According to the Mrs. Stewart's Bluing Web site, bluing is a liquid made up of a blue iron salt suspended in water. It does not clean clothes but works optically by giving the clothes a bluish look that appears "whiter than white." The Mrs. Stewart Company recommends that bluing be added to the second rinse cycle.

starch those dresses and aprons, bonnets, and everything in that starch and hang 'em on the line to dry. You had to wash every week. Sometimes it'd be Monday. My mother would usually wash up the baby's things on Monday, whatever that they wore, she took the baby anywhere on Sunday. She'd always keep the baby's clothes all clean. And then she never washed the baby's clothes in with ours. Some way or other, I guess [she] felt like they were more delicate or she'd always get the baby's dresses and everything washed on Monday, and the diapers and everything. You had cloth diapers then. There was no such thing as a disposable. And so we washed diapers every Monday, and the dresses and bonnets, whatever the baby wore, or the little children. And then later in the week, she'd wash the other clothes. We'd go to school, we'd wear the same dress on Monday and Tuesday, then we'd have a clean dress for Wednesday and Thursday. And sometimes we could afford to have a clean dress on Friday, but it all depended on the color of the dress and how dirty we'd got it. But we didn't have a lot of clothes. You couldn't, you just didn't have."

The clothes washing process was both arduous and relentless, especially for women with miners in the family. Sara Ellen Ison of Ice (Letcher County) said, "We washed on the washboard. I washed on



Coal miners with their lunch buckets at Jenkins, Letcher County, 1935. (Ben Shahn, Library of Congress, Farm Security Administration)

that board 'til my fingers wouldn't get well 'til the next wash day. I'd start in when [my husband] went to work and maybe I'd be washing 'til that evening. His daddy, he stayed with us a lot and my brother did [too], and all of them worked in the mines and I worked. You had two washtubs and my sister would rub [the clothes] through what's called the first water and then she'd put them in my water and I'd rub them again. Lord, it'd take you all day. You washed them through two waters, you boiled them, you took them out and you rubbed them through the boiling suds, they called it. And then you rinsed them and then you would blue 'em and then most of them had to be starched, so, it took about all day to wash. But we stayed clean. We was raised clean-conscious."

Washing machines were introduced and came to be widely used. William Singer of rural Georgetown in Scott County described his observations: "And we had a big tub that you could wheel into the fire. And that's how you heated your wash water. [Things have] really kinda progressed [since the early days]. When I was very small, a small child, our washin' machine was a wood washin' machine turned by hand. And then, 'course you had your washtubs and your washing boards. But then later on, we graduated to a Maytag washer, which had a little gasoline engine on it. When you started it, you had to open up all the windows and doors. And a lot of times, though, instead of runnin' it in the cabin, we would run it on the back porch because it would sputter and smoke and fume. It ran just like a lawn mower motor, with a very bad spark plug. And then after the Maytag, we finally got an electric washer. But still, it wasn't like your washers today. Ran by electricity, but you had to pour the water in and drain it out. And then when you got ready to [rinse] clothes, you poured more water in. Which was a great big job. And 'course there was no such a thing as a dryer then. We had a clothesline that reached from the buggy house. Was anchored into the buggy house. And it reached completely across the yard to the lot fence on the other side, and was anchored by a big post. I've seen the clothesline full of clothes, really, from one end to the other. Now, I'm liable to wake up at night and hear the washer running. Where someone has a pair of pants or a dress that you wanta wash out. Back then, you didn't do that. You waited until you got a whole lot of stuff. And for example, like one week, if it would be raining, well, you'd put off washin' for two weeks. And then you'd have a double load. 'Course my job was always after they came out of the washer, to run the wringer.

Whether it be a hand-powered wringer or later on a 'lectric wringer. 'Course when we had the Maytag washer it still had the hand wringer on it. . . . [Then] you hung 'em out on the line. 'Course really, in the wintertime, when it was zero cold or somethin', you took the washin' tub and washed them out in the kitchen. Hung 'em, [at least] what you had to have, on a rack behind the stove. Or hung 'em in front of the fire in the grate. 'Course if it was cold outside what you hung out on the line, they would freeze. Or it would rain on 'em or somethin'. And they're liable to hang out there for two, three days until the wind would eventually dry 'em, you know."

Some people built what they called washhouses. Florene Smith recalled: "Dad had built [Mother] what they called the washhouse, and it was just a board, rough-sawn lumber-type building. I don't believe we got the washhouse until after she got the washing machine, and then she put it down there in that building. And it was right beside of a well that had real good soft water. Dad [made a] kind of a bench-type table, low table-type thing for her to set big washtubs on, and it would be near the kettle that she would heat the water. She'd heat the water in and put it in the tubs, put the lye soap in, and wash the clothes through the soapy water. Then [she would] put more water back in that pot and kept that fire going and boiled those whitest things. And then she would take 'em out of that and rinse 'em two or three times. I believe she'd put that lye soap in that boiling water. And then hang 'em on the clothesline. Of course, we could only wash on sunny days. And then in the winter she'd wash on the back porch and heat the water on the stove. But if it was just cold and not rainy or snowing, she'd still wash down at the barn. At the house, we had two wells, one was for the drinking water. Why, she'd draw water out of that and heat it on the cookstove and wash. And if it was bad-time bad, like snowy-icy, she'd wash in the kitchen. There was a low table there that she'd [use] of course, it was hard. You know it was hard."

Women also did a lot of ironing. As Flossy Lutes explained, it was hard work: "Then we had irons, some of 'em had attached handles and some of 'em had detachable handles. We never had one with an attached handle. We had the other type you had to hook the handle to. And when you got ready to iron, when those clothes in the kettle would get boiled a while, then you'd start another rinse procedure, you see, and rinse them. And when you would hang 'em up and let 'em dry, took 'em off the line, you sprinkle the starch things and put 'em

in a basket and kept 'em from drying out. Then you built the fire in the woodstove in the kitchen. And chestnut wood burnt the best, but it didn't heat the irons so well. You had to set the irons on that woodstove to heat. So you'd have to have good oak wood or something that would make the irons get hot. And you'd heat those irons and keep that fire going till you got those clothes all ironed. Now that was something that happened every week." Hattie Wells (Harlan County) recalled: "I always did all the ironing. And I did 'em with old 'sad' irons. We put those irons on the stove and it heated them. Now, it's not very smooth now, but my father used pumice or something on the bottom of 'em to keep them smooth, you know. And we'd run 'em over light bread paper.* [The iron] is heavy. But see, the weight of it helps to press the [fabric]. And they didn't have ironing boards like they do today. I remember my mother put down a comforter on the kitchen table and spread an old sheet over it. And we ironed that way. Heated [the iron] on top of the stove. I guess I started ironing when I was about nine. Back then boys were wearing these white duck pants, and my brothers always wore a pair Saturday afternoon, and after they got big enough to get out Saturday night, a pair Saturday, Sunday, and Sunday night. And I always had eight pair of those to iron. [It was called a sad iron] 'cause it was hard to do and you were tired when you got through with it. I would iron a big lot of the day. Well, when there's six or eight of you, it took a lot of ironing. But now sheets, we took our sheets off the line, put 'em back on the bed. But now, we ironed the pillowcases. We didn't have polyester and all that sort of thing then, it was all cotton, so [I] ironed my daddy's work shirts."

Florene Smith recalled the day her mother brought home an ironing board from town. "I remember her carrying an ironing board on horseback once. Up until then she'd have to [use a homemade board]. Daddy shaped a board, the shape of an ironing board. She'd put it on the foot of an iron bed, one end; the other end would rest on the back of a straight-back chair. And she would heat the irons on the stove, those old stove irons. In the summertime when it was so hot, she could at least take an ironing board outside on the porch and iron. The adverse part of that was it was cooler, but then the irons cooled so fast, she'd have to keep running back and forth. She'd have two irons.

* Store-bought bread came wrapped in wax paper, which was used to treat irons.

While one was heating, the other one was used. And then she'd switch out irons really quick like that. But we got electricity in '43. I believe it was '43."

Spring Cleaning

Spring cleaning was a memorable event. Majora M. Bastin of Casey County recalled: "Ever' spring, we had a big housecleanin'. Ever'thing had to be taken out. 'Course back in those days, we just had straw ticks. Stuffed with straw. All those had to be taken out, the straw burned and the ticks washed. And then filled with fresh straw, where they thrashed wheat . . . back in that day and time. And all the walls had to be washed down, and we papered our walls with newspaper 'til later. [My mother] found out that these stores had wallpaper books, you know. And she would, they would [give] them to her when [they] got done with their year's supply, and she would paper with these colorful wallpaper books. There wouldn't be two squares alike. But we thought it was just wonderful. All the big high ceilin', you know, was papered with those wallpaper books. And she would scrub the floors and she would send me up to the little cemetery to get cedar boughs. She loved flowers better 'n anything. And she would take those cedar boughs and wet 'em. And then she'd sprinkle flour on 'em and they did look pretty. Then she'd place them around in big old crocks and jars on the floor, you know, not generally on the tables, but around on the floor. And then she darked the windas [windows] and scooted us all out, you know, and made us stay out 'til time to get supper. And when we'd come, the house'd be full of the fragrance of cedar. And be clean and smell so good, you know."

Other people used corn husks to stuff their mattress ticking. Every spring women would empty and wash the ticking and then hang it out in the sunshine to dry and air out. This was thought to kill germs and eliminate insects. Usually people cleaned and refilled their bedding once a year during spring cleaning. According to Sara Ellen Ison, "They had feather beds and shuck beds. You hefted all them shucks out, you wash your shuck and filled it back with fresh shucks and you hefted your feather beds out in a big barrel or sacks and you washed your feather ticks. You washed all your quilts and you scalded it and then repapered your house. And you cleaned everything in that house. I said it was really cleaner than what we do today."

Quilting

Quilting, which was more common in the old days, when women did not work outside the home, provided an opportunity for them to get out of the house and socialize. As Christine Sims said, "You could quilt and get your talking done at the same time" (van Willigen 1978–1980). The owner of the quilt in progress would invite people over to work on it, generally during the winter months, when there was less outside work to be done. Paul D. Morris (Letcher County) recalled, "[My mother] made the quilts. Her and my granny. The older women quilted after they, I guess, felt like they were too old to go out and do field work. Most of them would make quilts. And we had a few blankets. I remember seeing some blankets around occasionally. But most of it was quilts. When we were kids we didn't care anything about whether it was cold back then or not. You just piled on more covers, homemade quilts mostly."

Some homes had special equipment for quilting. Doris Jones of Grayson County described this aspect of her mother's craft work: "My mother would, she would piece quilts. You cut out, you have a pattern and you cut out certain pieces and you put them together [called piecing a quilt]. She pieced quilts and in the wintertime she'd quilt these things. They had, she had these four hooks in the ceiling and they run strings down them and then her quilting frames were just four long sticks with holes in 'em, and if she'd quilt a side, they'd roll that and you know, fasten it. I guess they had bolts or something to anchor it. They worked from the outside in. And then at night, or whenever she finished with it, they would take that string and just wrap it around the end of one of those poles and wind that quilt up to almost the ceiling. The poles, I would say they were quite a bit longer than the quilt was. I'd say eight or nine feet long. It was just four sticks with holes bored in 'em. They'd have one each side of the quilt. And across each end. [We did the quilting] in the room where everybody lived, basically. Where the two beds were. Where the fireplace was. My mother did a fabulous job. She made mostly patchwork is what she did. She just did a fabulous job. I'm just sorry I didn't take better care of those things because they would be priceless now. Most of what she left, I'm giving to my children, and some have worn out. We used them. But they were beautiful. And she liked bright colors. She'd piece the quilts and put them together. Some-

times she'd quilt in patterns but a lot of 'em were just real simple. They quilted what they called fans. You know, just the, maybe a fourth of a circle. Then when they'd get a whole row done, they'd roll up that side and anchor it again. She quilted by herself. And I know my grandmother had several sisters who lived in the area. Some of them would get together, but I don't remember my mother ever quilting with anyone else. [It was] in the wintertime. She would do that in the daytime, but a lot of times at night, she would piece that quilt. I guess it was sort of recreation. Maybe you can think of it as craft work or something."

Paul Morris remembers women in his neighborhood working as a group: "Sometimes they would get together and quilt . . . maybe a couple of days. They would finish one at somebody's house and then they would go and quilt one at somebody else's house. And this was a social thing for them too. But if one lady quilted one quilt [alone], sometimes it would take them five or six weeks, maybe even two months to quilt one. Because they did it all by hand. The top they made from pieces. Scrap pieces of shirts, dresses, feed sacks, whatever they could get. Something that usually was colorful. Sometimes the ends left off of bolts of material that they would buy. They made some dresses too and some shirts and things. But anyway scrap pieces would usually be what the top would be made [of]. And they would work out some kind of pretty design. Then underneath that they would put cotton. And then they had a thing that they called a backing which was sort of like a cotton cloth that was the final thing that was on the back. And then they had to quilt through three layers to put it all together. And they would be pretty thick. Some of them would be pretty thick and usually pretty warm. Then they had a way that they bound them around the edges. . . . They would have a line that they quilted by hand all the way across the quilt in designs or things that held it all together. And they were nice. I've still got some of the old homemade quilts. We [had] a lot of quilts. My grandmother on my mother's side did most of the quilting. And she loved to make quilts, so we had a lot of quilts. We sure did. Mom did some of that. And still does. Mom is seventy-two years old and up till maybe the last year, she usually made at least one quilt every winter. But more like a hobby. She just did it because she liked to quilt."

Energy

During the period considered here, there were significant changes in the way energy was used. In rural areas, this era brought electrification and a dramatic increase in the use of petroleum products in internal combustion engines. Although these changes were dramatic, it was not a matter of simply turning on the lights all over rural Kentucky. Electrification came considerably earlier in some areas than in others, and once it was introduced, many new uses followed. Accounts of early experiences with electricity often stress people's fear and uncertainty about the new resource, as well as frugality in its use. Another interesting fact is that intermediate technologies were used prior to electrification, including acetylene gas home lighting systems and generators. Some narrators still used wood for cooking when the interviews were done in the early 1990s, although this was apparently rare, perhaps for only certain kinds of cooking or canning. Many still used wood for heating.

The men of the family were responsible for the preparation of firewood. Doris Jones recalled how her family dealt with the chore: "Daddy and Uncle Charlie worked at splitting the wood. They worked together. We kids would bring it in as needed. They had a little box in the kitchen where they put wood for the kitchen stove. The wood for the kitchen stove was smaller. Smaller sticks, you know. The fireplace, they'd have logs about [two or three feet long], maybe six inches through. They'd put one on the back of the fireplace they called a backlog. It could be a big log. And then they'd build a fire out in front of that. I know a lot of times, the back log, it took a man to carry it in. It was big. The other things, the rest of us could carry in. We always had enough [wood]."

Keeping the wood box full was a common chore for young boys. "It was my job to carry stove wood in," said William Singer. "Like I say, we had a woodstove that we cooked on and heat the water with the water tank behind it. It was my job to keep the wood box full of wood. 'Course, we had a wood box there and had split wood in it, and anytime the wood box got half empty, I had to carry wood in from the wood house, dry wood, to fill the wood box back up in the kitchen. [The wood came] off the farm. We would saw it up. Saw dead wood, the trees that would die, limbs would blow off the trees, and a tree

somewhere that you didn't want, that you would cut down. In the stove we always had to have seasoned wood, dead wood, because it would split easier and burn easier. And all of it came off the farm. Every bit of it came off the seventy-one-acre farm, all the wood. And, of course, my grandmother didn't like to use [coal], she said it was dirty heat. But every once in a while some of us would take a couple of lumps of coal and stick [it] in the cooking stove. It would burn better and burn quicker and make a better fire than the wood would, really."

Some got the firewood ready at a specific time of the year, often as part of an effort to clear fields for farming. "We would clean up [the woodlot] every August, the first day of August if it didn't come on Sunday. We would get our crosscut saw and our ax and mauls and wedges and things and we'd clean up a field. We'd cut that down real low. And I'd pile brush. We'd go back and burn the brush when we got big piles. And then we hauled the big long pieces of wood [we cut] to the house. Then we had a cutoff saw with a motor. And we'd put this old belt on there and put gas in that motor and Dad started [it] up and we'd cut wood for days. We worked all the month of August to prepare wood to heat with and to eat with, you know. [The woodlot] was a third of [the farm acreage] or less" (Clara Garrison, Bourbon County).

In some counties in eastern Kentucky, firewood was a by-product of lumbering for the cash market. This may have been the case in central Kentucky counties too, but at a much earlier date. According to Florene Smith of Letcher County, "They'd have to chop the wood and, of course, Dad would haul in with a horse, he'd saw down a tree. The biggest part of the tree would be for logs for lumber. But the branches, the bigger branches, we'd saw it up into stove wood. Those would have to be split into smaller chunks to go in the stove. And that was called chopping wood. But I remember distinctly that I would love to chop wood. I loved to do that. I'd bargain with [my brother]—he'd help me do things I'd have to do and I'd help him chop wood. Dad had built a rack that he could lay these short limbs up on to saw. We had [a] crosscut saw. One would get on one end and pull and you'd saw that way. Well, we'd race. I remember making games out of everything we did. They would use the chips to start the fire in the stove. . . . Mother didn't burn coal in her cookstove. She only burned wood. She'd say that coal smoked her pots and made messes with her dish towels and cooking things. The coal got so hot it would burn the grates out of the stove faster, too, deteriorate the stove linings."

Some families had a woodshed to store wood and keep it dry. But woodsheds were used for all kinds of storage, according to Glen Vanoy (Casey County): "In the woodshed, that's where you kept your wood and you kept your hoes and your rakes and all sitting right inside the woodshed door where you could get them. And I guess other little odds and ends. There was a window in the back side of the woodshed, they pulled the wagon along there and you would throw the wood into the woodshed from there. See, there wouldn't be anybody in it, so you'd just pitch your wood into the woodshed in that high window. And it would just, you know, go [in] there hither and yon."

In some eastern Kentucky settings, wood was harvested for more than domestic use. J. Henry Ogans of Breathitt County spoke of cutting firewood and how it related to farming. "They cut cordwood all the time in the wintertime. . . . [It was] a wood that they shipped outta here on railroad cars. They hauled it, the railroads. They cut it with a crosscut saw. Four foot long and busted it up into big pieces, and loaded it on a railroad car and sent it out of here to Cleveland, Ohio. They ground a lot of it up for paper and took the sap and all that stuff and made alcohol. Just rub[bing] alcohol. I know you've seen it in bottles, costs forty, fifty cents a bottle now. It's an antiseptic. They cut cordwood, and all winter long, that's all they done in the wintertime. But, 'course [in] the summertime, they still cut cordwood, and growed little crops of corn. You would cut cordwood off'n these hillsides, cut all the wood off of 'em. And then you would grow your crop of corn that spring. These hillsides was so steep, that you didn't plow 'em up. You just stuck an old single stock plow, an old one-footed plow, and laid the rows off—they call[ed it] lay them off. 'Course that was plowin' a furrow around the hillside, about four foot wide from one row to the next. And they done that with an old mule or an old ox, one of 'em. They used [oxen] more so than they did mules on account of mules were more scarcer and oxen could pull more when it comes to pullin' logs and things. And they could stand up, well they could stand up good. They could go through mud good, and all that."

In some places in eastern Kentucky people had access to coal, which they used for heating over the winter. Emma Ison of Linefork (Letcher County) said, "We had coal in our place. They'd hire a man to come and get the coal out of the bank for us. And we'd get that just after we would get Mama's gardens made. We'd hire somebody to get her coal and she would have it for the winter. We had a great big coal

house. And we'd always try to fill it full of coal to have it ready for the winter. They'd try to get wood, that's what you cooked with then. Mama never did like to use coal much in her cookstove. She said it burned it up too bad. So they would use that wood to cook with. As soon as we'd get our garden and everything, you know, she'd put us, you know, out to getting in wood and try to fill her wood house. We had a wood house and a coal house too. And try to fill them full where they would have [enough], you know, for the winter months."

Woodstoves were of various types and sizes. The size of a stove was measured by the number of "caps," or circular openings on the top surface. Most stoves were either four- or six-cap models. Some were made of cast iron, and others were made of less expensive sheet iron. Some had added features such as a water reservoir to provide a supply of warm water while the stove was in use. The stoves could burn either wood or coal, but because coal burned hotter, it would cause the stove to wear out sooner. Warm Morning was one brand of stoves sold by traveling salesmen or "drummers" in the region.

Even after electrification, some people kept both electric and wood-burning stoves for a long time. There were many different motivations for doing so, including cooking preferences and the desire to save money. "We had an electric stove and then we had a stove in the kitchen in addition to that," said Glen Vanoy. "It was what they called a sheet-iron stove. And they would get hot so fast. You'd get warm in a hurry with those. [It was] just a regular round stove with a door in front, flat on top, and you could cook your pintos on that. They're so much better if you can cook them slowly. Not in a rush. Just set 'em on there and let 'em cook slowly for a long [time], for, you know, for hours. And that big old chunk of bacon in there, if you had one, would, you know, be sure to cook real good. Even after we got married, we did it that way. As long as [the woodstove] was there, why we used it for things like that. And potatoes. You know, you could fix your pan of potatoes and put 'em over there and they would cook too."

Minnie Morton (Powell County) reported that she returned to a woodstove after using gas and electric for thirty years. She said, "Food tastes better. It just tastes better. I don't know. Well, I may be afraid of electric. If I start [a] wood cookstove [and leave, the] fire will go out of it right. Electric if you forget and leave it on, it'll keep going. So I'm still safer with a wood cookstove. I like a wood cookstove [because] it flavors the food some way. I bake cake, cookies, or anything on it. You

just got to regulate your stove. If the oven gets a little too hot, just open your oven up. That's the way I do [it]."

Like stoves, methods of lighting the home also changed. In the early days, people used kerosene and simple fat-fueled lamps. Henry Turner of Beattyville said, "People in them times used kerosene lights. And some of the poorer families, if you run out of kerosene, most of them had what you called a 'grease light.' And this grease light was a little container, oh, something similar to [a coffee cup]. They'd put some grease in that, and usually that grease . . . was old grease where they'd had meat the year before and it got strong and it wasn't real good to cook with. I mean, you could taste it. So they would save that and . . . make a little grease light. And the way they done, they took a piece of string and they made a little wick, and they got grease on the wick and put it down, then they lit it. Didn't have no globe on it. It smoked quite a bit. [Also] sometimes they had what they called a 'pine torch.' [On] a pine tree right at the base of the tree where the limbs come out there's a knot there, and that knot is real rich in rosin. And they'd split that up. And they also used this pine knot to start fires with."

J. Henry Ogans spoke of the limited lighting he had in the old days. "The only light that you had was an old kerosene lamp or an old jar or something like that with some taller [tallow] poured in it with a string attached to it. And you would light that and that would make somethin' like a candle you know. And that's the only light you had, so when it come dark, you went to bed. You didn't have no lights."

There were various kinds of lamps fueled with kerosene, including the familiar flat-wick type. Some kerosene lamps produced much more light through their superior designs. The best example was the Aladdin brand lamp, which was widely used in the countryside during the 1920s and 1930s and is still manufactured and collected today. This lamp used a round wick that increased the flame size. This feature was coupled with a mantle made of special materials that gave off light when heated. Mantles were turned to ash when used for the first time, so they were very fragile. Kerosene lamps also created another set of chores because the chimneys would get a coating of soot that had to be cleaned off periodically. If the wick was not evenly trimmed, the chimneys would turn black very quickly. The lamp's fuel reservoir also had to be refilled often.

One lighting system used prior to the availability of electricity was the carbide gas generator. These systems were not widely used, but they

produced a light that was far brighter than that achievable with kerosene. The system included a tank located outside the house that contained carbide and water. A hopper and balance arrangement dropped the carbide into the water to produce acetylene gas, which was then piped to lighting fixtures at various places in the house. Carbide came in fifty- and hundred-pound drums and was available from huckster trucks. Because the Model T Ford had carbide-powered lamps and miners used carbide to light their headlamps, people were familiar with this process.

Some families used what was called a Delco set, which allowed them to run electrical appliances, such as refrigerators and washing machines, before their neighborhoods were electrified. William Singer described the one in his childhood home: "The Delco was self-generating because there was a gasoline engine out in a building. You went out and cranked the gasoline engine and it provided electricity. They told me that Kentucky Utilities came in about the time I was born, which would be about 1929. [At that point] they quit using the Delco and transferred to commercial electricity. And, of course, . . . down on the farm, [they used] coal-oil lanterns. Coal-oil light was [necessary] there because electricity didn't get out in the country that far until, oh, you're talking World War II again. You're talking early forties. I can remember when I was a boy, an early teenager, that they [the tenants on the farm] were using kerosene lamps for light."

Delco sets were apparently quite rare, although they were mentioned fairly regularly in central Kentucky narratives from places such as Bourbon, Scott, and Woodford counties. A narrator from Woodford County estimated that only one in ten families had them. William Stone Dale (Fayette County) described the use of a Delco set: "They had an engine and they had batteries. They'd fill those batteries up [to] get your own 'lectricity. And that's the kind they had here at this house. You had an engine there, used to put it down in the basement of the house there. Just a little gasoline engine. And I guess one or two cylinder. And had a generator on the thing and make 'lectricity and have these batteries, storage batteries. Just like automobile batteries, only larger. Whole bunch of 'em. Maybe twenty or twenty-five of 'em. Up on a platform. And they just charge those batteries up and you'd have 'lectricity run over the whole house. And later on they'd have a gauge there and you show how high the batteries are—gettin' kind of a little weak, you'd start the engine up and it'd charge 'em up. And then

gradually they'd come to where they got to [be] automatic. Where they'd start themselves and die themselves, you know when you charge the batteries up. And then later on, KU [Kentucky Utilities] kept expandin' the center [transmission] line used to come down here. And they started putting' wires on the poles here and getting 'lectricity. And then they cut out the Delco Light Plant. And all we had to do was just put, hook on to the 'lectricity from town there, and that cut out [the use of Delco sets], but that was a great thing. [That] Delco Light Plant was thirty-two volts. And we had 'em here, my grandparents had 'em and my mother and dad had 'em. I guess [we got them] about 1912 or 1915. Somethin' like on in there."

The electrification process started in the 1920s and involved both the private and the public sector. For example, the extension of electrical service to Mt. Olivet by the Kentucky Power Company of Augusta (the precursor of Kentucky Utilities) was announced in 1925. This was financed through local subscriptions that varied from $100 to $500. The local paper ran an item that urged, "Fall into line! We're near the goal! Only need a few hundred more. Sign up today. Help your town and county step to the front. Mt. Olivet needs more light, more heat, more power! The Kentucky Power Co. will give it to us. Sign today" (February 26, 1925). The process of electrification accelerated with the creation of the Rural Electrification Administration (REA) in 1935 and the Rural Electrification Act of 1936 (Brown 1980). These programs provided a means by which a group of farmers in a neighborhood could organize and form a cooperative to acquire low-interest loans to construct power lines and generators. Today, the electricity needs of many rural Kentuckians are still met by cooperatives formed during this era.

One of the ways that the REA accelerated electrification was through competition with investor-owned utilities. It forced local utilities to extend their lines more quickly. Before the REA, the private power companies would not extend their lines if there were insufficient customers. But, as Turner Dunlap (Fayette County) noted, "Then the REA came and they extended it wherever they needed it. And the Kentucky Utilities Company extended our line. REA didn't get up in here. I think they were trying to keep the REA from taking over all their area. All the rural area, that is. One end of Woodford County depended upon REA. It was a great thing and actually our superintendent of schools got very involved in it. When he found out

that the program was available, he really got after the utility company and I think [was] very forceful in getting our lines run."

The impact of having electricity was great. Ola Bell Edds (McLean County) summed it up: "It was like we got rich." Nevertheless, there was some fear surrounding the use of electricity when it was first introduced. "When electricity first come along, my dad, my grandpa and them," said Henry Turner, "they'd heard so many bad tales about electricity, everybody was afraid of it for a while. They was, everybody [was] afraid of [being] electrocuted. [They would say] 'It's the same stuff that they're putting in these electric chairs to kill people. Now do you want a house that'll just be electric chairs?' I mean, that was the talk. Well, there was a fellow, he'd been down, he said, in the Bluegrass. He'd been down into Lexington or somewheres. Evidently he hadn't been, he was just talking like he knew a lot. He said he saw an electric wire broke. And he said that [wire] fell on the ground and said that electric was running off of the wire. And he said that wire would just coil right back just like a copperhead snake, and said it would strike just like a snake. And said there was a bunch of fire jump[ing] off the end of that, he says, five and six feet long. And he said that wire was about fifty feet long and said it had burned a streak around that pole, trees, and everything down where it broke. And that didn't help a bit the way people thought about it when it already had a bad name on it."

There was substantial lag between the early adopters of electricity and the late adopters—as much as fifteen years in Robertson County. In part, this was related to the distance from the power line. Early users were very conservative in their use of power. Many continued to fire up their woodstoves for canning, and some turned the refrigerator off when the weather turned cold. Initially, even those who were wired-up customers made limited use of electricity. In the early days, most electrical lighting consisted of ceiling lights rather than floor and table lamps. Paul Morris said, "Everybody got their house wired. They put in a single bulb in the ceiling. And an outlet on each wall. They usually had three or four in each room. And I remember the minimum electricity bill back then was $2 a month. And some people didn't use much more than that. Some people just paid the minimum. Because until you got into the electric iron or that sort of thing [you didn't use much]. The washers didn't take much electricity, and the refrigerator didn't require a lot. I can remember when we paid our bill, and it was less than $5. Of course, $5 was hard to get back then.

The advantages of electricity were important. Turner Dunlap said, "One of the nice things was to be able to pump your water from the spring to the house with an electric pump. And you were able to use a pressure tank pump. Before, the only system that anybody could have was an old gasoline engine that was very temperamental. We've had to use batteries to fire it. Early on, I think they used magnetos to fire the engine and a lot of times the moisture [in the building] made it hard to start all the time. And we would pump water up in to the reservoir in the attic and then we'd have gravity flow from that. But we were among the few that had those kind of things and most people just had a well they had to carry water from. Whatever use it was, for your bath, for your cooking. You had to carry water from a pump or from a cistern. We did have a cistern for drinking water. But everything else was pumped up by this old gas, temperamental gasoline engine. But oh my, when the electricity came, it opened up a lot of avenues then for everything, you know. Before, we had a gas refrigerator. And before that, we had ice stored in an icehouse, where we'd go out and uncover the ice and bring it in the house for cooling anything. 'Course the ice came off the pond at the farm. That was a big chore in the winter. [As soon as we got a] gas refrigerator [about 1934] they quit putting ice up."

Trash and Garbage

Compared with today's households, these rural Kentuckians produced much less trash and garbage, and there was much less waste. Euell Sumner of Powell County said, "They had a location where they'd burn [trash]. And they didn't have as much trash as we had nowadays. Of course, whenever we had the fire going in the wintertime, we'd burn it in the house." William Singer explained why there was so much less trash in the old days: "Garbage wasn't a problem because when you canned, your jars were reusable. I mean, if you bought something at the store it was usually paper. Most of it you could burn it, and chemicals then were really an unheard of thing. And we had a sinkhole in back of the place and we would pitch any[thing] like metal or broken glass or anything in it. I never ever remember us putting any chemicals or anything that would pollute anything in there. You would just take and dump some dirt on it and smooth it over and sow it in grass and hunt another sinkhole. Grass it over. But really, it amazes me today that back then, really, there was no such a thing as garbage, because, really,

like scraps out of the kitchen or stuff like that, you fed all that to the hogs and, like I say, your canning jars and everything were reusable. Really, you just didn't have anything to throw away. Today, well, there's three of us in the family and, really, we have three garbage cans full a week. Sometimes four garbage cans full a week. It's just amazing today the difference in throw-away stuff than what there used to be. [The garbage problem began] in the mid-1940s, and by the early 1950s, you know, you were starting to accumulate garbage. And people weren't doing as much on the farm."

Opal Shouse of Powell County recalled how people used to save things rather than throw them away: "You didn't have much to throw away, because anything that was broken or worn out you fixed it or you patched it. When you bought things at the store, they weren't done up in cartons like today. I can remember dad ordering these big tin cracker boxes. Full of crackers and Fig Newtons and anything like that he ordered from Montgomery Ward or Sears and Roebuck. Those came in those packages. Those tin boxes were used around the house to store things in. They weren't thrown out. There just wasn't really an awful lot of scrap that I recall. But when there was something that was beyond repair it was taken to the pasture and thrown in a washed-out gully or something. And then it was eventually covered over. Like a lot of times when they were trimming trees or something. They would throw the branches that were trimmed off, or a tree that died that you couldn't use for fuel at the house for the stove. And that was piled in there and as it rotted down and filled in. And it was all taken care of in that way. Of course we had our own fruit jars. And we had the glass jars that we used in canning. And we had the large crocks that Mom would put things like sauerkraut and pickles and things like that down in. And those were, unless they were broken, they were never tossed. Those were used year after year after year. . . . I don't remember very much being thrown out at home."

The responsibilities of keeping the household running smoothly were clearly divided between the traditional female and male gender roles. Generally women did the inside work to keep the household going, and men did the outside work that kept the household productive. Women were primarily in charge of the cooking, housecleaning, and clothes washing. Men did the labor necessary to produce the energy that kept the household warm and the food cooked. Both men and

women contributed to household income, but in different ways. During these times, work habits changed, largely because of electrification. But electrification influenced the work of men and women differently. Women would not begin to change their tasks until much later, and in fact, many still have not given up their household tasks. Although cooking, cleaning, and washing are relentless and often thankless tasks, country-style cooking is viewed with a great deal of nostalgia and is still the taste preference for many Kentuckians.

Recycling was the normal state of affairs, rather than some new practice adopted as a result of "progress." There was more reliance on nature rather than machine to run the house: water was heated as a by-product of the wood-fired cookstove, leftovers (fatty meat, scraps, spoiled meat) were used to make soap, wood from cleared fields was used to heat and cook, clothes were dried by the air, wood ash was saved to make lye for soap, mattresses were filled with wheat straw and corn husks, light was produced by burning grease, and some even pulled coal out of the earth to heat their homes. The rural person at the beginning of the era was still linked to his or her place. But by the end of the era, people's relationship to place had been transformed.

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Chapter 4

Farmwork

"There's a time for everything. You got to work, well, you know the old-time people always said, you got to make hay while the sun shines. There's times for all things" (Clara Garrison, Bourbon County). To capture what Mrs. Garrison was saying, we collected statements about different tasks performed at different times of the year and assembled the following outline of the annual cycle of farming, gardening, and food preservation.

January

"You lambed in January [to the] last of February. See you want to get that spring lamb. That's when the top price of the lamb is, and the age, or get 'em around that 100 pounds or a little better for the spring lamb. That was the ideal time" (Eugene M. Kiser, Bourbon County).

"And so it [was] usually after January they'd start looking at the seed catalogs to buy the seed that they wanted to buy. And then *very* soon after they came they would plant some indoors. But mostly they would plant it outdoors" (Mary Eleanor Isgrig, Bourbon County).

"They started really early. My grandmother would plant her lettuce on January 6th" (Mary Creech, Harlan County).

"'Course back in those days, you burnt tobacco beds, you know. Then you'd get the wood up whenever, in the early part of the spring, or February or January if you got pretty days and so forth, why you'd get a bunch of tobacco bed wood up" (Kiser).

"January and February if the weather was considered favorable for

outside, we cut wood, 'cause we cut wood with a crosscut saw" (Ralph Lobb, Hart County).

February

"We would get out about February and cut brush and wood and burn our tobacca beds and seed them" (Roy G. Brown, Rockcastle County).

"You always put that meat in sacks before March, before the month of March, because that's when the bugs would always get on the meat in March" (Flossy Lutes, Lee County).

"Usually a lot of people sowed tobacco beds in the last part of February if there was any way possible" (Kiser).

"Mama never did like to smoke [cure meat] any after the first day of March [smoking was done from late November to the end of February]. And then we'd started to smoking and we tried to smoke it as often as we could, until around the first of March. And then we didn't want no flies or anything to get on it. And then we sacked it and then we didn't have no more fires and it was the best-tasting stuff" (Garrison).

March

"[We sowed tobacco beds in March]. We tried to stay within three, four, five days of Granny's birthday, the 29th of March" (Garrison).

"In early March you take brush, scrap wood, whatever you could find and burn, burn it on top of the ground to kill the weed seeds [in the tobacco bed]. Sort of sterilize the soil because tobacco doesn't compete well when it's young with other weeds" (Paul D. Morris, Letcher County).

"Traditionally you planted your potatoes in March" (Lucian Robinson, Robertson County; van Willigen 1978–1980).

"Usually people used to plant beans on Good Friday, which was Good Friday before Easter, if Easter didn't come too early" (Lutes).

"Usually Good Friday we'd start planting [the garden]" (Sterling Smithers, Casey County).

April

"[Shearing] would take place in early to mid-April because, again, like picking geese, you would shear the sheep when you figured that

it would be warm enough where if it turned real cold or you had a sudden change, where it wouldn't make 'em sick, wouldn't given 'em pneumonia or something [like] that" (William Singer, Scott County).

"You plant potatoes in late March or early April" (Lutes).

"And then by the time late April or early May came along you'd have your ground all plowed" (Morris).

"But they planted corn in, I guess in April because they'd be hoeing by May" (John Preston, Letcher County).

May

"Usually plant corn about the first of May. Last of April, first of May. Very seldom ever planted any in April, but of course they backed it up now. But back in those days, you just didn't do it. The rule of thumb was, when the walnut trees had leaves on about as big as squirrel ears or you had locust bloom. That was everybody's time to plant corn" (Kiser).

"You plant corn in May" (Willard Varner, Bourbon County).

"You can raise taters, plant 'em first of May. If the moon's right" (John Clarkson, Casey County).

"The middle of May, why the [tobacco] plants would be large enough, we'd pull them and set 'em, set 'em by hand" (Brown).

"All the local people grew strawberries. We had about an acre and I heard them say that they picked them for two cents a quart and adult five. And that was a cash crop for them, I guess. Kind of in-between, come in May" (Lyman C. Barnes, Ohio County).

"From May till October. We got hay again" (Kiser).

"You'd strip bluegrass in the last part of May" (Kiser).

June

"My favorite time setting [tobacco] is the last week of May and the first week of June" (Garrison).

"Well, also in the first part of June, you were binding wheat and barley" (Kiser).

"Hay we'd cut in June and July. July and August. That's when hemp's in" (Varner).

July

"It'd be about the first of July when he'd go to topping [the tobacco]" (Alvin Leach, Bourbon County).

"Dad always liked to get his corn laid by. That was plowing it the last time around the Fourth of July. Then if it needed thinning, if when he planted it there was too much, why, he'd thin it and everything" (Garrison).

"[Father] always said he had to get through by the Fourth of July. He would not hoe corn after the Fourth" (John Preston).

"[With] alfalfa you usually get three cuttings off of it anyway. That's what you were talking about in that particular time in the last of July. You would get a cutting off that area" (Kiser).

"That was the good hot days of July when you were baling straw off an old straw rick" (Kiser).

"The latter part of July, the end, why we would top the tobacco" (Brown).

August

"We would clean up [the woodlot] every August, the first day of August if it didn't come on Sunday" (Garrison).

"If a person . . . grows 75 to 150 acres of tobacco, he can't wait till the middle or the later part of August to start housing. Because time runs out on him too bad. . . . But your later August and up to the middle of September, housing is your better time" (Garrison).

"In the first part of September or last of August. Kind of depend on when they cropped it. You usually were topping tobacco about the middle of August, or you let it bloom a whole lot more than you do now too" (Kiser).

September

"September 20 is the day that you should have your tobacco in order to avoid the risk of freezing" (Doris P. Jones, Grayson County).

"If [the frost] held off until the 25th of September, we always had the fourth cutting of alfalfa" (Garrison).

October

"And usually about the first of October when the weather started to cool off and the cane would get mature [we would make sorghum]" (Creech).

"We'd be cutting that corn first of October. Last of September, first of October. And then let it set there two, three weeks, and go back and shuck it" (Varner).

"In October, why, we'd a go gather those beans [called October beans]" (Hattie Wells, Harlan County).

"You'd sow [winter wheat] just as soon as you got the corn cut. And tobacco in. Well, about the time you do now. About the middle of October" (Kiser).

"Then about the later part of October, when it dried enough, we would start to strip the tobaccer off" (Brown).

November

"And onions had to be put up the first 'lection day in November. The onions had to be put up that day. If it was sprinklin' rain, they had to be put up that day" (Clarice McKinney, Rockcastle County).

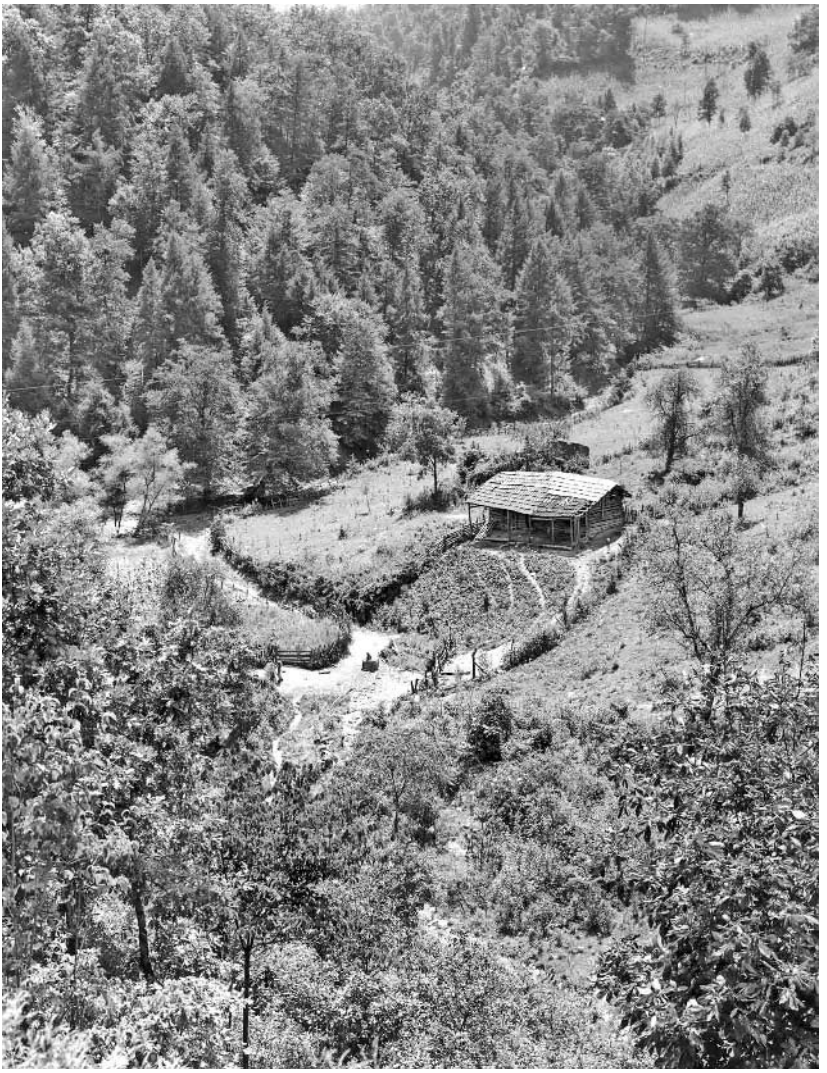
"We'd kill [hogs and beef] in maybe November or December. After it got cold" (Stephen C. Bullen, Rockcastle County).

"By November, the last of November or the first of December, we'd kill hogs and leave it down [in the salt] six weeks. And then we'd started to smoking and we tried to smoke it as often as we could, until around the first of March" (Garrison).

"Some years we didn't get to start stripping [tobacco] until, say, after Thanksgiving. Around Thanksgiving. And we may get part of it in by Christmas. Before Christmas. In December. And then we usually finish up in January. And I think the last few crops we had, it took us up 'til about the last week before the market closed in February" (Anna Burdette, Garrard County).

December

"I don't believe [the tobacco market] was open 'til around the first of December then. Not hardly as early as it is now. You know, you usually



Mountain farmstead in Breathitt County, 1940. (Marion Post Wolcott, Library of Congress, Farm Security Administration)

open now the Monday before Thanksgiving. But seemed to me like there was a lot of times it was around the first of December that they started selling. And they would sell up until the first of March, you know. Every year" (Kiser).

"She'd dry pumpkin on rings by the fireplace in December" (Creech).

"Lambs were usually born in the daggone coldest weather that could be. They would start being born about Christmas, and you tried to be done by mid to late January" (Kiser).

Division of Labor

In both household and farmwork, there was a clear gender-based division of labor. Men, women, and children all had their different tasks, for the most part. Men did a larger share of the work in the fields, and women were more involved in the work associated with the home—cooking, cleaning house, and washing. Women also did a significant amount of agricultural work, but usually in between taking care of their other responsibilities. Both were involved in child care, although in different ways. The boundaries between these domains were not strict, however. Men did some cooking or helped with the housecleaning and clothes washing, although even in these contexts, they tended to do "male" things. It is likely that the narrators exaggerated the differences between men and women, making it sound as if they rarely did the same kinds of work. There was undoubtedly far more overlap in reality.

Men tended to focus on sources of income that economists call "lumpy," meaning that the earnings were concentrated rather than spread out over time. For example, tobacco produced a check once a year, as did the sale of other commodities such as grain and larger livestock. Women also had an important role in terms of producing cash income, consisting of small but more or less continual amounts earned through the sale of eggs, cream, and chickens. This money, along with their work in the home garden and the kitchen, met the daily needs of the household. Men may have paid for the mortgage, farm implements, and taxes, but women put food on the table and clothes on their backs.

The workweek followed a typical pattern, with certain activities performed on weekdays and others on weekends. According to Ralph Lobb of Magnolia (Hart County), "Saturday morning you'd do odd jobs that had accumulated during the week that you could put off. And Saturday noon, 99.99 percent of the population wound up at the county seat. And in that particular community, and in most rural Ken-

tucky at that time, few people worked on Saturday. Saturday you went to town.[On Sunday] there was only the essentials. No field work ever, ever on Sunday. Animal chores were done. You know, the pigs were fed and the cows were milked, but no field work. Didn't harness the team ever on Sundays. Once a month was church. Other three Sundays was visitation unannounced, in which [the] entire family would [visit] another family. And with neither knowing that you were coming or vice versa, which meant that if you didn't get there early on Sunday morning, [and if] that family done decide to visit somebody else, then you had to think of somebody else to visit. And if you missed two or three [families], eh, just go on back home."

Children were part of the farming process, starting from an early age. "And my earliest memories, I guess, are going to the cornfield with my mother when I was tiny. She would take a quilt and put me in the shade on that quilt and there'd I'd play until she'd come home to get dinner. And she went with my dad. She worked right by the side of him. And they were extremely attached to each other and where one went, you'd see the other one, all their life. And then, of course, I played that way until I got to be about ten years old, and then I got my hoe and I got in a upper row above them. Wherever they went, my dad's in the lower row, and my mother in the middle row, and I was in the next row and I hoed right along with 'em. But I didn't feel unhappy about working that way or children I played with did the same thing. And so we didn't have very much money. We didn't want for anything. We had all kinds of food but we raised most of it. And my dad kept cattle and chickens, hogs, and occasionally he'd kill a beef. And we had sheep when I was a child and he'd kill sheep. We'd have mutton. And my playmates at home were dogs, and when we had calves I was known to get out and drive 'em around till I had 'em trained almost like a pony. I played with the lambs. That was my pets. And we'd raise the motherless lambs on a bottle and I really loved the sheep. So you can see I had a happy childhood" (Ella Preston, Letcher County).

A large portion of labor was done through mutual aid, or "swapping labor," with neighbors working together on one another's farms. This custom was based on reciprocity; it was not just helping out one's neighbors but sharing essentially similar work on two or more farms. These practices all but disappeared with the advent of wage labor and pervasive off-farm employment, which increased the difficulty of

scheduling joint work activities. Euell Sumner of Powell County said, "And we worked around here and worked for other people and, you know, in a small community like this, you helped other people and they helped you. And there was no money exchanged. You was helping somebody, and then when you got ready to house tobacco, they would help you, and that's the way you worked it. It's not like it is now. You know, you got a transaction of money anytime that somebody helps you, where back then you didn't have."

Work exchange was a regular custom among groups of neighbors, with certain activities usually done as a group and others done individually. Ralph Lobb of Hart County explained how it worked when he was a young man: "A customary way of getting work done was to exchange work. There was four farm operations in our work circle. And many of the neighbors' tasks we did with a combined workforce of the four farms. Setting tobacca was always a group activity of four farms. If it was a group activity, it was all males. If it was an activity done with the crew at home, the family, well then [on] some farms the girls would assist [with] some tasks. . . . In addition to setting tobacca, of course, harvesting tobacca was a group activity. And thrashing grain was a group activity. And hog killing was a group activity. And occasional building construction was a group activity. This group [would] be about three workers per farm, four farms, so that'd be twelve in the group in all these, except thrashing. In the thirties now is when we're talking about. There might be forty or fifty people with the thrashing group, with eight or ten doing all the work and all the rest of'em came along for the excitement and the free dinner. [They would] enjoy the fellowship of each other and get all they could eat, the best of foods. The food was prepared by the family whose farm we was thrashing on. And the other wives might come in and help that particular one, but the family responsibility for feeding the crew fell with the farm wife of the farm that the thrashing machine was setting on at the noon hour."

Although barn raising is the most well known, a number of economic activities were performed as part of communitywide social events. According to Mary Creech, "We had a custom in [Harlan County]. You'd have a corn hoeing or apple peeling or bean stringing if you had lots of beans or whatever [and] everybody came. Just all the neighbors from all over the creek would come and help you get it all done. And then you'd go help them do theirs when it came their

turn. You just let people know and they came. Brought their hoe and worked all day, and all you did was feed 'em dinner. [This practice] started dying in the early fifties. And now you don't ever hear of it anymore. Seems to me that family units started moving further apart. And it seems to me that basically people have become more preoccupied with their own problems than they used to be."

Land was cleared during a group project called a "log rolling." Sara Ellen Ison of Ice recalled: "They'd have a log rolling where they clear this ground. Clear it with an ax and a crosscut saw. That's all they had to work with then. And they'd ask all the neighbors in. They'd all come in and roll those logs up in a pile and burn them. And they'd pile that branch pile up, clearing the ground and burn it off. And next year [they would] tend it and hoe it. They would raise the awfullest ears of corn on that [land] you ever saw. They'd cook. Maybe [they'd have] chicken and dumplings in a big kettle out in the yard. And all you could eat. Everybody had plenty to eat. And bake cakes and all that kind of stuff for that working. They'd feed all them men. All that worked could dance. They'd dance. They'd come from everywhere, you know. Oh, we had a good time. The men done the work and the women done all that cooking for that."

Farm Implements and Tools

The basic inventory of farm implements included a number of different items. To get some sense of the typical farm equipment used, we looked at estate sale and farm auction lists published in the Robertson County *Times-Democrat* from 1924 to 1932. (Robertson County is located in the hills of the Bluegrass; much of the land is sloped, the bottoms are small, and tobacco and forage production was important.) The following list is not based on complete inventories but simply items from auctioneers' advertisements. The manufacturer is specified when this was included in the ad.

Soil preparation machinery
cutter plow (one horse, two horse)
hillside plow (Syracuse, Oliver chilled, steel beam Oliver #20)
land plow (Oliver, Vulcan)
double shovel plow

Farmer adding lime and phosphate to the soil in Lee County. (Kentucky Historical Society)

Seedbed preparation machinery
harrow (cutting, drag, double A, McCormick Deering)

Seeding and planting machinery
wheat drill (Superior)
tobacco planter

Cultivating machinery
five shovel cultivator
Rastus plow (these were called plows but were really cultivators.)

Dusting and spraying machinery
tobacco spray

Harvesting machinery
mowing machine (Deering)
binder (Deering)
hay baler (John Deere)
hay fork
hay rake

Grain processing machinery
corn sheller

Feed preparation machinery
feed mill

Fertilizing machinery
manure spreader (McCormick Deering)

Dairy machinery
cream separator

Transportation equipment
wagon (Columbus, two horse, iron axle)
extra bed (wagon)
buggy (rubber tired, runabout)
sled (one horse, two horse)

Harness and other equipment
harness (buggy, breeching, tug, work)
saddle (man's, side)
check lines
breast chains
single tree and double tree
neck yoke
hip straps
bridles
halters
collars

Hand tools
dirt shovel
pick
crosscut saw
scoop shovel
fence stretchers
grubbing hoe
pitchforks
garden hoe
wheat cradle
tobacco hand planter
ax
mattock
sledgehammer
grindstone
manure fork

There were a number of different plows and cultivators. Plows, used to open new land or to prepare land for the next year's crop, do a number of things to the soil. The plowing process opens and pulverizes the soil so that it can better receive and retain moisture, allowing roots to grow well. Plowing covers up any preexisting vegetation so that the planted crop will be better able to compete with weeds. It can also be used to mix organic materials, such as animal or green manure, into the soil.

These inventories mentioned cutter, hillside, and land plows, which

varied in terms of size, shape of the component parts, number of bottoms, and purpose. In all plows, the plowshare cut through the ground, and the mold board turned the soil over. Most plows were designed to turn the soil to a particular side, and when plowing bottomland, one could simply plow in a circle. But when working on a slope, a regular bottom plow would turn the soil downhill on one pass and uphill on the next. Thus, in places with slopes, farmers needed both bottom and hillside turning plows. The plowshare on a hillside turning plow was built with a hinge to allow the farmer to reverse the direction in which the soil was thrown. He would plow to the end of the field and then reverse the direction so that the dirt was always thrown downhill. A "walking" plow was used behind horses or mules, either a single animal or a pair of them.

After plowing the ground, farmers had to prepare the soil to be seeded or, in the case of tobacco, transplanted. According to William Singer of Scott County, "You prepare the ground with [a cutting harrow]. You hook it behind a tractor or a team of horses. After you plow the ground, you take a big log or railroad ties tied together, and rub it down, smooth it out and then come in with a cutting harrow. It's a thing that has round discs and you pull it over it and it cuts the clods up and pulverizes the ground, makes the ground finer textured, you know, so you can plant corn, set tobacco, stuff like that."

Cultivators were used mostly for weeding, although they might be used to harvest root crops such as potatoes. One type of cultivator—equipped with three shovels and a single "bull" wheel in front to keep the cultivator level—was known as a Rastus plow. The name was based on a racist stereotype. Apparently, Rastus was a name used collectively for the African American field hands hired to hoe for weeds. The cultivator, representing a technical alternative to the African American laborers, was thus called a Rastus plow.

There were various kinds of wagons and buggies. Inventories often mentioned sleds, which were used in all season to haul various things, especially in the fields. Some of these were horse drawn, but some are still used with tractors. The sleds were constructed of wood, with runners clad in steel. Sometimes sleds also functioned as movable work platforms. Accounts of hog butchering noted that the carcass was placed on a sled after being dehaired and gutted and then cut into large "primal" cuts, such as shoulders, middlings, and hams.

Clearing Land

In most areas, it was rarely necessary to clear heavy timber; that had been done the generation before. Clearing usually involved land that had been left fallow and become overgrown with small trees and shrubs over a several-year period. (Land in a production cycle might be left fallow for five to seven years, in a process called grubbing out.) If larger trees were involved, they might be girdled and allowed to fall down of their own weight. More typically, two-man crosscut saws were used, supplemented with wedges to take the pressure off the saw blade. The log tops were used for fuel, and the debris from the clearing operation was disposed of by burning. There was no attempt to scatter the ashes as a kind of soil enhancement.

Clearing land was heavy work. Fred Lewis (Harlan County) wrote an account of the process: "It was a big job. And we had to live here since farming was the only way to make it. The land had to be cleared. All the timber had to be removed. All winter long we would clear land. That meant to take an ax and start. But you have to locate a place that is rich land and will produce for a long time. And not so steep that you can't work a mule or an ox. Some land is too steep, and some too rocky. It is important to find a good place. There has to be a lot of chestnut trees close by the fence. We would start cutting everything that was there. We would cut the chestnuts and haul to the fence line. And we would save some good hickory wood to make ax handles and sleds. We would haul all we could for fuel. We would save good poplar timber for house logs, smokehouses, cribs, hog pens, and chicken houses. We would save every sled runner and hoe handle and plow handle. We would need all these through the year. The rest, we did not need, we would cut and pile in a pile and start a fire. Everything near the fire we would cut and put in the fire. Some real valuable timber had to be burned. Yellow poplar, virgin oak, maple, black walnut all had to go. We would do this all winter. When we could, in the spring, we would finish clearing and fencing and we would start to plant the corn and beans. All of us big enough to work would fill our pockets full of corn and beans. One of each. We called this 'digging in the corn and beans with a hoe or a mattock.' We would dig a small hole in the ground and put three grains of corn and two beans in the same hole."*

* When interviewed, Mr. Lewis chose to read a text he had written. Thus, his narrative is a transcript of his recorded reading.

Intercropping corn and beans was common and had several advantages, including saving the work of cutting and placing beanpoles. As Henry B. Turner (Lee County) explained: "I remember my grandmother one time, they was planting a field of corn and putting it in beans. And the reason they put beans in corn, they were using stake beans or pole beans, and they'd run up cornstalks, and that way you didn't have to cut poles for them. Made it easier. And they gave me two eggs for dropping the beans for them that day and I took the two eggs down there and swapped it for candy down at the store." There were other advantages of intercropping. Beans are nitrogen-fixers and therefore increase corn yields. In addition, the diverse leaf canopy created by intercropping can reduce the risk of insect damage (Kuepper and Dodson 2001).

Lewis described the relentless labor involved in keeping fields hoed and clear: "The [bean] hills were about three feet in the row at about four foot from one row to the other. All weeds, sprouts, had to be cut and left between the row and between the hill. Sometimes it would take a half day to hoe two rows. By the time we got to the backside of the field, which is usually the top of a mountain, we called this the 'first time hoeing.' It was ready at the bottom to start the second time. The same thing over the third time. When we stopped hoeing the young bushes and sprouts would keep on growing until late fall or frost. We called this field 'the new ground.' In early spring we will have to go to the new ground and start grubbing and sprouting all the young growth from the stumps. Those young bushes that have started to reclaim our field. This happened every year until the stumps dies. It took three or four years for them to die and rot out the roots until we could plow a little bit with a mule and a homemade plow stock, called a 'bull thong.' After six or seven years of continuing to tend the same field, it would get so weak it could not produce. We would have to clear another field to tend and let this one lay out for a year or two. Around and around we would go. Just keep clearing the land by hand. It was a hard job and had to be done. All of our friends and neighbors did about the same."

Planting new ground presented special problems. Virgil Fair in Casey County said, "[With new ground you] bust the ground up and you drop the corn by hand, cover with a hoe. There's stumps, roots. Go out here in the woods, cut that timber off. Then you go in there with a plow and root out a furrow, you know, and drop your corn. You

couldn't do it with a turning plow, or a tractor, nothing like that. Well, they called it new ground back then. It was fresh ground cleared up. Never been tended before. Just went in the wood and chopped it all off and made a field. [The stumps] they'll finally rot out. You can burn 'em up, pull 'em up, you know, take a team pull up some of 'em. Took a team a lot of time pulling 'em out. Put a chain around 'em, take a team, and hook stretchers to it, and make 'em pull, pull it out. Sometimes they had a stump puller. These were block-and-tackle things that you pull more with a stump puller than you could just a straight chain, you know. You could pull a bigger stump. It is work, 'pending what size it was and how tight it was in the ground. Some's loose and some's tight, you know. Some's hollow. Different types, you know. But they first burn the brush, get the logs off, and they go back two or three year and get the stumps out. What they could, I mean, for a while. Maybe in four or five years. I've got one that's in the field up there been there for twenty years. Just a big old stump."

As part of their enterprise development strategy, landowners often took on tenants to clear their land. Then, after a few seasons, they would farm the land themselves. J. Henry Ogans of Breathitt County noted, "When you got all this land cleared off, and all that, most generally the big landowner would take over and grow all of the corn himself after the land was cleaned up. The only reason that he wanted these little tenants in the first place was to help him get that land cleaned up and get his cordwood off of it and all that stuff. Once he got it cleaned up and all, most [times] he took it over for hisself. But that's one thing about back then. Is the reason the land is in as good a shape today as it is, they didn't completely worry it out before they left it."

In most central and western Kentucky counties, the clearing of heavy timber had been done in the past. People farming in the 1920s and 1930s had heard of it but did not do it anymore; it was outside their experience. In eastern Kentucky, the land had been cleared of heavy timber much more recently, destroying a lot of lumber in the process. "They would go ahead and move along further and cut more timber down. That's the reason we got no good timber. I seen good timber stacked up, the little stuff be cut down. And the big stuff would be deadened. Cut a ring around it and let it die. And then in two or three year, it would fall. And they'd go in with their oxen and mules and pull it all together and set it afire and it would burn for weeks. I would say [the] timber would be worth millions of dollars today. I seen

big fancy trees with rings cut around 'em and then in two or three year, come windstorms and blow them old dead ones out, and then eventually the tree would blow over. Then of a wintertime, a lot of times the landowner would take his old mules or his old oxen, pull 'em down in the holler, and make a big pile of logs and set 'em afire and burn 'em. All of 'em. So that's where a lot of your good timber went" (Ogans).

Tenant Farming

Some landowners relied on tenant farmers to operate their farms. Most tenants worked "on the shares," typically receiving half the proceeds from the sale of crops, in addition to having the use of the house and garden plot and other benefits. Less commonly, tenant farmers paid cash rent for the land. The landowners usually provided the seed and fertilizer and made the basic strategic decisions about what was to be planted. If a landowner got a good tenant, the tenant would be encouraged to stay for another year; if the sharecropper was ineffective, the relationship might be terminated. Sharecropping required the supervision of the landowner because there were no strong incentives for the tenants to be good stewards of the land. Often people used the term *cropping* rather than *farming* to describe this activity.

The frequency of this practice varied from county to county, and tenancy arrangements generally declined over time. Some former tenants eventually became landowners themselves, others sought full-time off-farm employment, and many others simply moved away. Although tenant farmers originally had a lower status than the landowners they worked for, increasingly, these status differences have become blurred. These days it is common for well-off landowners to enter into sharecropping arrangements to expand the amount land they are farming.

James Coffman of Calhoun (McLean County) discussed the sharecropping arrangement he worked under: "When I was workin' with the other feller, raisin' his crop. Most of the time, he would furnish the money, the fertilizer. You know, he bought the fertilizer. And furnished ever'thin' and maybe just give me half of it. I wasn't out nothin'. All I was out was just my labor. 'Course I raised a crop, took it to town, sold it, and he got his part and I got mine. We'd split the money right down the middle. But most [of] the time, they usually furnish ever'thing and give me half of it for raisin' it and takin' care of it. I had to do all the

work. 'Course lotta times, they'd help me, but anyway I had to, I raised it. That way, I wouldn't have to be out no money, see."

The landowner perspective was somewhat different. William Singer discussed tenant farming in Scott County:

> Back then everyone, ourselves included [would have tenants]. [Let's] say, on every couple of hundred acres or so, you would have a tenant farmer. He and his family would have to live off of that as well as you. He would raise the tobacco on a fifty-fifty basis. He would raise the corn on a fifty-fifty basis. And then he would work for you, too, but really he had to work the farm pretty hard because most of your tenant farmers then had large families. [They] had five, six, seven children, and then when the children got up to be teenagers, they were looking for work. 'Course you had plenty of work but, really, you were overworking the farm in reality to give them something to do. The tenant farmers back in the thirties, the forties, and the fifties, back in that thirty-year period, every farm from 70 acres to several hundred acres had tenants on it. My mother had two tenants on her 450 acres. That'd be around 225 acres to a tenant. And my grandmother, she had one, two, three. She had around 500 acres, she had three tenants. During my time of growing up we never had less than five tenants on the farm. And each one of 'em had X amount of tobacco he would grow, and then there'd be some type of deal worked out. Of course, you had to furnish 'em a house. They lived right on the farm. And of course, you'd furnish 'em a lot or a field. They would have a milk cow. They would have some chickens. They'd have some hogs. And they would have a big garden. And they were pretty much, you know, on your farm, they were self-sustaining, too. I mean they lived right off of the farm.
>
> Basically they would [manage the farm]. Any major decision like which field to plow or how much tobacco could you raise, or how much corn could you raise, my mother made. But after the crop was started it was strictly theirs. When to plow your corn, when to plant it, when to cut it. Same way with tobacco. When to set it, when to cut it. The tenant was actually in charge of all the crops. When they weren't in their crops, they were, you know, basically taking care of the rest of

the farm. They baled the hay. They fed the livestock during the winter. They oversaw the livestock. On the farm then we had sheep as well as cattle.

Sometimes I [hauled the farm produce myself]. I had a truck. Other times you would hire somebody. And a lot of times, the tenant farmer would have a truck. That would be his way of making a little extra money. He would have a truck and he would use it to haul what he grew on the halfers with you. And then if you had cattle to haul, or if you had something that you had to haul, or if you went to Lexington to buy something and you had to have it hauled back, he would haul it for you. It was a way of helping him, you know, make a little extra money.

After I came back from the army, which was in '53, well, the tenants were still very much [a part of farm life in the county]. Starting in the early to mid-1960s, the tenants started going away. And then like you'd have some fellow that lived in town, he would still be a tenant, but he would rent four or five farms. The tenants, what I'm trying to say, got bigger. They started operating more acreage and living somewhere else. They basically quit living right on the farm. In the present time here in the county, I don't know, I could probably [count] eight or ten people that live directly on one farm. Most of the old houses where the tenants live have either fallen down, blown down, been torn down. And the tenant farmer per se is just something that's a way of life that is no more. It started to change in the early sixties. Late fifties, early sixties, and it was just about completely gone by the starting of the seventies. The tenants just finally found out that it was a hard life. And all the time in the fifties and sixties you were having small factories move in, small industry, and the tenant farmer figured that he could come to town and buy him a little house or rent him a small house in a low-income section of town and work, say, at the pencil factory, the blanket factory, or Johnson Controls and make more money than he could on the farm. And then, of course, you were getting more machinery. [More machinery] was moving in the fifties and the sixties, and really there was less for the teenaged boy to do or the farmer himself. Because the tenant farmer, if he wasn't working in his tobacco

> crop or his corn crop or working in his garden, it was an unwritten agreement that you furnished him work. He would be out patching a fence or he would be painting the barn, or he would be cleaning up the farm or he would be working for you. [You would pay] him over and above, in addition to the fifty-fifty. Every day he worked, whatever the going rate was, if it was five dollars a day, six dollars a day, he was paid. As money got tighter, the farm [owner] wasn't able to pay and was cutting back on his income and [the tenant] moved to town and went to work for some small industry in the city, or even went to work for city government, county government, got on the Scott County road crew, or something like that.

The situation in Jessamine County in central Kentucky was described by Dale Scott, a landowner: "I usually had five or six [tenants] back there then. They did have as many as seven. Then they started combinin' 'em a little bit and maybe not have so many. In years I had four, I've got five now. There's four of 'em live on the farm, and one lives off the farm. They just raised tobacca and they worked by the day or hour every time that I want 'em, well they're supposed to be available to me. Tobacca is where our money is, and so we want to try to make that a good crop. And it has priority. But if the ox gets in the ditch, we have to help it. Get that, see. So, sometimes they may wanta do something on the tobacca [but] we want 'em to . . . do something on the farm. So that, that's just one of the mutual agreements. That's what caused disagreement sometimes, but if they don't wanta work, work in the cattle someday, that's when they lose their job if they're not careful. [I fired] very few. They're awful good, our tenants. And . . . the last one to move away had been here thirty-five years. And he was just gettin' too old. Not able to farm. He had his own home. Most of my tenants have done well here, I'm glad to say. And after ten or twelve, fifteen years, they'd make enough to buy 'em a farm or somethin' and go, move off. Which I hated to see 'em go, but still, I always liked to see 'em do good, you see. And 'course some of the others, they'll spend the money as fast as they make it. And don't own anything. [We provided] a house, didn't charge rent. Way back there I used to charge rent. But we cut that out a long time ago. Furnish the house and garden. They used to have a pasture, like a field there where they kept cows. Keep milk cows. We used to have a team there where they worked, 'fore we

got the tractors. And 'course now, we furnish all that stuff ourselves and they don't have anything. I mean, they just, they just use my machinery. But we still split the tobacca, split the crop. It's changed a lot from what it used to be."

It was common for farmers to use sharecropping as a strategy for improving their families' lives. Paul Morris recalled how he and his family used sharecropping to become landowners: "[Sharecropping] that's the way my family started. When my parents were married [they] had no land at all. An' I believe, the best I recall, my mother said that her parents gave her a milk cow. So they started with a milk cow. That's all they had. They sharecropped with my grandfather on my dad's side. So they did this till I was in the third grade. In fact they worked through both parents, her parents and [his] parents both. And then by that time Dad had scraped together enough money for a down payment on his own farm. So he and his father, which was my grandfather, bought 180 acres of land across on the wrong side of [the] river. The road didn't go to it, so they got it fairly cheap. I don't remember what the prices were back then. But they bought this 180-acre farm and built a cross-fence right across it. And proceeded to farm then. Each one of them on their end of the farm. And of course, Dad had a mortgage which he paid on from the sales from the tobacco and the cattle, and they sold some corn. This would have been right about into World War II. He got a deferment to work on the farm. And then, it seems like that still wasn't enough money to pay for the land. So he and my mother both went north and worked in Michigan for a couple of years in defense plants. We continued to live on this same farm and continue to grow the same things, corn, tobacco, some hay and cattle, right on through the time when I started to college."

Soil Fertility

Crop rotation was especially important when growing tobacco because it needed lots of nutrients. Eugene Kiser discussed early patterns of rotation: "Usually you had about five or six years before you'd plow a piece of ground. You usually plowed sod about every year for tobacco. And then it would be that particular piece of ground would go into wheat and then go into grass and it would be six or seven years before you'd be back to it. [Tobacco was raised on one piece of land one out of six or seven years.] Usually you didn't do like you do now. Now

you've got a lot of permanent tobacco patches. I mean it's year after year after year that you do with tobacco on a lot of farms. I don't switch around on my tobacco that much on none of the farms that I run. One particular farm up here, we cleaned up a bottom on, and it's been in tobacco five or six years. Every bit of six years. Probably this year it was just as good a piece of tobacco as we had anywhere. But back then you didn't fertilize and you didn't lime like you do now. And you plowed new ground, you know."

The introduction of chemical fertilizers had a profound effect on the way land was used. The pattern of rotation, with fallowing and periodic land clearance, became much less important. It was possible, as Mr. Kiser said, to cultivate land permanently, without letting it revert to brush. Stephen Bullen described the introduction of chemical fertilizer in Rockcastle County: "Back in the thirties and early forties [there] wasn't much fertilizer and then we got into the middle forties, fifties, when you could get plenty of fertilizer. It bein' shipped in by rail and you could get it. Armour or some of those companies from Cincinnati, why you could order a carload. I had an uncle that ran a store down at Wildie [a rail line in Rockcastle County], and he was an Armour dealer. And he would get in about two carloads of fertilizer a year and farmers would get it and then they would pay when they sold their tobacca. Everythin' run on the credit. Take the eggs to the store and get your groceries. . . . You'd pay when you sold your tobacca."

There were some problems associated with fertilizer use in tobacco growing. According to Mr. Bullen, "We started puttin' on so much ammonia* that it made the tobacca almost too wet and heavy at market time. A lot of people got caught thataway and it wasn't a desirable kind. It'd make it more blacker and darker and it'd catch moisture a lot more where they put so much nitrogen on it."

The early fertilizers were different from those that are currently available. According to Roy Brown, "Back in the early days, we [used] old black joe. It wasn't too high [referring to an analysis number], and we didn't put very much, maybe forty-fifty pounds per acre. The only way you could tell that [you were] gettin' results from it [was] when you set it back in grass. Usually, a lot of times, about the only place you could [plant] your grass was in where the corn rows was. We just put

* Ammonium nitrate is a fertilizer that provides nitrogen relatively inexpensively. Here, the narrator refers to it as "ammonia." It can also be used as an explosive.

it in the rows and you'd see the grass was much better. So that was [a] pretty good example of fertilization and people begin to broadcast it and use more of it then on their other crops. Besides corn and tobacca and things. Just an old kind of a black fertilizer and that's the reason they called it old black joe. And it came in hunnerd-pound burlap bags. It wasn't in paper bags like it is today. Old burlap bags. We . . . had what they called fertilizer dealers and they would . . . take orders and get a carload of it shipped in and we'd go to Brodhead with [a] wagon and team and pick it up. Sometimes, it'd be twenty to thirty wagons in one day, would be like a wagon train goin' into town to load their fertilizer and bring it out. [The fertilizer came from an Armour plant in Jeffersonville, Indiana.]"

The new fertilizers led to large increases in yields. Willard Varner said, "We were trying to pick out the best land for tobacco because that's where most of the money was. [Back then] we was getting 400, 500, 600 pound [an] acre? I raised sixty crops. I've got as high as 4,000 pound an acre. That's the way yield's raised. That's the way your corn yield raised. When I lived down there, we didn't know any better. Laid [the rows] out four foot each way. These boys today lays it off at least eighteen inches [between] plants. They get tremendous yields. Your seed is better. We'd go to the crib and just shell corn to plant. It don't yield like this hybrid corn, you know. They keep feeding it more and more. And it yields better. We call that open pollen corn. If a little bit of drought hit it, it'd hurt it quick. These kind we have now stands the drought much better."

Traction and Transport

This period saw the transition from animal power to the use of tractors for basic farm tasks. In the early 1920s most plowing was still done with horses and mules, although a few farmers used oxen. According to Paul Morris, "At that time all the locomotion, all the power was horses or mules. Really in my country everybody used mules. For some reason the old-timers, they seemed to think that mules could stand the hard work better than horses. And I think they do. So every family that I can think of in our community [in Breathitt County] had a pair of mules. Some of them maybe would have two pairs of mules. If they had a horse, a lot of times, it would be used maybe just for garden work or to ride. A lot of people had a horse to ride. The method of moving

Farrier at work shoeing horses, 1940. (Marion Post Wolcott, Library of Congress, Farm Security Administration)

things was a wagon. [There were] a lot of wagons in the community when I grew up. [They had] steel wheels. We didn't have any rubber-tired wagons. In the wintertime when, especially when the ground was froze, they would use sleds. And you could haul your corn in from the fields or hay or anything on a sled when the ground was frozen. It would pull very easily. But for the most part wagons. And the roads were all, at that time, were all dirt."

Reliance on horses called for farmers to have a range of skills that they seldom have these days. Lyman Barnes of Ohio County described breaking a horse to work: "My dad raised colts and he [would] sell one occasionally and he'd break [it] to work and then he'd sell it. He'd get more money out of it. You know, they sold about $100 a head if they were broke pretty good. They had to be two, two and a half years old [when you broke them to work]. And I'd just put a bridle on them and get them sort of used to that. And then put the harness on them and get them used to that. And then work them with an old horse. Some kind of a little light job, pulling the wagon around or something until he learned the feel of the gear and everything on his back. And then they just kept increasing his load a little bit from week to week. Until you know, I guess their muscle on their shoulder was soft and every-

Mowing a forage crop near Noctor, Breathitt County, 1940. (Marion Post Wolcott, Library of Congress, Farm Security Administration)

thing. It had to be toughened up before they could work them very [much]. Usually work them a half a day for the first three or four or five weeks, half a day was all they'd work them."

In some places mules were preferred to horses. Stephen Bullen spoke of his experiences with mules in Rockcastle County: "We had a team of mules that my dad drove, [that] had a little more fire to 'em and they had more get-up. And the team that I had . . . some [people] used to joke me, said the team knowed more'n I did and I had to ask them what to do, but my dad would take [me] out to the mowin' machine of a mornin'. He'd go out and help me hook it up. I was too little to raise the tongue of the mowin' machine up to hook it to the team. And then he'd come back at dinner and unhook it when we'd be feedin' the team."

Horses were important for transportation. Mary Eleanor Isgrig said, "We usually had three [horses]—two for the wagon, the big wagon, and then a third one for the buggy. And usually the one that we used for the buggy was a better type than the other horses. What

I mean is that maybe [it] was a saddle horse as well as, you know, a buggy horse. So we usually had around three horses and we rode them out in the back fields, we children rode them. And that's another thing that we enjoyed, you see, we could just get up on the horses whenever we wanted to. And put a bridle on them and they fortunately were not, you know what I mean, horses with bad disposition. They had good dispositions. And we got along well."

The time and rate of change from animal power to the use of tractors varied from county to county, influenced by wealth, farm size, topography, and the availability of tractors and repair services. There have been tractors on Kentucky farms since the nineteenth century. These were steam tractors used to power equipment, such as threshing machines, rather than to pull plows. The tractor name referred in part to its capacity to move to the place where the threshing was done. Eugene Kiser said, "The first tractor Dad had was old Advance-Rumely that he run the threshing machine with. It run on coal oil and water. That was the first tractor I remember and that was early. Old steel wheels on it. He sold it during the war and they scrapped it. And then, [in the] early forties I reckon that it was, he bought a Farmall F20.* It wasn't too long after that he went to a John Deere G that he used to pull. Was big enough to pull the threshing machine with. And then later on we had some smaller tractors. But that old G was run up until the fifties before it was ever gotten rid of."

William Singer remembered, "There were very few tractors in the thirties. And then, World War II broke out and, really, you didn't build any tractors then. [There] was a few old tractors puttin' around. But after World War II, the tractors got to be more and more. In the late forties and by the early fifties everybody had a tractor. But during wartime, most of your work was done by draft horses, workhorses, mules. At the seventy-one acres, we always had a couple of mules up there to work and a workhorse or two. And down on the big farm, the tenants most of'em worked with the workhorses during the war and before the war. Oh, one of'em may have had an old tractor, but 85 percent of the work was done by draft horses. And then like I say, after World War II and by the time I got back from the army in '54, well, all the horses

* The Farmall F20 was introduced in 1932 and was sold with either wide or narrow front-wheel placement. Until 1936, this tractor was painted battleship gray; after that, a typical Farmall red was used. About 150,000 of these tractors were built.

were gone. You may drive all day and you might see a man out with a horse. But by the late fifties the horses were completely gone."

Similarly, a farmer reflecting on his experiences in Robertson County recalled that the large-scale conversion from animals to tractors occurred right after World War II. In the early days of tractor use, farmers hired tractors and drivers to do what was called "custom work." That man and a few others in Robertson County were kept very busy doing custom work. He earned enough money in one summer to buy a used 1936 John Deere Model B tractor (van Willigen 1978–1980).

In the mountains, the conversion to tractors was slower. Farmers were concerned about the cost of the machines, the cost of fuel, the limited repair service, and the utility of tractors in the smaller mountain fields. Stephen Bullen recalled that he got his first tractor in 1940: "It was my uncle that run the store, [he] got [to be the] Oliver dealer. So it was [an] Oliver tractor. And it had iron wheels on it. It would go about six mile an hour and you couldn't hardly ride on it, on the hard road. We didn't have much hard roads. Very few roads that had ballast rock on it then, or chipped limestone. And it just had iron wheels see. It did have, though, a self-starter. Had a battery on it. Some of 'em came out then that just had, you had to crank 'em, but that one did have a battery to where you could start it off'n a battery. [My friend] lived about two mile on down the road. And he got his tractor a year later. In the county, I don't know. [There] . . . prob'ly wouldn't a been over ten or fifteen in the county at that time. They was very few. I know I seen one or two where they had a steam tractor. And then there's a guy that pulled a unit with steam on a sawmill. And he also used it [for] some pullin' on the farm. But that was comin' out of the steam age into the gasoline age in that time though. In the thirties and forties."

Tractors got bigger over time to keep up with the increase in farm size. "[We] were using a small medium-type tractor around, probably, a thirty-five- to forty-horsepower tractor. They were mainly Fords and John Deeres. And then in the sixties, as I said previously, where the farmers started to spread out and take on more acreage, the more acreage a farmer farmed the bigger tractor he got. And, of course, through the sixties, seventies, eighties, and well into the nineties, it seems to be that every year a tractor gets just a few more horsepower because a fellow has a few more acres that he's tilling" (Singer).

In this period, farming underwent a huge shift. It started as a house-

hold-based enterprise in which the primary goal was supporting the family. By the end of the period, its link to the market was stronger, and it was more about commodity prices and the costs of chemical and machinery inputs. This change spelled the end of the family farm in the nostalgic sense—a place where members of the household worked hard but were rewarded by the freedom to choose what they did and when they did it, and by the benefits of a close-knit farming community of kin and neighbors.

Also, changes in farming practices, particularly chemical fertilization, meant that farmers did not have to know their land as well. Crops did not need to be rotated every year, and the farmer did not require as much knowledge about soil fertility or management practices. He could simply apply more chemicals to get a bigger yield, with no concern for the land as a living organism.

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Chapter 5

Garden Spots and Fruit Trees

Gardening was an important part of the household's economic strategy, and some farms also had orchards and grape arbors. Fresh garden and orchard produce sustained families during the summer, and these foods were preserved to last the family over the long winter until spring. Christine Sims said, "It would be an amazement to people today how little we spent for food in those early years" (van Willigen 1978–1980).

Household Gardens

It was rare to sell produce from these household gardens, some of which were quite large. "We had probably an acre and a half of garden because it was your source of livelihood. If you didn't have nothing in your garden you didn't eat. We never sold anything. They were used for our own use. Whatever we needed to eat. Whatever we had, that's what we ate" (Euell Sumner, Powell County). Garden produce that was not eaten fresh or preserved was shared with neighbors and kin.

Gardens were usually located near the house to be convenient to women, who did most of the work in them. Lucian Robinson inherited a farm from his mother and said that the garden had been in the same place, right near the house, since "19 and 6" (van Willigen 1978–1980). The need to have the garden site close to the house might mean that the soil quality was not optimal. Christine Sims (Robertson County)

Homes with gardens, tobacco, and corn near Hyden, Leslie County, 1940. (Marion Post Wolcott, Library of Congress, Farm Security Administration)

recalled that in her childhood she lived on a hilltop with heavy clay soil. As she said, "Clay soil was very stubborn [and] when it rained it got hard as a brick" (van Willigen 1978–1980). In the bottomlands the soil had more sand, which made it easier to work. Gardens were fenced to protect them from cattle, but this made it difficult to get large equipment into the plot.

Rather than buying new seeds to plant every year, people saved seeds from season to season from many of the vegetables they grew. According to Christine Sims, "People that wanted to be self-sufficient and not have to spend money any more than was necessary were careful to save what seed they could. I suppose there were improvident people who didn't spend much time at that just as there has always been." Saving was quite straightforward, she said, "You just tried to save an especially nice tomato for seed and the seed were spread out on a piece of paper or cloth to dry. They kept alright" (van Willigen 1978–1980).

To save seed, selected plants were allowed to mature and just left in the garden until they were dry. Virgil Fair of Casey County said, "I learned saving seed from my mother. You let 'em dry out there in the patch. You bring 'em in, you done dry 'em, then you hull 'em out. They put 'em in some kinda container and put something gonna keep the bugs out of it for another year, put 'em in a deep freeze, or refrigerator, or put some sulfur on it, to keep the bugs out it. Some I put in the freezer. Sometime you keep it two years."

It was most common to save seeds that also served as food, such as beans, corn, and peas. It was also common to save tomato seeds but not others such as beets, carrots, greens, and radishes. Flower seeds, such as hollyhock and foxglove, were also collected, and perennial flowers were planted.

Gardens were plowed and prepared like any farm field. When the conditions were right in the spring, the garden was plowed with horses. Some plowed in the fall, believing that freezing and refreezing helped the soil structure, giving it the right tilth; plowing very early in the spring had similar advantages. The clods of newly plowed soil were then pulverized with a cutting harrow.

The garden was often fertilized with manure hauled from the barn the preceding fall and left to decompose on the garden plot over the winter; then it was worked into the soil in the spring. Flossy Lutes (Lee County) said, "We didn't have commercial fertilizer those days. What we had was barnyard fertilizer. And Father would haul the manure out of the barn and spread [it] on the patch before he plowed it." Chemical fertilizers were seldom used.

Some crops were planted early, with the goal of having early produce. For Kentucky, the last frost in spring ranges from April 15 to May 15, depending on location (U.S. Department of Commerce 1988). According to Ms. Lutes, "We planted the potatoes early. See, you plant potatoes in late March or early April. Then you have early potatoes about in late May. That's the first thing you plant in a garden in the spring, is you get the potatoes, and the onions, and lettuce, and the radishes. And then a little later you plant the beets and the carrots. And then you don't plant the corn too early or it don't do right, or the bean." Some people used certain dates as reference points for planting. Ms. Lutes continued, "Usually people used to plant beans on Good Friday, which was Good Friday before Easter, if Easter didn't come too early. Of course, if it was the last week in March, you didn't plant

your beans then, you waited a week or two. But planting the potatoes was a big thing."

There were a number of other mechanisms for deciding when to plant garden crops. To some people, the phases of the moon and the signs of the zodiac were important. This practice, referred to as planting by the signs, was associated with the belief that the moon's phases had an effect on seed germination, the structure of the resulting plant, and yields, among other things. Guidance was provided by almanacs, which published calendars showing the phases of the moon and the signs of the zodiac. An example was the *Ladies' Birthday Almanac* (still published today), distributed by the Chattanooga Medicine Company. John Clarkson (Casey County) said, "Sometimes [I plant by the signs], and sometimes I fire away and plant and not think about the signs. If you want good taters [plant] in March, April, or May. You can raise taters, plant 'em first of May if the moon's right. [There is] the dark moon and the light moon. . . . Plant in the dark of the moon, and your potaters will stay in under the ground a growin'. Plant in the light of the moon, and they come to the top. And they'll get sunburnt."

Some used the signs in other ways. Dorothy Cox (Anderson County) spoke of this: "Sometimes they would say, oh the sign was wrong or something like that. Great believers in signs in those days too. They couldn't plant a bean 'less the sign was in the arm.* So the bean would grow long. And if you weaned a calf or anything off a cow, you wanted a sign anywhere except in the heart or the head. 'Cause you didn't want that calf to bawl or that cow to bawl for a week. And believe it or not, that works. You may not think it does, but try it sometime. Always went by the sign. All the older people went by signs. I don't think the modern-day farmer, they pay much attention to the sign, but it still works to a certain extent."

Others would base their planting decisions on the signs provided by nature. In Anderson County, some believed that corn was best planted when the dogwood or apple trees were in bloom, beets when the pussy willow was blooming, and beans when the peach trees were blossoming. Others mentioned migratory birds. "When the first whip-poor-will appears in spring it is time to plant corn" (WPA n.d., Anderson County files).

* The signs of the zodiac were thought to represent a human body. For example, Pisces would be the feet, and the phase from Libra to Leo would be the arm.

Children were often involved in planting the garden. Henry B. Turner (Lee County) talked about his childhood experiences preparing potatoes for planting: "And when you cut the potatoes up to plant 'em for seed, they'd always cut 'em up, quarter them, and leave one of them little sprouts, they called it an 'eye.' That's where a sprout come out. So, if you planted one and it didn't have an eye in it, you wouldn't have no sprouts on it. When kids was helping the [parents] to cut 'em up, they was awful particular and afraid they wouldn't cut 'em up right. And when you got about six or eight years old, big enough that you could do a good hand at cutting 'em up, you got to feeling like you were grown, like you accomplished something. You'd got up in the grandpa and daddy's class of people then. About like a kid now when they drives a car the first time, or something like that." In contrast, Flossy Lutes said that her parents were cautious about letting children prepare the potato seeds. "They wouldn't let us kids cut 'em because you have to have a eye in each piece. And then we dropped 'em and we covered 'em. We kids dropped 'em. We had to be careful. You dropped 'em about eighteen inches apart each hill. And then you put a couple of hoes of dirt over 'em. It takes three weeks for 'em to come up, as a rule. Then when they come up, you hoe 'em and you put fertilizer on 'em."

Work on the tobacco crop took precedence over the garden. Interestingly, some early vegetables, including lettuce and radishes, were planted in the beds used for tobacco seedlings. These got an early start because of the heat-conserving cover placed on the beds. Garden plants were sometimes planted in the tobacco fields themselves. Christine Sims said, "We planted our lettuce around the edges of the tobacco. We grew onions, radishes, early things you know. We would plant at the ends of rows. That was a good way to get some early vegetables before the regular garden was started" (van Willigen 1978–1980).*

A range of vegetables were raised. Christine Sims considered

* This is not done much anymore. In the early 1980s tobacco was infested with blue mold, which was treated with a chemical called Ridomil (the brand name for the fungicide metalaxl). Fields and tobacco beds treated with Ridomil could not be used for crops for either human or animal consumption (e.g., hay) for a number of years. This more or less eliminated the planting of vegetables in tobacco beds and fields. In addition, with the development of float plant technology, tobacco plant beds were replaced by greenhouses. The production of float plants involves seeding multicell Styrofoam blocks with specially prepared tobacco seed in a planting medium and floating these blocks in shallow tanks housed in purpose-built greenhouses, usually glazed with plastic film.

potatoes (Irish, not sweet) and beans "basic foods." In the 1930s in Robertson County, she remembered that "some people rarely had any other vegetables than those two." Generally, she said, "everybody had the same things" (van Willigen 1978–1980).

People raised a variety of beans. In addition to green beans, there were several kinds of beans for drying and for use as soup beans. As mentioned earlier, some beans were interplanted with field crops, especially corn—hence the term *cornfield beans.* These were pole or running beans, as opposed to bush or bunch beans. They came in white, speckled, striped, and light brown varieties. Today, many people collect, raise, and eat what are generally called "heirloom beans" (Best 1998), which are local varieties that have been carefully preserved and bring premium prices in farmers' markets because of their flavor and consistency. Some of these beans are referred to as "greasy," which means that the pod is smooth and free of fuzz, or "cut short," which describes the way the seed fits in the pod; cut short seeds fill the pod and have squared-off ends. These beans are grown to an advanced stage of maturity to maximize their protein content. As a result, the beans get quite heavy and require long cooking times. The beans' local names are based on different characteristics, including the color, markings, place of origin, or some humorous aspect. For example, Bill Best (1998), well known for his knowledge of heirloom beans, mentions the Barnes Mountain bean, Big John bean, and Lazy Wife bean.

In the fall people would dry and thresh out the beans. "We'd go to the store and buy 'em occasionally, but we raised a lot of beans, you know. And my grandmother, she was, she would cull 'em out. Get 'em, gather 'em, you know, and bring 'em in and then, I thought that was kind of a miracle. It's no miracle. But we would hull these beans [by putting them] in a tub or something. And maybe it would be my job to put my shoes on and get in there and you'd tromp 'em out you know. Tromp 'em out and then you'd pick out all the hulls you could. And then [on] a windy day and she'd put 'em in a wooden tray. And it was oblong. I believe they called it a biscuit tray. It was made out of a solid piece of wood and it was scooped out and I guess it would be maybe twenty or twenty-four inches long and eight or ten inches wide and then it was hollowed out. She'd put those beans in there and she would, would toss them up. Just pick 'em up and the wind would blow the chaff away. They'd just be as clean, get all the chaff out of 'em. But you couldn't pick it out, but that's the way, that was the way

she would do. That would be our food for the winter, you know" (Joe Twine, Madison County).

The corn produced for the table included both field corn and sweet corn. Field corn, generally grown for animal feed or cornmeal, was also served fresh as either boiled or fried corn. This corn had to be used early in the season before it passed the milk stage and got too hard and starchy.

There were many kinds of tomatoes, both local varieties and those bought from seed companies, including Maule Seed Co., D. M. Ferry, and Burpee's. Christine Sims recalled an orange tomato ordered from a catalog, probably Burpee's, that made "the most delicious tomato preserves." She also noted that "there were some local tomatoes, one that they just called the pink tomato. It seemed to always have been around and we grew that" (van Willigen 1978–1980). Although pink tomatoes could get quite large, Lucian Robinson said that in the old days, the red tomatoes "just never did get very big like what we've got now" (van Willigen 1978–1980).

The root crops included beets, carrots, parsnips, and turnips. According to Robinson, "they made ridges for planting beets on, little over a foot wide, seven to eight inches tall" (van Willigen 1978–1980).

Onion sets were often purchased, because growing onions from seed was difficult. Christine Sims said, "People had an onion that they kept over just to produce sets. They would save enough of them to have early onions. [They would] put out the sets and have extra early onions" (van Willigen 1978–1980). Mrs. Sims may be referring to top-setting onions that produced bulblets at the top of each stalk that can be planted like onion sets.

Cabbage was especially important in early gardens because it could be preserved by cellaring or burying or pickled as sauerkraut; it was also served boiled or made into coleslaw. Some cabbage varieties were flat Dutch and the conical Jersey Wakefield. Tobacco and cabbage were often sown at the same time and started under the tobacco cloths; the cabbage plants would be transplanted to the garden later. Flossy Lutes described how she saved cabbage in the garden over the winter: "The late cabbage you grew, you set it out in July and it would just be matured in October, and you'd just turn it over in the garden where it was and put four or five shovels of dirt over it. Then in the winter the root of that cabbage would be sticking up straight, and if the snow wasn't too deep you could go along and see where your cabbage head was.

And you'd dig in and get your cabbage head out. You didn't raise your late cabbage in a low place. You put 'em where they were well drained, because when you buried the cabbage, it would be in water if you didn't know how to do it. Well, my husband and me buried cabbage numbers of times. In the winter, after it stays under the ground, it's bleached out and so white and crispy. We used to give the neighbors cabbage heads because we always grew too much of everything."

Various kinds of winter squash were raised, such as long-necked squash or cushaw, which stored well. Mrs. Sims claimed that she "liked [squash] better than I liked pumpkin" (van Willigen 1978–1980). Apparently, there was no Hubbard or butternut squash, and the ubiquitous summer squash, zucchini, was adopted later.

Watermelons, cucumbers, and cantaloupes were grown as well. Many people also devoted space in their gardens to the perennial rhubarb, which some called pie plant, after its primary use. A few plants were raised for seasoning, such as dill for pickles and hot peppers and sage to flavor pork sausage.

A number of vegetables that are found in contemporary gardens were either not important or not grown. Kohlrabi, eggplant, rutabaga, carrots, cauliflower, chard, spinach, mustard greens, brussels sprouts, and okra were not commonly part of the array of garden crops planted in this era.

There was little insecticide use in the early days, but it seemed as if the pests got worse and worse. Ella V. Preston of Letcher County spoke of the historical situation: "They raised tomatoes unlimited. They didn't have to spray 'em like we do. And I can remember the first time my mother ever noticed the bean beetles. She brought the leaf in and showed Dad, something is eating her beans. And then they started finally having to spray. The first time I ever remember 'em using [pesticides] on the tomatoes was in WPA times. They hired one of our neighbors up the way to go around to different places and spray their tomatoes. And he was just demonstrating it, and he came to Dad's and sprayed his one time, and it was something he had in a bucket. And it was blue in great big chunks. He called it 'Blue Stone' [copper sulfate]. Anyway, he had to break it, and I think it was copper in it. I'm not positive, but it was blue. I know how it looked, sort of a royal blue. And he mixed that up with water and sprayed it. And then from then they had got to buying stuff. The blight didn't bother then like it does now. [Before the use of pesticides] you could just go out in the tomato

Bounty from the garden near Barbourville, Knox County, 1940. (Marion Post Wolcott, Library of Congress, Farm Security Administration)

patch and get you a tomato and start eating it right then, which you can't now."

The bean beetle became quite a problem. Mrs. Sims remembered: "This bean beetle just seemed to gradually develop until it got to be a major pest and we had to spray quite extensively. [These days] you can't raise anything now that you don't have to put some insecticide on. Perhaps there were more birds then" (van Willigen 1978–1980). Other pests included potato bugs, which were controlled with a powder, and tomato worms, which gardeners just caught and pinched their heads off.

Garden produce was rarely sold. Mrs. Sims said, "The only thing I can remember selling when I was still at home, one time we had a wonderful blackberry crop and we picked some blackberries and took them to Cynthiana and sold them." In later years, she said, "We sold some tomatoes . . . a few times. Some of the storekeepers knew we had extra ones and said if we'd bring some up they would sell them." Mostly, "surplus was given away" (van Willigen 1978–1980).

Much of the surplus produce went to kin. Christine Sims noted, "There was quite an exchange of vegetables among relatives. The people near me were all relatives. I was surrounded by relatives in every direction. If I knew of anybody who didn't have [a certain type of produce, I] could give something to him." Planting was rarely coordinated among relatives, however, and people tended to grow the same things. The first red tomatoes of the season would often be shared. Mrs. Sims said that even after her relatives moved away, she still "had a constant stream [of them] during the productive season, and they always took something back to eat. If you knew of anybody that was in need who hadn't been able to grow things themselves, you'd take them some." She also gave vegetables to her husband's parents. Her husband had tended the garden when he lived with his parents, so "when he left, that left them without a gardener. They had gotten aged and so we tried to keep them supplied with whatever they needed [from the garden]" (van Willigen 1978–1980).

There was a substantial change in gardening when people became better informed about new products, which led to the raising of a greater variety of produce. According to Christine Sims, "You got a proliferation of seed catalogs." Also, people went to grocery stores and saw things they were not used to growing. Extension agents and magazines such as *Progressive Farmer* and *Farm Journal* were other useful sources of information. As Mrs. Sims said, "People just became better educated along that line" (van Willigen 1978–1980). Gardening was based on both tradition and experimentation, and people were continually trying new things to see what worked. "[Knowledge] was just handed down, you know. Actually, they were tryin' all the time to . . . find new methods to do. It was not a matter of not wantin' to do somethin'. They knew if they fed the family, they had to do it. And that was the story. That's the secret. So I mean, they were always tryin' new methods, and they wouldn't try the whole patch, they'd just try parts of it to see if it would work. Some of the things they tried didn't work. But you gotta try 'em again. So that, I guess you learn that as you grow up. . . . That's what I do now" (Nancye Stamper, Lee County).

Experimentation apparently did not extend to methods of preservation, even when freezers became more widely available. The traditional methods of preparing and preserving vegetables were part of the preferred taste. For example, canned green beans were thought to taste better than frozen, and there was a preference for long cooking

times and the use of seasoning meat in green beans. Cellared potatoes still taste better than either canned or frozen to this day. And cabbage is still made into sauerkraut.

Orchards

In addition to a garden, many families had some sort of orchard, berry patch, or grape arbor. Fruit production was far more common in the past than it is today. In some areas, orchards were described as universal. Although apples were the most common fruit, plums, pears, peaches, and grapes were also raised. Families often grew a number of different varieties that matured at different times during the season. Blackberries and other wild fruits were gathered as well.

The production of fruit orchard crops had decreased dramatically by the 1930s. A story in the Robertson County paper reported that there were few apples, strawberries, raspberries, gooseberries, currants, and grapes grown, and the writer was perplexed. "They are easily grown, and prove profitable. There is no better climate or soil for growing the fruits mentioned, and it is not understandable why this profitable industry is neglected. Thousands of dollars are spent annually for fruits which can be grown here. Think a thought and put out an orchard" (*Times Democrat,* September 15, 1932).

Home production of apples was important. Christine Sims said, "Most people had a lot of apples in those days and of course there were sometimes they would have a few peaches, but mostly it was just apples. Much of the time in the winter [they wouldn't have any fruit]. They stored a lot of apples" (van Willigen 1978–1980). Joe Twine of Richmond said, "It was a must to have an orchard, you know. [My father] had orchards, I guess they were, a dozen or more trees. He had apples come in all times of the year. I recall that he had two trees, they were right behind the house, was early June apples. You don't see 'em anymore. They were red and yellow striped. And their flesh was of a pale yellow. They were a good cooking apple and a good eating apple and then you had two sweet apple tree and a maiden blush. I don't know whether that type of tree exists. And he had a fall season, and had two Genesis apple trees, they were a winter apple. And that's where the ones that we had, we would gather them and bury them. And we'd put up enough to eat on and use for cooking for a while. And then 'long about February, we'd open up the apples and get some out

and close 'em back up. [We] put 'em in the ground. They would be real mellow and as a rule, they would keep just perfect almost. Very seldom you'd ever see a rotten one in 'em, in the group. But the onliest thing about 'em being buried in the earth that long, they would have kind of an earthy taste. But we enjoyed 'em. They was mellow and juicy. And we enjoyed 'em as children. Anything you wanted to make out of 'em [you could]. Excepting if you wanted to bake 'em, bake 'em you know. You couldn't bake 'em because [by] the time they got hot, they would just fall all to pieces."

Apples were also important to Florene Smith of Whitesburg: "We had apples, all sorts of apples. And peaches. I remember up on the hillside there was a level area. Dad called it 'the bench.' And he went up there high up on that mountain and planted apple trees, and they did beautiful up there. And peach trees. And we'd have to haul those things out and carry them out, and loads of those. Apples would keep pretty good. He had a variety that was very good keepers. And they would wrap them in catalog pages one apple at a time and store them in big wooden boxes. I remember my granddaddy used to have a big wooden box, insulated with sawdust. I don't know what came in it. It must have been ten feet long by three feet wide. He might have made it especially for apples. And that big thing would be full of apples. He had them up in the loft up over the house. It was like [an] attic space, but they also had beds up there. But those apples wouldn't freeze and those kids. They'd keep bushels and bushels of apples all winter. Fresh apples. And they'd be so crispy and juicy. They wouldn't freeze because you had them in that insulated box. Apples can take chill and cold."

In the fall, when many apples matured, some people would hold cooperative apple peelings. Drying apples was common, or some would cut the apples into slices, place them in a sack, and treat them with burning sulfur; people reported that sulfured apples stayed white. Some apples were just cellared. Lucian Robinson of Robertson County said, "I remember we used to go down to my stepfather's home place and after supper, after the dishes were done up, some of them would go down in the cellar and get a big bowl or basket of apples. They would bring them up so cold, in the warm room there would be sweat on them" (van Willigen 1978–1980).

Some families produced cider from their own apples. "We would make apple cider," said Mary Isgrig (Bourbon County). "We had a press, and we had an apple orchard and we would press this liquid

out. At first it was apple juice and then cider and finally it turned to a vinegar. And they had this old stone jar and you put it down in there and some other vinegar must have been in it, including a lot of dirt, probably. But it made vinegar. And then they would get vinegar when they needed it."

The most common grape grown in rural Kentucky was the purple Concord type. People made grape juice, grape wine, and grape jelly.

Why did home fruit production decline? Some say that the fruit orchards just played out. Disease was an important consideration, and insects became an even bigger problem. An article entitled "The Passing of the Home Orchard" that appeared in a publication of the University of Kentucky's College of Agriculture offered one explanation (Olney 1922, 17–18). According to the author, the late nineteenth century saw an increase in the severity of plant disease. The disease cited as most significant was San Jose scale, which could kill a tree in a few years and was caused by a toxin injected by a sucking insect. Although scale could be managed by spraying and pruning, these methods were not widely practiced by home producers of the era because of the cost and lack of knowledge. At the same time that home fruit production declined, there was an increase in the number and size of commercial orchards, which experienced increased yields during this period. Presumably, commercial orchardists had the knowledge and resources necessary to protect their trees from insects and disease.

During this period, gardens and orchards filled a valuable role. They provided much-needed variety in the diet and served as means of sharing with neighbors and kin. People were very self-sufficient. They saved seed from year to year, and many people mentioned how little money was spent on food. The shift to a more cash-based society did not affect the garden as much as it did the farm as a whole, but it did affect the orchards. Orchards diminished in prevalence, probably due to the reluctance to spend money and time on a losing proposition.

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Chapter 6

Tending the Field Crops

Farms usually produced either corn or wheat, and often both. Although much of this grain was sold, these crops were also raised to be consumed at home as meal or flour or, in the case of corn, as animal feed. The amount of grains grown varied from region to region. Eastern Kentucky narrators often talked about corn and the work involved in producing it, so it is clear that corn was important in the mountains. Central Kentucky narrators talked more about wheat. In western Kentucky, grain production became specialized. Soybeans were still a new crop then, and they were raised for the market; they were never eaten at home. Along with these crops, many farmers raised tobacco, which was a source of cash. A few farms raised sorghum cane to produce sweet syrup.

Corn

Corn was raised primarily to feed livestock and to consume at home. Corn was fed to horses and mules to supplement pasture grasses and hay and to hogs to supplement the household wastes they were fed. Much of the corn was ground into meal and made into various breads. Some corn was processed into hominy or consumed as roasting ears. Shirley Wegner of Robertson County may have overstated the situation when he said, "Back then we didn't sell no corn" (van Willigen 1978–1980). Similar views were expressed by Doris Jones of Grayson County: "They never sold any. That corn was to feed their animals and also our cornmeal. That was our source of cornmeal. They had to take it to mill. I think at Big Clifty. And have it ground into cornmeal. At

a time I would say twenty-five to fifty pounds was ground. I'm sure it was my father who took it as needed."

In the early days, people saved their own seed or swapped seed with neighbors. These early corns were open-pollinated varieties, not hybrids, so they produced less.* Lyman Barnes of Ohio County spoke of the transition from open-pollinated to hybrid corn: "And they had open-pollinated corn. I can remember that. And you just went to the crib and shelled you off some. If your neighbor wanted some, he'd come along and brought his variety and swapped with you. And then I remember the first hybrid corn come around. My brother was going to school at Centertown and I think this seed corn company gave some little samples. And we planted [it] and my dad gathered off like two rows and weighed [it] and then he gathered two rows of his open-pollinated corn and I heard him say he never did plant no more open pollinated after that." With open-pollinated corn, the pollination process is not controlled. In these cases, self-pollination occurs, in which the pollen is provided by the male parts of the plants, called the tassels. In the production of hybrid seed, pollination is controlled by the seed producer, and corn is typically "detasseled" so that it cannot fertilize itself. The pollen is obtained from a genetically different inbred plant, and the crossing of these two plants results in what is called "hybrid vigor." These advantages do not "breed true"; that is, seed that is saved and planted the next year will not retain the advantages of hybrid vigor. In contrast, open-pollinated corn does breed true. Hybrid seed corn was first produced in the 1920s by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and land-grant universities; then seed companies began producing hybrid seeds for sale to farmers. With hybridization, the farmer's role in genetic selection diminished. Seed production became more concentrated as the number of seed companies decreased over time. By the early 1940s, the majority of seed corn planted was hybrid. The yield advantages were immense, and plant breeders could also select for other desired characteristics such as disease resistance and standability.

Corn planting was difficult work when done by hand. Majora Bastin of Casey County said, "'Course we planted corn by hand, and I was

* Technically, all corn is open pollinated, but in the process of producing hybrids, the corn plant's capacity to open pollinate is controlled by various techniques, including detasseling. With strictly open-pollinated varieties, there is no intervention.

a little girl, six years old when I started planting corn. At that time, the girls was out of school, and they helped too. I remember that the rows was awfully long, up and down that big hollow. Bottomland. And I would get so slow dropping corn. And my father had told me to drop three grains in the cross. The rows were laid off in the form of crosses, this way and that way, too. And in the center of the cross is where you dropped your corn. And I was so afraid of my father that he wouldn't like it. If I dropped four grains, I'd bend over and pick up the extra grain. But that, you know, that wasn't necessary. But I didn't know it at that time. So, I dropped corn." Corn was sometimes intercropped with varieties of pole beans, called cornfield beans, which were allowed to grow up the cornstalk (see chapter 5).

Some people used a hand-operated corn planter that consisted of two flat pieces of wood with handles at the top and joined at the bottom with a metal hinge. The corn seed was held in a metal box attached to one of the pieces of wood. While holding the two handles together, the operator would jam the metal tip of the planter into the soil and then move the two handles apart, which would release three or four seeds into the soil. The use of this tool was described by Florene Smith of Letcher County: "Daddy'd plant it with an old drop corn planter. It was a hand tool that was made kind of like bellows. But it had a little metal container on the side, that when you would operate this, the bottom of that container had a little kind of like a grooved metal. My guess, that was on the opposite side, and it would slide back into that container and pick up, it had a hole big enough to pick up a couple of grains of corn. And then when you opened it, it would pull that grain of corn and it'd fall down between those bellows-like things and would go down to the ground. When you closed it, that would let that drop in the ground, and you opened and closed this with your hands, but the process put it in the ground, and when you pulled this out to go [to] the next step, it would actually cover the corn. It was like a two-inch thing on the bottom that left the kernels in the ground. Sometimes you used two grains of corn in a hill, and they's probably about eighteen to twenty inches apart, a man's step, you know."

This strategy of planting several seeds in one hole required that the corn plants be thinned. Majora Bastin said, "And when it got big enough, I had to thin it, and that was an awful hard job. Bending over and walkin' 'cross miles of, seemed like, rows. From one end to the other and your back'd be broken. And by that time, later, the chillen

[children] was gone, and the older girls, and I had to do this all by myself. [My dad would] get a little boy or somebody to help me drop the corn, but he wouldn't get anybody to help me thin it. And if you pulled a stalk of corn up and it squeaked, you had to get down and get the root because it would come back. You pulled up one and you left one for the blackbird, one for the crow. And two to grow. And you had to pull up any extra, the three grains that [you planted], you had to pull up one and leave two, you know. So I'd have to bend down and get that root out. I wouldn't have had to, but I was afraid my dad wouldn't like it, you know. He was very strict with us. [I said a little rhyme] One for the blackbird, one for the crow, and . . . that's one for the blackbird, one for the crow . . . I forgot how it goes." In addition to hand planting, many used planting machinery.

The corn would be weeded by plowing and hoeing, and eastern Kentucky narrators had plenty of stories to tell about that chore. Ella Preston of Letcher County recalled: "Dad always said he had to get through [hoeing the corn] by the Fourth of July. He would not hoe corn after the Fourth. We might work 'til six o'clock on July the third but we wouldn't be there on the fourth. And he always [said after] the last hill he would hoe, 'Now you can holler,' he'd say, and we'd all scream as loud as we could." After the corn was "laid by" (cultivated for the final time), the plants were large enough to suppress the weeds themselves.

Eastern Kentucky narrators mentioned that the job of corn hoeing was sometimes shared among neighbors. "All the neighbors would come in and help them hoe [the corn] out," said Jeannette Dollarhide (Letcher County). "Then the women too. But some would stay at home and cook for them. They would swap work a lot, you know. Then a neighbor would have a corn hoeing too, and they would all go and help them. Which was double work. Mostly just kinfolks and close neighbors, you know."

Weeds could also be controlled with horse- and tractor-drawn cultivators. "We plowed anywhere from two to three times. Then we'd chop the weeds out of it and hoe it. Then we tried to hoe up weak plants. A good farmer would do that, try to make the yield all he could 'cause ain't no use to go out there and put a crop out and not take care of it. If you plow it and take care of it good, and keep the weeds out of it and have a reasonable amount of rain, you'll have a great crop" (Willard Varner, Bourbon County).

Cultivating corn at Valley Station, Jefferson County, 1943. (Howard R. Hollem, Library of Congress, Farm Security Administration)

The cultivation of corn with horse-drawn implements was vividly remembered by Florene Smith: "Then [my dad] would plow in between those rows until the corn got big enough that . . . the horse going through it and the plow going through it would tear it up. But I remember he would plow it until it got up about to the belly of the horse, and I remember putting a muzzle on that horse to keep him from eating it as he went along. And that was just nothing but a wire-like basket he'd put up on that horse's face and attach up on his mouth and attach it onto the bridle. So everybody used muzzles on their horses when they'd plowed their fields. They wouldn't eat the corn. So they wouldn't reach off and get a bite. After it got too big to plow it, then we'd have to go through and pull out big weeds that might come up. But once it got [too big to cultivate] it was laid by, it was finished cultivating, it was finished plowing and hoeing. You usually plowed and hoed it twice after it came up. That was kind of the procedure. You'd plow it when it was about six inches high and hoe it, and then when it

got about, well, depended on the weather, you know, if it was dry the weeds didn't grow as fast and I remember we plowed at least twice and sometimes three times. My dad would plow and we'd have to hoe and pull the weeds out."

Prior to harvest, some cut off the tops of the corn above the ear to feed to the cattle. Others mentioned what they called "foddering." Sara Ellen Ison of Ice said, "When we got older you went to the field and helped in the fields and that was the hoeing and the foddering, if you know what that is, when the corn got so ripe you pull the blades off of the corn up to the ear. And you let it lay a night or two and then you went back and you tied that up in bundles. And that was called foddering, and then a little later, after that, [you] went through and you cut the tops off of that corn down to that ear where you foddered up to and there was them tops."

The corn, planted in hills, was cut and put in shocks. Farmers often did this by squares of hills—as Willard Varner put it, "sixteen hills out the hill and sixteen up." This was done before the corn got too ripe. A fodder shock was tied about two feet from the top with a stalk of corn wrapped around it and then just tucked under. This would help keep the shock from falling over in the wind. The job of cutting corn and making shocks was man's work because it was considered somewhat dangerous. "They would put their arm to the left and just cut and go onto the next stop. Just 'til they got a big armful. And then they would take it over there and then they'd go do it again until they got enough to make a big shock of fodder" (Glen Vanoy, Casey County). Farmers harvested corn by cutting it with a corn knife, which was similar to a machete with a long, sharp blade. As Shirley Wegner of Robertson County said, "It took a right smart knife to cut through all of them stalks" (van Willigen 1978–1980). The idea was to cut through the plants with one slice. This was often done around the last of September or first of October.

After the corn was cut and shocked, farmers would let it dry out. "They would shock the corn when they cut it and leave it until it finished drying out. What they did then with the corn is just about what you see the Amish doing today. The same thing. There was no electricity here. But after the corn dried out, they would take those shocks apart and then they'd pull the ears off. And out in the barn, here, they have one room they called a corncrib. And they would fill that" (Jones). After the corn dried, it was shucked and the cobs were removed.

Shocks of corn along highway near Virgie, Pike County, 1940. (Marion Post Wolcott, Library of Congress, Farm Security Administration)

The grain, leaves, and stalks were all important sources of animal feed. Willard Varner said, "They fed a lot of corn. That good old yellow corn and it had a lot of vitamins. Corn's good for a horse. They fed a lot of it to the horses. Seven, eight big ears apiece twice a day." As for cows, Varner noted, "we'd feed fodder to cows in the wintertime. They loved it. If you get it cut with some greenness to it, they'd put it on sleighs, big, tall things. The horses [would] just pull off and run along with the cattle so they all get to it. It would be spread over 300, 400 feet. You could take fodder and corn and almost winter your cattle without anything else. If you had a lot of fodder."

People also enjoyed their corn. Regular field corn was harvested in the milk stage, while it was still sweet and tender, and used for roasting ears. Hominy was also made, as Henry B. Turner (Lee County) recalled: "He'd raise corn. Most of it was field corn but they used it for roasting ears. I mean, that was before it got hard. And in the fall, they'd feed some to their livestock. They would make hominy. And in order to get the skin to come off the hominy, that's the husk, now they

would get wood ashes, and wood ashes where you burnt hickory wood. Now hickory wood has a tendency to have more lime in it. And they would take this, they put their corn in one of them big boilers, like you put on top of a stove, you see them oblong kind, and you take the stove caps off and it would sit down in it. You'd put this corn in and they'd boil it for two or three hours. That'd get it soft. Then they would pour water through these hickory ashes, and they would catch this, they called it 'lye water,' that run out of the bottom of it. It was real strong. And they poured that onto the corn and they would let it sit on the corn several hours, maybe all night. They'd let it sit till these little husks started coming off, and then they would take and start rinsing it. They'd rinse it, oh, five, six, seven, or eight times in order to get all this off. Then they'd put that big kettle back on and then they'd start boiling it until it got done, got soft, you know. And the reason they made so much in the wintertime, they didn't have no refrigeration, and to keep it fresh for a week or something like that, they would make it in cold weather. [People would share the hominy.] If, for instance, my grandmother made a big kettle of it, she'd take out about what we would eat within the next eight or ten days. All right, she'd give my mom some, she'd give other grandchildren some, and they'd give it to all the family around the community. [If an] old man [and his] wife, if they was old, they'd take him up a mess. Then in about the time she'd run out, one of the neighbors, they would make some, and that way she could get some back."

Wheat

Like corn, wheat was raised for home consumption; the flour used to make biscuits was often obtained from wheat grown at home. Although these accounts rarely discuss it as a source of cash, wheat was sometimes sold and remains an important market crop in western Kentucky; it is not commonly grown in central Kentucky. Wheat straw was used as animal bedding and as filling for mattress ticks. Wheat straw could also be used as animal feed under unusual and adverse conditions (these days, wheat straw can be treated to improve its nutritional qualities). In addition, wheat was often used as a cover crop to help prevent wind erosion of harvested tobacco fields over the winter. That wheat was turned under as green manure or cut in a green state to use as animal feed; it was not allowed to mature into grain.

In addition to wheat, small amounts of other grains were produced, including barley, rye, and oats.

Some older people recalled that in the early days, wheat was sometimes cut with a "wheat cradle," a two-handled scythe with "fingers" or "ribs" arranged in parallel rows above the blade. This method kept the newly cut stalks from falling to the ground so that they could be carefully bundled, reducing the amount of grain lost because of "shattering."* The shocks of wheat would be left in the fields until a threshing machine arrived, which might be a matter of weeks. Virgil Fair of Casey County described the use of a wheat cradle: "When I was a boy, we cradled wheat by hand. [A cradle is] a thing like about five fingers on it and a blade there on the bottom. And make a sweep with it and catch it on that and build a pile. Make another'n, throw in the pile. Here come a man tie it. [And left it] for so many days to dry."

Cradles were generally used for only a few small patches. For the most part, this process was mechanized with a mower and binder. Eugene M. Kiser (Bourbon County) described the timing of it: "In the first part of June, you were binding wheat and barley. And getting it ready to run through the threshing machine. Usually you would start threshing the last part of June. [The wheat and barley] was sown in the fall. The fall before. And rye, you had some rye in those days. After you got your tobacco done and of course wheat, the first thing you would do would be barley, which was earlier. I mean sometimes you'd have to cut barley during tobacco setting or something or other. Not that often. Then you'd get your wheat cut and you cut your rye last. Soon as you got everything cut and shocked and so forth, then you would get the threshing machine out and you'd start threshing barley. There was a lot of barley in those days raised in this part of the country 'cause it was good hog feed and yield and everything, and it turned out a whole lot. Then we'd thresh our wheat and we'd thresh your rye. Then you'd get ready to go to baling straw. Off the old straw rick. That was the good hot days of July when you were baling straw off an old straw rick. That's when they used to claim there was monkeys on the pitchfork handles and everything else. You have just a little bit of lax time in

* Shattering occurs when the attachment between the husk and the stalk is broken. Reduction of shattering was one of the changes that occurred with the domestication of wheat from its precursor wild grasses. Shattering in the wild is a kind of self-propagation.

there, usually in the last week or so in July or something like that. And the first week or so of August. It's just a little [bit] of lax time."

Working on a threshing crew could be hard work. Ralph Lobb of Hart County recounted some of his experiences as a boy: "A local person would hire a thrasher [during a portion of the] six weeks thrashing season. And this thrashing was about a two-week activity. In the thirties the wheat was brought with a wooden high-wheel wagon, that was everywhere. Every farm had a high-wheel wagon and had a special rack to put on it to haul small grain, like wheat, in a bundle. So, we hauled it on a special rack on a high-wheel wagon. It would take about six wagons to keep the thrasher operating at capacity. Everybody enjoyed thrashing time. I rotated [the work I did]. I pitched up onto the wagon, or I loaded on the wagon. Remember once or twice bagging, you had an automatic bagger, but you still had to tie the string [on a] bag of grain [and load it] onto a high-wheel wagon and carry it to the storage area. Most of the time I was pitching, 'cause I was a beginner and that was the hardest work and the least skill. And the person who had control of the team loaded the wagon and that didn't take much work, but it took some skill, but at least he had to be somebody who was responsible for the team and they tended to misbehave when they pull in beside that flopping belt from the engine to the separator. The grain was put into the separator at such a place that your team had to come right alongside that giant flopping belt. The [team] might be frightened at any time, so the person who owned the team [had to be a] responsible adult. And the ones who were undependable pitched it up onto the wagon. We'd just make one set per farm. A set was a reasonable hauling distance. In other words, you had the choice of hauling it a distance or you could move the machine. These was 100-, 300-acre farms, so there was only one set per farm, because you could haul the grain easier than you could move the machine if you was gonna move it within a 100- or 200-acre area. So there was just one set per farm. We got six dollars per set, and ten cents per bushel over 100 bushels. [A set was any time the thrasher] put the belt on it and fired up the engine. That was six dollars. That was the total charge until he thrashed past 100 bushels. And then for all over 100 bushels [it was] [an] additional ten cents a bushel. [The workers brought the grain to the machine.] The most unpleasant task—which I never did, 'cause [by the] time I got big enough they'd replaced it—and my first years with the crew, we did not have the automatic feeder and the bundle

was throwed up on a table and a person had to cut the binder string with a knife and, by hand, feed that bundle of grain into the thrashing [machine]. And that dust just poured out of it. But they usually rotated that. The next most unpleasant task was on the straw stack. Then, the straw was stacked and used for feed. And they put a man on the stack to keep it uniform and firm so as it wouldn't topple over and wouldn't be all spread out. So, I stacked, but I never fed, because after about the time I got big enough to really've been dependable, they came out with that automatic feeder and you just throwed that bundle up on a conveyer well away from this awful dust."

Threshing crews were quite large; they might consist of twelve, fifteen, or even eighteen men. Willard Varner recalled that in Bourbon County the thresher "brought [a] lot of hands with him and had all kinds of help." According to Ed Poe of Robertson County, threshing machines required "a dozen hands"—two to sack the grain, two to feed the wheat, and the rest to haul it from the field (van Willigen 1978–1980). In some cases, the crew was also served by a cook. According to William Singer of Scott County, "The thresher would go from farm to farm. [It would] take a big crew of men and they would set up in the middle of a field, wherever you wanted 'em to, and you

Threshing wheat in Oldham County, 1940. (Marion Post Wolcott, Library of Congress, Farm Security Administration)

Bagging wheat on a farm in Oldham County, 1940. (Marion Post Wolcott, Library of Congress, Farm Security Administration)

would haul the wheat in the bundles to 'em and they would thrash it. [You would] take a wagon and haul the shocks if that wheat was in bundles and take and pitch it in the thrasher. [It] would thresh the grain out of it. [The threshing machine would] blow a big stack of straw. And they had a cook kitchen that they would take along with the thresher. They had a man that would cook, well, they called it dinner then, it's lunch now, for the hands at the thrasher. Of course, wheat used to be one of the big crops, but as people did less cooking at home, less baking and everything it's easier to buy bread out of the store than [it] is to bake it."

Threshing machines served a number of different neighborhoods. Some were owned by individuals, and others were owned by groups of farmers—called "company machines." The machine owner-operator was paid cash by the bushel. In addition to paying for the threshing services, Varner noted that "you had to furnish the coal" to run the steam tractor, and in some cases, you had to prepare meals for the crew and "feed them while you are there."

Singer recalled that threshing was an important business in the region: "It was big business. A fellow would think, if I can get me a

good crew together and get enough money borrowed at the bank and get me a threshing machine and really do a good job and really hustle it, I can make some money. There were two or three threshers in Scott County. [One] fellow, Cliff McBee, that did the thrashing for us was from Burlington, Kentucky, Boone County. He would come up in this area like Bourbon County, Woodford County, Scott County, Fayette, and he had probably the biggest and the best outfit and naturally he would get the most work."

After wheat raising became less common in an area, there were fewer combines available for harvesting the crop. A farmer in Piqua, Kentucky, who enjoyed raising his own wheat kept a small Allis-Chalmers combine for that purpose. For some time he raised a crop every four years, growing just enough wheat to meet his flour requirements. Most people who raised wheat on this small scale eventually had no way to get their crops harvested because nobody had the necessary equipment, so some had to leave the last crop in the field.

Processing Grain

Prior to 1920 and the experiences of the people we interviewed, corn and wheat were ground using water power. Water power was replaced by steam, at least in some areas, and then by internal combustion engines. Tim Taylor, a retired agricultural extension agent, recounted how his father used to grind grain: "He'd start up [the mill], and my job was to shovel the meal back in the sack. And I could tell when he turned that water on. He ran it starting 1917 till the 1950s. It used to be at Sawyer Post Office [in McCreary County], and that was a gathering place. And he'd grind corn all day Saturday. He took toll out of each [bag] he would grind. If he had a bushel of corn, he'd take a full gallon and pitch it over as toll to pay for the grinding. And you could go to that mill and buy corn, and he would take the toll out, give you seven gallons. So, all I did is dip the meal out [the meal might be sifted to remove the bran] and my father kept the old engine going, and measured out the corn, took the toll, and talked to customers. He just loved to talk to customers. At the end of that day I was so tired. You know, he'd run ten hours, if he had customers. . . . We sold that corn. A person would buy the corn, have it ground, take it home. And we bought it to feed the animals on this place. And he did pretty well."

Water mill on Long's Creek, Breathitt County, 1920. (Kentucky Historical Society)

People also took wheat to the mill to be ground. In Robertson County, there were mills at Sunrise, Brooksville, Germantown, and Mt. Olivet. The Germantown mill was set up for the convenience of the customers. They would deliver their wheat and put it "on deposit," rather than waiting for it to be ground. The grain was then commingled and ground, and each farmer could receive flour, as requested, equivalent to the amount of grain he had delivered.

In the era before cars, people often took their grain to the mill on horseback. Mills usually were not very far away. Marjorie Carlton recalled her family's experiences in Anderson County: "We had a garner where we kept our wheat. You know, they threshed the wheat out. And it was a little building, looked like a little house, a little roof on it. Had a door up high, just a square. They would come and empty the sacks of the wheat in that after they had it run through. And then when we got ready for flour, we would take a big sack of grain to the mill, and they would grind the flour. And we made all of our flour and our corn. We'd shell corn the same way. And I know one of my brothers, my youngest brother, sometimes in the winter they would just shell the corn out. And he'd put it on a horse, and ride to the mill, which was about a mile

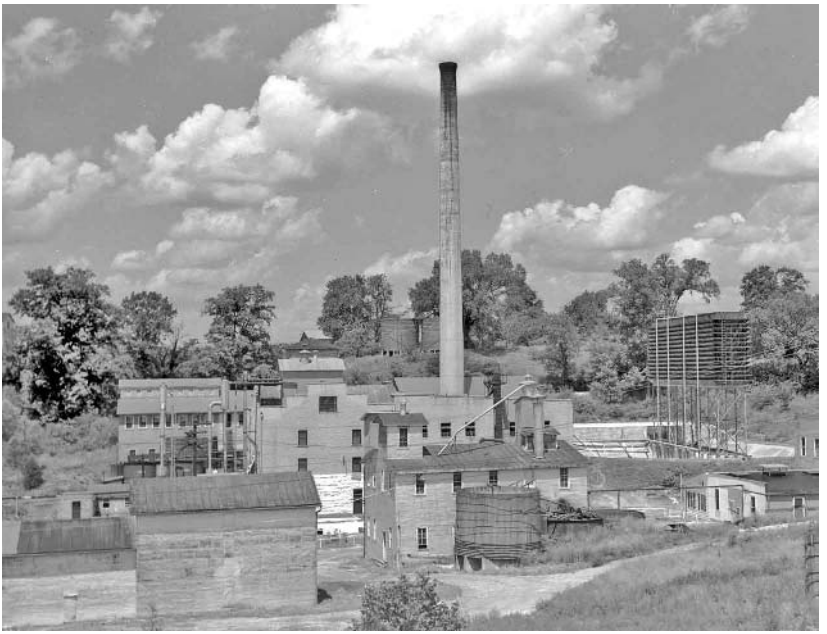
Flour mill and dam at Robinson, Harrison County. (Kentucky Historical Society)

and a half, and they'd grind it, and they put it back on across the saddle, and he'd bring it back."

Some corn was made into whiskey. Shirley Wegner spoke of making whiskey in the late 1920s in and around Robertson County: "It was pretty good if you made it right. We doubled our whiskey, runned it through [the still] twice. It would part your hair if you drank very much. I have sat down on my honkers and laid a five-gallon stone jug full of double moonshine, and take a drink out of it. And then put it in a coffee sack and lugged it up the river cliff over there [the interview took place within a quarter mile of Licking River], then hide it. People made it for their own use and to sell it. Back then we get ten dollars a gallon. And you'd be surprised at the people that were up in society, and high-priced people that would buy it from you. [The still held] forty or fifty gallon, [made of] copper with a copper coil and a cooler keg. You had a fifteen-gallon cooler keg that ran through that water, the coil was in that keg. That water would cool that steam, that's what made your whiskey. It wasn't [the mash] what made the whiskey. [It was heating] the mash in the barrel. The steam would come through that copper pipe and go through this cooling keg and that would form

that steam into a liquid. You couldn't [make it] in the wintertime when it was cold. [You would make it] in the summertime when it was warm. It wouldn't work off in the wintertime. I got out of it. I knowed they's gonna get us. I just got out of it. That whiskey could get you! You could make it 200 proof. It would take your breath away when you try and swallow it, pretty near" (van Willigen 1978–1980).

Distillery equipment was made by local people. Tim Taylor recalled that his father, who had a blacksmith shop, "made beautiful moonshine stills." He told this story: "This is the thirties. I guess I must have been about twelve years old. [My father] was a blacksmith. I would help him. He could do all sorts of things. [He'd fit] up animals and put the shoes on, and I'd hand him these nails, and I'd crank the forced air thing. And he got me to help him with these moonshine stills. And he was that good a craftsman that he could do it. He got sheet copper out of Somerset. Shipped it to Parkers Lake. Went out there in [a] wagon and his mules, and lay that copper right flat, right in the bed of that wagon, and come home with it. And he was com-



Distillery near Bardstown, Nelson County, 1940. (Marion Post Wolcott, Library of Congress, Farm Security Administration)

missioned by some moonshiner to do this. We didn't have electricity. We had the soldering iron in the fire. And he could run the prettiest bead with solder you ever saw and I could hold that while it was getting cold, pair of tongs. One day he said, 'Tim, we've got to go to town.' And I said, 'All right.' Said, 'I've got some business there and you've got to go with me.' And I said, 'Yeah.' 'We'll just ride the mules.' Twenty-five miles back through there to [town]. So, we got on the mules, and rode over there, and went downstairs in the old courthouse where it is now. And there was sitting a beautiful still, shined up, and they had purported that to be the best-made still they'd ever captured. And my father said, 'We did that one. Don't tell anybody.'"

The ingredients for whiskey vary, but by law, the recipe (or, as they say, mashbill) for bourbon whiskey requires that the grain from which the mash is made contain at least 51 percent corn. The remaining portion varies from maker to maker and might contain more corn, rye, or wheat in some combination and some malted barley to help break down the starches. Moonshiners no doubt used much simpler recipes and increasingly used sugar. A huckster truck operator from Robertson County recalled selling sugar and cracked corn to an old man who was making whiskey. Contemporary moonshiners may use all sugar (Bilger 2000, 63–100) because it is much quicker, mostly because it eliminates the need to cook the grain mash. And when an activity is illegal, being quick is good.

Making whiskey was a way of making a living with scarce resources. According to Joe Clark (Rockcastle County), limited economic opportunities "started a lot of guys to moonshinin'." Of his neighbors, he said, "These [folks] over here are the best people that ever was. You know a lot of 'em. They raised their family makin' moonshine. They don't drink much, but they had them little old bad farms over there. There wasn't no welfare then. That's the only way they could have fed 'em. There wasn't no other way to feed their family. I think it's as honorable as anything. It's more honorable than lettin' your family starve. And I knowed 'em all. I bought it fer 'em. They could take a pint of whiskey and get a quarter for it then, when they couldn't get a day's work. If they did, it wouldn't pay 'em over a quarter. But you couldn't get no work. And that way they'd buy stuff. They raised big families over there."

Many Kentucky counties were dry, but some say that that never made much of a difference to moonshiners. When a county went dry,

there were always plenty of bootleggers around. In Robertson County, one could buy bootleg whiskey under the counter at a restaurant. One person told this story: "I was downtown with a friend. He said, 'It's Saturday night. Let's have a drink, we can buy us a pint from ol' Floyd [the bootlegger].' I didn't much want to, but he insisted, so we put our money together for a pint. He wanted me to buy it. I didn't want to, but he said, 'The bootlegger knows you better.' Finally we flipped for it and of course I lost. So I went into the restaurant and it was full of all those ladies from the Methodist church. A [lady I knew] was there and I didn't know what to do. I sat at the counter right in front of Floyd and put the money in front of me an' pushed it over to him. Then I felt something bump my knee. I thought maybe it was a dog that was snufflin' along the counter, so I looked down so I could bat him one, and I seen the bottle poked through a sort of slit in the counter. So I took it an' slipped it under my shirt and went out. Ol' Floyd wasn't the only bootlegger in the county, there must have been eight or ten of them, but he was the best. He made the most money" (van Willigen 1978–1980).

In addition to bootlegged whiskey, there was prescription whiskey. Doctors charged $1.50 or $2 for an office call, and the drugstore filled the prescription for $3.

Tobacco

Tobacco production was important on most farms, and it was the only crop raised solely for cash. People often described it as the crop that paid the mortgage. Farmers rarely smoked or chewed their own tobacco or sold it to other end users; virtually all was sold to manufacturers.

The process of tobacco production is complex and requires specialized knowledge. There are at least three reasons for this complexity. First, tobacco is transplanted rather than sown directly in the field; this requires a number of special practices. Second, tobacco has high nutrient demands, which means that fertility management is complex. Third, tobacco is not sold as a raw agricultural crop; the first steps in processing are done on the farm, necessitating the elaborate infrastructure of a tobacco curing barn. These days, tobacco plants are raised in plastic-covered greenhouses, often by specialists. (For a more detailed discussion of tobacco farming, see van Willigen and Eastwood 1998.)

Roy G. Brown of Rockcastle County described the process in a historical framework: "Back in those days, we would get out about February and cut brush and wood and burn our tobacca beds and seed them." The purpose of burning was to kill pests and weed seeds; later farmers used a toxic gas to accomplish the same goals. Bed seeding often involved mixing the microscopic seeds with a substance such as wood ashes or fertilizer to give the seeds enough bulk so that they could be planted. "And then along in about the middle of May, why the plants would be large enough, we'd pull them and set 'em, set 'em by hand. We didn't have no tobacca setter. We'd have to go along, somebody'd crop the plants and it fell to my lot to go along and take a stick and push down in the ground and set 'em out. We have to do that when the ground was [soft] after a rain then. In those days, 'cause we didn't have tobacca setters [that could water] and had no other way of waterin', so we just had to set 'em [during] what's called a season, which was when it rained." As Brown described, farmers used a simple wooden dibble to transplant the tobacco. It was, by all accounts, backbreaking work that involved making a hole for each plant and then heeling it in—called "peggin' it in." This could be done only when the ground was moist, so farmers had to wait for rain to "get a season." The newly invented planters (or setters), including individual, horse-drawn, and tractor-drawn models, had a provision for watering the transplants just enough to help them survive the shock of transplantation.

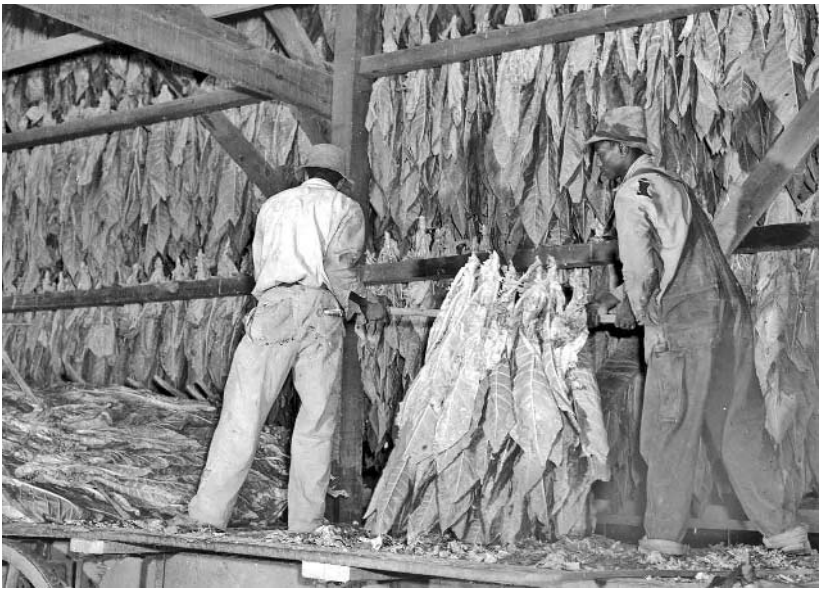
After transplanting their tobacco, farmers needed to be concerned with keeping the weeds at bay, which involved careful hoeing and cultivating. Nelson M. Witt of Bourbon County recalled an incident from his childhood: "Yeah, I did [weeding] when my daddy was living. I remember he had tobacco. One time, 'specially, I can remember he made [my sister] and I get out there, or he asked us to chop the weeds out of it. He said, 'Now be careful or you'll cut it down,' so I cut down a big plant. Stupid-like, I stuck it back in the ground, thought it'd grow and he wouldn't know the difference. As he went out there, that was the first thing he found. So I can remember chopping weeds out to the tobacco very well. Yeah, he said, 'Now be careful; you'll cut it down.'"

Right after the tobacco set its blossoms, the farmer would pluck the flowers from each plant—called topping—to cause more vigorous leaf growth. According to Witt, "In the latter part of July, the end, we would top the tobacco. 'Course back then we didn't have no spray for it, so we had to go in and sucker usually about two times." The "suckering" he

Loading tobacco to take to the curing barn in Fayette County, 1940. (Marion Post Wolcott, Library of Congress, Farm Security Administration)

referred to involved removing shoots, or suckers, from the plants as they tried to produce more flowers and seeds. Eventually, a chemical spray called MH-30, or "sucker dope," was developed that kept suckers from developing. This saved large amounts of labor.

Witt continued: "Tobacco [would] be ready to cut and harvest in September. We had a barn on the farm that we housed it in, and back in those days, we didn't have spears. We just cut it with [a] regular old tobacca knife and put it on a stick. We'd split it and put it on the sticks. [The] spear . . . goes on, sits on the end of the stick and you put your tobacco plant over that and it sticks through the plant and splits it enough to go down over the tobacco stick. But back before then, we just had to take a knife, a tobacca knife, and split the stalk from the top, and put it over the stick." Mr. Witt was describing the use of a shank knife. For many years, tobacco was cut with a blade mounted liked an ax or a tomahawk, and the stalk was then speared by a steel cone with a very sharp tip and impaled on the tobacco stick. The newly cut tobacco was left in the field to wilt for a time, to make the crop easier to handle.



Hanging tobacco in the barn to cure, Fayette County, 1940. (Marion Post Wolcott, Library of Congress, Farm Security Administration)

Roy Brown picked up the story: "After the 'bacca was cut, we'd haul it and hang it in the barn, which was a great big job. Was heavy to handle tobacca. Green of course and we'd haul it and hang it in the barn." Burley tobacco—the type Mr. Brown was talking about—was air-cured; other types required the application of heat. After each stalk was hung in the barn on its stick, a complex process of curing began. The green and yellow tobacco leaf slowly used up its stored nutrients, changing color to various shades of brown. If everything went right, it would take on a fragrant, lank condition so that the leaf could be stripped from the stalk.

Brown continued: "Then about the later part of October, [when] it dried enough, why we would start to strip the tobaccer off. We'd take it to market. In those days, of course, we had to strip it off and tie it up in hands and put it on sticks and handle it that way. It wasn't 'til later years, and just a few years ago, that we started balin' tobacca. Which took quite a bit of labor out of it. We [divided] it in[to] seven or eight grades. We'd have what we called flyings and have trash and lugs and bright leaf. Long red, short red, tips. It was a job. We'd marked our

sticks. Either take a crayon and mark the sticks or take a knife and cut a notch on 'em and that's the way we did it back then. We'd usually go to Danville or Lexington or Richmond. I remember 'fore I did any of it myself, that my brother hauled it with a team and wagon to Danville. But I never did any of that though. It'd take about all day to take it up there. Well, you'd take a day to go up there and then take a day to unload and come back. It was a long, worn-out job at that time. Roads were muddy. 'Course we didn't have no paved roads. Usually muddy in that time of year. Usually had a pretty good crop. 'Course tobacca, back in those days, we didn't grow it as big as we do today, I don't believe, because we didn't use as much fertilizer and ammonia nitrate and things on it as we do now. Tobacca wasn't bred up to grow a better 'bacca at that time."

Sweet Sorghum

Many farms raised a variety of cane *(Sorghum bicolor)* that could be used to produce a sweet syrup called sweet sorghum or sorghum molasses.* Other varieties of sorghum planted today include milo, maize, and grain sorghum, which are raised as animal feed. The sorghum plant looks very much like corn except that it has no ears, and instead of tassels there is a seed head at the top of the plant. Rural Kentuckians squeezed the juice out of the stalk and heated it to produce a sweet syrup that could be used like honey or sugar. Sorghum was a common crop but not universal, and most farmers produced just enough for household use. Typically, they planted a small plot, "maybe an acre" (Vanoy).

At present, most sorghum is grown in the southeastern states. Production in Kentucky has increased in recent years but is still much less than the acreage planted a century ago. Historically, the least sorghum was produced in the 1970s (Bitzer n.d.). Sorghum molasses has been produced in the United States since colonial times. Today, it has a high nostalgia value and is marketed regionally. It can be found in gift shops of restaurant chains such as Cracker Barrel.

Before the cane was harvested, the leaves and seed heads would

* Narrators called the product sorghum molasses or just molasses, but sweet sorghum syrup is the more technically correct term. Molasses is actually a by-product of sugar production.

be stripped off and might be used as animal feed. Some believed that the leaves had a negative impact on the quality of the end product, but contemporary research does not support this idea. Henry Hankla of Boyle County said, "You have to strip the blades off on the leaves. We did that while the stalk was standin'. We had a little paddle 'bout two, three feet long. And you just run it down the stalk and strip it off. Stripped the blades. And then you cut it. You cut it down near the ground with a hemp knife. We called it a hemp knife. It's a little blade with a long handle and short blade. And just cut it off down at the ground. The handle [was] 'bout, maybe three feet. And you cut it off down at the ground and, and just leave it lyin' on the ground or set it up in a shock or whatever. Then you cut the seed off. The top seed cluster."

The actual cutting was very much like cutting corn. The farmer would get the stalks under his arm and cut them with a machete-like knife. The stalks would then be taken to the cane mill in a flatbed farm wagon. The harvested cane could be held for up to a couple of days.

The seed heads (or panicles) might be dried and saved for next year's planting. Glen Vanoy said, "When it got up to the mill where they were gonna make the molasses, the heads were like a foot long and had little seeds all over 'em. The cane heads. And it grew right on top. And they would, they would cut those off and dispose of 'em before they put the cane through the cane mill." Some narrators suggested that the seeds could be fed to chickens. Current recommendations are that the syrup quality will be better if the cane is harvested before the seeds are mature; the sugar content is highest in the milk stage of growth. Narrators did not speak of different varieties of sorghum, although there are a number of them.

The making of sorghum molasses was a specialized skill possessed by relatively few Kentuckians. Certain men within a community were recognized as having the requisite skill and knowledge, and they were often the owners of the cane mill and the pan used to evaporate the sorghum. Sometimes these persons were hired, and sometimes they produced the syrup on shares. Henry Hankla spoke of his family's experiences in Boyle County: "We didn't own [the mill]. It belonged to a man in Perryville, an old black man. We called him Mingo. Uncle Mingo. Mingo Peters was his name. And he would bring his mill which was on a wagon. That's the way he transported it. Just sittin' on that wagon without a wagon bed or anything. You had to go get him [and]

Crushing sorghum cane in Breathitt County, 1940. In the background is a stand of cane. (Marion Post Wolcott, Library of Congress, Farm Security Administration)

haul all his stuff there. And he had a little tent and spent the night. And we fixed his lunch and breakfast and ever'thing. It was a lot of fun. He did the cookin'. You'd have 'bout two people could do [the work] all right. Keep the cane cut and stripped and hauled up to the mill."

The mills, which were usually made of cast iron and had two or three adjustable rollers, squeezed the juice from the cane. Cane mills were often powered by mules or horses attached to a long wooden sweep. "There was a mill that you fed the [cane] into. The mule, would go 'round and 'round. It was hitched to a pole that come out in front of the horse that led them around so they'd go in the circle always" (Sterling Smithers, Casey County). Some mills were belt driven from the power takeoff of a tractor. There were a number of mill manufacturers throughout the sorghum belt, including the venerable Louisville firm Belknap Hardware. Today, most processors, especially hobbyists, use antique cane mills, creating quite a market for these old devices.

In the old days, mills were fairly scarce. Not every farmer had one,

so they would often be moved around and even borrowed. "I don't think we had one. Somebody had one. Everybody took their cane to that person. To get it made into molasses. Because those big metal things were probably expensive. Probably everybody couldn't afford one" (Vanoy).

Unlike the wheat at some mills, sorghum was not pooled; each person's cane was milled separately. "They would, like for instance they'd make my cane pile today. And tomorrow they'd do someone else's cane pile. And they would have their buckets all there. And you know, just go on down until everybody got through" (Vanoy). The cane-crushing part of the process would be done during the day, but the cooking might last into the night. Lanterns might be hung in the trees to provide light for the work.

The juice could be held for only a matter of hours. If it was held too long, it would begin to ferment, which resulted in a lower-quality product. Often the juice was held in a barrel, which allowed some of the impurities to settle out. "And you'd grind the cane and the juice would, it would go into a little box and flow down a pipe into the pan. And there would be a barrel to hold that until you was ready for that amount of juice to go into the pan" (Smithers).

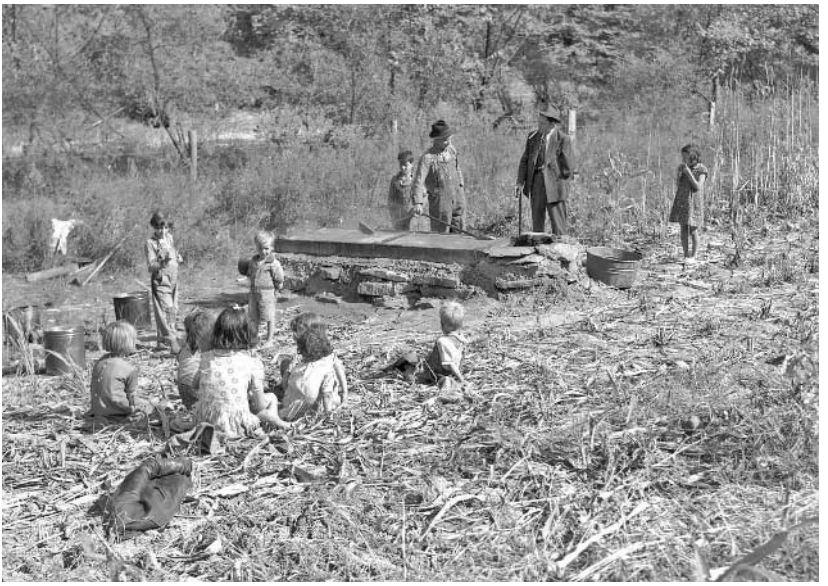
The process of making syrup involved reducing the water content and removing impurities. Glen Vanoy described it: "The mill [would] . . . squeeze the juice out and it would run into the boiler where they'd have a big fire. Sometimes they had a different kind. Sometimes it was one that boiled it altogether. Just in a great big [pot]. And then there was the kind that was a little fancier. Probably a little harder to do. And that's where the juice started running at the top. And it would run up and around and down and between little [compartments]. By the time it go to the end of that, it was ready. It took all day to prepare the sorghum. They would cook it maybe for hours before, before people could come. They had to boil and boil and keep getting the skimmings off. The process was often an all-day thing."

Basically, syrup could be produced by one of two methods: a batch process or a continuous process. The batch process used a large iron kettle or open pan. Mary Creech of Harlan County said, "They didn't have any of the modern equipment we have now. [They would use] a big old copper flat pan that my grandpa made. I don't know how he did it, but he did."

The continuous process used an evaporator and produced a lighter-

Hauling wood in a sled to fire the sorghum pan, between Jackson and Campton in eastern Kentucky, 1940. (Marion Post Wolcott, Library of Congress, Farm Security Administration)

colored and probably cleaner syrup. According to Vanoy, sorghum syrup prepared this way was "always so much better." An evaporator consisted of a long pan made of copper, iron, or stainless steel with a heat source, usually a wood fire, under it. The newly squeezed juice was introduced continuously at one end and the finished syrup was taken off at the other. The juice flowed by gravity between a series of heated compartments (Mask and Morris 1991). This processing method required a higher level of skill. The sorghum maker had to maintain an even fire of the right intensity and carefully calculate when the completed syrup was the right consistency. In addition to this, he had to adequately skim the product and avoid boiling in the impurities. Sterling Smithers described the process: "And it would start cookin'. I don't remember what the length of the pan is, but anyway, it's like twelve feet maybe. And it would start, you just started cookin' from the back, and it would go by the time it got all the way up to the front, you had little sections in it where you run the juice backwards and forwards. And it would cook as it went along. By the time it got to the end, it



Homebuilt boiler pit made of mud and rocks where sap from sorghum cane is boiled down to syrup, Breathitt County, 1940. (Marion Post Wolcott, Library of Congress, Farm Security Administration)

was ready to, you know, you cooked it until it was ready to empty out into the buckets or cans or whatever you have."

When the sorghum juice was heated, some of the protein and nonsugar substances would coagulate and rise to the surface. Thus, continual skimming of the cooking sorghum was essential to ensure the quality of the finished product. Skimming was best accomplished when the juice was kept below the boiling point; if it boiled, the impurities would get thoroughly mixed, or boiled, in (Mask and Morris 1991). Glen Vanoy described skimming: "And I know they had this long, kind of like a cup, except it was bigger than a [regular cup], maybe a quart cup. Two-quart cup maybe. And they would skim off the foam. That cane juice would foam and foam. And they would skim off the foam and put it into a [pit]. They had a little pit, a place dug out. So it would be handy to put the skimmings into. And then so they always had to watch the children [to keep them] away from the skimming hole. It was pretty deep, usually, and they had to be sure that the little children didn't get close to that. [You could eat

the foam] but it wasn't very good. It tasted green after a little while. You know, you could eat a few bites, but it was, it had a different taste. It was not like the molasses after they were cooked and ready." Sterling Smithers liked to sneak a taste anyway. "And I used to sneak around and eat out of the pan if my dad, if nobody was along, my dad would let me. We called 'em skimmin's. It was a little like foam, you know. And I would get a little bit of the foam to eat. I had to have some when he was cookin'. But of course if someone was around, he wouldn't let me do that. You take a little spoon or something, you know, and dip it out."

As Vanoy mentioned, the skimmings were disposed of in a hole. Jeannette Dollarhide added, "[They had a] skimmin' hole, they called it, you know. Had a hole right there [for] throwin' them skimmin's in it. And a bunch of boys, see which one was the biggest man, put him in a hole in the [ground], just like a bunch of dogs wrasslin'."

The making of sorghum syrup in the fall was a big social event called a stir-off. Vanoy said, "[The stir-offs were] in the fall of the year. It would begin to be cool nights. And it generally, that was after it began to get cool. Now they got their cane all stripped off and all before frost. Because you didn't want your cane to be frostbit because it had a different flavor. It wasn't good after it got, after the leaves were frostbit. Or if it happened to come a frost early, why everybody got in and got their, their cane, their fodder off of those cane stalks before it had time to get into the taste of the juice."

Many narrators recalled these enjoyable fall events. Mary Creech said, "And one of the things that I enjoyed was the stir-offs from the cane, you know, each family had some patch of cane. When the stir-offs started, they'd all get wood for about a week, you know, to heat the furnaces. And then we would have stir-offs for about a week. And all the neighbors would come, you know, and it would just be a big party. We'd do each person's one night, you know. And they ground the juice during the day, and then cook it off at night."

Children got to taste the warm, fresh, sweet syrup. "Everybody got together and molasses were finished and they took, they let it run out into the cans that they were gonna store it in. And then what was left, all the kids got a little paddle. Their daddies or somebody would make 'em a little paddle. Just a little wooden paddle about an inch and a half wide. You know, with a little handle. Much like an ice cream stick, except wider at the bottom. And they would, they could use the stick to

Skimming the sorghum pan, Breathitt County, 1940. (Marion Post Wolcott, Library of Congress, Farm Security Administration)

eat the molasses that was left in the box. Everybody, everybody would go, around in the community, would go to a stir-off" (Vanoy).

Stir-offs were fun for children. "Well, everybody took part in it. The kids thought it was great fun, you know. Some of them wanted to do things like throw raw apples in the sorghum and all that kind of stuff, like their friends did. But mainly it was just the young people came, old people came. Everybody brought a little pail to take molassey foam home. It was just kind of a festive occasion, you know, which we didn't have much festivities going on anyway" (Creech). The children would play games while the adults talked. "As I remember it as a child, the children they would play hide-and-seek and you know, whatever games they played. And the adults would stand around and talk and visit. And whoever was working the, working the boiler was busy, busy" (Vanoy).

In some cases, particularly when the sorghum syrup was made as a commodity to sell, the social nature of the event was lacking. Smithers

Enjoying the syrup at a neighbor's home, Breathitt County, 1940. (Marion Post Wolcott, Library of Congress, Farm Security Administration)

recalled, "My daddy used to make molasses. He always had molasses in May. And he did sell, you know, he would sell [it]." Mr. Smithers worked alone "unless a friend happened to drop by. He didn't have anybody come 'round except just when they'd accidentally come by." For

those who sold sorghum syrup, the price was quite low. "They didn't sell for very much because nobody had anything. Usually they just [gave it to] whoever didn't have any. They would divide [it]. [Some] sold their molasses . . . for like a quarter a gallon. . . . You know, load up a wagonload and take [it] to town or just along the road and sell [molasses] for a quarter a gallon" (Vanoy). It was also sold to moonshiners. "You could make awful good moonshine whiskey out of sorghum molasses. And I was in charge of selling it. Fifty cents a gallon. And it was made into moonshine, and that was during Prohibition days, and it was sold all over" (Taylor).

In addition to its illegal uses, molasses was used as a sweetener, much like brown sugar. Lucian Robinson of Robertson County declared, "The most popular dish that I can think of from an eating standpoint would be hot biscuit, sweet country butter, and sorghum molasses" (van Willigen 1978–1980). It was also used in vegetable preparations, such as on sweet potatoes. "You put [the sweet potatoes] in a dish. Not baked, but where you stew them and put 'em in a dish and sweeten them with molasses" (Vanoy). Sorghum was used in baked goods as well. "My mother'd cook a lot of that stuff, you know. Sweetenin'. She make sweet bread and this, that, and the other, sweetened with that molasses (Fair). "You'd use it for making tea cakes. [Tea cakes are] like cookies, only bigger. Like to have 'em soft. Soft tea cakes. They're good with milk" (Vanoy).

Gingerbread and cookies were also prepared with sorghum. A recipe for sorghum cookies from a 1938 issue of the *Kentucky Farmers Home Journal* serves as an example:

Ingredients
1 egg
½ cup brown sugar
¾ cup sorghum molasses
⅓ cup melted shortening
1 cup oatmeal
2¼ cups flour
¼ teaspoon soda
½ teaspoon each nutmeg, cinnamon, salt, and baking powder
1 teaspoon ginger
½ cup raisins (optional)
½ cup nuts (optional)

Procedure
Beat the egg and add it to the brown sugar. To that mixture, add the sorghum molasses and then gradually add the melted shortening. Mix together the dry ingredients, and add them to the egg mixture. Beat well. If desired, add raisins and nuts. Drop the mixture spoon by spoon on an oiled pan and bake in a preheated 375-degree oven for 15 minutes.

Hemp

In a number of central Kentucky counties, hemp was raised as an agricultural crop and used for the production of rope, twine, and fabric. Hemp production was especially important in central Kentucky in the nineteenth century, before it was declared illegal because it is the same species as marijuana *(Cannabis sativa)*, although it contains limited amounts of the latter's psychoactive compounds. During World War II, hemp could be produced legally again to replace foreign sources that were no longer available, but one had to obtain a federal permit to raise it.

William Singer of Scott County described his experiences:

> The biggest thing that was raised on our farm was hemp. Hemp was the number one crop back around the turn of the century or before, back in the 1880s, 1870s, 1890s, along in there. I've heard 'em talk about it. And even during World War II, I was about thirteen [or] fourteen years old then, and the government gave us a contract to grow hemp because of the supply of burlap and jute and rope material was cut off from India. And, of course, they used the hemp to make ropes and I guess bags, burlap bags maybe. We had a contract with the government to grow up to forty acres of hemp back during World War II. That has really come home to haunt us because now there's still wild hemp that grows all over the farm and grows in the fence holes and sinkholes, and you're always having to pull it up and destroy it because it's not hemp anymore, it's marijuana. [Growing hemp is like growing other row crops.] You go out and plow your land, drag it down, cut and harrow it, and you just take a seed drill and drill it in like you would wheat or soybeans. It's usually [planted in] small rows of it

real, real close together. [Because of this] it requires no cultivation or anything because once you get it in the ground, it's really a fast-growing and aggressive plant. And all back when we were growing it for the government, I've seen it as high as eight or nine feet tall.

[It was] real funny, . . . when they would cut it and be harvesting it for the government you would have trash, some of it would break off. And you would rake it up and burn it. You'd burn your trash and, of course, nobody had any idea then, but if you got downwind of it, you'd hear the people just hollering and laughing and having the biggest time in the world. And they were wondering, what in the world was wrong with 'em. You're out in that hot sun about ninety degrees working and hollering and laughing and slapping each other on the back. 'Course, you know, that was before people got smart, and knew what it would do.

You would have to cut it. Back earlier they had what you called hemp hooks. You would just go in and slash and cut it. But they finally found a binder-type of apparatus that would work just like a sickle mower. Have a blade and the blade would go back and forth, and you would drive real slow and you would just cut it off even in the ground. [There was] a binder [that worked on] the same principle as they did when they cut the wheat. A binder will cut it up in a small little bundle and tie one string around it. [It was] about eighteen inches around, something like that. A wheat bundle would be about fifteen inches around. And then you'd come back later and pick up the bundles. We just put 'em on the truck and they processed 'em. I think the government had a place in Versailles [Woodford County] where they processed it. They didn't process it on the farm.

Turner Dunlap of Fayette County described what was done with the harvested hemp: "[It was] stacked like corn and then you'd want it to dry there and then later on, they'd take this shock down and lay it out on the fields just the way it was scattered when you cut it. And that's to rot it. So you rot the pith away from the outside surface which makes the string. And it was an interesting process and a very difficult thing to do."

Singer described the details of producing hemp for the government during World War II:

> It was a contract with the Department of Agriculture. They furnished us the seed and the seed had to be really well accounted for. I mean, you had to have planted all of it. You couldn't have kep' any back to plant later. And then of course they would have a government inspector there when it was planted [and] it was harvested. To make sure that all of it was planted. And all of it was harvested. You had to sign for the seed. And you had to sign when the harvest was complete that there was not anymore on the farm and that, you know, basically the agreement had to be signed and that both sides had lived up to their obligation. And they guaranteed you so much to do it. Really, you were just workin' for them. You were just a contract agent for the government.
>
> 'Course hemp was one of the big farm things back then because we used to have an old building down on the farm that lightning hit it, later burned, which we called it the hemp house because when the hemp was, that's where we stored it. They would take it out in what they called breakin' hemp. And then when they got it broke, got the fiber out of it, they would, you know, take it to Delaplain and ship it on the railroad to Cincinatta. I guess Cincinnata was the destination where it would be shipped to. [To break hemp] they would cut it and then you would have a board-type thing and, and you would have some levers that went up and down. And that would break it and that would separate the fibers. Separate the good from the bad. Separate the real, the real woody, the real hard stuff from your fine stuff. Your fibers that you made rope out of. I assume [that's] what they did with it. I've always heard that it was used mainly in the makin' of rope. When we raised it for the government it was hauled completely off the farm. I'm sure the government had mechanical means to break it and to process it, but back when my great-grandfather [was raising hemp] it was just did manually. [There would be] some big black men out there, you know, manually operatin', you know, the hemp break. But 'course the government, they just hauled it away. Put it on a truck and hauled it away. And I un-

derstand, I think Versailles was one of the processing points. And Lexington coulda been. Possibly Louisville. Louisville, I think some of it was taken to Louisville. But it was hauled away because they were in complete control of it and 'course you could process it manually with machinery a whole lot better than you could by hand, you know. They had ways to do it. They took care of it. They hauled it off. They'll give you your money. That's the last you saw of it. After it was cut and, and loaded on the truck. That was it. [When my great-grandfather was growin' it] they processed it on the farm. They would burn the wood stuff and the residue from processing it ever' night. And they would say that they didn't see how in the world that they were so happy after a hard day's work, but I guess inhalin' some of the smoke.

[The program to raise hemp for the government] was advertised in the local newspaper. And anyone that was interested in doing it, and 'course several of the larger landowners responded to it. I believe that there was an individual came in from the government. I think his office was at the post office. I think he came there, and you know, took the applications and interviewed the people and found out whether you were capable of doing it. Whether you were interested [and] would do a good job, and whether you were trustworthy or not. That was very important at the time because it was part of the war effort and they wanted someone that would basically deliver the goods so to speak. [They were concerned about] your financial ability. How much available labor you had. Whether your land was good enough to grow it on. For example, they wanted you to have a good level tillable field. They, you know, wouldn't be interested with someone that lived in, for example, northern Scott County that had a real hilly, rough, rocky farm. They wanted good, tillable, fertile land 'cause it takes fertile ground to grow it in. [To] really make it, make good hemp. Make it, you know, worthwhile.

The field crops that were the farms' biggest moneymakers were tended mostly by men. It required a lot of hard work to get them sown, tended, and harvested. Women helped by weeding the fields and taking care of the food needs of the workers and the hired help. Harvesting and

processing the crops often required extra labor and specialized equipment that had to be hired, such as that to thresh wheat, mill corn and wheat, and make sorghum syrup. Except for tobacco, most crops were consumed by the family or by their animals; some was sold, and some was shared among neighbors and family and others in need. With tobacco and hemp, farmers provided some after-harvest processing before shipping the crop to manufacturers, which involved some special skills, knowledge, and equipment.

Chapter 7

Keeping Livestock

A farm was considered incomplete without livestock, and virtually every farm had a diversity of animals. The purpose of livestock was quite different from the situation today. This livestock was raised for home consumption and, in the case of horses, mules, and occasionally oxen, traction. Pigs and chickens were fed farm and household wastes. Many farm families also sold livestock or livestock-derived products such as eggs, cream, milk, and even cured meats off the farm. Today, livestock production is much more specialized and market focused.

The basic complement of farm animals reflected the complex needs of families. Florene Smith of Letcher County described the situation on the eastern Kentucky farm where she was raised: "We always had a horse or a mule. That was our work source. We always had a cow and sometimes two because that was our milk source. We had hogs and chickens and ducks, and that was about the limit. But we always had chickens for eggs and we had hogs for meat. My daddy didn't raise beef to eat, but we always had hog, pork meat. And we had ducks for feathers. We had feather beds."

Some farmers also kept flocks of sheep, although these animals were more important in specific regions. Many central Kentuckians noted that sheep were a significant aspect of farming until the early 1960s, and eastern Kentuckians also mentioned them. Geese were not common anywhere, but for some reason, geese were often part of a good story and appeared in the narratives with some regularity.

The animals that formed the foundation of the Kentucky farmers' herds and flocks had been brought to the state by the original settlers.

Most came over the mountains, through Cumberland Gap, and down the Ohio River and were off-loaded at Maysville (Clark 1977, 24–41). Early Kentucky cattle, horses, hogs, and sheep reflected the animal populations from which they were descended. These animals had characteristics that were more suited to survival on limited resources than production for the market. For example, the hogs were leggy, were slow growers, and had long snouts; they tended to be more bony than fatty or meaty and were quite independent. Starting in the early nineteenth century, some farmers, especially wealthy ones, changed the genetics of their flocks and herds through production-oriented breeding with purebred animals of English origin. In the case of hogs, early sources mention Berkshire and Hampshire, as well as American breeds such as Duroc and Poland China. Two hundred years later, there is still concern with animal genetics and production.

Hogs

In the early part of the twentieth century, hogs were allowed to run "free range" in the forest, at least part of the time, where they ate acorn and beechnut mast. Farrowing would occur out in the woods, and the sows would arrive at the farmstead two or three weeks later with their new litter of piglets in tow. Feeding the pigs kept them more or less tame and attached to a particular place. Columbus M. Sexton of Letcher County recalled how the hogs were marked for identification purposes: "We often marked 'em. Each [of the families that lived in the neighborhood] had their own mark. We'd mark the hogs' ears by cutting on 'em, to identify 'em by families. And we were able to keep up with ours, and of course, we had a few sows that ran loose and, of course, the boars were with them. We'd have, oh, forty, fifty pigs to sell at the end of the year."

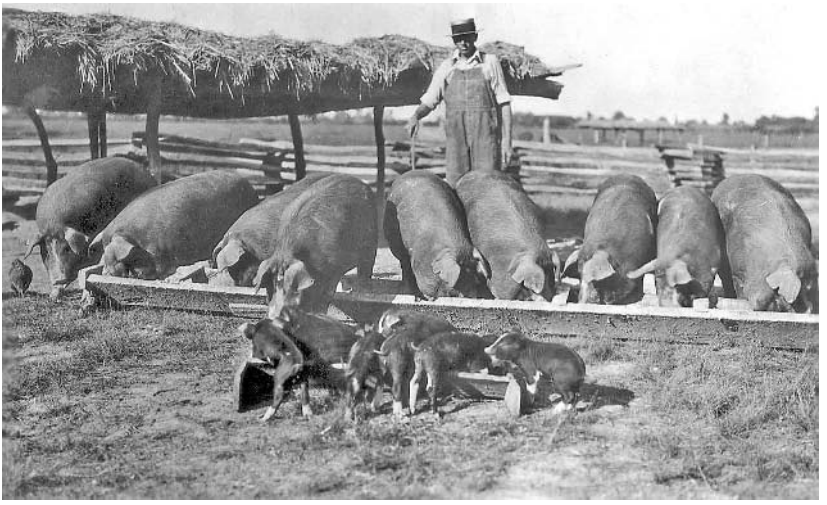
Free-ranging hogs often caused problems in the neighborhood, rooting up people's gardens and breaking through fences. As a result, stock laws were passed that required all animals to be kept behind a fence or in a pen. Thus, hog lots became a part of farm life. These were considered somewhat dangerous, according to Clara Garrison (Bourbon County): "They never would let me go close to the hog lot when I was little. They was scared I'd get in there and get killed."

Confinement in hog lots increased the number of chores associated with keeping hogs. Florene Smith said, "You had to carry water

to hogs every [day]. [You had to carry] all they drank. There was a big trough. Dad would make troughs out of wood boards, big wide boards, and you'd take and pour that in it, and it'd be watertight. It'd hold water. But the hogs would lay in it. I remember they'd lay in it and, well, you'd have to get in there and clean them. [My brothers] would drag [the trough] out [when] it was muddy. They had to clean out those troughs and water 'em."

Hogs were fed both corn and household garbage and kitchen scraps. Mrs. Smith recalled, "After supper my brothers would have to go feed the hogs. We'd save the dishwater. The water had lye soap in it and they said that was good for hogs. They'd carry the scraps, like all the potato peelings, all of the scraps from the dinner, all of the leftovers that had gone bad or any of that type of thing, we'd call that slop, and they'd have to slop the hogs. They'd have to carry that, and we'd have big buckets, [and] we'd pour all that in [the feeding trough]."

Unlike today, when sows are culled after only two or three litters, farmers kept their breeding stock for quite a long time. And because pigs continue to grow throughout their lives, both boars and sows could get very large; thousand-pound boars were not unheard of. The boars and sows had to be kept in different lots until the desired breeding time, and while sows could be trouble enough, boars were especially



Feeding pigs in Daviess County. (Kentucky Historical Society)

difficult to manage—not to mention mean. Thus, one of the early uses of electrical fences in Kentucky agriculture was for boar lots.

Typically, farms had two to eight brood sows, each of which could produce two litters a year. Farmers tried to have all the piglets born within a ten-day period; the piglets were weaned at about six weeks and then put in a pen for feeding. If properly fed, the pigs grew fast, reaching 180 to 200 pounds in about six months. Back then, the animals had much more fat—perhaps two or three inches—than they do today because of the high value placed on lard. Hogs were generally raised so that they would be ready to butcher around Thanksgiving. On Kentucky farms, hogs provided meat, lard, and income with a minimal cash investment. (See chapter 11 for more on hogs and pork products.)

Hogs were very much a part of rural Kentucky culture, but starting in the 1950s, there was an increased concentration of hog production. This meant that farms raised fifty to sixty hogs instead of five or six. In the 1980s and 1990s, hog production became even more concentrated, with fewer farms raising hundreds of hogs each. The waste produced by this concentration caused serious environmental problems. Also, new lean and quick-growing breeds were developed and raised.

Cows

To ensure a continual supply of milk (cows cycle in and out of lactation, depending on fertility), many households had three or four cows. According to Tim Taylor, "We always had about four cows that we got our milk from, not all at the same time. This [means] we had always had a cow in milk, or two, or three, in milk." Ella V. Preston of Letcher County thought of having a milk cow as automatic. "I don't think we even had any discussion about it. It was just understood we'd have a cow. Everybody did. There wasn't a one around our neighbors, nobody, except what had their cows. Now, not everybody kept a plow animal. Just a few of those, but everybody kept cattle and that. You didn't have milk if you didn't keep a cow unless you found somebody that might have a little extra to spare."

Households consumed milk, buttermilk, cream, skim milk, and cottage cheese, but there was no mention of the home production of other types of cheese. In some places in the 1950s, farmers supplied milk to cheese factories owned by companies such as Kraft. In the

days when families had only a few cows for mostly household use, the preferred breed was either Jersey or Guernsey, because these types produced milk with a high butterfat content, and these farmers were interested in making—and perhaps selling—butter and cream. Later, specialized dairy producers had Holstein herds because that breed produced more milk with a lower butterfat content.

The birthing of a cow could be difficult for the family, especially if it happened in the winter. Lawrence Simpson of Paris (Bourbon County) reflected on his experience: "We spend a good deal of time with calving in the wintertime. And it's great when things go well. And then there's some times when it doesn't go very well. And then we have a good many times when you have a calf who's got to have some help for one reason or another. Either its momma doesn't have enough milk, or it's cold, gotten cold or they need to be bottled. If it's very cold or wet we have to bring them into the barn and dry them off and warm them up and get them on their feet. Once they can get on their feet they've got a good chance. And if they can't get on their feet, you can write them off. So occasionally we have to bring one home, keep it in the kitchen over night. We've had a little of everything in the kitchen. We had a pig in the kitchen once. I remember that didn't turn out too well either. I think we've done pretty well on a lot of these. Some of them will work. Sometimes it hadn't."

The heifers produced by milk cows were used to replace older cows that were less productive. Bull calves were usually castrated; some were raised as steers or sold off as feeders. Clara Garrison said, "At times when there was a calf, we would let him have most of the milk, just what it took. If we had three cows and three calves, well, we'd maybe get a teat or so from each cow, so that we let the calves keep on eating and growing, you know. Sometimes, we turned that calf out if it was a heifer, we'd turn that calf out, you know, to make a cow. And then sometimes we'd sell it if it wasn't what Dad wanted."

Households with milk cows had to devise ways of keeping the milk fresh. Florene Smith said, "We would hang our milk in the well to keep it cool. They had what they called coolers. And it was nothing but a long slim container with a tight-fitting lid that was watertight. And everybody hanged their milk in their water well. And it was cool down underground. You'd bring it up it'd be about fifty [degrees], fifty-five to sixty, because the well was deep and you'd hang it with a rope. You'd fasten the rope at the top. We'd only have sweet milk at night be-

cause that's when we eat our leftover bread and our leftover food, and we always had sweet milk at night. But in the daytime we could drink warm buttermilk. It didn't matter. Normally the nights were cooler and [my mother] milked at night. Well, that milk, by morning it would be at night temperatures. So we'd drink that milk in the morning. I can't remember hanging milk in the well at night. Maybe she did in the real hot times. But in the daytime we'd [always] hang that milk in the well. And then finally Dad dug a little cellar out back in the bank and put a little front kind of a shed on it with a little door, and we'd put our butter in there. But most of the time we just we'd have to eat soft butter. She'd have to put it in a bowl because it'd melt right [away]. You couldn't put it like on a butter plate."

Milk was made into butter using a churn, of which there were a number of varieties. Clarence Wells (Harlan County) said, "I used an old wood one with a dasher. I've used the old earthenware [type] with the dasher. And I've used the kind that had a top on it and a rotating thing [where you] had [the] cream in a half-a-gallon jar and swished it back and forth." Nancye Stamper (Lee County) recalled, "We all made butter. You churned it. You put the churn on the hearth at night. In the summertime, all you have to do is set it out on the table. [The milk] would curdle. When it would curdle, you would churn that and the butter comes to the top. And then you dip that butter off. We had a little mold. My daddy made it. We didn't always mold it, but if company was comin' we had to mold the butter. You'd put this butter in a bowl and you whipped it. And then when you whipped it through this water, that caused the, the milk to be out, and all you had then was the pure butter. And so, we always had the butter for breakfast." Cream that had soured, or "clabbered," produced better results because the souring helped the butter form more quickly; it also improved the flavor. Salt was added to enhance the flavor further and act as a preservative.

Even with a small number of animals, it was possible to produce a surplus of milk products and sell them. Families who lived near enough to manufacturers were able to sell their cream directly; it was then used primarily to produce butter and ice cream in places like Cincinnati. James Jones of Robertson County recalled taking a five-gallon can of cream and getting $2.50 for it at the Tri-State Creamery in Mt. Olivet. Cream and other related farm products were also sold to agents at cream stations (Dorr 1921, 15–16, 25). Cream stations were

Churning butter on the front porch, Breathitt County, 1940. (Marion Post Wolcott, Library of Congress, Farm Security Administration)

licensed and regulated, and the people at the station would test the cream for butterfat content (using the Babcock test) and pay on that basis. Although cream stations paid lower prices than direct sales to manufacturers, they had advantages, including quicker payment, immediate return of the cream can, and the opportunity to take care of

other business on the same trip, since cream stations were often linked to general stores. The station operator weighed the cream and prepared a check, which the farmer could use to buy groceries and other supplies. It was also a good opportunity to spend some time in town visiting with neighbors.

These small-scale milk production systems were highly integrated. William Singer (Scott County) described how everything fit together on his boyhood farm in central Kentucky: "We never did have a dairy, but when my grandmother lived, we milked four or five cows a day. And, of course, we made our own butter. Had a churn. Ever since I was big enough, it was my job to churn to make the butter. 'Course, we produced our own butter. And, 'course, we had our own fresh milk to drink. And then, 'course, we sold cream. You'd skim the cream off. [The milk] would clabber and the cream would come to the top. We would sell the cream. Get five gallons or ten gallons of cream that we put it in five-gallon cans, and then I'd take it to the train station and ship it to Cincinnati. Five gallons of cream was a big thing then. And like I say, we milked five or six cows and milked 'em twice a day. And, 'course, after we skimmed the milk, the clabber and the milk what we had, we'd feed that to the hogs. I mean [there] was nothing on the farm was ever wasted. You fed your scraps out of the kitchen. You had your slop bucket. That went to the hogs. The milk you didn't drink, after you skimmed the cream off of it, that went to the hogs. And then you would let it set and then you'd pour it in the churn, and when you needed butter, then you would churn your butter out of it, and that was a hard job. You turned that churn manually, and you would have to turn that churn for an hour and a half, two hours before you got your butter. And then after you got your butter out, then you would take the milk you had left in it and put it in the icebox or refrigerator and cool it. Then you had buttermilk. You didn't waste anything. And that's why people then, 'course they may not think so, but people then, they were far better [off] than they [are] today because you didn't have anything to spend money for. There was nothing to spend money for. You had everything on the farm that you needed. And there's nothing any better than buttermilk with specks of butter floating around in it. You know, that was as good a drink as you could find anywhere."

A cream separator was often part of the household's basic equipment. Invented in the nineteenth century, it made use of centrifugal

force to separate the skim milk from the cream. De Laval was a widely used brand manufactured by the company founded by and named for the original inventor, a Swede. The separator features a large metal bowl that is rotated by either a hand crank or an electric motor. The rotation forces the skim milk out of the bowl and into a container, removing almost all the fat from the milk in the process. Virgil Fair of Casey County said, "I separated the cream. Didn't fool with the milk, just took the cream off. I had a separator, used to take the cream off of the milk as soon as you milked it. You'd take it to town and sell it for so much a pound, you know. Pour the milk out to the hogs, put some feed in it. [The separator] it's a machine that's got a big bowl up there, you pour the milk over there, and when it's warm, as soon as you milk it, and it's got about twenty-five little disc[s] in a spool. And the milk goes through that, has two prongs out here, and the milk goes one way, and the cream another. [We would take] five, or ten, fifteen gallons of cream to town every weekend, sell it, and buy groceries. Seem to me like we got about eight dollars a can."

Cream separation entailed a lot of hard work, as described by Ola Bell Edds of McLean County in western Kentucky:

> Daddy milked about three cows. And we separated the milk. Ran it through a cream separator and sold the cream at a local store. Well, it was a job I always wished I had an older brother to do. When the milk was freshly milked, we poured it into this device that separated the cream from the milk. It wasn't run by 'lectricity, you turned it by hand. And 'bout onst the week, the cream was taken to the local store and sold. It was tested down there for what percentage was butterfat. I don't know what it brought. But it helped put me through school. It bought lunches and helped with the groceries.
>
> [We had to clean the separator every day.] That's kindly hard to do. It had a lotta parts to it. And it had these little things they called discs that stacked up. And the milk runs through that, through these discs out spouts. And how it really, how it separated I do not know. But it was a terrible task of washin' that thing every day. And we started out with a small one. We had to turn it by hand. And then, later on, we [acquired] my uncle's used one, which was a large one. Held more milk. And my father rigged it up with an electric motor

> on it. Where you didn't have to turn it. I'll say it held about three gallon of milk. [The larger one] it prob'ly held five gallon. I'm not sure how much larger it was. It was on a stand, and the first one we had was a portable. I have done it. But Father and Mother done it most because I woulda been in school. I think I turned it mostly at night or in the summertime. And that milk was taken, that went through the separator, we had some hogs. And he fed milk to the hogs. Sold the cream to the local store, [a] grocery at Beech Grove. They had a little room in the back they called the cream room. I think it was onst the week that we would take it down. Prob'ly on a Saturday. [The truck] would come and pick it up. I do know that when we lived in the tenant house. I was born in the tenant house, and I was six years old when we moved down here. And I think we had the little cream separator when we lived up there. And I remember durin' the '37 flood, they did not pick up the cream. We could not sell it so often. And I can remember us gettin' large containers and we had to keep it a long time. And it didn't matter if it soured or it didn't. 'Cause we didn't have any refrigeration. Nobody did. And they did not keep it refrigerated in the stores either. And that was one mess. One job I hated, cleanin' up the mess [after separating the cream]. We didn't have any runnin' water then, either. That was just, that was a chore.

Some farms developed larger dairy operations, and these underwent significant changes over time. "[We had] a family dairy. We'd usually milk about sixty cows. We'd keep about, we'd try to keep thirty-five on the line all the time. And we breed, we bred artificial and we had some high-producin' cows. When I sold the dairy in '77, they were producin', I believe the herd average was close to 15,000 pounds per cow. 'Course they've got 'em today that's improved over that. We had pipeline milkers. But we started out with milkin' by hand. And then we went to cow-to-can. They had milkers to go from the cow directly into the can. And then we went from that to pipeline milkers. Went grade A. We sold to Southern Belle Dairy at Somerset, Kentucky. All durin' our milkin' for grade A. And, we had pipelines. We'd bring it back to the bulk tank. We'd bring a little cooler and [a] bulk truck come and picked our milk up. We sold cream first. When we first started. Had

Cattle in Fayette County, 1940. (Marion Post Wolcott, Library of Congress, Farm Security Administration)

just a few cows. We sold cream. Then we sold what they call grade C. I don't know how they class it, but it's [used to produce] canned milk. And we sold grade C for several years. And then we went grade A.* [There was] a little plant at Liberty [that took grade A milk]. And we sold there just a little while before we sold at Somerset. I don't [know] if Kraft got that or Cudahy. I may have sold to both of 'em. After I got grade A it was [always my biggest source of income]" (Sterling Smithers, Casey County).

In addition to milk, cows were raised for meat. Today, herds of beef cattle are a common sight in central Kentucky. There were attempts from early times to improve the genetic potential for meat production. In the past, however, there were only a few different breeds of beef cattle raised; the dominant breeds were British, such as Hereford,

* Grade A milk was produced to drink and was subject to more rigorous health and quality-control regulations. Grade C was used to manufacture milk products such as cheese.

Shorthorn, and Angus. Most central Kentucky communities now have a much wider variety of breeds, including Charolais, Limousin, and Simmental, as well as Hereford and Angus.

Some farmers raised cattle for sale. William Singer, a cattle farmer from Scott County, summarized his experiences:

> We've always had a bunch of cattle, feeder calves, cows, and calves. My grandmother had cattle. My mother had cattle. We always been in the feeder calf business. Sell your feeder calves when they weigh about 500 pounds. And then when your cows get old, cull them out and either save or buy your heifers. 'Course, I always save heifers out of the herd and let them grow up and just make cows out of them. The cattle that we have on the farm has been on the farm all my life and longer than that. We never buy any new cows, we just change bulls. Buy bulls, new bulls so that they won't become inbred. But we just keep the same herd there. There's every color there in the rainbow. I always say I might not have the best herd in the county, but I got the most colorful herd.
>
> There's a lot of pleasure to [raising cattle] and a lot of grief. 'Course, cattle require a lot of care. For example, like you save a heifer out that's going to be a cow. You breed her when she's about eighteen months or twenty months old. And it takes nine months gestation for her to have a calf. And then, really, you have to watch her very close when she has the first calf because she may have problems having it and you may have to manually help her have the calf. But after she has the first calf, ninety-nine and a half percent sure that she'll never have anymore problems having another calf. And, really, you keep her until she's fourteen or fifteen years old until you see that she's deteriorating as a cow. You can, of course, if you've got the trained eye like I have, you can just about tell how long a cow's got to live or die. And when she starts to look bad a little, cull her out and take her to Lexington and sell her as a pound cow, and then save you another heifer out.
>
> [The cattle business] has had less change to it than anything. Back when I first started out there were a few people that liked to feed cattle here themselves, that liked to put the

> feeder calves in a pen and crush corn and feed 'em and fatten 'em out themselves. But that was never a big operation here. The feeder calf business, from the time I was, ten, twelve years old hasn't changed very much. It's still basically that the cow have the calf and raise the calf herself and feed 'em out there. They'd stay out in the field.

Beef cattle were not the animals of choice for home consumption in the early days. The traditional techniques of food preservation just did not work well with beef. In addition, producing beef at the household level was what economists call "lumpy," meaning that it happened all at once. A farmer slaughtered a cow and then had hundreds of pounds of meat that he had to eat, store, or sell before it spoiled. Prior to the advent of freezing, people used an organizational solution to the problem of lumpiness and spoilage. Groups of twelve to fifteen neighbors formed what were called meat companies. The group met weekly (only during the summer) and slaughtered a cow; members took turns supplying the animal, and the slaughtering took place at that person's farm. The cow would be cut up into the same number of pieces as there were members, and there was a rotation system so that each participant would get a different cut of meat each time. One member of the group usually had special skill as a butcher, but this earned him no special treatment or compensation. The size of the group related to amount of meat that could be used in a week without going bad. As Christine Sims said, "A week was about all [it would last], you wouldn't get any more than you could take care of in a week's time because you had no way to keep meat in those days" (van Willigen 1978–1980).

Farmers often did their own "doctoring" when it came to cattle. It was just too expensive to call a veterinarian, if in fact one was even available. Alvin Leach of Bourbon County related his father's cure for bloat: "He'd have a calf that'd be bloated or something, why he would take clabbered milk and put about a quart jar, milk bottle, fill that half full, and fill the rest full of coal oil. Stirred it up, it was the awfulest looking stuff ever you've seen. And then catch that calf and pour it down. The doctor told him one time, said, that'll save that doctor bill if you want to do that. I'll save the bill. Never did lose another calf. Never did have very many though that was bloated. Seven, eight in my lifetime."

Sheep

Sheep raising was an important part of many farm enterprises in some areas of Kentucky, Prior to the 1960s, many central Kentucky farms had a flock of sheep along with the ubiquitous cattle and hogs. According to the 1935 Census of Agriculture, the ten Kentucky counties with the most sizable sheep populations were all in the central part of the state, although all counties had some sheep. Surprisingly, statewide, there were a few more sheep than hogs in 1935 (U.S. Department of Agriculture 1935, 557–89).

Some counties were well suited to sheep production. Willard Varner spoke of his experiences in the rolling hills of Nicholas County: "When I was a boy, every farm down there had sheep. And one or two cows. Some horses. And that's what my father had. [He] run about a hundred sheep, and we had twelve, fifteen head of cows, milk cows." Sheep tended to do well on sloped land. Varner said, "It was a fine place for sheep 'cause that type of land has a lot of weeds and all, and everything like that. And sheep does good on that kind of land. It's drained. And you don't have much disease when you have sheep on that kind of land that you do on level land. On level land, the disease stays without washing off. On steep land, disease tends to wash off more. They had the foot rot. That put a lot of people out of business."

The foundation flocks consisted of "native" stock derived from the sheep brought over the mountains when the state was originally settled, although the latter's actual origins were unclear. These animals produced offspring easily, were hardy, and had good mothering and milking characteristics. On the downside were their lack of size, slow growth, late maturity, and poor confirmation (that is, they were not good mutton producers); in addition, they had poor, coarse fleece. Early on, "improved" breeds were introduced, with the typical flock development strategy, if there was one, being to breed "native" ewes (some sources mentioned "common mountain ewes") with "improved" rams. As with hogs and cattle, the early improved rams tended to be English breeds, particularly Southdown, which was a premier meat lamb of the era; also mentioned were Hampshire, Shropshire, Dorset, and Cheviot, all of which were better known for their meat than their fleece. These purebreds were contrasted with "scrub rams" (Horlacher 1921, 16), which might cost 75 percent less and were far more common than purebred animals. The head of the University of Kentucky's

Sheep grazing on a farm near Lexington, Fayette County, 1940. (Marion Post Wolcott, Library of Congress, Farm Security Administration)

Animal Science Department wrote, "Eighty percent of the flocks in Kentucky are headed by grade [with one purebred parent] and scrub rams" (Horlacher 1921, 16).

The production system was something like a cow-calf operation. Farmers raised sheep primarily for the lambs; wool was a secondary consideration. While the bred ewes completed the approximately five-month gestation period, they had to be carefully monitored. Typically, these ewes were segregated in the barn, housed in small, temporary pens made of movable panels (Miller 1938, 4–5). Although the ewes gave birth without much help, farmers had to make sure that they did not trample their offspring and began to care for the new lambs properly. Lambs are born wet and need to be groomed by the ewe to keep them from freezing. Some farmers kept a dog in a nearby pen in the belief that the ewes' fear of dogs would increase the likelihood that they would care for their lambs. The lambs were sold for slaughter at about six months of age. The goal was to have them weigh between 110 and 120 pounds and to sell them "right off their mother." The market for lambs was very good, and farmers were able to get good prices because they could produce high-quality animals during a short period in the spring when there was no competition from producers in

other regions. In addition, the wool of the breeding herd was sheared and sold.

Lambing was seasonal to take advantage of the spring market. According to Eugene Kiser, "You lambed in the fall. January. Last of February, first of January. See you want to get that spring lamb. That's when the top price of the lamb is. And get 'em around that 100 pound or a little better for the spring lamb. That was the ideal time." Because of this, the lambing season could be difficult. Kiser said, "Lambs were usually born in the daggone coldest weather that could be. They would start being born about Christmas, and you tried to be done by mid to late January. And lambs are very fast growing. They would be mature enough to sell now about mid-June, early June, late May. If the lambs came early about the first part of December, they would be ready to sell by Memorial Day. That would be what you would shoot for because that would be the best lamb market, really, around Memorial Day." There was a market on the East Coast for Kentucky spring lambs.

A frequently mentioned problem associated with sheep raising was predatory dogs. Some farmers even got out of sheep production because of this. Ella Preston said, "And the dogs would come from Whitesburg. They'd hunt here in this hill. [We] kept 'em back in there in the field and they'd kill the sheep till you just about had to sit with your shotgun to keep the dogs out of 'em. They've lost high as five at a time from dogs." Often the dogs were owned by neighbors, which led to conflict.

The wool produced by the sheep added to the farmer's income. According to William Singer:

> [Shearing] would take place in early to mid-April because, again, like picking geese, you would shear the sheep when you figured that it would be warm enough where if it turned real cold or you had a sudden change, where it wouldn't make 'em sick, wouldn't given 'em pneumonia or something [like] that. [So] taking the wool off of 'em wouldn't be adverse to their health.
>
> And, of course, sheep shearing then was a pretty big thing. 'Course, we'd always do that in the spring. We always had a pretty good bunch of sheep and we would shear the sheep. We would have sheep shearing time. We'd shear 'em about the latter part of April. Just drive 'em up in the barn. And there

were crews went around. That's what they did, you know, for a livelihood was shearing sheep. And they'd go around and, 'course, our job, what we had to do, was to catch 'em. The man sheared 'em, then he would lay it down on the ground and have a gasoline engine–powered shears, or some of 'em had hand-turned shears. And they would shear 'em and I think then they got maybe fifty cents a sheep for shearing 'em. And the sheep would turn out about seven or eight pounds of wool per sheep.

Then you'd get a couple of dollars a pound for it. You would get probably sixteen dollars per sheep. That was big money then. [Now the price of wool is very low.] It will cost you more to get the sheep sheared than the wool will bring. Then you could get it sheared for a half dollar and get fourteen, fifteen dollars out of it. Now it will cost you, say, four or five dollars to get the sheep sheared, and the wool is worth two or three dollars. The government gives you a little support price on wool now. You just about break even if you have sheep on a farm.

Others also spoke of the decrease in the price of wool. Ella Preston said, "Every spring my mother'd shear 'em. She was left-handed, but she could use that left hand better than most people can their right. And my job was to hold their heads. I had to hold their heads down. And every once in a while with those big old shears she'd nip 'em, nip the skin and the sheep would jump. I don't believe we ever kept more than ten. They sent [the wool] off to a buyer. And the way they'd send it, they sewed burlap bags together and make great big sacks and send it in. And usually they'd just exchange it for something. I know they got blankets at different times. In fact, I've got some of those wool blankets here yet. They're pretty scratchy. I don't like to sleep under 'em, but I kept 'em. And then finally they got to just letting 'em send money, but the wool prices got low and they quit fooling with 'em."

Emma Ison (Letcher County) also remembered helping with the shearing and selling the wool: "And they would shear the wool them days and sell [it]. That helped, you know, for some little bit of the income that we got. We would help [my mother]. She mostly sheared them. My dad would help her some too if he was there. But she mostly sheared the sheep with the help of us children, you know, holding them such as that for her. And then they'd send it to Louisville. The

wool and sell it. And them says now, that was some hard times. They'd get a dollar a pound for that wool. She sent it and would have blankets made, you know, with part of it. They'd take part of the wool and make blankets for you out of it. And then they would make what they called a wool flannel. And she'd take that wool flannel and make dresses for us children and for herself too. They'd make so much yardage, you know, of this and then so much blanket for part of it. And then if you didn't want that they just paid you for your wool." The wool had to be cleaned before it was sold. Ison said, "You had to pick all of the burrs, you know, where the sheep would be out in the woods. You had to pick it all out and wash it real good to send it to them."

In counties where sheep were raised, people developed a taste for lamb. A man from Robertson County said, "Lamb sure is good. When I had sheep I used to have it regular. I butchered about one a month, it sure was good eating." He sometimes did butchering for other farmers for a share of the meat. He said, "I used to butcher for [two other farmers]. I got a quarter for the butchering, [plus] one time I'd take a hindquarter, next time a shoulder." When one of the farmers complained that the charge was too high, he quit. He said, "The thing was

Preparing beef and lamb for a benefit picnic on the grounds of St. Thomas's Church near Bardstown, 1940. (Marion Post Wolcott, Library of Congress, Farm Security Administration)

the butchering ain't so much work, but the cleaning up after is a big chore, and getting rid of the offal is too, so I quit doing it" (van Willigen 1978–1980).

Some men traded in livestock, which often involved brokering between producers and the market. Various strategies were used, one of which was to buy young lambs that had not been "doctored" and resell them after they had been docked and treated for parasites. Traders often carried a cane with a crook that would be used to lift sheep by the neck to inspect their teeth. Another strategy was called "pinhooking." Pinhookers were classic middlemen who made money by arbitraging market differences. Pinhookers' success depended on their knowledge of the market. They would buy animals from farmers, presumably at a discount, and then auction the animals with the goal of making a profit. Pinhooking was also done with tobacco.

Hay and Pasture for Livestock

In the early days, little was known about hay and pasture management, and only a few types of grass were used for hay to feed the livestock. According to Eugene M. Kiser (Bourbon County), "[typical farmers] had a little piece of alfalfa that they used to try to, you know, get up for the sheep. And the balance of it was in bluegrass. Bluegrass in those days was your grass. Bluegrass or timothy. You didn't know anything about orchard grass. And fescue was a new grass and it had never been grown in this area. But bluegrass was the main thing."

Hay would be cut in June through August. Clarence Wells reported that in early times, "they'd wait 'til it'd get brown and cut it." But it was discovered that hay loses nutritional value when it gets too mature. "You want to cut it when it's green and in bloom, if you want to get good hay," he said. "That's when you cut it now." Hay was put into shocks after it was cut. Glen Vanoy of Casey County said, "Years ago, when they cut hay, they shocked it in little round piles out in the field. They called it shocking hay. And [a shock] was just about, maybe three feet high and three feet around. The children would use the mules to go around that little tiny shock of hay and somebody would be there to fasten the chain. It would go all round that. And that horse with that child on it would pull that hay up to the haystack. And then somebody would loose the chain and the child would go back to [get] another shock of hay. And somebody would be there with pitchforks

and they worked as, in a pair. And if they put their pitchforks in right and moved together, they could put that pile of hay up on the stack. That's the way you kept your hay before you started baling. You kept your hay like that."

Stacking the hay helped protect it from the elements. Willard Varner (Bourbon County) said, "We stacked our hay. You probably [have] seen stacks of hay built that way. They would shed water. We lost very little. We haul 'em in the wintertime, if we used hay. We had a two-horse sleigh. Had a frame out on it and me and my brother [would] haul that in and put it up on the loft. Try to get enough in and when that was gone, go out and get another. We'd pull that in the winter."

Mowing hay was an important activity. For most of his working life, Clyde Mullins (Fayette County) was an agricultural laborer in central Kentucky, and he had extensive experience mowing hay before tractors were used. "Mowing now, ain't nothing to it. Back in those days, you're driving old mules all day. [If the] mower hit a rock and it'd raise you up about that high. [They had] metal, iron seats. You fall out of your seat and you hit a big enough rock, bounce you out. Nowadays

Loading hay on a farm at Noctor, Breathitt County, 1940. (Marion Post Wolcott, Library of Congress, Farm Security Administration)

you can do as much in a hour as you could two days with an old mule in them days. You can do about a hundred acres a day now on a tractor. You couldn't put that much in a month with a pair of mules. Had five teams running up there and still [was slow going]. A six-foot cutter bar is what they had. Now I use a twenty-foot, twenty-one-foot back mower. Tractor, big tractors. We got about ten tractors now. These farm bosses back in those days rode horses. Wasn't nobody in a car back in those days rode but the manager. And the owners. That's it. Bosses, they rode horses. You didn't get no car to run around it. You rode that horse where you're going. All over this farm. Thirty-six hundred acres there at one time. 'Time you made your rounds, it's lunchtime time you got back. Now, you know, it's tractors, trucks. Go anywhere you want to."

Poultry

Poultry was an important part of the diet in rural Kentucky, as well as a reliable source of cash income. Chickens were raised by many households, and turkeys, guinea hens, ducks, and geese were mentioned as well. Egg gathering was a children's task and was frequently mentioned by the people interviewed. Glen Vanoy said, "The first things generally that kids did was gather eggs. That was kind of your starter. They would go to the henhouse and they would have the nest where you could peep over and see that there wasn't a snake in there, because snakes liked eggs. And you get the eggs and put 'em in your little bucket." Clarice McKinney (Rockcastle County) said, "The house wasn't underpinned. And the chickens, hens, would get up under the floor and make 'em a nest, you know. And my grandmother would send me up next to the chimley [chimney] to get the eggs. Maybe three times a week so she could have 'em to take to the store. And she, we'd go to the store and she'd give me one egg for doin' that. Each time. And I would git that one egg in candy. She'd [said] that was what she paid me for doin' it. And, and you got a good, fair-sized sack of candy for that. And I enjoyed that. Mama would do things like that for the children that helped her."

Egg production would decline during the winter, so in anticipation of this, some people stored eggs in a solution of sodium silicate, also called "water glass," that could be obtained from the drugstore. A single layer of eggs—clean and free of cracks—was placed in a crock,

and the water glass was poured in, covering the eggs. Although these eggs would last until spring, they declined in quality; the white became thinner, and the membrane that separated the yolk from the white became weaker. As spring approached, they were best used in baking and other recipes rather than for boiling or frying. As the weather improved in spring and early summer, egg production increased.

Eggs, along with other dairy products and garden vegetables, were incorporated into recipes prepared for the table. Corn pudding is a classic example, such as the following recipe contributed by Mrs. Paul Blandford to a Washington County Homemakers Club cookbook (1999, 33):

Ingredients
2 cups corn
2 tablespoons sugar
1 teaspoon salt
4 eggs
2 cups scalded milk
2 tablespoons melted butter

Procedure
Stir the corn, sugar, and salt together. Add the well-beaten eggs, followed by the scalded milk and the melted butter. Pour the mixture into a 2-quart casserole, place it in a pan of water, and bake for 1½ hours at 350 degrees. "Be sure to stir from bottom 2 or 3 times during baking."

Many people sold surplus eggs, and some even increased the size of their flocks with the goal of selling more eggs. Anna Burdette of Garrard County recalled her experiences raising chickens: "When we were raising chickens, 500 was the most that I ever raised. And we used those chickens, we sold the eggs. We had a little market in Danville [and] we went to folks' homes. Different people. [My husband] James used to work [at] what they called a re-dry tobaccer house. He worked there when we first got married. For a few winters. He didn't work all summer. But he worked in the wintertime. When, you know, tobaccer season was going on. And we got a market for our eggs with those people there. And we would take 'em to their homes. And anyone that wanted young fryer chickens, we dressed those and sell those.

That was some of our income. I did that myself. I would clean 'em and crate 'em up. [When cleaning eggs] I didn't put 'em in a lot of water. I would just take a damp cloth and wipe 'em clean. And put 'em in the carton. Some of the folks would save the cartons that we had and give 'em back to us each week so we wouldn't have [to] buy anymore. And then we would deliver 'em at night when we got through doing the rest of our work to different folks' homes. [The chickens] laid mostly every day. We did not get as many every day. And during the winter months, when it's real cold, they didn't lay real well. But we practically got eggs every day because we fed our chickens good. We fed 'em corn and laying mash. We had to buy that [laying mash] it wasn't as expensive then. When we started out laying mash is what they called it. It was little pellets. And we used that along with the corn. Because when you get chickens too fat with corn, they don't lay well. We always raised White Rocks. I think at one time we did have what they call Barred Rocks along with the White Rocks. But most of the time, as long as [we] could get them, we ordered 'em. Now when we first started out, they had hatcheries in Lexington and I believe Stanford at the time. That we would go there and buy our baby chicks. And we had two big, large brooders. They were metal. And we would turn our electricity on and the baby chicks would stay in there and stay warm. If we got 'em early, we usually would get 'em sometime in March. And it would be cool. And we'd use these brooders to keep 'em warm and we'd grow 'em up. In about eight weeks they would be frying size chickens. Pound and a half, two pounds. We could grow 'em in eight weeks. But it took some feed to do that. To grow 'em that fast. And then we would put what we wanted to eat in the locker plant. And then we'd pick our layers. James, he knew how to pick good laying hens. And he would go over the chickens and keep the best ones that he figured would be layers. That was ones we'd keep. And then the others, we'd kill for our use. Table use. [As I said we had a brooder] for the young chicks. And then we had this larger barn for the laying hens. He built both of those buildings. The brooder house had a floor in it. But the laying house did not. The chickens run on the ground. I guess we kept at least 100, maybe 150 of 'em at one time. We would get the 500 in the brooder house. But now we didn't get all of laying hens. We had roosters mixed with them. You'd lose some sometimes. But we never lost too many. We were good at raising 'em I must say. And we would kill all of the roosters. At first, we started to keeping a few roosters with the hens.

And then we decided, we learned that laying hens did just about as well without the roosters. So we killed the roosters. And keep 'em for our own use or sell 'em. [The dressing of the chickens] involved quite a bit of work, I can tell you that. Picking the feathers off and cutting the chickens if people wanted them cut up. Or if they wanted 'em whole, we'd just leave 'em whole for 'em. But that meant heating a lot of hot water and picking lots of chickens. That's the way you have to do. You heat [it]. If you heat it too hot, and you dip 'em, when you got to pick the feathers off the skin come off too. So just hot enough, you know, to get the feathers off. And we would pick those feathers off and fix those chickens up and drain 'em. [You would] drain 'em out of the water good so they wouldn't sour. And then sack 'em up and anyone wanted to buy 'em, we'd sell 'em to 'em. Or we'd put 'em in the locker for our use. And some we'd give to his mother and father. And his sister. [If] anyone came and wanted them, we'd sell them to 'em. But we carried them, mostly the folks that we sold eggs to. Lot of times. Most of the folks that we sold eggs to were right in Danville. And at night, early part of night when James would, if he was farming, we'd quit early enough that we'd go and just go from one house to the other. That's quite a job. [After a while] we begin to get rid of the chickens. We got rid of the main laying hens and all."

Chickens, eggs, and cream were often an important source of income for the family, and this was largely the work of women. Alvin Leach of Bourbon County said, "[Mother sold some of the chickens] and eggs. Sold cream right here [in town]. Bring it in here every Saturday. Bring the eggs and sell them up here. People had to hustle them days. But then when my daddy bought the first little farm we bought, thirty-nine acres, I believe it was, he well bought it. But he didn't, really didn't have enough money to pay down on it, and my mother said, 'Well, how much did you need?' And I forget what it was $10,000 or $12,000 more money. She wrote him a check for it. He didn't even know she had a dollar. Had it in the National Bank right over here. Sell them eggs and chickens and stuff, she put it in the bank, done that for years and years."

As people produced less of their own food, some would continue to raise animals for a portion of the life cycle. For example, it was common to purchase chicks in early spring and raise them to fryer size. As a consequence, some associated certain foods with certain times of the year. One woman from Robertson County said that her family

bought chicks with the goal having big enough birds by the Fourth of July. She fondly recalled eating chicken with the first tomatoes and garden-fresh green beans. Others recalled looking forward to eating fried chicken when it was tobacco time, early in June. As the cured pork got used up, the amount of chicken eaten increased, and summer was generally fried chicken time.

In addition to chickens, some raised geese. According to William Singer, "[Back in the] thirties, the early forties, we would take and pick the geese two or three times a year and my grandmother would make pillows out of it. Make what you'd call a feather bed. We would eat the goose eggs and we would sell geese at Thanksgiving and Christmas. Back then geese were probably more popular to sell than turkeys because geese were cheaper, and I don't know whether you've ever eaten a goose or not but, really, they're not as dry as a turkey. Their meat's a little darker, but goose meat, I like it as well or better than turkeys. And most people that bought 'em from us back then liked goose. I've picked geese. You take and put a goose down between your legs and the only feathers you ever picked off of it was the breast because that was your soft down-type feathers. You just take and put it down between your legs and make sure that they couldn't bite you 'cause a goose, they will bite you just like a dog, and then pick all the feathers off of its chest and turn it loose. Oh, it would look horrible [when you finished]. [It would look] like it had been in a windmill or something, but you come back about a month, six weeks later, and all those feathers had grown back. We'd pick about every two or three months. 'Course you wouldn't pick 'em in the winter because the feathers tend to, you know, protect 'em from the cold weather. But we'd pick 'em all spring and summer and then, you know, have the best pillows in the world there. Softest pillows you could find. Back then we would have about fifty or sixty [geese]. I have twenty out there now. Have twenty, and the geese have been there since [the family] moved there. When they moved in 1900 they brought geese with 'em, and there's geese been on that farm ever since then, [for] ninety-two years. [Now we still] eat the goose eggs. Take and scramble them with some hen eggs, but other than that they're just kind of pets. Just part of the landscape. You know, every pillow, every feather bed, everything [was made from that goose down]. [My grandmother] may have sold some pillows or something, but it was mainly for our use. She'd pick the geese about every three, three and a half months during the summer. Well, she would pick 'em

in the spring as soon as she thought that it was warm enough so that, for example, that they wouldn't get sick or the cold wind wouldn't give 'em pneumonia or something. And then you would do it up until, oh, mid-October, late October. And you would get about three pickings of feathers a year off of 'em. You'd probably have to pick a dozen geese to get a pillow. Or if she got enough pillows, she would keep her feathers and pool 'em and make a feather bed. She would keep 'em in bags. Keep 'em in sacks, or really take a sheet and just wrap 'em up in it. Just something so that they wouldn't blow around or somebody wouldn't give 'em a walking through and you'd kick 'em all over the house or something like that, you know."

Chickens were often retained even after the family stopped livestock production; they were often the last thing to go. Getting rid of the flock of chickens marked the end of an era. Ella Preston said, "So we got rid of our cow and our hogs, and I kept my chickens on until about three years ago, two or three years ago. I raised fryers for my freezer and I kept just a few layers for ourselves. I really was sorry to get rid of [my] chickens. I liked to raise them. I liked to spend time with them. But the feed was high and we had to buy it and we just decided it wasn't worth it. [My husband], by then, couldn't eat two eggs a week so it wasn't worthwhile. And we had to go on skim milk or 2 percent milk and no pork for him. He had angina. So it was necessary that we got rid of all that. It was our hog, I guess, totally, but our cow was a whole lot of trouble and we just decided we didn't care for that milk. It was too rich."

The diverse array of animals provided farmers with meat and animal products to eat, sell, and use for other household needs. During this time, livestock was kept mostly for household consumption and to raise a little cash.

Pigs were an excellent animal to raise. They were fed mostly household and farm scraps, and even dishwater was given to the hogs. They were therefore an efficient means of converting otherwise useless waste into a very desirable product—pork. Also, traditional methods of preservation worked well with pork. They produced a delicious meat that would last a very long time without refrigeration—a country ham could last years.

Cows were raised mostly for dairy products—milk, cream, and butter—rather than their meat, with the exception of the butchering

cooperatives described earlier. Farm families both consumed and sold these dairy products, using the money used to purchase groceries that could not be produced on the farm.

Chickens were raised for both eggs and meat. This profitable pastime was often in the hands of the female farmer, whose hard work and perseverance could pay off handsomely.

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Chapter 8

Country Stores and Huckster Trucks

Farm families of this era often stressed that they produced much of what they consumed in terms of food and supplies and therefore bought very little, but there were limits to their self-sufficiency. The relatively few things they did purchase were important. The short list included salt, matches, coffee, sugar, baking soda, baking powder, and kerosene, and there was no doubt a long list of hardware items and tools. An important source of these items was the country store, which maintained a stock of grocery items as well as some clothing and hardware. In addition, peddlers in huckster trucks would stop at households on a weekly basis carrying much the same stock as a store; other peddlers visited less often. And, of course, people went to town to visit the stores and attend markets. Some also shopped through mail order. Many of these stores and peddlers also bought certain kinds of farm produce from their customers, including eggs and live chickens, cured meats, and some craft items.

Country Stores

Country stores were once a common part of the rural landscape, but through the years they have changed their business plans, closed down, or been inundated by urban sprawl. They are still out there but are far fewer in number, often serving as rural convenience stores.

Most people went to town periodically to buy supplies. Something

Store in Irvington, Breckinridge County, 1938. (Russell Lee, Library of Congress, Farm Security Administration)

of the nature of country stores can be gleaned from Joe Clark's narration about his experiences in Rockcastle County: "[In the old days] most things come in barrels or metal containers, like crackers. They come in a big metal barrel. And your coffee, well they finally got to curin' it, but we used to have to buy it green. They'd ship it in green. [Mother would] have to roast it in the oven. You had an old coffee mill. You could hear her out there ever' morning, that old coffee mill agrindin', see. Grind her coffee. They kept old salt meat, you know. That's about all could do is salt-cure it. Old fat bacon and stuff like that. It wasn't bacon, just a whole side. Almost pickled in salt. You didn't have no way to keep the other kind of meat. They couldn't keep the milk. Not in the stores, no. You didn't have butter in the store. You just had meal, flour, sugar, salt, sody [soda], and bakin' powder. Then coffee. It was just the stuff that, you know, you could keep without refrigeratin'. And your lights were oil lamps. You seen them. You could buy you a gallon of kerosene for a nickel. Them old country stores kept that kerosene. They had a barrel there. They kept that. And that's all you had to buy that was on the farm. A little coffee and sugar and salt. You could just about make it on the rest."

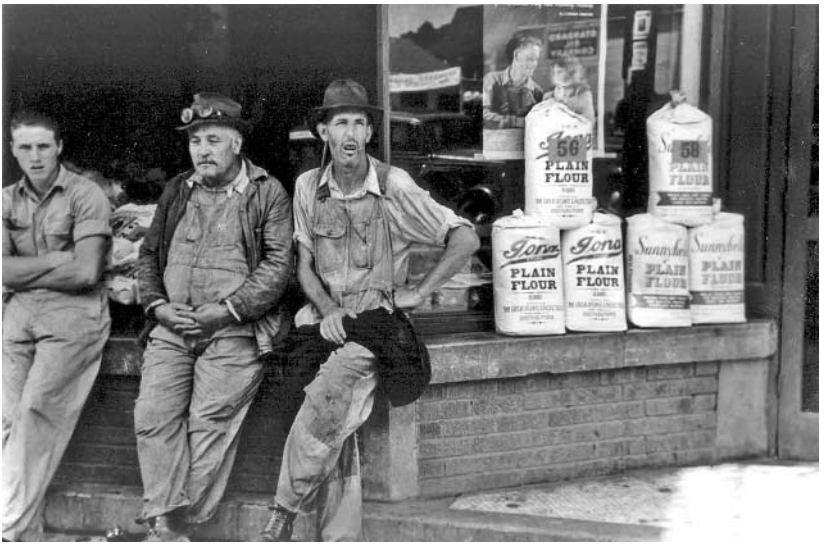
The limited number of products and their very basic nature was clear. "So much come out now that wasn't out then, just like, for instance, macaroni. I never heard tell of it, and pizza had never been borned at that time. No cooking oil. All the oil, everything to cook with was strictly lard, made from hog grease. And they sold lard and they sold flour and they sold some meal. Most people raised their own corn and had their own meal ground. And they sold salt and sody [soda] and baking powders and pork and beans. They sold shotgun shells, .22 shells. A big store then, they sold plow points for plows, bridles for horses. They sold coal oil. They call it kerosene now" (Henry B. Turner, Lee County).

Some foods were available only from the store and were regarded as special treats. One of these was canned salmon, which was often prepared as croquettes. A recipe for the dish from that era called for the following ingredients: 1 can salmon, 1 pint cracker crumbs, juice of ½ lemon, 2 eggs lightly beaten, "a little" chopped parsley, 1 tablespoon melted butter, ½ teaspoon sugar, and ½ teaspoon grated onions. The recipe instructed: "add enough sweet milk to make the croquettes very soft, roll in beaten egg and cracker crumbs and fry in very hot fat" (Woman's Guild of Christ Church Cathedral 1926, 17). Like many recipes of the era, this one was a little short on instructions; crackers crumbs and eggs were both part of the mix and part of the coating. Salmon croquettes were often served with a simple white sauce.

Country store proprietors would sometimes accept farm commodities in trade in a kind of barter system, such as chickens and eggs for groceries. The produce tendered by the farmer would be priced, and its value in dollars and cents could be used to purchase groceries. This was called "trading out." The store owner would not give cash; barterers had to spend the "money" in the store. If a farmer did not trade out the full amount, the storekeeper would issue a "due bill" that could be used later.

Eugene Kiser described a store in Paris (Bourbon County) where his family shopped: "[There was] a grocery out there on East Main Street that traded. [The proprietor] would buy the butter and eggs and [we'd] buy groceries there, you know. [The store] wasn't too big. I would say the building was probably thirty feet wide and maybe sixty feet deep. It was just a small grocery. The building's still standing there. It's on East Main there in Paris. They sold the staple goods like any other grocery. You didn't have your vegetables and stuff like that, fresh

Farmer's car loaded with sacks of feed on a Saturday morning in Jackson, Breathitt County, 1940. (Marion Post Wolcott, Library of Congress, Farm Security Administration)



Men in front of the store on Saturday in Jackson, Breathitt County, 1940. (Marion Post Wolcott, Library of Congress, Farm Security Administration)

vegetables, 'cause there was no sale for 'em those days. Everybody had their own. And they didn't do that much shipping 'em, you know, up out of the south. There were some, but not that much back early. [They sold] sugar, salt, just your basics. Flour and so forth. I remember some bulk barrels and so forth. You don't see the stuff that you do this day and time. They had some canned vegetables, but not that much really. Brooms and stuff like that."

Ella Preston of Letcher County said, "We sold [eggs] to one of the bigger stores in Whitesburg. It's not there anymore, it's gone. We sold to different stores, just take 'em all [at] one time. By then we could buy egg cartons without printing on 'em, you know, without the name of the company or anything. We bought those and fixed 'em up. We'd had white leghorn chickens, all white eggs, and we never mixed the brown and white eggs. We were very careful about that. I always see that the big end is up and the little end is down, just so. They had to be just so. I don't think we did it as much to increase our income as we just liked to raise the chickens and all."

Itinerant Salesmen

Farm families were also visited by peddlers and traveling salesmen. William Singer (Scott County) mentioned that these merchants "would be selling all kinds of patent medicine, selling books, selling about anything, really, you could think of. Of course, we used to buy quite a bit from 'em. The W. T. Raleigh Company would have a traveling salesman and they would sell salve, liniment, headache pills, laxative, stuff to sugar-cure your meat with when you killed hogs, sugar-curing compound, and everything. I really looked forward [to them]. They would sell lemon mix or orange concentrate or grape concentrate to make drinks with. They were a popular thing. The W. T. Raleigh Company, they didn't sell that much medicine. But you had, you know, just your flat-out patent medicine salesmen that sold everything from tonic to anything you think of, you know."

Another firm that bought and sold products was the McNess Company, which is still in business selling many of the some things. Euell Sumner of Powell County recollected "a fellow by the name of Harry Reese. He used to come through and he bought chickens from people, but he always carried McNess Products and he sold the lemon extract and vanilla. And my grandmother, she always liked to make

lemon pies and I hate the taste of one right now. He had a truck. He would buy chickens and eggs. He would do more selling than he would buying. I still got some of the old bottles of the lemon extract and vanilla and nutmeg and stuff like that, and pepper that he'd peddle."

Huckster Trucks

Once motorized transportation became common, huckster trucks started visiting rural Kentucky areas and continued to do so up until the mid-1950s. Before that there were huckster wagons and even huckster boats that traded on the Kentucky River prior to World War II (Ellis 2000, 136). A story from a Robertson County newspaper reported wagons in the area as early as 1910 and an early use of trucks in 1916; the trucks mentioned were two Cincinnati-made Armleder and Schacht trucks with chain drives. Huckstering was especially important during World War II, perhaps because the rationing of gasoline made people less mobile.

The typical huckster truck looked something like a small school bus, although it had windows only in the front. Inside it had an aisle with counters on each side and shelves above, each equipped with a piece of lath to keep the goods from falling off.

Hucksters planned their routes so that they showed up more or less on a weekly basis, although some places might be served by more than one huckster. In addition to stopping at homes, hucksters often dropped by country schools as part of their regular routes. The students would pool their money and buy snacks such as cookies.

These trucks were often based out of stores in town. Customers paid cash, bought on credit, or traded butter, eggs, or chickens for goods. Chickens would be weighed in a sling scale, and the trucks were equipped with chicken coops on the outside to accommodate them. The hucksters would come back with crates full of chickens at the end of the day, which had to be unloaded and held in pens until they could be shipped to wholesalers. Hucksters were part of a system that consolidated certain kinds of farm produce. "[The driver] he'd go all his five days a hucksterin' they called it. He'd pick up chicken and eggs sometimes. And maybe have twenty cases of eggs. Maybe fifty chickens at the end of the week. And then the guy come on Saturday and pick 'em up. Take 'em to the chicken house, there in Morehead" (Virgil Fair, Casey County).

In the case of the Robertson County route, the huckster went to Cincinnati every Tuesday to sell the produce accumulated over the week and to buy new supplies. On Wednesday the bulk goods purchased would be packaged, called "weighing-up day." The Thursday and Friday routes were busy and long, as was Monday's. Saturday was a half day that involved some loading.

Children also sold commodities that they had raised themselves. One man remembered selling eggs to the huckster, as well as culled out laying hens that had laid their last egg. In eastern parts of the state, young people would sell things they had collected in the woods, such as ginseng and mayapples. In Robertson County the huckster also bought game. "During the cold weather the back of the truck would be piled to the roof with rabbits. Game was plentiful and the hunters were busy" (*Robertson County Review,* July 1971, 1).

Sometimes the woman of the house did not have her husband's approval to sell what she did. Virgil Fair told this story: "And I was runnin' around on a route and some old woman come out. Had three grown girls goin' to school. I never will forget it, I guess. She said, you buyin' hams? Well, for some reason I said, 'Well if I find one I would.' [She] said, 'If I sell you one, will you tell it on me?' She was keepin' it secret from her old man, you know. I said, 'You're a sellin' I'm a buyin'.' You know. I went to the smokehouse and cut down a ham, weighed it. She said her man wouldn't give her no money to buy the kids no dresses to get to school. Back then, they just made their dresses, you know, of rolled out bolt goods, they called it. Well I bought her ham, she got the kids some dress goods."

The trucks carried a surprisingly complete line of goods. One former huckster said that he stocked anything that might be found in a grocery store. That assertion aside, he also said that he kept a "want list" of things to bring on the next trip. The interviewees reported buying baking powder, coarse salt, baking soda, flour, cornmeal, matches, crackers, baloney, pails, mops, brooms, and canned vegetables. At Christmas the huckster might have a bushel basket of oranges. He sold piece goods, but no clothing; some hardware, such as fence wire and tobacco cottons, but no tools; and notions, such as needles and thread. The truck was fitted with a coal oil tank to fill lanterns and for other uses. Women could buy chicken feed in bags made of colorfully printed cotton fabric that was suitable for making dresses. One former huckster recalled housewives walking out to the truck with empty

feed sacks over their arms looking to match the designs so that they could finish their dresses. Hucksters also carried a large stock of candy; chicken bones (a filled hard candy), all-day suckers, and peanut butter logs were mentioned.

Although the Robertson County huckster operated through a store in Mt. Olivet, he bought chickens on his own account and sold them to a dealer in town. He recalled that in the early 1940s, patrons' monthly bills were $18 to $20. Many customers presented World War I veterans' pension checks for payment, and he had few credit losses during the few years he did this work.

Mail Order

Mail-order catalogs were another source of the goods people needed but could not produce themselves. "The Sears Roebuck catalog would always come in the mail. The farm families back then were big on ordering. Like you would order work shoes, work pants, kitchen utensils, dinnerware, coats, shirts, you know. You ordered a lot out of the mail-order catalogs. You would order even plumbing supplies. I think maybe we bought a pump from 'em. You know, it was a very, very big thing, the Sears and Roebuck catalog, because my grandmother, she would always look forward to getting the new catalog. And we got both of 'em, Montgomery Ward and Sears and Roebuck. But mainly Sears and Roebuck is what we ordered out of. 'Course, now it's just plain Sears, but then it was Sears and Roebuck. We'd even order paint out of 'em. Order paint and it would be shipped in to the railroad station and you'd go pick it up at the railroad station, Georgetown Southern depot out here if it was too big to come through the mail" (Singer).

Door-to-Door Peddling

Some farmers peddled their own products door to door in town. John Preston recalled the following story about peddling eggs: "I had one old man here in Letcher County, I started a selling him eggs when I first came to the county. And he asked me, he said, 'Why don't you just tell me what you'll furnish my eggs for.' The old man said, 'Two dozen a week and don't matter what happens, I'll pay you that and don't matter what happens you take a loss the other way.' And I started delivering his eggs. I delivered 'em up till he died. And his motto was, 'Keep a

record of the eggs that you deliver to me, and fix me a little receipt, and have the amount on it, and hand it to me, and I'll pay you.' Well, when the old man died, he owed me for forty dozen eggs. I didn't dog him. I just let it ride. And when it happened, I told my wife, I said, 'Well, we may never get any pay for the eggs.' She said, 'Well, that don't matter.' She said, 'He's been a good friend of ours for all that time.' And said, 'We'll just forget about it.' Well you see, his estate come up, he was worth around a million dollars and they started settling his estate. And put an ad in the paper of anybody owed or had a debt against him to turn it in. Well, I didn't do a thing in the world only fixed my receipt out for the forty dozen eggs, turned it in at seventy-five cents a dozen, and told Old Man Combs, that was the lawyer that took care of the estate. I just gave the woman's name that I delivered 'em to that took [care] of him. I said, 'She would be the only witness.' I got my money. I was lucky. Never did lose nothing that I couldn't collect."

Florene Smith (Letcher County) recollected her mother's experiences riding to town on horseback to sell her wares:

> My mother used to bring food out to Whitesburg to sell. She would ride a horse and bring our surplus to town and sell, and that's called peddling. And she would bring meal to sell in Whitesburg to people, and then take that money and buy flour and sugar and salt and baking powder and soda and all those things she cooked with. She would peddle eggs and milk and butter and produce that, like in the spring, I've seen her pick peas and beans and bring those out and sell them. And we always raised extra for her to sell. And I remember she'd come to town like once or twice a week. And that would take all day long. She'd get up, she'd have to get her stuff ready the night before, and she would pack eggs in a round basket. They'd call it 'egg baskets.' The big ones that hold about a bushel. And I remember we children would pack those eggs, and we'd have to put paper in between every layer of eggs to keep them safe from cracking. And she would carry that basket of eggs, and resting it on her leg as she would ride the horse. And she was across mountains with that.
>
> I remember on the days that she'd go to town, we didn't have any eggs that morning because she had to take all those to sell. And finally, I remember distinctly like at Easter time

> that she'd have to buy us shoes and she'd make our dresses, but she'd buy material. [During those times] nobody would eat eggs because we'd have to save all the eggs to sell. For extra things. I remember her buying stuff to bring back. And at Christmastime she always would buy and bring back our toys and everything. Of course, we didn't have big stuff. But she'd buy little things and hide them among the quilts or under the feather beds or some place to keep 'em hid from us. Well, she couldn't put it under the feather bed because we'd have to make up the bed.

Selling farm produce directly to consumers or even to stores became increasingly restricted by law. "A man would come by through the week and buy those chickens in a great big truck. And he'd buy the chickens from the producers. And buy the eggs. But see, you can't sell your eggs to the store now. There's a law against it. And you don't sell chickens to the store. You can sell privately, I guess to somebody, if I was raisin' fryin' chickens and someone wanted to buy a dozen fryin' chickens from me, I think I could do that. But now you can't sell eggs. You're not supposed to do that. There's a law that eggs have to be candled. They have to look at 'em through some sort of a light to tell whether they are all right or not. And I think that comes because of salmonella. I believe that's right. But you know, you buy many a box of eggs in the grocery store that's got a cracked egg in it. I always open my box and look at it to be sure" (John Preston).

Court Days

In many counties, a kind of farmers' market came to be associated with the one day a month that the county court was in session. Many farmers would come to town to take care of business and to socialize. Livestock, including horses, mules, cattle, and hogs, was bought and sold. In some cases, one court day a year was allocated to the buying and selling of mules, for example. This was also an opportunity to sell other farm produce, such as cream and eggs. Trappers brought their pelts to court day, when fur buyers would be in town. Some court day markets were scheduled on a rotating basis to allow regional traders to go to a number of markets. Court day was a predominantly male activity, with a contemporary account of court day in Anderson County noting that

Selling watermelons on a Saturday court day in Jackson, Breathitt County, 1940. (Marion Post Wolcott, Library of Congress, Farm Security Administration)

Itinerant pitchman draws a court-day crowd in Campton, Wolfe County, 1940. (Marion Post Wolcott, Library of Congress, Farm Security Administration)

"most of the women were left at home" (WPA n.d., Anderson County files). Men would bring items to swap, including pocketknives, firearms, and dogs. Commercial suppliers also might take orders on court day. For instance, Maysville lumberyard took orders at the Robertson County court day, which was scheduled every third Monday. In addition, court days provided an opportunity to visit with neighbors.

Although court days have been more or less discontinued, in some Kentucky towns they have become an annual event, more like community festivals than local markets. The best example takes place in Mt. Sterling, in Montgomery County, every October, when the town's population expands from its normal 5,000 to over 100,000. Deer rifles and shotguns are big sellers at the Mt. Sterling court days, where men often just walk around carrying their weapons looking for a good offer. There is also an active market for dogs.

People were far more self-sufficient in those days, and this was an important source of pride. When rural Kentuckians had to purchase goods, they often traded their farm products for credit toward whatever supplies they needed.

To an extent, marketing also involved important social relationships. This was especially clear on court days or just weekly visits to town, when purchasing supplies was often part of a larger social encounter. Folks were able to meet and talk with friends they did not see every day, as well as trade for items they needed. The huckster trucks and the country stores carried a wide variety of supplies, and pretty much everything else could be purchased from a catalog such as Sears and Roebuck. As people got more mobile, their relationships with storekeepers became more anonymous.

Chapter 9

Poke, Blackberries, and Hush Puppies

It is easy to overlook the role that wild food played in the foodways of rural Kentucky. Many families supplemented their farm-grown food by hunting game, fishing, and gathering wild plants. The foods acquired this way were used to provide variety in the diet, and people enjoyed the recreation. In some cases, families also sold these foods.

Wild Greens

It was common to gather wild greens from early spring to the first of June. The types collected included shepherd's sprouts, poke, mustard, lamb's-quarter, whitebritches, wild lettuce, wild cabbage, sour dock, and what were called creases or creasy greens. Bessalee Robinson of Robertson County said that "wild greens were better than any other kind because they had a better flavor." She added, "Plain old dandelions are awful good [especially if they] don't get too much age on them," when they could get "a little bitter." She remembered that when she "was little," her family never planted any greens, such as spinach—maybe some kale, but no spinach (van Willigen 1978–1980). Greens were often cooked in a skillet in a little water or fat and might be accompanied by some vinegar.

Greens often grew on disturbed ground. Those who lived where streams flooded along bottomland would often find wild greens on land that had been in cultivation the previous year, along creek bottoms, and where there was "good overflow ground." Lucian Robinson

explained this aspect of farming on a floodplain of the Licking River: "One winter we had water get over our cornfield seven times in one winter and it left anywhere from a thin skim of dirt [to] up to two inches of mud. That overflow ground is conducive to greens and mustard and stuff" (van Willigen 1978–1980).

Although many wild plants are toxic, people knew how to avoid them or make them safe to eat. Some said that anything with a milky white sap was likely poisonous and should be avoided. The most frequently mentioned poisonous wild green was poke or pokeweed *(Phytolacca americana)*. Poke could be eaten, but it had to be picked as new growth, no more than four to six inches long, and then processed in a special way to wash out the toxins. Minnie L. Morton of Powell County explained how to prepare poke: "In the springtime, that's when I get out and get greens. When it first comes up when it's tender. [In the spring we collect] the little bitty poke green. When it first comes up. The first mess or two and that's it. [I] cook the poke, and the other [greens] you eat raw. Cut it up with green onions, talk about good, that wild lettuce. [I use] salt and grease after you cook them and [pour] the water off of it. I have to wash that cook water, and then you salt and grease it and then just cook and fry it."

Poke, when eaten in large amounts, acts as a purgative and an emetic. Sally Hounshell of Beattyville (Lee County) said, "[There is a] whole big bunch [of poke] right around the edge of the fields. It just comes up wild. You've not lived until you've eat poke. They say that cleans your innards out. I'm crazy. I wouldn't want to eat it every day. I couldn't stand it every day, but, you know, ever' once in awhile. It's got a more potent taste than mustard or turnip greens. It's good to fix it you know by itself. Or you can add it to mustard green and turnips. [We use it when] it's small and it's tender. You can take the leaf and the stalk. And you cook it in the water and you drain all that water off, and then you put it in somethin' else, and you know, cook it again. Fry it or whatever. But when the stalks get up about like your little finger, I like to take 'em and chop 'em in pieces. And dip 'em in a batter, you know, like you make it up with flour and all this kind of stuff and deep-fry it. Now it's good like that."

She had some tips about other wild greens as well: "I like to take the, the flower of the dandelions. You know, the little yellow flower? And make a batter, and dip it in the batter, and deep-fry it. It's real

good. Crispy. And we got creases. And we got plantain. Plantain, it's good, but it's kinda got a sour-like taste to it. So, my father-in-law said you could eat most any kind of a plant that cattle could eat. And it probably wouldn't hurt you, but I wouldn't take that chance. But he was a pretty wise man. They wasn't too keen on gatherin' the wild plants. And we'd go out, and after we moved over here, why, there's a whole big bunch of land. You know, where it's not been plowed up and stuff, and all this stuff's growin', so he'd go out with me. And that's how I learned to do all this stuff. He always says he learnt me how to cook. Neither one of [my children] will eat greens, you know like mustard or poke or anything like that. They'll eat lettuce. But that's about as far as it goes. They're not too crazy about gettin' out and walkin' and lookin', you know, all that kind of stuff. We get out quite a bit. When it's not too hot. And [my husband] gets that wild sage and we use that a lot. He knows a lot of these herbs and stuff like that. See, where the pennyroyal, he'd gather some of that. That's pretty good in, you know, meat if you cook it."

Nuts

Collecting walnuts and hickory nuts both to eat and to sell was common. Walnuts could be spread out on the ground to rot off the husks covering the shell. As the green walnut husks rotted, they turned black and gave off a juice that stained the hands a dark brown and was once used to dye yarn. Both kinds of nuts were used in candy making and baking. Lina E. Wells from Casey County said, "Had our own nuts and we popped all those out for the candy that [my mother-in-law] made. Never bought any nuts. She popped out walnuts and sold the kernels and bought the first place setting of silver that I got after my husband and I were married, his mother gave to us. But now she had a walnut popper that held the walnut, you know. And it popped itself. A handle that you worked it by. I didn't have one of those. Her husband, he'd pop out a lot of 'em for me, you know. When he didn't have anything to do and I'd pick 'em out. And I'll tell you about those walnuts. A man from here drove a truck to Detroit, Michigan, and [took] those walnut kernels from around here to the candy factories in Detroit. The reason I know that is I saw one of those trucks when I was teachin' there. Said Casey County on it."

Blackberries

Wild blackberries were frequently picked, although they became harder to find once people started mowing their fields. Berry picking during the summer was fondly remembered as a childhood activity. "We, my brothers and sisters, usually all went out huckleberry pickin'. Blackberry pickin'. We usually try to get out early of a morning before it got too hot to go pick when they got ripe, it was a hot time of the year. You tried to get our buckets full or whatever we took to pick in" (Marie McCoy, Powell County).

Dorothy Cox of Anderson County recollected her experiences: "We learnt to pick blackberries. [Mother] would set us to blackberry picking and we'd have to get those buckets full. And many a time I put some leaves under mine 'cause I got awfully tired picking blackberries. And build 'em up a little bit, put berries on top and then she said, 'Now go in and pour 'em in that dishpan in there.' And I'd pour 'em in and she never knew how many came out of that pan, out of that bucket. That's kindly cheating a little, but I did it. And I imagine my other sister did too. 'Cause we went together. We just took little buckets. Like little gallon buckets is what she sent us with 'cause she thought we'd do well if we picked a gallon. 'Cause sometime that gallon wasn't a true gallon."

For others, picking blackberries was something they did when they needed money. Clarence Wells of Lynch (Harlan County) talked about picking blackberries during hard times: "It was just a real trying time, you know. And we'd pick blackberries. I never will forget it. Because see I was about thirteen when this ended up. And we'd pick blackberries. And we could carry five gallons. My daddy and myself and my stepmother. And then we'd carry one child and the other one walked. We walked five miles into the town and carried five gallons of blackberries for ten cents a gallon. We got fifty cents for ten miles of walking we did. And you just had to beg people to buy them. There was no money. That's the reason it made it so hard on me trying to go to school. I wanted to go to school."

Wild berries are no longer so abundant, largely due to changing farm technology. Rotary mowers, such as the Bush Hog introduced after World War II, allowed more frequent and thorough pasture clearing than did the briar scythe and plow. Also, the wider use of chemical

fertilizers in the 1940s encroached on stands of wild berry plants by shortening the fallow period in the field rotation cycle.

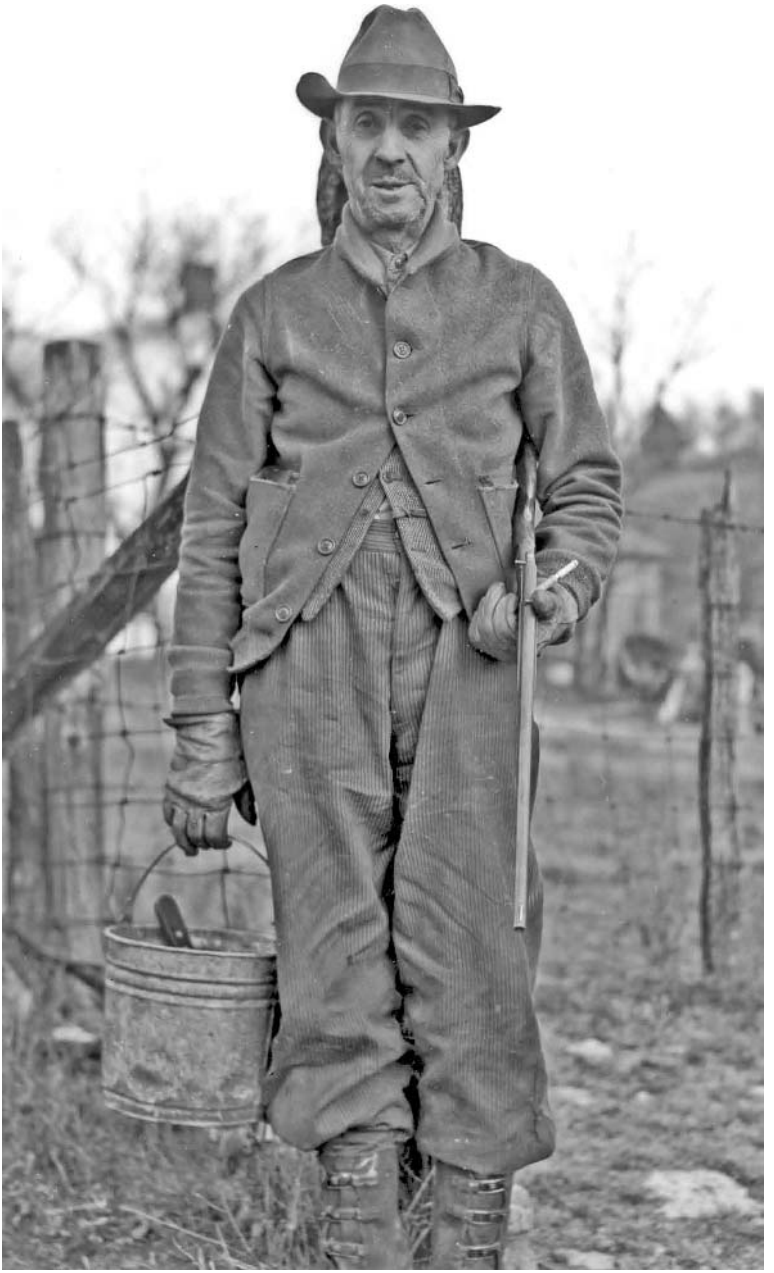
Hunting

Animals that were hunted included rabbit, groundhog, opossum, raccoon, deer, turtle, squirrel, and quail. Hunting was a male activity that provided recreation, food, and income.

Rabbits were so plentiful back then that a man could hunt them all day with a .22 rifle or shotgun until he had more than he could carry. Some even rigged deadfalls made out of stone slabs and a wooden trigger device baited with an apple on a sharpened stick. Men sometimes hunted rabbits to sell; they were gutted and put in barrels and shipped to East Coast cities such as Baltimore. The prices paid for rabbits varied quite a bit. A man from Robertson County reported that once when he was young, he and a neighbor killed a lot of rabbits and took them to Mt. Olivet to sell, where they were offered four cents apiece. They decided to go to Maysville to see if they could do better. By the time they got there that night, the rabbits had frozen. The next day they sold the rabbits for eight cents apiece, but they had the extra expense of a hotel. Prices tended to go up in colder weather.

Some used dogs to hunt both raccoons and opossums, especially in the fall. At night, the dogs would tree the animals. Coons were more desirable, but opossums were easier to hunt. In the old days, these animals were eaten. Sara Ellen Ison of Ice (Letcher County) recalled hunting opossums. "The possum hunt was in the fall of the year. And just have a big time out of it. You can go out and take your dog, and he'd tree them old possums and you'd go up and get them. Maybe you'd get a nickel or fifteen cents out of that hide. And they would throw the carcass away. They'd get that hide and sometimes a good one would bring you a quarter. They sent it off to these fur companies."

Small-game cooking was a simple skillet-based process. Preparation involved skinning and then carefully washing and soaking the meat in salt water, sometimes for a few days. With raccoon, it was necessary to remove the scent glands located under the forelegs, called by some the "kernel." Failing to do so would thoroughly ruin the meat. Then the meat was boiled or fried. Minnie Morton recollected how her mother cooked small game: "She would either boil it or fry it. And



Nicholas County farmer with rifle, 1940. (John Vachon, Library of Congress, Farm Security Administration)

so either way it's good. You skin, clean it, wash it real good. And then you can leave [it] in salt water overnight or you can just go ahead and fry it fresh. And roll it in flour, meal, whatever you want to fix it in. [She would fry it in] bacon or store-bought lard." The remaining fat and other drippings would be made into gravy.

Quail hunting was also done with dogs. Winthrop Hopson of Trigg County spoke of his hunting experiences: "Quail hunting was a good thing to do. A lot of people did it. And they had, my father shot with a double-barrel shotgun. It was kind of a quail gun. You had a good pattern to it. He shot a lot and killed a lot of quail. He was good enough to kill two quail at one time. It's not that big of a deal, but if you stop and think about it. When the covey gets up, if you watch and, and when two cross, or if they're coming around to the side and two come around together, occasionally I would kill two. But I don't know as I planned it. He, he could do it. Had to have a good bird dog. You have to kill birds. They expect it. 'Cause you miss 'em too often and [the dogs will] get discouraged. They get in the habit of nothing and they get discouraged. Dogs have, animals have a lot of sense. And this, this is my belief on that. And he had a good bird dog. But we did, I remember, he had a dog that would find a covey of quail and come back and get you. And you just, I've seen him show it to other people and we'd go out and the dog would be gone a while and he'd come back. And then when you got back to the covey, he wouldn't let you shoot over his head. He would circle the quail, [so] they couldn't run off everywhere. He circled them."

Trapping

Trapping was something that people did to raise money. Fred Tirey of Beattyville (Lee County) recalled his experiences: "I had to trap [to get money] to buy books and stuff, and if I run my traps and caught a polecat, and skinned it, I always took a bath but sometimes, the principal didn't like it. I couldn't get [the polecat smell] off. That's the only way I had to buy my clothes, was hard times. And buy my books and stuff. Trapped anything that had a pelt. I started when I was 'bout eleven or twelve. We caught muskrats. Polecats, or anything we could catch that you could sell. My daddy had told me how to do it."

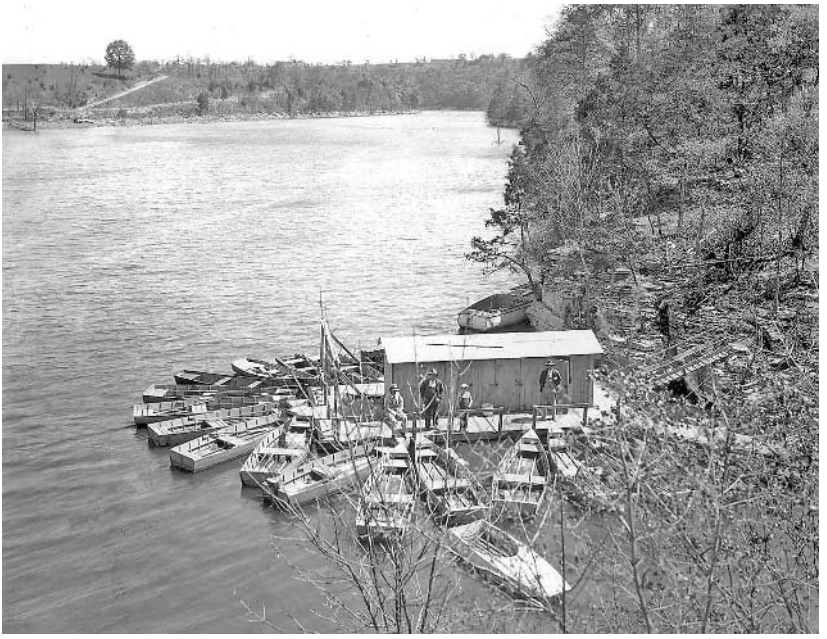
Trying to make money from trapping was difficult, because the market for most hides was not very good. Virgil Fair of Casey County

said, "Well, there wasn't much to make. Just wasn't much money to be made. Sometime you go possum huntin', you know. They catch 'em a possum or polecat or coon. They'd sell their hide. Few had tree dogs, you know, and they around the woods at night. Catch four or five ol' possums and skin 'em. Stretch the hide over a board, you know, and let 'em dry. And here come a guy around to buy 'em. Maybe give you fifty cents for a possum hide. Two dollars for a coon hide, or something like that."

Fishing

As might be expected, fishing was especially common along rivers, and like hunting, it had both a recreational and an economic aspect. It was often a group activity done by men.

Fish traps and weirs were used frequently in the early days. Lucian Robinson, who lived in Piqua (Robertson County) at the time, recalled that a group of about twenty-eight men built a fish trap on the Licking



Fishing boats on Lake Herrington in Boyle County. (Kentucky Historical Society)

River. The trap consisted of a stone weir with two diagonal walls across the river. The weir was open, with a space of about eight feet between two abutments of carefully stacked rocks. There was a sluice in back of the opening with diagonal baffles to stop the fish. The trap was set up to allow smaller fish to pass through to catch larger fish, such as catfish, carp, gar, spoonbill, and punkin seeds. The right to take the fish rotated among the builders, divided into four-man groups. Sometimes the fish were sold. These practices, which were common from the 1880s to the early 1930s, were illegal, although there were some attempts to legalize them. Nevertheless, these traps were widespread and, according to Robinson, could be found at every riffle up and down the river, as well as up the smaller branches. People also fished for various kinds of carp (golden and blue) and catfish (blue cats and flathead cats) (van Willigen 1978–1980).

It was also common to use a trotline, a light line to which leaders with hooks were attached. These were left in place and tended periodically in a johnboat. The fisherman would lift the line and take off the fish, rebaiting as he went. Dough balls were the preferred bait for carp. Trotline fishermen made these from a mixture of half wheat flour and half cornmeal with a little scalding water. After rolling the dough into balls of a suitable size, they dropped them into boiling water to cook briefly. Shirley Wegner of Robertson County said that he might "dope" the bait with vanilla or chopped onions (van Willigen 1978–1980).

Another fishing technique was called "noodling." Large catfish would situate themselves in the underwater nooks and crannies along the riverbank. The person doing the noodling would feel for these holes, stick his hand in, and try to capture big catfish. This could produce a lot of fish, but the noodler risked injury to his hands and arms because catfish fight back.

Some went gigging for frogs with a three-pointed spear. At night, the frog gigger, either from a boat or along the shore, would find frogs with the help of a flashlight and impale them with the spear. The frog legs were fried.

On the Ohio River in Boyd County, men sometimes used seines during weekend fishing outings. In the still water along the riverbank, they would attach a seine to the shore. Then, using sturdy, flat-bottomed johnboats, the men moved out into the current, creating a pocket to capture fish. The occupants of the boats would thrash the water and make noise with cowbells tied to long poles to chase the fish into the net. At

Stringer of fish at the dock on Lake Herrington, Boyle County. (Kentucky Historical Society)

that place and time, this could produce a good haul of fish. Once the nets were drawn, the men would tackle the cleaning job (WPA n.d., Boyd County files).

Fish were deep-fried and served with hush puppies and other picnic fare, such as coleslaw and baked beans. Fish fries were often the culmination of the Boyd County seinings. "Early in the day wagonloads of neighbors with their womenfolks would arrive at the fishing camp. A great copper kettle would be swung over the fire and grease would begin to bubble in the kettle. Then one of the men, who knew just how would fry the fish. Augmented with the pies, cakes, puddings, homemade bread, fruits, vegetables, pickles, and other delicacies brought by the women" (WPA n.d., Boyd County files).

Hush puppies are made from a thick batter of cornmeal, salt, baking powder, wheat flour, eggs, and buttermilk and deep-fried in lard or oil. Recipes usually call for finely chopped onions or crushed garlic as well. The mixture is dropped from a tablespoon into hot fat deep

American Legion fish fry in Oldham County, 1940. (Marion Post Wolcott, Library of Congress, Farm Security Administration)

enough to float the batter. The result is a golden brown, crunchy ball. Because this was fish camp food, it was one of the few meals that men cooked, given the traditional division of labor. Although the men fried both the fish and the hush puppies, the women probably prepared everything else.

Marion Flexner's classic cookbook *Out of Kentucky Kitchens* (1949, 65) includes a hush puppy recipe, although it is more appropriate for a well-equipped Louisville kitchen than an Ohio River fish camp:

Ingredients
1 clove garlic
1 cup white cornmeal
2 tablespoons white flour
½ teaspoon salt
2 tablespoons baking powder
2 eggs
¾ to 1 cup buttermilk
1 tablespoon finely chopped onion

Procedure

Crush the garlic and rub the inside of a suitable mixing bowl with it. Put the cornmeal into the garlic-prepared bowl. Sift together the flour, salt, and baking powder (Flexner points out that 2 tablespoons may seem like a lot of baking powder, but it is correct) and add to the cornmeal. Beat the eggs and combine with the buttermilk, adding "just enough buttermilk to make a stiff batter." Beat this mixture. Add the onion and beat again. Cover the bowl and set it aside for an hour. Drop the batter, tablespoon by tablespoon, into deep, hot fat. It is important to limit the number of hush puppies frying at once.

Hunting wild animals and gathering wild plants provided rural Kentuckians with free food to eat, commodities to sell, and fun and recreation. Usually, the only cost was the time it took—everything was there, free for the taking, with just a little effort.

Many of these wild foods were prized and required special knowledge and preparation techniques, such as overcoming the poisonous properties of pokeweed and ensuring that raccoon meat was edible. People looked forward to eating these wild foods and valued the dietary variety as well as the supplemental income they might provide.

Chapter 10

Puttin' Up the Garden

Families invested a lot of time in preserving the food raised in the garden. The range of techniques used was large and included drying, canning, curing, burying, cellaring, and pickling. Starting in the late 1940s these methods were supplemented with freezing. Such practices allowed the relative abundance of the growing and harvesting seasons to be spread over the year. Slowly, home-preserved products were replaced by store-bought goods, and although some people still can, freeze, and dry, the practice is much less prevalent.

Drying

A variety of techniques were used to dry fruits and vegetables. One of the most common, especially in the mountains, was "stringing" the produce using a needle and thread. Regular sewing thread or threads unraveling from cloth sacks were used. Green beans were the most common products strung, but people would also string chili peppers, pumpkin, and apples. Stringing was sometimes a group activity, and the children were often involved. Virgil Fair (Casey County) said, "Take a needle run through with thread. We'd make beads out of 'em, us kids would. Break them strings, have to do it all over again. [Mother'd] hang 'em up. Sometimes you get out here, like on the porch, have our scaffold, put 'em on that to dry. Make like dried apples or beans. Then she'd put 'em in a sack. Store 'em for the winter."

Beans that were strung and dried in the pod were called shuck beans, shucky beans, or leatherbritches (Clark 1998), depending on the region. The terms *shucky beans* and *leatherbritches* were more com-

mon in the mountains. After picking, the first step in processing was to remove the fibrous strings from each pod (hence the name *string beans*). This task involved cutting or breaking off the ends of the beans and drawing out the string. A big pan of beans were then strung using a needle and thread. Some would add a chili pepper to the string to help ward off insects. Then this "big necklace" of beans, as some narrators described it, was hung up on a nail to dry behind the stove, out on the covered porch, or up in the attic. After the beans were dried, they might be stored in a sack. When it came time to eat them, they would be broken by hand, soaked overnight, and then cooked slowly with seasoning meat.

Kentucky author Billy C. Clark wrote of his experiences with "dried in the pod beans" as a boy in Catlettsburg in Boyd County. He also included a recipe that called for "four cups of dried shuck beans, enough water to cover beans in kettle, piece of smoked slab bacon, [and] salt (to taste)." His instructions were as follows: "Rinse beans in cold water. Cover dried beans with water and soak over night. Next morning, drain water and rinse beans. Put beans in kettle and cover with water and add a piece of smoked slab bacon. Heat to boiling on high heat and then slow cook until beans are tender. Add salt to taste" (Clark 1998, 37).

Although some types of beans were strung and dried, to be reconstituted with water and served cooked in the pod, other varieties were shucked. Shuck beans were allowed to dry in the husk and then later "beat out" and used for soup beans. The combination of cornbread and soup beans was one of the most popular menu items. A related practice was to let beans dry in the field. Clarence Wells (Harlan County) recalled how they did it in his mountain home: "The way we got our dried beans, was to raise beans—we called 'em October beans, they were big, brown beans. My mother would plant them in the corn, in the regular cornfields. In October, we'd a go gather those beans, and sometimes we would have eight or ten coffee sacks of those beans. Now, you know what a coffee sack is, a brown burlap bag. And we'd bring those beans home with us, and she'd let 'em lie out in the sun, you know, and then they'd pour 'em out until they got good and dry, and they'd pour 'em out in a tub, and they would let us walk over the top of 'em in the tub, barefoot you know, and that helped shell those beans out. You didn't get 'em all, but got part of 'em out. So you finished shelling 'em by hand. The shells were thrown away."

Drying apples near Jackson, Breathitt County, 1940 (Marion Post Wolcott, Library of Congress, Farm Security Administration)

Hot peppers were dried for use in flavoring sausage. Peppers might be strung and hung alongside the beans. Some people simply picked the whole cayenne pepper plant and hung it in the shed to dry.

Although peaches, pears, and plums were dried, apples were by far the most common dried fruit. The technique was simple: apples were peeled, cored, and sliced and then placed in the sun, sometimes covered with cheesecloth.

Apples were also processed with burning sulfur, the advantage being that the apples' white color was preserved. Even so, it was important to peel and process the apples quickly to prevent them from turning brown. Florene Smith of Letcher County said, "You'd peel the apples in a dishpan or a pan, and then as quick as you got a dishpan full you would go put it in the sulfured crock. To do that [my mother] would take a little sulfur. I remember she would use like a broken dish or a broken jar. She wouldn't used our real dishes, and put like two or three tablespoons [of sulfur in it]. I can remember that pot of sulfur, yellow sulfur, powdered sulfur in this piece of broken dish. She would put it in

the bottom of a crock and then cover that with something that would keep an air space between the sulfur and the apples. And the best I remember, it was a basket that would hang down in this crock. Then she would dump the apples in the basket. And then when she would set this sulfur on fire and enter the apples immediately. And then cover it with a big thick quilt. And I remember maybe two or three quilts to keep all those fumes from the burning sulfur in the crock. And then [she] would leave that there until the sulfur stopped burning. And those apples were preserved. And they were just like fresh. You'd go eat one as crisp like a peeled apple. They were delicious. And then she'd fry those for breakfast. And then she would enter 'em. Then when that bunch was sulfured, she'd take them out and put them in a like a keeper jar. And then the next basket full was sulfured and then you'd keep piling that till that jar was [full]. And then you'd cover that with a piece of wood so no flies and no gnats and no ants or nothing could get into that. She'd seal it over. [She would] tie a tight cloth around it and then put a wooden lid on it. So they were well preserved. And we'd have those even in the early spring. They'd keep all winter."

Dried apples were made into fried pies. A recipe from the Works Progress Administration's *Pack Horse Library Cookbook* described the process: "Use either canned or dried apples. If canned apples are used, cook until thick. If dried apples are used, cook tender, sweeten fruit and let cool. Make dough as for biscuits. Roll out thinly, places apples ¼ or ½ inch on dough. Fold dough over making crust on both sides and fry in hot fat until even brown" (WPA n.d.)

In the early part of the twentieth century, food was dried by virtually every family as an essential component of the household's economic production strategy. Today, canning and freezing are the preferred methods of preserving fruits and vegetables. Drying is rarely practiced; it is limited, for the most part, to attempts to create special tastes and textures from the past or as a hobby.

Making Sweets

An important way to put up fruit was called "making sweets," a process that resulted in a variety of fruit and sugar preparations, including preserves, conserves, jams, jellies, and butters. All these methods involved cooking the fruit with sugar until it was reduced and gelled. Some older homemakers noted that relatively less sugar was used in

the past before commercial fruit pectin was introduced. Preserves were made from whole or sliced fruit; conserves were the same as preserves but used more than one type of fruit. Jams used mashed fruit, whereas jellies were made from strained fruit juice. Butters were made from apples and pears. Most finished products were protected by a covering of paraffin. Frequently, these products had a more or less permanent place on the table and were eaten with biscuits or store-bought bread at various meals.

Cellaring and Burying

Families who had basements or specially constructed root cellars used them to store fruits and vegetables, including potatoes, turnips, squash (winter types), carrots, and apples. Cellars were also used to store canned goods and crocks filled with various pickled products, such as cucumbers and sauerkraut. Christine Sims (Robertson County) recalled her family's root cellar, which was a separate structure with a concrete top and floor, built into a bank and covered with earth. "It was such a nice place to keep things because it was always cool. It never got cold enough to freeze it. We always had a jar of sauerkraut there" (van Willigen 1978–1980). In addition to the right temperature, root cellars needed to have high enough humidity to avoid drying out the foods.

Another root cellar observed in Robertson County was also built into a bank. It had an elliptical floor plan that measured about four feet by ten feet. The structure was made of stone set with mortar. The front wall was limestone and had a framed-in door with a high threshold. It too was covered with earth, from which grass was growing. One of the locals figured that it had been standing in 1915 and might have been even older than that.

Many families kept a barrel of apples in their cellars, either harvested from their own trees or purchased in bulk from merchants during the monthly market days in the county seat (so-called court days; see chapter 8). Marjorie Carlton of Anderson County recalled, "Dad would always put the apples in a big barrel with a layer of corn shucks between the apples, and they would be in the cellar. And we'd have 'em all winter long. We'd go down there and scratch around, and get a pan of apples, and bring it up."

Burying was another method of preserving fruits and vegetables,

used primarily by families who did not have cellars. Apples, cabbages, potatoes, and turnips could be saved this way. The basic technique was simple: dig a pit, line it with straw, put the food in, and cover it with a layer of straw and dirt. Some people covered this with shakes or something else to help keep the rain out. Cabbages could also be stored right in the garden, with their root ends up and covered with dirt. Henry B. Turner (Lee County) recalled burying potatoes: "Now, then to keep stuff in the wintertime, like Irish potatoes, they would [do] what they called 'holed them up.' I've seen a few people now that holes Irish potatoes up, but most of them that holes 'em up now, they don't know how to hole 'em up. They'll dig 'em out a little hole in the ground and they'll put some dead grass and stuff, and then they'll heap dirt up over top of it. And then they'll put a little cover. Now, what's bad wrong with that, they put their Irish potatoes on top of the ground and it's up on a higher place, which made the surface water drain away from the potatoes. Now, if you dig a hole down, when snow and stuff melts it runs down in that hole and has a tendency to rot your potatoes. And now later years, I saw people that'd have 'em, and they'd have little pieces of tin or linoleum rug over them. But back when I was a kid, everybody had boards, like you cover a house, shingles, that they'd rolled out and they have some cull shingles that had knots or would leak on the house and they'd stack them all up around this potato hill and looked just like a bunch of little Indian wigwams, if he had two or three of 'em. And in the spring, they got 'em out and they eat part of 'em and planted part of 'em. So you had your seed potatoes and eating. If they opened one in the wintertime, they had one particular hole they opened. And what would happen, you'd get on the side that the wind and rain blows agin' [against], which usually is coming out of the west. They'd dig the hole on the east side and they'd make this little tunnel down and they would go back and they'd, they didn't want to go into it every week, so once they dug a hole, they'd take enough out maybe to last a month. And they'd take this hole where they took the potatoes out, they'd fill the hole back full of grass or hay to fill this hole back. Then they'd fill it back with dirt, tamp it down tight, and then put these little boards around. Now, those boards are around there to keep it dry. That was to keep the water from getting into it or getting besides which give it more insulation. And in spring, when they took 'em out, usually if you needed some potatoes to eat, they'd eat the larger ones and they would take the smaller ones and plant them for seed."

Storing sweet potatoes was much more difficult and required a different approach. Florene Smith said, "We'd raise sweet potatoes. We'd have a hard time storing the sweet potatoes. We could store the Irish potatoes in pits in the ground and cover them with a mound. First we'd put hay over them. But any rate, we'd put hay over them to insulate them from the cold, and then we'd put dirt over the hay. And then we'd put boards, and that would insulate those potatoes. And we'd have as much as eighteen to twenty inches of covering over them. And I tell you, come spring and they would be just as fresh and good. And then we'd take those out. According to your family, your family would have as much as five or six 'potato holes' and it would be bushels of potatoes. We'd save a special, we called it, potato hole for the seed potatoes. Some families were smarter than we, but they'd dig their cellar back in the mountain and line it with rocks and store their things in there. But I remember the potato holes served a real purpose. I wish I had a potato hole now to store my potatoes, I tried to put mine in the basement and they sprout so early. But then the sweet potatoes, we would have to can them, what we could. [Using] what jars we'd have left, because they would freeze and you couldn't store them in the ground. They didn't do well. They were just not adapted to that. They need a more warm [place]. I remember we'd eat sweet potatoes early before it got really winter enough to freeze them. Mother would store them in boxes under the beds or anywhere she'd find room to store them. Many times we'd have boxes of [sweet potatoes] to freeze when we just couldn't keep the house warm enough at night. They'd freeze when you'd go to bed. Even a chill, they'll [be ruined]."

The mounds created by the burying were popular places for children to play. Christine Sims recounted her experiences as a young mother: "When the boys got big enough to play they played the grass right off of it. They ran their little cars back and forth. It was a great play place for them, scooting down the slopes" (van Willigen 1978–1980).

Another technique was to store cabbage in "ricks." Cecelia Laswell described the method: "It was interesting to watch the men make these ricks. First a long, shallow trench was made, some of them 20 feet long and five feet wide. Next the bottom was covered with a thick layer of dry straw. The cabbage was then laid in close formation on the straw. Another layer of straw not too thick as the first layer was placed over the cabbage. Then more cabbage and so on until the rick was about five feet high. Each row was narrowed until there were only two heads of

cabbage on the top row. Over the top row a thick layer of straw was piled which slanted down in all sides like a roof on a house. When this was made quite firm, a roof of dirt was placed over the straw and patted down very tight, and last of all a piece of tin bent right through the center was laid across the top of the rick to shed the water." This technique was also used for turnips, apples, and potatoes (WPA n.d., Daviess County files).

Canning

One of the most commonly practiced food preservation techniques was canning. The specific canning techniques, however, changed over time, largely as a result of technological improvements in the types of containers used and a better understanding of food safety. Initially, most food was preserved in standard quart-size metal cans or ceramic jars with replaceable lids that could be purchased from local stores. The metal cans could be reused only a few times, making them less practical than other containers. The ceramic jars could be reused numerous times because their tops had molded-in flanges that supported metal lids.

Ultimately, glass canning jars became more or less universal. Mason jars—with reusable, threaded zinc covers that was sealed with rubber rings—were invented just prior to the Civil War. These were both less expensive and more reliable than other containers and became popular. One of the major advantages pertained to safety; the clear, heat-resistant glass permitted the jars to be boiled without breaking and allowed visual inspection of contents. The canning jar lid and ring system that is still in wide use today was patented in 1915 by Alexander Kerr. Despite these improvements, obsolete jars and cans continued to be used for many years after improved jars were introduced. Eventually, however, sealing wax and lids became unavailable, and ceramic jars were no longer usable. Today, they are valued as antiques.

As one can imagine, rural Kentucky households ended up with large numbers of jars for food preservation. Christine Sims believed that she easily possessed 200 or 300 canning jars. And according to Lucian Robinson, "another sign of an old-time garden would have been a picket fence around the garden [with] fruit jars setting on top of the pickets [because] they did not have enough room in the smokehouse to store all the jars" (van Willigen 1978–1980).

Slicing beets at the Jefferson County Community Cannery, a Works Progress Administration project, 1943. Women brought their own produce and paid for cans and use of the pressure cooker. (Howard R. Hollem, Library of Congress, Farm Security Administration)

At least three processing techniques were used: cold pack, hot pack, and pressure canning. The first two were open-kettle techniques. Some sources from the 1940s also mentioned oven canning, in which the

canning jars were heated in the oven without a hot-water bath. Some people also did canning in large cast-iron pots. Glen Vanoy (Casey County) said, "[Mother] canned and preserved things in the big, old, black kettle out behind the milk house." Pressure cookers came into use in the 1930s. This reduced the processing time and increased the safety of the food and the range of products that could be canned. Advocacy by the university's Cooperative Extension Service contributed to the increased use of pressure canning.

Canning was a demanding process. It had to be done when the crop was ready, and although there was no shortage of jars, there were limited places available to process the food. Thus, during canning, the kitchen was one hot, busy place. As William Singer (Scott County) described it: "[Canning was done] in the kitchen. The kitchen table would be cleaned off. You'd have all your canning jars and your stove. You would have your stove full of pressure cookers and everything, and you'd be cooking, oh, say a couple of pressure cookers. You'd have never canned but one thing at the time. Say, for example, you were canning tomatoes and making tomato juice, you would have the stove full of tomatoes cooking and you would have all your jars washed and sterilized. And then when you got it cooked, you would put it in the jars and then put your caps on it, and your caps automatically sealed 'em, hermetically sealed 'em. And, really, the way they sealed 'em, you very seldom ever lost any. You may if you canned forty jars of tomatoes, you may lose one or two. But you know, if you done it right, if everything was clean and they were thoroughly cooked and everything, you know [you would not have problems]. You would cook tomatoes and can tomatoes for a day. Like I say, have all the burners and ever'thing on the stove full. And then after that, you would rest a week or so. You would never figure on canning two, three days in a row. It wasn't an assembly line. And then a week later you'd come back and you would can beans. You would key on beans for two, three days. And then, 'course, you would come [with] your fruit, you know. But really, farming is a funny thing. You never you know, you just key up to do something one day. You never try to kick it over into three or four days 'cause . . . you're going to run out of gas. You're going to get tired. So you'd figure on getting it all done one day, or finish up the next morning, anyway. If you had some left over, you'd cook them, can them the next day, and then you were done cooking tomatoes. And then maybe come back three or four days later and make tomato juice. But, really, you tried to

do one thing at one time. You never did get too many irons in the fire, as the old folks would say. You never wanted to have too many irons in the fire. You wanted to do one thing at one time and get that done and then do something else. And that carries over in my life. Like if I'm going to do [something] that day, I say, 'Well, I'm going to do that.' I never plan on doing a whole lot of things one day. Just key on what you plan on and complete that and do a good job of it. And like making grape juice and grape jelly and everything, their procedure would be the same. The main thing is to have your fruit or your vegetables or your grapes, have 'em as clean as you could get 'em, have all your jars clean and everything. And then fill 'em up and put your Mason caps on 'em to get 'em on tight as you can and take 'em to the basement where it's cool. That's where we always stored all the canned stuff. Stored every bit of it in the basement. And then in the basement, we'd go down and get it in the winter as we needed it."

Hattie Wells (Harlan County) commented on the safety of canning practices: "[Mother] canned everything open kettle. And you know, today you pressure everything, and I wonder how we kept from gettin' botchery [botulism] back then. And being real, real sick. But she canned everything open kettle. And they had some sort of an acid that they put in their corn and their beans to preserve them. And people used that. And I'm wonderin' today if some of our cancer could have been caused by that acid. [In open-kettle canning you just] put 'em in a dishpan and put 'em on and cook 'em for so long, and then put 'em in a can or a jar, and put some of that acid and seal 'em. But now, I remember my mother didn't have a pressure canner, but she got to where she put her beans in a jar and put them in a big black kettle and cooked 'em for three hours. Outside in the summertime. And, 'course that was cold packin' or whatever you want to call it. And then of course her jams and jellies, she just made that open kettle on the stove. And she made plenty of them."

Various programs were provided to train people to use pressure cookers for canning. One such program was given through the Farmers Home Administration (FHA) right after World War II. Dorothy Cox recalled, "We had a home demonstration agent from Anderson County. And I bought a pressure cooker 'cause [my husband] was going to the veterans' school and all this different modern stuff became available to you and knowledge of it through the schools, you know. And through this program when you bought your farm through FHA.

And so they recommended getting a pressure cooker and they came and showed us how to use it. [The home demonstration agent] asked me would I ask all my neighbors in. All the neighbor ladies to come in and learn how to can with a pressure cooker. And so I had, not a Tupperware party, but a pressure cooker party and she gave the demonstration in my house. To all the neighbor women. None of 'em had pressure cookers. And nearly every one of 'em bought a pressure cooker. Because it was so much faster, so much easier. And you could just get along so much better. They taught you then the safety of canned food from pressure cooking [was better] than it was from [the] open-kettle method, the old way. It used to be not unusual at all that you would can a whole canning of something and if you didn't get that just right, and any bacteria got into it, that whole batch would spoil. And of course you'd throw that away. But you just accepted that as a fact."

People would buy produce, especially fruit, to can during the season. "And back years ago we'd buy as high as five bushel of peaches at a clip. The boys'd sit down and peel. That was before the pressure cookers come into existence, and they'd use a washtub and lay up a tin across the top of it, and build your fire on the outside. And they'd cold pack their peaches, or put 'em on the stove and heat 'em till you could get more in a can. And you'd put about nineteen quarts or half a gallon in a washtub and build your fire underneath the washtub, have a fireplace and put your tin over top of it, and you got it boiling, it served as pressure cooker. We got by with it" (Ella V. Preston, Letcher County).

Some vegetables were hard to can because they were not acidic enough. Nancye Stamper of Lee County said, "And for instance, corn? You'd cook six hours. Boil it six hours, because if you didn't, it would not keep. And then the meat, I don't know exactly how long, but anyway, Mother had a book to show how long you had to cook it. And if you didn't process it that long, it wouldn't keep. So corn is really about only the hardest thing there is to keep. In the vegetable line. And if you make soup, and put corn in it, you've got to process it according to the corn, not because the other stuff don't cook, but the corn has to be processed enough to cook."

It took a lot of effort to get vegetables ready to be canned. Mary Louis Evans of Clark County discussed the work involved:

> [Canning was] hot. You had to go get a bushel or so of either ripe tomatoes or green beans or so forth. And if you could, you

Canned goods in the cellar of a new home near Barbourville, Knox County, 1940. (Marion Post Wolcott, Library of Congress, Farm Security Administration)

snapped the beans the night before to be ready, you know to be ready to go and start with them. With the green beans, they had to be snapped and then we didn't have a pressure cooker then. You just heated the green beans until they lost that real bright green and they were hot through. And then you filled your jars. The jars had to be washed with soap and water and rinsed and kept hot. And so did the lids. Everything had to be clean and very hot. Or they wouldn't, didn't keep well. And then you filled the jar, we usually used quart jars, with the hot green beans and the liquid and added a teaspoon of salt for each quart. And then you put the tops on to seal them and put them in a boiling water bath and they had to cook for three hours. And then you took those out and let them cool. Checked to be sure they were sealed. And by then you were ready to start another batch. 'Cause often, you would make

three rounds. You did seven quarts to a canning kettle. So generally you would just keep going until they all got canned. With tomatoes, you had to scald the tomatoes and slip off the skins. And put them in the jar with the juice. And they did not have to be processed nearly as long because they were so acid, that they kept well. I think maybe twenty-five minutes for seven quarts sounds about right. And there again, you had to add the salt. Or you made juice. You took your tomatoes and then just pureed them and the juice, and canned the juice. Or whatever product you wanted. Chili sauce or ketchup.

And then they canned fruits too. Things have changed so because mostly, mostly people use the freezer. Because they're more like fresh. And we canned corn too. We had to really cook it a long time because it's so dense that it wouldn't keep unless it was processed a long time. Freezing is good. It was after 1950 [that] freezing became more acceptable. And when you freeze it, you have to blanch your vegetables and then cool them in ice water so it kills the enzymes. But then you just package that in an airtight container and label it. Keep it in the freezer. And they're much more like fresh than the canned food, except that we still don't like frozen green beans. We prefer canned, just like the taste better. And you can get varieties of green beans that are supposed to freeze better than others, but we've never liked them as well. Even to buy. We don't like frozen green beans this way. But that's just a matter of preference. And it's just a different kind of process. You didn't have those hours with the heat. 'Course by then we were using pressure cookers. Which I think it takes twenty-five minutes at ten pounds pressure for green beans. But by the time you get your pressure up to the proper point and then let it cool down afterwards so you can release them, it still takes a long time to can your beans.

And then people made a lot of jams and jellies. You had grapes and went out and picked blackberries. And then you picked the chiggers off or else you scratched. But people made a lot of jams and jellies. We did because I guess my dad liked blackberry jam and that sort of thing. My mother made a lot of the chopped green tomato relish because my dad liked it. He

> used to come in with his pickup truck full of green tomatoes. We made [them] into chowchow, which is piccalilli, green tomato relish. Did you ever eat that? You run that through a food grinder. Now you'd use a food processor, I guess. And let it drain with salt in it overnight to get a lot of the juice out. And then you, you mix it with a blend of vinegar and sugar and spices. Cook it. And can it.

The frequency of canning dropped when many people switched to freezing or just purchased vegetables during the winter months. Once a greater variety of fruits and vegetables became available year-round, people had less incentive to preserve them.

Freezing

Freezing was introduced in the early 1940s and had a number of effects, including a dramatic reduction in the amount of food dried and buried. Early owners of freezers especially liked the ability to freeze fresh fruit, but some still preferred to preserve certain foods by other methods, such as canning, primarily for reasons of taste. One obvious constraint to the adoption of freezing was the availability of electricity and the cost of freezers.

Initially, freezing food meant the use of a centralized "locker plant." Lyman Barnes of Ohio County said, "It must have been after World War II. They put this place at Beaver Dam and you rented a thing that held about 250 pounds of meat. It was like $12 a year for your freezer locker. And then they killed and processed the meat there for you. That's what made it go over. Before that everything was put in a fruit jar. We started that deep-freeze stuff then, and it's been with us ever since. [Our family bought a freezer] about 1950. We went back and forth [to the locker] a while and that soon got old. Have all your meat over there and you couldn't get none to eat. One trip a week to town was all they made then." In Robertson County, the locker plant opened in 1945 and closed in 1952.

With the advent of freezers, the amount of beef eaten increased. Some reported that the beef was hung, uncured, in meat houses after it got very cold. Although some people suggested that the meat was frozen, it did not get as hard as if it were frozen in a mechanical freezer; the meat could still be cut with a knife.

Pickling

The making of vinegar for pickling was a simple process. It started with apples—the parts of the apples not used in other ways—pressed in a cider press. What was not drunk as cider would be made into vinegar, as described by Mary Creech of Cumberland (Harlan County): "My grandmother made her vinegar from apple juice and something called 'mother.' It's vinegar starter. It's some kind of bacteria you use to start vinegar. And she'd put apple juice into a crock with just a little neck on it. And some of this 'mother' that she had left over she kept all the time year around, just a little dab of it. [It] looked moldy. It looked nasty. And then she'd just take a corncob and drive it down the top of that jug and let it sit there for I don't know how [long]." Older people recalled that this vinegar was much more flavorful than contemporary commercial vinegar.

To make sauerkraut, people shredded cabbage with a box shredder; added salt, so that it would produce a brine and sour naturally; and placed it in ceramic crocks stored in the basement or an external root cellar to ferment. Clarice McKinney of Rockcastle County described the process: "[My mother would] make 'kraut. And she'd make it in a stone jar. We had a ten-gallon stone jar, and then we had a four-gallon jar. But she would make it and she would salt it in the pan like you was gonna cook the cabbage. And she would mix that with her hand, then she would put it in the jar, and she would mash that down in the jar. She'd take the churn dash, and she'd press that down until the water come over. Then she would fix another pan, you know, 'til she got it full. And then she would get some grape leaves. She'd put cabbage leaves first. Then she'd put grape leaves. That would make the 'kraut crisp. Then she would put a plate. And then she would get her a rock and wrap that in a cloth and weight that down. Then she would tie her cloth over that, and she let it stay eight days. And then she would take it out and clean the top of it all off and can that. She'd put it on and cook it until it come to a boil. And then she would can that and seal it. And sometimes, in the fall of the year if we had cabbage, why she'd make the jar, and it would stay and all winter that she would go and just take the top off of it and we'd eat it just like that. She would [also] fry it with bacon grease."

Pickling was an important method of preserving a variety of commodities. There were numerous relish-type items, such as pickled cucumbers, green tomatoes, green peppers, and hot peppers, as well as

more complex recipes such as chowchow. Corn, green beans, and cabbage were sometimes pickled for later use as a side dish. Pickled foods were prepared in crocks and then cellared. Florene Smith said, "We'd pickle beans in a brine solution [in] big crocks. They'd hold fifteen and twenty gallons of beans and pickled corn. And that was a little bit of a change from canned beans and dried beans, the pickled beans." Ella Preston said, "My mother pickled in churns. She had some big old, I don't know, we called 'em crock churns. I don't know what they were made out of. They were glazed. And she'd pickle as high as six gallons at a time, pickle beans and corn. My aunt, she had a big family and she'd pickle in barrels. And I can remember many a time a going with her girls to the pickle corn barrel and reaching in and getting me an ear of corn and eating it, pickled corn. And she'd pickle beans in barrels, but my mother didn't [pickle] on that scale."

Some pickling recipes used an array of spices to produce savory additions to winter meals—for example, chutney, chowchow, corn relish, and piccalilli. The following recipe for chowchow was recorded on a blank page of the 1926 Women's Guild of Christ Church Cathedral *Book of Recipes:*

Ingredients
4 quarts green tomatoes
6 small onions
2 green peppers
1 small cabbage
1 quart vinegar
1 pound brown sugar
½ tablespoon each allspice and ground cloves
1 tablespoon each whole black pepper, mustard, salt, celery seed, and turmeric

Procedure
Run the vegetables through a meat grinder until they are finely chopped. Mix well with the remaining ingredients and let simmer until tender. This recipe was contributed by Mrs. Sam Hanna.

Certain fruits were pickled as well. Clarence Wells said, "[Mother] made the best peach pickles. You use a clingstone peach. And you cook

them and you make a syrup of vinegar and sugar and spices. I don't know exactly, I'd have to get the recipe out to look at it. And then she put the peaches in that and let it just come to a boil so the peach would be hot through and pack 'em in a jar and pour that over 'em. And I know they had cloves in 'em 'cause I can see those cloves stickin' in those peach pickles. Oh it tasted like a peach, but yet it had a real good flavor. She'd put some cinnamon in, but then she'd put those, you stick the cloves in like when you do a ham."

With the more widespread use of glass canning jars, pickling was often done in conjunction with canning. The improved reliability of canning methods and extension service education increased the variety of items pickled.

Their sophisticated knowledge of food preservation allowed rural Kentucky women to satisfy the nutritional needs of their families throughout the year. What was on the table changed with the seasons, but there was always food, and people looked forward to the annual return of their favorite dishes. Some commodities were preserved by several techniques. For example, corn was canned, pickled on the cob, made into relishes, and later on frozen. Green beans were canned, pickled, dried, and frozen.

The tastes that were produced by food preservation became the preferred flavors, and today they are sought after and cultivated. The buried cabbage was white and crispy, the canned green beans' color and texture were favored, and the apples wintered in the basement or painstakingly dried were cherished.

Chapter 11

Doin' the Hog Work

Many households raised hogs for home consumption, and discussions of foodways usually included references to the raising, slaughtering, processing, cooking, and eating of hogs. Besides being important sources of food, hogs also supplied fat for frying, baking, and soap making. This all changed with the economic transformation of Kentucky farms. These days, few pigs are raised for home consumption. Hogs are now raised on just a few farms that specialize in pork production, using a production system that has few links with the practices of the past. The pigs themselves are very different—lean and slender and genetically predisposed to gain marketable meat on a diet of prepared feeds. They are no longer fed recycled household and farm wastes. Although hog production has changed, there is still a taste preference for pork, especially cured pork.

This chapter is about what Christine Sims of Robertson County called "doin' the hog work" (van Willigen 1978–1980).

Butchering

Prior to slaughter, farmers selected the hogs that would be butchered, put them in a "fattening pen," and fed them extra corn for a couple of months. During the weeks before the slaughter, families might run out of pork and lard, so a farmer might be tempted to slaughter a hog early and then share the meat with others. According to Henry B. Turner (Lee County), "[Sharing production] worked out in meat. If somebody killed a hog in the early part of November, and usually they'd want to kill 'em as early as they could because they was needing the grease and

meat bad. And where it may not keep too well. In other words, [if] you was on the borderline of when it was cold enough for [the meat] to take salt, or where it wasn't cold enough." In the early part of the season, it might "turn cold and stay cold for ten days or two weeks, [or] it could just stay two or three nights and warm back up. So if it done that you had a chance to lose [the meat]. So there was always some person who would kill real early and he would loan his meat out. And that way if it did turn warm too quick, they would all eat it up before it spoiled. When they would kill two or three weeks later, they would bring the meat or the sausage back. So that was a deal that worked out good for everybody."

Hogs were butchered on the farm during the fall and, to a lesser extent, in the early spring. The timing was based on both weather conditions and the agricultural cycle. For the best preservation, butchering was conducted after cold weather had begun but before the really harsh winter weather set in. Cold weather was needed to keep the meat from spoiling, but if temperatures dropped too low, portions of the meat would freeze and be prevented from taking up the salt needed to cure it. Meat that froze as it was being cured could spoil later on. Some also believed that "animal heat," or the heat produced by an animal's metabolism prior to being killed, was somehow more of a problem than ambient heat. Along with weather considerations, hogs were butchered when agricultural activities were less demanding, such as after the tobacco had been housed and before it was being stripped. Most informants stated that they butchered in late November and early December. Some used, as a rule of thumb, the "warmest day after Thanksgiving." A woman from Robertson County went so far as to say that "something in the air changes after Thanksgiving" that reduced the risk of spoilage (van Willigen 1978–1980). In any case, hog butchering was carefully scheduled.

In the past, hog butchering was a cooperative effort shared by a group of neighbors or kinsmen, although some farmers might sell their slaughtering services. A typical arrangement was described by a retired farmer from Robertson County: "Now this place used to be a main place. Maybe there'd be three or four neighbors here. We'd kill our hogs. They'd bring three hogs and we'd kill, butcher all hogs in one place. The day we'd butcher hogs we'd have everything ready. We'd have the box set and the water in it. We'd get up before daylight and start heating that water and the neighbors'd start coming in then, we'd

butcher hogs and at night, why, we had the hogs butchered, we'd block them out, put 'em in the meat house and cool them until the next day. And the next day. And the next day we'd start workin' 'em up" (van Willigen 1978–1980).

William Singer (Scott County) said, "A lot of times the neighbors would all get together and say, for example, they would kill hogs at our place one day, and they would kill at their place two [or] three days later because hog killing, heck, there's a lot of work. You kill five or six, seven hogs, and wrestle about a big 300- or 400-pound hog, lifting it up on a table and cutting it up and hanging it, and hanging the meat up and everything, you know, it gets to be a job. So neighbors would trade work with each other. Like if a whole bunch was required to do one job, you know, you'd go over and help your neighbor, and then if you had that job to do, they'd come over and help you. But hog killing was especially that way because the neighbors would pitch in and help each other in return for, you know, you helping them. [No one had a specific job.] Everybody was a jack-of-all-trades, really, and good at none, you know. I've seen some people could trim up a ham or trim up a piece of meat, you know, would just be a work of art, and a lot of others couldn't. But, really, there was no specialist in it. Everybody just pitched in and did everything. I've trimmed meat. 'Course we had an old sausage grinder that you turned by hand. I've did that."

Butchering started with the killing of the hog, which was usually done very early in the morning to allow time to finish the entire process. Hogs were killed by either sticking or shooting. Sticking involved cutting the hog's carotid artery in the neck, but mostly, hogs were shot. Ralph Lobb of Magnolia (Hart County) recounted his experience shooting hogs: "We always used a rifle. There usually were two or three people who had the necessary rifles and they would razz each other as to who was gonna do it and then they'd maybe alternate it and kindly keep score as to how many squealed one and how many didn't squeal one. They kindly made a game out of it and all. And the feller who didn't get a clean kill on the first shot on every one and if his pig squealed and you had to chase him down took lots of ribbing. We never shot one the second time 'cause you never could hit him. If you squealed him and [the pig] was moving to the extent, the fella just went in and bulldogged him, and overpowered him, and flopped him over, and cut his throat. But if his marksmanship was right, the pig would just freeze upright for a split second and then just topple over

on his back, and the person who was gonna cut his throat to bleed him just walked in and didn't need no help at all 'cause the pig was, you know, paralyzed. But if he didn't kill him clean with that shot, three or four other people just run in and grab the hog and hold it, and cut his throat and he'd bleed to death. It really wasn't necessary to take a shot at him. They could have grabbed the pig and slit his throat and let him bleed to death."

After the hog was bled, it was scalded to assist with the hair removal. In the old days, people used what was called a hog box or a scalding pan. A hog box, which might be up to eight feet long, was constructed of wooden sides and a sheet-metal bottom. The sides and ends would be held together with long cross-bolts. Members of the butchering brigade would dig a hole in the ground, build a fire in it, set the hog box on it, and fill the box with water. They would have to start at daybreak so that the water would be heated and ready to go before the first hog was killed. William Singer described the process: "You would dig a hole. What the hole was for was to build a fire underneath of it and then you would fill the hog box full of water. The hog box was big. Had to be to, you know, to put a 300- or 400-pound hog in and scald it. I would say you're talking about close to [a] hundred gallons of water that you'd have to put in there and build a fire and heat the water and make sure the water was hot enough to scald the hog so that his hair would slide off pretty easy. [So that you could] clean 'im pretty easy. It was [made of] steel. And the best I can remember, some of the sides of it was wood. But all the underneath, 'course where the fire could hit and everything, was steel. And the inside of it was tin. You had to have it so you could handle it, because if it would have been completely steel or iron, it woulda been too heavy to handle. But it was a combination of tin, steel, and wood. 'Cause I can remember the sides of it would kinda get singed a little from the fire underneath. You had to be careful not to let the fire run up and . . . get the wood sides of it on fire, somethin' like that you know." Alternatively, one could use a wooden barrel and heat the water with hot rocks. Or the water could be heated in tubs and ladled over the hog. In any case, there was never enough hot water to completely immerse the carcass.

The hair could be difficult to remove if the water was too cold or too hot. A more recent technical manual on slaughtering pigs recommended that the water be between 140 and 145 degrees Fahrenheit and that the carcass be in the water from three to six minutes (U.S.

Doing the hog work, ca. 1920. (Kentucky Historical Society)

Department of Agriculture 1978, 10). Some people believed that a tablespoon of lye added to the water helped remove the scales, or scurf, that adhered to the skin. Winthrop Hopson (Trigg County) stressed the importance of the right water temperature: "The secret to a good scald is to have your water the right temperature. Now we didn't use a thermometer. We'd just stick a hand, somebody that's done so much that they could probably stick their hand in there and say it was okay. You had a vat where you put your hog in. Generally you put a rope around that hog. You wrap it maybe twice and a person'd stand on each side and one person could do it really. Just keep the hog moving. 'Cause you didn't want your hair to set. It won't come out. It's just sticky. You want to keep your hog moving all the time [so] the whole hog will get the water. If everything's right, it doesn't take very long. And then you get him out real quick. Sometimes you take a pole and go around the other side of the vat and prise him up and somebody pull the rope. And flop him out. And then everybody'll pull hair. If everything is right it doesn't take long. If it's what I call set, it just won't come. [Then] you have to kind of shave it. And it's nice to just grab a

bunch of hair and it just, just comes off." Everything from the head to the feet was dehaired.

The next step was gutting. For this, the animal was put on a pole, forequarters down, and the hind legs were separated with a gambrel stuck between the Achilles tendon and the bone. The gambrel had to be quite stout in order to support the full weight of the hog. As Ralph Lobb remembered, gutting the hog required skill, because "if you made a miscut, the fecal matter would spew off into the body cavity." The gutted animal was often laid on a sled and cut up into large portions. Known as "blocking out," this process produced seven large primal cuts with the skin remaining: head, two hams, two shoulders, and two sides (or middlin's). The butcher used a very sharp knife to cut around the head, circling the neck until he got to the bone. A sharp hatchet might be used to finish the job and separate the head from the neck and to cut through the breastbone.

The blocked-out carcass was then carried to the meat house, where it was allowed to cool down for twenty-four hours and harden. This made the meat easier to trim. "And then if you got 'em all blocked out and gutted and trimmed up, you'd put [it] in the smokehouse, it would be late afternoon. You would let 'em stay in there overnight usually. If it got down to about ten, fifteen degrees, [it] would solidify 'em where, you know, that they were solid and you could go in there and trim the meat and trim the fat off for lard, and trim the other lean meat and everything for sausage" (Hopson).

Some of the internal organs were eaten during hog-killing time, which was something the participants looked forward to. The heart, liver, and kidneys were always saved. The brains were fried—typically, scrambled with eggs. The liver was ground up with onions, sage, and bread. The tenderloin might be stripped out and eaten during the butchering process.

In addition to fresh meat, butchered hogs produced cured sausage, ham, bacon, jowl, and shoulder, as well as rendered lard. Souse making and the pickling of pigs' feet were also mentioned in association with hog butchering. Back fat was reserved for use in sausage making, and belly fat was carefully trimmed to make bacon. Some of the meat that was hardest to cure was eaten fresh; this was usually referred to as the "backbone." Usually, the meat was eaten in a predictable order. The first things consumed were the organ meats. Backbone, ribs, and other fresh cuts were consumed next, followed by the sausage and

cured shoulders. Hams were the last part used. People often had a ham left over for Christmas.

Curing and Smoking

There were a number of different ways to cure pork with a salt-based mixture. Most commonly, however, the hams and shoulders were left whole, with the skin on. In addition to the two hams, two sides of bacon, and two shoulders, the fat around the lower part of the hog's head—the jowl—had to be cured. This was used like other cured pork as "seasoning meat" in green beans, lima beans, or other garden produce.

The first step in curing was to rub a salt mixture into the meat. Glen Vanoy (Casey County) described the process: "You would take your hands and rub all that salt and everything in the meat, and it would nearly freeze your hands off 'cause it'd be about ten, fifteen degrees outside. You'd have your hands in all that wet stuff massaging it in those hams and in the bacon and in the shoulders." The meat was allowed to salt for six to seven weeks. Some people had meat houses with racks installed for that purpose; others had special meat boxes. Vanoy said, "There was a meat box in the smokehouse. The meat box was on legs, and it was about, I guess four feet by five feet by four feet deep, I guess it was. Anyway it was a big one. And that's where you salt-cured your bacon. And you did your hams and shoulders that way also."

One major point of variation was whether the ham was smoked. Smoking helped the curing process—thus, smoked ham was salted for a shorter period—but its main purpose was to add flavor. The preferred wood for smoking was hickory. Before smoking, the curing salt was removed from the outside of the meat.

The fire was kept small because the purpose was to smoke the meat, not cook it. William Singer said, "And then my job always was to smoke it. You would take and get some metal troughs of, usually what they were were hot-water tanks that were cut half in two, and you would put 'em in the smokehouse. And then you would get you some wood, either preferably hickory or peach or plum or apple, some type of fruit tree or hickory tree, and then you would take and build a fire in there and you would just take and keep the fire smothered out all the time. Like usually what I would do would be use wet corncobs. Take and soak corncobs in water and then if the fire got to blaz-

ing or something, take and pitch some of them wet cobs on it and you'd smoke your meat, and you would smoke your sausage, smoke your hams, your shoulders, your bacon, and your sausage. And, really, there's nothing in the world any better than the smoke-it-yourself, do-it-yourself type."

The smokehouse was an important part of the process. As Clara Garrison (Bourbon County) described it: "We had a smokehouse, and it was [covered with planks] on the outside to keep any smoke from creeping out whatsoever. And after the meat was killed and salted down for six weeks—Dad kept salting it to make sure it took salt good to keep it—it was laid stacked down on a table. And then he hung it on nails after six weeks. When Mama was smoking meat she kept her eye on it all the time. Then we'd go to the woods where there was green sassafras and green hickory and we'd split that and we'd build a fire, we would just let it smoke. You know wood that don't burn good will smoke. It never did be a blaze. They'd put water on it if it would go to blaze. And it would get in the smokehouse, you'd choke to death when you go in there to look about it. And we smoke that clear through. Mama never did like to smoke it any after the first day of March. By November, the last of November or the first of December, we'd kill hogs and leave it down six weeks. And then we'd started to smoking and we tried to smoke it as often as we could, until around the first of March. And then we didn't want no flies or anything to get on it. And then we sacked it and then we didn't have no more fires and it was the best-tasting stuff."

Eventually, salt cures became obsolete and were regarded as "old-timey." They were largely replaced by sugar cures. Mabel Stewart of Mt. Olivet said that she and her husband Herbert switched to a sugar cure in the early 1920s. Of course, what was called a sugar cure was still mostly salt. For example, one contemporary home-mixed sugar cure called for 12 quarts of salt, 3 pounds of sugar, 1 pound of black pepper, and a scant teaspoon of saltpeter to cure 500 pounds of meat.

The cure was rubbed in carefully and then left on the meat about an inch thick. The hock received special attention; the space between the bone and the skin was slit with a knife, and the opening was packed with the cure. The meat was laid on wooden shelves in the meat house or some equivalent arrangement for up to three weeks. The hog box might be used to salt pork as well. In some cases, the shank end was treated with saltpeter to prevent contamination with skippers, flies

(*Piophila casei*) that laid their eggs in the ham; the actual damage was done by the hatched-out larvae.

Insect problems were almost inevitable and just had to be dealt with. Mary Eleanor Isgrig (Bourbon County) said, "You know the bugs would get in that pork. There were little beetles that laid eggs and they had little worms in them, but they cut those lovely hams, bring them in and put them in boiling water and all the worms would float up and then she would fry it or cook it or bake it. And that was the best-tasting meat. Oh, that was good. I don't know whether the bugs made it good or the way they cured it made it good. But it certainly was good. We ate too much of it really."

The hams were covered with cheesecloth or placed in "meal bags," primarily to protect them from insects. "After they cured the meat, you would make meat sacks of cloth if you didn't have feed sacks. If you had some kind of feed you'd bought for the cows or something on the farm, you'd put those hams and shoulders down in those sacks and hang it back in the smokehouse, and it'd hang there all summer. And when you'd go and cut the ham then, you'd have to put it back in the sack and be sure that the flies didn't get to it, or the green flies would get on it and mess it and blow it, and you'd get bugs on it. But you always put that meat in sacks before March, before the month of March, because that's when the bugs would always get on the meat. We washed ours off in borax water usually. [We did this] once a year or just when we cured it. We'd wash the salt off with a little borax water and drain it, and let it dry. [We would] lay it out in the sun and let it dry, and then put it in the bags. And it made nice brown cured meat. And [with] that everybody had meat to do 'em all year. You didn't go to the store for meat very often. Maybe a can of salmon occasionally. The country stores didn't have meat counters" (Flossy Lutes, Lee County).

Besides contamination by insects, other types of spoilage were feared—for example, if there were broken bones or if the meat froze while it was being cured. To determine whether a ham had spoiled, some recommended inserting an ice pick and smelling it. Another risk was that the ham might become too salty.

After ham and other meats were cured, they were hung in the meat house or a garage. Christine Sims of Mt. Olivet said, "And when it was smoked and thoroughly cured, we made hangers out of wire. We would punch a hole in the shank and poke that wire through it and then it was hung. I don't think we ever had any meat to spoil. My

Ham and sausage in a smokehouse near Barbourville, Knox County, 1940. (Marion Post Wolcott, Library of Congress, Farm Security Administration)

husband was very good at curing meat" (van Willigen 1978–1980). Because meat houses were located away from residences, they were occasionally the targets of thieves.

Today, few farmers raise hogs for the table, deterred by the cost of feed and the smell of the pig yard. Those who do are usually motivated by quality concerns. Raising the pigs themselves allows them to feed the animals properly, avoiding garbage or distiller's slop, which may give the meat a bad taste or texture. Others solve this problem by buying pigs only from farmers who feed in the preferred way, or they have feeder pigs raised by a farmer on a custom basis. A few farmers still butcher their own hogs, but most of these are purchased at stockyards, not raised on the farm. Others may send live animals to a custom slaughterhouse, where the hog is killed and blocked out for a fee. Relatively few families still cure their own meat. Some purchase pork, especially hams, to cure, but there is a greater risk of spoilage with purchased meat because it is difficult to tell how old it is.

Rendering Lard

Rendering lard was another aspect of the hog work. In fact, in these early times, lard was considered the most important hog-related product. "One of the most important things was the cooking the lard, all the fat on the hog. 'Course that's why you put 'em up in the fattening pen. Now you don't want that, but back then you did so you could get the lard" (Singer).

The trimmed fat of the hog was cut into one-inch cubes and cooked to render the fat. Most often this was done outdoors in a large iron kettle heated by a wood fire. Rendering was done at the lowest temperature possible to keep the lard white. Lard was usually stored in lard cans, which could be purchased at the local hardware store. Fat with special qualities was rendered separately; some was used in sausage making (discussed later), and some was used for other purposes.

The quality of the rendered lard was important, and most people spoke of different types, or grades, of lard. "There was what they called the real good lard, and then there was leaf fat lard, and then the gut lard. Of course, that's where the skill came in cooking the lard. We had three big kettles and we'd put the good lard in one and you know, the three grades, and set the kettles up out in the field and built a fire under 'em and cook the lard. If you didn't kept it stirred real good or something, and you browned the lard. If you cooked it too much and the lard turned brown instead of solid white, you was in a lot of trouble. You had people to answer to. But usually the lard came out looking real good. Most of the time it came out just as white as the driven snow" (Singer).

The leaf fat, which lines the abdominal cavity, was often reserved to be used as a hand lubricant. During the tobacco stripping process, one's hands would get covered with a gummy substance that required grease to soften and remove it. Leaf fat was used for that purpose. Today, tobacco strippers use mechanic's hand cleansers and petroleum jelly (Vaseline).

The crisp residue left after the rendering of lard was known as "cracklin's." These were usually put in a lard press to squeeze out the excess. Christine Sims said, "My husband made a tool that we used. It was two large paddles that had a piece of leather that joined them at the foot. You would put the cracklin's in a cotton sack and then he would apply those paddles to squeeze the liquid out, separating

the lard from the cracklin's" (van Willigen 1978–1980). Although the Sims family did not eat cracklin's (Mrs. Sims thought that maybe the dogs ate them), other people considered them a real treat. One person said, "There was something else that people liked real well that was a real delicacy, [this] was cracklin's. [With the cracklin's] you would take and make what you call cracklin' bread out of them. Take meal and cook it up and take and sprinkle the cracklin's in it and call it cracklin' bread. And that was really good. Everybody loved it. You take good cornmeal and cook cracklin's in it, now, that was really good. And then, of course, cracklin's were brittle. You could just eat 'em the way they were. A lot of people would dip 'em out when the lard was about done. [They] let 'em cool down a little, and eat 'em right there while they was cooking the lard" (van Willigen 1978–1980).

The recipes for cracklin' bread were as variable as those for cornbread. One recipe from the early-twentieth-century food writer Martha McCulloch-Williams was reported to be from "pioneer" days.* This was a variation on unleavened corn pones. She wrote, "sift a pint of meal, add a pinch of salt, then mix well through a teacup of cracklings—left from rendering lard. Wet up with boiling water, make into small pones, and bake brown in a quick but not scorching oven" (McCulloch-Williams 1988, 37). Following is a contemporary recipe for "Cracklin Corn Bread" (Allison-Lewis 1998):

Ingredients
½ cup cornmeal
½ cup all-purpose flour
2 teaspoons baking powder
½ teaspoon salt
1 beaten egg
1½ cups milk
½ cup cracklings

Procedure
After preheating the oven to 400 degrees, sift the meal, flour, baking powder, and salt together. Combine the egg, milk, and

* McCulloch-Williams, raised in Tennessee, had knowledge of food practices around Clarksville, Tennessee, and Hopkinsville, Kentucky.

> cracklings in another bowl, and then add this to the dry ingredients. Beat this mixture and put it in a greased hot skillet. Bake until brown. Test for doneness by inserting a toothpick.

Although these special recipes are interesting, it is likely that in many cases people just threw a handful of cracklin's into their regular recipes.

Although the better-quality fat was reserved for cooking, some of the rest was used to make soap. Christine Sims said, "We made our soap with the cracklings which were left over from [making] the lard. We would cook them down [with] other parts of the fat that wasn't edible. We would put lye in that. I had a big black kettle. With that grease and lye we made our own soap to wash clothes" (van Willigen 1978–1980).

Today, lard-making equipment is viewed as antique. Rendering kettles can be seen on front lawns, used as planters. Although lard is still used in cooking, many avoid it for health reasons. It is, however, an important ingredient in biscuits and can be used to season vegetables.

Making Sausage

Basic sausage making involved grinding the meat and fat and adding a cure and flavoring agents. Most sausage was made in bulk rather than in links. The mixture required the proper ratio of fat to lean meat (perhaps 30 percent fat to 70 percent lean). The fat was selected after the jowl and other tissues were reserved for making bacon. If the sausage meat was going to be cured and hung, the cure would be rubbed on the meat after it was cut into strips but before it was ground. If the cure was being added primarily as a flavoring (as when sausage was frozen), it would be added after the sausage was ground. One recipe for a home cure for 25 pounds of meat called for 1 cup salt, ⅔ cup sage, 2 tablespoons black pepper, 1 tablespoon red pepper, and 3 tablespoons brown sugar.

Clarence Wells of Harlan County described sausage making: "When they butchered the hogs we had to help grind that sausage. And I know my mother would clean the washing tubs and she would grind the sausage into the washing tub. She'd wash her hands real well. Get her hands down in there up to her arms and work that sausage. They had all their spices and everything. Everything measured out to go in the sausage. [To season the sausage] we used some red pepper.

Not much. And salt and sugar. And black pepper. And maybe a little sage. And then my mother took cotton and made sacks and stuffed the sausage down in there and tied them up. [They were about a foot and a half long and two or two and a half inches, three inches wide.] And they'd hang 'em up in the smokehouse. And after they salted the meat down, and after the meat was ready to hang, my dad would build a hickory fire in [my mother's] long black wash kettle. And he would smoke the meat. And we'd hang the sausage up. They'd get smoked too. And see, that preserved it. It didn't get cooked. It was just smoked. And then what we did, we just let 'em hang there and when we got ready to cut it, we just brought it in and we would cut off whatever we were gonna use, you know. And then we'd just pull that cloth back up over it and hang it back up. We used that always before it got [to be] warm weather."

Some would prepare sausage as links. William Singer described this process: "The sausage would come out kind of a little small hole on the side [of the grinder]. And you would take and run out a link of sausage. Then you would take a string or something and tie that to break it. Then you would fill another link. It was a very slow, slow process. 'Course the sausage links were just hog entrails. Hog guts so to speak. And like you would get a link of sausage, run it out [so] long. Then you would take a string and tie a knot in it and then you'd run another link out approximately the same. And then you would take a string and tie another knot in it. And that's how you divided the links. But your links would be 'bout eight inches long. And maybe an inch and a half [in diameter]. [The intestine] could possibly be from the same hog killin'. Although we never did do it. You could buy 'em at the store like that. The same place where you bought your sugar-curing stuff to sugar-cure your meat with. Your sausage bags. You could buy 'em commercially. We did that instead of trying to use intestines outta the hog. Because our way of thinkin' was that the ones you bought would be more sanitary. [And they] would be processed better and be cleaner than the ones that you could use off the farm. Although I know of some people that would take and dry 'em. And 'course you, you'd have to go through the process of dryin' 'em before you could use 'em. You just couldn't use 'em while they were still green so to speak. If you used them off the farm, you would have to use last year's hogs, really. Last year's entrails off the farm is what you'd have to do. You couldn't use, use the same year that you killed hogs."

Another process consisted of "canning" cooked sausage, although this method seems to have been uncommon. Glen Vanoy described it: "I've helped to fry sausage. Oh, it would take a long time, because you'd have [the] skillets. Most people didn't have that many big black skillets. So two or three would come in and bring their skillets and they would fry sausage. And when it got done they would put it in a glass jar. And then they would take that hot grease, sausage grease, and pour over it till it was just, oh, about half an inch from the top of the lid. And then you put your lid and your ring on it, you know. . . . And the lid was all one piece, had a little glass thing in the top of it. And you put that on it. And then you turned it upside down. You turn it upside down so that the sausage grease will be to the top. And then after it cools, then you can turn it back and it will stay up there. That's to preserve it, to keep it fresh and good. You put it in the cellar, if you had a cellar. And it was cool in the cellar."

A similar approach to preserving sausage was to put raw sausage in a crock and bake it to render the fat. The sausage itself was weighted down with a plate to keep it under the rendered fat, which would solidify and seal the sausage. This product was then sliced and fried. Older people often praised the flavor of sausage preserved this way, which apparently resulted in fresher-tasting sausage than that stored in sacks. The crocks used for baking sausage were not especially designed for that purpose but had originally been made for dairy products. The crocks were stored in the root cellar.

In the past, sausage making was a kind of cottage industry for farmers. They sold homemade sausage door to door in town, where there was considerable demand for it. This became illegal with passage of the federal Wholesome Meat Act of 1967.

Present-day sausage makers may reduce or omit the amount of cure, using it merely for flavoring, and then freeze the sausage. Commercial preparations are also available, such as Morton Salt Sausage Cure. In a given family, sausage may be prepared from fresh, cured, or frozen pork, depending on the taste and the time of year. Currently, as in the past, sausage making is done along with the curing of hams. In some cases, local meat markets grind sausage and pack it on a custom basis.

Grocery stores in central Kentucky usually stock a wide array of commercially prepared sausage. The advertisements of these sausage manufacturers often emphasize their rural origins. Nevertheless,

home-produced sausage is often preferred for a number of reasons, including the ability to control the amount of fat and the level and kind of seasoning.

Making Other Products

Pork was also used to make mincemeat for pie filling. Christine Sims said, "We ground a certain amount of lean [meat] and a certain amount of fat and then we put in dried apples and raisins. It was very spicy" (van Willigen 1978–1980). She also used cinnamon, nutmeg, and cloves. Mincemeat was canned in a glass jar. In contrast, contemporary commercially prepared mincemeat contains no animal products.*

Making headcheese—or, as most narrators called it, souse—was a secondary processes following hog butchering. The hog's head had to be boiled for a long time. Fat, skin, gristle, and some lean meat was reserved and chopped. This was covered with cooking stock, flavored with vinegar and sage, which would reduce and congeal when cooled. The final product was sliced and might be served with bread.

Souse making was not common, but Clarice McKinney (Rockcastle County) described her experience: "I made a lot of souse meat. And I love it. I made two kinds. One kind that I put meal in and some flour, and then you can fry that. And that stays together. But I always cooked the hog's head. I used scraps, but mostly the hog's head. We'd take the jowl off and salt that down. For jowl bacon, you know. I never did use the ears. But it was a job to clean, to fix the hog's head. I generally cut it in four pieces. And took the eyes out, and the ears out. I never did cook them, but some people did. And cook that 'til that got tender. I'd [say that] takes maybe three hours to cook that. Then I would take all the bones out. And take the gristles and then fix out all the meat up fine with my hands. And then put it down in a bowl to gel. Everything was in there together. Put some salt in it and some pepper. And then slice that after it got cold. It would stay out in the winter. You could keep it out in a building, you know, in a covered dish, and it would stay out for three or four weeks. We'd slice that and make a sandwich or just eat it with our vegetables."

Flossy Lutes made headcheese: "You clean the head and feet and

* None Such Brand mincemeat was first marketed in the nineteenth century. It is still available seasonally in the United States.

you cook 'em until they come off of the bone. You take all that bone out and run [what's left] through a food chopper, and then you'd add sage and red pepper. You mold that into a pan and let it get cold, and they call that headcheese. I've made the headcheese. I've sold headcheese. I did more headcheese than I could do anything with. I'd bring it to town and sell it to the restaurant because we couldn't use it all. And we didn't have refrigeration all the time."

Hogs provided myriad products to rural Kentuckians. Lard was used in cooking, seasoning, soap making, and even lighting in some circumstances. Homegrown preserved pork products were highly prized for their flavor and superior quality. Most parts of the hogs were used, including the head to make souse and the intestines to make link sausage. Small amounts of cured pork or lard—called seasoning—were combined with various green vegetables.

A few family hogs could be sustained on household scraps and crop wastes, making pig raising a cost-effective venture. Hog butchering was often done as a cooperative neighborhood project, and the meat had the advantage of lasting most of the year due to the processing of hams, bacon, and sausage.

Although pig production is very different today (taking place in state-regulated operations), the taste for pork, especially cured pork, remains as an integral part of Kentucky foodways. High-quality, dry-cured country ham is still an important rural product in Kentucky. It has been compared by food connoisseurs to the dry-cured hams of Italy, Spain, and Germany.

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Chapter 12

Kentucky Foodways

Traditional Kentucky cuisine is the product of past necessity. The constituent foods and preparation practices fit the historical circumstances of rural Kentucky, and to some extent, people got used to and came to value that which circumstances demanded. Thus, foods born of necessity became valued and preferred. As rural life was transformed, the conditions that led to these ways of provisioning, cooking, and eating changed substantially, and this was reflected in the foodways and other aspects of domestic life. Nevertheless, many of the traditional foodways have been retained.

Although social and technological change has an impact on foodways, food practices and preferences are somewhat stable and often lag other changes. There is a cultural investment in doing things a certain way; some things may be continued even if doing so exacts a considerable cost. Of course, one does not actually eat tradition; one eats food. In this interpretive academic rhetoric, it is easy to forget that these foods taste great and make one feel good. As food practices lead to certain taste preferences, these preferences in turn lead to certain foods becoming particularly important and dominant in the diet, eventually taking on a special cultural status. Foods can become cultural icons that, in a sense, represent foodways in people's minds. If you asked people in Kentucky which foods are representative of their state and have an iconic status, the list might include fried chicken, country ham and sausage, biscuits and gravy, sweet sorghum syrup, green beans with cured meat seasoning, and chicken and dumplings. Yet there are lots of frequently eaten foods that would not make this list. For example, in a community cookbook compiled by the Washington County Home-

makers Club (1999), we found recipes for shrimp dip, turkey tetrazzini, Tater-tot casserole, beef Stroganoff, chicken chow mein, and German potato salad. Most would agree that these recipes and the dishes they represent are neither rare nor iconic, and they are eaten with some frequency.

What are some of the economic changes that took place in this era that impacted foodways? There was a dramatic reduction in self-sufficiency. In the old days, people did not buy much food; the shopping list was often limited to sugar, coffee, salt, and bicarbonate of soda. Few pesticides and fertilizers were purchased, and most animal feed was raised on the farm. Increasingly, people purchased rather than produced the food and other items they consumed. Although it is probably accurate to call some rural Kentuckians subsistence farmers, they, like most farmers around the world, also had to produce for the market so that they could buy the few things they needed, pay their taxes, or meet their obligations as tenants.

As farmers' orientation toward producing for the market increased, the mix of products changed, and farms became far less diversified. Most families abandoned their milk cows and hog lots. Hogs are raised in Kentucky today, but generally not by individual farmers; hog production is now a specialized, large-scale business. The same can be said of dairy production. The production of grain for home consumption disappeared almost entirely. In some regions, wheat grain production of any kind fell to almost zero, although it remains an important market crop in other areas. And wheat is still planted as a cover crop to protect postharvest tobacco fields from wind erosion. Corn is raised for the grain market and as silage.

Another factor that affected foodways was the availability of electric power. The state was not fully electrified until the 1950s, and there was at least a thirty-year interval between the first electrification of rural areas and the last. Within these areas, better-off people got power first. The uses of electricity increased over time. Initially, electricity was used primarily for lighting; cooking came later. Even then, many people continued to use wood fires for canning and cooking certain foods. Although some farmers (primarily those who were more well-off) purchased generators, these were not suitable for home freezers, refrigerators, or cooking.

Food preservation at home became less important. These days, some may choose to can and freeze certain products, but in the past, it

was a necessity. Over time, however, there was an increase in the different kinds of preservation techniques used. With these techniques, a greater variety of foods could be preserved, and these changes were reflected in the diet. Generally, there was a decrease in the seasonality of the diet and an overall increase in dietary options. In the past, fried chicken was a summertime food, and fresh pork was eaten in the fall. Milk, cream, and eggs were in more limited supply in the winter months. Cured meats had their own pattern of availability and got scarce toward the end of summer. The supply of fruits and vegetables varied: in winter, people ate canned, dried, or pickled products, and the first wild greens of spring were a welcome addition; in August and September, families had a bounty of fresh garden produce. Also, with the availability of freezers, beef consumption became more common.

Although many new preservation techniques were introduced, to a large extent, traditional techniques were retained. This is part of the cultural lag process. Economically, it was difficult to adopt new technologies, which involved buying new equipment as well as the lost value of the replaced equipment. For example, people who canned at home retained their stock of obsolete containers for a long time, even though ceramic jars and metal cans did not allow the safe preservation of a wide array of foods. Gradual container breakage was a factor in the adoption of new methods, as replacements were no longer marketed and lids and sealing materials were no longer sold. Cost was also cited as a factor that slowed the adoption of high-capacity pressure canners, despite the significant investment in educational programs by the extension service. The purchase of freezers was curtailed by the same factor.

Many of the changes in canning technology were focused on food safety, and extension service agents provided instruction and public education in this regard. For example, the use of higher processing temperatures through the use of pressure canners was one important safety aspect. Water-bath canning was approved only for high-acid foods. Technical advice was also given concerning product quality and processing times, among other things. In addition, there was a public-awareness campaign concerning the risks of toxins caused by botulism (*Clostridium botulinum*).

Overall, during this period there was a decrease in the dietary significance of home-produced or home-preserved foods and an increase in food purchases from stores and restaurants. Thus, as the inventory

of adaptive technology available to individual households increased, its use declined. This pattern is a manifestation of a process that is almost universally associated with modernization—that of delocalization, or the increase in dependency on energy and other resources from outside the community or region (Pelto 1973, 546). Although in most cases the energy resources in question are petroleum products and electricity, here, we are referring to a more basic energy source—food. What we observe here are basic changes in the nutritional strategies used (DeWalt 1983, 2607).

Along with new methods of preparing and preserving foods, new garden seed varieties—hybrids rather than open-pollinated types—became available. Because hybrids do not pass on their advantageous qualities to the second generation, there was no point in saving seed from year to year, and the swapping of seed among neighbors became less common. These developments have been associated with increased concern about saving garden variety germ plasm and the collection and preservation of what have come to be called heirloom varieties. It is now possible to purchase premium-priced heirloom varieties of various plants, especially beans and tomatoes, at farmers' markets. Such seeds can also be purchased from various sources over the Internet.

Along with the decline in seed swapping, other technical innovations caused social relationships to change. The use of freezers led to the disappearance of slaughtering cooperatives or "meat companies" and that aspect of neighborly cooperation. When considering the entire way of life, there was a general substitution of cooperative work sharing among neighbors with individually owned capital investment. A wide variety of cooperative activities—barn raisings, corn huskings, firewood sawing, wheat threshing, and fish trapping—are now a part of the past.

Farm labor was once supplied largely by the family or through cooperation among neighbors, but for several reasons, today's farm families cannot reliably provide the labor they need. The average age of farm families today is much higher than it used to be; the average age of a Kentucky farmer is over sixty. This means that many farm family households consist of empty nests; the children have long since moved on. If there are children still at home, it is likely that school and other activities conflict with farmwork. It is also more likely that the husband and wife are both employed outside the home. Hired labor is one of the ways to take up the slack.

Before automobiles became common, people were far less mobile, so they had to rely on either their own production or what they could buy in the immediate area. Limited mobility made the diet much less cosmopolitan than it is today. Trips to the country store were infrequent, and people bought a limited number of items but often in large quantities. They also relied on huckster trucks for a comprehensive range of commodities. Stores that were located close to town have been inundated by urban sprawl and bulldozed. Those farther out have either gone out of business or been turned into high-priced, rustic "convenience" stores. Here and there, one can still find a country store that serves lunch—a sandwich made of light bread, Miracle Whip, iceberg lettuce, sliced tomatoes, and bologna in just the right proportions.

The increase in mobility brought many consequences. The amount of food shopping and eating out in town increased. With this came many new foods: Chinese food, pizza, and tacos come to mind. Interestingly, within the last decade there has been an increase in the number of farmworkers from Mexico. As a result, it is now hard to find a county seat without a family-owned Mexican restaurant.

Politically, there has been little change in local institutions. What has occurred is the increased involvement of state and federal institutions in local affairs, generally through regulations and subsidies. For example, artisanal food production techniques practiced in the countryside became more regulated. Laws now make it very difficult for farmers to sell to end users; this is especially true in the case of milk, eggs, pork, dressed chickens, sorghum syrup, and processed meats such as ham and sausage. All the food products that eventually became industrialized also became highly regulated, but in fact, the regulation of farm products started earlier than our story. Federal meat inspection acts had been passed as early as 1889, but the most important was the Meat Inspection Act of 1906. Poultry was excluded from federal meat inspection but was eventually covered by the Poultry Inspection Act of 1957. These regulations made selling fresh and cured meat manufactured by farm households very difficult.

The commercial marketing of former subsistence products such as ham, sausage, and sorghum syrup is placed in a cultural context of meaning that is reminiscent of the traditional setting. For example, the Web site of Purnell's Old Folks Sausage Company in Simpsonville, Kentucky, highlights its long family heritage and country roots. The

brand Old Folks—a nickname of founder Fred B. Purnell—conveys a traditional image. In addition, when the company expanded from its original location in Louisville, it selected Simpsonville partly because of its country location. As another example, the Web site of Father's Country Hams states, "Our Country Hams, Bacon and Smoked Sausage are cured on the farm the Old Country Way. This method has been handed down through several generations of Gatton's, who have lived on this farm for over 100 years." An important factor in this regard is the relationship between the preservation technique and the preferred taste. The country-style cured ham, bacon, and sausage available in grocery stores address this taste preference.

Nevertheless, store-bought products are regarded as unattractive by some. Ham is regarded as too expensive, and sausage is not lean enough or is improperly spiced. Some dismiss store-bought "country" ham as "quick-cured," and old-fashioned country ham is certainly difficult to find in a store. Because of this, some people continue to produce their own ham, bacon, and sausage, although there is a general tendency to abbreviate the process of cured pork production. The sequence of breeding, feeding, butchering, curing, and preparing is curtailed. These days, some just raise pigs without breeding them; others just cure the meat, paying a slaughterer a fee to kill and block out an animal that someone else has raised. Most simply buy the cured meat, forgoing the entire process. Thus the history of ham and other cured meats is marked by a shift: what was once a means of capturing household labor or adding value is now a means of satisfying a taste. The decisions to truncate the process are, of course, based on economics. It is much cheaper to buy a hog from a specialized producer than it is to raise a hog or two. Country ham is expensive enough to allow those who do cure their own to say that they "paid for the whole hog."

Finally, people's better understanding of the health consequences of diet has had an impact on foodways. Older people often speak of the dietary changes they have had to make because of health concerns. Thus, pork is now less attractive, especially cured pork. And some report the use of vegetable oils as a substitute for "seasoning meat" (K. M. DeWalt, personal communication, 2003). Lard, which was highly valued in earlier times, is rarely used.

Kentucky foodways retain the tradition of good food, but the households and communities that produced it have been radically transformed. Much of the food tastes as it always has, and taste prefer-

ences born of necessity have taken on some of the characteristics of a cuisine. Kentucky home cooking has been passed on and reinterpreted by restaurant chefs as a "new Kentucky cuisine."

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Narrators

Almost all the narrators were interviewed in 1991 or 1992 as part of the Kentucky Family Farm Oral History Project of the University of Kentucky Oral History Program. By using the collection database of the program's Web site (http://www.uky.edu/Libraries/Special/oral_history/), the specific date of each interview and other information can be obtained. In addition, the site includes a number of transcripts as well as a description of the project. The collection can also be accessed through the Kentucky Digital Library at http://kdl.kyvl.org/. The authors also made use of field notes based on interviews done in the late 1970s; these are in the senior author's personal papers.

Lyman C. Barnes, Centertown, Ohio County (western Kentucky)
Majora M. Bastin, Casey County (central Kentucky)*
Clinton Brandenburg, Beattyville, Lee County (eastern Kentucky)
Roy G. Brown, Rockcastle County (eastern Kentucky)
Stephen C. Bullen, Rockcastle County (eastern Kentucky)
Anna Burdette, Garrard County (central Kentucky)
Marjorie Carlton, Anderson County (central Kentucky)
Joe Clark, Livingston, Rockcastle County (eastern Kentucky)
John Clarkson, Hustonville, Casey County (central Kentucky)
James Coffman, Calhoun, McLean County (western Kentucky)
Dorothy Cox, Anderson County (central Kentucky)
Mary Creech, Cumberland, Harlan County (eastern Kentucky)
William Stone Dale, Lexington, Fayette County (central Kentucky)
Jeannette Dollarhide, Whitesburg, Letcher County (eastern Kentucky)
Turner Dunlap, Lexington, Fayette County (central Kentucky)
Ola Bell Edds, Calhoun, McLean County (western Kentucky)

*Although Casey County is located in central Kentucky, it is part of a semiofficial association of western Kentucky counties.

Mary Louis Evans, Winchester, Clark County (central Kentucky)
Virgil Fair, Dunnville, Casey County (central Kentucky)
Clara Garrison, Paris, Bourbon County (central Kentucky)
Henry S. Hankla, Danville, Boyle County (central Kentucky)
Winthrop H. Hopson, Canton, Trigg County (western Kentucky)
Sally Hounshell, Beattyville, Lee County (eastern Kentucky)
Mary Eleanor Isgrig, Paris, Bourbon County (central Kentucky)
Emma Ison, Linefork, Letcher County (eastern Kentucky)
Sara Ellen Ison, Ice, Letcher County (eastern Kentucky)
Edith Jackson, Trenton, Todd County (western Kentucky)
Doris P. Jones, Clifty, Grayson County (western Kentucky)
Eugene M. Kiser, Paris, Bourbon County (central Kentucky)
Alvin Leach, Paris, Bourbon County (central Kentucky)
Fred Lewis, Big Laurel, Harlan County (eastern Kentucky)
Ralph Lobb, Magnolia, Hart County (western Kentucky)
Flossy Lutes, Beattyville, Lee County (eastern Kentucky)
Marie McCoy, Cane Creek, Powell County (eastern Kentucky)
Clarice McKinney, Brodhead, Rockcastle County (eastern Kentucky)
Paul D. Morris, Whitesburg, Letcher County (eastern Kentucky)
Minnie L. Morton, Cane Creek, Powell County (eastern Kentucky)
Clyde Mullins, Lexington, Fayette County (central Kentucky)
Lela Noe, St. Helens, Lee County (eastern Kentucky)
J. Henry Ogans, Jackson, Breathitt County (eastern Kentucky)
Ella V. Preston, Whitesburg, Letcher County (eastern Kentucky)
John Preston, Whitesburg, Letcher County (eastern Kentucky)
Lucian Robinson, Piqua, Robertson County (central Kentucky)
Dale Scott, Jessamine County (central Kentucky)
Columbus M. Sexton, Letcher County (eastern Kentucky)
Charles Shouse, Cane Creek, Powell County (eastern Kentucky)
Opal Shouse, Cane Creek, Powell County (eastern Kentucky)
Lawrence Simpson, Paris, Bourbon County (central Kentucky)
Christine Sims, Mt. Olivet, Robertson County (central Kentucky)
William Singer, Georgetown, Scott County (central Kentucky)
Florene Smith, Whitesburg, Letcher County (eastern Kentucky)
Sterling Smithers, Liberty, Casey County (central Kentucky)
Nancye Stamper, Beattyville, Lee County (eastern Kentucky)
Euell Sumner, Cane Creek, Powell County (eastern Kentucky)
Tim Taylor, Parkers Lake, McCreary County (eastern Kentucky)
Fred P. Tirey, Beattyville, Lee County (eastern Kentucky)

Henry B. Turner, Beattyville, Lee County (eastern Kentucky)
Joe Twine, Richmond, Madison County (central Kentucky)
Glen Vanoy, Dunnville, Casey County (central Kentucky)
Willard Varner, Paris, Bourbon County (central Kentucky)
Shirley Wegner, Kentontown, Robertson County (central Kentucky)
Clarence R. Wells, Lynch, Harlan County (eastern Kentucky)
Hattie Wells, Lynch, Harlan County (eastern Kentucky)
Lina E. Wells, Casey County (central Kentucky)
Nelson M. Witt, Bourbon County (central Kentucky)

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