

Animals on the Farm *(much of this information comes to us through oral histories)*

Dairy Cows

During the times that Hugh Carr and Conly Greer were farming, almost every family would have had a cow which provided milk and butter for home use. In one role as Extension Agent, Greer helped teach farm families how to choose the best “family cow.” Smaller farms in Albemarle County usually sold separated cream and not milk which required refrigeration and daily shipping into town. Separated cream was picked up once a week and taken to the Monticello Dairy in Charlottesville to be made into butter. Our current set up in the barn illustrates the time when Conly Greer had dairy cows and sold separated cream. He would have had Jersey or Guernsey cows for this purpose, because they produced a greater proportion of cream to their milk. Our model cow, Tillie, is a Guernsey. Cows were brought in to be milked twice a day, each cow knowing and going to its usual stanchion. They would be fed a tasty mixture which included grains and often molasses to help them relax and let down their milk.



Tillie with her head in the stanchion

In his later years, Greer replaced his dairy operation with a herd of high-quality beef cattle, but they would not have been brought into the barn.

Horses

Greer worked his fields with teams of large work horses which were housed in stalls in the barn. Originally there were five stalls. Conly Greer’s nephews remembered some of the horses’ names which include two that honor African American heritage—Queen of Sheba, who was a 6th C. BCE figure from Yemen, noted for her wealth and beauty, and Haile Selassie, who was Emperor of Ethiopia until 1974.



Horse Stall

The implements in the barn are like those Greer would have used with his horses to farm his fields. He spent most of his farming years working with his horses, and bought a tractor only late in his life.

Feeding stalls line both sides of the barn. Hay would be thrown down the hay chutes (located about half-way down the length of the barn on either side) from the loft above, where it was stored. The animals would be also fed grain.

Granary

The granary was once fully lined with galvanized metal to keep rodents out. The ceiling is still lined with metal and you can see where once there was a dividing partition that separated small grain such as barley and sorghum, from corn which was dried in the fields and stored on the cob until being separated and ground for cornmeal either for human consumption, or more coarsely ground for animal feed.

Pigs

The barn did not house pigs during Conly Greer's time, because it was not good practice to keep pigs in the same building as other animals, particularly dairy cows. The Greers did have pigs, and they were kept below the barn area. In the 1970's, a friend of the family, Horace Miller, Jr., rented the barn for his hogs which were about to have litters. The farrowing pen was reconstructed during barn renovation with bench-like structures designed to mimic protection measures for preventing accidental suffocation or injury



to piglets when the large sow changed position. The neighboring pen might have had many uses, including as a place to temporarily house young calves. We are not sure what function the small door served.



FARM TALKS—Better farming methods are being discussed by Horace Miller Sr., right, and one of his sons, Horace Jr., with their county agent, James R. Butler, left. The Millers live in the Charlottesville, Va., area and sharecrop nearly 1,000 acres in addition to farming the 157 acres of their own.—USDA Photo.

Chickens

The chicken coops were located across from the family cemetery. In his work as Extension Agent, Greer worked to improve the sanitation of chicken houses and increase the quality of chickens owned by African American farmers across the county. At one time Greer had a house where eggs were incubated and chicks hatched out and another for the laying chickens.

