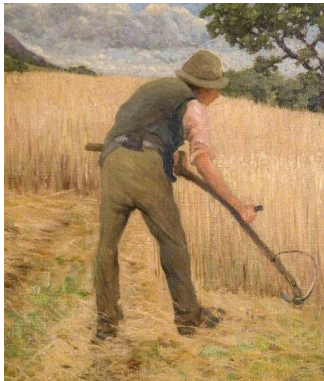


farm tools



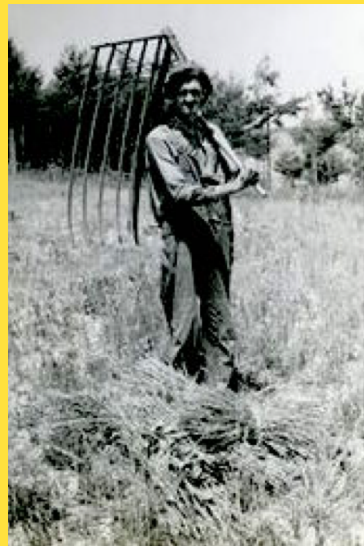
Scythe, Grain Cradle, Pitchfork

Farmers have cut down grain by hand for centuries, and surely did in Hugh Carr's time. Although you may not see one in our display, a scythe, pronounced "*sigh-th*," is the kind of blade used to cut high grasses like wheat, barley and other grain crops.

To use it, one has to draw the blade across the grass stems in a slicing motion. When it's done properly, the scythe leaves a neat row of cut grass that can be pitched into a larger pile and picked up later.

The big fork you see here is called a Grain Cradle, and it works just like a scythe, but cuts a bigger swathe. The metal blade cuts into the stalks, which the wooden fingers catch and then lay down in neat rows. Then the farmer used a pitchfork like the one hanging on the wall to pile the hay on a wagon.

To sharpen these long blades, called "chines," so they work the most efficiently, farmers might carry a metal file. The the sharper, the better! It's backbreaking work!



By the late 19th century, scythes could be replaced by mechanical reapers drawn by horses, like the design patented by Cyrus McCormick in 1834. McCormick used his inventions in nearby Raphine, Virginia, at his 620-acre farm, once called Walnut Grove Farm, and constructed water wheels for milling in the area. Virginia Tech has maintained McCormick's farm since 1956 and conducts agricultural experiments on the land, which is now known as The Shenandoah Valley Research Station.