

Agriculture of Maine: Report of the Commissioner of Agriculture
Maine Department of Agriculture 1873
Survey of Waldo County
Historical, Physical and Agricultural
by J.W. Lang

The "Great Farm," Jackson.—The "Proprietors," who bought up a large part of the "Waldo patent," Messrs. Sears, Thorndike and Prescott, early established a farm of over a thousand acres near the centre of the town of Jackson, which was intended as a summer resort for themselves, and to aid in colonizing their lands. Here they conducted farming on a large scale, built a large, fine house, and large barns. They employed a large force of hands, and introduced blood stock, and new varieties of seeds. It has been with extreme difficulty that we have obtained reliable data of this farm, and this will render our description somewhat imperfect.

Through this farm runs a brook of considerable size known as

the "Great Farm brook," which is one of the tributaries to Marsh river, uniting with it at Monroe village. The land was of a rolling surface with some interval bordering the brook. The buildings were upon a swell of land north of the brook, and some fifty rods from the highway, and had access to the same by means of a wide avenue, bordered by elm and other shade trees. The house was a large two-story, roomy, structure, with ell and outbuildings attached. These buildings were considered almost a palace in the simple days of the early settlements. Two large barns—one known as the "Egypt"—with several smaller ones completed the outfit. An orchard of large extent was set out early in the history of this farm, and when it came into bearing, a cider mill was built. The prospect from the buildings is beautiful and extensive.

The farm now has fallen much to decay and contains but four hundred acres of the original one thousand. It is owned by Mr.

N. E. Carpenter. The fields, except the intervalles, produce little other than "June grass," except the newly seeded pieces. The buildings are but wrecks of what they were once and its ancient glory has departed. The stream that winds across the farm contains a few trout, but is the most persistently fished stream in the county.

The proprietors used to make their summer pilgrimage in carriages, all the way from Boston, occupying some two weeks in the journey. Think of this, ye who can hardly spend ten hours to go the same distance over iron rail. Think of these jolly old school gentlemen, leisurely jogging along in their coach and span, taking life easily, jolting over the country highways. Their arrival and departure was a noted event in the annals of the "Farm." Shooting, fishing, cordiality, and sociability marked their stay, while the crew of laborers were stimulated to feats of work by their presence, and their pennies.

Their stock was a source of pride and gratification to the proprietors. Water was brought three-fourths of a mile from the slope of a hill to the south, in a lead pipe and supplied to the buildings. The first overseer of the farm that we can learn of, was a Mr. Perry who was there seven years, or from about 1807 to about 1814. Whether clearing was commenced under his direction, or by a former employee, we are unable to say. The towns adjoining were settled between 1795 and 1805, so we infer that Mr. Perry may have been the first foreman employed to start the farm, and direct its development. In 1814, Mr. Timothy

Thorndike, from Jeffrey, N. H., nephew to Col. Thorndike, one of the proprietors, took charge of the farm as foreman. Mr. Thorndike was there eight years, or till 1822, when he settled in Brooks, on what is now known as the Woodbury Edwards place. One of his sons is now a merchant in Belfast, and from whom we have obtained many facts regarding the "Farm."

Col. Thorndike imported a large number of Shorthorn Durham stock from England, during Mr. Timothy Thorndike's service on the farm; the larger part of which went to Kentucky. Several were sent to the farm, together with some Spanish Merino sheep, and jacks for service of mares. Devons were also put on the farm afterward, and during Mr. Thorndike's stay, and also before an infusion of the "Vaughan" stock from Hallowell. Mr. Clapp from Portland, succeeded Mr. Thorndike as overseer. Other blood animals were from time to time introduced, which have become blended with the stock of the county and has done much good. But to this statement we wish to add the qualifying remark, that the introduction of Merino was unsatisfactory, and regarded as a failure. They proved weak, tender, and unfit for the climate. Perhaps in the new settlement and hardships of the times they did not receive the care they might or ought to have had, and this caused the dissatisfaction given.

Many young men came from New Hampshire and Massachusetts, and took up lots of wild land from which to make farms, working on the "great farm" to pay the first installments. Beside being a pleasure resort for its owners, it proved to be a means of developing the country about it, and of accomplishing thereby good results.