

Then and Now & Then and Now Horsing Around!

For nearly 200 years, the horse was the only supply of “horsepower” on the farm. Until the tractor was invented in the early 1900s, workhorses pulled farm equipment over nearly every acre of soil planted.

Spanish explorers first brought horses here. American Indians soon found horses useful for hunting and traveling. As settlers arrived, they depended on horses in many ways. Transportation, pulling heavy wagons, clearing the land, plowing the fields and the Pony Express for mail delivery were ways horses helped. Early streetcars, stagecoaches and fire engines were also horse-powered.

Most of today’s farms depend on machinery to do the work. But horses are still important in agriculture. On many ranches in the American West, cowboys ride horses for rounding up cattle, checking fences and other chores. On a few farms, draft horses (horses that do heavy work) still do fieldwork.



Left Photo Courtesy of Dean Riggott - Agri News



Minneapolis-St. Paul is one of the largest centers in the nation for raising horses. There are more horses in Minnesota now than in the days when they did the farm work, but today’s horses are pleasure animals.

Photos Courtesy of Minnesota Ag in the Classroom

In 1920, two humans and eight horses were needed to care for a farm of 160 acres. One fourth of the farm was used just to grow hay for the horses, and it took 40 days to do the plowing. Today, one farmer typically handles over 400 acres using modern machinery.

1. Why do farmers use tractors today instead of horses?

2. What is “horsepower”?

3. What do these words mean?

Mare

Stallion

Colt

Foal

Filly

Mustang



FARMING THOMAS JEFFERSON’S WAY

We remember Thomas Jefferson as the main author of the Declaration of Independence. As our third president (1801-1809), Jefferson made the Louisiana Purchase in 1803. Minnesota is one of the states carved out of this vast wilderness.

Jefferson's father died when he was 14, leaving him some slaves and 2,700 acres of land. An inventor and lawyer, he also studied science, math, agriculture, viticulture (wine making) and architecture. He loved his Virginia plantation, Monticello, where he designed an elegant house.

He set up a **grist mill** there, and experimented with rotating of crops.

Jefferson didn’t care that cotton was replacing tobacco as the most important crop. He quit growing tobacco to grow wheat. He believed that America’s future lay in producing crops and goods that would make the new nation self-sufficient.

Thomas Jefferson died July 4, on the fiftieth birthday of the United States.

What year was that? _____