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THE EDITOR'S PAGE

THE BLACK HOLE

A black hole is reported to be a burned out star that has recaptured all that has happened to it and turned it inside out so nothing can escape—even light.

I feel that some parts of Weston's history have been turned inside out, resulting in a black hole, probably never again to be rediscovered. Finding information on some of the happenings, the mills, and the taverns has been fraught with dead ends and conflicting information. This is one reason your society embarked on an oral history project over 15 years ago. Our trustee emeritis, Scott Hill, undertook this job and interviewed many old-time residents. Now we have personal recollections of life in Weston in their time.

Too bad it wasn't done 200 years ago.

Herb Day

Herb Day - Editor

SPRING IS PLANTING TIME,

Every year—however, the way crops are planted has changed as much as our mode of transportation has changed over the past 200 years. Gone is the oxen—drawn wooden plow, replaced in this day and age with a 10-12 bottom steel plow drawn by a 2-ton giant of a tractor, covering as much land in one hour as many of the early Weston farmers had in plowable land (his speed was more like one acre per day).

The crops planted by the early farmer of Weston increased over the years as he changed from being a subsistence farmer to one who grew some crops for market. And, as the crops changed in kind or volume, so did his planting equipment requirements change.

Hay was the major crop as the settlers began to populate this section of Fairfield in the late 1600's and early 1700's. It was needed to sustain his livestock over the long winters. He grew wheat, rye, and flax for his own use and barley and oats for his livestock. These crops were planted mostly in the spring. Until the grain drill was invented, these seeds were planted by hand. Hay was mostly native grasses until the pasture land could be roughed up enough to sow some timothy and maybe some clover.

After the stones were picked up and dug out and moved into fences, the farmers were able to plow some of their fields (around the stumps until they were able to burn them out). The early plows were wide and crude and required great effort to pull and hold on to. The moldboard plow (see pictures), first pulled by oxen and later by horses, became a standard on all farms. It replaced a wooden plow which had not seen much change for centuries. Even these cast-iron plows broke frequently. It wasn't until John Deere made a moldboard out of steel that this plow became a relatively trouble-free farm implement.



Horse-drawn, farmer-controlled
(some of the time)



Planet Jr. Planter for
vegetable seeds. Used in Weston.



Corn planter
one hill at a time.

SPRING IS PLANTING TIME (Cont. from page 1)

From Weston south to Long Island Sound some farmers made a living planting and selling onions. Weston's onion fields ran from the center where the Hurlbutt School and the town hall are now to the plains of the Saugatuck and Aspetuck Rivers. Onions were planted using a Planet jr. planter (see picture). This planter would also plant other vegetable seeds by changing the size of the seed opening.

A partial list of the plants grown on Weston farms include: rye, corn, barley, oats, buckwheat, flax, potatoes, tobacco, cabbage, tomatoes, onions, and squash. In addition to these, the farm also had a kitchen garden for vegetables and fruit for the family's daily use and for storage for winter use.

Plowing and harrowing the land for planting was hard work. Consequently, the acreage plowed and cultivated was not large, in 1850 the average farm in Weston included 63 acres of improved land. In 1860 this figure had risen to 75 acres: but by 1880 the figure was down to 34 acres. This was primarily due to the cheaper crops grown to the west and brought to the eastern markets by the railroads. Weston farmers kept their local Fairfield County markets, but lost the big markets such as New York. However, this limited market could not support the farm families and farming, as with Weston's manufacturing, became a thing of the past.