

BRIGHTON AREA FARMERS: FROM BEEF TO DAIRY c. 1900 (cont.)

These milk routes were operated by people like George Taylor. He lived in Brighton Township on the west side of Old 23, north of Hyne Road. One of the routes covered North Brighton before reaching Grand River in Genoa Township and then on to Howell.

George furnished a wagon and horses and hired drivers who worked a 12 hour day. Depending on the distance from the factory, Taylor was paid about 10¢ per can. The wagon box held 40 ten gallon milk cans. A shelf-like arrangement held four cans on each side of the wagon. High above the front wheels were two shelves which held three cans each. A fully loaded wagon carried 54 cans. At 100 pounds each can the payload reached 5400 pounds. The weight of the wagon, box and driver's cab brought the gross vehicle weight near 7000 pounds. Each can was lifted about 3 feet up into the wagon.

Two horses normally were expected to pull this load. Keep in mind the country roads of the day were not the roads to which we've become accustomed, not even the narrow, gravel ones. When roads were really poor (during the spring thaw or heavy rains) an extra team was hitched up, or the load was placed on two wagons. Extra wagons were usually put into use on Monday mornings because of the previous weekend's milkings which were not picked up on Sunday.

Upon arrival at the milk factory the driver lined up with other wagons coming in from other routes. Approximately 30 wagons arrived each morning with cans of milk. A large container, mounted on scales, was at the top of inclined rollers. The driver unloaded the cans of milk and the factory workers dumped and weighed the milk. It then was put through a pasteurization and evaporation process before being preserved in tin cans for shipment to world markets. The empty cans were steam cleaned and the driver again loaded them onto the wagon.

From his tin pail the driver retrieved his lunch and from the wagon the team received their oats and hay. After lunch the return trip began; again stopping at each farm leaving the cleaned cans at the proper destination in time for the next milking. Each had been purchased by the farmer and had his name on the copper strips soldered to the can and its lid.

In order for him to accomplish this day's labor the driver rose at 4 am. and fed the horses so they'd have time to eat before starting out. The milk hauler certainly earned his pay of \$20 per month and board. Sometimes the schedule enabled Bill Pless to hitch a ride to school on the milk wagon. (The Charles Pless farm was half way between Euler and Kellogg Roads on the north side of Grand River at the time, c. 1915.) (Compiled by Marieanna Bair from Bill Pless' "Michigan Memorabilia". To be continued.)

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