The Rise of Dairy Farming

Wheat was the earliest and most important cash crop for white settlers in Wisconsin. It required a small initial capital investment and was fairly easy to grow, allowing farmers to harvest two crops a year. The high rate of financial return made wheat an especially attractive crop for homesteaders during the middle of the 19th century.

Wheat provided a way for new immigrants in Wisconsin to farm cheaply and to deliver a product that many people needed. From 1840 to 1880, Wisconsin was considered "America's breadbasket" because one-sixth of the wheat grown in the nation came from Wisconsin. The early success of wheat farming helped Wisconsin's agriculture develop more rapidly than it did in other states.

Despite its appeal, wheat also had risks and disadvantages. It was hard on the soil, which it quickly depleted of nitrogen. Depending on the vagaries of the weather and insect infestation, yield could vary substantially from year to year. By the late 1850s, the price of wheat began to drop as Wisconsin yields and quality diminished and competition increased from farmers in Iowa and Minnesota. Disaster struck in the 1860s, when tiny insects known as chinch bugs began devouring Wisconsin wheat crops.

To meet these challenges, farmers began experimenting with a variety of alternatives to wheat. Feed crops, rather than cash crops, were better suited to Wisconsin's soil and climate, and came to characterize the state's agriculture in the late nineteenth century.

Charles Rockwell was one of the earliest cheese makers in Wisconsin, beginning production at Koshkonong, near Fort Atkinson in Jefferson County, in 1837. Starting in the mid-nineteenth century, dairying emerged as the most viable alternative to wheat. The number of dairy cows increased rapidly and by 1899, more than 90 percent of Wisconsin farms raised dairy cows. Much of the success of Wisconsin dairying can be attributed to the efforts of William Dempster Hoard, who tirelessly promoted the industry for nearly fifty years. The University of Wisconsin School of Agriculture also played an active role in encouraging dairy farming throughout the southern part of the state.

The dairy industry expanded rapidly in Wisconsin for several reasons. Many of the enterprising dairy farmers who settled in southern Wisconsin in the 1840s and 1850s were New Yorkers. At the time, New York was the leading dairy producer in the nation and they brought with them the skills needed for commercial dairying and butter and cheese production. Although it was more difficult to produce, most of the earliest dairy operations made cheese rather than butter because it kept longer.

Dairying was also helped by the University of Wisconsin, which actively promoted the industry in the late 19th century through scientific research. The first professor of agriculture, William A. Henry, used the university's farm to experiment with new dairying methods. The university also promoted the use of cylindrical silos for storing feed for cattle during the winter. Professor Stephen Babcock developed the first test for butterfat content in milk, which allowed high quality butter and cheeses to be manufactured consistently, and the university's College of Agriculture pioneered testing for bacteria that led to practical methods of milk pasteurization.

In the 1870s, leaders of the growing Wisconsin cheese industry organized several professional organizations to promote their product and to overcome farmer opposition to the cheese industry. The transition from wheat husbandman to herdsman had been difficult for many farmers, and the adjustment to the more regulated and confining routine of the factory supplier had proved especially trying. Among the most famous of the organizations was the Wisconsin Dairyman's Association, founded in Watertown in 1872. Though primarily a marketing association, the Dairyman's Association also provided education in new dairying methods through its publications and meetings.
In the 1880s, the university began offering agricultural "short courses" and "winter courses" in Madison to educate farmers on the benefits of dairying. Its Farmers' Institutes, held around the state, also brought farmers and scientists together to share ideas.

Finally, the dairy industry was helped by the German and Scandinavian immigrant families who were quick to adopt dairying as a profitable way to farm. They also specialized in the European-style cheeses that appealed to consumers, and Wisconsin became known for its Swiss cheese. By 1915, Wisconsin had become the leading dairy state in the nation, producing more butter and cheese than any other state.


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**Article 1: (2 pages)**

**A Sauk Co. farmer recalls turning from wheat to dairy in the 1850s.**

**Hauling grain from Baraboo to Milwaukee**

In this short reminiscence, Sauk County farmer H.H. Flynt recalls how wheat was grown, milled, and taken to market in the 1850s. He comments on the prices paid, money earned, and difficulties encountered when the chinch bug epidemic decimated wheat crops at the end of the decade. One enterprising neighbor had pulled himself out of debt by dairying, and Flynt describes how all the region’s farms were gradually won over to dairying.

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**Article 2: (3 pages, with picture)**

**The legacy of the farm magazine, Hoard's Dairyman (1935)**

**An Editor Whose Cow Philosophy Made Wisconsin the Leading Dairy State**

William Dempster Hoard began publishing Hoard's Dairyman as a separate publication in 1885. Focusing primarily on dairy and farm information, Hoard used his magazine to campaign for the expansion of dairy farming and to advocate for agricultural reform. On the fiftieth anniversary of the magazine, the Milwaukee Journal reviewed Hoard's life and legacy to the dairy industry in Wisconsin.

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**Article 3: (2 pages)**

**A history of cheesemaking in Green County**

**History of Foreign Cheese Industry in Green County**

Gouda, Limburger, Havarti, Edam, Cheddar--Green County is famous today for all of these types of cheese, and many more. Cheesemaking has enjoyed a long history in Green County as cheesemakers from New York and Ohio settled in the area in the mid-to-late nineteenth century. This article provides an overview of the development of the cheese industry in Green County.
Introduction:

1. Why was Wisconsin considered “America’s Breadbasket?”

2. Why did Wisconsin’s wheat crop begin to go under?

3. How did the University of Wisconsin have an impact on agriculture in the state?

Article 1: “Hauling Grain from Baraboo to Milwaukee”

How does the author describe hauling grain? What were some issues people encountered with this process and how did they deal with those issues? Were there any inventions or improvements that changed the grain industry for Wisconsin? If so, what were they and how did they help?
Article 2: “An Editor Whose Cow Philosophy Made Wisconsin the Leading Dairy State”

How did William Dempster Hoard get his start with dairying in Wisconsin? What circumstances allowed him access to this type of industry? What did he do to increase the impact of dairying in Wisconsin? When answering the last part of the question, consider legislation and education in your response.

Article 3: “History of Foreign Cheese Industry in Green County”

How did cheese making get its beginnings in Wisconsin? What were some issues these early cheese artisans faced and how did they handle these issues? How did immigration have an impact on cheese making in Wisconsin and what evidence is there of this impact?
In November, 1861, father packed his household goods at Girard, Erie County, Pa., and with mother and four boys, a team of horses and a wagon, boarded a steamer at Erie and went by the lakes to Milwaukee, Wis., and from there overland about one hundred miles to Sauk County and located on a farm about four miles northwest of Baraboo, the county seat. Wisconsin was then a wilderness and away out on the frontier. Father had traded some Erie County property for some land in Sauk County, where he located thinking to better his condition, and where his growing boys could have a chance to develop their latent talents. This country was then undeveloped, and no one knew its possibilities. Everybody was poor, and of course had to do the best they could. Some farmers thought the soil better adapted to wheat than anything else, and as fast as they got their land broke up, put it to wheat. This venture proved well as far as yield is concerned, for the yield was twenty, thirty, and sometimes forty bushels to the acre. But where was the market? Baraboo was a place of only about three hundred people. Madison, the capital of the state, was the nearest place of any consequence, forty miles distant, and that not large enough to afford any market for our wheat, and there was no road there then. Milwaukee was the nearest place, one hundred miles, that provided a market for our wheat; therefore the only alternative was to haul our wheat to Milwaukee and sell it for thirty, forty, fifty, and sometimes as high as sixty cents per bushel. This was pioneering and making money with a vengeance. This farmers grew wheat until about 1858 or 1860, when the chintz bug put an appearance and reduced the farmers' yields down to from three to ten bushels per acre.

Real Hardships

In hauling the wheat to Milwaukee, both horse teams and oxen were used; more oxen and horses. It took from two to three weeks to make a trip, depending upon the weather and the roads. Some seasons the weather would be fine and the roads good; other seasons the weather would be rainy and the roads bad.

No settler ever indulged in the luxury of stopping at a hotel unless compelled to do so by sickness or a bad storm. The time it took and the price of grain, forbade any luxuries. I heard one settler say that his load of wheat lacked sixty cents of buying a few groceries and incidental expenses of one trip. A settler would start out with his load of wheat, a small sack of flour or corn meal and would take a shot gun with which to get his meat on the way. Camping out was the alternative. At first the Wisconsin river was crossed by ferry at Portage. Portage had an eye single to the trade west of the river and after a few years erected a bridge. Later a ferry was established at Merrimack. I do not remember of hearing any settler say what the toll was at those places.

As I look back over the years that have passed, these lines of Wadsworth come to my mind:

"How dear to my heart are the scenes of my childhood."
When fond recollections present them to view.

**Thought They Were in the Swim**

In the meantime, what is now known as the Chicago, Milwaukee, & St. Paul Railroad company had built a line of railroad from Milwaukee to Prairie du Chien, and was building a line from Milwaukee to La Crosse, and had it built as far as Kilbourn City, sixteen miles north of Baraboo. There was also built at this time a flouring mill at Baraboo. The farmers by this time began to think they were in the swim, by having a flouring mill at hand to buy their wheat and a railroad so near.

We well remember the first load of wheat we were sent with to that mill. The price received was eighty cents a bushel. Gee! What a contrast; eighty cents a bushel, and only a four-mile haul from a hundred-mile haul and fifty cents a bushel. After our load of wheat was disposed of—boy like, we thought we would see the sights of the new mill, and on our rounds, we saw the by-products, the bran and shorts, running through a spout out of the mill into the river. On returning home, we told the home folks the price we received for the load of wheat, and we all thought we had the world by the horns, and yet our yield that year was only eight bushels per acre.

**Notch Higher in Scale of Prosperity**

How the farmers rejoiced over the erection of this mill. It would pay them ten cents a barrel to haul its flour from Baraboo to Kilbourn City, sixteen miles; they could haul ten barrels to a load, make one trip a day, thereby make one dollar a day for themselves and their team. Thus we thought we had raised one notch higher in the scale of prosperity.

We had in our midst at that time one very progressive farmer, Mr. N. W. Morley, who is known in the state over as one of the pioneer and successful dairymen of the state. Mr. Morley came from Mentor, Lake County, Ohio, in the early '50's and located in our midst. Many farmers in Lake County had entered the dairy business and were making money. Mr. Morley was a man of large views, a thorough business man, and a successful dairyman. When he first located in Sauk County, he entered into wheat growing; the same as the rest. It was unsatisfactory to him, and he changed and went to growing peppermint and manufacturing it into oil. This was also too slow for him. The writer remembers him saying one day, "If the farmers of this section ever make their business pay, they will have to change their tactics. I know the farmers in Lake County that have entered the dairy business have made money, and I believe we have every opportunity, every facility, and every condition just as favorable here for the dairy business as in Lake County.'" Thus he talked and thus he worked. He began to buy cows as fast as he could, and he kept at it until he had gathered up about forty head. He commenced by making butter, but later added the manufacture of cheese. His original quarters became too small for his expanding business, and he decided to build a large stone cheese factory. He had a fine stone quarry on his farm, and out of this quarry he took the rock and erected the cheese factory on the same spot. We had the pleasure of helping dig the rock and attending the masons that built this cheese factory, and also became a patron. After he had the cheese factory built and in operation, the surrounding farmers began to gather about them a few cows and took their milk to his cheese factory to be manufactured into cheese. It was but a few years until the appearance of that community was completely transformed. The farm mortgages were soon lifted. The old log house was replaced by a large and imposing dwelling. The old straw sheds and stables gave place to large frame barns, stables, and outbuildings. Now and then a farmer would stick to grain growing, but he remained in the same old rut—no enterprise, no improvements.

(Founder's Note—A portion of the foregoing article appeared in the Blue Valley Bulletin, Chicago, March, 1912.)

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An Editor Whose Cow Philosophy Made Wisconsin the Leading Dairy State

Fiftieth Birthday of Farm Magazine W. D. Hoard Founded Revives Memory of His Steady Campaign Which Substituted Milk for Wheat and Gave the State Silos, Cheese Factories and Creameries

W. D. HOARD and the chinch bug made Wisconsin a great dairy state. The chinch bug taught the farmers not to depend on wheat; Mr. Hoard and the magazine he founded taught them they could depend on cows.

Jan. 23 marked the half century since the founding of his magazine, Hoard's Dairyman, of Fort Atkinson, Wis.

Wisconsin now glories in its diversified agriculture, the fact that it produces more than 10,000,000,000 pounds of milk a year, that it produces more cheese than any other state and ranks with Iowa and Minnesota as the state that spreads the nation's bread. But it was not always so.

The roots of Wisconsin dairying go back to William Dempster Hoard, the farm boy from New York state who came to the young state of Wisconsin and rose to the governorship.

Young Hoard was grievously disappointed when he arrived here in 1857. Wisconsin at that time was raising wheat. The settlers on fertile southern Wisconsin land were satisfied with wheat, which they hauled to Milwaukee. Hoard had expected to capitalize on his knowledge of the care of cows and making of butter, but the southern Wisconsin settlers wouldn't listen to him. The growing west wanted bread, not milk.

Hoard chopped wood, worked on the farm, taught singing school, enlisted for Civil war service, sold pumps and nursery stock.

When he was reduced to $350 capital and with his wife ill he started a newspaper. There were three babies in the family at the time. He had never set a stick of type in his life. But he did have health and ambition and an idea.

From the start of the publication Hoard preached dairying. It was almost gospel with him. He lived among farmers, so he wrote about farmers and farming.

In January of 1885 he started a separate publication, primarily on dairy and farm information. He called it Hoard's Dairyman.

It was about this time that the chinch bug came along to help him. Wheat fields were devastated. Even the black muck soil of Rock prairie couldn't withstand the ravages of the pest. Farmers had to turn to a new branch of farming. And there was Hoard, preaching, pounding and expounding the dairy cow.

Down east Hoard knew of the merits of cows bred exclusively for milk production. The cattle that had been brought west by the settlers were mainly the so-called dual purpose breeds, usually Durhams with Shorthorn ancestry. The Fort Atkinson editor scoffed in disdain over the claim that a cow can economically produce both milk and beef.

"Just so long as we are cursed with dual purpose notions, just so long will we have no-purpose cows," he wrote. And on another occasion said: "If cows could talk they would be heard all over this country calling for an improved breed of dairymen."

Meantime Hoard's campaign to teach people to consume and produce dairy products had been getting results. In 1871 he had initiated
W. D. Hoard, Governor of Wisconsin, 1889-1891

a dairymen's association in his own county and a year later with six grass crop which had to be covered with a "handkerchief atop the Dairymen's association. Then he sponsored a cheese board. Reduced freight rates to eastern markets were sought for and obtained. Hoard was jubilant over the first refrigerator car used for a shipment of dairy goods from Wisconsin.

This apostle of the special dairy cow had many a battle on his hands. Wisconsin is now dotted with silos. Yet there was a time when Hoard was termed a fanatic for advocating the feeding of silage and the building of silos.

"Didn't that damn fool Hoard know that silage would cause a cow's teeth to rot and milk to spoil?" said the skeptics. "The idea of feeding cows that rotted mess."

He championed alfalfa. Again they laughed at the Fort Atkinson in America. Shortly after election

Hoard went to Washington to battle against butter substitutes. His conviction that "butter fat has a virtue not found in any other fat" is still the basis of current petitions against the substitutes.

When the manufacturers of substitutes were particularly active against the dairy legislation, Editor Hoard once wrote:

"Nothing on earth, save the virtue of woman, is more susceptible to scandal than butter fat."

* * *
as governor he secured passage of the bill creating the first state dairy and food commission. There was a successful fight against dairy food deception, filled cheese and adulterated products.

W. D. Hoard was now a recognized dairy authority, molding public opinion and legislation. To him the dairy cow had dignity.

"The cow is the foster mother of the human race. From the day of the ancient Hindoo to this time the thoughts of man turned to this beneficent creature as one of the chief sustaining forces of human life," is his most quoted tribute to the dairy cow.

In his own dairy barn he posted this notice to workmen:

The rule to be observed in this stable at all times toward cattle, young and old, is that of patience and kindness. A man's usefulness in a herd ceases at once when he loses his temper—bestows rough usage. Men must be patient. Cattle are not reasoning, human beings. Remember this is the home of mothers. Treat each cow as a mother should be treated. The giving of milk is a function of motherhood; rough treatment lessens the flow. That injures me as well as the cow. Always keep these ideas in mind in dealing with my cattle.

Throughout his magazine he preached the same sermon:

"Not only 'speak to a cow as you would to a lady,' but care for her as a true gentleman does for a lady; that is, if you want to make money at the dairy business."

In his campaign for silos he once printed this:

"Mr. S. A. Cragin is a successful farmer of New Hampshire and an intelligent siloist. He says the rich man can afford two things—he can afford to do without silage and he can afford to burn green wood. But the poor man can afford to do neither."

Mr. Hoard believed women were highly qualified as dairy managers. "We have never yet seen a woman fail when she took hold of the management of a dairy," he wrote.

W. D. Hoard died at 83 at his Fort Atkinson home, Nov. 22, 1918. His work lived after him, evidenced by the progress made by the state in dairying. Two sons, Frank W. Hoard and Arthur R. Hoard, are chief executives of the publication, now circulating in every country where dairying is followed. L. C. F.
HISTORY OF FOREIGN CHEESE INDUSTRY IN GREEN COUNTY

By Thomas Luchsinger, Monroe, Wis.

In August, 1845, the first settlers from the canton of Glarus in Switzerland planted their colony at New Glarus, and among these pioneers were a few who had been cheesemakers and herdsmen on the Alps in their old home, but coming to the colony they found that everything essential to this industry was lacking. They had no cows, nor milk, no implements whatever, and very little money. It was some time after the first settlement that a few cows were brought from drovers who passed through Wisconsin. But very soon each of the colonists owned from one to five cows, and as butter was of very small commercial value, some of the men who were versed in the art of making cheese, began to study the problem of making a beginning. A common wash boiler had to serve as a kettle. Hoops were shaved out of some pliant hickory or white oak splint. A gunny sack or a piece of linen hitched to the bedding had to serve as cheese cloth. A heavy beam was loaded with stones to serve as a press, while the bare hands dipped into the warming milk answered for a thermometer, and other shifts were tried. Such was the primitive beginning and although so crude, their efforts were crowned with success. The product was fairly good and what was not consumed in the family, found a ready market with their neighbor and fellow colonist. But cows multiplied, and there was more cheese made than could be used at home, and some of the best and more enterprising of the cheese-makers sought a market in the nearest cities, like Mineral Point, Galena, Freeport and Madison. They hauled their surplus in a wagon box, securely packed in hay and blankets and hauled by an ox team, until horses were procured, when the journey was not so tedious. This was the beginning of the trade in the outside world.

By that time they discovered that regular copper cheese kettles and the rest of the implements necessary could be procured from Switzerland and also from Ohio. Meanwhile the other settlers were planting their acres, sowing wheat and oats, and a little barley, planting corn, etc. Very soon, as no rotation of crops were tried, the hilly fields gave out. The chinch bugs did the rest, and finally the settlers were compelled to turn to something else. As is often the case, when the need is greatest the help was nearest. Cheesemakers commenced to arrive from New York and Ohio, notably among them Nicholas Gerber and his partner, Mr. Neumeyer, who had seen the workings of the cooperating systems in New York and Ohio, and persuaded the settlers to build cheese factories and cellars and deliver their milk there to be either bought outright, or made into cheese by the cooperative system. Fifty to sixty cents per hundred pounds of milk was then considered a good return.

Swiss cheese was still made by those who continued the industry, but Limburger, which was destined to become the great staple, was first introduced by these factories. As the people at first were not very...
fond of it, on account of its peculiar odor and flavor, most of it was shipped east to the great markets, and the cheese industry had made its real beginning. More cheesemakers came from Ohio and New York, and also from Switzerland, cheese factories were springing up like mushrooms, after a rain, every section corner of the county seemed to be occupied by a cheese factory. The supply exceeded the demand. The market was glutted. The price of cheese and consequently milk dropped. A number of these factories which bought milk went to the wall and became bankrupt. It seemed for a time the business was a failure, but very soon the people in the large cities became aware that cheese made in Green county was nearly, if not wholly, as good as the imported article. The Limburger was even better, and a great demand was created, which has steadily increased since, and the whole industry flourished better than ever.

The great income derived from the milk doubled the personal property of the farmer, and with it the price of farm land ran to a height never dreamed of. Land which was considered high at $25 to $40 sold for $200 per acre and over and the wealth of the county increased to three and four times the former amount.

A number of citizens of Monroe conceived the idea of utilizing this large flow of milk and started a condensing plant at Monroe. But for some reason it did not realize the hopes of its promoters and others who took it off their hands, found the venture a losing one, until the Herden company secured the plant and made a success of it. Very soon the Helvetia Condensing company of Freeport, III., built a large plant in the village of New Glarus, in the north part of the county on a magnificent scale, and the two plants have absorbed the milk from so many as forty to fifty localities in the two localities, so that the milk production in number of pounds of cheese manufactured in Green county does not

Limburer is still the good staple but Swiss cheese, both round and block is also made in vast amounts. Brick cheese, which is made mostly in the spring and fall of the year, has of late been made in larger quantities. American cheese has never been manufactured in the county to any extent. Formerly there were a number of factories scattered over the county but at the present time there are only a few of them in operation.

The completeness of the development here, has caused the industry to extend to neighboring counties which have gained from the influx of Green county cheesemakers, who carry their vocation as they did in the days gone by, and with the Green county producers raise lively competition with their mother country.

While Green count factories still show gain in production with the adoption of the Holstein as the standard dairy cow and the increase in the size of the herds, the trend of development in recent years has been more along the line of improving the quality of the output. Everywhere, on the farms and in the factories, is there greater endeavor in the direction of enhancing efficiency in producing and marketing, counting for a better and more profitable product.