

~ Denmark Historical Society ~

~ Newsletter ~

Vol. 4. No. 1

January - March 1997

Is There A Doctor in the House ?

Prayer and common sense were often the "best medicine" as doctors were usually few and far between in rural communities and even in small towns. Herbal remedies handed down generation to generation often were trusted more than a doctor's instructions as it was not uncommon for someone to hang out a shingle after several years apprenticeship with another doctor. As late as 1840, of all the doctors practicing in Oxford County, only 35% had obtained a medical degree. Men working in the fields or in the woods had no way to reach a doctor quickly when an accident occurred. They had to do the best they could to set broken bones or take care of an emergency situation on their own until more skilled help could be found.

Winter in earlier times, as now, was a season of colds and flu. Mother brought out her herbal teas and mustard plasters, hot flannels and hot water bottles. Hot lemonade was good for a sore throat. Onions and garlic, too, were used to chase colds away.

Illnesses that we seldom see or take for granted these days could be life-threatening not too long ago in rural areas. Measles, for one, was a problem for all ages. It was not unusual for a family to report multiple children sick at one time, and sometimes a parent as well. It was thought for a while that the best way to deal with a contagious illness was to let it run through the children all at one time and then be done with it. Mumps, measles, chicken pox and scarlet fever were some of the most common winter maladies. Sometimes these illnesses reached epidemic proportions and school was shut down for a while, but they occurred in warmer seasons as well. As late as June 20, 1943 the Denmark Board of Health reported one family with seven children down with measles at one time. All cases were supposed to be reported and, although most of these viruses ran their course in a week or two, they disrupted family and community routines. A person ill with scarlet fever usually brought quarantine to the whole family until the doctor said it could be lifted.

Perusing the records of the Denmark Board of Health it was evident that measles were especially rampant in 1909, 1913, 1929 and 1954. Chicken pox held forth in 1911, 1912, 1930 and 1965. Although cases of scarlet fever were recorded into the 1950's, it was most noted in 1928.

We can count ourselves much luckier than our forefamilies. We have little incidence of these diseases and more educated doctors, easy access to fever-reducing medicines and information. The telephone puts us in touch with the doctor at the earliest notice of illness or accident. First aid and ambulance services are part of every community and well-equipped hospitals are within easier reach.

Despite all the advances in modern medicine and health care, there is a lot to be said for many of grandma's herbal remedies and her cool common sense in the face of accidents and family illness. Her teas and tinctures eased the pains and often did the trick. The medical community has learned many lessons in the area of home health care and once again people are using herbal treatments for relief. Education combining methods of the past with technology of the future has kept us healthier these days, but at the first sign of distress, we still look to "Dr. Mom".

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Headaches.

Garfield Relief Plasters

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A Trial will Convince You.

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For Kidneys and Liver.

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The best Fruit Laxative for

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Garfield Tea Co., Brooklyn, N.Y.

A Woman's Place

"I would remark...that the question is not, what ladies have a right to do, but what is right for them to do." So wrote Jason Whitman in the 5th edition of The Young Lady's Aid to Usefulness and Happiness in 1848. He further wrote that any lady who entered into affairs hitherto thought only a suitable arena for men *"must be willing to forego all polite and delicate attentions."* It was recommended that young ladies make themselves *"thoroughly and practically acquainted with the whole round of ordinary, domestic, female duties and labors"* with no facet of domestic labor to be overlooked. It was not enough for a lady to know what was to be done. She was to be totally capable of handling every aspect on her own without resorting to assistance for this was not only helpful in the home but might be, of necessity at some time, her only means of support, and certainly it was better than engaging in *"the trades or arts to which females usually resort"*.

Young women in Denmark and most other rural communities were brought up in this tradition. Little girls learned from their mothers, grandmothers, aunts and older sisters what was expected of them from an early age. Children were given simple chores to do befitting their abilities and, from the start, these were clearly defined as predominately male or female duties.

The farm household ran on regular routines that coincided with the routines of the farm and the seasons. Husband and wife worked together and separately to keep things running smoothly and assisted each other where their duties overlapped. On his way out to tend the animals in the early hours of the morning, the farmer would start the fire in the kitchen stove. When the farm wife woke the children and tended to the baby she would add more wood to the fire and lay out the food and utensils for breakfast. She set water on to heat for coffee, washing dishes, bathing the children, or washing clothes, and set about making breakfast which was no cold cereal or pop-tart repast. Depending on the number of animals he owned and the number of people doing these chores, morning feeding and milking could take an hour or two and the farmer was more than ready to sit down to breakfast. This often consisted of eggs -scrambled, boiled, or fried; sliced bacon or fried ham; hot oatmeal; doughnuts or muffins; cornbread or pancakes with syrup or molasses; fried potatoes; beans; and plenty of coffee or tea.

If the children were of school age the mother would make their lunches and help them into their outer garments. If her husband was working in the far fields or in the woods she would prepare a lunch pail for him as well. Then she put the leftovers away and washed the dishes. Unless the children were old enough to make their own beds, she would tend to that chore, then she would feed the chickens, and check on the smaller children before getting into the morning's major task.

One day a week was always washday. In the warmer months she was able to hang the washing outdoors in the fresh air and sunshine, but in winter she hung it on the porch or hung it over wooden racks by the stove. One day was scheduled for ironing. A very simple ironing board was one that was positioned over the top slats of two ladder-back chairs. Ironing was hot work and involved heating the heavy irons on the stove and pushing them back and forth over the cloth being very careful not to stay on one spot for too long resulting in scorching or burning the fabric. Baking, by comparison, was a much more enjoyable task. While the bread was rising she could make cookies, cakes, or pies for desserts for meals and lunch pails.

Unless her husband already had his packed lunch with him the farm wife prepared a big noonday meal. This was generally meat, potatoes, bread and butter, vegetables, dessert, and coffee, tea or milk. After dinner was cleaned up she was free to pursue other activities. There were eggs to collect, the house to clean, clothes to mend, spinning, weaving, making clothes and more pleasant chore in season such as picking berries, harvesting vegetables and fruits from the garden and putting them up by canning, drying, salting and pickling. She made jams and jellies, sausage, and cheese.

Supper was to be ready at 6 pm. She would have to make time to prepare, serve, and clean up. If chicken was on the menu this meant killing, cleaning, and cooking the chicken. A rooster in the stew pot took a while to tenderize before she added the vegetables. Girls in the household helped peel and cut vegetables, set the table and wash the dishes. If she was lucky, the girls washed, wiped and put the dishes away giving the farm wife time to see to smaller children, perhaps reading them a story before bed, playing the piano while they sang, or getting them ready for bed. In the evening hours she was then able to do a little reading, sewing, or knitting, or keep up with her household accounts before going up to bed.

Evening hours, especially in winter, were times that the family spent together in front of the stove in the parlor. Music was a popular entertainment and folks would visit house to house to sing or play parlor games or to catch up on the news in the area. Sundays were kept for church activities. No cooking was allowed, nor work except during haying time. Most people read or did their visiting on Sunday. Friday night was often spent in social activities at home, whereas Saturday night was usually the night that organizations in town held suppers or dances.

There were several kinds of social events that brought women together at one house or at a central meeting place for a specific purpose. Quilting bees and spinning bees were common recreations that had a practical outcome as well. Often the women would get together to make something for a

couple about to be married, or a family moving away, or to commemorate a special date such as a birthday or anniversary. Children would play at the women's feet or outside. Younger girls would thread needles, while others would work on little doll quilts to perfect their sewing skills. Some women were very adept at knitting, crocheting, tatting, weaving, and embroidery and taught their daughters and other girls these domestic arts.

Gatherings were not restricted to the womenfolk. Sharing work was a reason for whole neighborhoods to get together. Men gathered to raise a barn, or house; to help neighbors hay, or clear land. Each family brought food and the men and women, engaged in different activities during the day, would join for meals and socializing later.

Both men and women led a rather structured life full of hard work, but many found rewards and great satisfaction in their labors. Women have always born and nurtured children, been responsible for caring for their spouses and family, sometimes aging parents or single siblings as well. They have been the tenders of the sick and the teachers of the young. When necessary, they have been adaptable; when challenged, they have risen to the occasion. Some learned trades that were unconventional for women of the time; some entered public life and fought for more equal status with men, such as voting rights or better working conditions; many stayed at home raising their families, taking part in the community and giving dignity to *"the whole round of ordinary, domestic, female duties and labors"*.

What's A Child To Do?

Children were an integral part of a farm family learning at an early age to do their share to help keep things running smoothly, to value a job well done, and to take a certain measure of satisfaction from doing a job well. Season to season each child had chores to do. Girls more often helped their mothers with domestic duties while boys helped their fathers. All children seemed to have been acquainted with feeding the chickens and gathering eggs. Baby animals often became the charges of younger family members and sometimes became great pets. Chores started first thing in the morning and had to be done before school or play.

Most children walked to their district school. Fathers sometimes transported them in a wagon or sleigh depending on the weather and it was not uncommon for a child to miss a great deal of school if the father was working in the woods and could not get the child there. School was suspended during the coldest or snowiest weather because many children could not make the trip. Also it would have been very uncomfortable to slog through heavy snow and have to sit there all day in wet clothing.



One-room schoolhouses generally had a wood stove for heat and no running water so the teacher assigned chores to the boys and girls such as fetching water, filling the wood box, tending the fire, and taking out the ashes, as well as winding the clock, sweeping the floor, cleaning the boards and erasers, and helping with the younger students. Each child had his or her own cup for water and brought lunch from home. Occasionally, on very cold days, the teacher would make soup on the stove for everyone to share. When it was very cold inside, the desks were moved closer to the stove. On dark days the desks were moved closer to the windows as there were no lamps at the school, a precaution against fire.

When the chores were done, the school day began with morning exercises. These were usually the salute to the flag, the Lord's prayer, a psalm or bible reading, and the singing of a hymn. Pupils were taught reading, writing, arithmetic, grammar, spelling, history, geography, hygiene, and penmanship. Every day they were given a reading assignment and a writing assignment. The subjects were determined by the school board and the experience of the teacher. Some schools prepared their students very well but others did not have the resources to teach all the subjects equally as well. For this reason some students went to board with relatives in other areas or towns to take advantage of greater educational opportunities at a larger school with a wider curriculum.

While the older students worked on their assignments, the teacher would work with the younger ones. The better students often assisted the teacher with those who needed extra help. Although much of the day was spent in study, there was always a recess. In good weather there were organized games, and in winter, if a good hill was nearby, many children brought sleds to school and would go sliding during recess. Many children who lived at a distance from other children enjoyed the group activity. Some did not have a good sliding hill near their home so this was great fun. Others got together after school to go sliding at such places as Fessenden Hill, or Mill Hill in the village. Ida Richardson Osgood in Denmark, Past and Present remembered that sometimes "you could slide all the way across Moose Brook Bridge, and that Mr. C. E. Cobb

would pull the children's sleds back up the hill with his team of horses". Skating on the ponds and on the lake was great fun, too, if clear of snow, and if the snow was good, the children enjoyed building snow forts and snowmen, and



having snowball fights as well.

Once home again, the children had their afternoon chores to do and they were supposed to be done by the time supper was ready.

Most early rural schools were not in session as long as schools are required to be today, and those sessions did not always correspond to modern schedules. School was planned around the ease of travel. When weather was bad and it was difficult for children to get to school, or when the roads were difficult to travel in mud season, school was suspended and then resumed, often into a summer session. This did not mean that boys and girls were made to study all summer. They had plenty of time to play and to help out at home with planting, harvesting, and other summertime activities.

Children were often responsible for helping with the feeding and milking chores, and frequently were given specific duties such as making the butter, or washing the milking utensils. They sometimes grew specific crops which they harvested and were able to sell for their own pocket money or savings. Girls learned domestic skills helping their mothers at home and boys learned about managing a farm by working with their fathers. The whole family generally took part in haying duties, but everyone worked together, so sometimes hard work took on an aspect of recreation. Occasionally the family would take time off together to go on a picnic, or go visiting, but because of the animals and the chores they usually did not go too far away from home. Each season had its necessary activities and children on the farm took part as they were able. Ask Percy Lord whether he enjoyed working with the teams of horses. Ask a young boy how he felt the first time he was allowed to drive the tractor. Ask Winnie Moore what she and her sister did with the money they made selling the cucumbers they grew.

Children today have television and radio and computers. Some have duties in the home to earn an allowance and they certainly have many more ways to spend their money than children of past generations. Are they happier? Most assuredly life is easier in many respects, but it is more complicated in many ways, too. Lest we be guilty of romanticizing the past, may we strive to appreciate the circumstances of both past and present and strive to give our

children what is most important, love, security and a strong sense of self in a community rich in history and rural tradition.

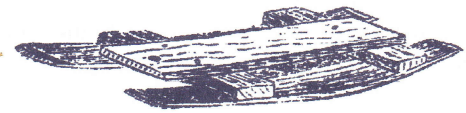


Figure 1 – The Common "SLEW"

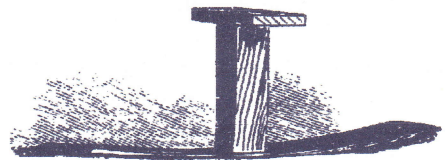


Figure 2 – The "JUMPER"

Gone To The Dogs

January is the month when all town dogs are required to be licensed. At the turn of the century there were about thirty canines registered in Denmark, the majority seemed to be black and white, or black and tan, with a few white and brindle for contrast. Here is a sampling of names of that period: Tige, Jack, Spide, Rover, Dime, Major, Watch, Skip, Hunter, Boney, Henry, Major, Jeff, Brue, Dick, Ring, Pedro, Prince, Brinnard, Carlo, Lion, and Fido. Woof!

Jordan Family Directory

Viki Jordan Smith and her uncle are compiling a directory of the Jordan family of Maine to be published as The World Book of Jordans. They are asking for our assistance to compile names and vital statistics on all Jordans, past and present. If you have any information, please contact Viki Jordan Smith, 1097 Worthington Drive, Dalton, FL 32738. Any information will be very appreciated. Thank-you.

History Is Alive and Well

"History is boring. Its just a bunch of dates that are useless to know in my life." After teaching history to adults for almost two years, I have heard that statement, or some

derivative of it countless times. Most students seem to arrive at my classroom door with that erroneous conclusion and the first few weeks of class are a struggle to drag them away from it. History is not made up of innumerable and meaningless dates but of the meaningFUL lives and actions of people. Our country and the other countries of the world are molded in countless ways by those who live within it, even as they are molded by it. Each person has a story and each story is important to the whole. We can smile and relish the experience of learning as many stories as possible for we often find that someone else's story is similar to our own. Jo Radner was kind enough to tell us a story filled with the lives and emotions of her ancestors. I smiled; I laughed; I relished it all.

The evening at the Denmark Arts Center began and finished with a brief slide show of sepia colored photographs of the style typical in older picture albums. The audience at first saw these austere men, women, and children only as strangers from the past, but came to know them as family through Jo Radner's words and reading of their letters. She describes herself as a storyteller, teacher, researcher, and folklorist with a desire to create a "social and emotional reconstruction of the past". For her, history is as alive as the people that created and lived it. I agree, and enjoyed watching and listening to her bring these people from her past alive. And as the night progressed, she became more alive and animated herself.

She began with the tale of her great grandmother Maria Gordon and concluded with the touching and poignant story of her great, great, half-uncle Horace. Maria, of Fryeburg, married Edgar Adams, of Denmark who had recently returned from the Civil War. (T.I. Lowell, mentions "Edgar Adams came home from the army" in the August 16, 1865 entry of his journals. He frequently mentioned Edgar and his father, Gilson, in earlier entries of 1863 and 1864 as visitors or as dinner guests.). The new couple soon moved to Togus when Edgar became employed at the new veterans hospital there. Jo Radner involved her audience in the young couple's joys, children, and heartaches by giving voice to the letters they wrote home to family. She continued on to follow the later lives of the couple after Maria's return home to Fryeburg and Edgar's eccentric half brother, Horace, moved into the house. As she delved further into Horace's personal story, Jo Radner's affection for the man became clear. Horace led a bachelor's life, and his childhood was intricately tied to the legacies of Denmark, written of in T.I. Lowell's journals. Ms. Radner warmly related tales of her great, great uncle and read correspondence he had saved which gave the audience a chuckle and made all wish to have known the man more personally than we were allowed on this one night alone.

We all made history yesterday and will make it again tomorrow. Our stories, like those of the family Jo Radner allowed us briefly to join, can equally impact the people of the near and even distant future. I felt the pain, the joy, the fear, the loneliness, and the love the Adams experienced. I understand those feelings. I have experienced them. History is not a distant, aloof, academic discipline. History is alive.

~ Adam Aja

Wish List

The Denmark Historical Society meets at the Denmark Public Library and most of our information is kept on a set of shelves to the left of the central desk. There are a number of items that would assist us in cataloging and displaying what we have so that more people could use it and learn more of Denmark's people and history. These include: **A permanent home, a copier and copy paper, showcases, filing cabinets and folders, file boxes for 8" x 5" cards, photographs, diaries, and other written materials pertaining to Denmark families, activities and buildings, and any genealogical information - whole genealogies or partial records.**

Any donation would be gratefully received and acknowledged. If you do not wish to part with your photographs and papers, would you be willing to let us have them copied for our records? Please contact Sue MacDonald at 452-2196 or Winnie Moore at 452-2352.

Doll House On Display

The 4th Annual Doll and Miniature Show will be held at the Denmark Arts Center on Saturday, July 26th. A doll house built like a little log cabin has been donated to the Denmark Historical Society and will be raffled off the day of the show. The house will go on display at the Denmark library and advanced tickets will be for sale soon. Bill Cutler has taken some photographs showing interior and exterior views and these will be circulated in other areas. Take a peak in the tiny door and windows. This will be suitable fun for girls and boys!

3rd Annual Sheepfest

Once again the sound of sheep and shears will echo in the Denmark Arts Center in April. Last year 35 sheep were shorn of their woolly winter coats as children and adults looked on. Many people learned to spin and watched others carding, picking, felting and dyeing wool. There were colorful displays of handspun and machine spun yarn, hats, mittens, socks, bags, and rugs all made with wool. With more exhibitors and spinners coming this year's Sheepfest promises to be even better. If you are thinking of trying your hand at spinning, this is the place to learn how. It is a great opportunity to meet people and get information on all aspects of wool crafting and sheep raising. And it is very entertaining, too!

Farming Perspective

Maine in 1840 had a population of 501,793. Immigrants were pouring into the United States and into Maine. Many came up from Massachusetts and down from Canada. The chief occupation of these people was farming. Land was cleared and farmed for many years but farming was more a philosophy than a business. People did everything they could to be self-sufficient. Little money was used as rural folks did not have much and were often able to barter for their needs. Mostly it was needed to pay the taxes and even these could be worked off in various ways.

In 1856 the State Board of Agriculture was established and by 1873 the Grange movement was becoming an active part of rural life. Despite these organizations, by 1880 there was a marked economic decline. There are several factors that contributed to this. Probably the most obvious was the number of young men, many of them farmers, who left their homes and families to fight in the War of the Rebellion, the Civil War. Maine sent over 70,000 men to the cause. Many did not return. Some were veterans who received western lands for their services, and others who saw more economic opportunities in the cities, or who sought to make their way in the more temperate states south of the Maine boarder. Many veterans were disabled physically or emotionally and were unable to continue farming in the scale needed to support a family. Younger men, particularly, were anxious to seek opportunities elsewhere and it was not unusual for families to have at least one "gold seeker". A number of these men settled in the West. Some did very well for themselves, while others returned empty-handed or were not heard from again.

As the mid-western territories developed into vast farmlands and the growing network of railroads was able to transport agricultural products almost anywhere with ease, farming became a far less profitable way of life in Maine. In 1860 the average farmer had a yoke of oxen or a team of horses, three milk cows, several beef cows, some sheep, a hog, and some chickens. He raised "5 bushels of wheat, 2 bushels of rye, 4 bushels of beans, 15 bushels of barley, 28 of corn, 54 of oats, 114 of potatoes, 17 tons of hay, and apples". He processed "26 pounds of wool, made 210 pounds of butter, 32 pounds of cheese, and all his meat products". On top of this he raised his own feed, made most of the farm tools, carts, wagons, sleds and sleighs. What he could not make, he would barter for or "work out" for money to buy what he needed.

The Civil War and the advent of the machine age separated the farmer from the businessman and created a different way of life. As more men sought work off the farm, people bought more goods from others instead of producing everything they needed at home. Rural men often took work in the woods for the growing timber companies to earn cash

needed to pay taxes and purchase equipment and other necessities of life. As older people died on their farms without

children to take over and as other farms were abandoned, or taken by fire, thousands of acres that previously had been farmed reverted to woodlands.

Cash crops were rare. In Denmark and several surrounding towns apples seemed to be the most lucrative crop. These grew well and were fairly easy to pack into barrels for shipment via the narrow gauge railroad to market in Portland, then to Boston and overseas. Some of the farmers shipped eggs to Boston but most crops were produced for the local market. As the demand for building materials and fuel increased wood became a greater commodity which engaged more and more men. The bark stripped from the felled trees was taken by wagon to Bridgton and sold to the tanneries there. As fewer men were employed full time on the farm those with special skills were called upon to execute certain deeds. It was common practice for a group of men to work together sharing the labor necessary to accomplish a difficult task. In 1902 the wage for 41 hours of cutting ice @ .10 per hour was \$4.10, 16 hours of cutting pine @ \$1.00 - \$16.00, 2 days hauling wood 1 hour each - \$2.00, and \$.60 for killing a hog.

In 1909 the average life expectancy of a farmer was 64.2 years, considerably more than for shop keepers, teamsters, laborers, seamen, merchants and lawyers. A farmer lived by the seasons, was early to rise and to bed. He worked for himself and his family and in tune with Mother Nature. Every action had a purpose and for every purpose there was a season. Farmers had reason to value themselves and to see value in the work they did. They were able to draw a great deal of satisfaction from seeing the results of their labor, something many in this modern age have lost the ability to do.

Sometimes those engaged in agrarian pursuits today are questioned by their peers about the value of doing something you don't have to do. Why raise chickens when you can buy eggs and meat all packaged at the store? Why concern yourselves with the vicissitudes of nature when fruits and vegetables of a much wider variety than we can grow here can be shipped in from all over? These small farmers are not exhibitionists, but people who do things in the old manner for the experience of doing something in one age "with the awareness that belongs to another" deriving that same satisfaction as those who did it all before out of necessity. They are reaping the benefits of their own labors, carrying on the traditions of our farming heritage.

Seasonal Work

With harvesting chores done and the garden put to bed until spring the man of the house turned his thoughts to the

coming of winter. To help prevent the cold winds from blowing icy drafts up through the floorboards he engaged

himself in the ritual of banking the house; the barn, too. It was most important to do this on the north and east sides where the winter storms blew the hardest. He would gather sawdust, hay, leaves, cornstalks, or evergreen boughs and pack them up against the building high enough to cover the sills where the house sat on the foundation, something we who now live in these older homes do by stapling rolled plastic along the foundations. This single layer of protection from freezing winds is often enough to protect under house water pipes from bursting. Many city-dwellers are ignorant of the games the countryman must play to outwit Old Man Winter before retreating to the warmth of the hearth and the bounty of his harvest.

Winter was a time for a man to see to the repair of his daily implements, to sharpen tools, to make furniture and wagons, to clean and take care of harnesses and other equipment such as the taps and buckets needed in March for sugaring. It was a time to sit with the family in the evening, to read, to plan his garden for the coming spring. It was also a time to provide for his family those things necessary for the following year.

January was the month for cutting the ice for storage in the farm icehouse. Generally a team of men would gather to clear the ice, groove the field, cut the ice blocks, and load them on wagons or sleds for transport from the lake or pond to the farm. Each 2' x 2' block was 16" to 24" thick and weighed 100 pounds or more. It was hard work but was made lighter by many hands working together.

February was the best month for cutting wood. The days were getting longer and the sun rose higher. Working in the woods protected the men from the worst of the winds and the cool days were well-suited to heavy duty work. It takes the work of many men to get a load of fuel oil from raw material to our furnace, but it takes only one man to make a pile of cordwood, "a stack of wood...a living thing and a gladdening sight to behold." Those of us who cut our own wood today feel the same satisfaction after cutting a season's wood as those who did so before us. Oak, beech, maple, elm, ash, and birch - these woods provided the long-burning fire. Soft woods giving a quick, hot fire were reserved for kindling only or kept for sugaring as they spit showers of sparks, not a good thing inside the house. Today people order cordwood cut, split and delivered, but there are not that many who can tell what kind of wood it is. A while back any country child could tell by appearance of the bark and grain and the smell of the smoke what type of wood it was. It was a common practice to cut more than you thought you needed as you could not predict what kind of winter was coming. Groundhog Day, February 2nd, was considered the half-way mark of winter, a time when you checked on your food and wood supplies. If you had used more than half your stores by that time, you tightened your belt a notch, put on another sweater, and hoped for an early spring. If you had more than you needed it could always be saved for the next year, or sold to someone in need, or for equipment or goods not produced on the farm.

One of the most important jobs in the winter season was grooming and maintaining the roads. Today the roads are cleared of snow for travel by the town crew in their plow trucks but until 1930 the roads here in Denmark were rolled, packed with snow, by horse or oxen drawn rollers.

In the early days a yoke of oxen pulling a sled with a heavy crossbar attached near the front of the runners would "break out" the road in snow time. These were followed by drawn plows and later, by rollers, large drums, which packed the snow on the roads. Men living along the roads shared in the process sometimes adding their team to their neighbor's team to make the going easier on the animals. These men were greeted along the way and frequently "warmed" by a dram of spirits given by grateful householders as they passed by. Often the value of a man's labor counted against his highway tax.

When the sleds went out to smooth the snow the boys would climb on to add their weight. Heavy loads were moved over the snow-covered roads because it was easier and safer to move them on low sleds than on carts or wagons over bare roads with their mud and ruts. Many people traveled the roads on snow-bright nights to visit or go to various entertainments as they had more time and opportunity than in the other seasons. With all the use, it was very necessary to maintain a smooth running surface and each man worked his section of the road to keep it in good condition.

After some years, Denmark was divided into five or six districts. Each had a roller and a man responsible for rolling the roads. He generally had a team of men. Kenneth Lord and Arthur Rankin were roller "bosses". Arthur was in charge of the Sebago Road district and used a team of six horses.

In 1927 the town appointed a "tractor committee", L. H. Ingalls, A. M. Deering, R. L. Day, A. H. Jack, C. E. Pingree, R. F. Smith, and E. H. Holmes, to look into the feasibility of leasing a tractor and plow to clear the roads. Article 33 of the 1928 Town Warrant was "to see what action the town will take regarding the leasing of a Mead, Morrison tractor and plow". By 1930 no rollers were mentioned in the road commissioner's report. Denmark had left one more thing in the past as it stepped into the future.

It is certainly less work for us today to leave the plowing to the road crews and stay snug in our homes watching the game or sitting in front of the fire instead of joining our neighbors in heavy work in the cold outdoors. We can go anywhere in our heated cars and are not dependent upon the labor of our animals and friends wrestling with the vagaries of winter weather, but I can't help but think we are missing something of the adventure and romance of yesterday.

1914	G. E. Smith	\$25.00
	Elwood Pingree	46.00
	Percy True	5.00
	G. B. Potter	18.00
	A. S. Wentworth	27.00
	Fred Sanborn	10.50
	Salt	<u>1.70</u>
		\$133.20

A. S. Wentworth, Road Commissioner

1918 / 1919 - Snow Bills - In this winter 18 men were paid for their services and the services of their teams for work on the roads. This included labor, driving, shoveling, making repairs on the rollers, and housing the rollers. Some men were mentioned individually while others were mentioned as heads of teams of men and animals. It must have been a very snowy year. The bill in the Town Report was \$703.58!

1926 - This Town Report listed 27 men paid for winter work on the roads. Mention was made of rolling the roads, horses, shoveling, number of trips, hauling gravel onto ice, cleaning ditches and culverts, housing rollers, and moving the rollers. \$1,000.00 was appropriated for the year and \$154.85 was left in the account from Feb. 1925 for a total allotment of \$1,154.85. The total drawn for the year was \$801.12, leaving \$363.73 unexpended.

Leo Smith, Road Commissioner

Denmark Historical Society
Post Office Box 803
Denmark, Maine 04022

Membership Information

The Denmark Historical Society meets at the Denmark Public Library on the second Tuesday of the month at 7 PM. The Annual Meeting is held in August and memberships are usually renewed each year at this time. Anyone wishing to become a member may send their name and address and check to the Denmark Historical Society, PO BOX 803, Denmark, ME 04022.

Individual \$5.00

Couple or Family 7.50

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~ April Sheepfest

July Meeting of Maine Old Cemetery Association

July 26 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Doll and Miniature Show

August Annual Meeting

September Cider Pressing