

Rethinking of Old Orleans

Vol XXI

C.W. Lattin County Historian

No.35

HARVESTING DAY

9-3-99



The information written on the back of this photo indicates that the picture was taken around 1900 at Jeddo south of Route 104 west of the creek. We see here five men cocking up hay. From left to right they are identified as: Charlie Cooper, Henry Bateman (farmer), Emory Breitsman, Charley Hooker and Frank Bayne.

Haying was hard work especially back at this time. First, the hay field would have been cut with a horse drawn mowing machine. Then a horse drawn dump rake would have been used to rake the hay into rows. Such a row is shown in the foreground. The men shown here are now cocking these rows into piles, thus getting them ready for pitching onto a hay wagon with racks to hold it in place. With the hay wagon brimming, the horses pulled it into the barn for storage. At this point the horses were unhitched from the hay wagon and hitched to a rope coming down through pulleys from a trolley on a hay track in the top of the barn. A grapple hay fork or a harpoon hay fork would be inserted into the load of hay. Or if a hay sling was used, the forks weren't necessary. The sling would have been placed on the wagon before the hay was loaded. Once loaded, the sling ropes were pulled up around the load of hay for attaching to

the trolley ropes. The horses then pulled forward thus lifting the load or at least part of it, into the top of the barn where the trolley was then rolled above the hay mow. A smaller rope was attached to the grapple or harpoon hay fork or sling for tripping these devices, thus dumping the hay into the mow. Men then had to pitch the hay around in the mow to level it out.

I think by now you get the idea that haying was an involved an labor intensive production before the advent of haybailers. With this change in haying we have also come to see a change in the architecture of barns. In times past, barns had to have high roofs for the storage of hay because it was loose. Once bailers compacted hay it took less storage space. Now we see it even stored outside. How different things have become. I can remember when farmers would fret about getting their hay wet. It was important to get it cut, dry in the field and stored in the barn before a rain. Wet hay was feared because it could cause spontaneous combustion in the hay mow if not properly dried.

Once farmers had hay loaders it saved them from having to do what we see going on in the picture.