The Beeson Farmstead: A Study of the Functional Aspects of a Black Farm in the Richland Community

Annelen Archbold
Western Kentucky University

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Archbold,

Annelen R.

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THE BEESON FARMSTEAD: A STUDY OF THE FUNCTIONAL ASPECTS OF A BLACK FARM IN THE RICHLAND COMMUNITY

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Anneleen R. Archbold

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Approved

September 23, 1974

Date

Mary H. Clarke
Director of Thesis

Jesse Crawford Crowe

Sara M. Mounts

Approved

Edwin Gray
Dean of the Graduate College

Approved 12-12-74
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This study documents the lifestyle on a small, prosperous black farmstead in the Richland community of Butler County, Kentucky. It is based on extensive fieldwork and interviews conducted with Percy Beeson, owner of the farm for over fifty years. The result of the fieldwork and interviews was the documentation of how this farmstead, maintained without mechanical farm equipment, worked as a functional unit on a year-round basis.

As a functional unit, the Beeson farmstead is described in terms of the Beeson family and their ownership of the farm and the breakdown of the property into two dependent units. In the first area, the Family Unit, the food supply and home industries were prepared and supervised by the women of the household. These activities are discussed according to the seasons of the year, beginning with spring and ending with winter. The second area, the Farm Unit, was run by the Beeson men and contained the major crops and farm animals. This area is also described according to the seasons of the year. The results of this study clearly portray this non-mechanized, small black farmstead as a functional and traditional economic enterprise for Percy Beeson.
This study is based primarily on fieldwork and interviews conducted in Butler and Warren County, Kentucky over a period of ten months. It presents a small black farmstead as a functional unit and derives its framework from information supplied by Percy Beeson, the man who operated the farm for over fifty years.¹

The concept of studying an independent and functional farmstead is suggested by the folklife research of Iorwerth C. Peate and George Ewart Evans. Both Peate and Evans, as trained folklorists, make a strong case for the folklife approach:

> It studies the object in its living setting, social and historical, not merely in its work context but its human context as well.²

They (architects, archaeologists, etc.) study things divorced from the person who made or used them, and pronounce judgment on man's creations without a thought for the man himself or for the culture of which he is a part.³

Peate and Evans indicate that individual items and processes have no validity unless presented in the total environment in which they exist.

I first met Percy Beeson in October 1972, at a broom-making demonstration held on his farm for the folklore
students of Western Kentucky University. My fieldwork with Beeson began in June, 1977, and ended in December, 1978. I conducted all but one of the interviews in the Turtle Creek Convalescent Centre in Bowling Green, Kentucky, where he was confined with an illness for a year and a half. My first interview with Beeson took place on his farm which he had just sold to Desper McCoy, the son of a neighbor. With the consent of the McCloys, Beeson and I walked over the property and talked superficially about the farmstead when he lived there. This initial interview acquainted him with the type of information I was seeking and put him at ease about the purpose of the project.

Two days later I returned to the farm and interviewed the McCloys about their recent purchase of the property and about what they knew of the Beeson family. They were extremely cooperative and agreed to my returning to survey and photograph the buildings on the farmstead.

Over a period of three months I photographed the buildings and compiled the history of the Beeson farmstead, utilizing the property deeds located in the Butler County Courthouse. Several months later, with the help of Steve Poyser, a graduate student at Western Kentucky University, I measured each of the buildings and completed a survey of their locations on the property.

During the next six months I interviewed Percy
Besson on thirteen separate occasions and tape-recorded each conversation. The first six interviews occurred in a conference room at the Turtle Creek Convalescent Centre on September 6, 8, 26, 27, 28, and 29, 1973. The conference room location proved somewhat inadequate because it prevented Besson from working on his other projects. His answers in this situation were informative but lacked the necessary depth for constructing a good study. At the suggestion of Mrs. Scherr, the craft room supervisor, I moved the eighth and subsequent interviews to the craft room in the nursing home.

The seven interviews in the craft room occurred on October 1, October 8, October 12, November 6, November 26, November 27, and December 3, 1973. I arranged these dates according to the activity schedule in the craft room and thus sometimes several weeks passed between my conversations with Besson. I attempted to transcribe each tape as it was completed, but because some of the interviews occurred on consecutive days the transcribing process stretched into a three-month period following the termination of the fieldwork. When I had completely transcribed each tape, I indexed it according to content and subject matter.

The seven interviews which took place in the craft room were the most successful because Besson was able to work on a project while talking. He decorated Baskin
Robbins' ice cream containers for wastebaskets. When he was able to work and talk at the same time his answers were more extensive and often supplied additional material for topics covered in previous conversations. For example, what began as a discussion of the types of showboats on the Green River led into an account of how Beeson cut ties and sold them to the railroads.

The half dozen women also in the room working on their crafts often responded to the answers that Beeson gave to my questions. These women frequently began a conversation based on a question I asked Percy, and when they had finished their discussion, they waited for a new topic to be supplied by my subsequent questions. At one point, Percy and I set a date for him to view the slides I had taken of his farmstead. When I arrived at the nursing home those there who knew him were also in the dining room area to view the slides which they thoroughly enjoyed and had me show a second time that day.

After I completed my fieldwork, I reviewed the two observations made during my first contact with Percy Beeson at the broom-making demonstration on his farm: 1) historically, his farmstead appeared to fit George Ewart Evans' view of a by-gone relic still surviving in a community, 4 and 2) the farm as a functioning entity presented a lifestyle and a series of processes which could be studied solely for the purpose of documenting
them. My second observation provided a workable means of presenting the raw data I collected.

At this point my data is inadequate to support a study of the farmstead as a surviving relic, since it pertains only to how the farmstead functioned. For instance, part of an interview focused on the garden and how it was planted — but the remainder of the interview dealt with cutting timber and harvesting hay. Research on other farms in the Richland community is necessary before the relic survival concept can be validated.

Additional research is also necessary before my data can be subjected to comparative analysis. In "Some Regional Characteristics of American Farmsteads," G. T. Trewartha examines farmsteads in a regional framework and attempts to construct a regional prototype based on land use for crops, animals, and buildings. Even though his discussion does not include the upper South or the Kentucky area, Trewartha identifies components for the farmstead which are equivalent to the Family Unit and the Farm Unit discussed herein, but he has no equivalent for the overall L-shaped pattern of the Beeson farm. It is possible to compare my study with Trewartha's and to speculate that the L-shaped pattern of the Beeson farm is unique. But such speculation is both premature and invalid until further research establishes the L-shaped pattern as a unique occurrence in the Richland community or as a
characteristic example of that area. My intention here
is not to ignore data pertinent to this study but rather
to suggest that the methodology of comparative analysis
cannot be effective until the material on the Beeson family
can be placed in the context of the community in which they
lived.

The materials related to this study contain in-
formation on individual facets of the Beeson farm. Reports
on regional folk beliefs list the beliefs according to
subject categories without placing them in a functional
framework. The Frank C. Brown Collection of North Carolina
Folklore, Volume VII, contains page after page of beliefs
which deal with planting in the signs of the moon, but there
is no discussion of the beliefs in operation. I do not
wish to imply any criticism of the Brown collection or of
its purpose as an aid to the researcher in developing folk
belief materials. Nor do I wish to imply that the planting
beliefs contained herein validate those listed in the reports
discussed above or in the Brown collection. The planting
beliefs of the Beesons correspond to those found in related
material, but that material provides no basis for comparing
or corroborating the functional framework contained in this
study.

Materials related to the topic of the black farmer
contain little if any information on the actual operation
of farmsteads. They deal mainly with tenant farmers in the
deep South and with economic factors outside of the farmstead. The *Negro Farmer*, written by Carl Kelsey at the turn of the twentieth century, emphasizes the tenant farmer and practically dismisses the concept of an independent farmer when the author concludes that "... the farms owned are so small that they do not suffice to support the owners." Kelsey encourages the development of a strong labor force of blacks in both industry and agriculture.

Oliver Stone's *"The Present Position of the Negro Farm Population: The Bottom Rung of the Farm Ladder"* is a political treatise designed mainly to encourage President Franklin D. Roosevelt's administration to direct part of its farm programs to the black farmer. The *Plantation Negro As A Freeman* by Philip A. Bruce is a political and historical discussion of black tenants and farmers, but Bruce fails to describe their lifestyles. Whether written as an apology or a demand, none of these materials on the black farmer even remotely approach the actual operation of a black farmstead.

There is a wealth of material concerning the work processes (e.g., broom-making, quilting, raising tobacco, etc.) on the Beeson farm. The Western Kentucky Folklore and Folklife Collection contains many projects describing such processes; however, this material was collected almost exclusively by beginning folklore students who were not
expected to deal with the total environment in which the processes occurred.\textsuperscript{11}

The published material on the individual processes is also largely descriptive. For example, studies by Charles S. Guthrie on corn and tobacco planting in the Cumberland Valley are valuable for documenting the planting process followed there.\textsuperscript{12} Guthrie concentrates on the importance of corn and tobacco in the area but does not explain how these crops fit into the total agricultural pattern. Sam Hillard's article on the southern diet is also instructive but does not place diet within the total lifestyle of the region.\textsuperscript{13}

There are reasons for the lack of an overall approach in the published materials. First, a journal has specific space limitations which usually narrow the scope of its articles. Second, the tendency in folklife and folklife-related research has been to document a particular process because it exists—without considering why it exists. Geographers such as Fred Kniffen compare building types in an effort to establish dispersal patterns.\textsuperscript{14} Though Kniffen's research is concerned with their uses, he does not fit the buildings into the organic units in which they exist. This point, however, is not meant to detract from the significance of Kniffen's comparative analysis of origins and diffusion of building types. Henry Glassie's \textit{Pattern in the Material Culture}
of the Eastern United States, following the trends set by Kniffen in comparative analysis, extends its approach to include buildings as well as many other aspects of material culture. These comparative works, however, tend to focus on how an item is used rather than on why the item exists.

The most valuable materials related to this study of the Beeson farmstead are the works of George Ewart Evans -- *The Pattern Under the Plow* and *Ask the Fellows Who Cut the Hay*. Having worked extensively as a field-worker in East Anglia, Evans writes from a holistic approach which reveals as much as possible about the community in all its aspects and relates those aspects to the totality of the community. Evans details individual processes, customs, and beliefs without losing his perspective on the totally functioning whole. Following the concepts and practices of Iorwerth C. Peate, scholars such as J. Geraint Jenkins and Evans are able to present a single process from the framework of the folk community as a whole.

In my interviews with Percy Beeson I explored the characteristics of life on the farmstead and then utilized this information to construct a picture of the farmstead as a functional unit on a year-round basis. This study therefore documents the lifestyle on a small black farmstead in the Richland community in Western Kentucky.
FOOTNOTES

1. My thirteen tape-recorded interviews with Percy Beeson are the major source for the material presented in this study. Some of the details provided by Beeson are inaccurate or incomplete. Explanatory footnotes are included to clarify these details.


7. Newman I. White, gen. ed. The Frank C. Brown Collection of North Carolina Folklore, 7 vols. (Durham: Duke University Press, vol. 7: Popular Beliefs and Superstitions, ed. Wayland Hand. The Beesons' planting beliefs can be found in the Brown collection: 8067-seeds must be planted when the sign is in the Arms, going down; 8096-Cabbage must be set out when the sign is in the head; 8121-Plant corn on the old moon and it will grow low and have big ears; 8267-Plant cucumbers when the sign
is in the Arms: 8888-Plant potatoes on the dark of the moon or they will all go to vine; 8450-Wood must not be cut from the forest when the sap is up.


17. Alexander Fenton defines the holistic approach for the folklorist scholar: If we confine ourselves to a study of material culture on a rational basis, it is useful to begin with an inventorizing, holistic approach, taking a single unit such as a farm or craft, and going through it as far as possible room by room, outbuilding by outbuilding, noting not only architectural features but also the contents of each room. By concentrating on the kitchen and outbuildings, it is possible to get a detailed understanding of the seasonal round of work and the economic status of the unit under study. Alexander Fenton, "Material Culture as an Aid to Local History Studies in Scotland," Journal of the Folklore Institute II (1965): 329.

18. For example, Don Yoder's work on the Pennsylvania Amish and German Communities. See Don Yoder, "Research Needs in Pennsylvania Church History," Pennsylvania Folklore XVIII (Spring, 1969): frontispiece.
2. the Beeson family begins with the close of the Civil War. As with former slaves, the only records devoted to Henry Beeson begin with government and family records kept after freedom was granted. The oral traditions of the family contend that Henry Beeson was owned by Ben Beeson. The farm where he worked as a slave was along the Mud River in Logan County, Kentucky. Here, Henry Beeson was trained to be a workman, the maker and repairer of farm and household tools and equipment. After being granted his freedom, Henry Beeson left the farm and assumed the surname of his former owner.

Henry Beeson left Logan County with his wife and eight children. Not far from the Logan County line in Butler County and within the community known as Richland, a group of ex-slaves had individually obtained enough acreage to establish this settlement through the purchase of a hundred-acre farm. Henry Beeson then purchased a log-house from a neighbor, Sud Belcher, and moved the structure to his new farm. As a trained workman, Henry Beeson continued to have his shop where he could make and repair the tools
necessary for his farm.

Four years after purchasing the farm, Henry Beeson died. One of his sons, Frank, took over the remaining payments on the land and continued the upkeep of the farm with the help of his brother Morris. In October of 1881, Frank Beeson, with the consent of his brothers and sisters, obtained the full legal rights to the property.¹

Frank Beeson married sometime shortly after the Civil War. His wife, Betty, born in 1850, was a former slave who had no memory nor record of her parentage. Each of their nine children, born every two years from 1877 through 1885, was born on the Beeson farm. Two children, Novella and Lissa, died while still of school age. Of the remaining seven children, four were to grow up and leave Butler County, while the three younger brothers remained and, like their father, took up farming in the county.

With the help of his brother Morris, Frank and his wife Betty built the structures and maintained the traditional processes on the farm. They planted and harvested a variety of crops such as wheat, barley, corn, and tobacco, planted and developed an orchard, kept bees, and raised sheep, goats, hogs, and chickens. Farm life continued to function in this manner until 1913 although all of the children but the youngest son had left home.
In 1913 Morris Beeson died, and Frank, Betty, and their youngest son were then without his guidance and his help.

Two years later, in 1915, Frank Beeson was seriously injured when a chip flew up into his already ailing eyes:

He lived four years after he went blind. Well, he had bad eyes anyway. He was choppin' and a chip flew up an' hit him in the eye. Put his eye out. His eyes always was weak so his eyes went out. He just could discover daylight.

So I stayed at home an' took care of 'im. All the other chillun' done scattered out. They all scattered out so I stayed thar an' took care of him. Stayed there and took care of my mother after he passed. 2

Thus, Frank Beeson's blindness left the twenty-year-old Percy Beeson the only able man in the house to work the farm. Of the other two Beeson sons who had remained in Butler County, Hiram had married and was about to purchase his own farm nearby, while Herschel lived in a neighboring community but returned home to help set out and then harvest the crops until the death of his mother in 1916. The three brothers worked closely together only during the tobacco season to harvest, prepare, and then take their crops to market.

In 1919 Frank Beeson died and rightfully the farm became Percy's because he continued to live there and work it. He maintained the farm just as his father
had built it, and he and his mother continued most of the
traditional farming activities, although a few were dis-
continued (e.g., the raising of sheep and making molasses)
because it became increasingly difficult for the two of
them to manage. When Percy married Lonie Bryant of Logan
County, she took over many of the chores of the then
eighty-four-year-old Betty Beeson.

Percy actually bought the farm in 1953. When
Betty Beeson died, three of her children, including Hiram,
who encouraged the other two, contested the legal turn-over
of the property to Percy. Three of the other children,
with the help of Herschel, agreed to give their share to
Percy:

Herschel, an' Della, an' Lizza gave me
their right to their part of it. There
were three of 'em didn't give me their
share—Hiram, an' Jerdy, an' George.
My brother up here, Hiram, he had it
put up an' sold at Morgantown at the
courthouse. An' I bought it in then
down there.

The difficulty over ownership was finally resolved when
the property was put up for sale at the Butler County
courthouse in Morgantown. Only Percy and Hiram arrived
on the day of the sale and the two brothers bid against
each other until Percy won the bidding for a cost of
$2,400. The three Frank Beeson children who gave their
property rights to Percy did not receive any payment, but
each of the other three descendants received $300 as their share from the sale of the property.4

Percy and Lonie Beeson had only one child, Rochester, who from birth was unable to walk. When Rochester died at the age of six, his death ended the possibility of further inheritance of the property within the Beeson family. In May of 1973, five years after his wife’s death and after he had suffered a long illness, Percy Beeson sold the property to the son of a white neighbor.

THE COMMUNITY

When Percy Beeson took over responsibility for the family farm, the Richland community was beginning to show evidences of change. The introduction of the automobile had just occurred and was followed over the next several years by the introduction of the gas-driven tractor and other heavy duty farm equipment. The small community of blacks in Richland was slowly disappearing as sons and daughters moved away and the parents died. Finally, only Percy and his brother Hiram remained in Richland. The black church, the New Zion Church, and the one-room schoolhouse were gone. As the years went by, fewer and fewer of the local stores remained open, and the last one closed its doors in 1973.

When the Frank Beeson family was growing up, the
Richland community, almost totally composed of farming families, was an active area. There were two schools, one for the white children and one for the black. Both schools were located next to their respective churches three miles northeast from the Beeson farm:

Thar was a white folks church thar. Our church was just a little bit further up. It went by Richland, too. But it was just a little further up on the hill thar. All went by the same name. Our school was just a little bit on this side of the white school. Little bit on this side of it, a little way.  

The black school and church, located on property owned by and leased from a white man, existed for a little over a generation. Percy Beeson was among the last group of about seven children to attend the school, and he completed only the first and second grades.

The country store was also a major center of community activity. Here products from the farm were sold or traded, mail was picked up, and friendly visits and the exchange of community news took place. The Beeson family frequented three country stores: the Demple store, just the other side of the New Zion Church and school; Boston store, one and one-half miles northeast of the farm; and Turner Town, approximately three miles west by walking across and cutting through the fields. The Demple store was farther away than the Boston store.
and did not offer the services of Turner Town. They used
the Demple store only when they visited neighbors who
lived near it.

The Boston store was important because it was
accessible. The family frequently walked there and
carried eggs and hens which were for sale or trade.
Betty Beeson sold her eggs and chickens at the store until
the early 1930s when the market for these products ceased:

In later years, after they change every-
thing up, got where we couldn't sell no
eggs, no hens. They wouldn't buy 'em.
They wanted these brooder chickens,
claimed they tender, an' all. The eggs,
they wouldn't buy 'em. They wanted
these brooder chickens, claimed they
tender an' all. The eggs, they wouldn't
buy eggs. An' chickens an' eggs, we
just had to do the best we could with
our eggs. Maybe we sell a dozen to our
neighbors. People buy an' raisin' all
them brooder chickens. They kept them
up an' didn't let them out. Fed 'em a
new kind of feed an' all. Claimed the
meat was tender an' our chickens, got
so they wouldn't buy 'em.6

Two other products continued to sell at the store—country
hams and brooms. As the children grew up and left the
farm, the family occasionally sold an extra country ham
or two to the store. Frank Beeson and each of his sons
made round-shaped brooms during the winter; they sold these
in the immediate neighborhood and at the Boston store.

The money received from the sale of eggs, hens,
country hams, and brooms was an important part of their
economy because the Beeson family was cash poor.7 Percy
Beeson's earliest recollection of the income from these products is that eggs sold for fifteen to twenty cents a dozen, hams for twenty-five cents a pound, and brooms for a quarter each. Because the crops grown on the farm were consumed there, the income received from the Boston store until the 1930's was extremely important to the Beeson family.

Turner Town, named after the family who originally owned the store, or Berry's Lick as it is now called, was a major center for the Beeson family. Each Saturday they made a trip there by horse or on foot to pick up the mail and to purchase groceries and supplies:

Well, I'd go lots a times on Saturday an' get my mail. I walk up thar sometimes . . . (it would take) about an hour an' a quarter, somethin' like that, to walk. When I want to go in the wagon, when I wanna get anything go in the wagon, then I go horseback up thar.

My mail come over thar. I had to get my mail once a week. I could a put up a box way back up thar, but I'd rather go to the post office. Your mail would stay thar 'til you go get it. Stay thar 'til you go an' get it.

In addition, both the mill and the blacksmith were located at Turner Town. At one time a water mill was located near the Beeson farm in the Richland community, but it ceased operation late in the nineteenth century. The grist mill at Turner Town became the milling center for the community. The Beeson family brought both their wheat and corn to the mill to be ground. The fee for this service
was one-tenth of each bushel ground. They used some of their ground corn for chicken feed and stored the remaining portion as well as the wheat in used salt and flour barrels until the women needed it for cooking.

The blacksmith at Turner Town repaired farm equipment, made plow points, and shod horses for the Beeson family. For many years, John Harrison was both the blacksmith and the mill operator. Late in the 1930's, Harrison became quite ill and was sick for a long time. According to local accounts, when he neared death his body began to turn to stone:

John Harrison used to do that up thar at Turner Town. He run a blacksmith shop up thar. He ain't livin' now. Dead. He got sick an' he was ill so long. They said he turned to a rock before he died. He turned to a rock.  

Although Harrison is best remembered for his ability as a blacksmith, the story surrounding his death also keeps his memory alive.

The mill at Turner Town continued to grind Percy's flour and corn as late as 1967 when it closed down. According to Beeson, Turner Town "finally played out an' didn't have none (mill). That's the way people had then; go to town to get their work done. Everything's in town." The town to which he refers is Morgantown, the county seat, located approximately twenty miles northeast from the farmstead.
Until the mill and blacksmith shop at Turner Town closed, the Beesons did not travel the half-day journey by mule and wagon to Morgantown with any regularity, except in spring when a trip was mandatory to purchase tobacco seeds and fertilizer for the crops. When Turner Town no longer provided the services necessary, Percy Beeson rode with a neighbor into Morgantown because he felt that a wagon and mule was no longer a safe combination on the highways.

For over ninety years, the Beeson family obtained the services they needed and marketed all of their crops, except tobacco, in the Richland community. In the spring, they made a trip to Morgantown to purchase tobacco seeds, and in the fall they went to Russellville in Logan County or to Bowling Green in Warren County to sell their tobacco at a tobacco warehouse. Since the family received the Morgantown newspaper, it helped them determine whether the tobacco market in Russellville or the one in Bowling Green would bring the higher price for their crop. In the majority of cases, the price in Bowling Green was equal to or better than that in Russellville. This was so frequently the case that Percy and his brothers, Hiram and Herschel, stopped going to Russellville at all about 1940.

The trip into Bowling Green to sell tobacco was a well-planned and systematic enterprise. The three
Beeson brothers, Hiram, Herschel, and Percy, transported their individual crops to tobacco in much the same manner as their father had done when he was alive. They loaded all of the tobacco on one wagon and then hitched two teams of horses to the wagon and set out at daybreak on the day's journey to Bowling Green. When they reached their destination, one of the brothers returned home with the second team. The other two went into town and left the wagon load of tobacco at a relative's home where they would spend the night. Then they took the team to a local livery stable for the night:

*Ya, had to stay in Bowling Green for a night. Take you all day long to come from down thar. Be night when you get up here from down thar. At that time the roads was muddy. Didn't have no pikes. Jus' had pikes... had one up here at Bowling Green. You hit the pike when you get up here at Kirkendahl's store up yonder. Then we would send part of our team back home. Then they'd come on with part of 'em. After we hit the pike up here at Kirkendahl's store.*

The next day they sold the tobacco and returned home. Every year the brothers rotated as to which of them stayed in town and which returned home with the second team of horses.

The death of Betty Beeson in 1953 and the subsequent legal difficulties over the ownership of the Beeson farm brought an end to the brothers' cooperative wagon journey into Bowling Green to sell their tobacco.
Percy Beeson was then forced to seek out neighbors to haul his tobacco crop into Bowling Green.

The Richland community was the center of focus for the Beeson family throughout its history in Butler County. Percy went elsewhere only when the services necessary for the functioning of the farm were no longer available within the community. Because he believed that his traditional method of transportation by horse or mule was unsafe on the roads, he increasingly relied on his neighbors, particularly Lonzo McKinney, for transportation into Morgantown. However, until Beeson was forced to leave the farm due to ill health in 1972, he was still able to commute by himself to Turner Town where he continued to purchase supplies, pick up his mail, and visit each Saturday. His focus remained within the Richland community and turned outward only when his farming needs could not be met.

THE FARMSTEAD

The Beeson farm consisted of one hundred acres of land of which sixty-two acres were tillable and the remaining thirty-five acres were woods, with approximately three acres set aside for the building complexes. Originally, Henry Beeson purchased a log house and transported it to the new homestead. He also built a tool shed where he kept his tools. While Brank Beeson was running the farm, he replaced the original buildings.
and added all of the other structures, except the chicken hovers and hog houses which were added later by Percy. Frank completed the building complexes by 1905, which was approximately the time Percy Beeson finished the second grade.

The pattern of the farmstead can be called an L unit and is based on the fencing--both slat and barbed wire--which encloses the farmstead.12 Within this overall L-shaped fence unit, there are additional fences which were constructed to separate the functions within the farmstead as well as to define the divisions of labor within the Family and Farm units. The overall pattern of building construction by Frank Beeson was the Family Unit and the Farm Unit. The Family Unit includes the house, the kitchen, the smokehouse, and the chicken house. These buildings constitute an indented linear scheme making up the top baseline of the L pattern. The Farm Unit includes the feed barn and tobacco barn which are set on an uphill gradient of six hundred feet and complete the length of the L unit. Percy Beeson continued the L pattern with the construction of the three hog houses.

To discuss the farmstead constructively it is necessary to break down the overall L unit into its functional parts. Such a break down can be accomplished by utilizing the inner pattern of fencing as a separation of the divisions of labor for the men and women in the
Survey of the Beeson Farmstead
family. Of the seven functional parts, the Family Unit --A, B, and C-- was the area where the women performed most of their traditional labors. The remaining four parts, the Farm Unit--D, E, F, and G, were the areas where the men traditionally did most of their work on the farmstead.

The Family Unit centers around the house and is located about twenty-five feet up from a spring which flows year-round. This unit consists of sub-unit A: the hen house, kitchen, and smokehouse; sub-unit B: a fenced-in well; and sub-unit C: the chicken house and chicken hovers. The date of construction for the Family Unit is unknown, except that the kitchen, well, and house were built prior to the birth of Percy Beeson in 1895. The chicken house and smokehouse were built after 1895, since Percy, born in 1895, is able to remember their being constructed when he was a young child.

The method of construction for all of the buildings, except the chicken house, was the work-in. A work-in was a means of obtaining help for constructing buildings. The head of a household notified his neighbors that on a certain day work would begin on the construction of a new building. Those neighbors who were able to attend gathered on the morning designated and contributed their labor:
I had a little work-in that come in thar. Oh, I invite my neighbors in thar. They come in thar. People used to have 'em when they had somethin' they couldn't do. You could invite 'em in an' they come in an' help ya; help ya fix your house up. Give 'em, have a dinner. Have to feed 'em. Have a work-in thar, have a dinner. Give 'em their dinner. 18

A successful work-in completed the structure by sundown of that one day.

Because the majority of structures were built by the work-ins within a generation, most of them follow the same principles of construction—limestone field rock foundations, white oak log structures with saddle notching, and white oak split shingle roofs. Percy Beeson added a later improvement in the 1940's when he put metal roofing on all of the buildings except the hen house and the hog houses. Although the buildings bear similar marks of construction, their function and their usefulness precluded, and even prevented, a drab sameness for the farmstead.

In sub-unit A, the house, with its mortared sandstone chimney on the south gable and its single entry at the front, was originally built as a story and one-half single pen cabin. 14 It remained in this form until 1961 when Percy Beeson made some striking alterations. He built a black oak story and one-half addition onto the north gable end of the house and equipped the lower floor with electricity. The lower floor, with a door at both
Photograph 2: The Beeeson House
Photograph 4: The Beeson Smokehouse
the front and rear, then served as the new kitchen and
the upper-half story provided storage space. Percy did
not add plumbing facilities to the house.

Located next to the house is the original one
and one-half story single pen kitchen which has a single
entryway in the front.\textsuperscript{15} This kitchen has an unmortared
sandstone chimney with a fireplace opening on the lower
level. The chimney was placed at the rear of the
structure to provide more work area inside. There is no
replacement opening on the second level which was also used
for storage space.

The smokehouse is located beside the kitchen and
has two unique features.\textsuperscript{16} Percy replaced the original
hinges on the door which serves as the single entranceway
with horseshoes adapted to his specifications by the
local blacksmith. The roof is of particular interest
because, unlike those of the two structures mentioned above,
it extends two feet over the entranceway to provide pro-
tection from the inclement weather for anyone using the
building. It is reasonable to suggest that the smokehouse
has such a roof extension because the work centered here
was not completed exclusively inside the building but
rather involved carrying items in and out of the structure.

The only component of sub-unit B is the well which
provided the family drinking water. While sub-unit A was
under construction, Frank Beeson hired a man named "Uncle"
Jim Phillips to witch for water. Phillips told Frank Beeson that he would not have to dig down far on the spot he selected to find water. Only ten feet down, however, solid rock stopped the digging, and attempts to blast through the rock proved unsuccessful:

... Built our house by that spring thar. They tol' him that spring never did go dry an' he built thar. Then my Daddy built a well thar in the yard. An' they hit a big rock an' they tried to blast through but the water come in so fast they never could blast through. So that well thar in the yard ain't but about ten foot deep. It stands to three foot in water all the time. Plenty of water in it. 17

This shallow well supplied a continual source for limestone, or hard, water for the family to drink.

A second well was dug shortly thereafter about two hundred feet south from the house outside of the total L-shaped unit. This well provided soapstone, or soft, water for the family's cooking needs.

The sole structure in sub-unit C is the hen house. 18

The tar paper and wood roofing were used because they were least expensive and could be easily replaced if necessary. The roof extends a foot and a half over the front of the hen house and thus provides protection from the weather in the same way and for the same function as that of the smokehouse. There are three entryways—one for the Beesons and two for the chickens. In the upper right hand corner
Photograph 6: The Chicken House and a Chicken Coop
of the building is one opening from which a pole ran to the ground. A chicken on the ground could climb the pole and enter the chicken house. The other opening for the chickens is near the base of the structure and the chickens were able to reach it from ground level. This entryway was frequently kept closed to prevent "varmints," such as foxes, raccoons, and opossums, from entering and killing the hens.

The chicken hovers scattered over an area near the hen house were used to house and protect a mother hen and her newborn chickens. The hovers, built from old weatherboarding, were triangular in shape with pieces of surplus metal roofing placed over their peaks.

The Farm Unit -- D, E, F, and G, consists of two barns, one storage shed, and three hog houses. The two barns served the traditional function of the feed barn and the tobacco barn respectively. The feed barn is located closest to the house and is a corn crib in the center with three additions. The north wing served as a storage shed, while the south wing was an additional storage area and held part of the yearly corn crop. The rear addition served as a wagon shed. The central section of the barn, raised two feet above the ground, functioned as the storage area for corn. The feed barn is completely weatherboarded in black oak.
Photograph 8: The Storage Shed
The tobacco barn is constructed of white oak and contains three additions. The central section was the traditional tobacco barn, the north wing served as a feed area, and the south wing was another storage area for hay. The addition on the rear of the central section has a gate on the north end which facilitated either the storage of the wagon during tobacco season or the storage of other farm equipment during other seasons. The north and rear additions are weatherboarded; the south wing is covered with split-log siding.

The storage shed and hog houses in the Farm Unit were built simply and with an eye toward utility. The storage shed, located near the tobacco barn, is built of white oak logs covered with black oak weatherboarding. To help preserve this small but important structure, the roof was re-covered with metal at the same time that such roofs were put on the barns. The hog houses were the last structures built on the farm and were constructed by Percy Beeson.

Two of the hog houses were built in the 1940's from weatherboarding that was replaced on the house. Both are rectangular in shape with a flat wooden roof built against a fence, and both have a single entry on their north side. The third hog house was also constructed in the 1940's from the remaining good pieces of log that were replaced in the smokehouse. The single entry was built on
the west side of the structure. The overall crudeness in appearance of the hog houses, in comparison with the other structures on the farm, is perhaps best understood in view of the fact that Percy Beeson provided some form of shelter for the hogs only during the fattening process and previous to slaughtering them.

The uniqueness of the Beeson farmstead does not lie solely in the structures described above; its uniqueness also derives from the integrating factors which made it a functioning unit. By understanding the totality of life as it existed on this farm, it is easy to perceive the remarkable singularity of the Beeson farm.

On the farm the separation of labor was fundamental. Each member of the family had certain tasks to perform, and these tasks were distributed by age and sex during the early years of the farm's operation. As the number of individuals living on the farm dwindled, the sole criterion for task distribution became sex. As a standing rule, the heavier work was delegated to the men, while the lighter work was performed by the women. Most of the work done by the men was in the Farm Unit; the work done by the women was in the Family Unit. However, the unit boundaries for tasks were not always static because some duties regularly required that both the men and the women work in the Farm Unit or in the Family Unit.

The seasons dictated the nature of the tasks as well as their priority at a given time. For example,
broom-making had little value during spring when the fields needed to be sown and the garden had to be readied. To understand the Beeson farm as a functioning unit it is necessary, therefore, to determine the labor performed during a given season, who was responsible for them, and where they were performed on the farmstead.
1. Butler County, Kentucky. Beeson to Beeson Deed (1881), Book X, pp. 120-122.

2. Percy Beeson, interview held at the Turtle Creek Convalescent Centre (hereafter PB), Bowling Green, Kentucky, September 8, 1973.


6. PB, September 28, 1973. It might also be suggested that the Boston store stopped buying the Beesons' eggs, butter and chickens because of the economic pressures of the Depression of the 1930's and/or the introduction of government controls.

7. See Chapter II, pp. 17-23.


14. See photograph 2.

15. See photograph 3.


18. See photograph 5.
20. See photograph 7.
21. See photograph 8.
22. I am aware of the inherent problems in basing my discussion of the women's work on information obtained from a man. The women who lived on the Beeson farmstead are deceased, but since their work was essential to the totally functional unit, it is important that it be presented here. I suggest that similar studies in the Richland community should utilize female as well as male informants.
CHAPTER II
THE FAMILY UNIT

The Spring Season

The family's food supply and home industry were prepared in the Family Unit. The women of the household supervised and carried out these activities in every instance, except that of broom-making which will be discussed later. The onset of these yearly duties occurred in the spring when it was necessary to renew the family's food and crop supply.

The most important of the renewal activities for the women was the preparation and planting of the family garden. The garden crops supplied, along with meat, wheat, and corn, the mainstay of the family diet throughout the year. In early March, Percy Beeson brought his mule and plow to just below the house and plowed one-half acre of ground. He then laid off the ground and prepared the rows. When he had completed these tasks, the women began their work.

As soon as the ground was dry, the women sowed their spring turnips and parsnips in alternating rows. In sowing the parsnips, they used ashes from wood burned in the fireplace during winter. Because the parsnip seeds were light and the fully-grown parsnips would
not be ready to remove until fall, the ground could not become packed. To protect the parsnips, the women first placed the seeds down the rows and then lightly sprinkled the uncovered parsnip seeds with ashes. The ashes prevented the ground from packing and from thus ruining the parsnips. Then they lightly covered the seeds and ashes with dirt.

The women planted the remainder of the garden in April or May, depending on the weather. Their largest variety of a single crop was beans—bunch, stick, butter, pinto, and Navy or northern. The women planted beans during the month of April, when the sign of the moon was in the arm of the human body according to the almanac. The purpose of planting them when the sign was in the arm was to insure a larger crop. The Beesons believed that if their beans were not planted in the proper sign the bean plants would have many vines but few actual beans. If the sign lasted for three days, they preferred planting on the third day of that sign because that was the day Christ rose from the dead:

Three days in a row. I guess the third day would be the best day, yes. That's the day Christ raised, the third day. That's the day Christ riz.¹

The Beesons felt that they would have better luck with their crops by planting on the third day. However, because the women grew such a large variety of beans, their planting required the use of all three days of
the arm sign, and frequently they continued their work into the next few days following that sign. They also planted cucumbers, spring onions, and radishes when the sign was in the arm and for the same reasons.

The women likewise planted cabbage, lettuce, tomatoes, sweet corn, and potatoes according to the appropriate signs of the almanac. They planted cabbage and lettuce in the spring when the sign was in the head because these two products resemble the shape of a head.

After first sowing tomatoes in a planting bed on St. Patrick's Day, March 17, they transplanted them to the garden sometime in early May but without particular guidance from the almanac. The other two crops specifically planted by the signs were eating corn, or "roastin ears," and potatoes:

Well, I always planted it on dark moon, when I always like to plant corn. Plant it on dark moon it won't grow so tall an' the ear will be low and down and plant it on the light of the moon it will grow up tall. Ear be way up high. I always liked to plant it on the dark moon.

I would plant 'tatas on the dark moon. When I like to plant 'em. Oh, they wouldn't grow so tall. The vine wouldn't be so high if you planted on the dark moon. Have a low vine. Planted on the light of the moon, it would grow up tall. Have a tall vine. 2

They planted both crops in April on the dark or full moon to produce a full yield. Utilizing the correct sign insured stalks full of corn ears arranged low on the stalk
and short potato vines with larger numbers of potatoes per vine.

In the fall the women planted potato onions. Shortly after election day in November, they planted the seeds in the ground and then covered them with straw to prevent their freezing in winter. In March, when the weather was warmer, the women removed the straw and worked the ground around the onions. Then, within a month, the family had its first crop of onions.

The planting of each of the garden crops was only the beginning of the work involved. The women worked the ground continually to prevent an unwanted crop of weeds. They were also kept busy "bugging" the garden, or trying to keep damaging insects out of it. There were two methods of bugging. For most bugs, the women gathered parts of bushes and literally swept each row, chasing the bugs out row by row. "You whup them out. Get ya some bushes an' whup them the way they come in and they'll leave." The method for eliminating the terrapin bug was more difficult. With a bucket in one hand, the women walked along the rows and shook the taller plants so the bugs would fall into their buckets. "Them ol' terrapin bugs, take you a bucket an' knock them off in your bucket. Make you a fire an' burn them up." Then they carried the buckets to an awaiting fire near the garden and emptied the bugs into the fire. The
only way to eliminate the terrapin bugs was to burn them. With the introduction of chemical spraying on the Beeson farm shortly after World War II, these particular bugging processes were no longer necessary.

The careful planting and constant upkeep of the garden was the major concern of the women during the spring season because the family depended on the garden products to survive the winter. However, there were other duties related to food supply and thus to the Family Unit which required daily attention in the spring as well as in the other seasons. Two of the most important such duties were tending to the chickens and to the milk cows. Betty Beeson, and later Lonie Beeson, raised approximately one hundred New Hampshire and Wyandott chickens. Each morning the chickens were fed from feed stored in the kitchen. They gathered the eggs in a basket made for this purpose by an uncle in Logan County, Kentucky. In the years when the Beeson family was large, several dozen eggs were always kept for home use and the remainder were sold, but as the years passed and the size of the family dwindled the number of eggs necessary for home use declined and thus those available for sale increased. Each week the Beesons made several trips to the store at Boston to sell eggs. In the 1930's when, for reasons discussed earlier, the Boston store stopped buying eggs Betty Beeson had to sell her eggs as best
she could within the immediate neighborhood. Those eggs which were not used on the farm nor sold to the neighbors were simply thrown away.

Twice a year, once in the spring and once in the fall, they sold some of the older hens to keep the chicken flock numbering around one hundred and to bring in some money for their needs. They killed the young chickens, which frequently graced the dinner table, by wringing off their heads. In their later years the Beesons learned that their neighbors were killing chickens by hanging them upside down and cutting their throats to make the meat more tender:

My Mom would kill 'em most the time. Sometime I would help her kill 'em. Young chickens just wring their heads off. Just wrung their heads off. Sometimes you could cut their heads off. Some people now hang 'em up an' cut the throat, but I never did kill 'em. That keeps from bruising 'em. You know a chicken you cut his head off an' he jump. Throw him down on the ground an' he jump 'til he die. That's bruise them up. Some people hang 'em up an' cut the throat.

Although the Beeson family knew of this other way of killing chickens, they never departed from their own and familiar method.

Betty Beeson always had two roan cows which she kept in the area around the tobacco barn. As part of her morning chores, she walked back to the tobacco barn and hand milked her cows. In the evening, she repeated this
process. During the years when the Beeson children were living on the farm, one of the older children had the chore of milking the cows.

The Beesons used all of the milk produced on the farm for drinking or for cooking or making butter. The women made the butter in a stone churn in the kitchen. They poured milk into the churn and covered it with the lid. One of the daughters, or Betty in later years, worked the milk with the dasher. As the milk began to foam they added one to three dippers of hot water, depending on the creamy quality of the milk:

Well, ya, they made butter. They had milk. Pour in milk in thar. They didn't skim the cream off then like they do now. They let the cream stay on the milk. Pour it all in thar together. Had a stone churn an' a stone top on it. Had a wooden dasher in it. Raise that up an' down an' churn up an' down. When it started foamin' put hot water in it. Put a dipper full. If that didn't do put in another dipper full an' maybe you'd have to put in three dippers of water before you got through churnin'. If it was in a bad stage, it take more water to cool it down where the butter would come.

When the butter formed, the women removed it from the churn, squeezed out the excess milk, and added salt. The excess or remaining milk was buttermilk which the family drank or used in cooking. They pressed the butter in one-pound molds and sold all but a pound or two, which they kept for home use, to the Boston store. By the
1930s, as was the case with the egg sales, the Boston store stopped buying butter and Betty Beeson turned to selling her butter in the neighborhood.

The garden especially, and the chickens and milk cows as well, kept the Beeson women busy throughout the spring season. Another important yearly duty for the women which also occurred in the spring was the making of soap. They prepared the soap supply from grease and from ashes saved from the winter fire in the house. Frank Beeson, and later Percy, constructed the ash hopper:

Take a good long while to make an ash hopper. You got to make your boards. You got to rive them out. Take three feet boards thar an' make an ash hopper. Then you got to dig your trough out. Get every-thing ready. Set that hopper up.

Then the women filled the V-shaped hopper with ashes and added water. The leached ashes or lye dripped into a kettle located at the end of the hopper:

Put the ashes in the hopper thar. Fill that up full of ashes then. Pack them ashes down. Then you pour water on thar. It'd take a week afore you start that up to drippin'. You have a kettle sittin' on a rock fer to catch it. A bucket or somethin'. Catch it in thar. You drip all that out. Get enough to make your soap.

This leaching process required the continual addition of water and took about three weeks—one week for the lye to form and two weeks for the ashes to completely leach.

They combined the lye with grease left over from
kitchen use or from slaughtering hogs and boiled the mixture which they tested for strength with a chicken feather:

Have a big ol' kettle. Put your grease in thar. Then put that lye in thar make you soap. Take a chicken feather an' see how strong that lye is. If it eat all that fur off that feather it'd be too strong. You'd have to weaken it down a little bit. Pour some water in it an' weaken it down a little. 9

When the soap was the correct strength and thickness, the women removed it from the fire and stored it in a wooden container:

They wouldn't cake it. Had jelly. They had a jelly soap. Just put it in a barrel or keg. Just dip your hands in thar, get your hands full of soap, an' put it on your clothes. Get ready an' take you a bucket an' get you some soap an' wash your clothes. 10

In later years Lonie Beeson purchased concentrated lye which they added to the grease to make their soap. This eliminated the process of leaching the ashes to produce lye. 11

With the close of spring, the Beeson women turned their attention to the kitchen where they preserved the garden products and fruits for winter storage and use.

The Summer Season

The summer season in the Family Unit was primarily devoted to food storage activities. For many years, the
women preserved fruits from the orchard and vegetables from the garden. After the death of Frank Beeson, Percy and his mother found it increasingly difficult to maintain the orchard until finally several years of severe weather and lack of care totally destroyed it.

The orchard was located just west of the hen house and contained apple, plum, peach, and pear trees. In addition to these fruits, the women also gathered blackberries and, in the fall, persimmons from the woods. The major process for preserving the fruits was drying. Just before the apples, for example, were ready to be picked, the men built a scaffold, an elevated platform made of wood, in front of the kitchen. When the apples were ripe, the women picked them and then placed them on the scaffold to dry:

Dried the fruit. My Mama would dry the fruit an' us children would help peel apples an' cut up apples an' put 'em up. Make a scaffold an' put 'em up on top. 

Each evening they gathered the fruit off the scaffold to prevent it from becoming discolored by the dew and returned it to the scaffold in the morning. This process was repeated for each crop from the orchard.

Although they dried most of the fruit, the women canned some of the peaches and plums. When they brought the fruit to the kitchen, they washed and peeled it, then cut it up and cored it, and finally placed it in a kettle
to cook on the wood-burning stove. While the fruit cooked down they readied the canning jars by smoking them with sulfur. "Smoke 'em in sulfur. Seal 'em up an' can 'em that way. That would keep 'em." When the fruit was ready they put it in the sulfured jars and allowed the hot fruit to cool briefly. Then they sparsely poured melted wax into each jar to cover and preserve the fruit.

When each crop of fruit was ready for storage, the women took it upstairs in the house because there was no storage cellar. They placed all of their canned goods and dried fruits along the west wall of the upper floor so the heat from the chimney would keep them warm during the cold winter. They wrapped the dried fruits in quilts and also covered the canned items with quilts to help keep them from freezing.

During the time the fruits from the orchard were being preserved for winter storage, the late crops in the garden were also ready to be picked and prepared. The Beeson women grew a large variety of beans which were allowed to dry out in the garden. After they picked and shelled the beans they set aside some of each variety as seed for the following year's garden. These beans were treated with either coal oil or turpentine to keep out the bugs:
Bugs would get in 'em an' you'd have to scald 'em. Some of 'em. Keep out enough to plant. Scald what you gonna eat. Then that will kill the bugs. An' what you gonna keep to plant you would put in coal oil (kerosene) or turpentine or somethin' like that to kill the bugs.

They separated the beans by type and placed them in buckets or sacks which were set under a table in the kitchen and covered with quilts. Frequently during the late summer and in the fall, bugs got into the bean buckets and the women had to scald the beans in hot water before they were used in cooking.

The major garden crops which the women canned were squash and tomatoes, and their method for canning these items was the same as that used for the fruits. After they brought the squash into the kitchen and cleaned it, then they cut it into pieces and cooked it. Next they placed the cooked squash in canning jars smoked with sulfur, added a little salt, and finally sealed each jar with a lid. They covered the winter squash with quilts and stored it on the upper floor with the other food.

Tomatoes were the most difficult crop to can because they spoiled quickly if not properly prepared. The women were especially careful to remove the cores from the tomatoes:

You got to cook 'em. Peel 'em. Take all that core out of 'em, an' cook 'em. That core, you want to
get all that core out of 'em.
That core what make 'em spoil.
Got to get that core out. You
peel 'em an' get all that core
out.15

Once the tomatoes were in the jars, with a little salt,
you sealed the jars with lids and took the canned
tomatoes to the food storage area in the house.

Sweet corn, cabbage, and cucumbers were preserved
in brine. The Beesons planted two crops of sweet corn
each year. Though they ate some of each crop as soon as
it was ready, they put up the major portion in brine. In
the yard of the Family Unit, they shucked the corn and
then took it into the kitchen where they prepared the
brine with salt brought from the smokehouse and placed in
a two-gallon stone jar. The women added water to the salt
and then put the corn in the brine:

If you wanted to put up roastin'
ears you could cut it off. Pickle
it in brine. Put it up in brine
in a stone jar. Cover it up in
salt an' you'll have a brine on it.
Tie it up an' set it back then 'til
you got ready to use it.16

They stored the corn in the kitchen until fall when they
moved it upstairs in the house to prevent its freezing.
When the women wanted to have corn for a meal, they re-
moved whatever they needed from the jar, soaked out the
salt, and then cooked the corn with sugar and bacon grease.

A brine was also necessary to produce sauerkraut
and pickles. The Beesons used an eight-gallon stone jar
for making their sauerkraut:
Used to make 'kraut an' put it up in brine in a big stone jar. Some people put it up in little jars. She (Betty Beeson) used to put hers in a eight-gallon jar. Put sauerkraut in brine to keep it.17

The process for making pickles out of cucumbers was somewhat different. The cleaned cucumbers soaked for several weeks in a brine of salt and water prepared in a two-gallon stone jar:

Used to put pickles up in brine an' salt. That's the way people used to put 'em up. They've got a different way now. Used to put up cucumber pickles in brine. Make it out of salt an' water. Keep 'em in brine 'til you get ready to eat 'em an' then you soak 'em out. Take 'em out an' soak 'em out. An' then put 'em in vinegar. Let 'em set for a while. Let 'em set an' in a day or two they would get good. Be ready to eat.18

When the women removed the pickles from the salt brine, they placed them in vinegar to sour for two days, and after two days in the vinegar, the pickles were ready to eat.

Onions and potatoes were not stored with the other garden crops. In July, when both items were ready, the Beeson women dug them out of the ground and spread them out in the yard to dry. Each evening, as with the fruit, they gathered up the onions and took them to the kitchen to prevent dew from spoiling them:

Spread 'em out in the sun to dry. Have 'em lay out thar an' dry up. Have a place to put 'em in the smokehouse. Put 'em in thar an' spread 'em out then. Finish dryin' out. Sometimes some of 'em will rot. Not often.19
After the onions dried for two days in the yard, the women placed them in the smokehouse where they dried for the remainder of the week, and then they covered them with old quilts. The onions remained in the smokehouse until needed during the winter.

They also collected the potatoes after two days and put those which would be eaten before winter in a burlap sack and stored the sack in the feed barn. They placed the remaining potatoes in a hole dug near the kitchen and covered the hole with dirt and grass and boards:

Oh, you dig a hole out here in the ground. Put you some grass around it. Then put them 'taters in thar an' cover up with grass. Then put some boards over them. Then cover 'em with dirt. That keep 'em from freezin'. Then when you want 'taters durin' the winter, you go over there an' open that hole an' get you out some 'taters an' cover the hole back up.20

As the family required potatoes during the winter, they removed the boards and dirt, took a sack of potatoes out of the hole, and re-covered the remaining ones. They placed the sack of potatoes upstairs in the house where the potatoes would keep until needed.

During the busy summer season, the women frequently carried the noon meal to the men working in the fields. Besides breakfast with its eggs, rice or oats, country ham or bacon, biscuits and gravy, the noon meal was the major meal of the day. The evening meal always consisted of
left-overs from the noon meal. Because the noon meal was the most important one of the day, it reflects the diet of the Beeson family as well as the significance of the summer food preparation and storage.

Midway through the morning, the women prepared the noon meal. They baked either sweet cakes made with sorghum, fruit or corn pies, or fried apple pies and cooked some variety of meat—jowl, ham, goat, or chicken—along with vegetables such as corn, tomatoes, squash, or greens and potatoes. Occasionally fried or hard-boiled eggs and canned or dried fruit were also included in the meal.

When the noon meal was ready they placed it in a basket and carried it, along with a bucket of water, to the field:

Well, she (Betty Beeson) would bring my dinner out there lots a times, when I was workin' out. Bring it in the field to me. She would have them wrapped up an' put 'em in a basket. They would stay warm 'til she got there.2

When the men finished their meal the women gathered the left-overs in the basket and returned to the kitchen.

All of the activities performed by the women during the summer were profoundly affected by the decrease over the years in the size of the Beeson family. With the death of Frank Beeson, the needs of Betty and Percy Beeson were greatly reduced. The orchard fell into ruin. The
traditional planting of three rows of potatoes was reduced to one row, while other garden crops were similarly cut back in quantity. However, the diet of the Beesons remained essentially the same, even though the quantity of the crops was reduced and the fruits were purchased at the country store or from neighbors.

The Fall and Winter Seasons

The fall and winter seasons in the Family Unit on the Beeson farm were devoted to activities within the house, except for the daily feeding of the animals. When the weather prevented outdoor activity, the family members worked in the house making quilts and making brooms. The quilting process was a task for the women; broom-making was solely the responsibility of the men.

In spring, the Beesons planted two rows of cotton in the garden. The women picked the cotton in the summer and laid it out in the yard to dry for several days. Once the cotton was dry, they removed the seeds and carded the cotton to smooth it out:

Had to raise some cotton to make paddin' for 'em. When that cotton got ready to gather, gather that cotton off an' dry it. Pick it an' let it dry an' get the seeds out of it. Then card it an' make paddin' to put in your quilt.22

Then they wrapped the cotton in quilts and stored it in the house until they were ready to begin quilting during the fall and winter.
The women made only piece-work quilts which utilized discarded clothing, scraps from previously worn-out quilts, and garments worn on the farm. The cotton readied during the summer served for the padding in each quilt:

Well, she would work on her quilt. Piece quilt. Make up quilt an' sew 'em together. Then she would quilt 'em during the fall an' winter. They never did sell none of them. All of the quilts were made for use in the Family Unit, for protection of the stored fruits and vegetables from the cold weather. In addition to quilting, the women also spent some of their time crocheting, knitting, and making clothes. The materials necessary for each of these tasks were purchased at Turner Town. For such purchases, the Beesons relied heavily on their income from broom-making.

The Beeson family was cash poor; they consumed the crops they produced, except for the small tobacco crop. The income derived from the sale of brooms, as well as eggs, chickens, and butter, provided them with the money necessary to pay taxes and purchase items which could not be traded for (e.g., fertilizer, shoes, and cloth). Both Henry Beeson and Frank Beeson understood the significance of a home industry when they taught their sons the art of making brooms:

I learned when I was a child. My Daddy was a broom-maker. We all learned how to make brooms. He
wanted 'em to get in some kinda trade when they could make a little money, ha e a little spendin' money.

Percy, too, understood his father's foresight.

The men of the Beeson family had a ready market for their brooms within the immediate neighborhood and at the Boston store. The brooms usually sold for a quarter each. From the 1930's onward, Percy Beeson not only sold his brooms at the Boston store and in the surrounding neighborhood but also at the Sugar Grove store near Herschel Beeson's farm in Butler County. This continued until Percy left his farm in 1971.

Though they produced their brooms in the house within the Family Unit, the Beeson men planted and grew the broom corn in the Farm Unit during the summer. In May they planted two rows of broom corn around the field of feed corn. In later summer, the broom corn was ready for cutting. To prevent the straight straws from becoming bent and twisted by the wind and rain, it was extremely important to cut this corn by hand at its base as soon as it was ready. The length and straightness of the straw determined the degree of perfection for each broom. If Percy had utilized bent straw, he would have found it difficult, if not impossible, to sell such brooms in a community which expected him to make brooms of high quality.

After they cut the broom corn the men laid it out in the sun to dry for a week.
Cure it in the sun. The sun'll cure it. It's stay out thar. Dry up. Then you strip the corn off of it. After you cure it an' you get the seed off. Pull your corn off. Get the seed off. Then your corn'll be ready.\(^8\)

They cut the dried broom straw from all but five inches of the stalk and removed the stalk seeds by both shaking the stalk and by running their hands down it. After storing these seeds in a sack for the following year's crop, they bunched the broom corn, tied it with rope, and hung it from the rafters in the feed barn for further drying. When cold weather arrived they moved the broom corn from the feed barn to the house where it was stored.

The men cut most of their broom handles from debarked black or red oak limbs to measure approximately thirty inches in length and one to one and a half inches around. Some of the broom handles they purchased at the country store in Turner Town. Each morning they brought downstairs only enough broom straw for a day's work.

The broom-making process took approximately one and a half hours for each broom. Percy first removed the broom corn from the stalk by cutting at an angle all but approximately four inches of the stalk from the broom straw. Then, he placed the straw in a bucket of water for an hour to make the straw pliable and easy to work with.
Wile the straw soaked, he cut two grooves around the broom handle -- the first about one foot from the broom end of the handle and the second about two fingers up from the first:

Cut a notch in my broom stick here to tie my twine on. To tie my broom. Don’t make it very deep. Jus’ a little shallow notch is all. Jus’ a little bit. A shallow notch."88

Then he tied twine, usually purchased at Turner Town, around the groove closest to the broom end of the handle.

With the broom handle held horizontally in one hand Percy then stood up and let the loose twine fall to the floor while he determined the amount of twine necessary to tie on the broom straw. Then he cut the twine and tied a hammer onto the loose end.

The next step in the process required him to stand in a stooped position. With the hammer (twine attached) placed under his right foot, he held the broom handle in a horizontal position in his left hand, and with his right hand he removed each piece of broom straw from the bucket and placed it between the handle and the twine. He used the middle finger of his left hand to tuck the straw firmly into the junction between the handle and the straw:
I always stand up ta tie it on the heart. Tyin' the heart of the broom on the handle. Use a hammer. Hold my string tight while I tie the heart on.

As he placed each piece of straw against the handle, he turned the handle slightly to secure the pieces of straw already placed on the handle. He continued this until the handle was completely surrounded with straw and then secured this first or inner layer of broom straw to the handle by pounding a nail through the twine and into the broom handle.

Percy tied the twine around the second groove, located now above the completed inner layer of broom straw, and placed the remaining broom straw around the handle. He did not utilize the stooping position in this step; he sat as he worked the remaining straw around the broom handle and wove the excess twine in and out of each piece of the four-inch stalks until the twine reached approximately two inches into the broom straw:

Get you some more straw on thar. Got to work it. Be the outside straws an' they're a little bit longer than them others. If you want to make it larger put on more outside straws. If you want it smaller, don't put on so many. Got to use your judgment on 'em. Where they go.

Next, he tied the excess twine to a section of the woven twine and cut off the small piece of remaining twine. Then he evenly trimmed the exposed stalks, which had pre-
viously been cut at an angle, by placing the knife into them and slowly turning the broom handle.

During the final step Percy held the broom in an upright position and used a knife to trim off any excessively long pieces of broom straw. Although the broom-making process took approximately an hour and a half, only two to three brooms were produced in a day. The Beeson men sold their finished brooms for cash; their home industry was therefore an important source of income for the family.

Though the men made brooms in the Family Unit, this did not change the influence of the women in that area. The Beeson women were responsible for producing a good garden and for maintaining the Family Unit as a functional part of the farmstead. With their efforts in the Family Unit and the efforts of the men in the Farm Unit, the Beeson farmstead was a completely functioning unit.
FOOTNOTES

3. Ibid.
4. Ibid. Kelcy Driskill, Warren County Agricultural Agent, interview held at Warren County Extension Office, Bowling Green, Kentucky, August 2, 1973. Mr. Driskill verified that a terrapin bug is a hard-shelled bug affecting tomatoes and potatoes and refers to either the Mexican Bean Beetle, the Bean Leaf Beetle, or the Blister Beetle.
5. PB, September 27, 1972.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Percy did not indicate that the women made hard or cake soap, though it is highly probable that they did. For making cake soap, see: Eliot Wigginton, ed. The Foxfire Book (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1972), pp. 151-158; Tony Dian Perkins, "Traditional Activities of Miss Addie Elliott."; Mary L. Schmidt, "Canning and Preserving Food."
14. Ibid. Sharon Smith Nation, "Preserving Food." Coal oil, or turpentine, was used as a repellant at a ratio of a few drops per cup of beans. This process is similar to that used in the Nation project, although bean dust was used in place of the coal oil or turpentine.
16. Ibid.


20. Ibid.


22. Ibid.

23. Ibid.


25. After Percy left the farm the price range of his brooms increased, and they sold for three to five dollars each because of his exposure to people outside the Richland community. For example, he demonstrated his broom-making skill for the folklore students of Western Kentucky University, and for audiences at the 1973 Festival of American Folklife, Washington, D.C.


28. Ibid.

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid.
CHAPTER III
THE FARM UNIT

The Spring Season

Of the one hundred acres comprising the Beeson farm, sixty-two acres provided the major source of income as well as the meat, flour, and corn necessary for the family's needs. The two major divisions of the Farm Unit were the crops and animals. The timber acreage which composed over one-third of the Beeson property was also an important element.

When the women helped in the Farm Unit it was generally with the tobacco crop which required extra hands or with the lighter chores which the men felt they could best do:

Around the farm, well, she (Lonie Beeson) would help me with most anything I wanted to do out, workin' out in the field. We would work in the tabacca. Help top the tabacca, sucker it, sucker the tabacca. Help me cut when I got ready to cut. Let her do light work. Had to be somethin' light, didn't do no heavy work.¹

The amount of time and effort required of the women in maintaining the Family Unit prevented them from working for any great length of time in the Farm Unit.
Crop production in the Farm Unit required forty-five to fifty acres yearly, while ten to fifteen acres lay fallow. Unlike their following the almanac cycle for planting of the family garden, the Beesons planted their major crops early, weather permitting, according to the month commercially specified for each individual crop. They raised seven different crops following the specified planting periods, and their method of planting -- with mule power -- directly influenced the amount of acreage for each crop.

The use of mules was Percy Beeson's conventional method of farming:

I didn't have no tools an' all to farm like those big farmers did, so I would jus' have to consider myself jus' a little farmer. An' I arranged myself there to the kinda tools I had. I jus' had tools you had to use with a team. Plows. Garden harra (harrow). Jus' get the mules to harra. Didn't have no machines or nothin'. I had a double shovel. Then I had a tobacco plow to plow tobacco with. Then I had a turnin' plow to break the ground up with. Then I had a jumper (plow) to break the new ground up with.

After Percy prepared the ground with a mule team, first by plowing, then by discing, he was ready to plant his crops.

The first and largest crop of the spring season was the corn--feed corn, broom corn, and sorghum cane. Each year the Beesons put out between twenty-one and
twenty-two acres of corn. They planted twenty acres of feed corn, one to two rows of broom corn, and a separate acre of sorghum cane. They used the feed corn primarily to feed the hogs and had several bushels ground for chicken feed and corn meal at the Turner Town mill. In the fall the men made the sorghum cane into molasses; however, if all of it was not made into molasses, which happened with increasing regularity as the numerical size of the Beeson family dwindled, they fed the excess sorghum cane to the hogs. The broom corn was used, as previously discussed, in the manufacture of brooms during the winter season.

The method of planting corn, as well as all of the crops in the Farm Unit, was explained by Percy Beeson when he defined the difference between sowing and planting:

Well, you sow grass an' all; you sow that. The other crop, corn, you plant it. Different what you do with grass. See, grass seed fine; corn large grain. You got to put that in a corn drill an' plant it. An' seed you got to ... well, they got seed sowers now to sow the grass seed. They got a seed sowerin' thing; hook it to your tractor .... They got an easy way now to do every-thing now (laughs). We used to have to sow it by hand.... They made a little seed sower you could put it in. Turn it an' sow your grass that a-way.3

The total acreage in the Farm Unit and the method of planting helped determine the small amount of land used for the seven different crops.
The second crop prepared and planted during spring was tobacco. The initial stage of tobacco preparation took place in late February or March with the planting of the tobacco bed. First the men plowed the ground for the bed and covered it with wood which they burned to rid the area of bugs and unwanted seeds. Next they lightly raked or worked up the ground and broadcast the tobacco seeds mixed with fertilizer. Then they covered the tobacco bed with a cotton canvas to protect the growing plants from cool weather, bugs, and migrating seeds. As the young plants grew, the men removed the canvas to weed the tobacco bed and to give the plants some sunlight during very warm weather, and they removed it permanently about one week before transplanting the plants from the bed to the field.4

The Beesons' tobacco base was 0.36 acres, or a little over one-fourth acre of dark tobacco. Except for the broom corn, tobacco was their only cash crop. The Beeson farm was thus a self-sustaining entity rather than a profit-making enterprise. The use of mule power and the amount of acreage devoted to individual crops influenced the economics of the Beeson farm; Percy Beeson could not raise productive cash crops without a tractor and other heavy-duty equipment.

His pride in owning and breaking-in a good mule indicates the importance of mules to his method of farm-
ing. With the help of a neighbor, Beeson broke in and then trained a mule team within two months:

I like mules the best. Some of 'em is stubborn and hard to break. A young mule is hard to break . . . . Put 'em to a drag, a big heavy drag, am' drag the ground. Hook 'em to the wagon and go out on the road. Get out on the road an' drive up an' down the road an' break 'em. Then hook 'em to a big drag an' drag the ground. You could soon break 'em to work. 5

Once the mules adjusted to pulling weight and to following orders they were ready to be worked in the fields.

When Frank Beeson died, Percy eliminated sheep-raising, another activity which required time-consuming work during the spring. Frank kept a small flock of sheep which he had a neighbor shear. After the sheep were sheared they were placed in a fenced-in area and constantly watched so "they wouldn't hurt an' all 'til that wool grewed back on 'em." 6 The sale of the wool in the spring and of the lambs in July provided some cash income for the Beesons, but Percy sold the flock of sheep because they were too much trouble for him to keep up alone on the farm.

The only other alteration in the farming routine during spring occurred from the outside. When a neighbor purchased gasoline-driven farm equipment, he harvested Percy's wheat and barley.
The Summer Season

With the coming of summer the activity within the Farm Unit increased. The tobacco plants which had been growing in the tobacco bed were transplanted by hand in mid-May to a prepared field. After the men plowed the field three or four times, they disced it and fertilized it. They pulled the tobacco plants from the bed by hand and set them in rows in the field with the aid of handheld wooden tobacco pegs. During July the family topped and suckered the tobacco:

Had to set it out. Drop the plants. Set it out. Then plow it an' hoe it out. Work it. Got ready to top it. Top it then. Then be ready when the suckers come to pull all the suckers off of 'em. We didn't use that stuff you put on to kill the suckers. Didn't know nothin' about that; rather break 'em off by hand."

Topping allowed the leaves to spread and reach maturity, and suckering removed the shoots from the stem of each tobacco plant to assure larger and healthier leaves. The tobacco plants remained in the field until "... just before the first frost."

Much of the summer the men spent in keeping the crops free of weeds, and in the late summer they harvested their crops. They intermittently cleaned the corn crop of weeds by mule and plow during the summer months until it was ready to harvest in September:
They don't raise too much corn aroun' here now. The corn all raised way off in the Corn Belt now. Mighty little corn they raise aroun' here. An' they spray their corn now. We had to plow our corn. Used to plow it maybe four times. People way back thar didn't know nothin' then. They'd plow corn an' be on the mule an' still be a-plowin' the corn.

With a wagon pulled by mules the family harvested the twenty acres of feed corn, and after they shucked it, they took it to the feed barn for storage in the corn crib. They cut the broom corn by hand in late August to prevent the weather from bending and twisting it and harvested the sorghum cane by hand in October when they made it into molasses.

During the first four weeks of June all of the winter crops were ready to harvest. The first crop ready was the hay:

Had a mowin' machine to cut it with. A rake to rake it with. Hay rake; that's the name of it. Then you rake it up an' shock it. Jus' take your hay an' pile it up thar an' make a round shock. Jus' shock it all over the field that a-way 'til you get it done. Then you let it stay there in the shock about a day an' it'd be ready to stack or put in the barn. Keep the sap out of it.

. . . Haul it an' stack it. I stack it or put it in the barn one. I stacked it around a pole; the only way I stacked . . . . I learnt to put a pole in an' stack it. . . . When you went to win' (wind) up, you trim ya a sharp stick an' drive down in thar. Cap it off so it wouldn't blow off so bad. Tie the hole to keep the wind from blowin' it off.
I could let the stock run through that during the winter. Stack for the stock to have to eat. Feed that in the barn when bad times; that'd be enough feed when it rainin', snowin', too bad for stock to be out.  

The Beesons raised one to two acres of either Timothy or Red Top hay.  

In mid-June, the men harvested the fifteen acres of winter wheat and the two acres of barley. Originally the men used a cradle to cut these crops and then threshed the wheat:

*Used a cradle. Cradled wheat. Then they'd come around an' thrash your wheat. They used to tramp your wheat out with horses way back in olden times. Horses go around an' around to do that. Tramp your wheat out. Then they'd have to run it through a wheat fan. Fan the trash out of it when they tramp it with horses. Until they got these other kind of steam thrashers; they'd thrash it out a different way.*

*... In later years they got these steam thrashers. You had to get up an' pull down on that wheel. Start that thing poppin' an' it'd go off then. Start it that a-way then. Them steam thrashers done gone out an' they had other kinds in later years.*

With the advent of the mule-driven, and later the gasoline-powered combine, the Beesons hired a neighbor who owned such equipment to do the major part of the work. This method of hiring help to harvest the grain crops with mechanical equipment became customary in the Richland community. Once these crops were gathered the barley
was stored in the feed barn for the farm stock, while the wheat was ground into flour at the Turner Town mill.

In late June they harvested the two acres of oats. Here, too, the Beesons hired a neighbor who moved from farm to farm with his equipment. The oats were bundled and taken to the feed barn where they were stored as feed for the stock during the fall and winter.

While most of summer was spent working in the fields there were occasions when the family did relax. When Percy Beeson ran the farm the family spent most of their free time at home although they did occasionally visit friends and relatives in neighboring Logan County. During the lifetime of Frank Beeson, however, the summer meant neighborhood picnics with both black and white neighbors participating:

Oh, they would have 'em along once a year. On June, July, an' August they would have a picnic. On them months when they had picnics. Maybe my Daddy wouldn't have but one. Would be somebody else would have one somewhere else. Have 'em around, first one place an' then another. People would have 'em. You could go to 'em. An' they would fiddle an' dance an' have this here big time. 12

The custom of the area was for various families to have picnics on their farms during the months of July and August. Over the years, then, every family in the community had one or two neighborhood picnics on their farm.
The Frank Beeson picnics were similar to those of his neighbors. The family slaughtered several sheep which were barbequed in a large pit; the visitors brought chicken, pork, bread, vegetables, and drinks. They enjoyed activities such as foot races and baseball. The highlight of such events was the fiddle music and dancing which continued into the evening.

With the close of summer the Beesons had all of their crops, except tobacco, harvested and stored for use during fall and winter. In late August, they plowed a two-acre field and planted the following year’s barley crop. They spent the next five months preparing their tobacco for market, making molasses, butchering hogs, cutting timber, and making the yearly repairs to the entire farm.

The Fall and Winter Seasons

Two to three weeks before the first frost in the fall the men began to prepare the dark tobacco crop for market. The process involved several weeks of work. First they slit the stalks down the middle, then cut the plants. Next they inserted tobacco sticks into the stalks and laid the sticks of tobacco on a scaffold built in the field:

You had to cut it an' put it on a scaffold. Put it on a scaffold a few days and let it yellow before you hauled it in an' make it ready.
After they hauled the tobacco to the barn and hung it there, then they fired, or cured, it for two to three weeks:

Used to fire tobacco. Maybe fire two weeks, three. Cure it up. They would have wood, sawdust, somethin' like that. Put a smoke under thar. Let it smoke; keep it smokin'. Smoke your tobacco. Cure it up. Some of 'em put molasses on the wood to put a gloss on, have a gloss on the tobacco. Put molasses on the wood. That would make a gloss on the 'bacca; make it shine like. Got a better price fer it; gloss on it.14

Then they stripped and graded the individual tobacco leaves. Stripping removed the individual leaves from the stalk; grading sorted the leaves according to their color and quality. "I graded it out when I stripped it out. Had to grade it out. Make several grades out of it."15

Then they tied each grade into hands (bunches of leaves tied together with another leaf).

The men tied the tobacco leaves into hands with the head of the hand measuring about the diameter of a silver dollar. Then they mounted the hands on tobacco sticks and placed the sticks of tobacco in bulks or groups to allow air circulation.16 After all of the tobacco crop was prepared in this manner, the Beeson men took their tobacco
to market in either Bowling Green or Russellville in late November or early December.

During October the Beeson men made their molasses, the final agricultural product of the year:

... Way back everybody used to raise sugar corn. Wanted to make molasses in the fall. They used to be on the go back then. Everybody trying to get their 'lasses made in the fall. ... 17

Frank Beeson always made his own molasses. When Frank died, Percy discontinued the traditional practice of making molasses on the farm and took his sorghum cane to a neighbor, Carly Parks, who made the molasses for the Beeson family:

My Daddy made molasses. And my uncle. Him an' his brother (Moses) would make molasses. ... I never did make none. I'd get somebody in the neighborhood to make 'em. 18

When Lonie Beeson's parents died during the 1930's, Percy acquired their sorghum mill, and Parks continued to make their molasses by coming to the Beeson farm and using their mill. After Parks' death in the late 1930's, the Beesons stopped raising sorghum cane and purchased all of their molasses from a neighbor.

When the weather turned cool the men cut the sorghum cane by hand at its base to provide the largest amount of cane for the molasses and then loaded the cane into a wagon and took it to the barn area where the sorghum mill was set up. Mule-power operated the sorghum
mill; a pole, or sweep was attached at one end to the mill and the other end was attached to a mule. The mule walked in a circular path as the individual stalks of cane were fed into the mill:

You got a mill an' run your corn through thar an' grind it out an' the juice'd run here in a barrel. Then boil that down an' make molasses.

The juice thus squeezed from the cane ran from the mill into a trough and eventually into a barrel.

As the juice was extracted from the cane, the men placed the sorghum pan on a rock furnace and built a fire under it. They poured the juice into the first tray of the pan and stirred continually as it heated. As they poured each additional bucket of cane juice into the first tray, they released the heated sorghum into the six remaining trays:

They'd skim it off an' make molasses out of it. Get the skimmin' off an' run it on up thar at the front. Run it off in the bucket then. The juice still be runnin' behind thar. They'd keep on pushin' it on up to the front. Keep the skimmin' off an' make molasses out of it.

When the portion in the sixth tray was thoroughly cooked, the men drained it into an awaiting bucket. They continued this process until all of the juice was cooked. The family stored their sorghum in the kitchen where it was used as a sweetener in cakes and cooking and on biscuits and pancakes.
The Frank Beesons also used maple syrup as a sweetener. In January when the sap began to rise in the maple sugar trees, Frank and his sons went into the woods and tapped the trees:

Well, my Daddy used to tap some maple trees. Used to make maple sugar. Used to tap the sugar trees an' make sugar. You commence to tappin' them sometime in January, maybe the middle of January through February. March, you can make sugar. ... That sap come on in March. Couldn't make none after the sap started up. If it stayed cold, it wouldn't start up 'til March, but if it was warm, it would start up in February an' you'd have to go to makin' sugar then... .

They tapped the trees by inserting spiles, or spouts, into them to draw off the sap, and the sap dripped into troughs, or containers, hung on the spiles or set on a rock at the base of the trees:

That tree would drip a long time. Two weeks or longer. You'd have to go aroun' an' have troughs an' put spiles in thar to run that (sugar) water in them troughs. An' you'd go around an' get that water. Watch em an' not let your troughs run over. Had to go aroun' an' haul that water, tote it up one. Pour it in a bucket or barrel or can or somethin'. As soon as you'd get enough cans, you'd go to makin' sugar then.

After they collected the sap, they carried it to the wood-pile near the house where they cooked it down into syrup:
You'd get that warm an' boil it down. Keep a-boilin' it down 'til it makes sugar. Molasses is the same way. Run it off like molasses in a molasses pan.... It really took some boilin' to make sugar. Lots a-people would buy this other sugar to put in thar so it wouldn't have to boil so long. Put this white sugar in thar. That water ain't too sweet, some of it. Took lots a-boilin' fer it. . . .

Percy discontinued the making of maple syrup because the time required and the effort involved were too much for him alone.

In the fall the men harvested the last crop of the year and sowed the second crop for the coming year. They plowed, disced, and otherwise readied fifteen acres for the winter wheat which they sowed by hand. In the Farm Unit all of the crops were numbered to begin with the barley in August and end with the tobacco which was transplanted in May. In the Family Unit, the activity and crop production began with the planting of the garden in spring and ended with the planting of onions in the fall. The importance of the grain crops for the livestock and the necessity of the garden for the family's food supply likely suggested this conscious ordering of activity within the two units.

One of the most important activities in the late fall or early winter was the slaughtering of goats and hogs. The meat from the goats and the hogs was the mainstay of the family diet throughout the year; their only other variety of meat was chicken from the flock main-
tained by the women and rabbits trapped in the winter
by the men.

The men completed this butchering process, unlike
any other performed in the Farm Unit, according to the
cycle of the almanac. They butchered hogs only on the
dark side of the moon; killing a hog in the light of the
moon would cause the lard to boil over and be lost. They
slaughtered goats when the sign was in the feet so the
meat would be tender and would not have a strong taste.
It was also important for the weather to be quite cold
or near freezing to prevent the meat from spoiling while
it was being prepared. The method of killing hogs and
goats remained the same when Percy Beeson took over the
farm; however, he did frequently ask his nearest neighbor,
Lonzo McKinney, to help him.

The process involved in the slaughter and pre-
paration of goats and hogs was much the same. During the
fattening stage, the men watched the hogs closely and fed
them only corn for two weeks to allow their fat to harden:

... People's stock used to run out-
side. People used to keep their hogs
outside. An a-for (before) they got
ready to kill 'em, about two weeks,
they'd bring 'em home. Then feed 'em
make the lard hard. A-for they got
ready to kill the hogs.24

When the dark of the moon occurred in conjunction with
very cold weather sometime in late November or in December
or January, they brought the hogs to the woodpile near
the house. Frank used a large barrel to heat water for
dipping the animals; he heated rocks in a fire and placed
them in the barrel to heat the water:

. . . . My Daddy used to heat rock
an' have a barrel. The way we used
to kill hogs at one time. Heat rock
an' have a barrel. An' put that
rock in that water in the barrel.
Get that water hot an' ya kill your
hogs. Scald 'em. Way we used to
kill 'em back thar then. 25

Percy Beeson, on the other hand, dug a "furnace" hole and
placed a scalding vat, or large rectangular tub, of water
over the hole. They built a fire in the hole under the
scalding vat to heat the water, and when the water was
near boiling, they killed the hog.

When they brought the hog to the woodpile they
shot it between the eyes and stuck a knife in the jugular
vein in its neck. They did this so most of the blood in
the body drained out to help preserve the meat. This
process was called sticking the hog. Then they placed
the hog into the boiling water to soften the skin and
thus loosen the hair:

We had a scaldin' tub then to put
'em in. Take a rope an' turn 'em
over. An' draw 'em out an' get
that hair off of 'em. You pull it
off with your hands. Only way you
can get it off. Scrap it off with
your hands. Knife and scrap it off.
Scrap off of 'em. Maybe sometime
you have to get you a rock an' rub
here an' get some of that stuff off
'em. . . . Time you get 'em scalded
an' all clean it would be noon.
Then you have to cut 'em up after
noon. 26
They repeated this process several times and then hung the hog by its rear legs and cut off its head to drain it even freer of blood. 27

After their noon meal the men returned to the hog and slit it open along the underside from the rear to the throat. They tied off the intestines to prevent the body wastes from spilling out and ruining the meat and removed the internal organs and set them aside for later use. Then they took down the hog and carried it to a table in front of the smokehouse.

At the smokehouse they cut the feet off the hog and then cut up the meat:

Well, we would trim our meat. Then cut that lard up fine. You'd cut that meat up fine and then you'd get the salting meat out of it. All the lean would be for salting. The fat'd go in the lard. 28

Then they took the meat to the smokehouse and covered it with salt. After six weeks they washed off the salt with warm water and allowed the meat to dry for a few hours:

... I'd wash it off. Get you some water. Warm you some water an' wash your meat off. Put some water in the tub an' wash your meat off. Then dry it off. Take some towels an' dry it off. Then lay it on the table to drain off. 29

Then they added salt and pepper to the meat and smoked it by burning hickory wood:

I always smoked it sometimes two weeks. Lots a times I would. Cure it up an' smoke it, sack it up there,
keep the flies off of it and wouldn't have any skippers (larvae of flies) on it. Cure it up so it would have a good, sweet smell to it. Keep better, tastes better, an' keep the skippers off better.30

The women prepared the remaining parts of the hog.

The women made sausage by grinding the trimmings from the lean meat pieces in a hand grinder and adding salt, pepper, and other spices. They cooked the sausage, put it in jars, and added hot grease. They turned the sealed jars upside down so the grease would seal the jars as it cooled and stored the jars of sausage upstairs in the house. They made chitterlings, or chitterlings, out of the intestines which were thoroughly cleaned and then cut up:

You take 'em an' clean 'em. Then cut 'em up. Wash 'em. Salt 'em. Salt 'em good. An' then they'll be ready for you to cook in a day or two. Soak 'em out.31

When the salt was soaked out they were dipped in a batter and fried. The women made the remaining fat into lard by boiling it in a large kettle:

...The fat'd go in the lard. Boil that lard up. Had a kettle. Make up a fire outdoors, if it wasn't too bad a-weather. If it was pretty weather, we'd get outdoors. If it didn't, we'd have to boil it up in the house, in the kitchen on the stove.32

They cooked the lard most of the afternoon and stirred it occasionally until the fat rendered into lard. When
the lard cooled the women placed it in a lard can, or round metal container, and stored it in the kitchen.

The slaughtering of the goats followed the butchering of the hogs and took place in much the same manner. Frank Beeson always butchered his own goats but Percy Beeson did not:

I never did slaughter none. I never was no butcher. I was chicken-hearted. I never did kill no goats myself.33

Percy always had one goat butchered by a neighbor each year. Then he salted down the fresh meat and stored it in a box in his smokehouse.

Lonzo McKinney, a white neighbor, was the man who most frequently helped Percy Beeson perform the chores on his farm. McKinney lived on the next farm south of the Beeson property and provided Percy with help on those little "thank you jobs."34 A thank you job was any chore which required some extra help; it was repaid by helping with a chore at that friend's house. For instance, when Percy Beeson butchered his hogs or goats, McKinney helped and, in turn, when McKinney slaughtered his hogs Percy helped him.

While the slaughter of hogs and goats was of prime importance in the cold winter months, the cutting of timber for use as firewood and repair timber was also necessary during this period. All of the wood used on the farm was cut in the fall and winter when the sap was down in the trees to prevent the sap from rotting the newly
Frank Beeson taught all of his sons how to make railroad ties out of white oak so they could earn extra spending money. Their knowledge of wood is perhaps best illustrated by the tie-making process:

White oak mostly what you want to make ties out of. You take a broad axe an' cut your timber. Get somebody to help ya to cut the trees. Then saw your cuts off. Next make 'em into ties then. You made 'em, let's see, seven by nine; that be eight tie, seven by nine. Then made six by nine; make 'em in two sizes. Take a broad axe an' hew it off. Hew 'em out, score 'em in, hew 'em. Had to hew 'em all around. Both sides had to hew 'em.

Well, you could make a little pole tie. You didn't have to hew it on 'cept two sides. Take the bark off, it would be round on the other side. Call that a pole tie. Just hew it on two sides. That's the way you done that.

We hauled 'em down at the river to Morgantown. Sold 'em a long ways from home. They used to buy ties on over than at Berry's Lick (Turner Town) way back. But I never did haul none over than.

Although tie-making lasted for only a few years on the Beeson farmstead, it helped to broaden their knowledge of wood and its uses.

The construction and repair of wood structures on the farmstead required an excellent knowledge of wood. When Percy Beeson took over the farm he was able to
maintain it with the wood available on the property. He hauled his wood by wagon to a mill where it was cut according to his specifications:

Well, use mules to haul it. You have to put skids out here, pull them logs up on the wagon load. Put your chain around here (logs); put your mules down here, an' load them logs on the log wagon. Have a standard thar to catch it (logs). That standard made out of hickory. It had to be stout so it wouldn't break. When you got them loaded on thar, then you'd be ready to drive out to the mill.

The location of the saw mill varied according to where the mill company was cutting wood. It was a common practice for a company to buy wood selected over a given territory and to move the mill as they moved from timber site to timber site.

The favorite wood for the many farm uses was poplar, according to Percy Beeson, but most of the poplar trees were depleted in the Richland area before Henry Beeson purchased the farm. The timbers most frequently used on the Beeson farm were white and red oak because they withstood varying temperatures better than the other available woods. Percy used red oak for fencing and white oak in the construction of buildings. As the availability of these oaks diminished, Percy substituted black oak.

Frank Beeson constructed fences with poplar rails and Percy built his with slats and strands of smooth wire:
Put up rail fences. People used to put up rail fences. Go cut in the woods and cut down a tree an' make rails and build a rail fence. You have a iron wedge, maul, axe. Bust 'em out. Some out a red oak, black oak, walnut. . . .

. . . I made slat. Cut down trees and make slats. You put up a wire here on top an' a wire at the bottom. Then you turn, weave your slats in thar. I just put up a differn't kind. Put up a wire fence made out of slats. 37

As the poplar rails decayed Percy replaced them with white and red oak. Although Percy knew that walnut could be substituted for fence slats, he sold the farm before his oak timber supply was diminished.

Percy used gum for slats or laths when he roofed the farm structures with metal sheeting:

Let's see, gum a soft wood. Well, gum was to saw laths to cover houses with. They lays on your house. Put a metal top on your house an' have gum laths to put on there, sheetin'. 38

For the construction of the hog houses, which were located farthest north of the barns and nearest the woods, he cut elm and sycamore logs to supplement the older white oak logs which were removed from the house when it was repaired.

Percy used oak in building and repairing the farm structures. He replaced some logs in the house during the 1940's:
I had a little work-in that come in thar. Got me a white oak tree an' hewed the log out. Go out an' cut the tree down an' drag the log up an' hew it out. An' be ready to saw it off the length you wanted it. Be ready then to put it in your house. Notch it then. I cut a notch in it. Oh, you put a notch kind, a saddle notch in it to fit in thar. Then you make that notch to fit that saddle. Cut a log an' notch 'em down. Pry it up an' put a log in thar.38

This effort was typical of what was required to keep the farmstead in shape.

The Beesons purchased all of the tools used on the farm, except shuttles, at the country store or in Morgantown. The men preferred white oak for most of their tools, although they sometimes substituted with hickory for items such as wagon axles. They used persimmon wood to make the wood shuttles because it had no grain and therefore would not break the delicate wool thread. When any of their tools needed repairs they took them to the blacksmith in Turner Town.

During the fall and winter seasons, the men occasionally caught rabbits on the property. Game was plentiful in the area but the Beeson men did not hunt:

"My Daddy never was, wasn't no hunter an' I wasn't neither."40 They trapped rabbits in a wooden box:

I never was much a hand to hunt... I used to trap a little, used to catch rabbits during the winter. I used to make me a wooden box.
I had a trigger you see. Get me a piece o' wood, saw it, and make me a trigger out of it. Cut me down a good big switch, about the size of your thumb there. I would bore holes in thar an' put triggers in thar then. See, he'd go back in thar an' I'd have a door thar and he'd hit that trigger an' it'd fall down on 'im. Couldn't get out then. 41

Usually they trapped about thirty rabbits every winter.

In the Farm Unit the men were responsible for crop production—preparing the ground, planting and maintaining the crops, and harvesting them. Their use of mule power required special knowledge and techniques and limited them in the amount of acreage they cultivated. The Beeson men were also responsible for making sorghum and maple syrup and for slaughtering the goats and hogs. They constructed the buildings and fences and repaired them when necessary.


3. Ibid.

4. Percy's information on preparing the tobacco was confused and out of sequence. I wish to thank Mr. Kelcy Driskill, Warren County Agricultural Agent, for his clarification.


8. Ibid. Beeson did not mention priming the tobacco. Priming is usually done in July and removes three or four of the bottom leaves when they turn a lemon yellow color. Again, my thanks to Mr. Kelcy Driskill for his clarification.


10. Ibid.

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid.


16. Mr. Kelcy Driskill provided this information on tying the hands and bulking.


CONCLUSION

When Henry Beeson was freed as a slave he purchased one hundred acres of land in Butler County, Kentucky and established a farm there. Frank Beeson, his son, took over the farm and built the majority of the structures which comprise the farmstead today. One of Frank's sons, Percy, continued the farming tradition with the help of his mother, Betty, and, later, his wife, Lonie, until he left the farm in 1971. This study documents the history of the Beeson farmstead and the activities which made it a functional unit.

The women on the farmstead primarily provided the major food supply. Throughout the year they tended to the chickens and cows and cooked the meals for the family. During the spring they planted and maintained the garden, and in summer they preserved the products from the garden as well as those from the orchard. In fall and winter the Beeson women made quilts for use as protective wrapping for the stored food and for the family's bed coverings.

The Beeson men grew the major crops, such as tobacco, wheat, corn, sorghum cane, and feed grains, in their respective seasons and throughout the year tended to the hogs, horses, mules, goats, and, at one time,
sheep. In the fall and winter they provided the wood supply, repaired the structures on the farm, and slaughtered the hogs and goats for the family's meat supply. In addition, during the winter the men made brooms which they sold for cash.

The activities of the men and women, performed at the appropriate times throughout the year and in the proper manner, maintained the farmstead as an independent and functional unit.

By utilizing in this study the holistic approach suggested by George Ewart Evans, I have been able to answer the major question raised and to draw some tentative conclusions. I began this study by questioning whether the Beeson farmstead was a functioning unit and, if so, how it functioned. The Beeson farmstead proved to be a functioning unit which relied on the duties performed by the men and women who lived on the farm. The method of farming, primarily with mule power, meant that as farming technology became mechanized, Percy Beeson became, in his own words, "a second-grade farmer;" this second-grade status meant that he continued to run his farm as it had been run at the turn of the century and the farm remained tradition bound. Therefore, it is possible to ascertain in some detail from this study what the farming methods were like prior to mechanization.

It might also be suggested that Percy Beeson as a black
farmer was able to live successfully in an all white area simply because his family and that of his brother Hiram were the only black families in the Richland community. However, to prove conclusively that Percy's status in the community might have been uniquely second-grade as a farmer or that the community did in fact accept or ignore his blackness would require a study of the Richland community.

The present study strongly supports the generalization that this relatively self-contained farmstead prospered modestly until modern agricultural technology and related changes turned the traditional life-style of its owners from assets to liabilities.

Further research in the Richland community could document particular lifestyles, including those related to the churches, schools, and country stores. It would then be possible to compare the Richland community to others in Kentucky or elsewhere—either those currently under study or those to be explored in the future.
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