

Comparing And Contrasting Farms In Gorham 100 Years Ago And Today

Lesson Plan for Comparing and Contrasting Farms in Gorham 100 years ago, with Farms Today.

1. Draw a Venn Diagram on the board. As you go through the lesson questions, you will fill out the Diagram as a group. Appoint 1 child as recorder on a separate piece of paper.

2. Set up the laptop and projector, go to the Gorham town website, then on the left hand toolbar go to "Important Links", then click on the Gorham Historical Society Homepage from the list, and from the homepage, open the "photo album".

3. Ok, now you are ready to go. Explain to the class that as we are studying farms and farming in our community and getting ready to interview some farmers, it will help us to understand some of the current situations in farming if we can understand the past as well. "You can't know where you're going unless you know where you've been." Last week they talked about "why are farms important in our community?" Ask them to share what they remember from that talk. That can inform the current discussion

4. Write on the board "What did farms mean and how were they important in our community 100 years ago, and how is that different from today?" Explain that this is the question that we are going to try and answer today. Remind them that what they read out of Sadie Richardson's is from just about 100 years ago on a farm in Gorham.

-click on the photo of the Gorham Fair. This is in downtown Gorham probably a little over 100 years ago. What kinds of transportation do you see? Then check out the photo of the electric car waiting room. 100 years ago in Gorham and less, until 1924, there was an electric trolley car that went to Portland and back every hour from downtown Gorham. There was also a railroad line that went from Cornish to Bridgton, or to Portland and down to Boston.

-Click on the pictures of the snow rollers. Instead of plowing people rolled the snow down and used horse or oxen drawn sleds to get around. People didn't have cars for the most part. If you wanted to go somewhere you had to go by horse or oxen drawn wagon, and then take the trolley or railroad.

-How does transportation play a role in farms and farming now? What do these photos tell us about how transportation played a role in farming in the past? Was long distance food shipping a possibility for farmers? Not really. Trucks not available, and small farmers wouldn't have been able to use railroads for shipping.

- What does this tell us about how food was distributed in the community? Was local food commonly available? Yes, local food was the way it went! Farmers could only sell locally. -click on the picture of the village square. Look at what kinds of businesses were there.

- Do you see a Hannafords? Or a grocery store at all? Cities had grocers, but often not small towns like Gorham. Explain that the electric car waiting room was also the local store. (I actually saw a picture of it on the inside when browsing some other archive, and you can pretend that you did and explain what it looked like inside.) There were several big glass counters, and walls hanging with handy tools and items. Cloth was available and bins full of flour and cornmeal. There seeds for sale, but other than that no food!

- If there was no grocery store, and not much food at the general store, where were people getting their food? They either grew it themselves or got it from a farmer nearby.

- Some other things that might not be so apparent from the pictures, but that affected farming as well;

- Everyone traveled with livestock. This meant that a LOT of hay and feed was needed, and farmers could do a lot of business selling hay, as did Sadie Richardson's family. Hay was kind of like gas! It fed the animals that got you where you needed to go.

- 1900 was before the days of refrigeration. People had what were called iceboxes. It was literally like a refrigerator, with a box in it that you put a block of ice in! And you kept your food in there. Of course the ice melted and you had to buy more. Farmers had lots of outbuildings and wagons for hauling heavy things, and so in the winter they would cut ice from the lakes and rivers and store it in a cool shed packed with sawdust. They would cut off blocks and sell them to people as needed. Packed well with sawdust the ice would last well into or through the summer. This was an extra way to make money.

-So, what are the things that people relied on local farms for 100 years ago? Vegetables, meat, dairy, as well as animal feed, ice, cider, etc.etc. Basically, food, fuel, and transportation (through hay.)

What are things that people rely on local farms for today? Hmm. How is this different?

5. Fill in the Venn Diagram as a group, using conclusions and evidence from the previous discussion.