

Hertford County Herald

"A PAPER WORTH WHILE"

THE AHOSKIE ERA OF
HERTFORD
COUNTY
1889-1939

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COUNTY
1889-1939

IN THE YEAR 1939

AHOSKIE, NORTH CAROLINA

SECTION C—8 PAGES

FARM LIFE IN HERTFORD COUNTY — BY WORD AND PICTURE

A BRIEF OUTLINE OF THE HISTORY OF AGRICULTURE IN HERTFORD COUNTY, N. C.

(By E. W. GAITHER)

HERTFORD County lies in the upper Coastal Plains area of North Carolina and is bounded on the north by Virginia, on the east by Gates and Chowan counties which are separated from it by the Chowan River, on the south by Bertie County, and on the west by Northampton County. It has a total area of 220,800 acres, or 345 square miles.

Its elevation ranges from 10 feet to 100 feet above tide water and its topography ranges from low swamps to rolling terrain. Natural drainage is facilitated by numerous streams bordered by narrow to wide swamps. None of the streams are very swift nor is the land of sufficient slope as to make erosion a serious problem, except for occasional sheet erosion.

The climate is mild and the rainfall plentiful and well distributed. The following table shows the mean, highest and lowest temperatures, by seasons.

TEMPERATURE AND RAINFALL			
SEASON	MEAN	HIGHEST	LOWEST
Winter	44	81	-9
Spring	55	100	10
Summer	77	107	49
Fall	59.9	96	15
For the year	58.9	107	-9

Latest killing frost in spring—May 11. Average, April 12.

Earliest killing frost in fall—October 10. Average, October 24.

Average growing season—195 days.

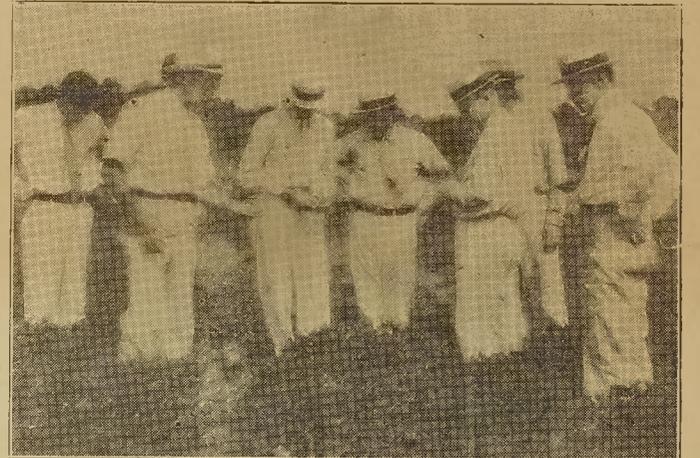
RAINFALL	
Heaviest any year	59.58 inches
Lowest any year	30.18 inches
Average	47.22 inches

The temperature, rainfall, and length of growing season make it possible to mature fully any of the usual crops produced in the area



Lunch Time For Farmer Group

On the annual tour of Hertford County farms in 1938, the midday stop was made at Menola, where the women of that community prepared sumptuous food and served on the grounds of the community house.



More And Better Peanuts Come From Dusting

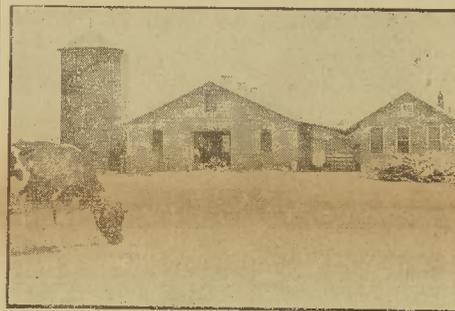
The peanut crop, for more than a quarter of a century providing Hertford County farmers their largest cash income, is receiving expert attention of both the farmer group and county, state, and federal extension workers. This picture was taken on the day of the annual 1938 farm tour, and shows a group of farmers examining "hills" of peanuts on a plot of land devoted to experimentation with sulphur dusting.



E. W. GAITHER

THE AUTHOR

He is the author of the "Brief History of Agriculture in Hertford County, N. C.", which features this section of the Historical Edition. He served Hertford County as farm agent, received promotion to District Agent, and is now Subject Matter Analyst of the Extension Service at State College, Raleigh.



Dairying Is Done Here, Too

"Old Bess" munches her green feed from a permanent pasture that adjoins the dairy barn lot. Silo, barns, and milk room are in the background. Several nice herds of dairy cattle are owned by farmers in Hertford County.

crimson clover and other winter cover crops.

All of the types of Coxwell and Norfolk soils respond well to good treatment, very marked improvement in crop yields being obtained when a crop of winter or summer legumes are turned under. This practice often increases the yield of corn 50 per cent in one year and the effects are seen on subsequent crops. While the use of commercial fertilizer and the usual rotation of planting cotton, peanuts, tobacco, or corn with a legume interplanted, is better than no rotation, the practice of following these crops with cover crops of crimson clover, vetch, Austrian peas, rye, wheat or oats would be better for the soil and aid materially in furnishing winter grazing and more feed for the much needed livestock.

EARLY HISTORY

Agriculture has been the principal source of livelihood in the county for over two hundred years. The early settlers, mostly French, Scotch-Irish, Scotch and Irish from Europe, and English from other colonies, occupied the better drained lands along the river banks and produced their living by raising corn, wheat, flaxseed, rice, indigo, pork and beef, and their cash income came largely from the exportation of these products. From this type of agriculture the plantation system was developed, under which was produced practically everything needed on the farm, including corn meal, flour, meat, milk, butter, much of the clothing, leather, and farm implements. Through the use of slave labor and the subsistence living on the farm, the cash derived from the sale of surplus farm products and timber products was clear money.

Plantation owners became wealthy and built mansions, maintained race horses and, in general, lived the life of kings and lords. All of this changed abruptly with the close of the Civil War which disrupted the labor situation and depleted the capital. Between the late sixties and early seventies, cotton, being the only basis of credit, became the principal crop.

Subsistence farming gave way to commercial or cash crop farming and the tenant system was substituted for the slave system. Between 1865 and 1870 the production of corn dropped from 288,805 bushels, to 189,079 bushels. Cotton increased from 270 bales to 2,686 bales. Cotton remained the chief cash crop until about 1900. Peanuts were introduced about 1880, but in 1889 cotton still occupied 15,959 acres, while only 1,688 acres were planted to peanuts. By 1900, peanuts increased to 10,408 acres, while cotton dropped to 8,500 acres. From 1900 to 1909 corn acreage dropped from 33,343 acres to 19,293 acres. Tobacco was introduced about 1905 and in 1909 there were 269 acres produced. For the lack of a local market, the tobacco was shipped by rail to Rocky Mount and Wilson, for sale on the warehouse floors. In 19... the first tobacco warehouse was built at Ahoskie with a floor space of ... square feet, which straddled Ahoskie on the road becoming the tobacco center of the Roanoke-Chowan section.

SCIENCE BEGINS TO PLAY A PART

By 1900 science began to be applied to agriculture through the findings of the Experiment Stations and Agricultural Colleges, and Farm papers brought these findings to the farm people. Farmers' Institutes and the press also helped in the distribution of this agricultural information. Feeling the need of an institution which could translate scientific findings into farmer language and teach the application of these findings through demonstrations on the farm, the Farm Demonstration system was developed and the Extension Service



Results Of Dusting

J. Gordon Blake, former farm agent, holds specimens of peanuts that were grown in this county; in his right hand, a plant that received applications of sulphur dusting, and in the left hand, a plant that was not dusted. Evidently, the sulphur dusting experiment is going to add to the yield of this crop.



After Peanuts Are Dug

Thousands upon thousands of similar scenes may be seen during the months of October, November, and December, on the farms of Hertford County—peanuts that have been plowed up, the dirt shaken from them, and the vines with nuts attached placed in stacks to dry.



A Peanut Harvest Scene

Upper: Negro and mule manipulate peanut draw cart to pull stack from ground, preparatory to hauling it to the picker. Lower: Stacks of peanuts, brought to picker by Negro-mule-cart outfit, are dismantled by workers and fed into the picker (in the background), which is driven by tractor (in foreground). Another mule is motive power for a hay baler (beyond tractor belt) that puts the vines into convenient sized bales. The hay is fed to work stock, and is particularly good for dairy cows.



A Crop Of Gold

Some of the choicest bright leaf tobacco is produced in Hertford and Bertie counties. This is a sample of it while growing on a Bertie farm, near the Hertford County line.



Cover Crops Abound Here

Former County Agent Blake examines a field of vetch on a Hertford County farm. Soil building crops have been planted in this county for years, and such practices have been a major part of the activities of every extension agent to work in the county.

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