

The Farm Economy

Epsom was a mixed husbandry farm that was involved with a variety of farm activities, including the cultivation of cereal crops, hay, fruits and vegetables, production of dairy products, and raising of livestock. It was one of the largest farms in the region, serving as one of the growing number of truck farms that provided food for the rapidly expanding population of nearby Baltimore City.

Crops

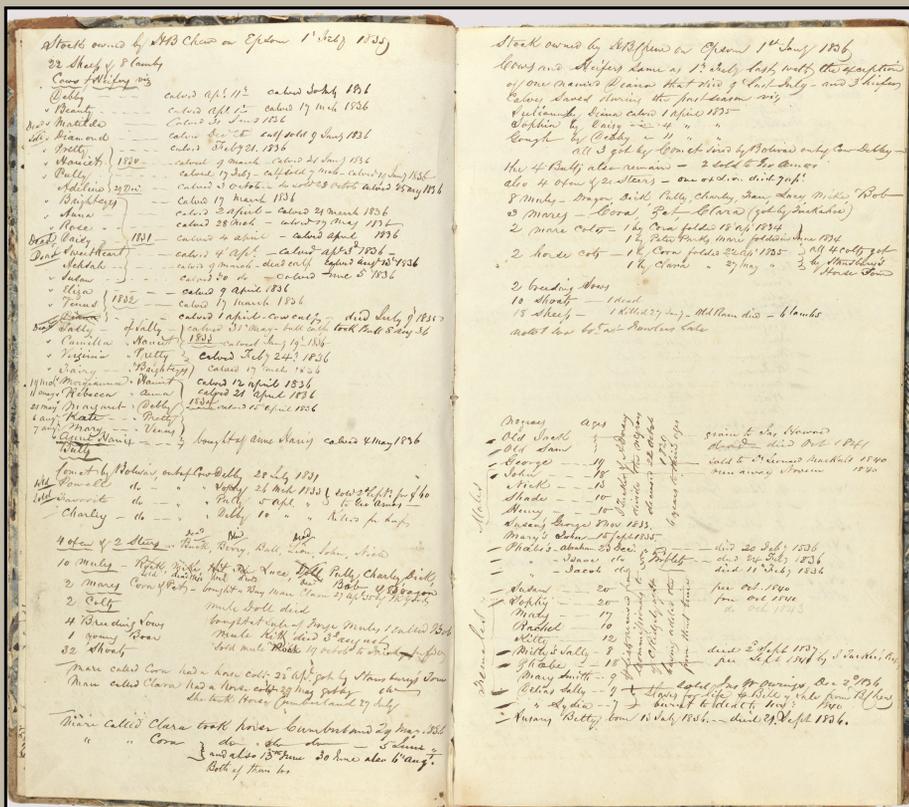
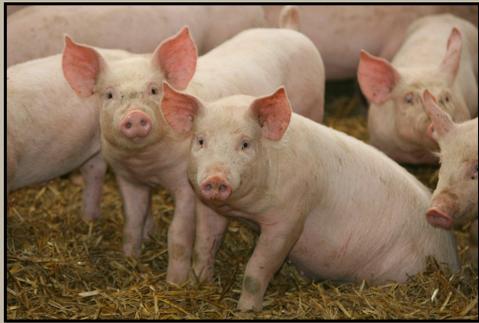
Chew ran a diversified farm, meaning he did not rely on any one crop as a cash crop. Instead, he planted a variety of crops, including but not limited to, wheat, rye, corn, hay, oats, and potatoes. He often struggled to raise a successful crop due to weather and disease. In 1836, Chew reported planting 90 acres of grain (combining wheat and rye), 50 acres of corn, and 300 acres of hay. The grains were used for home consumption as well as sold for cash. Chew utilized hay as an important cash crop during the 1830s. Chew also had an orchard, consisting of mainly peach and apple trees, and fruit bushes, including cherries, raspberries, and currants, the produce from which he sold at market. These fruits were also consumed at Epsom by the Chew family as well as the workers, enslaved and free, who resided on the Farm.



Epsom Farm field, ca. 1921, Goucher College Archives.

Livestock at Epsom

Livestock played an important role in the farm economy as draft animals, as a means of transportation, and as sources of vital farm products. Horses were bred for racing, as well as riding. Steers were essential as draft animals as well as a source of beef. Cows were kept and bred for dairy production. Hogs were a major source of meat. Sheep were a source of meat and wool. And chickens were a source of eggs and meat. Henry Chew regularly sent his market man into town to sell butter, eggs, ham, and beef, among other animal products at the Baltimore markets. The resulting income accounted for a large percentage of Chew's overall profit. In 1850, Epsom's dairy sent 2250 pounds of butter to market, the largest amount of butter produced in Baltimore County.



Livestock Inventory 1835-1836, Henry Banning Chew, Blotter or Memoranda Book, 1827-1837, Chew Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania. A list of Chew's enslaved people (right side) follows the livestock inventory.

Lime Kiln

This lime kiln was built in 1772 by John Robert Holliday, the original owner of Epsom, and Captain Charles Ridgely, the owner of Hampton. Lime was extremely valuable in the eighteenth and nineteenth century as a fertilizer as its properties as a base neutralized the acidity in soil. Limestone only burns at very high temperatures. Calcium carbonate, which makes up limestone, will burn at 1648 degrees Fahrenheit. The temperature in kilns generally range from 1648 to 2192 degrees Fahrenheit. Lime kilns required skilled workers because of the high temperatures and the importance of maintaining those temperatures at a constant level. Lime kiln burners enjoyed higher pay because of the skilled nature of their work. The lime kiln burned continuously for three days. All farm workers were directed to haul and spread lime ash as fertilizer before cereal crops were planted.



Barn Foundation

The remains of a stone foundation of a barn are still visible on campus. This foundation may date from the eighteenth century since its dimensions conform closely to those of a barn structure listed in the 1798 Federal Tax Assessment. Today, the site is littered with numerous artifacts from the 1950s and 1960s, suggesting that this served as a dump site for mid-twentieth century Goucher students.



Epsom Spring House

A spring house was used much like a modern day refrigerator. The cool water of the spring running just beneath the house was intended to preserve perishable food, such as milk, butter, eggs, and cheese. The spring house was part of Epsom farm, though its date of construction is unknown. There have been several restorations of the spring house by Goucher students. The last occurred in 2000.