

HOPS IN SCHOHARIE COUNTY

William Pindar

One of the best known hop yards in Schoharie County was owned and operated by the Pindar Brothers, William and the late Henry Pindar, of Middleburgh.

William Pindar reports that, as best he can recall, his grandfather started raising hops in about the year 1890 and continued raising them until the time of prohibition. Then, when repeal came, the grandsons, William and Henry started growing them again until the year 1952, which was their last.

As William Pindar relates, the hop plant is a twining vine which grows on an 18 to 20 foot pole, similar to climbing beans. The hop, itself, is shaped like a small cone, about two inches long and one inch in diameter. In color, it is a pale green and the lupulin in the hop possesses brewing value.

Hop poles are cut in cedar swamps near the Canadian border and when [the Pindar] hop yards were in peak production, they used from 90 to 100 thousand hop poles. At the end of each season, these poles were cleared of any refuse vegetation and stacked for the next season; likewise the ground was cleared from the waste hop vines and leaves.

The hop plant is a perennial and starts coming up about the middle of April. Harvesting started about the first of August, and the hops, after being picked, were dried in the hop houses. Each day's pickings would be carted to the hop house, and dried 8 to 9 hours for curing. Then they were baled and ready for delivery to the breweries.

According to the statement made by the author of a previous article on local hop growing, the production of hops in Schoharie County was a major industry for many years. The New York State Gazetteer of 1860 gives the agricultural production of hops, as reported by the State Census of 1855, as 440,754 pounds in Schoharie County.



Familiar hop yard scene in Schoharie County in the early twentieth century. Photo courtesy of the Schoharie County Historical Review.