

Tom Wisner talks with Winfield Hutchins about the oxen on the family farm in Owings when he was a child.

Mr. Hutchins: Well, we had, you know, yes, we had oxen. We used to drive oxen in the ox carts.

Mr. Wisner: Did you drive oxen when you were little?

Mr. Hutchins: Oh, yes, sure. I did all that.

Mr. Wisner: Can you tell me something about that?

Mr. Hutchins: We used to have oxen and you'd hook them up, you know, yoke them up to a ox cart. And that's where we did all the work on the farm outside of — then we had, I guess, eight, ten horses. Used to saddle horses and driving horses, and we used to make them work, too work the crops with them, but you did the majority of your hauling with oxen. Of course, and then you more or less went to the wagon and the horses.

Mr. Wisner: Oxen moved out real slow; didn't they when —

Mr. Hutchins: Oh, Lord, yes, sir, too slow sometimes.

Mr. Wisner: Well, what did you say to them to get them moving?

Mr. Hutchins: Giddup or go haw — come here!

Mr. Wisner: Would you see them move right away when you said, "Giddup"?

Mr. Hutchins: Yes, they knew. They knew — they understood you. You had to have a great big old whip if it didn't move. You'd help them along.

Mr. Wisner: Did you always work them in like a wooden yoke?

Mr. Hutchins: Yes, a wooden yoke.

Mr. Wisner: No other equipment that you remember?

Mr. Hutchins: No, no, a wooden yoke. Always a wooden yoke. And, of course, that was — the tongue would run through a big ring in the center of it. That's where you ran the cart tongue.

Mr. Wisner: So, would you use them for all activities plowing and —

Mr. Hutchins: We didn't use them too much for plowing. We used them mostly for hauling. We didn't use oxen; we used horses for plowing and cultivating.

Mr. Wisner: Because they moved faster?

Mr. Hutchins: Yes. You could do more with them. And a lot of people — I've seen them, but very little of oxen plowing, I think, was done around this section.

Mr. Wisner: Could you compare the strength of an average-sized horse to an average oxen?

Mr. Hutchins: Oh, Lord, no, sir. I wouldn't know. I would say the oxen was stronger, of course now, you'd get a good horse that you could use — you took pride in your horses in those days. And you got a good wagon team — you used them for a wagon team, you know what I mean. And always — Mr. White used to cut timber — that's before your time — down here. And he used to have big, big horses, you know.