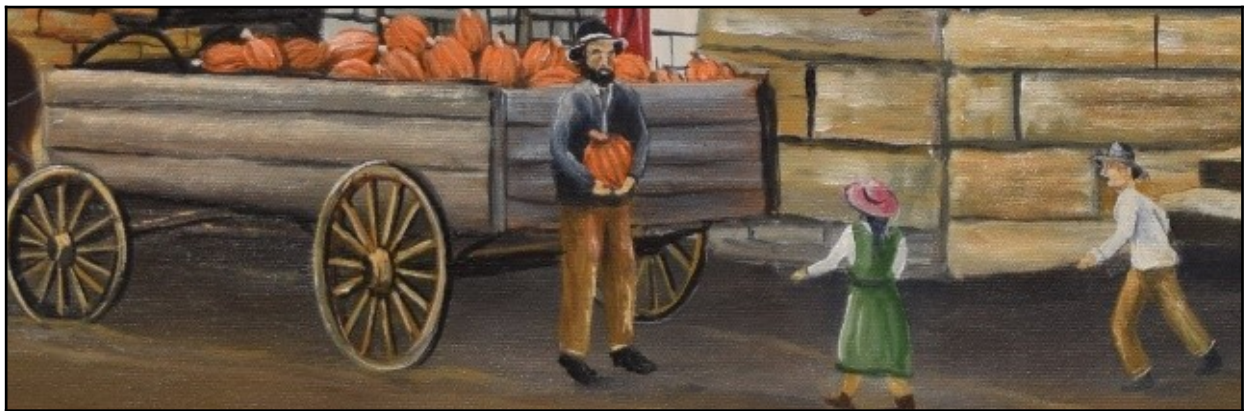


**Exploring Rural Kentucky Through Documentary Art:
Irvin Store, 1920s - Documentary Art Interactive
Unit 2 - Lesson Set 2 - Pumpkin Harvest
- For the Student -**

BACKGROUND READING

The community surrounding Creelsboro, Kentucky in the 1920s was an agrarian society. Many farmers raised tobacco as a “cash crop” that they shipped down the Cumberland River to markets in Nashville. Farmers also found other ways to provide cash income for their families.

But farm families in the Creelsboro area generally did not need substantial cash income. They were largely self-sufficient, growing and preserving most of their own food, raising their own meat, keeping chickens for eggs and a cow for milk. Some even raised sheep for wool.



A wagon load of pumpkins for sale or barter outside Irvin Store on a fall Saturday in Creelsboro – a detail from Irvin Store, 1920s by Dennis Thrasher (2018).

But if a family *did* grow a surplus of a crop – like pumpkins – they could load it in their wagon and take them to town to sell or barter. Pumpkins need full sun, rich soil, and lots of space. Not every farm family could devote the space needed to grow a pumpkin patch. Those that could had ready customers for their produce.

In the short video [Rural Life](#), Mr. Reeder jokes that family farms in Creelsboro were organic because they couldn’t afford fertilizer and pesticide. But today, many people - whether they are raising their own food or buying it - prefer organic foods. It is considered healthier and more environmentally friendly.

Advances in agricultural technology have resulted in higher crop yields per acre. Advances in transportation and refrigeration mean that food can be grown on massive farms and shipped long distances. But many people are beginning to see the advantages of systems where food is locally grown and consumed. Farmers’ markets are flourishing in many communities, reviving elements of the “good old days” along the Cumberland River in Creelsboro.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Where do you buy pumpkins and other produce?
2. Is there a Farmer's Market in your community?
3. Is organic produce available at the Farmer's Market or at a store in your community?
4. Do you know anyone who gardens or has a small family farm? Do you know if they grow organically?
5. Why would people decide to grow their produce organically or to look for a place to purchase organic produce?