

*Pioneers coming into Iowa expressed the faith of Americans in their future. Iowa farmers now live in relative prosperity and security. Their daily living has been made easier, and has been enriched in practically every phase.*

## 24. The Farm Standard of Living in Iowa

ELIZABETH E. HOYT, *Consumer Economics*

THE COVERED WAGONS WHICH MOVED SLOWLY FROM THE East in 1846 had to camp on the Illinois side of the Mississippi until the ferry could take them over. The crossing of the Mississippi was not merely the crossing of a river. More than any other single step in the long trek of western migration it stood for the faith of Americans in their future. Their experience told them only one thing about that future; it was to be full of labor and hardship. There was no sure evidence of prosperity to come from the rolling plains beyond the river. The crossing of the Mississippi was a transition point not only in the lives of the individual men and women but in the history of the United States. It was in this year, 1846, that Herman Melville put into words the spirit that consciously or unconsciously expressed itself in Americans:

God has predestinated, mankind expects, great things from our race; and great things we feel in our souls. The rest of the nations must soon be in our rear. We are the pioneers of the world, the advance guard, sent on through the wilderness of untried things to break a path in the New World that is ours.

### PIONEER PERIOD TO THE CIVIL WAR

Many times in their after lives the pioneers told the story of their search for home sites in the new country. If they arrived, as they tried to do, in the spring, it was hard to choose because every place was full of promise. The Indians had called Iowa the beautiful land. In the spring the fertility of the soil made the plains green early, and the song of redwings, meadow larks, and bobolinks welcomed the settlers. Walnuts, oaks, and poplars fringed the water courses and stood in groves among the hills. Masses of white hawthorne and pink crab apple filled the hollows. The children shouted with joy at

the wealth of flowers and begged father and mother to stop where the wild phlox grew.

Early settlers chose their homes for the most part near the water courses, for here the springs were more common and here also were trees from which their homes could be made. Flat and treeless areas were settled last, for, although they were most fertile, the houses there had to be made of sod. Furthermore, the first settlers sought the protection of the hills from the winds and storms that blew across the country. Early settlers speak often of the terrific tempests of spring and summer, the blinding blizzards of winter. So their homes, first log and then frame, were built with windbreaks around them and cyclone shelters in the dooryard.

#### FOOD

Even in the earliest days almost no one writes of being hungry in Iowa: Iowa has always been a country of the well fed. The food had not much variety, perhaps, but almost always, even in the hard times of '57, there was plenty. In early days wild game was added to beef and pork produced at home. There was even venison in some sections. At one time deer were sold at \$1 each in Scott County and even up to 1870 wild venison came to the table in Monroe County. Some of the early settlers speak of the continuous Boo-hoo! Boo-hoo! Boo-hoo! of prairie chickens (now almost vanished from Iowa) around their doors. The staple of the diet, after the first harvest, was of course corn, which was served in a dozen ways we have now forgotten. The English traveler, Mrs. Trollope, tells that Americans even made various kinds of cakes with cornmeal, "in my opinion all bad." But Iowa girls and boys did not think so.

Cabbages and root crops were the vegetable standbys because they could be stored in the cyclone cellars against the winter. The wild crabs and haws were preserved as apple butter before domestic fruit trees could bear. Wild plums and grapes made jam. It is true, however, that the fruit and vegetable part of the diet had grown limited and monotonous by springtime. When children got the curious disease called spring fever, which sometimes means being in love and sometimes lack of vitamins, mothers dosed them with sulphur and molasses; but the children found a better remedy by roaming the hills and nibbling the first fresh leaves of the pennyroyal.

In the early days sugar was a scarce article, and molasses, sorghum, and honey were used much more than now. It was a great day for the children when mother could spare sugar enough for homemade candy.

There was no dearth of children's labor to crack hazelnuts, hickory nuts, and black walnuts for such a rare feast.

Travelers in Iowa in this period reported a price of fifty cents commonly charged for all meals. There was often little difference in type of foods for different meals; at least meat, cake, and pie all were reported as served for breakfast.

Prices for food in Muscatine in 1854 were these: corn, twenty to twenty-five cents a bushel; flour, six to six and a half dollars a barrel (all families bought flour by the barrel in those days); beef, six and seven cents a pound; pork, five and six cents; chickens, fifteen cents each; quail, two for five cents; turkeys, fifty cents; butter, ten and twelve cents a pound; milk, four cents a quart; potatoes, twenty-five cents a bushel; peaches, a dollar a bushel; muskmelons, five cents; watermelons, five and ten cents. "Tomatoes they will give you all you want." In the same year eggs were sold at five cents a dozen in Fairfield.

#### CLOTHING

So far as clothing was concerned, the chief aim of the first settlers was to keep warm and keep covered. Children, one writer says "were not then annoyed with shoes and boots, or hats and bonnets. . . It was no uncommon thing to see small boys trapping for birds or hunting rabbits in the snow without shoes or hats . . . all the very pictures of health." As for style, as one man wrote back to his eastern relatives, "anything goes out here in the West." The men trapped muskrats and tanned their skins for mittens and caps. As long as the deer held out, most men wore buckskin. At first the women made their cloth from flax and wool, all their own clothes and some of the clothes of the men folks. They plaited straw for their hats. Everyone's stockings were home knit. Even very little girls often knit their own. The native dyes were walnut, which makes a dark brown, and smartweed, which makes yellow. The girls were happy if with the egg money they could sometimes get a red or blue ribbon from the store or a peddler. Before 1860, however, calicos and muslins had supplanted home-woven goods in almost all parts of the state, and men had some store clothes. Grandmother Brown, born in Keokuk about this time, made a great point of the fact she kept clean collars and cuffs on hand and always changed her dress in the afternoon though most of her neighbors did not.

#### FURNISHINGS

It is hard to imagine today the vast amount of production that went on in the home itself. Food and clothing were only a small part

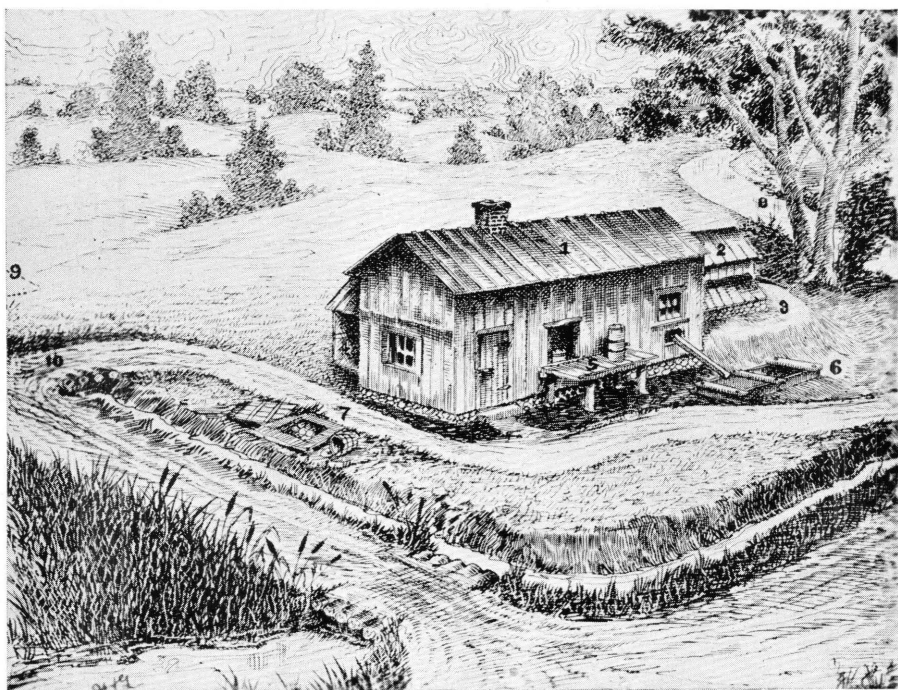
of it. Men and boys made their own tools and built homes and all but the best pieces of furniture. The mattresses were made at home of corn husks, with possibly a featherbed on top. Carpets and rugs, if there were any, were made of rags or yarn. A Brussels carpet in a pioneer house was so rare as to call for comment for miles around. The brooms were homemade, and chicken wings were used to sweep up the dust. All this work at home would have been impossible if children had not helped. "They have to scratch as soon as they're out of their shell," one mother said. At four years old little Lizzie Brown washed and wiped the dishes of a big family and she did it right.

In 1846 Bishop Thomas A. Morris, for thirty years an itinerant preacher, contrasted western homes with those in the East. In the East, he said, there must be a parlor, sitting room, dining room, with Scotch or Brussels carpets, rocking chairs, sofas, "elegant bedsteads with testers or canopies, dressed with curtains and valances," dressing tables and mirrors, very likely also "mantle ornaments, such as artificial flowers, with glass covers, or some specimens of conchology and geological formations. Besides, the walls must not only be papered, but beautiful with portraits, landscapes, etc." In the West, however, ordinary homes had not a single one of these comforts or elegancies. One or two rooms were all. Furnishings were one poplar slab table, two poplar or oak rail bedsteads, one of which was for visitors; six splint-bottomed chairs, one long bench, and a few three-legged stools; a half dozen pewter plates, some tin cups, one dish large enough to hold a piece of pork with turnips, hominy, or stewed pumpkin. "For mantle ornaments they had the tin grater . . . and the cornsplitter," while the walls were sufficiently beautified by the families' surplus garments and Sunday clothes hung on pegs. All of this, thought the Bishop, was to the credit of the western pioneers, and he observed that while the "real wants of man are comparatively few and simple, the imaginary ones scarcely have any bounds."

#### RECREATION

Recreation was not a matter of spending money for either shows or equipment. If they had made budgets in those days, some families would not have planned to give recreation one cent. The family made their own or went out and shared with the community. The Fourth of July always justified a social celebration. A speaker from town orated in the style of Patrick Henry, the people sang, and everybody enjoyed a picnic dinner.

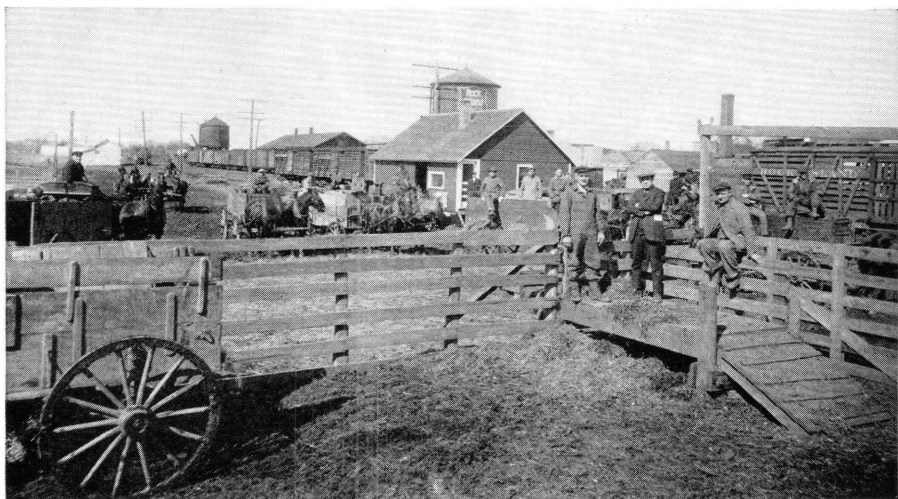
Bobsledding was a great winter sport. Fathers helped their sons



*The first creamery in Iowa was started in April, 1872, by John Stewart at Spring Branch, three miles southeast of Manchester.—CHAPTER 19, DAIRY PRODUCT OUTPUT FROM IOWA FARMS.*



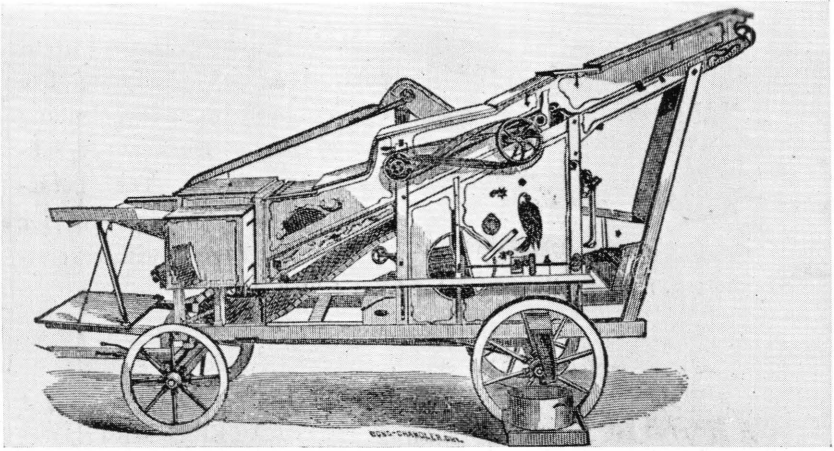
*A central print room for creameries in north-central Iowa manufacturing Iowa State Brand butter was set up in Mason City headquarters established in 1927, and a campaign was started to sell butter throughout the United States.—CHAPTER 19, DAIRY PRODUCT OUTPUT FROM IOWA FARMS.*



*Before World War I, livestock transportation was almost entirely by rail, with deliveries at country points made by team. By 1940, nearly all of Iowa's livestock was moved from the farm by truck, mainly by common carriers.—CHAPTER 20, THE MARKETING PHASE OF IOWA FARM LIVING.*



*Transportation . . . was always a key factor in Iowa marketing problems. Here is one of the earlier arteries for motor flow, before the days of hard surfacing.—CHAPTER 20, THE MARKETING PHASE OF IOWA FARM LIVING.*

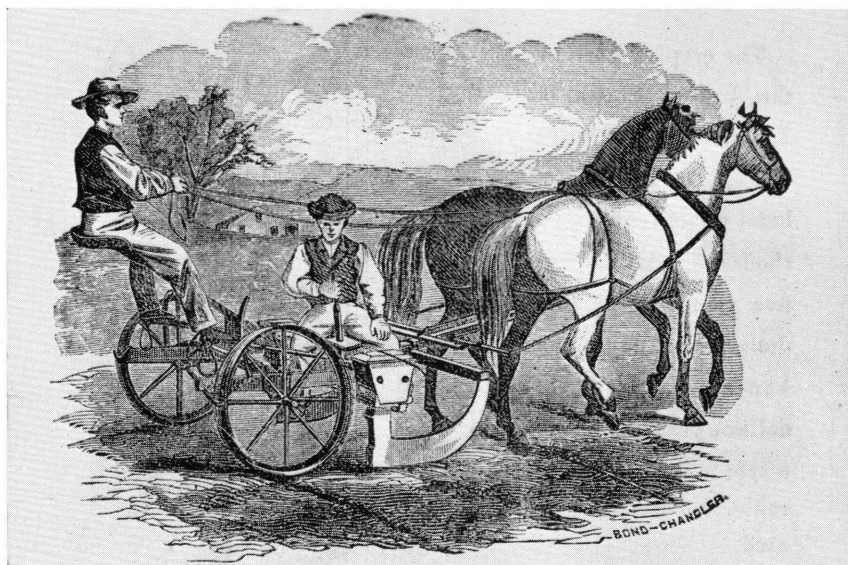


About 270 of these threshers were sold in Iowa in 1867 (\$640 complete). The machine was said to have the capacity to thresh three bushels of wheat per minute.—CHAPTER 21, THE ROLE OF MACHINERY IN IOWA FARMING.

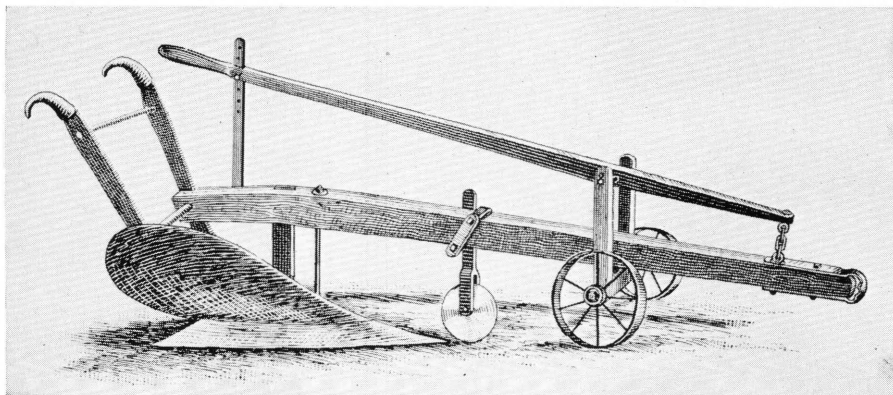


The harvesting of ear corn with a machine was one of the last operations to be mechanized. But with the improvement of the machines and also the breeding of corn hybrids which were better adapted to mechanical harvesting, the corn picker has for the most part replaced hand picking except on very small areas.—CHAPTER 21, THE ROLE OF MACHINERY IN IOWA FARMING.



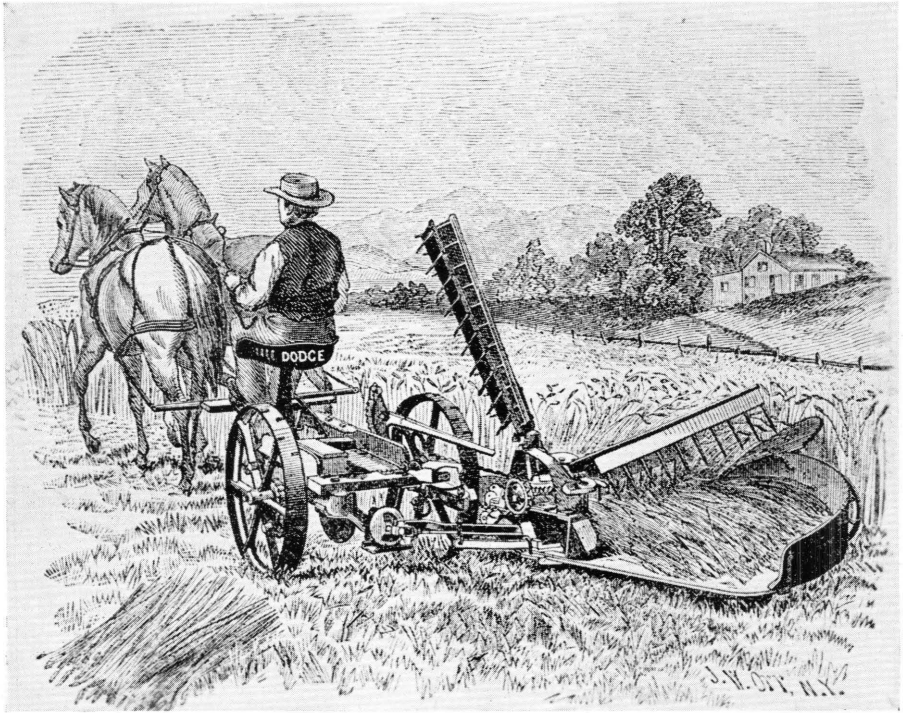


*In 1867, 416 of these corn planters were sold in Iowa for seventy dollars each. Two operators were needed, one to drive the team and manage the raising and lowering of the furrow openers, and one to operate the dropping mechanism.—CHAPTER 21, THE ROLE OF MACHINERY IN IOWA FARMING.*

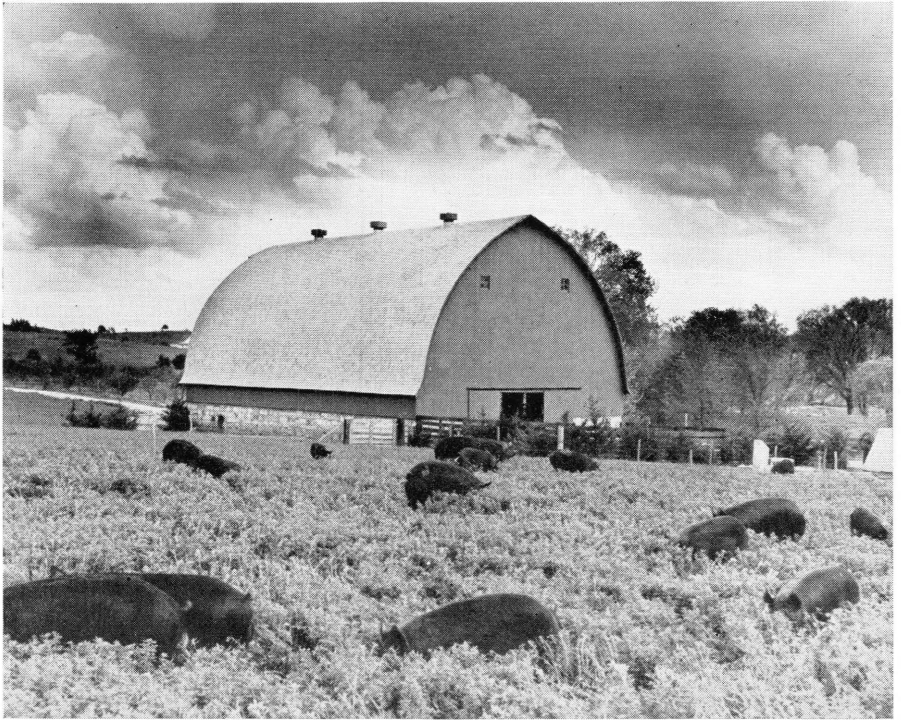


*It took a plow with a long, sloping moldboard to do the job of breaking the prairie sod in Iowa. "It is . . . like other plows but much larger, being 10 feet long and cutting a furrow some 22 to 24 inches in width. When the plow is once set in, it needs no further attention in good prairie, as it runs alone, and the driver has only to attend to his team, which consists of some five yoke of oxen."—CHAPTER 21, THE ROLE OF MACHINERY IN IOWA FARMING.*





*A popular machine with the early Iowa farmer was the self-rake, reaper, and mower combined. When used as a reaper the grain fell behind the cutter bar on a table from which the grain was raked at intervals and deposited in even gavels on the stubble. The self-rake and platform were removed when mowing grass.—CHAPTER 21, THE ROLE OF MACHINERY IN IOWA FARMING.*



*During the latter part of the Nineteenth Century, a type of barn construction appeared which promised to be the most popular of all—the curved or so-called “Gothic roof.”—*  
CHAPTER 22, TRENDS IN FARM STRUCTURES.

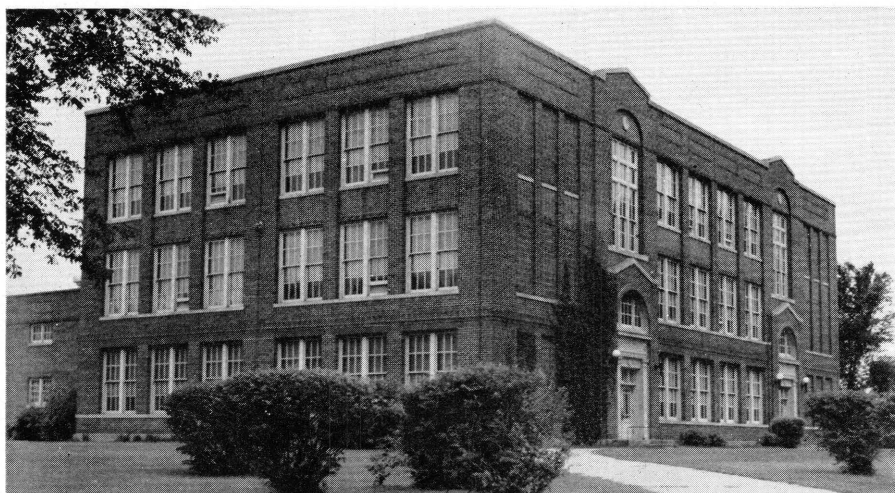


*A group of livestock men in 1904 voiced the need for college-trained agricultural writers. As an outgrowth of this preliminary discussion, a group of friends and editors met on the Iowa State College campus on May 30, 1905, to formulate plans for the first course in agricultural journalism, opening in the fall of 1905.*

Those agricultural leaders were: (back row, left to right) Alvin H. Sanders, C. F. Curtiss, J. A. Rutherford, Will H. Ogilvie, Mr. Farwell, R. Merrick, W. J. Kennedy, W. E. Skinner, R. B. Ogilvie; (front row, left to right) John Rigg, W. A. Harris, Mortimer Levering, Arthur G. Leonard, John Clay.—CHAPTER 23, AGRICULTURAL JOURNALISM IN IOWA.



*After the act of 1919 providing for the standardization of one-room schools, there was a conscious attempt to improve qualifications of teachers, usefulness of the one-room building, and the quantity of equipment.—CHAPTER 25, SCHOOLS FOR THE FARM BOY AND FARM GIRL.*



*In the consolidated school, the farmer found his answer to the century-old problem of adequate education for his children. By September 21, 1921, the number of consolidated school districts authorized by vote totaled 439. This consolidated school at Crawfordsville, Washington County, is typical of those which replaced more than two thousand one-room rural schools after the turn of the century.—CHAPTER 25, SCHOOLS FOR THE FARM BOY AND FARM GIRL.*

make sleds and sometimes were not too busy to build playhouses for their little girls. Corncocks found a new use: they made good dolls, which the girls dressed in scraps of their own dresses. No children were too poor to have teeters. The best games of all were games of running and of skill. If the children worked harder then—and they did—they seem to have played harder also.

As for the grownups, they got a great deal of pleasure from their sometimes infrequent social gatherings. Amusements were most justified when they followed hard work, especially the community efforts of mill- and house-raising, husking bees, and quilting bees. These were followed not only by good meals, but by dances, races, and community sings. Everyone, young and old, delighted in the recreation that came from hospitality. The settlers' houses stood open to travelers, and many were the exciting evenings when travelers' tales were told by open fire or airtight stove.

Much of the recreation was connected with social gatherings fostered by church groups. The social atmosphere was permeated by religious feeling. Children were strictly limited in their play activities on Sunday. Typical of the attitude of many good parents was that of Mrs. Maria Brown whose little boy asked that, provided he sang a hymn all the time, could he not pick out hazelnut meats on Sunday. "Certainly not," said Mrs. Brown. One traveler in Washington County reports being unable to sleep because drunks in the tavern kept arguing about theology.

Though the church was only a little behind the schoolhouse, there were yet years in some places before people had the service of a regular minister. They traveled miles to hear the circuit riders and the more devout met frequently to pray in one another's homes.

In those days of much more religious observance, there was also much more whisky. Three hundred barrels came into Des Moines on one day, April 11, 1857. The temperance movement was not yet fairly under way.

Those who write of health in the pioneer period almost always emphasize the prevalence of malaria. In those early days many undrained swamps fostered the *Anopheles* mosquito. Fevers and agues were so common as to be taken almost as a matter of course. In 1841 one doctor, the only one in a large area, went on his rounds with malaria himself. He said he "just took quinine and let her shake." Most communities, of course, had no doctors. Bishop Morris says that if a man had a severe attack of settled fever "he laid himself in a cool place, drank abundance of cold water, his wife or sister fanned him with the

wing or tail of a turkey; and he committed himself to the keeping of a kind providence, without being plied with blisters or dosed with poison." In some homes the only two books were the Bible and the "doctor's book," in which mothers looked up their children's symptoms, and treated the illness with herbs and poultices according to the book. Fortunately, the constitutions of the early Iowans appear to have been good, and strong men and women lived to a good age. However, although we have no statistics, we know that infant mortality was high.

#### PROSPERITY INCREASES

The main lines along with the farmers' standard of living was to develop already were laid out by the Civil War. The decades following the war were a period of slowly increasing prosperity in most parts of the country, in spite of various periods of hard times. It became clear that Iowa, by and large, had the richest soil in the United States, and the fertility of the soil began to show up in dollars and cents—although a large part of these dollars and cents were invested in new land or stock or equipment, not spent on consumption goods and services.

Emphasis on saving is the most outstanding single thing in the farmer's use of money income. This emphasis on saving is not limited to Iowa. It stands out everywhere in the United States where farmers' opportunities for productive increase have been great. The reason for this is partly the great irregularity of farm income, which influences farm families to set their standards by the income of poor years and save the rest. There is a deeper reason, however. When the town man saves, the money goes into the bank or into securities where it ceases to play a colorful part, but if the farmer puts by wisely, he gains twice; he continues to enjoy his money in the new combine, the new Hereford, the waving corn on the new forty.

The farmer's wife does not enjoy these savings quite so much as her husband, but still she usually participates. When in 1870 the Browns sold their farm near Keokuk for \$10,000, Mrs. Brown was sure a considerable part of the \$10,000 was hers. "All our married life I was just saving, saving. We shouldn't have had anything if I hadn't been saving. The secret of the whole thing was just dimes, dimes. I never got anything I didn't need, and, when I had it, I took care of it." There have been, however, some family conflicts in Iowa where the woman wanted more spent for equipment, electricity, or the improvement of the house.

## FARM HOMES

Farm homes became larger and somewhat more comfortable though not generally well equipped or attractive. A state-wide survey showed the condition of farm houses about 1930. The survey took in nearly nineteen thousand home in the counties of Benton, Davis, Fayette, Madison, Mitchell, Scott, Shelby, Sioux, Story, and Webster. The average value of farm homes was estimated to be \$2,375. Highest of all was \$3,266, in an eastern Iowa county; lowest, \$1,676 in a southern Iowa county. These figures are low considering the high average value of farms in Iowa. The Agricultural Census of 1940 reported that the average value of farms in Iowa was 227 per cent of the value of United States farms; the average value of owner-occupied farm homes in Iowa was 137 per cent of the average value of United States farm homes. The survey in 1930 showed that most homes were in need of some repair, particularly of paint, and the enumerators estimated that one out of eight needed replacement. There was little overcrowding, however.

Housing includes also the beauty of the home setting. Some of the older settlers have said that more attention was paid to shrubs and flowers in the pioneer period than in that which immediately followed. Women lately arrived from the East took particular pains to cultivate their lilacs and their gardens of hollyhocks and marigolds, to make their places look like their old homes. Landscape architecture, as an Extension activity, came to Iowa farms with the first full-time specialist in 1919, the first home landscape short course in 1920. The response from farm people, though slow, has been steadily increasing. Toward the end of the thirties every Sunday in May and June would see cars from all over Iowa parked by the State College gardens in Ames, with farm men and women examining the plants and flowers, asking questions about layout. Of the nineteen thousand houses covered in the state survey previously referred to, three in four had some plantings.

The first generally-adopted piece of important household equipment, the sewing machine, arrived in the sixties. With the exception of the washing machine, most other important household equipment waited for the introduction of electricity. During the twenties and early thirties there was much complaint from Extension workers that either farm men would not give, or farm women would not demand, the money to purchase equipment for their homes, even though farm incomes would amply justify it. A study at the end of the period showed that telephones and various pieces of patented household equipment such as washing machines were much more common in farm homes than water systems and bathrooms.



## DIETS CHANGE

Between the Civil War and the thirties the variety in diet greatly increased, though it is not certain that its food value became improved. These years are those of the type of food technology that devitalized flour and increased the use of sugar with its protective elements removed. The great development of education in nutrition was not to come until after 1930. Yet Iowa families were presumably well fed. The diets of 143 typical families in a 1925-28 study were analyzed in detail and found abundant in calories and rich in protein, calcium, and phosphorus. These farmers produced about 40 per cent of their food on their farms.

Prices reported for food in 1878 indicate the same low prices reported for 1854. The biggest change came after 1900.

More and more of the families' clothing was bought ready-made, until finally almost all the men's and boys' clothing was purchased and a large part of the women's and girls'. The 1925-28 study showed that about one-fourth of the amount spent for women's and girls' dresses, aprons, and underwear was for materials to make these garments at home. These comprised practically all the home garment-making for the family.

The recreation enjoyed by farm families in this period continued, and in fact still continues, to be home and community-made to a much greater extent than is true of the recreation of town and city families. Social events at school, church, lodge, and farm organization play a large part in most farm families' lives, and most farm families belong to social organizations. Investigation of family accounts in 1925-28 showed that an average of only \$6.90 per family was spent for motion pictures and concerts in an entire year. In the decades immediately following the Civil War a good proportion of the American people took part in informal recreation where they made their own music and sang songs like "The Arkansas Traveler" and "Don't Leave the Farm, Boys"; participated in Virginia Reel and Grand Right and Left; and applauded their own shows and skits. On Iowa farms the Farm Bureau and Farmers' Union encouraged the continuance of community entertainment, and in the twenties the Extension Service began to include music and drama among its programs for farm people.

This same 1925-28 study made special comment on medical care for Iowa farm families. Many families in cases of illness "sought medical care tardily or not at all, and most of them failed to make regular periodic use of medical and dental examinations. . . It was found that families neglected their health, in part from lack of knowledge, in

part from ideas of economy, and in part because of a lack of health facilities in their community."

The narrower religious views of the earlier period softened. Dancing, card playing, smoking ceased to be so frowned upon. There was much less argument about theology. The liberalization of thought, which in some parts of the country has been marked by departure from religious observance, in Iowa has taken place to a large extent within the church itself. The church has become to a much greater extent a place not so much where dogma is handed out as where men seek the truth. For example, a Methodist Sunday School discussed whether there was a God or not, and followed it by asking a Hindu and a Buddhist studying at Iowa State College to present their views on the subject.

#### BROADENED INTERESTS

It was once said of Iowa farmers and their wives in the pioneer period that though they wanted to keep up with current events from the newspaper, they did not have much "hankering after book learning." Several field studies showed that though Iowa farm families spent little for books, they generally subscribed to several magazines and newspapers. The 1925-28 study previously referred to reported an average per family of \$1.20 for books and \$12.13 for periodicals within a year. There were few local libraries and about three-fourths of the families never used a library.

The period of increasing prosperity was accompanied in the United States as a whole by a desire for "culture," "refinement," contact with European art and music, budding emphasis on manners and general sophistication. Iowa farm families were not greatly interested in this movement. They did not look back much either to the East or to Europe. The 1925-28 study of 147 typical families showed, for example, that in spite of ties with the East, the farm women who had had a chance to travel had generally chosen to travel west. There is a close relation between the farm families' distrust of "culture" and leisure, and their emphasis on good hard work. By this they were saved from the superficial or false sophistication that characterized some portions of American society during this period and led to a spirit of social defeatism after the first World War. There was never any defeatism in rural Iowa, and Iowa farm men and women were never soft. It is true, however, that a little more emphasis on spare-time occupations would have helped them when, in old age after they had retired from the farm, some of them were at a loss because they

had developed few of the interests which can flourish in leisure.

The early part of this period brought the practically universal acceptance of a common school system in Iowa. Its over-all educational rating is among the highest in the nation.

College and university education expanded rapidly. The 1925-28 study showed that most farm families at least wanted to send their children to college.

The one particular form of education that was most significant in differentiating the farmer's and particularly the Midwest farmer's standard of living from other standards was Extension education in agriculture and home economics. The first Farmers' Short Course in Iowa, believed to be the first held anywhere, was in 1902; two years later the farmers brought their wives, who studied home economics. Formal Extension instruction had begun at the State College in 1904, and the federal act of 1906 provided for a permanent Extension Service. At present in Iowa the rural Extension movement touches in some formal way half the families of the state; indirectly and informally it influences them all.

The real beginnings of the Extension movement precede the formation of the present large farm organizations that support it, the Farm Bureau, the Farmers' Union, and the Grange, and long precede the federal government's active concern in agricultural education. The real beginnings were found in the vigorous interest of Iowa farm families from the first in improving their material condition and in the many opportunities they made to advance better practices on their own initiative. When men met among themselves on social occasions for any purpose, the discussion of crops and live-stock was sure to enter, and when women met, their chief topic was the home.

The lyceum and literary society movement, which swept the country in the years following the Civil War, became in Iowa another significant agency for agricultural education, and in the problems of citizenship as well. To be sure, such diverting topics as "Resolved: the works of nature are more beautiful than the works of art," were argued, but farmers generally wanted something more practical when they came together.

In the nineties visiting delegations of farmers and their wives began to come to the Iowa State College campus in the summer, sometimes as many as five thousand in a single day. The railroads gave low rates and advertised excursions. The farm families brought picnic lunches and spent their day inspecting the work of the college.

A farmer was heard trying to drag his wife away from her home economics observations by calling, "Ma, you've got to look at this cattle barn. It's cleaner than any room in our house."

Complete records are shown of a society of farmers' wives which carried on in Harrison County from 1872 to 1897. To these meetings women brought their health problems, their household problems, and their recipes. Often, since they came from long distances, these recipes were in the form of food ready to eat. The husbands of these ladies inclined at first to make fun of them because they had a bylaw against gossip. Any woman who spoke disparagingly of another had to pay a fine. We read, however, that when the ladies put on one of their good dinners "quite a number of gentlemen assisted" by sitting at the tables while the ladies brought on the food. Plain sewing was to be encouraged, but fashions were disapproved of. One of the bylaws specified that in order to discourage emulation the women must come to meetings in a "plain home dress." The purpose of these farmers' wives' meetings was primarily to discover the science of homemaking, food preparation, candle-dipping, quilt piecing, cleaning, and sanitation.

By such movements arising directly among the people the way was prepared for Extension education in agriculture and home economics.

#### A NEW PATTERN—SINCE 1930

Since 1930 the farm standard of living, especially in the Midwest, and specifically in Iowa, has begun to stand out as a new and distinctive pattern, with its goals emerging from within rather than set from without. Its foundations, of course, lay in the independence of the pioneers. We have seen how, in the middle period, children of these pioneers consciously or unconsciously declined to be drawn at all deeply into the somewhat superficial refinements that were spreading over city and town in the United States. Furthermore, they escaped any rapid transformation from the impact of a complete machine culture. In this middle period some writers spoke of the farm standard as having a cultural lag because it was not urbanized. Actually, the farmers did not want the kind of urbanization available; their ignorance was not so significant as their independence. They were quite capable of moving, but first they wanted to be sure where they were going.

In recent years large increases in income have come to Iowa farm families. In the past there have normally been great fluctuations in farm incomes, so no one can say how permanent the recent increases

will be. But for the time, at least, Iowa farm families are better off in money terms than any other large group of people in any state.

The average Iowa net farm income in 1944 was \$3,856, compared with an average \$2,269 farm income in the United States as a whole. In other words the average of Iowa farmers' incomes was 70 per cent more than the average for the nation's farmers. Iowa farmers have had a relatively large share of government payments for crops and livestock. In 1940 and 1941 Iowa farmers, although only 3 per cent of all American farmers, received 8 per cent of the total of a billion dollars.

Iowa farms stand a little higher than other American farms in respect to certain conveniences reported to the Census, as shown in Table 14.

TABLE 14  
PROPORTION OF IOWA FARMS AND OF ALL UNITED STATES FARMS  
HAVING CERTAIN CONVENIENCES, 1940  
(U. S. Bureau of the Census)

Conveniences	Percentage on All Farms	Percentage on Iowa Farms
Running water.....	18	22
Flush toilets.....	11	15
Bathrooms.....	12	15
Electricity.....	31	40
Mechanical refrigeration.....	15	16
Radios.....	60	87

In 1940 the United States Department of Agriculture drew up a scale to measure the level of living on farms. Iowa led the nation with a rating of 131. Illinois came next, ten points below Iowa. The lowest states were Alabama and Louisiana, with 64. Iowa's lowest county ranked as high as or higher than the highest county in nine of the states.

The scale, known as the Hagood Index, gave farms points for having a radio, a car less than five years old, gross income of more than \$600, the grade in school completed by farm adults, and the number of rooms per person.

It must be pointed out, however, that while the over-all standing of Iowa farmers is high, there are considerable differences of income among them. The last year for which we have figures is 1941, when the lowest third in incomes received less than one-fifth as much as the highest third. The low-income farmers received much less in govern-

ment payments also. In 1939-40 an Iowa State College study of a selected group of farmers showed that the upper third in income received \$350 from the government, the middle third \$179, and the lower third \$152. The net effect of government payments to farmers was therefore not to make their incomes more equal but to give most to those who already had the most.

Differences in levels of living within Iowa itself also are brought out by the Hagood Index. It has been said that the average for all counties in Iowa was 131. The highest county rated at 145, the lowest at 115.

With means for an Iowa farm family scale of living well above the American minimum, the chief material problems today are not monetary but rather those of wise choice and of availability of goods and services.

It has been said that farmers are great savers. During and immediately after World War I, farmers who put their savings into land bid up its price and, by this overcapitalization of their plant, some of them in the end reaped bankruptcy and disaster. At the end of World War II the same danger showed up, and was the more serious because many of the things farmers would like to have bought were not on the market.

In 1946 the fields of living in which Iowa farm families were most conscious of need for improvement were housing, equipment, health, and education. Food was already good; clothing was adequate. Farmers and their wives were not especially interested in expenditures for showing off. State Extension workers in 1946 reported that farmers were particularly anxious to improve their homes. Unfortunately, housing materials and equipment were only to a small extent available. Cars were hard to get, also.

Improvement in health also was to a large extent a matter of availability. In a study of Iowa's rural health facilities in 1945 it was shown that in villages under one thousand, there was but one physician for fifteen hundred people (1940 statistics), less than half the standard of the Committee on the Cost of Medical Care, and even below the war emergency standard of the War Manpower Commission. Iowa as a whole stood low also in hospital beds. Expenditures for public health by the state increased from \$150,000 in 1932-33 to \$665,000 ten years later, mostly as a result of federal grants. The individual, whatever his money income, can do little to draw physician and hospital services into his locality; social action is required. Farm organizations are now taking active steps in Iowa to bring about more adequate health facilities.

## EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

Iowa schools are getting better and more children are going to college. The educational developments must characteristic of farm Iowa, however, are those closest to the corn roots, those of the people by and for themselves, and these are very broad. There is less of a separation between work and education, and recreation and education, among farm families than among others. Not only on the farm but in the topics and programs for state and local groups of farmers it is often hard to tell where work leaves off and recreation and education begin. In this broad sense the chief educational agencies in rural Iowa continue to be the farms and homes themselves; their work and play are supplemented by radio programs, and by the general reading of newspapers and agricultural journals, and to a small extent by the use of public libraries.

Public library services for Iowa rural people are rather limited. In 1941, 77 per cent were without free public library service, although urban people were well supplied.

Beyond what is done in the home, on the farm, and at the school, the chief agencies of education are Extension programs for farm men and women, boys and girls, and township and county meetings for everyone together.

Basically the chief purpose of these programs is as it always was—better preparation for the duties of the farm and home, with emphasis on topics like control of the cattle grub, kitchen planning and child feeding, systematically presented. But with this there is much more. Marjorie Patten, in *The Arts Workshop of Rural America*, says that Iowa has probably gone further than most states in an integrated arts program. These arts include not only landscape architecture and interior decoration but appreciation of poetry, picture-study, crafts, flower arrangement, and drama. The farm people have a full-time specialist in the last. Miss Patten is especially impressed by Iowa's farm music. Orchestras and choruses, even opera, are fostered by the Extension Service. In 1935 and 1936 farm people gave remarkable performances of "The Bohemian Girl" before audiences of twelve thousand at Ames and Des Moines. Further, the study and appreciation of music has been used to develop international understanding. Music from many lands, music from the homes of all nations, and Latin-American pageants are themes serving a double purpose.

Finally, and most striking among the latest developments in the interests of Iowa farm people, these interests are moving more surely into the problems of citizenship, national and international. This



also has a background in earlier periods, for meetings of farm people were always places to argue when some dramatic issue like free silver was in the air. Also, of course, they have always been concerned with national issues that related immediately to their own prosperity. There has been at times some criticism of the Extension Service for teaching, and of farmers for promoting, certain narrow policies of the United States Department of Agriculture without regard for the larger interests of the nation as a whole. More of a menace are the still narrower policies of some very vocal agricultural pressure groups. These dangers are recognized by the more farsighted leaders of Extension and by the more farsighted farm people. On a farm leaders' guide for township meetings in 1945, for example, we find this subject for discussion: How can we get away from special government aid?

Interest in international problems has grown rapidly in the last decade. In most if not all of the ninety-nine counties there is now some formal attention to world peace and international organization, discussed not only in general but in relation to specific current topics. In 1946, a number of Extension leaders told the writer that they considered this international concern to be the most noteworthy single thing in the expanding interests of Iowa farm families. Such interests were particularly marked among rural young people. The 4-H Clubs had in 1937 put on their first annual World Citizenship Program, in which Iowa led the other states by several years. International needs were made more real to many Iowa farm people by the forming of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization and the visit of its head, Sir John Orr, to Iowa.

One hundred years is a short time in terms of history; in terms of change on Iowa farms it covers a great deal. Where Iowa farm families formerly lived in hardship and poverty they now live in prosperity and relative security. Where they formerly worked long days at a score of different tasks they now purchase equipment and farm and household goods formerly produced at home; their days are shortened and their tasks are lighter.

Where they formerly lived in isolation they now have cars and telephones, friends near to them, social opportunities within easy reach. Where they formerly were unschooled they now have education brought to their very doors. Their daily living has been enriched by the arts in a dozen ways, by science in a hundred.

This is partly due to their vision, their integrity, and their hard labor. It is partly due to the fortunate accident that Iowa is blessed with much of the country's richest soil. It is partly due to the fact that the

whole world has moved in the last hundred years at a faster rate than it ever did before, and the world has become a smaller unit. Iowa has experienced chiefly the beneficial side of world changes.

The standard of living on Iowa farms, to advance indefinitely, even to survive, will be related more than it has been in the past to the course of events in the United States as a whole—even to the course of events of the world outside the United States. Already, to some extent, Iowa people know this, as is shown by their increased interest in national and international affairs. The problem ahead for them in the next hundred years is to express this larger citizenship.