



Jones County

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Peet roots planted in Jones county in mid-19th century

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The sons of Gideon and Abigail Wildman Peet were the forebears of all the Peets living in the Anamosa-Martelle area in Jones county today and of those who have branched out and moved to other localities.

The eldest, John, married Julia Wilcox, daughter of Eber and Rachel (Merrill) Wilcox and both are buried in the Wilcox cemetery west of Fairview, which plot was a part of the Wilcox farm, now owned by the Ed Wild family. John was Ensign of 124th N. Y. Volunteer Inf., finally promoted to Lt. Col. of the Regiment in 1837. They were parents of five children: the youngest two were twins, nicknamed Sam and Dick.

A granddaughter of Sam, Hazel Peet White, recently of Grinnell, and now living in Canada, relates that Sam was a horse-trader, traveling all over the country, finally settling in the Gilman area. A chest of drawers, now in the Jones county museum, was a wedding gift to Sam and his wife, Ella Hoofcut, from her parents, in 1868.

The other twin, Dick, once had a business in Anamosa and also operated the flour mill begun by his father on Clear creek, below Lisbon in Cedar county. Dick is buried at LaHarpe, Kans. as well as two sons, who lived there. In Iola, Kans., five miles west of LaHarpe, Dick had a large building constructed which he called his "gol-darned opry house"!

The second son of Gideon and Abigail, Julius Allen Peet, married Hester Ann Crow and were parents of nine children, the descendants of whom include Mrs. Augusta Chamberlain Pulver of Anamosa. After the death of Hester he married Mrs. Lucy Tucker of Anamosa, an ancestor of the late Mrs. Lucy Remley.

STOCK FEED SUPPLEMENT

A grandson of Julius Allen Peet was

Ernest, who formed a company known as the Peet Stock Remedy Co., with Walter Ruehlman in 1917. They were interested in new and improved methods of livestock feeding for quicker maturity, less feeding cost and more profit. They decided something could be done in supplementing a combination of certain mineral and chemical elements that were gradually becoming deficient in grain and other livestock feed grown on our soil which, due to constant "take-off" or cropping, was gradually becoming deficient in these elements of vital necessity for the health and well doing of livestock and poultry.

The span of 27 years saw these men work out formulas and manufacturing a full line of the highest quality supplemental mineral and protein feeding products and supplies for the livestock and poultry raisers' acceptance. They saw their products sold and used year after year with results even beyond their expectations.

The original plant occupied a small building on South Main St. in Council Bluffs. Within a year the second floor was hired to handle the business and in 1923 a large factory was built in another part of the city to which additions were built in 1928 and 1949.

The Peet Co. operates two major factories, the one in Council Bluffs containing more than 20,000 sq. ft., with an elevator and bin capacity for more than three million pounds. Other factories and warehouses were located in Indiana, Texas and all western states. Both men farmed extensively together until Mr. Peet's death in 1944. His brother, the late Julius Duane Peet of Mount Vernon, was a salesman for the company, traveling from farm to farm in Jones county and elsewhere.

YOUNG PIONEER

Children responded to the duties required. One young boy of 13 (in the family line of Julius Allen) broke up the

land in a newly acquired area so that plowing could begin early the following spring. After moving to the new homestead, a neighbor required the services of a physician and the young lad was asked to go, riding off after midnight. Since there were no bridges, he swam his horse over the flood-swollen Wapsipinicon near what is now Stone City, accomplished his purpose and rode back the same way.

PEET AND WILCOX

Gideon Nelson Peet married Cordelia, sister of John's wife, Julia Wilcox, in 1840 and were parents of four children: Collis Sprague, Theresa Vernetta, Eber Gideon and Adelbert Carleton.

After a few years in a log cabin west of Fairview, they homesteaded land and built a log cabin, probably before 1850, at "Cherry Grove", an area about four miles southeast of Martelle in Greenfield township, on Walnut creek, and this home, the only one for miles around, was a stopping place for travelers for several years. His wife also taught school in the home. Her teaching contract dated 1832 in Solon, N. Y. is in the possession of descendants.

Later, to accommodate those who stopped overnight, they built a two-story brick house, 36 ft. sq., and with a gable roof, the side being toward the road, but sometime in the late 1870s a miniature cyclone lifted this roof, turned it exactly around and landed the west half about 200 ft. northeast and the east half about 200 ft. northwest of the old house. No one was hurt and no other serious damage was done to the house.

Directly across the road, Gideon also built a magnificent barn, the timbers of selected white oak scored and hewed, and with the entire frame braced and secured with heavy wooden pins. Four heavy stone walls ran its length and the heavy sills were laid thereon.

This barn was planned when men

Pioneers and Indians--

worked, and it will be noticed that hay was pitched from the wagon into the side lofts, then up to the center loft. The original roof was of split white oak "shakes" more than half an inch thick and about three feet long.

This barn still stands today and when I was a child I played with the neighbor children who lived there. A hay rope hung from the very top down to the center driveway and their four-year-old daughter could climb that rope with her bare feet clear to the top. I was never brave enough to try it.

INDIANS

The hardships endured by the pioneer women, as well as the men, were told in such events as occurred one day when Gideon N. was away at court. Cordelia was at her spinning wheel when she heard a noise and saw a band of 17 Indians in the yard. Too terrified to do anything else, she kept on spinning while they entered the house, ransacked her cupboards, picked up the babies, Collis and Theresa, who were playing on the floor, talked to them, finally leaving the house and executing a dance in the yard. One turned to the door and said, "Brave white woman, Indian no hurt!"

Cordelia, when almost 77, attended the World's Fair in Chicago in 1893, spending six days at the fair and to church twice on Sunday. A few months before her death at age 80 in 1896 she said, "I've heard old people say they were tired of living. Well, I never felt tired of living! I only wish I could live 50 more years to see the developments that will come."

In the obituary of Cordelia, it states that as a young girl she was "thoroughly drilled in the conventional occupations of the time, to spin, to weave, to knit and to sew, as well as to assist in the work of the household and the dairy."

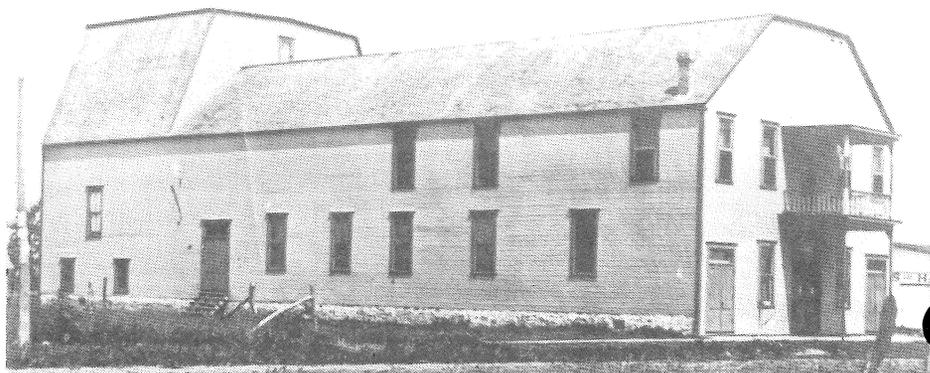
Her common school education was supplemented with a few terms at the academy at Cortland, N. Y., after which she "taught in the common or village school, boarding around, the remuneration for which was about \$2.00 per week."

WIDOWED

Her husband died at age 47 leaving her with a farm of over 500 acres and two young sons, age 15 and 13, at home; the eldest, Collis, had married and left home a few months before the death of his father. This period brought out the strong points of character in the young widow. Farm help was not available as nearly every young man in the country had enlisted in the army. As the sons grew to manhood, they took over many of the chores that were being done by their stalwart mother. She remained on the farm with her youngest son, Adelbert C. Peet, until he moved to Anamosa in 1883.



DOUBLE COUSINS, Bertha Falls, Hazel Peet, Pearl Falls and Helynn Peet, pose for a 1910 portrait taken by their mother and aunt, Iva Falls Peet, a professional photographer. The girls were the daughters of William and Lela Peet Falls and Charles L. and Iva Falls Peet.



THE GOL-DARN opry house was built by Dick Peet in Iola, Kan. He operated a business in Anamosa and later ran a mill in Cedar county before going to Kansas.

The eldest son, Collis, died at age 23, leaving a wife and two children. She died seven years later so the children grew up with relatives.

In this family, the descendants include Herbert Peet, who was superintendent of schools in Anamosa in the early 1920s, and in Cedar Falls the Peet Junior high school is named for him. There were many school teachers in this family line. Herbert's father, George N., was U.S. mail carrier in Springville for many years.

The daughter of Gideon N. and Cordelia, Theresa, married Charles T. Myrick and lived in Montana, being parents of Dr. Arthur Myrick who published a limited Peet History in 1929, a copy of which was given to the Anamosa library, and Hobart Myrick, prominent rancher near Stanford, Mont., who was formerly a banker in Anamosa.

Eber Gideon, the third child, remained in Greenfield township, building another set of buildings a few rods south of the home place, married Oriana Chapin and reared eight sons.

MODERN HOUSE

In 1896 Eber built a palatial new house of at least 14 rooms. The home, costing \$3,800 above the wall, was 56 feet by 36 feet, two

stories with a full basement and a stand-up, fully-floored attic, ultra-modern with gas lights, hot and cold running water, plumbing and hot air central heating. It even had a refrigerator and wooden bath tub lined with copper.

The hot air furnace was designed to heat the first floor rooms and hall, with one pipe going upstairs, but the latter never worked, it was reported. With plenty of wood available on the 420-acre farm, this was the usual fuel used.

Gas illumination through the house was provided by a gas machine in the yard. Water was pumped from a cistern, 16 feet deep and 10 feet across. The water was pumped to the attic and into a lead-lined wooden tank, three feet by eight feet by 30 inches.

The water sometimes was pumped by a "threshing engine", in the basement, but usually it wasn't working and "boy power" was used. A son, Clarence, recalled that would take four of the boys 15 to 20 minutes to pump the tank full.

Wash days, particularly those in the winter, meant carrying the wet wash to the unheated attic, where it sometimes took two or three weeks to dry. "And then we

House stands today--

had to hang it over the furnace to thaw it out."

SOLID LANDMARK

There are some good reasons why, after eight decades the house still stands as a solid landmark of another era.

The basement is of rock, with brick partitions dividing it into rooms. Studding and siding for the mansion are of white pine. The kitchen floor is maple, the dining room of oak, and the sitting room, parlor and bedrooms and halls are floored with six-inch white pine. "It was the best lumber that money could buy" and was shipped to Martelle and then hauled out to the farm. The rock came from Stone City and shipped to Martelle by rail.

An architect, his name forgotten long ago, drew the plans for \$75, plus an added \$25 because Mr. Peet insisted on altering the plans to gables instead of a hip roof.

The house had one of the first circulating plumbing systems. Hot water was furnished by a water-back in the kitchen range.

Refrigeration came from the ice house. In the winter, the boys would go down to the creek, saw out chunks of ice 20 inches thick and 20 inches square, load them into a high wagon and bring them to the house. It was back-breaking work.

One other minor item -- drinking water always had to be hand-pumped from a well outside the back door.

The house stands today, a reminder of the grand style enjoyed by prosperous citizens.

Eber participated in the affairs of the community, was a county supervisor, (he is included in the picture of the supervisors taken about 1895 which hangs in the museum), township trustee, secretary of the local school, "Greenfield Center", was instrumental in the organization of the first telephone company in Martelle.

GOOD TIMES

In contrast to the harsh realities of pioneer life, they enjoyed parties, house dances, and just visiting as often as possible. On the lighter side, it was recalled by a son, V. J., that in the late 1800s the circus wagons came by the home. The elephant helped himself to the corn in an open crib beside the barns and no amount of yelling or shooing could chase him away. Only when he trainer spoke did he respond and was led back into the line to lift the heavy wild animal cages out of the deep mud. The elephant's tracks could be seen in the road for several years afterward. (This was before the days of "road dragging".)

LUSH LAND

The youngest son of Gideon N. and Cordelia, Adelbert, married Emma Jane Perkins, daughter of George Perkins. (Emma was a sister to the mother of the



THE EBER G. PEET home was built in 1896 in Greenfield township. It had at least 14 rooms, cost \$3,800 to build and still stands today.



THE EBER G. PEET family posed for this portrait in 1902. Family members are, front row from left, Vestus James, Eber Gideon, Oriana Chapin and Grove Eber. Back row, from left, Glenn Alden, Clarence Bruce, Collis Sprague, Harry Lester, Earl Chapin and Claude Gideon.

late Jane Birk, long-time school teacher in Anamosa and Maye Birk, former Anamosa librarian.)

The story of George Perkins portrays the times of which we today, cannot fathom. It is included here to give us a picture of life in those days.

"Until the defeat of Black Hawk about 1835, the hostile Indians held control west of the Mississippi river, and few whites dared to attempt living in the Iowa Territory, but in 1836, there began to build up settlements, and among those living in

Illinois was a young man named George Clinton Perkins. He had been told that some 60 or 70 miles west of the river, a white family named Mann was living at White Oak Grove (in southern Greenfield township; there is still an old church standing known as the White Oak church on the road where many of the Hempy, Kohl and Siver families lived) and he declared his intention of joining them.

"As early in the spring as it was possible, he wrapped up his belongings, plunged into the chilled waters and swam

Fruits, game sustained settler--

across the Mississippi and took his way westward. In due time he found White Oak Grove and the Mann family, and soon selected a location for himself along the ridge between the Wapsipinicon river and Buffalo creek and here he made his home, living on the fruits and game, making his clothing of skins and furs.

"The land was covered with heavy growth of hardwood timber, with black walnuts, butternuts, hickory nuts, soft shelled bitternuts, hazelnuts, crab apples, plums, red and black raspberries, currants, and gooseberries, wild strawberries, all growing in profusion.

Elk, deer, bear, rabbits, wild turkeys, pigeons, grouse, prairie chickens and quail in the brush and thickets, and both streams teeming with fish; on this ridge George Perkins made his home.

CASH IN HAND

Three years later, having found a wife among the new families coming in, and securing a pig raised some young ones and some oats which he cut with a hand sickle, flailed out with a hickory flail, winnowed in the wind, he set out for Dubuque some 40 miles away. With the small load of oats, three dressed pigs, and driving an ox team, camping on the road, he sold the oats for 5 cents per bushel and the pork for 5 cents per pound, and thus obtained the first money he had since he swam the river three years before.

"Out of this money he bought blue print calico for his wife a dress costing 30 cents per yard and Hickory Shirting for his own dress-up occasions costing 35 cents per yard and he paid 10 cents for the privilege of sleeping in a bed one night on his return trip when it rained. He was worth about \$50,000 when he died. This was the father of Emma Jane Perkins who married Adelbert Peet."

UNCLE DEL

According to notes by my cousin Merle Peet, her father, Claude, remembered "Uncle Del driving two teams on a wagon and all the horses they could lead to the wagon, maybe 10 or 12, making several trips to Minnesota to sell and brought back cattle. Bought an ox team and a couple riding horses to bring the wagon back and drive the cattle home. He made several such trips."

Adelbert and Emma Jane moved to Anamosa from the farm in Greenfield township, so their children might have a greater advantage for higher education than would be possible on the farm. After his family was grown and his wife deceased he spent his time traveling from one coast to the other doing what he loved best, visiting about old times with his old friends and relatives. It was told that he

always carried a suitcase filled with photographs of his loved ones and friends.

LITERARY LADIES

In Anamosa, Mrs. Peet took advantage of the culture within her reach and followed the Chautauqua courses for years. Later, as a member of the Fort-nightly club, she showed considerable literary talent in her lesson work. She had the satisfaction of seeing all her children acquire a college education. Delbert Clinton lived in Montana, and was president of the First National bank of Geraldine. Grace married a rancher in Montana and daughter Theresa Elizabeth became the most famous of all.

LELAND STANFORD TEACHER

Theresa was born 1873 in Greenfield township, graduated from Anamosa high school, the University of Iowa, and obtained a master's degree from Radcliff college in Boston, the ladies' annex to Harvard University. After teaching and serving as assistant principal of Anamosa high school she married Frank Russell, professor of anthropology of Harvard University and a world traveler whose speciality was ancient Indian life and customs. (In the museum in Iowa City, we have seen a bear he shot in Alaska.)

After their marriage they went to Arizona for his health and to further his research, but he survived only a few years. After his death in 1903, Theresa joined the faculty of Stanford University at Palo Alto, Calif., where she taught in the English department for more than 25 years, being a professor of English at the time of her death in 1936. During some of her vacations, she attended Columbia university, where she received her doctorate.

Notes from clippings (with no dates) convey the news when she was advanced to "an assistant professorship at Leland Stanford university with a salary of \$2,000 to \$2,500 a year."

AUTHOR OF BOOK

Another news clipping relates that the Anamosa library received a copy of a book written by Theresa. Clipping states, "Two years ago she took her Doctor's degree in Columbia university and has since written this book, "Satire In Victorian Novels". It is highly intellectual and instructive and a book well worth reading. Anamosa is certainly proud to receive this child of her pen. Mrs. Russell informed a cousin, Mrs. Park Chamberlain (Augusta Pulver's mother) of this city, that the idea which led to this work was conceived in the local library, and thus she sends to her former home the first copy to be christened in the place of its birth.

Her wedding account in the local paper

was full of flowery phrases describing the setting, the music, the reception, the educational accomplishments of both bride and groom, the distinguished guest list, the young ladies who served as waitresses whose names included many Peet relatives of Theresa, the ancestry, the 'going-away', along with bits of poetry, even some of Longfellow's lines. Yet, not a word about the attire of the bride nor any of the guests, not even a blue garter!

FIRST SCHOOL

The next son of Gideon and Abigail was Daniel Marlin Peet. The first school for the pioneer children was held in Marlin's home.

One of his granddaughters was named Jennie Iowa Peet, because her father thought so highly of this state.

Jennie married John Berry and became a very prominent club woman in Cedar Rapids. An account of her many accomplishments is given in "The Story Of Cedar Rapids" by Janette Stevenson Murray and Frederick Gray Murray (pub. 1950).

WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS

In 1952 a booklet entitled "Jennie Iowa Berry And The First 75 Years Of Women's Organizations", written by Mrs. Murray, was sent to Tom Powell, editor of the Anamosa Journal.

Among other things, Jennie was president of the Cedar Rapids Woman's club, recording secretary of the Iowa Federated Women's clubs, chairman of the Child Labor Comm., Regent of the Ashley Chapter DAR, belonged to the "Daughters of Founders and Patriots of America", was National Defense Chairman of DAR, Women's Relief Corp. She was active in affairs of the community, some of her projects being the first city playground, a juvenile court and probation officer, a reorganized music department, beautification of Greene Square, distribution of flower seed packets among school children, also of books and magazines in factory rooms where workers gather, leading in the collection of relief supplies for San Francisco earthquake sufferers, and the philanthropic department's sewing classes. (Girls were taught "all kinds of stitches, to mend, patch, darn and learn to keep their clothes in order and make their own. These classes and promotion by the Woman's club hastened the domestic science course in our public schools."

Many girls were assisted to a higher education because of her work on the Scholarship and Loan committee in the Iowa Federation of Women's clubs.

DAR

In her work as Regent of the DAR, she worked on Americanization, preparing

Believed in working for good causes--

outlines and questionnaires, specializing in naturalization of citizens, essay contests for schools, also in the founding of the Counsel of Societies for Americanization. This council, in turn, founded near Tyler school, the Cedar Rapids Community Center, forerunner of the Jane Boyd Community House.

As chairman of a committee that raised funds, she procured a marble drinking fountain and presented it to the city of Cedar Rapids Sept. 30, 1911. It stood in front of the old Federal building at 2nd Avenue and 3rd street. It was iced in summer by the city and cost the Ashley chapter DAR \$500.

WRC

Her most satisfying work was in WRC, her accomplishments too numerous to mention in this work. She was responsible for the legislature erecting a suitable building for the veterans at the Iowa Soldiers Home at Marshalltown to be occupied not only by the veterans but their wives as well.

In 1904 at a National WRC convention held at Mason City, over which Mrs. Berry presided, Clara Barton was a guest. Although Miss Barton was then advanced in age, "apparently frail as a piece of old china", Mrs. Berry was told firmly but courteously that she needed no assistance, for when she arrived and it was found that the meeting where she was to speak could be reached only by a long flight of stairs, the ladies were concerned for her ability to climb.

Amidst their protests and wonderings what to do, Miss Barton interrupted by asking, not too patiently, "Well, is there anything wrong with the stairs?" (Rena Hubbell, cousin of Mrs. Berry, is responsible for this story about the stairs. Rena was aunt of Augusta Pulver of Anamosa and Rena's uncle, Mr. Hubbell, was a long-time private secretary to Clara Barton and heir to the Barton mansion outside Washington, D.C.)

An important event of Mrs. Berry's term as national president of the WRC was the transfer to the United States government (a gift from the order) of Andersonville Prison Park, property which had long been held, cared for and beautified by the National Woman's Relief Corps.

Mrs. Berry described the Woman's Relief Corps as patriotic in purpose and kindly in influence. "Its general policies are shaped in accordance with those of the A.R.". Its avowed objects are: finding homes, employment, clothes and food for needy veterans and their dependants; perpetuating the memory of the heroic dead of the Union Army, caring for and protecting army nurses; preserving certain sacred historical sites; promoting patriotic education for our younger

citizens; and encouraging the humane teaching of peace and arbitration among nations."

"Mrs. Berry expressed a truth recognized by too few of us -- that only when we hold an office do we have any chance to promote that organization before the public."

Because she had held higher offices, she did not hesitate to accept a lower office. She had high honor, experience, dignity, so that much power was accorded her; she was able to do fine and constructive work on the boards, commissions, and in the various offices in which she served. When a constitution, a set of resolutions, or a revision of bylaws was needed, Mrs. Berry was usually chosen for the work. She accomplished an immense amount of constructive work in the many organizations in which she served.

She cared not a whit for the many popular clubs for women of that day, but rather preferred those organizations where group discussions could lead to the betterment of their fellowman.

SUFFRAGE

The question of Women's Suffrage was very controversial and speeches were made by opponents wherever possible and after one such speech in Mount Vernon in 1919, Mrs. Berry stayed up all night working on a speech designed to counteract the effect of the preceding one and she gave it to the convention of the Iowa Federation of Women's clubs the next day. The next year Tennessee, the 36th state, ratified the 19th Amendment Aug. 26, 1920, making the required three-fourths majority so that suffrage was granted to women nationally and they could vote at the November election.

Mrs. Berry paved the way for women in political service, being the first chairman of the Republican Women, Fifth (now 2nd) District, and attended as alternate delegate-at-large in the Republican convention, which nominated Calvin Coolidge for president in 1924.

But before this, she attended the Republican convention in Des Moines. Upon her return, the Cedar Rapids Gazette quoted her as saying, "The new spring hats of the women delegates added a colorful appearance to the immense assembly hall. The sessions of this convention were in striking contrast to the session of four years ago. Then the women delegates wandered about like lost sheep and the men, though courteous, seemed at a loss to know what to do with them. This year, the women were taken as a matter of course and were looked upon as 'citizens' rather than women. The galleries were filled with interested women spectators."

COLD CREAM

Mrs. Berry was so well known and her name so much in the papers through the many kinds of organization work she was doing that once in a while she found her name on some board or in the skeleton of some organization of which she had never heard; and once she found a printed recommendation was being sent out in every jar of a certain cold cream with which she was entirely unfamiliar. Her attention was called to the trick by a woman telling her she used that kind of cream.

Although richly endowed with intellect, administrative ability and social graces, she was no stickler for form but considered the individual first. One day a young couple accompanied by an attractive two-year-old child came to the Red Cross office in distress. The government was granting benefits to wives and children of the first World War but the couple had never been married. If they claimed the benefits, their social standing would be impaired.

A way had to be found. She found it! She dispatched the veteran for a marriage license; sent for the chapter chairman, who chanced to be a minister; locked the office door temporarily while the distressed couple were married. The county officials were cooperative in keeping the records from the press. Thus was the social status of the couple retained and their government benefits assured.

ACTOR

A grandson of Daniel Marlin Peet, George Earle Peet lived in the state of Wyoming, being active in civic affairs and the Masonic lodge. For many years he participated in a yearly pageant by the townspeople portraying the "Coming Of The West", in which he always played the part of an Indian Chief, riding his horse, attacking the wagon trains of pioneers traveling west.

(To be continued)



CHARTER MEMBERS

Among charter members of the Jones County Historical Society, not previously listed in the "Review" are:

Warren J. Rees, Mrs. Warren J. Rees and Mrs. Josephine Russell, all of Anamosa.

Mr. and Mrs. Harold Scherrer, Monticello.

Mr. and Mrs. Max Wortman, Cedar Rapids.



Threshing day was once the most exciting time on the farm for a young Iowa boy

The following story, "Memories of Threshing", was written in 1972 by Sylvester Benischek of Tipton. It was submitted to the "Jones County Historical Review" by W. Grover Benischek of Olin.

At the time that our United States of America came into existence farmers were threshing grain by hand with a flail, the same method used for centuries. Before our nation was a century old, the farmers threshing tools consisted of a scythe and cradle which were also used by my parents. Grain bundles were made by hand consisting of many stalks of cut grain, hand tied by using a few grain stalks and making a knot which took skill to secure the bundle. Several bundles were then placed in a shock to cure for later threshing and covered with another bundle which was placed on the shock in a skillful manner to shed rain and resist wind to keep the shock intact.

My memories go back to the early 1900s when one of the most exciting times in the life of a farm boy, 75 years ago, was threshing day.

The invention of the McCormick binder that done the cutting and tying of bundles was an inducement being so beneficial that my father purchased a machine in the early 1880s. In that era, horsepowers were made in treadmill and sweep styles, my father purchasing a twelve-horsepower sweep unit for the larger threshing machine, the 32 - 50 which my father possessed.

Power was transmitted from this unit by a tumbling rod connected to a gear assembly on the cylinder shaft of the

thresher which delivered power to run the threshing machine. For many years in that era, threshing machines were fed by hand, the bands were cut with a knife, or a triangular sickle blade fastened into a wooden handle.

I was six years of age when my first job helping my father thresh was cutting bands on the bundles with a band cutting tool while standing on a high large round block. The band cutting knife was tied to my right hand by whang leather and I stood on the right side of the table while my brother being four years older took the left side of the table, while our father fed the machine.

First threshing machines had a straight straw carrier and in later years this was replaced by an oscillating carrier which made work easier for stacking straw. By my visual recollection this early threshing pertaining to the horsepower was a man and horse killing job, as in steady threshing from prior stacked grain stacks which were very large and were fed into the machine continuously, workers exchanged jobs such as feeding the machine and the straw stackers.

Horses also were replaced due to heat and the steady pull on the horsepower to keep the machine at proper speed. Four good pulling large horses were required to move the separator thresher to a new location. The horsepower unit required a good large team of horses to move to a new location and then there was a great deal of hand work to drive in the stakes with a large maul to secure the horsepower so it would not move out of place while the 12

horses were pulling on the sweeps.

How vividly I remember as the threshing machine was lined up, even the wind that day was a factor as to the clean side of the grain wagons for placing was determined by throwing a handful of chaff into the air for wind direction.

On a still morning, after the wind was tested the machine was placed in position and a level was placed on front and rear axles as well as the frame. Holes were dug under wheels to compensate for unlevel terrain as the machine had to be perfectly level for good clean threshing. The horsepower unit was set in front of the thresher and the two were connected by a tumbling rod covered by an 8 to 10 inch trough made of plank which was placed in a trench about a foot deep and covered with dirt to keep the horses from stumbling while they were walking in a circle pulling the horsepower sweeps to supply power. Wooden anchor bars were placed through the wheels of the horsepower and into its frame work and other anchoring large stakes were driven into the ground.

The six teams of horses when hitched to the horse power sweeps walked in a circle around the horse power and pulled through an arrangement of equalizers so that one team, by slowing down, could not throw their share of the load onto the other five teams. This would cause the machine to slow down so that the man on the horse power had to use his whip to pep up the lagging team to keep up the desired speed for the threshing machine.

Relating to the steam engine, the first ones were stationery and not used for



THIS IS THE WAY it was done 45 years ago. The days of threshing time on the farm are long gone, lingering only in memory. This photo was submitted to the "Historical Review"

by W. Grover Benischek of Olin. It shows Chris Benischek on the steamer in 1933.

Horse power gives way to the steam engine--

reshing. Then the portables were moved with horses and later around the 1880s they moved under their own power by traction and also pulled the grain separator to each location.

During this same era, threshing machines with self-feeders and automatic band cutters were introduced. This improvement eliminated the work of several men and in a few years most of the machines had a new device called the swinging stacker or blower which was another labor saver.

Some of the names of the most popular threshing machines and steam engines were J. I. Case, Russel, Gear Scott, Aultman Taylor, Wood Brothers, Minneapolis Moline, Twin City, Avery Yellow Fellow, McCormick, Nichols Shepard Red River Special, Frick, Peeves, Buffalo Pitts, Hart Parr, Rumley, Huber and Port Huron. With this advent came agitation for better roads, as they desired to move this heavy equipment in safety as the flimsy bridges were a hazard in crossing.

The going price for threshing per bushel was, Oats 2 - 2½ cents; Barley 3 cents, Wheat 4 cents, Timothy 20 cents, which was threshed later after the grain was first threshed. Later in the 1900s, the cost was increased to Oat 4-5 cents per bushel and wheat production was discontinued due to chintz bug infestation.

Threshing timothy, there was also a change of concaves and different finer mesh sieves were installed in the separator and a canvas was placed on the ground beneath the feeder, also canvas was spread on the floor of the bundle racks, later on this crop was also discontinued. My father also possessed a Birdsell Clover Huller as clover was grown extensively and was hulled in October when it was exceptionally dry and the canvas method was used.

I must stress the importance of the water carrier; usually being the children of the farmer where the threshing took place, or the neighborhood boys, as they were very active on the job due to compensation received. For transportation they rode a pony otherwise walked.

They used an earthenware gallon jug wrapped with burlap which was kept moist and seemed to have a cooling effect and kept the water cooler longer. An old hame strap from a horse harness was run through the handle of the jug and was easier to carry or it could be hung on the saddle horn.

It was a real satisfaction to give a thirsty man a cool drink of water, so the water boy was very important. The threshing session lasted from two to three weeks depending on the size of machine and the weather. It required from 22 to 28 men and was one of the most enjoyed social events of the year as it brought all the neighborhood families, regardless of economic status, reli-

gions, beliefs, or color, to work, visit and eat together, and the women tried to out do each other in setting up fine dinners.

We knew that threshing time was near when dad took a team and wagon to town and brought back a load of coal, the only time we ever used coal was to fire the steam engine, that furnished power for the threshing rig. There was quite a bit involved to get ready to thresh. We used a team and slip scraper to fill in low places and holes in the driveways and lanes and to build up the approaches to the grain bins.

We were always glad to see threshing time come as it usually meant the end of the busy season of harvesting and gave us the opportunity to get together with friends and neighbors and while it was hard work, there was usually plenty of help and it meant good food at its best and excitement.

When our threshing was scheduled, that day or two were busy ones, extra bread had been baked perhaps a dozen loaves, large batch of Kolaches and other pastry was baked, also pie shells were readied for soft pies to be filled early in the morning and baked. The gardens furnished the vegetables and about five gallons of potatoes were dug.

The role of the kitchen was almost as important as that of the threshing crew to be assembled. Often there was almost as much kitchen help as threshers and it was not uncommon to feed around 40 or more adults including cooks and additional smaller children.

The day prior to threshing, the dining room table was pulled out and extended to full length for full eating capacity. The men were fed in two settings, finally, the ladies turn came for eating, there was hearty chatter concerning funny incidents with some jokes and laughter. The conversation was interspersed with compliments to the hostess on the goodness of her food, but being typical cooks, food prepared by another was always more enjoyable.

Appreciation always has made hard work less burdensome and some of the men expressed their thanks or praise for the bounteous meal as they left. The fly swatter was also put to use in the dining room and at times when doors were being used continuously the flies were beyond swatter eradication and the ladies had a fly herding session.

Aprons came off, or towels were grabbed and they closed in on the flies by waving these items furiously while aiming them toward the door. Fast action by the door guardian let out the hordes being chased. Repetition of this act took care of the problem and eased the hostess from concern for her table.

Generally, the only "running water" available was that in the buckets if the

carrier could manage to retain any of the precious liquid while running from the well back to the house. Earlier, the men's hand washing needs had to be laid out too. Large wash tubs were set in the sun and filled with water so that by noon it was warmed for the clean up in a shady spot near a wooden bench or two, old chairs probably without their back supports were set with tin or porcelain wash basins and a few bars of soap, sometimes homemade. Sometimes the outside porch floor or a cement ledge replaced the chairs and benches. A large supply of hand towels, sometimes handmade were hung on the shed, nail in a post or even a tree trunk and combs were handy.

I think back to those days and wonder how the homemakers managed so well without the many modern conveniences of today. Electricity hadn't been made available to the farms until R.E.A. in about the year 1936 and later installed facilities. The cooking was done mainly on a large cast iron wood burning range which required a great deal of skill to achieve a steady and even burning heat and every house wife was concerned that the right size and kind of wood was available as she prepared the threshers meals.

Lacking the convenience of the ice box, the home churned butter was stored in a covered container and placed in the outside well put leading into the water reservoir, if available, where it would be cooled by running well water and sometimes placed in a pail and lowered by a rope into the well or stored on the dirt floored basement of the house.

In the early days much of the grain was stacked because of the shortage of machines. The stacks went through a sweat and this was claimed to produce a higher quality of grain. The stacks were arranged in groups of four so there would be two stacks on each side of the machine. The bundles from each of the four stacks could be pitched into the machine before it would have to be moved and re-set. Making grain stacks from bundles was an art in itself as it required much skill to make the round conical stack and keep it high enough in the center and place the butts of the bundles that were on the outside in such a position so they would shed water and then on completion a long round sharp stick was stuck in the top to keep the last bundles on top of the stack in place and from blowing off. With stacked grain the threshing could be delayed with less help and done in late fall if necessary.

The water hauler's duty was to haul water for the thirsty steam engine with a large steel enclosed tank mounted on a four wheel steel wheeled wagon drawn by two horses. A large hand operated cylinder pump was hand operated and mounted on top of the water tank. The pump handle

Later harvest possible with stacked grain --

was made of a large round piece of hickory or oak about three feet long and required a very good muscular man to fill the tank and avoid a delay in hauling water to the steam engine.

The three-inch rubber hose was usually placed in a stock tank and the water was pumped by the hand operated pump into the water wagon. If the wind did not blow enough to efficiently run the windmill that pumped the water into the stock tank a gasoline engine usually 1 cylinder turned a machine called a pump jack which pumped the water into the tank. Sometimes water was pumped from a creek, but this was a last resort due to dirty water possibly getting into the engine boiler.

A 32 x 50 inch threshing machine required eight bundle racks and four pitchers and larger machines up to 54" required ten to twelve bundle racks and 6 field pitchers, all depending upon the distance of hauling to the separator. An experienced man pitching bundles placing heads first was an asset to the man building the load of bundles on the rack. Two to three grain wagons were used to haul the threshed grain to the granary. As the grain had to be scooped by hand an additional two men called spike shovelers were used to scoop the grain into the bins of the granary and the grain also had to be scooped to the far side of the bin so it could be filled. The spike shovelers alternated to shovel grain off the wagons and scoop to the rear of the bin as there were no elevators at this time.

The straw from the threshed grain was usually stacked requiring three or four men with thorough experience and skill to build a good straw stack by tramping the middle repeatedly with an abundance of straw to make a good stack that would shed water and prevent spoilage. It took hardy souls to stack the straw as it was a dirty and usually hot job and each one wore a colored handkerchief around his neck to keep some of the chaff and sharp stickers from going under the shirt as there was a great deal of discomfort from the dirt, dust, chaff and sweat from the hard work, but they still took great pride in building a neat straw stack.

Later in the Twenties the introduction of the gasoline tractor marked the end of the steam era in threshing. The farm tractor was cheaper to buy and easier to operate than the steam engine. Some of the glamor of threshing was lost with the passing of the steam engine and thresher but the change was welcomed by most farmers and their wives because of the lighter work load.

The advent of the combine, which eliminated the need for the binder and the threshing machine was the final "blow" to the threshing industry. The small grain harvest of today is much simpler than fifty

to ninety years ago, but those men who remember the excitement as this "writer" of the good old harvest seasons, will always look back on it with a certain nostalgia and will tell stories to their grandchildren of the "good old days" when men were men and steam was king. In reality, it was really a time in history that progress and so called improvement spoiled the neighborly acts and duties most farmers enjoyed at that time, even the women enjoyed going to help prepare the meals.

Because I was born and raised in another county, the threshing ring was something unique and fascinating to me. It was a cooperative way of getting a big job done, but it was much more than that as it was a friendship builder, par excellence. It was typically American which our fathers and forefathers laid the foundation and guidance which this generation should cherish to the utmost, the neighborly spirit.

It was truly wonderful and I disliked very much to see it pass out of existence. What a soothing sensational feeling of contentment one had driving the countryside observing cleaned up fields and the straw piles gracing the farmsteads and landmarks, proof that the threshing season was over for another year. At the end of a busy day we retreated to the green grass of house yard, our respite of peace. The hot sun had gone down and the cool evening breezes fanned us to comfort, and we discussed the whole days episode.

In conclusion I can say that threshing was hard work, but we had a wonderful time when we were threshing and many straw hats were thrown in the machine on finishing the last job for the season, but when it was all over, one found it very lonesome following the scythe around the corn fields.

Finally in Conclusion

Fading away like the stars of the morning,
losing their light in the sun
So do we pass from the earth and its toiling,
only remembered by what we have done.

President's message

Dear Reader,

Surprise!! Issue 4 of Volume 4 is on time. We start Issue 1 of Volume 5 next, and it will also be out on time, about the last week of January 1979.

Most of the subscriptions run out with this issue, so if your copy is marked with an X in the box on front cover, be sure you get your renewal in without delay. We have no extra copies (or at best very few) so your chances of getting back issues you miss by failing to renew on time is pretty slim.

NOW, WE DO HAVE A PROBLEM, and only you can help. Unless we are able to maintain a subscription list of at least 500 subscribers (this simply covers the cost of producing the "Review"), we will find it necessary to discontinue printing it, and that would be a shame.

We have toyed with the idea of printing it on cheaper stock not printing any -- or as many pictures, both of which would reduce the cost of producing a little, but we have discarded the idea.

Most subscribers keep these issues bound for future generations in the family, and the fine grade of paper these are printed on, assure they will be legible many generations in the future. Our subscribers number about 275, so we must pick up at least another 225.

Here is where you can help. Urge friends, relatives, etc., to subscribe to the Review, and use a subscription to the Review as a gift at Christmas, birthdays, etc.

Unless you act fast, the Society will be in a bind for knowing exactly where we stand with our subscription list. The Society cannot afford to send reminders (with postage at the current level) so the only reminder you will get is the mark on front of your latest issue.

Please -- let's all turn to, and each of us find at least one new subscriber -- that's all it will take to keep the paper coming.

Sincerely
C. L. "Gus" Norlin
President, JCHS

P.S. Future issues will have more heretofore unpublished historical material.

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