

Curator's Corner . . .

By CLAUDE R. COOK

Visiting in a neighboring museum recently we saw a small cylinder and spike variety of grain thresher. It turned my thoughts to the valuable collection of threshers resident in our Historical building here in Des Moines. Probably nothing in Iowa history is more interesting or important than the evolution of harvesting grain and its preparation for food right on the farm or for the market.

Naturally, my experience does not go back to the "beginning" of threshers, but being born and raised on an Iowa farm gave me plenty of contact with threshing machines and threshing crews. Well does one remember the horsepower-driven thresher, when the threshing crew would "move in" to the farm just "before supper" and get ready to "set" the machine the next morning. Perhaps the boss would sleep in the house—and others, too, if room permitted—while some would roll up in a canvass and sleep near the machine, for it was considered a good idea to have someone "sleep" with the machine at night.

Just writing this makes me hungry as I remember the meals that went along with threshing. It was a major project in those days. Not one of these modern few-hour jobs where the threshing is done almost as the machine passes by. From the very first cutting until way into winter, threshing continued in the early eras. Wet weather breakdowns, cornhusking—all often combined to delay the day or night when the threshing crew would arrive.

Having worked at both ends of a threshing machine I can now almost feel a huskiness in my throat from the dust that used to roll up from the thresher. Always the endeavor was to "set with the wind." That was so it would not blow the dust from the strawstacking end. But the wind always changed. I am certain that a definite allergy to dust was derived from standing waist deep

in threshed straw, building a stack to be used for bedding—and I do mean bedding, for as soon as threshing was over every bed tick in our house was emptied of its old straw and filled with the fresh new product. And that night the children would behold an apparition resembling a Graf Zeppelin on every bed in the house. Then a running jump would land one in one of the mattresses and the job of settling that into a place of rest was something to talk about the next morning.

So we threshed not only to eat, but also to sleep. And from God-given soil and sunshine, and rain, snow, freezing and melting, man keeps on living. He who said, "from dust to dust" knew whereof he spoke.

FOR GOVERNOR OF IOWA

There are at least two applicants for that station from this territory in waiting at Washington, Philip Viele, of Fort Madison, and Joseph Hawkins, of Des Moines county, whose acquaintance in our territory would enable them, perhaps, the better to suit the office-seeking party; yet, for several reasons, we hope Gen. Wilson will succeed over them, and, for that matter, over any other that has been named in connection with that office. Viele is a deserter from the Democratic party, and Hawkins lacks the ability, the *Herald* claims. These men would increase the population of Iowa in a hurry, due to the horde of office seekers who would flock in. The *Herald* supports Wilson because coming from a conservative state where more labor for a living is required and less speculation is rife, the territory would grow more surely and safely, the editor thinks.—*Bloomington Herald*. (prior to date below.)

APPOINTMENTS FOR THE TERRITORY—It has been "given out" that a Mr. Chambers of Kentucky, who has been running on General Harrison's errands since the inauguration, is, or is to be appointed governor of Iowa, and a Mr. Stuhl, of Hagertown, Md., secretary; so Messrs. Viele and Hawkins can "hang up their fiddles."—*Bloomington Herald*, April 16, 1841, an anti-administration paper.

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