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## Twenty Years of an Iowa Farm Business 1860 - 1880

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During the mid 1850's, William Savage moved to Iowa from New York, bringing with him his wife Mary and four children, Rose, Mary, John and Thomas. An Englishman by birth and a tailor by craft, Savage purchased a small farm in Salem township, Henry County, Iowa. Here he tailored and farmed until his death in early 1877. The younger son, Thomas, died while serving in the Union Army during the Civil War. Much of the work and direction of the farm fell to John Savage, who remained at home continuously and inherited his father's interest in the farm on the death of William Savage. In 1862, then aged 24, John married Tacy Crew, a union which was to be blessed by a large family.

In some respects the Savage farm differed from the traditional picture of a holding occupied by an operator who devoted all of his time to its management. The tailoring craft occupied William Savage to a considerable extent and John typically taught the winter term of four months at one of the nearby schools. But actually we can regard the Savages as illustrative of a rather large number of mechanics, artisans, craftsmen or professionals who maintained farms. From late in 1860 at least, John Savage kept a rather detailed diary. As

he noted on the day of his marriage, "Whoever looks for sentiment in this book will find it a scarce article," but it does allow us to reconstruct many aspects of the Savage farm business.<sup>1</sup>

The farm which William Savage purchased in 1856 was 75 acres in size. In 1867 John Savage bought 40 acres of brush land, the "Wilson forty," adjacent to the original holding, for \$360, and three years later he acquired a five acre timber lot for \$25. This he held for a short time only. Late in 1879 he purchased the "Hockett farm," approximately 150 acres, of which about 100 were in cultivation. Almost every year during the 1860's and 1870's, John Savage rented additional crop land, varying from four to 40 acres, in the neighborhood, usually on the "Allen farm." Sometimes he paid the rent in cash—\$60 for 40 acres in 1862; sometimes one third of the crop was the consideration. In several years of the mid 1860's the Savages also rented pasturage for their flock of sheep during part of the season. The Savages put together their operating unit, therefore, partly by renting and partly by purchase. When John Savage acquired the Hocket farm he had for the first time more land than he could himself farm, so he rented part of it to a tenant, Samuel Smith.

The farmstead particularly changed greatly in appearance in the twenty years between 1860 and 1880. In 1860 we can visualize a farmstead where the original log cabin still stood, but where the family now occupied a small frame house. A picket fence surrounded a nearby garden. A rail fence enclosed the farm yard. A straw-covered pole stable provided winter shelter for the horse and two cows. Probably an open-fronted straw shed protected the sheep and other livestock in the winter time. In the late summer each year the Savages built a small rail pen for the fattening hogs, near a crude corn crib, although on occasion the hogs occupied the old log cabin. If a steer was to be fattened for slaughter it also occupied a pen in the barn yard, beginning in the late summer or early fall. In the appropriate seasons small stacks of wheat, oats, and hay, stood in or adjacent to the barn yard, protected from the farm stock by temporary rail fences. Simi-

<sup>1</sup> The quoted passage appears in the John Savage, "Diary," October 23, 1862, manuscript division, State Historical Building, Des Moines.

larly the Savages protected the corn fodder which they hauled to the farmstead during the fall and winter.

John Savage's diary reflected steady improvement at headquarters. A few years after his marriage to Tacy Crew, he employed a joiner to build a new house which was attached to the old one, providing more adequate living quarters for his own growing family and his mother and father. When he purchased a second horse in 1861, he built a more elaborate stable. As the number of cows grew on the farm, they too acquired their own stable, made from lumber, cut at a nearby saw mill. The roofing on these stables, however, was still straw. Year by year, a new pump, a smoke house, a granary, drive shed or corn crib appeared at the farmstead. Finally in 1871, the Savages hired a local builder to erect a barn 26 feet by 36 feet in dimensions. For this they paid him \$450, the builder "finding" all the materials but the foundation stone.

The appearance of the farm itself changed over time also as father and son brought more of the brush land under cultivation and removed the grubs from the older fields. In the 1860's the fencing was solely of worm rail fence, laid seven or eight rails high, with the conventional stakes and riders. Such fence enclosed the improved portion of the farm and father and son shifted the interior fencing as the need arose to protect the winter wheat after they had turned stock into the meadow in late summer or the stalk field in the late fall or winter. About 1870, John Savage may have planted some hedge fencing. In 1870 he was beginning to fence brush land for enclosed pasture. Until this time, much of the unimproved land had lain open to all of the neighborhood stock. John Savage had his first experience with wire fence in the late 1870's when one of the cows returned in the evening, slashed "as if cut with an axe," and he discovered that a neighbor had run a barbed wire fence along his property line through the timber.

We cannot work out a detailed summary of the labor utilized in the various farm enterprises from the information in the diary of John Savage. But the general routine of farm life is clear. The year 1861 can serve as an illustration. In January the Savages butchered their hogs for home use, cut rails and

fire wood in the timber and hauled "shock corn" from the field to the barn yard, where they husked it before feeding. In February the wood lot tasks and the drawing of fodder continued. During March the Savages continued to split rails and began to grub in ten acres of brush land which they proposed to break that spring. Lambing began in this month. In April they washed their apple trees with a solution of lye and lime, sowed oats, and altered the lambs. In this month, too, the task of tending stock at the yard lightened when father and son turned out the cattle and most of the pigs. In May they planted potatoes, sorghum and corn. Work on the ground to be broken continued as they cut hazel brush with scythe and axe, used the grub hoe and burned brush. At the same time they hauled rails from the timber and relaid the outer fence around their improved acreage to include the newly grubbed land. Just at the end of the month they washed the sheep. In June they sheared the sheep, worked out their road tax and broke the new patch of ground. But particularly in this month they plowed corn. Early in the next month they laid the corn by, and turned to haying and the wheat and oat harvest. In August the harvest ended, with oats and wheat safely stacked. Now they could haul manure to the winter wheat ground, plow for wheat, and, unusually early, pick some seed corn. In September, they planted their fall wheat, brought in the fattening hogs and penned them in the barnyard, built a new stable, repaired the barn yard fence, stripped and cut the sorghum for grinding and began to thresh in the neighborhood. In between these tasks they started to cut and shock corn. Local threshing continued in October, but now cutting and picking corn were their major tasks. In this month too they picked the apples and dug the potatoes. By November they had husked and fed out the standing corn and began to husk the corn which they had shocked earlier. In this month they drove the fat hogs to Salem for delivery to a buyer and hauled rails from the timber. December was open enough so that they could do a certain amount of grubbing. They split additional rails too to protect the fodder when brought to the farm yard because the cattle were now spending most of their time there. Some tasks of course, like going to the mill at



Oakland Mills or to market at Salem and Mount Pleasant were repeated at frequent intervals throughout the year.

Over the next twenty years the basic tasks would remain much the same, although emphasis changed somewhat. Although John Savage bought 40 acres of brush in 1867, he seems to have used it mainly for wood and pasture. He broke some of it for crop land, however, and there was still a certain amount of grubbing to be done in the older fields. In the intervals between tending crops and livestock, fencing occupied much of his time. Bit by bit father and son enclosed the open lands of the farm. Rails decayed in the older fences and found their way to the wood pile after the Savages had replaced them with new ones. Constantly it seemed, father and son were rearranging the interior division lines to conform to new crop boundaries. Different or new crops sometimes shifted the emphasis of the work load, as when the Savages grew buckwheat, rye or timothy for seed. In general, however, farm technology changed far more in the twenty years between 1860 and 1880 than did the farm tasks themselves.

From their fields in 1859, the Savage family gathered 85 bushels of wheat, 600 bushels of corn, 20 bushels of beans, 30 bushels of potatoes, and they cured three tons of hay. They sold \$10 worth of market truck, probably beans and potatoes, and \$25 worth of apples. To this list of crops John Savage would add oats in the early 1860's as a customary crop, and occasionally he and his father grew buckwheat or rye. Early in the 1860's they were seeding their meadows with timothy and in the late 1870's, John Savage threshed relatively large amounts of timothy seed. In 1859 they probably grew between five and ten acres of wheat and between 15 and 20 acres of corn. In 1880, John Savage listed an acreage of 24 acres of wheat, 60 acres of corn and 16 acres of oats. In the mid 1860's the Savages increased the size of their orchard and by 1880 listed 8 acres of bearing trees, a rather large farm orchard.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> The Federal Agricultural Censuses of 1860, 1870, and 1880 are available in manuscript at both the Iowa State Department of History and Archives in Des Moines and at the State Historical Society in Iowa City. The writer used the copies in Iowa City in this study.

Since the middle west evolved its own unique method of corn harvest, it is of some interest to examine the methods used on the Savage farm. Often father and son fed green ears to their hogs when they first penned the animals for fattening in August or September. As the crop ripened and the corn harvest proper began, the Savages cut a portion of the crop with corn knives and shocked it in the field. From this part of the crop they husked the grain either in the shock or after they had hauled it to the barn yard. The cut stalks provided corn fodder, the basic item in the winter diet of the cattle and sheep on the farm. Husking corn from the fodder was a common early morning task for John Savage before he set out to teach school in the winter months. From the remainder of their corn crop the Savages gathered the grain in the field, leaving the stalks standing. Their practice here varied during the twenty years between 1860 and 1880. Sometimes they husked the corn directly into the wagon, but on other occasions they merely snapped the corn off in the husk and cribbed it. If such corn was to be ground they undoubtedly husked it later; when it was destined for the hogs, it may well have reached the trough in jacket.

In 1860 William Savage reported one horse, two oxen, two milk cows, three other cattle, nine sheep and thirty swine. In 1861 John Savage purchased a mare, giving the farm a team of horses for the first time. The team, young Savage noted, could plow two acres a day, the yoke of oxen only one and a half. By purchase and natural increase the number of horses on the farm increased through the years, despite the occasional sale. John Savage reported six horses in the 1880 census. Similarly the numbers of the other kinds of livestock rose so that the 1880 census listed eight milk cows, 14 other cattle, 139 sheep and 86 swine.<sup>3</sup> During the Civil War years, the Savages increased the size of their flock of sheep rapidly in response to the high wool prices of those years. When wool prices declined John Savage decreased the size of his flock by slaughtering sheep for meat, and selling a number alive. During the mid 1870's, however, he once more increased the size of the flock.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

On occasion the management of the livestock on the Savage farm would have seemed highly casual to the Iowa farmer of today. The work stock, of course, the Savages held close to the farmstead, as they did the nursing ewes and lambs or sows with young litters for a time, but they might turn their other stock "into the road" to forage in the brush land of the neighborhood which lay open to all the local domestic animals. Their complaining offspring at the farmstead ordinarily brought the cows home for milking in the evening. When maternal affection waned during the summer, however, the cows might not appear and then John Savage or his father would have to spend a half day or more, looking for them. Like their woodland companions the Savage cattle bore distinguishing notches in their ears to aid in identifying them if they roamed far. The sheep and swine carried the same marks although on occasion the Savages painted them on the smaller animals. During late August or early September father or son rounded up the hogs in the woods and confined those to be fattened in a pen at the farmstead. Now also they brought in any sows, expected to farrow in the fall. During the fall the sheep and cattle might run in the enclosed meadow but with the definite onset of winter they spent their time in the stalk field or in the farm yard where they lived on straw, hay and particularly corn fodder. These rations the Savages might enrich with a few cobs of corn each day. It is clear that the farmers of Salem township were fencing their pastures during the 1860's and early 1870's, but the process was still incomplete at the end of the latter decade. The commons long persisted in Henry County.

John Savage was apparently rather successful in his management of livestock. More than half of the hogs on the farm died from hog cholera in 1863, but aside from this catastrophe, he made few references to animals lost by accident or disease. Some of the sheep contracted foot rot and Savage treated them with blue vitriol. Lambs on occasion received a dousing with tobacco water to control scab. The horses once suffered in an epidemic of vaguely-described "horse disease" but recovered. Savage was not a blooded stock man, although he did pay \$32.50 for a good buck in 1864 and purchased a Poland China boar during the late

1870's. Pure breds in general apparently did not interest him in this period at least. Despite the fact that the number of milk cows on the farm had risen to eight in 1880, he had still not purchased a herd sire, relying instead on his neighbor's beasts. Savage seems usually to have kept the maximum number of animals that the farm would support, gauging this so closely that he frequently had to buy small amounts of corn or other grain during the late winter or spring months.

These were years of striking changes in farm technology. The equipment on the farm in 1860 evidently included a buggy, a wagon, a plow and a harrow. William Savage valued the lot at \$75 for census purposes. In 1862 John Savage made a large sled for hauling in winter. The plow of course was a basic implement and the Savages bought two new walking field plows and one second hand field plow in the twenty years between 1860 and 1880. They evidently never owned a breaking plow. When John and his brother broke one of their plows "to pieces" in the hazel roots of a patch of new breaking in 1861, they borrowed a breaking plow from a neighbor to complete the task. In August of 1878 John Savage watched a trial of sulky plows on a nearby farm but was not impressed enough to purchase one. Although he borrowed a roller on occasion from neighbors, John Savage never purchased one in this period. Indeed he noted in his diary in 1879 that dragging a log across cloddy ground did more to pulverize it than a roller could. Not until 1878 did he add a riding cultivator to the plows and harrows with which he worked his land.

Like most of their neighbors, the Savages were planting their corn with hoes during the early 1860's, first marking the field with a shovel plow and a wooden marker. In the spring of 1865, they borrowed a corn planter from one of their neighbors but it was not until eight years later that they paid \$40 for a horse-drawn planter of their own. In 1864, John Savage paid \$30 for a two horse walking corn plow which plowed on both sides of the row at the same time. This implement, he believed, would allow closer and more careful cultivation than the variety of one horse corn plows then in use. But three years later he sold the two horse

implement for \$25 and bought a double shovel corn plow and a bar plow corn plow for a total of \$16. Not until 1874 would he buy another two horse corn plow.

The Savages approached the machinery of the small grains and the hay field with some circumspection. Despite the fact that they grew a respectable acreage of wheat, the Savages never did purchase a grain drill during this period. By 1870 at least they had begun to rent a drill from a neighbor who charged 75c when the drill left his shed and 25c for each acre sown. As the 1860's opened they were cutting their rather small hay crop with scythes and using the cradle for their small grain harvest. Not until 1865 did they hire a neighbor to cut their grass with his machine. Thereafter they usually engaged a local farmer to cut their hay for 75c per acre but they did not retire the cradles so quickly. In 1872 a neighbor cut most of their small grain acreage as well as the meadow at the same rate per acre. In the following year, John Savage became ill while cradling wheat and a custom reaper finished the job. Before the next grain harvest began, John Savage purchased a Manny combined reaper and mower in partnership with one of his close neighbors, splitting the \$185 purchase price equally with him.

Intermittently during this period the Savages borrowed a horse rake in haying time. Not until the late 1870's, however, did John Savage buy a hay rake. Judging by the price paid, \$6.00, it was evidently a simple revolver rather than a wire or iron toothed dump rake. Father and son stacked their hay near the farm yard or even within it. After they had built a barn they filled the loft with hay before stacking the remainder outside. The Savages of course bound the small grains by hand and shocked them in the field. Harvest was complete when they had safely stacked the sheaves at the farmstead and raised a rail fence around them to protect them from the farm livestock. Threshing was a custom operation and might take place at any time from the late summer through the early winter. The first machine mentioned in John Savage's diary was a two-horse power one which did the job rather poorly. At the end of the 1870's he noted that he had drawn up a supply of wood to fuel the thresher's "steamer."

Apparently John Savage recorded most major items of farm



income in his diary. Occasionally his description of a sale of butter or eggs was incomplete and he may well have omitted some minor transactions altogether. He seems to have been less careful in noting farm expenditures.

Table I\*  
Receipts and Expenditures on the Savage Farm  
1861

Farm Receipts		Farm Expenditures	
Hogs	\$214.93	Principal & interest	\$179.00
Apples	52.23	Mare	65.00
Pork & lard	15.32	Rails (1300)	10.40
Beef	6.26	Steer	10.00
Wool	5.60	Corn & grain	8.70
Chicken & eggs	1.85	Harness & halter	8.55
Hides	1.59	Farm tools	3.50
Butter	.32	Machinery repairs	2.00
		Taxes	??
	<hr/>		<hr/>
	\$298.09		\$287.00

1862

Farm Receipts		Farm Expenditures	
Cattle	\$103.00	Principal & interest	\$137.00
Hogs	101.72	Rent	60.00
Apples	98.17	New Plow	10.00
Wool	22.40	Threshing	6.50
Ox rent	.75	Machinery repairs	3.50
Wood	.25	Timothy & rye seed	3.12
		Taxes	??
	<hr/>		<hr/>
	\$326.29		\$220.20

1870

Farm Receipts		Farm Expenditures	
Hogs	\$154.25	Two cows	\$ 65.00
Cattle	97.00	Corn	52.60
Wool	70.08	Taxes	38.64
Wheat	37.70	Principal & interest	12.50
Butter & eggs	33.41	Machine rent	.12
Meat	18.92	Seed wheat	8.00
Wood	6.60	Labor harvest	
Miscellaneous		shearing	7.60
garden & orchard	5.95	Bridle	3.50
Potatoes	5.46	Lumber	3.45
Floor	4.50		
Road tax refund	3.00		
Tallow	1.10		
	<hr/>		<hr/>
	\$437.97		\$210.41

## 1880

Farm Receipts		Farm Expenditures	
Hogs	\$ 767.12	Principal & interest	\$185.03
Timothy seed	175.08	Corn	56.16
Wool	131.33	Taxes	28.48
Wheat	97.99	Boar	7.80
Cattle	60.00	Wages	5.60
Apples	17.54	Road tax	2.39
Hay	15.00	Machinery repairs	2.90
Potatoes	14.85		
Meat	11.43		
Oats	9.80		
Butter	9.40		
Haulage	1.73		
Calf's hide	.60		
<hr/>		<hr/>	
\$1,311.87		\$288.36	

\* Data in this and the following tables all appear in the John Savage "Diary," the gift of Miss Alice Savage, Salem, Iowa.

The income from hogs was usually the largest single item of income. Generally the Savages sold their fat hogs in one or two lots in December or early January. Local hog buyers from Salem and Mount Pleasant called at the farm during these weeks and made tentative offers. Occasionally when prices were depressed, William or John Savage had to go and seek the buyers. On delivery date the Savages, accompanied by a neighbor boy or two, drove the hogs to Salem or Mount Pleasant. On such trips they took the wagon along to carry any porkers that became mutinous along the way. Although they usually killed several hogs at the end of the feeding period for family use, the Savages never dressed any considerable number of hogs for sale, a common practice during the 1840's. They might, however, sell small amounts of fresh or cured meat.

Typically the Savages sold a few cattle each year also, and on occasion the income from this source rivalled that from hogs. Ordinarily they saved a couple of male calves from each year's calving to raise as steers and sold them at the age of two or three years. At times they might sell a cow or cow and calf also. Most of the buyers were local people evidently, but occasionally Illinois buyers purchased the steers. Typically, too, the Savages fitted one beef each year for slaughter during the winter months. From the early 1860's onward, the

income from wool was an important item in the farm revenues. Returning only \$5.60 in 1860, it added \$131.33 to farm income in 1880. Proportionately wool was most important during the late war and immediate post-war years. At 55c per pound, the wool brought \$114.95 in 1865. Local buyers ordinarily took the clip. In the post-war years and early seventies, the Savages sold numbers of wethers for mutton. Occasionally John Savage sold a horse, but the horses did not provide the steady source of income that the other kinds of farm livestock did.

The orchard was an important source of income during the early 1860's. From the crop of 1862, the Savages sold apples to the value of \$161.13. They found their market at Mt. Pleasant and Salem mainly, but on at least one occasion a local buyer shipped some of the Savage fruit to Nebraska for sale. During the 1870's particularly, the sales of grain and grass seed to the grain buyers of Salem and Mt. Pleasant became of more importance. Timothy seed especially was a money maker in 1880. Occasionally the Savages made small sales of corn or seed to neighboring farmers. The diary of John Savage was probably least complete in detailing receipts obtained from butter and eggs. Such sales, ordinarily made at Salem stores, the Savages customarily traded out for store goods and John may well have ignored transactions made by his father and mother. By the late 1860's, at least, butter and eggs were providing a significant addition to farm income.

Undoubtedly many other farmers in Illinois and Iowa operated farm businesses during the same years which were similar to that of the Savages. No doubt also the Savage business contrasted with that of many farmers in these states in the degree to which wool and particularly fruit added to farm revenue. We must remember also that the Savages derived additional returns from the younger man's "school money" and his father's skill as a tailor. During the early 1860's John Savage was obtaining \$90 for his services in the four-month winter school term. For most of the period his salary was \$140. Occasionally he received additional compensation for repairing the school house or supplying wood for the fire. In the 1870's for a time he received a small salary

as treasurer of the township's school board. We cannot know how much William Savage obtained from his tailoring work, but his son frequently noted that his father was sewing. Both father and son on occasion obtained small sums from contributing road work beyond their quota and from jury service. In 1864 William Savage regretted the circumstances which brought a payment of \$126.92 to him, representing the back pay and enlistment bounty of his son Thomas. Tacy Crew did not come with completely empty hands to her marriage, although we cannot know exactly the amount of money which she derived from her father's estate. Certainly she brought a heifer with her when she was married and there are a couple of references in her husband's diary to payments made by the executor of her father's will.

There are undoubtedly many gaps in the farm expenditures which John Savage noted in his diary. He makes no mention of paying service fees, for instance, although the Savages owned neither bull nor stallion. Taxes and threshing costs are missing from some of the yearly expenditures summarized in table I. This Table does, however, give us some idea of the kinds and amounts of expenditures which the Savages made on farm account. In many years expenditures for farm machinery, however, were considerably more than was the case in any of the four years summarized. Table II lists the major purchases of machinery on the Savage farm between 1860 and 1880.

Table II  
Farm Machinery Purchases

1861—plow (second hand)	\$ .50	1869—plow	16.00
1862—plow	10.00	1873—corn planter	40.00
—shovel plow	3.50	1874—corn plow-double shovel	\$ 5.50
1864—2 horse corn plow	30.00	—Manny reaper (½ int.)	92.50
1865—wagon	136.00	—Wier corn plow	25.00
1868—corn plow-double shovel	6.50	—buggy	127.50
—corn plow-bar plow	9.50	1876—harrow	
		1878—cultivator	20.00
		1879—horse rake	6.00

Property taxes never constituted a major expenditure for the Savages, but they did rise sharply during the early 1870's.

Table III

Savage	Property	Taxes
1863—\$10.56		1872—\$54.90
1864— 14.95		1873— 40.37
1865—		1874— 41.90
1866— 12.68		1875— 36.70
1867— 15.44		1876— 36.80
1868— 18.25		1877— 35.20
1869— 19.57		1878—
1870— 38.64		1879— 29.86
1871— 16.31		1880— 28.48

Wages did not constitute a major item in any of the years summarized in Table I, but occasionally the Savages hired skilled laborers to make improvements in the house, to build a barn, or to dig and wall a cistern. John Savage often hired neighbors, skilled as shearsmen to assist at sheep shearing, paying them at the rate of 7c per fleece. In a variety of ways, they obtained help with normal field work. They traded labor in haying, harvest and threshing with their closer neighbors and occasionally one of the neighbors worked out the price of a coat or other apparel which William Savage made for him.

An orphan lad of the neighborhood worked briefly for John Savage in the early 1870's, but was sent packing when he was discovered prowling the family sleeping quarters, in search, John Savage believed, for money. By 1878, John's eldest boy, Thomas, was large enough to begin helping his father on the farm. Although the Savages cut their own firewood, John was normally teaching school in the period when most of their neighbors split rails. As a result they hired neighbor lads to cut rails on a number of occasions. The price was 80c per hundred during the early 1860's; John Savage did not record the price of later agreements. Neighbor boys might be hired also to help in driving hogs or cattle to Salem or Mt. Pleasant for delivery to buyers. When John Savage purchased a second farm in 1879 he placed a tenant, Samuel Smith, upon it, who worked for him on occasion as well as paying share rent on the acreage directly under his control.

There are few references to store credit in John Savage's diary, although the family probably used it. Credit relation-



ships within and without the community appear in many entries, however. The county records do not make clear the exact details of the purchase of the original 75 acres in 1856. Evidently the note and mortgage which William Savage signed in lieu of part of the purchase price was not recorded. In 1859, however, Thomas LeFevre of Salem recorded a mortgage in which William Savage and wife Mary acknowledged indebtedness on the farm of \$300. If I interpret a cryptic diary note of John Savage correctly, William Savage very possibly paid about \$400 down on a purchase price of \$1,000. Interest on the LeFevre note was at the rate of 10% per annum and during the war years the Savages had to pay varying and sometimes quite substantial exchange rates in the process of sending money to Mrs. LeFevre who was living in New York at the time. By the spring of 1863, the Savages had cleared their 75 acre farm of debt. When John Savage purchased the "Wilson forty" for \$360 in 1867, he agreed to pay \$120 on January 1, 1869 and similar amounts at the beginning of the next two years, the rate of interest on unpaid principal to stand at 8% — a very generous level for the time. To complete the payments on this land he borrowed \$160 from a friend and neighbor in 1871. When he purchased the Hockett farm in 1879 for \$3250, John Savage again found it necessary to borrow money. From Throop & Cise, mortgage brokers of Mount Pleasant, he obtained \$1200 at 8% interest, payable annually, mortgaging 138 acres as security for this loan. This loan was payable in not less than two nor more than five years. He also borrowed \$500 from a neighbor for one year at 8% per annum, but gave no land mortgage in this transaction. To make up the remainder of the purchase price, he assumed Hockett's obligation of \$818.30 to an estate of which Hockett was executor, Savage taking over administration of the estate. Finally, John Savage gave Hockett a personal note for \$431.70. With the initial down payment of \$300 which he made from savings or current income, these obligations totalled the purchase price of \$3250.<sup>4</sup> It is obvious

<sup>4</sup> To supplement "Diary" entries on this subject the writer consulted the instruments filed in Henry County, "Deed Register," M,599; S,549; T,395; X,258; 33,104; and "Mortgage Register," B,506, all in the office of the Recorder, Henry County Court House, Mount Pleasant. The will of William Savage is in "Will Record" 1,448-49.

that the Savages considered debt to be a completely normal accompaniment of acquiring land.

On occasion John Savage borrowed money for other purposes than land purchase. In 1865 he borrowed \$150 from his brother-in-law to buy a mare and wagon. In 1872 and 1876 he mentions other short term loans of \$50 and \$60. A few smaller obligations represented credit extended to Savage by neighbors or businessmen in sale transactions, as when he bought a ram in 1864, paying \$17.50 down and giving a note of \$15.00 for the remainder. John Savage and his father also loaned money out to neighbors and business acquaintances or extended credit to them when they purchased farm products or livestock from them. Between 1864 and 1876 John Savage noted at least eight transactions which fell into these categories, usually involving sums which ranged from \$5 to \$70. A certain amount of petty lending and borrowing also went on in farm products—they might lend or borrow a wagon load or more of corn, subject to repayment with a few bushels extra when the next crop was harvested, or a few bushels of oats or wheat on similar terms.

For the period, the Savages were no doubt considered progressive farmers. In 1861 they spread 41 loads of manure on their fields and always used this product of the barnyard as wisely as possible. They traded seed wheat and corn with neighbors, evidently so that their strains would not "run out." They believed in bringing in new blood to their flock and did this by purchasing new bucks or exchanging rams with their neighbors. They attempted to fight borers in their orchard by washing the tree trunks with soap or a lye and lime solution, and on occasion at least by wrapping wool around the trunks "to keep the worms down which lay the eggs to produce the canker worms."<sup>5</sup> They were growing clover by 1871 at least. In the early sixties the family was subscribing to five papers or journals, including the *Rural New Yorker*, but John Savage's diary was matter of fact in the extreme about new developments. The entries give little clue as to the source of his ideas about them. When the Savages wished advice on the varieties of trees to plant in

<sup>5</sup> John Savage, "Diary," April 4, 1866.

their new orchard, John Savage went to a local orchardist for counsel. John Savage helped to organize a farmers' club in 1866 and subsequently he joined the Grange, although not until 1873. When his chapter decided to establish a farmers store, however, he became a member of the supervisory committee, where his school teaching skill in arithmetic was of considerable service to his neighbors. Father and son, however, were no doubt more conservative than many in acquiring new machinery.

Despite the great contrast between the cash income of the Savage farm in the 1860's and 1870's and that from an "average sized" Iowa farm of today, it is clear that the Savage farm was no subsistence operation. In the early years the Savages labored to retire the mortgage on the farm as rapidly as possible and thereafter they worked to enlarge and improve the farm at a rate that only commercial farmers could have achieved. Yet there were many aspects of life on the Savage farm that are missing on the Iowa farm of today. Behind the house stood the lye leach, that essential tool in making soap. The Savages pickled some of their meat and cured a portion of it in the smoke house of a neighbor before they built their own. Each year the sorghum patch provided a crop of cane which the Savages hauled to the mill and evaporator of a neighbor who specialized in preparing sorghum molasses and who took his pay in a share of the yield or at a charge of 20c per gallon. The wheat flour and corn meal which Tacy Savage used in cooking had been ground at Oakland Mills from wheat and corn raised on the Savage farm. Tacy Savage did not weave cloth ordinarily, but she did spin a portion of the coarser wool from the annual clip after John had retrieved it from a local carding mill. This yarn Tacy dyed herself with sumac berries and red oak bark and had some of it woven into cloth in the community. Through many of these years, however, she had a mechanical sewing machine, she did her wash in a mechanical washing machine and by the late 1870's could listen in the evening to one of her daughters playing a \$90 organ.

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