

## Growing Up On An Iowa Farm, 1897-1915

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*Those who lived on Iowa farms at the beginning of this century, and look back over seventy or more years, appreciate the tremendous changes which have taken place in farm life. Although many others have written about the years of transition, when we passed from the horse and buggy days to the machine age, it is hoped that this memoir will make a contribution toward preserving a picture of what life was like on an Iowa farm during the turn of the century.<sup>1</sup>*

### From Clinton County to Clinton Township

SO MANY PEOPLE MIGRATED from Clinton County, Iowa to Sac County during the last quarter of the nineteenth century that a township was named after the county from which they came. Among those who settled in Clinton Township was my father, Will Drury (1862-1916), who, with his friend Rob Wilson, crossed Iowa to Odebolt in the Fall of 1880. My father was eighteen years old on October 2 of that year; Rob was about four years older.

My grandfather, Thomas George Drury, with two older brothers and other relatives, emigrated from Lincolnshire, England, to Jackson County, Iowa in 1851. Thomas was then sixteen years old. The parents of the three Drury boys were deceased. On October 27, 1857, Thomas was married to Sarah Elizabeth Davis, to which union three children were born—Sarah Annette, John, and my father, Will. Shortly after his marriage Thomas bought forty acres of land about two miles north of Bryant in Deep Creek Township,

<sup>1</sup>I wish to acknowledge the help of the following persons in the preparation of this article: Laura Drury; my sisters, Clara and Sarah; my brother Billy, Mrs. Henry (Jean) Kjarsgaard of Newell, Iowa (the daughter of Rob and Lucy Wilson); Verne Fuchs, son of our neighbor, John Fuchs of Wapato, Washington; and Mrs. Reuben Hokanson, Sr. of Odebolt, Iowa.

Clinton County, for \$10 an acre. He became a naturalized citizen on March 12, 1860.

When Thomas bought his small farm, he was able to make a deposit of \$100 and to cover the balance with a note which called for 10% interest. The time came when his wife, Sarah, wanted a survey with a fringe on the top. This Thomas promised to buy as soon as he was able to make the last payment on his note. The day came, but before he could buy the carriage, he was killed in an accident in a sorghum mill. A day of rejoicing was turned into a day of sorrow. My grandmother was left with three small children, including my father, who was then only twenty-six days old. Somehow she managed to rear her children with the income from her forty-acre farm and possibly with help from relatives. I remember my grandmother as being a kindly Christian woman, with much self-reliance and strength of character.

#### **My Father's Farms**

According to a family tradition, sometime probably in the Spring or Summer of 1880, a land salesman from Sioux City visited Clinton County extolling the excellence of the virgin soil in Sac County. My father, then seventeen, was fascinated by the glowing pictures of the western prairie paradise painted by the salesman. So likewise was his close friend, Rob Wilson, a member of the James Wilson family which had emigrated from Glasgow, Scotland, and had settled near the Drurys in Clinton County. The two decided to move to Sac County.

By this time, Will had fallen in love with Sarah Wilson, Rob's youngest sister. After giving assurances that he would return and claim her for his bride after he had gotten settled, he and Rob loaded their possessions onto a wagon and left for western Iowa sometime in the Fall of 1880. They followed the road across Iowa which later became Highway 30. The trek across the state probably took them from ten to fourteen days. The two young men walked alongside their wagon for most of the way. They arrived in Odebolt on a Saturday morning.

When my father first saw the 160 acres in the southwest corner of section 5 of Clinton Township on which he had taken an option, he found the "improvements" far short of what had been described by the salesman. The barn was nothing more than a shed covered with straw for a makeshift roof; the well needed cleaning and

relining; the house had a door that did not fit, steps that were broken, a chimney that did not draw, and a floor that needed repair. All this was disheartening. The excellence of the soil, however, more than compensated for my father's disappointment in the condition of the buildings.<sup>2</sup>

My father and Rob Wilson "batched" for at least two years, often sharing one another's cooking. During these years, Will was busy cultivating his farm, improving his buildings, taking part in the developing community. Shortly after the two young men had settled on their farms, they attended a public meeting of the local school board. Although neither was married, both were elected to an office, Will as secretary of the Board, and Rob as treasurer. This was the beginning of my father's interest in public affairs, an interest which he pursued throughout the remainder of his life.<sup>3</sup>

In the late Fall of 1882, my father (then twenty years old) returned to Clinton County where he and Sarah Wilson were married on December 28. Sarah was born on October 15, 1862 and was only a few days younger than her bridegroom. They had four children: Maude Leone, born April 21, 1884; Millard Wilson, born April 21, 1887; Blanche Annette, born March 21, 1892; and Clara Mae, born June 26, 1894.

About 1882 Will's brother, John, and his mother moved from Clinton County to a farm nearby. John never married. He was interested in raising and fattening cattle, and bought 220 acres on the Boyer River a mile east of the farm Will owned and six miles directly south of the town of Early. For this he paid \$35 an acre.

When John Drury died on November 1, 1893, Will took over his brother's farm. He sold his first farm to Gerhard Lange for \$45 an acre in April 1895. At that time, it was the highest price ever paid for land in Sac County. Thus my father was able to sell his first farm for three times what he had paid for it about eleven years earlier. Will and Sarah, with their four children, moved to the Boyer River

<sup>2</sup>My father paid \$15 an acre for his quarter-section. He was able to make a deposit of \$200 and to cover the balance with a mortgage which called for 10% interest. The records in the County Clerk's office in Sac City show that both Will Drury and R. G. Wilson recorded their respective purchases on December 22, 1880.

<sup>3</sup>My father's opportunities to get an education were limited, a fact which he bemoaned in later years. He was elected to the Iowa State House of Representatives in 1906 and reelected in 1908. He once told me that he could have gone further in the political life of the state if he had been better educated.

farm probably sometime in the spring of 1895.

About this time, Will bought an unimproved quarter-section in Boyer Valley Township for \$25 an acre. The Boyer River also flowed through this farm, providing another ideal place to pasture cattle. With two farms two miles apart, Will then owned 380 acres of prime Iowa land. Being unable to pay cash for all of his holdings, he was forced to go into debt. This he never regretted.

In the late Spring of 1895, Sarah, with her year-old daughter Clara, returned to her parental home in Clinton County for a visit. There she was stricken with appendicitis and died on June 5. My father, left with four small children, all under the age of eleven, turned to his mother for help. Grandmother Drury moved into the home, kept house, and cared for the children for nearly two years.

My father remarried in 1897. His bride was Mae Charity Dell of Buffalo, New York.<sup>4</sup> Six children were born to this union: Clifford Merrill, November 7, 1897; Grover Eldridge, August 18, 1899; William Edward, March 5, 1901; Sarah Miriam, April 2, 1904; and twins, Howard John and Homer Thomas, June 12, 1908. All of these children were born on the Boyer farm.

My father's second farm was located on the southern side of a gentle slope about one-quarter of a mile west of the Boyer River. The house had been erected in 1874 by a George Martin. The main part had two stories with a covered porch which extended the length of the building on the south side. There were three bedrooms upstairs under the gabled roof, and a hall. With two beds in the largest room, and with two small children sleeping on a cot in the hall, the upstairs could accommodate eight or nine at night. Downstairs was the sitting room, which we called the parlor, a small 10 x 10 foot bedroom, called the "spare room," and a storeroom or pantry from which a stairway led to a basement that had a dirt floor and dirt walls. The cellar was used for storage for such items as potatoes, apples, vegetables, and canned goods. We also took refuge in it when cyclones threatened. Adjoining this two-story part to the north was

<sup>4</sup>Mae Charity Dell was born near Niagara Falls, Canada on November 2, 1863. She received a good education, having been for a time a student in the normal school at Hamilton, Ontario. After Sarah's death, my father entered into a correspondence with Mae. She was then living in Buffalo. This led to their marriage in that city on January 26, 1897.

a one-story addition which contained a dining room, a second bedroom, a storeroom or sewing room, and a kitchen. According to my earliest recollections, we had to carry in our water from a hydrant near the kitchen door. A storage tank which held our water was on a higher level north of the house. I remember how happy we were when a sink was installed in a corner of the kitchen and running water was brought into the house. This house, still standing but now empty, is reported to be the oldest house in Clinton Township.



*Courtesy of Author*

*Aerial view of the Will Drury farm, 1948. The buildings shown which were standing in the Fall of 1915, from left to right, are cattle barn, horse barn, silo, wash-house and house, and garage. The other structures came later. The row of poplars marked the north side of the orchard.*

The approach to the house and barnyard was by a lane about thirty rods or nearly 500 feet long which was lined with soft maple trees whose branches interlaced high overhead. The lane began at the road which bordered the south side of the farm. Long before I had ever heard of a famous street in the theater district of London, England called Drury Lane, this driveway under a canopy of stately maple trees was the only Drury Lane I knew.



*Courtesy of Author*

*“Drury Lane” before the trees lining the drive were cut down for firewood by a disgruntled tenant in the winter of 1931-32.*

When my father took possession of this farm, it had two main unpainted buildings in addition to the house, a horse barn and a hog house. No doubt there were other smaller structures as corncribs, granaries, and a hen house. A privy was located about fifty yards from the house, near the hen house, in a grove of box-elder trees. My father's first major improvement was the erection of a barn which contained six double stalls for horses, a box-stall for a mare with a colt, and a haymow overhead. The roof on the north side of the barn extended over an inner driveway wide enough for us to drive in

a team of horses pulling a hayrack. On the other side of the driveway was a corncrib, a water tank, and two grain bins. Heavy doors at either end could be rolled shut in stormy or very cold weather. Thus we were able to water our horses without leading them to a trough outside.

My father's second major improvement was the building of a double corncrib, the south side of which contained bins for shelled corn and oats. The north crib was given over entirely to the storage of ear corn. The two cribs were joined by a roof which covered a driveway wide and long enough to accommodate a double-seated carriage and two single-seated buggies. In those days, corn picked by hand was stored with the grain still on the cob. Sometimes we would feed the ear corn to the cattle, but usually when a slack time came in the farm schedule, the corn would be shelled by a horse-powered corn sheller. My father would hire the owner of the machine to come on some specified day. He would bring a curious contraption of gears and pipes. The main part of the machinery would be fastened to the ground at some point about twenty feet from the corn sheller. The gears were surmounted by a platform about four feet in diameter. Out from under this platform extended three long arms to each of which would be hitched a team of horses. Also extending from the central gears was a pipe, called tumbling rods, at least two inches in diameter, which would rotate rapidly when the horses began their circular march. The pipe was connected at its other end with some gears in the corn sheller. A man would have to stand on the rotating platform with a long cattle whip with which he could hit any laggard horse. One could become so expert in the use of this whip that one could flick a fly from the flank of a horse twelve or more feet away. As the horses moved in their limited orbit, they had to step over the revolving pipe each time they passed it. Perhaps the diameter of the circle was some twenty-five feet. One of the by-products of shelling was a pile of corncobs. They were stored in the cobhouse, and eventually burned in the kitchen stove where they produced a rapid, hot fire.

Along the north side of our farmyard was a row of buildings which included another corncrib, a machine shed, a granary and tool shed, and the cobhouse. Just beyond these buildings, at the east end, was a rectangular building, the south end of which became a garage and the north end, the ice house. Next to this to the east was still another corncrib.

In 1901 a large cattle barn to the northwest of the main cluster of buildings was erected. The center section of this barn was a haymow. On either side were sheds which could accommodate at least 100 head of cattle, and at either end of the haymow were areas for as many hogs. My father had painted in large letters across the clerestory on the south side of the roof of this barn, so that all who passed by on the road could read, WEST RIVERSIDE FARM.

A previous owner of the Boyer River farm, perhaps George Martin, had planted a grove of box-elder trees on the south and west sides of the farmyard, and a row of stately Lombardy poplars across the north side to serve as windbreaks. Along the creek at the bottom of the lane were some cottonwood, willow, and plum trees. Two lilac bushes and a few cherry trees grew south of the house. The gentle slope which stretched from the south of the house to the grove of box-elders would have made a beautiful lawn if we had been able to keep the grass cut.

North of the farmyard buildings and south of the row of poplars were acres of apple trees including such common varieties as crab, Whitney, Dutchess, Russet, Baldwin, and Gravenstein. Several cottonwood trees grew around the house which provided much-appreciated shade during the hot summer days. There was also a row of box-elders along a short lane that led to the east pasture. Many of the country roads in Sac County were lined with trees in those days. The east side of our farm had trees for the full one-half mile. Today most of these roadside trees are gone.

Our groves and the orchard provided us with firewood. Each year my father would have the hired man and us boys clean out the dead trees and fallen branches. This wood was piled near the cobhouse and when a sufficient supply was on hand, a man was hired to come with a steam-powered buzz saw to cut it into stove lengths. The smaller pieces would be used in the kitchen stove, and the larger chunks in the pot-bellied Franklin stove in the dining-room. Corncobs were burned largely in the kitchen range.

Since we never sprayed our apple trees, we had wormy apples. This we took for granted. From the orchard we got crab apples for pickles and jelly. Other varieties were used for apple butter and apple sauce. Bushels of apples were peeled, sliced and then spread out on sheets on top of a corncrib to dry in the hot summer sun. Later these dried apples were cooked up into apple sauce. We had a cider press and in season had gallons of fresh apple cider. Although



the apples would be washed before being thrown into the hopper, no attempt was made to cut out the worms. Some of the cider was poured into a cask which was kept in the cellar in which there was mother-of-vinegar. In due time we had our vinegar.

We had no knowledge of modern methods of controlling insect pests. The only insecticide we used was a solution of paris green (a compound of copper acetate and arsenic) and water which we sprayed on our potato plants. Since this treatment was not always completely successful, my father would send us children into the potato patch to pick off the remaining potato bugs. We also had to pick off the caterpillars on the cabbage plants.

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Due to the unavailability of hospital accommodations during the birth of babies of farm wives, complications sometimes resulted in death. Such was the case for my mother. I well remember the night of June 12-13, 1908, when my twin brothers were born. Her labor pains began more than a week before they were expected, and a neighbor lady who had planned to be present during Mother's confinement, was not yet there. I was awakened in the late evening of June 12 by my father who was frantically calling my brother Millard and the hired man to get up, get a team of horses, and drive to get Mrs. Banta, who lived about a mile and a half away. I remember how he urged them to hurry, hurry. He had already called Dr. Farguahr of Early.

Before either Mrs. Banta or the doctor arrived, the babies were born. My father was alone at the time. The births took place in the spare room, which was off the parlor in the southwest corner of the house. I have been told that all of my mother's children were born in that room as well as my half-sister, Joyce. None of the country women of that day ever dreamed of going to a hospital or a maternity home for their confinement. Often a woman relative or a midwife attended the expectant mother, but sometimes the husband alone delivered the baby, or babies, as was the case when my twin brothers were born.

My mother failed to rally after giving birth to the twins. Complications set in which at the time was called blood poisoning; now we know that it was puerperal fever. A second doctor was called in for consultation, Dr. W. H. Townsend of Sac City, and a

professional midwife came from Odebolt. My Aunt Lucy, the widow of Rob Wilson, also came from Sac City. Added to the distress of those days was the realization that one of the twins, Homer, was not well. He possibly suffered some injury at birth. This physical handicap shortened his life and he died in his twenty-eighth year.

My mother died on Saturday afternoon, June 30, 1908. The funeral was held in the parlor of our home on the following Monday, with a Methodist minister, the Reverend George Wareham, officiating. The casket with some floral pieces stood in the corner of the room. As was the custom, the lid of the coffin was open. Relatives and friends crowded into the dining-room and parlor; others stood on the porch outside. Two parts of the service remain etched in my memory—the reading, "In my father's house are many mansions," and the singing by a quartet of young men from my mother's Sunday school class of the gospel hymn, "God be with you till we meet again."

Burial was in the family plot in the Odebolt cemetery. The procession of horse-drawn buggies, led by the hearse, took over two hours to cover the ten miles to the cemetery. I rode with my father in our two-seated carriage immediately after the hearse. I remember how once he remarked, "This is the second jewel I have laid away in the earth."

Following the funeral, my father made arrangements for the infant twins to be taken into the home of Mr. and Mrs. Alex Wilson, relatives of his first wife, who lived four miles from us. He also secured the services of a hired girl to help out with household work in our home. The main responsibility for this, however, rested on the shoulders of my sister Blanche, then sixteen years old. Since a hired man also lived with us, this meant that our table had to be set for at least ten persons three times a day.

Looking back over more than sixty years, my sister Clara, my brother Billy, and I realize how deep and lasting was the religious influence that my mother had upon us and on other members of the family. She was the one who stressed the importance of faithfulness in attendance at church and Sunday school; she took time either on Saturday afternoons or Sunday mornings to go over the Sunday school lesson with us; she induced my father to say grace at the table; and she heard the prayers of the smaller children each evening before tucking them into bed. As a four or five-year old boy, I remember once how she knelt by my bed and prayed that I would

grow up to be a minister.

My father was married for the third time on September 29, 1909. He and Laura Gathman exchanged vows at Clinton, Iowa. Laura had been born and reared in the vicinity of Early. They became the parents of two children: Joyce Jean, born on the farm on August 25, 1911, and Dean Allison, born in Early, December 16, 1915.

### Pre-electricity Days on the Farm

The coming of electricity and the combustion engine, as in automobiles and tractors, made a tremendous impact on farm life in Iowa. Only those who actually lived on a farm before or during the first decade of this century are able to appreciate the revolutionary changes which have taken place.

So far as I can recall, the first time electricity was used in our Boyer River farm home was in the telephone. I do not know when our first telephone was installed but it must have been about 1900 or shortly thereafter. The phone, fastened to the wall, had a mouthpiece at the end of a metal arm about ten inches long which could be lifted or lowered to adjust to the height of the speaker. Above the mouthpiece was a box containing an electric generator which was cranked when one wanted to alert the central operator or one of the parties using the same line. Below the mouthpiece was another box containing two dry batteries.

Each party on the line had his own signal. Ours was two short rings. Central was called by making one long ring. In case of an emergency as a fire in one of the farm buildings, an alert could be sounded to all on the line by a series of long rings. Of course, there was no privacy, for anyone along the line was free to listen in whenever he or she desired. Long distance calls were unknown in those days. If we needed to communicate with someone at a distance, we telegraphed. At that time every station master along the railroad was a telegraph operator.

It was dangerous to use the telephone during an electrical storm. Protective devices had not yet been invented or discovered to safeguard people using the phone at such a time. If a bolt of lightning should hit a telephone wire, the charge following the wire could suddenly emerge from the mouthpiece in someone's home as a flash of fire. I remember seeing one such flash leap out of our telephone five or more feet.

How did we get along on the farm in those pre-electricity days? We did so by using the skills and practices handed down from our forefathers through our grandparents and our parents; by working hard from early in the morning until, sometimes, late in the evening; and by accepting without complaint the lot which was ours. Not knowing of the marvelous labor-saving devices to come, we accepted without complaint the lot which was ours. This was the way things were to be; the way all of our neighbors lived. In spite of hard work and what many would now consider to be real hardships, we not only survived but indeed found life enjoyable. Looking back now over the past seventy years, I treasure my farm heritage. During those early formative years of life, I learned lessons and acquired habits which have been of inestimable value to me throughout my life.

#### **Our Farm—Almost Self-Sustaining in Food**

With the exception of such staples as sugar, flour, spices, and canned goods, we were able to raise or produce most of the food we needed. Our farm was largely self-sustaining. We raised our own vegetables, some of which we stored in the cellar for winter use such as potatoes, carrots, squash, cabbages, and turnips. We also stored such winter apples as Russets and Baldwins, but since many of these were wormy, they did not keep long. My father would supplement our limited supply with one or two barrels which he would buy at the Carlton store in Early.

We usually had at least one acre devoted to sweet corn, and what we did not eat in season, we dried by cutting the kernels from the cobs and drying them as we did the sliced apples. Since we had no pressure cooker, the women of the household did not try to can such items as peas and beans, but they did can bushels of tomatoes in one and two-quart Ball glass fruit jars. When available, my father would buy crates of peaches, pears, and berries which they would make into jams and sauces. For several years we had a good strawberry patch and this also provided fruit for the table or for canning.

Because of the abundance of small grain and corn on the premises, we were plagued with rats and mice. I remember that after milking, we would fill two basins with fresh milk for the ten or twelve cats we kept to help keep down the rodent population. Rats and mice would get into the cellar. In order to protect the food

there that was attractive to them, my father had made a wide swinging shelf which was suspended from the ceiling by iron chains. This prevented the rodents from having access to the items on the shelf. Of course, we also set traps.

In my boyhood we milked five or six cows which provided us with milk, cream, butter, and cottage (also called Dutch) cheese. My brothers and I were taught to milk by the time we were ten years old. According to my earliest recollections, the milk, when brought in from the cow barn, would be poured into flat basins and left standing for twelve hours for the cream to rise. This was then skimmed off and the milk, such as was not used in the home, was given to the hogs. I remember that there was a country creamery on the Zimmer place, about a mile east of where we lived. One day, when I was about five years old, I was riding with my brother Millard in a one-horse buggy when he was taking a five-gallon can of cream to the creamery. Since the roads in Sac County were five rods, or 82½ feet wide, there was plenty of space on either side of the main traveled path to permit one to drive on the grass when the main road was muddy or rough. This my brother was doing when an accident occurred. A row of telephone poles had just been erected on the grassy side used by my brother. Evidently he was unaware of them. The horse was running at a fast trot when he hit the first pole. The left front wheel went on the other side of the pole; the horse broke loose from the shafts and we were thrown out. I do not remember what happened to the can of cream. Incidentally, the recollection of this incident, which occurred in the summer of 1902, gives an approximate date when the telephone was coming to that part of our community.

So far as I can recall, the creamery on the Zimmer place did not continue very long. Later on we carried our cream to Early. I remember seeing piling in the Boyer River just south of our place which marked the site of an early gristmill. I was told that a flood had washed the mill away. Certainly it was not in operation during my boyhood.

About the time my mother died, my father bought an abandoned coal-shed from some school district and moved it to our home. He fixed it up with a cement floor and running water. He bought a one-cylinder gasoline engine which he installed to run a washing machine and a barrel churn. After we had this washhouse, he got a cold-water separator for the milk, which was an improve-

ment over the old method of letting the cream rise in shallow pans. The separator had an inner container which was surrounded by water. At the bottom and at the front was a spigot and a gauge. After the cream had risen, the skim milk was drained off. A few years later, my father bought a hand operated centrifugal separator. This permitted us to separate the cream from the milk right after milking.

The first churn that I remember being used in our home was tubular in shape, about thirty inches high, possibly fifteen inches in diameter at the top and somewhat wider at the base. A hole in the center of the lid was for the handle of a plunger which had a cross-piece of narrow boards at the bottom. Butter was churned by patiently moving the plunger up and down until butter was formed. This was a tiresome job. After my father installed the gasoline engine in the washhouse, he bought a barrel churn large enough to hold several gallons of cream. When connected with the engine, the churn would rotate, end over end, thus churning the butter.

Our flock of chickens must have numbered at least 200, mostly Plymouth Rocks. The chickens were not kept in a pen but were allowed to run freely over the farmyard to forage for themselves, except in winter months when we fed them. Although most of the chickens roosted and nested in the hen-house, some roosted in the trees and made their nests in the barn or under some of the buildings. A daily chore for us children was to gather the eggs. We referred to it as "hunting the eggs" for that was literally what was required. Although we had several rows of nests in the hen-house, some hens preferred laying their eggs under a building or in some odd place in the barn. I have a letter that I wrote to my father on April 4, 1909, when he was serving in the legislature in Des Moines, in which I stated that: "Last night we found sixty-three eggs." We carried our extra eggs to the Carlton store in Early in a twelve-dozen egg crate. I recall getting 11¢ a dozen for them in 1909.

Each spring the nesting instinct would induce many of the hens to start sitting on a nest even if it had but one egg, or even a glass egg. Sometimes when too many hens were trying to sit, we would discourage some by dunking them in the water trough. One or two experiences of this kind would stop the nesting urge. We tried raising ducks, geese, and turkeys but were not successful. We found it difficult to raise turkeys because we had no good place to keep them when it was rainy or cold and the baby turkeys often died when

exposed to inclement weather.

We had a beehive as did most of our neighbors, but I do not recall that we were successful in harvesting much honey. A rare delicacy which my mother especially enjoyed was fresh mushrooms which popped up in the pastures after a warm spring rain. She knew how to distinguish the edible mushroom from the poisonous toadstool.

Each winter after the ice in the Boyer River became eight or ten inches thick, we would cut the ice into blocks and store them in the icehouse. It had double walls that provided good insulation. We packed such old sawdust as we had around the ice. New sawdust, less than a year old, was not suitable. We supplemented the sawdust on hand with slough hay cut from the slough which ran across the northwest corner of the farm. This served very well as an insulating material. The harvested ice would usually last into August. We had an icebox in our pantry which would hold a modest sized chunk. The drip pan beneath the icebox had to be emptied once or twice a day.

With ice available, we often made ice-cream during the summer. What a treat it was for us children to lick the dasher after it had been pulled from the two-gallon container. No ice cream has ever tasted so delicious to me as the rich, creamy, vanilla-flavored ice cream we made on the farm. Pure cream was used and no air was pumped into the mixture which, so I have been told, is common in present day commercial methods of making ice cream.

With the coming of cold weather, my father would butcher a hog or sometimes a steer, provided we were able either to freeze the meat out-of-doors or share it with a neighbor. Since we had no smoke-house, father would make arrangements to have some hams or slabs of bacon smoked by a neighbor. The women rendered the fat into lard. I do not recall that we ever made pork sausage by stuffing the meat into casings, but some of our neighbors did. Instead, we partly fried some of the pork sausage and then placed it in large stone jars. Melted lard was poured over the sausage. The pork thus processed would keep for months. As a boy I learned the meaning of the old saying, "Eating high on the hog." Pork chops were literally "high on the hog" whereas "sow belly" was not.

If a steer was butchered, the hide was usually sent away to be cured, lined with cloth, and made into a lap robe for use in our open buggies in cold weather. I remember that we had two buffalo robes

which my father had purchased from some wandering Indians long before I was born.

Occasionally wild game was served at our table. My brother Millard enjoyed hunting ducks in season. Sometimes the migrating birds settled on the Boyer but it was most difficult to approach within shooting distance without being seen by them. A few prairie chickens were still in that area. Neither the Chinese nor the Hungarian pheasant had then been introduced into Iowa.

As boys, my brothers and I fished in the Boyer for bullheads and carp. Occasionally we would catch suckers. On several occasions one of our neighbors would come with a seine. We were told that seining was illegal, but we ventured to do so anyway. One evening we drew in more than fifty carp, some being ten or twelve inches long. They were not as tasty as the bullheads.

We had both red, or timber, and gray tree squirrels in our groves. Only once, as I recall, and that time at the suggestion of a hired man, did we kill any of these beautiful squirrels for a meat pie. Although our flock of pigeons must have included more than 100 birds, only rarely did we try eating squab.

Some of our neighbors had Concord grape vines, but we did not. We children were told that it was dangerous to swallow the seeds of the grape as to do so might cause appendicitis. Our neighbors, the A. L. Manleys, had some butternut trees and permitted my brothers and me to pick up the fallen nuts after they had ripened. Horseradish plants grew wild at the edges of some of the fields from which we made horseradish for our table. This was done by scraping each crooked root clean, grinding it in a meat grinder, and then mixing in some vinegar. Sometimes we sold the finished product to residents in Early for 10¢ a large glass.

All of our bread, pies, cakes, and cookies were home baked. I have nostalgic memories of the sweet fragrance of homemade bread when taken from the oven. Of course, the women had no oven thermometer and had to test the temperature by putting a hand in the oven from time to time when the dough was being baked. During the winter months, we often had buckwheat pancakes for breakfast. Old fashioned, or long cooking oatmeal, was a favorite breakfast dish for us boys. Since we lived in the midst of a great popcorn producing region, my father often had a field of popcorn. We children had all the popcorn we cared to pop. Balls made with the popped corn and karo syrup were a common treat at social events and festive



occasions. We used the empty karo syrup cans for our lunch pails when we attended school.

I remember that as long as my grandmother Drury lived, she would make soap each summer. Quantities of hog fat, lye, and perhaps some other ingredients were placed in a big black kettle which was hung over an open fire in the farmyard where the mixture was cooked until the soap was made. After my grandmother died on April 20, 1906, this project was discontinued.

Looking back on my boyhood days, I realize that we always ate well. Sometimes there was a lack of variety in our food and in winter months we did not have the fresh vegetables so available through the year in our markets today. I remember that our evening meal sometimes consisted of corn meal mush with corn syrup or thick potato soup with, of course, plenty of milk, home-made bread, and butter.

My father was a hospitable person who loved to entertain company especially on Sunday afternoons. Often our table, which seated twelve, had to be cleared and reset for a second serving. We children were the ones who had to wait. During the latter part of July and throughout August, our farm, garden, orchard, and poultry flock would provide such delectable items as new potatoes, sweet corn, tomatoes, new peas, young spring chickens, pie apples, and strawberries. No sweet corn is ever so tasty as that which is freshly picked. We planted peas in rows in the cornfield and, when they were ready, picked as much as a bushel basket full at one time. In my imagination I can picture dishes of creamed new peas and potatoes with blobs of home-made butter floating on the surface. No chicken is ever as tender as fried young spring chicken. For dessert there would be such items as angel-food cake, green apple pies, and home-made ice-cream with fresh strawberries. Such a combination of dishes provided a feast which can never be equalled in the most exclusive gourmet restaurant of today. Always connected with the preparation of such a feast and the inevitable cleaning up afterwards was the inordinate amount of work required of the women.

The endless chores both indoors and out in those pre-electricity days often made life a burden, but this was accepted philosophically as there seemed to be no alternative. The daily necessity of caring for the livestock meant that someone had to be on the job every day of the week, both morning and evening. This made it impossible for

the whole family to go away on a vacation or an outing which would last for more than a day. If, for instance, we drove the nine miles to Lake View to enjoy a few hours of fishing, boating, or bathing, we would have to be back home in time to milk the cows and care for the livestock.

Woman's work in the farm home was never done. The women were responsible for cooking the meals, washing the dishes, making the beds, baking bread, washing and ironing the clothes, churning the butter, sewing, cleaning house, caring for little children, and a multitude of other routine duties. Our supply of corncobs and wood did not meet all of our needs for fuel, so my father would buy some soft coal from time to time for use in the kitchen range and the heating stoves. The cobs made such a quick hot fire that they had to be constantly replenished. My brothers and I were responsible for keeping the box at the end of the stove well supplied with cobs and wood.

We did not have the luxury of a hot water tank which today is taken for granted in the average American home. Instead we had a reservoir attached to the end of the range which held about eight gallons of water. This was warmed by a pipe filled with water which ran through the firebox of the stove and then into the reservoir. The hot water circulating through the pipe warmed the water but never made it really hot. We always had a teakettle, large enough to hold at least a gallon of water, on top of the stove.

Monday was wash day and during cold weather this chore was carried on in the kitchen. My father had placed gutters along the south and west sides of the roof of the house so that the rain water drained into a cistern. This provided a supply of rain or soft water for washing, much to be preferred over the hard water that came from our well. All of the white clothes were first boiled in a ten-gallon oblong boiler which had a copper bottom and could thus be placed directly over the fire after the stove lids had been removed. After being boiled, the clothes would then be put into a hand-operated washing machine. By pushing a lever back and forth, the plunger inside the tub would be rotated. Usually my father or one of us boys was given this task. While one batch of white clothing was being washed, another lot would be boiling. The colored clothes were not boiled. Many pieces had to be starched: aprons, dresser scarfs, and men's white shirt collars.

Washing was followed by many tedious hours of ironing. The

flat-irons, also called sad-irons, had to be heated on top of the kitchen stove. The heat of the iron was tested by wetting a finger and touching the bottom of the iron. If it sizzled, the iron was hot enough. If not, more fuel had to be put into the stove and the iron reheated. Of course, on hot days without even a fan to blow out the hot air, the heat in the kitchen would become almost unbearable.

Once or twice a year, my father hired a seamstress to come and live in our home for a week or so in order to make shirts for the boys, dresses for the girls, and other articles of clothing. We had a Singer sewing machine which was operated by foot-power on a pedal beneath the machine.

Usually we children would be given our baths on Saturday evenings. One of the large galvanized tubs was placed on the kitchen floor. Water from the reservoir, supplemented by kettles of hot water from the stove, filled the tub to the desired level. Then beginning with the youngest and proceeding to the oldest, we would take turns—all using the same water. I suppose the adult members of the family took their baths in the late evenings after we children had gone to bed.

I remember that our hired men would take advantage of the bath tub in the barber shop in Early where a bath with plenty of hot water could be had for 25¢. In the summer months we boys would go swimming in the Boyer which for us was a most acceptable substitute for the bath in the tin tub. The river must have been polluted, as our cattle, and our neighbor's cattle in the pastures above us, would spend hours standing in the river.

In the spring of 1910 my father added two rooms to the north side of the kitchen—a pantry and a bathroom. What a great convenience these rooms proved to be, especially to have a toilet and a real bath tub in the house! A hot water tank was placed in the bath room which was linked up to the kitchen stove as the reservoir had been, but the firebox was too small to make the water hot. The tank should have been called a warm water tank.

The Franklin heating stoves in the dining-room and parlor burned chunks of wood and soft coal. The ashes from all of our stoves had to be removed at least once a week during the cold weather, and this usually caused dirt and dust. Also, occasionally the stovepipes had to be taken down and the soot shaken out. Another big improvement came to our home when our father bought a hard-coal heater, about 1908, for the parlor. This could swallow a

scuttle full of anthracite coal twice a day. The coal was poured into a round container from the top of the stove and it then gradually fed itself into the fire. Thus a steady fire burned continuously around the clock, providing much-appreciated comfort in cold weather. By leaving the stairway door open, some heat moved upward and made the bedrooms a little more comfortable.

Our coffee had to be ground in a hand-operated coffee grinder every morning. We used kerosene lamps and lanterns, and among the weekly chores of the women was that of refilling them with kerosene and washing the glass chimneys. So far as I remember, we had no lamps in the country school. If some evening event were to be held there, the neighbors brought their lanterns. Our church likewise depended on kerosene lamps until about 1905 when acetylene carbide lamps were installed.

Although some of our beds had mattresses, I recall that the beds in the upstairs rooms had ticks filled with straw. Periodically the contents of these ticks had to be replaced after the old straw had become so compressed as to be uncomfortable. Perhaps some of our neighbors who raised geese had feather beds, but this was an unknown luxury in the Drury home. Since the straw ticks provided little insulation from the cold, blankets were put over them before the bed was made.

Vacuum cleaners were then unknown, and it was a problem keeping our carpeted floors clean. The floors covered with linoleum, as in the kitchen, were scrubbed regularly, often by the women on their hands and knees. Rugs that were not nailed down were periodically taken outside, thrown over a clothes line, and beaten with a woven-wire carpet beater. We had a wall-to-wall carpet in the parlor which had the edges tacked to the floor. Underneath was a thin layer of straw. Every spring at housecleaning time, the rug was taken up and the dust beaten out. The old straw was removed, the floor swept and scrubbed, new straw was laid, and the carpet replaced.

The proximity of the house to the barns, where piles of manure accumulated during the winter months due to the daily cleaning of the horse and cow barns, meant that we were constantly plagued with flies. During the days when the women were canning fruit or making jams or jellies, the sweet fragrance of cooking lured hordes of flies that settled in clouds on the screen-doors or screen-windows. One could not enter the house without first

brushing away the flies and even so, some would always manage to fly in. Sometimes when the screen-door leading to the kitchen was almost black with flies, we would touch a match to a newspaper and sweep the screen with the blazing paper. This would burn the wings of the flies and they would then fall to the ground.

Inside the house sheets of sticky flypaper were scattered about to catch some of the pests. At times we tried chasing the flies out of an open door by several persons waving the yard-square dish cloths. Still a third method was used occasionally when, in the evening, the flies would cling upside down on the ceilings of the room. I remember my brother Millard taking a tin can from which the top had been neatly cut away, putting some kerosene in it, and while standing on a chair encircle a sleeping fly with the top of the can. Within a few seconds, the kerosene fumes would cause the fly to drop into the can. We were still pestered with flies even after the manure piles had been hauled out to the fields following the cutting of the oats.

Even as a woman's work in-doors was never done, so neither was a man's work out-of-doors ever done. The cows had to be milked twice a day, the livestock fed, the barns cleaned out, the fields cultivated, the fences kept in repair, and a never ending routine of other chores had to be performed. My father believed in keeping his children busy as soon as they were able to perform simple tasks. Depending upon the season of the year, we were usually up at 5:00 or 5:30 a.m. Our first duty was to light the fires in the kitchen and the dining-room stoves. Then we went outside to do the milking, feed and water the horses, and clean out the barns before breakfast.

Even before we were old enough to drive a team of horses pulling a one-row corn plow, we children were sent into the corn fields to pull morning-glories. This obnoxious weed would twist itself around a stalk of corn and if not pulled away would strangle it and thus prevent an ear of corn from developing. Since the corn plow could not eradicate the morning-glories growing close to the stalks, these had to be pulled away by hand.

My father aimed at raising all the corn and oats needed to feed or to fatten his livestock. When my brother Grover was nearly twelve and I thirteen, we together took a man's place in the fields and on the threshing crew. We learned how to shock the bundles of oats which the binder kicked out neatly tied with twine. Should the binder fail to tie a knot, we knew how to twist a handful of straw so

as to improvise a band strong enough to hold the bundle together. A shock was made by standing two bundles on end with the grain at the top and with them leaning together. Then a bundle would be placed at each open side, one at each of the four corners, and one on top. Thus each shock would contain nine bundles.

Sometimes the farmers would haul the bundles to a convenient site in the barnyard and place them in stacks close enough together so that a threshing machine could be brought in-between. My father followed the custom of leaving the shocks in the field and then when we threshed, we would have at least six men with hayracks bring in the bundles. A threshing crew would include from fourteen to eighteen men, depending in part on how far away the grain field was and where the threshed grain was to be taken. Neighbors came to help us, and we in turn helped them. Grover and I handled one of the hayracks and I marvel now how we at our tender ages were able to pitch a heavy bundle into the conveyor belt of the threshing machine. Since today the grain is threshed in the field when cut, the old-time steam-operated threshing machine is obsolete.

Of course feeding the threshers two meals a day was the responsibility of the womenfolk, who likewise sometimes called on neighboring women to help. The appetites of threshers have given rise to the saying: "Hungry as a thresher." The tables would be laden with a variety of meat dishes, vegetables, salads, home-made bread, pies, cakes, and puddings. My sister Sarah remembers how in the mid-afternoon when the threshing crew was at our place, the women carried baskets of sandwiches and jugs of lemonade out to the men. This was the equivalent of today's coffee break.

Before the days of the modern mechanical corn pickers, all corn was picked by hand. Side-boards about three or four feet high were fastened to the off-side of the wagon. A well-trained team would be started down a row already picked. The row next to the wagon wheels was also one that had been harvested. Then the picker took the next two rows. A right-handed man would have a hook fastened by a leather strap to the inside of his right palm. After grasping an ear of corn with his left hand, he would strike across the other side of the ear with the hook, thus pulling back the enveloping leaves. The remaining leaves were then jerked back by the left hand, and with a quick twist of the ear with the right hand, the ear would be broken from the stalk and thrown against the side-board and

dropped into the wagon. On command the team would move forward a few feet at a time. A good corn-picker could bring in 100 bushels a day.

### School Experiences

Most of Iowa, especially the northwestern part, has been laid out in square-mile sections, each containing about 640 acres. So regular was this checkerboard plan followed that correction lines had to be drawn across the state, east to west, and north to south, to allow for the curvature of the earth. One of these lines ran just north of Early westward through Correctionville which was on the line.

Clinton Township, where I lived as a boy, had thirty-six sections, divided into nine country school districts of four sections each. In the center of each of these districts was a one-room schoolhouse located on an acre of land. Each district was numbered beginning with No. 1 in the northwest corner of the township. We belonged to District No. 2. By this arrangement no child could be more than two miles from school. Of course, all children walked to school and by cutting across the fields, the children who lived two miles away could cut down the actual distance by about half-mile. Our home was only about a quarter-mile from the school. Occasionally, if a severe blizzard came, my father hitched a team to a bobsled and took the children home who lived farthest away.

I began my public school education in the fall of 1902, a few months before my fifth birthday. I recall how my teacher, Miss Elizabeth Merchant, would take me on her lap when teaching me my lessons. The number of pupils varied from year to year and also from season to season. Our lowest number was five and the most, perhaps, about twenty. In the winter months, some of the boys would be seventeen or eighteen years old. There were many German families in our community, some recent immigrants. I remember that two boys from the Toevs family who attended could not speak English. In spite of the great diversity in numbers, ages, and abilities, one teacher had to handle all grades in one room. The average pay for teachers then was about \$33 a month. Out of this he or she would have to pay board and room.

Our school had a small reed organ and, when we had a teacher or one of the older girls who could play it, we spent some time singing. Our songbooks were relics of the post Civil War days with such songs



*Courtesy of Author*

*District School #2, Clinton Township, Sac County. Photo taken in 1922.*

as "Tenting Tonight on the Old Camp Ground," "O Columbia, the Gem of the Ocean," and several of Stephen Foster's plaintive songs as "My Old Kentucky Home." Some of the songs, such as "Kind Words Can Never Die," and some of the mottoes in our copy books as "Kindness is to do and say the kindest things in the kindest way," were evidently aimed to inculcate high ideals of conduct.

Some of the first money I ever earned was when I was about ten years old. Our teacher drove out from Early each day, six miles. She paid me five cents a day to sweep out the schoolroom and, in cold weather, to build a fire so that it would be warm when she arrived. I got another five cents for taking her horse to our barn where it would be stabled for the day. After school I would get her horse and buggy and she would return to Early.

We had no well on the school grounds, so each day two of the boys were sent to the Manley home nearby to get a pail of drinking water. This we carried back by hanging the full pail from a stick thrust under the bail or handle. The water was then placed on a



bench near the door. A dipper hung from a nail nearby or, as was usually the case, was left in the pail. As I recall, if a pupil took more water in the dipper than he could drink, the part left over was simply poured back into the pail. In the springtime when the sap began flowing in the willow trees which grew along the banks of the Boyer, we boys took delight in making whistles out of the slender willow branches. I wonder if Iowa boys of today know how to make willow whistles.

Occasionally social gatherings were held at the school such as "box socials" which were designed to raise money for some special project. The women of the community, and especially the teenage girls, would prepare a delectable lunch, which was placed in a box that was decorated with colored tissue paper and ribbons. After a program the boxes would be sold by auction. The name of the one who donated the box was supposed to be a secret until the box was sold. When the purchaser opened the box he discovered the name of his partner. Human nature being what it is, a girl could easily indicate by some secret sign, known to her sweetheart, which box belonged to her. Some boxes sold for as much as \$1, the equivalent of a full day's pay as a farm laborer.

It was at one of these social gatherings that I heard for the first time an Edison phonograph which we called "a talking machine." This was a marvel almost beyond belief. Our neighbor, A. L. Manley, had purchased a phonograph and offered to share its joys with his neighbors. On the night when it was displayed, the schoolroom was packed. I remember that the machine had a long horn attached to the box which contained the spring mechanism. This had to be wound up each time a cylindrical record was played. Shortly afterwards my father bought a similar machine and a collection of thirty or more records which we played over and over again.

I passed the eighth grade examinations in the spring of 1909 when I was only eleven years old. This I was able to do as I had listened in our one-room schoolhouse to the recitations of the eighth graders during the previous year and hence was able to pass the tests. I enrolled that fall in the Early High School. My sister Clara had preceded me there by a year. Our father permitted us to board in town during the school days. We would go back home on Saturday and return to Early the following Monday.

I began keeping a diary on March 7, 1910, when I was a freshman in High School, but was most irregular in making entries.

On May 12th of that year I noted seeing the tail of Halley's comet, a remarkable astronomical display which attracted universal attention. On May 23rd, I wrote: "I am going to be good today." The next sentence revealed the reason for my resolve: "I am going to Sac City today. Maybe." In other words, I wanted to go with my father who was planning a trip to the county seat. This was a two-hour ride each way in the horse drawn buggy.

Beginning with the fall of 1910, my father felt that I was old enough to drive a horse to school, so Clara and I made the trip this way each school day except in the worst of the winter weather when we stayed with a family in Early. This meant that we had to be on the road before eight o'clock in the morning in order to drive the six miles, stable our horse, and get into school before 9:00 a.m. We rarely were able to get back home before 5:00 p.m. We had our usual chores to do both before and after going to school.

I will never forget the misery of driving into the face of a north wind when it was zero weather or below. Knowing that our feet would get cold, we would heat bricks on top of the kitchen stove, wrap them in newspapers, and put them in the buggy under the buffalo robe. These would help but the bricks would be cold long before we got to our destination.

The High School then had from thirty to thirty-five pupils with a faculty consisting of the principal, Mr. H. P. Trumbo, and one woman assistant. Classroom work was carried on in the main assembly room and one adjoining room. The eleventh and twelfth grades were combined and the work alternated year by year. Mr. Trumbo, now deceased, was a strict disciplinarian. He had a rubber hose in his office which he sometimes used with stinging effect on boys he felt deserved such a punishment. My father often told me that if I got a whipping at school, I would get another at home.

My sister Clara began teaching a country school in the spring of 1912 when she was only seventeen years old. Beginning that fall, my brother Grover joined me in driving back and forth to High School. My father bought a blind horse for us which had been trained as a trotter and perhaps had competed in county fair races before going blind. We called her Blindy. She was high-spirited and, when hitched to a buggy, was eager to start running at full speed. She put absolute confidence in the tight reins that we had to hold on her bridle. When we hitched her to a buggy, one of us had to hold her by the bridle while the other got seated and picked up the reins.

Then when the one who held her let her go, off she started and he would have to catch the rear end of the buggy as it went by, climb over the back, and be seated. Blindy could make the six-mile trip to Early in somewhat less than an hour.

### Christmas on the Farm

I suppose it is natural for all senior citizens to look back upon the Christmas observances of their childhood with nostalgia. We did not exchange Christmas cards in the days of my youth nor did we have the elaborate Christmas decorations so common in this generation. Evergreen trees back at the beginning of this century were scarce on the Iowa prairie and it was considered almost a sin to cut one for us as a Christmas tree. As a boy I knew nothing about the different species of the non-deciduous trees. To me every evergreen tree was a Christmas tree. So far as I can recall, we never had a Christmas tree in our home on the farm except once and that was when I was given a tree used in our school when it closed for the Christmas vacation.

We attended the Methodist Church at Pleasant Hill, located in the open country about two miles east of our home. This church was supported by about fifteen families who lived within a radius of about four miles. The white-painted building had a steeple, three narrow and relatively high gothic style windows on each side, an entrance vestibule, and a meeting room large enough to seat about seventy-five people. Another twenty-five could be seated by lowering wide boards, which had been folded into the walls, along the sides and back of the church. Of course when this was done, the side and back aisles were effectively blocked.

The church was heated by two large pot-bellied coal-burning stoves, one on either side. Sunday school was held beginning at 2:00 p.m. with the several classes clustered in various parts of the church. A preaching service was supposed to begin at 3:00 p.m., but the hour depended on the arrival of the minister who also served as pastor of the Wall Lake Methodist Church.

Christmas eve at the church was always one of the biggest events of the year for the children. Those in charge of the program always tried to get an evergreen tree but were not always successful. When no tree was available, a substitute was made by erecting a wooden arch on the platform which was about eight feet wide at the base and about ten feet high. Both the tree, when one was secured, and

the arch would be decorated with home-made ornaments as strings of popcorn and/or cranberries. Paper chains, made by the little children of the church out of strips of colored paper, were also used. If we had a tree, candles fastened to tin holders would be clamped onto the branches. Of course, we had no manufactured tinsel or fancy decorations so common today.

The families who attended our church had the custom of taking to the Christmas eve program some of the presents they intended giving to one another. These would be placed on the tree or under it. My parents always kept back some of their presents for us children so that there would be something to put into the stockings which we would hang after returning home from the church. The stockings would be hung from nails in the wainscoting on one of the walls of the dining-room. Presents too large for the stockings would be placed on the floor under them. Usually there would be a big orange at the bottom of each stocking, a real treat in those days.

A combination of circumstances has etched in my memory the events of Christmas eve 1911. I was then fourteen years old. A winter storm had laid a deep mantle of snow over the countryside and it was very cold. The whole family rode to church that evening in a large wagon-box which had been placed on bobsled runners. At least a foot of straw was thrown into the wagon-box on which most of the family sat well protected from the cold by buffalo and cattle robes and heavy horse-blankets. A few, including the driver, preferred to stand. Among those who made the trip to the church that evening was my stepmother, Laura, and her first-born, four-months-old Joyce. A clothes-basket filled with the beautifully wrapped presents was taken with us.

After having eaten an early supper and having taken care of all the evening chores, we left for the church about seven o'clock. In those days we never thought of locking the doors of our house when leaving. Vandalism and thieving on farm property were unknown, certainly in our community. Nobody stayed home on Christmas eve—the whole family including the baby, the hired man, and the hired girl—all went. We had one string of sleigh bells which was fastened to the harness of one of the horses.

The soft gliding of the bobsled over the snow, the tinkling of the bells, and the meeting along the road with the sleds of neighbors all bound for the church added to the subdued excitement each of us children felt. The white church with its high steeple burst into view

when we were about a quarter-mile distant. I recall how the three gothic windows were reflected like white shadows in the snow by the bright carbide lights from within. It was beautiful. After drawing up to the entrance, all got out of the sled except us older boys. The basket of presents was carried into the church. We boys had the responsibility of driving the horses into the open shed near the church and covering them with the horse-blankets. They would have to stand in the cold for several hours.

The church was crowded to capacity. The pile of presents under the tree grew as family after family brought their baskets. The program consisted of Christmas music and "pieces" which had been memorized and then recited by the Sunday school children. The younger the child, the greater the enjoyment to all but the child. In due time there was a lull in the program and then from the vestibule came the sound of sleigh bells. After the excitement within the church had been raised to the ultimate pitch, Santa Claus burst into the room carrying his traditional pack. He wore no fancy red suit, the trademark of department store Santa Clauses of today. Instead he had the racoon fur coat that the average farmer wore and a Santa Claus mask with its beard. But even that thin disguise sufficed—Santa Claus had come to the Pleasant Hill Methodist Church.

After some banter about his trip from the North Pole, Santa would go to the platform and empty his pack at the foot of the tree. He would then pick up the packages, one by one, read off the names of the recipients, and hand them to some boys who served as pages in the distribution of the gifts. Of course, everybody received something. That was the unwritten rule. At the close of the program, bags of candy were distributed, and soon the church was a mess with torn wrappers, empty boxes, and discarded decorations. There was always a contest among some of the boys and girls to see who could get the longest strings of popcorn from the tree or arch. Gradually the unwrapped presents were put back into their respective baskets. For a time there was confusion in the small vestibule as individual families struggled to put on their overshoes and overcoats. Sleds drew up to the door, were loaded, and then moved off into the night with the sleigh bells jingling again. Another Christmas eve had come and gone.

It was at this program that I got my first flashlight. What a novelty! Press a button and a light would shine! I hid it under my coat to get the contrast between light and darkness, pressed the

magic button, and stared into its shining eye. That evening on our way back home, my stepmother, who was carrying baby Joyce well wrapped in layers of blankets, suddenly became alarmed. She cried out that the baby was suffocating. She couldn't see the child. Someone thought of my flashlight. I was called upon to produce it which I did very reluctantly. I now present my apologies to my dear sister whose life at that time seemed far less important to me than the use of a little electricity in my flashlight battery. After due examination, the baby was found to be quite all right.

After I was nine years old, my parents favored me frequently with gifts of books at Christmas. These I greatly prized as books were scarce in our home and in the community. Among the first books I received was Jack London's *Call of the Wild* which my mother gave me at Christmas, 1906. This was a reprint of the first edition which appeared in 1903. Although only nine years old at the time, I read the book with great interest. On other Christmases, I received some of the historical novels by G. A. Henty which I devoured. Here I got my first love for history. My brothers and I subscribed to the *American Boy* which we greatly enjoyed.

#### Some Memorable "Firsts"

A number of new inventions, new machines, and new methods destined to transform farm life appeared during the first decade of this century. One day our neighbor, John Fuchs, who lived one-half mile to the south of us, telephoned us and invited my brothers and me to go to his place and take a ride in his new automobile. If I remember correctly, this was in the summer of 1908. The prospect of taking a ride in an automobile was exciting. We three ran the half-mile and I can remember how Grover and I, being older, outdistanced Billy who cried out in vain for us to wait for him. Our first ride in an automobile, a two-cylinder Reo which had no windshield, was an unforgettable experience.

Once when Mr. Fuchs was taking his wife, Elizabeth, known to her family as Lizzie, for a ride, a June bug so common in Iowa flew into her open mouth when she was talking or laughing and almost choked her to death before the bug could be gotten out. While gathering material for this article, I wrote to Vern Fuchs, the son of John, who lives with his wife Anna at Wapato, Washington, asking for confirmation regarding a second incident which involved the car. On February 24, 1973, Anna wrote to me: "Yes, Verne recalled the

incident when Dad Fuchs was driving the Reo across the farm, with Elizabeth, his wife, in the back seat. When she suddenly stopped telling him how to drive, he turned and found that a big stick had flown up in the air, and hit her on the head, and knocked her out." Today with our enclosed cars, this fortuitous method of silencing backseat drivers is no longer operative.

My father also bought a Reo, like that owned by our neighbors, a few months later. I recall that the car had brass sidelights, which burned kerosene, and brass headlights that burned carbide gas which came from a tank fastened to our left running-board. A long three-foot crank had to be inserted from the right side under the front seat to start the engine. Our car had a windshield, supported by brass rods, and top that folded back. Often in case of a sudden storm, the rain would come before we had time to raise the top and button on the side-curtains.

My father traded in the Reo on a four-cylinder Overland sometime in 1910. In this car the crank was in front under the radiator. About two years later, he got a Ford "run-about." All of these early cars were hard on spark plugs. We always had to carry some spares. Also, punctures were frequent as the country roads then seemed to have been sprinkled with nails. When a tire went flat, we would have to stop, take it off, patch the inner tube, replace the tire, and then pump it up by a hand pump. This was a laborious job. The demountable rims with a spare tire already pumped up were still in the future.

I learned to drive when I was about thirteen and I remember my father warning me that if ever he caught me going more than twenty-five miles an hour, I would not be permitted to drive anymore. The chugging, wheezing automobiles were frequent causes of horses hitched to buggies running away. When the driver of an automobile saw a team approaching, he was supposed to stop and let it pass. Sometimes he would have to get out of the car and lead the horses by the automobile.

I saw my first airplane at a Sac County fair. I have forgotten the date but think it was before 1910. It was a biplane. However the aviator refused to go up because a strong wind was blowing. Of course, this was a great disappointment to the crowd which had come to witness the event.

I remember that occasionally pedlars came walking through our community carrying heavy packs of miscellaneous sundries as bolts

of calico, needles, pins, thread, and similar items. Usually these men were recent immigrants from Europe. A Watkins medicine man made regular visits selling extracts and common medicines. My parents always had some of the Watkins "pain-relief" on hand. Whenever any of us children had a stomach ache, we got a spoonful of this medicine. Later I learned that it had a high alcoholic content and also some sedatives. This "pain relief" was a panacea for all manner of ailments. I do not remember that we ever had any such common remedies for headaches as aspirin in our home on the farm.

Occasionally "medicine-shows" came to Early. A tent large enough to seat about 150 people would be erected on some vacant lot where a stage presentation would be given, usually on a Saturday evening. I went one evening and saw Uncle Tom's Cabin, complete with several baying bloodhounds. Between acts, a smooth-talking salesman harangued the audience, extolling the merits of some bottled medicine that he was urging the people to buy. Evidently enough of this patented mixture was sold to make the shows financially profitable.

My father was a liberal Republican in politics and during the presidential campaign of 1912 supported Theodore Roosevelt. He was a friend of Henry Wallace, Sr., and subscribed to the *Wallace's Farmer*. My mother enjoyed this periodical especially because it carried an explanation of the coming Sunday's International Sunday school lessons. My father was progressive in adopting new methods of farming or feeding livestock. He built a cement-block silo in 1912 or 1913, one of the first to appear in the community.

We boys trapped muskrats and minks each fall and sometimes caught weasels (also called ermine if their fur had turned white in wintertime) and skunks. The dried and stretched pelts were sent to a firm in St. Louis for sale. One fall we received \$20 for our catch. Muskrat skins sold as low as 15¢ each, and I remember that once we got \$3 for a beautiful mink pelt which measured about three feet from tip to tip. I also made money by sponsoring a Larkin club of ten housewives, each of whom agreed to order one dollar's worth of Larkin products each month. From these endeavors, I was able to earn such rewards, called premiums, as a camera, a tent, and two hammocks.

I was graduated from High School in the spring of 1913. I was still wearing knickerbocker trousers with long black stockings, held up by an elastic band above the knee, and high button shoes. I was



then only fifteen. I was eager to go to college but my father felt that I was too young, so I spent the next year and a half working on the farm, doing a grown man's work.

I enrolled at Buena Vista College on November 30, 1914. Since I entered in the middle of the first semester, I could not take the usual Freshman courses; therefore I majored in work in the commercial department. There I learned touch typing which has been of great value to me throughout my life. At the beginning of the second semester, I joined the Freshman class, and went to summer school in 1916 and 1917 so that I was able to graduate with the class of 1918.

During my college years I visited home whenever possible. If weather or the condition of the roads made it inadvisable for anyone of the family to take me to Storm Lake by automobile, I would have to take the train. Even though Early was only fifteen miles south of Storm Lake, it took about four hours to make the rail journey either way. One would have to change trains and depots in Sac City. I often walked the two miles which separated the stations, carrying my suitcase.

The summer of 1915 was the last summer I spent on the home farm. In addition to helping with the usual farm work, I spent many days hauling gravel and spreading it on the dirt road bordering our farm to the east. The coming of the automobile had created a demand for better roads, first by having them graded and then by having them surfaced with gravel so that they could be used in rainy weather. This was hard work as the gravel had to be shovelled by hand onto the shallow wagon box. I earned 50¢ a load and was able to deliver four or five loads a day.

### The Death of my Father

After having lived on his Boyer River farm for twenty years, and after having brought it to a high degree of productivity, my father in the spring of 1915 decided to move to Early where he had purchased a grain elevator. One of the factors influencing his decision to move to town was his increasing ill health.

He began building a house for the family in Early sometime during the spring or early summer of 1915. Plans were made to rent the farm beginning in March 1916. The new house was ready for occupancy shortly before Thanksgiving. When I returned home on December 23rd for the Christmas vacation, I went to our new home in Early for the first time.

Upon my arrival, I learned to my surprise that I had a new baby brother named Dean Allison, born on December 16. No one had thought to tell me of his arrival. He was the last of the twelve children of Will Drury. It seemed strange to be back home again in surroundings entirely different from those on the farm. There were no more cows to milk, no livestock to feed, no stables to be cleaned out, and no need to go out-of-doors to do chores in stormy weather. Moreover, we had electricity in the house and a furnace in the basement. We had moved into a new age!

After the Christmas holidays, I returned to college. Early on Wednesday morning, February 9, 1916, I received a telephone call from home informing me that my father was seriously ill and telling me to return to Early as soon as possible. I caught the early train out of Storm Lake and was back home a little before noon. My father was then in a coma. He died about two o'clock in the afternoon in his 54th year.

# #

A family reunion was held at the Drury home in Early on Sunday, August 10, 1922 when twenty-eight gathered for dinner. This number included all twelve of the children of Will Drury—the first time we had been together since the death of our father in February 1916—the spouses of the older four who were married and their children. More than thirty relatives and friends came in the afternoon so that altogether about fifty were there. That afternoon the twelve children and Mrs. Laura Drury had their picture taken, the only time this was done.

I was married on November 17, 1922 to Miss Miriam Leyrer of Berkeley, California, and the following March we sailed for Shanghai, China, where I served as pastor of the Community (American) Church for more than four years. Our first-born, Robert Merrill, was born on June 8, 1925. In June 1927 we three left for Edinburgh, Scotland, where I spent an academic year studying in the University for my doctor's degree in church history. We returned to the States in June 1928.

On our way back to California, we visited my relatives in Iowa. This time when I returned to the farm to show my wife where I had lived as a boy, I was impressed by the feeling that everything had shrunken. The house, where so many of us had lived, seemed so

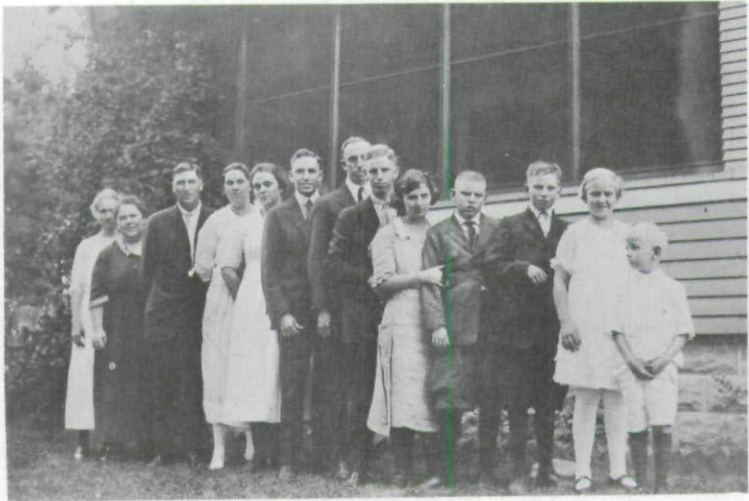
small. The barn, which once seemed so big, had likewise become smaller. I then became aware that changing farming conditions were making some farm buildings obsolete. Some of the corncribs and other out buildings had been torn down. The big scales were gone. The tenants concentrated on cultivating the soil and not on feeding livestock, with the result that herds of cattle and hogs were no longer to be found in the pastures and yards. Things were different. A farmyard that once throbbed with activities was quiet and almost deserted.

Each time that I have returned to Iowa during the intervening years, I have always gone back to the old home place on the farm. Mr. and Mrs. Reuben Hokanson, Sr., tenants for thirty-seven years beginning in 1932, were always most hospitable in allowing me to visit.

As I grew older and noted the changes taking place on the farms of Iowa, I realized more and more that I had lived at the end of an era and the beginning of a new. Farm land has increased tremendously in price. My father bought land for \$15 an acre in 1880. Now Iowa land sells for as much as \$700 an acre if not more. During the first decade of this century, one man could farm 160 acres if he was not at the same time fattening livestock. Now with modern machinery, one man can farm a whole section. This means that many farm buildings are now standing empty. The last time I drove out to my home south of Early, I found that no one lived there and that a fence had been built across the driveway.



*Courtesy of Author  
Clifford M. Drury*



*Courtesy of Author*  
*Mrs. Laura Drury and the twelve children of Will Drury. Photo taken at a family reunion held at the Drury home in Early in August of 1922. From left to right are Maud, Millard, Blanche, Clara, Clifford, Grover, Will, Sarah, Homer, Howard, Joyce, Dean.*

The establishment of central schools spelled the doom of the old one-room country schools. The schoolhouse which once stood in the center of District No. 2, Clinton Township, is gone and the former school yard is now a part of a cornfield. So likewise, the coming of the automobile and good roads doomed the country churches in most instances. Pleasant Hill Methodist Church is gone and the land there is now part of a farm. The rows of trees which once were so common along the country roads are gone. The introduction of pesticides has killed many of the birds which were so common in my youth. With the high cost of farm machinery, farmers must protect themselves from possible thievery by having high spotlights in the center of their farm buildings.

The introduction of modern machinery has made the horse obsolete, and with its passing went the large horse barns with their spacious haymows. With the coming of electricity to the farm, the farm homes of today can be as modern and as comfortable as any in the city. Today, few farmers even bother to keep a flock of chickens. They buy their eggs along with milk and even vegetables.

No longer does an Iowa farmer try to make his farm almost self-sufficient in the production of food. With the high price of machinery and labor, it simply does not pay to follow old-fashioned methods.

On a return visit to Early in October 1969, the Hokansons invited me to spend a night with them on the farm. I gladly accepted and slept that night in the "spare room" where I had been born nearly seven-one years before. When I awoke the next morning I listened for some of the barnyard sounds which I remembered hearing as a boy, the mooing of the cows and crowing of the roosters, but all was still. Times had changed.

Breakfast was served that morning in a breakfast nook in the kitchen—in the same room where as a little boy I took my weekly bath in a galvanized tub on the floor. Every room of the house, now about 100 years old, had memories. Life now is so much easier with the coming of electricity. People have more leisure. A few miles south of the old Drury place is a beautiful golf course—out in the country! Of course, it is supported by members who come from the surrounding towns.

The advent of automobiles and construction of paved roads have revolutionized the social life of Iowa farm communities. In my youth, the farthest I could go to any social event in an evening would be to Sac City or Lake View if I had to drive a horse and buggy. I remember escorting a neighbor girl, Helen Anglum, to a church dinner in Lake View one evening. The round trip, after picking her up at her home—she lived one mile north of us—and then driving to Lake View, was twenty-two miles, or a four-hour drive. Today a young man with an automobile in the same length of time could drive to Sioux City or even to Des Moines. This creates problems sometimes for parents who do not know where their children are. It was never a concern of my parents. New conditions in this new day have brought new problems. I continue to be grateful for my farm heritage.

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