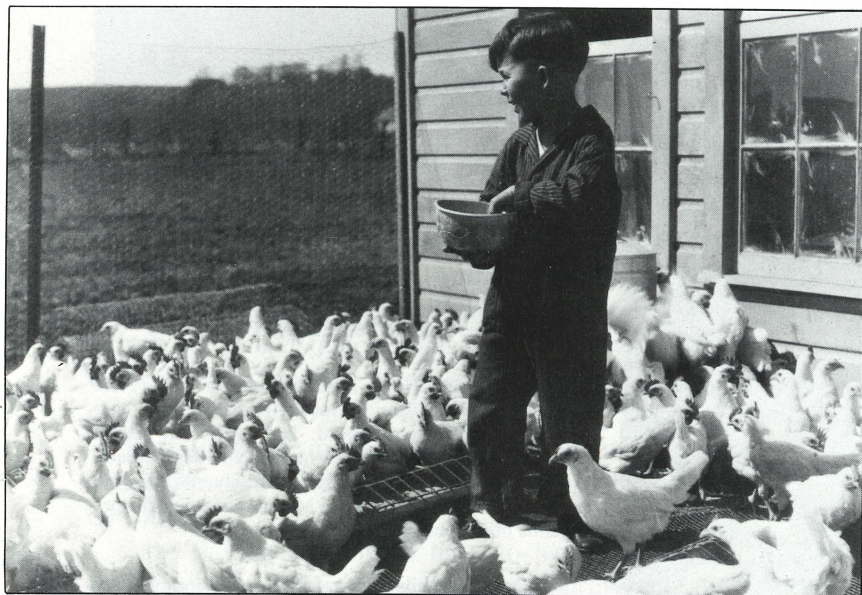


The Goldfinch

Iowa History
for Young People
Volume 11, Number 3
February 1990



The Goldfinch

Member of



1988 Gold Lamp Honor Award Winner
Iowa History
for Young People

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Have you seen any this tall?
The year was 1910.

Editor
Carolyn Hardesty

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Welcome to the farm



■ WHAT IS A FAMILY FARM? It seems like a simple question with a simple answer. “A piece of land where a family lives, grows crops, and raises animals.” That simple answer may have worked fifty years ago, but not now.

Sometimes farm women and men have jobs off the farm. Some farms are run by single men or women. Farm children may have less time for chores because their nearby country schools have been **consolidated** [*when small schools are combined into one large school and children have to be bused long distances*]. Also, the school year used to allow time off in the spring and fall so children could help in the fields.

Inventions have made many parts of field work and housework easier. Laundry is no longer done by hand.

Farm families no longer have to haul water from pumps to dish pans, wash tubs, or drinking tanks for the animals. Attitudes about work have changed. A hundred years ago, leisure was almost unknown, and **idleness** [*doing nothing*] was thought to be wrong. Instead of using money, people often traded work or farm products. Hides

were traded for shoes or clothing; butter and eggs were exchanged at the general store for tea and cloth; doctors, lawyers or editors might take wood for their services.

One way we can learn about farming is to look at tools and how they’ve changed during the past 150 years. To understand family farms, we need to look at tools that farmers used —

- to plant and grow crops,
- to take care of animals and farm buildings,
- to feed and clothe people.

This issue of *The Goldfinch* explores the family farm. We’ll look at farm life and how it has changed. Inventions have changed the way people do housework, raise livestock, do chores, and grow and harvest crops. Many machines help us save time and energy, but you’ll see that some changes have given us new problems.



Family Farming



State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City

This farming family dressed up to have this photo taken next to the corn crib with its piles of corn. Does it make you think about the photos

you dress up for? Which objects do you like to have in your photographs?

PEOPLE HAVE FARMED in the place we call Iowa for more than 300 years. When French explorers came to Iowa in the 1600s, they met men and women from the Oto and Ioway tribes. These American Indians lived in the area during the summer and planted gardens of beans, corn, pumpkins, and squash. The women did all of the gardening. They planted and harvested by hand

with simple tools of wood, stone, or bone. The older women of the tribes sorted through the seeds from the year before to find the best ones for planting. The seed-sorting helped develop good types of corn.

Letters that early settlers wrote to their families and friends in the East were often filled with praise for the **fertile** [*good for growing*] land in

Iowa. Some of the letters were printed in newspapers and taken to Europe. Families from many countries came to the prairies to farm. Settlers came for the wood and water and black soil.

In the beginning, family farms only supported the people living on the land. The families themselves grew their grains and vegetables, and raised animals. Sometimes they traded their goods for items such as shoes or tools.

Clothing was made from both plants and animals. The plant called flax was dried and shredded. The women in the house spun it into thread and weaved cloth for clothes. If there were sheep on the farm, the wool was clipped off, and the women used it for making warm clothing.



Flax

Children worked with their parents. When they were young, they helped take care of the small animals, and they helped with the food. As the children grew, they learned about the large animals and helped with heavier work, such as the laundry and the milking. In many households, boys did most of the animal and crop chores, and girls helped with food and house tasks.

If extra help was needed in the fields, women might join the men to finish the work. When extra help was needed in the house, men rarely left the field work to help.

Early homes

The first farmers had to clear the land of trees to build a house. Then they had to plow up the prairie, which was packed with tight roots from the tall grasses.

The home they lived in was usually one room, about sixteen by twenty feet, about the size of a large living room. Here in this single large room, they cooked and ate their food, wove thread into fabric, bathed, slept, and stored all of their goods. The house was built from the chopped trees or from sod.

What was on a farm?

Most farms had milk cows—for both the milk and the butter. They often had between six and twelve sheep, too.

Chickens, ducks, geese, and turkeys provided meat, eggs, and feathers. These animals were not fed special food. Instead, they were expected to



Spinning wheels were part of nearly all farm homes.



find their own meals by poking around the farmyard. Farm animals wandered freely, and wild animals, such as birds, wolves, and snakes, as well as insects, were more common.

Changes in farming

As the years passed, many inventions helped family farmers do their work more easily. Early farmers had to plant seeds by hand; they washed clothes in a tub, scrubbing them one by one. In summer and fall, fruits and vegetables were eaten fresh; the rest of the produce was dried, smoked, or stored in a hole in the ground for winter use.

Farming has changed a lot in the past one hundred years. Three of the causes were:

Changes in early farming

HERE ARE SOME WAYS farming has changed in the past 150 years. You can read more details in other articles in this issue of *The Goldfinch*.

- Animals roamed through the fields until farmers put up fences. Now, many farmers who raise cattle and hogs for sale keep them in special barns and feed them special food to make them grow fast.

- Women on farms used to weave all of the cloth and sew the family's clothing. Clothes were washed by hand in a half-barrel or in a cookpot. Now, as in towns and cities everywhere, most clothes are purchased and homes have automatic washers and dryers.

- Families on farms grew all of their fruits and vegetables; meat, milk, eggs, and butter came from their animals. Now, farmers, like town people, may have gardens, but they buy most of their food from grocery stores. Some people keep chickens, but far fewer than used to.

- Men on farms did the field work with oxen or horses, and **implements** [*large tools for farming*] were pulled behind. Now, farmers have tractors and many types of equipment for taking care of plants and dirt.

- Farmers used to fight insects by hoping and praying. Now, many use pesticides; others introduce enemy pests such as ladybugs, which eat many other insects.

1. transportation
2. education
3. inventions

By 1870, four railroads had built tracks across the state. Eventually, no point in Iowa was farther than twelve miles from a railroad. It became quite easy for farmers to take their animals or extra crops to railroad stations. From there, the farm products could be hauled to distant markets for sale.

Education brought many changes to farming. Since people had learned to farm by following the customs of their parents, many were not interested at first in what they called “book farming.” This phrase meant researchers did

How many lowans?

To learn the population of Iowa in 1860, answer the questions below and put the numbers on the blanks below, from left to right.

If a dozen is twelve, half a dozen is ____.

This number is considered lucky. ____

How many ears do two pigs have? ____

What's the highest single digit number? ____

How many stomachs do people have? ____

How many letters in the word “egg”? ____

_____, _____



- Farm women used to stay on the farm to take care of food, household tasks, and chores. The money they earned from eggs and cream often supported the household expenses. Older girls hired out to other farms to help with chores; their wages were sent home. Now, many farm women have jobs off the farm where they can earn more than they would be selling eggs or cream.

- Farms needed large families and helpful neighbors to complete jobs like barn-raising, quilt-making or harvesting. Now, the large machinery can do the job of many workers. When help is needed, men, women, boys or girls are hired for the season.



Getting the news

experiments in laboratories and then wrote the results in books for farmers to read. But farmers trusted other farmers, not people who wrote books about farming. Then the researchers began to visit farms; farmers were more likely to be persuaded by the teachers who actually came to the fields to talk with them.



Inventions changed many activities on the farm. In the field, in the barn, and in the house, new machines could do more and more of the heavy work that had once been done only by hand.

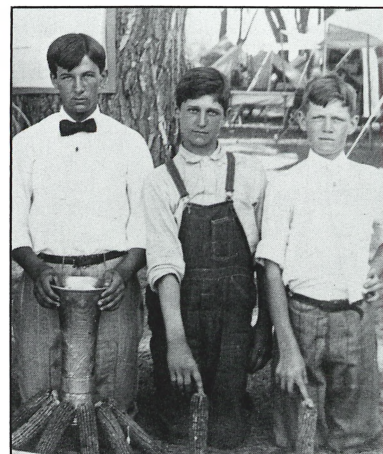
Farmers learned more about farming in four ways:

1. They talked to each other.
2. They listened to the people who did research and read the books they wrote.
3. They attended fairs, both in the county and in the state.
4. They read magazines such as *Wallace's Farmer* and *The Homestead*.

When we want to share news with friends, we send them a letter or call them on the telephone. Long ago, farmers heard news only when they went to town, visited neighbors, or received a letter. But it took longer than it does now.

When the Post Office was young, mail traveled slowly and cost a lot. The cost depended upon the number of pages and the distance. Letters were written on heavier paper and often sent without an envelope. The fee could be paid by the sender or by the receiver. Often the sender did not pay the fee for fear the letter would never arrive. If the receiver was low on cash, a letter often sat at the postal station—an inn or store—for weeks before it was paid for and picked up. Everywhere mail had to be picked up by the person who would get the letter.

These boys show their corn at a fair.



Mail was usually carried by railroads, stage coaches, and steamboats. The famous Pony Express carried mail in 1860 and 1861, but only between St. Joseph, Missouri and Sacramento, California.

Mail was first delivered to homes in 1863, but this was only in large cities. Deliveries to farms began in 1896. This meant that the Post Office workers would deliver mail to mail boxes near every country home.

In 1913, the Post Office began to deliver packages, too. Farmers could then order things through the mail. The mail order business grew quickly after that.

Telephones were invented and improved during the 1870s and 1880s. Most farms installed them during the early 1900s.

These changes meant that farmers and town

There were other changes, too.

- In 1870, a new law said that farmers needed to keep livestock fenced. This made some farmers unhappy, and it gave all of them another task to do—building and repairing fences.
- By 1900, most of the state's butter was made in dairies instead of at home. The women who sold butter and eggs then made less money. Yet, most farms had three to four milk cows, which provided milk, cream, and butter for the farmer's home and extra milk for hog slop.
- Also in 1900, most farms kept six or seven **sows** [*mother pigs*]. Pork was the main meat of



H.A. Olander is the first Iowa mail carrier to use a car for mail delivery. He worked near Stratford.

people could get the same information and products, no matter where they lived. They could get news from their friends and distant family members faster, too.

the American diet at this time. But farmers kept fewer sheep because more people were buying ready-made clothes or they bought ready-made cloth to sew with.

- As more hogs and cattle were grown on farms, the need for corn rose, and more and more farms grew more and more corn.

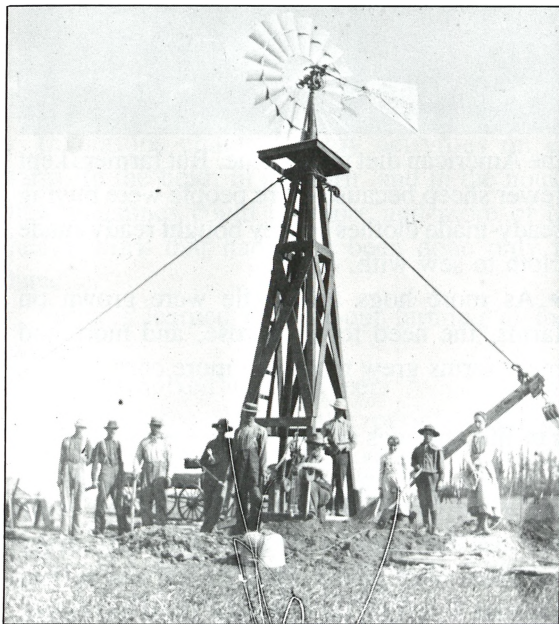
Farm life changes

The very first cars in the early 1900s did not cause a big change in farm life. The cars were heavy and they sank in the mud. By 1920, many Iowa roads were paved. Henry Ford was selling the Model T, a light car that didn't cost too much,

and many farmers bought them. Then farm women who still wanted to earn a little extra cash from eggs and cream could drive to town to sell them, older farm children could drive to town to go to high school, or go longer distances to attend 4-H meetings.

Electricity came to farms long after it was in towns. When houses in town had toilets and sinks, electric lights, and hot water at the sink, farm homes still had out-houses, kerosene lamps, and water that had to be hauled from a pump and heated on the wood stove.

Electricity goes into houses through wires. Companies strung wires to businesses and houses in town, but it was too expensive to string them in the country. In 1935, President Roosevelt and the Congress formed the Rural Electrification Administration (REA). (continued next page)



How many family farms were in Iowa in 1985?

_____,000

To learn the number, answer the riddle.
At the county fair, a boy pitched horseshoes to win a jar full of nickels.

"You've won, won, won!" yelled the judge.

"But how many did I win?" asked the boy.

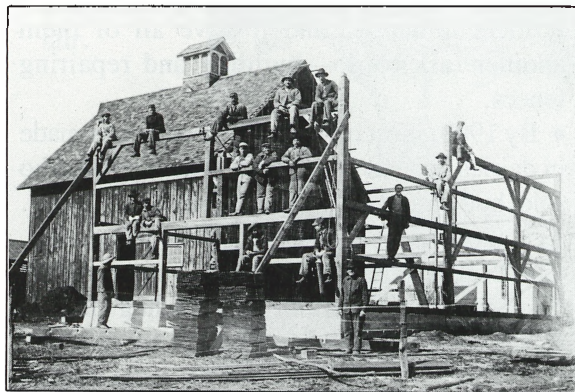
"I just told you," said the judge.

How many nickels did the boy win? ____

(Fill the numbers in, above.)



Raising barns and windmills took a little help from friends.



Out in the fields

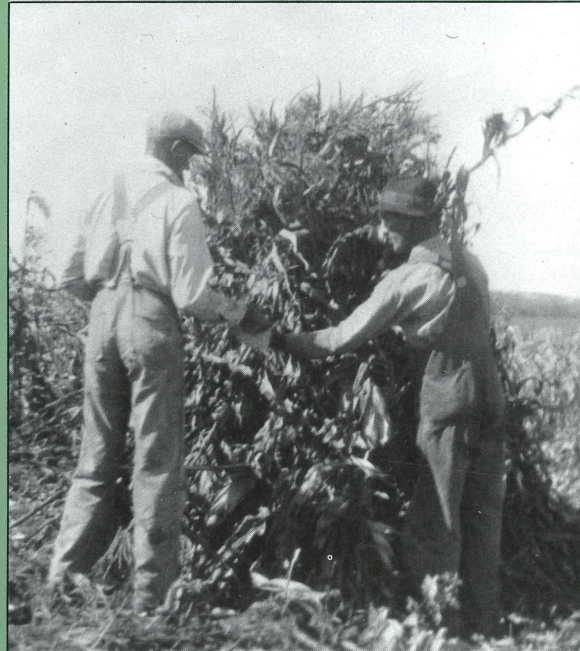
LONG AGO, PLANTING WAS DONE BY HAND in the fields and in the gardens. Men usually worked in the large fields, and women and children planted the gardens. Common garden foods were beans, peas, turnips, parsnips, carrots, and onions. The field crops included corn, wheat, oats, and potatoes. Farmers also grew special grasses, such as timothy, for animal food. Crops were eaten, sold or traded for other goods.

When plants were ready to be picked, people used large **sickles** [*long, curved knives*] to cut them. Root crops, such as potatoes, had to be dug with shovels. In most families, all but the babies helped at harvest time. Neighbors helped each other, too. After plants such as wheat or oats were cut down, they had to be threshed. This means getting the hulls off the part you want to eat. The plant had to be crushed, in the same way you crack a nutshell to get the nut out.

Picking corn was done by hand for a long time, and each year the slow task of corn-gathering continued through fall and into the winter.

Oxen were very important to farmers. They were strong enough to pull a plow through the prairie, to haul the large logs for house building, and to pull out tree stumps or move large boulders. Also, oxen ate less than horses and worked longer.

Over the years, simple machines were replaced by complicated ones run by steam engines and later ones run by gasoline engines.



Shocking corn

This group (REA) loaned money to groups of farmers so they could put up poles and string wires to their houses and barns.

Another big change on farms was brought by the tractor. First came the steam tractor, but it was big and awkward. Beginning in 1902, the Hart-Parr company in Charles City built and sold gasoline-powered tractors, which were much lighter. By 1917, there were 4,000 tractors in Iowa. Twelve years later, the number had grown to 60,000.



Getting a haircut at home.

chores changed.

Farmers built **feedlots** [*special buildings and pens for feeding*] for **beef cattle** [*cattle raised for meat*], pigs, chickens, or turkeys. Some farmers kept only dairy cattle.

In order not to waste time and to earn the most money, many farmers now buy very expensive equipment. This debt can cause problems for farmers if they can't earn enough from their crops and animals to pay the bills. Some farms have been **foreclosed** [*when the bank takes the farm because the farmers can't pay back a loan*].

Many farm men have taken jobs off the farm. This is especially true during the winter months for farmers who grow crops instead of raising

Modern times

As farms became more **specialized** [*growing only one or two kinds of crops or raising just cattle or just hogs*], many family activities and

Farm organizations

Farmers have joined together for over 100 years to form clubs that would help them. The first large group was called the Patrons of Husbandry or the Grange.

At meetings of the Grange, farm families held spelling bees, debates, and other fun or educational activities. In the early 1870s, Iowa had more Grange organizations than any other state in the country.

The Grange became more than a social club as farmers became unhappy with railroad costs and with the fees charged by the owners of **elevators** [*the building in a town next to the railroad track where farmers stored their grain until the train could haul it away*].

Farmers used the Grange to send messages to the state and national government. Eventually, laws were passed

that forced railroads to charge a fair price.

Many other groups have helped farm families, including the Farm Bureau, Future Farmers of America, 4-H (see the February 1988 *Goldfinch*) and Farm Safety for "JUST KIDS," begun by Marilyn Adams after her son was killed in a farming accident. (See page 31 for an address.)

livestock; animals need to be taken care of all year long.

Many farm women have left the farm to work at jobs in town. Some women have careers that have nothing to do with farming, even though they still help with chores at home. Their wages help support the family and help pay for farming expenses.

Farm children are more likely to leave the farms and spend their lives in towns and cities. Fewer children are needed to help run a farm, and there is not as much land for sale as there once was



Government and farming

BUSINESSES IN AMERICA MUST OBEY certain laws. Since farms produce and sell food, farming is a business, too.

Rules tell farmers how they must do certain things so that products, such as milk, are clean, and safe. Some rules help farmers get fair prices for their work. The government also sets limits on the kinds of poisons farmers can use to fight weeds and insects. Sometimes the government, like a bank, loans money to farmers.

During World War I farmers became very good at growing lots of food. After the war, there was too much to sell and **prices dropped** [*when there's too much of something, sellers offer bargain prices so that they can sell it; if prices are too low, the money doesn't cover the cost of making the product*]. The farmers were angry because they couldn't get a fair price for the food.

Prices were so low after the 1930 Depression began that farmers joined together to talk about their problems.

In August 1931, the farmers took action. The milk from their cows would earn so little money that they decided not to sell it. Instead of selling it, they dumped it into ditches. This was a way of **protesting** [*objecting to*] the low prices.

Another time, in February 1979, hundreds of farmers drove their tractors to Washington, D.C. They parked on the lawn of the Capitol so that the President would listen to their complaints.

The government has many plans to help the farmers. Sometimes farmers are paid not to grow food. Other times the government pays for the food and stores it. Sometimes the farmers and the government disagree on the best ways to produce and sell food.



for the young people who want to start a farm of their own.

As more and more machinery is used to help people manage their animals, crops, and households, time is spent in different ways. Like people all over the country, people on farms watch television, watch or play in school sports, take music lessons, and go shopping.

On the farm, many women have become the bookkeepers. Many farmers—men and women—have become experts in pest management controls, soil conservation, and fertilizing programs. Young farming men and women study agriculture at universities.

Iowa has fewer family farms than it had fifty years ago. Farming is a difficult business to be in. The costs of equipment and chemicals are high.

Profits depend on good weather and good prices at the market; farmers have no control over those things. Some farmers lower their costs by buying used equipment or not spending money for chemical fertilizers or pesticides; these farmers use other techniques to make soil healthy and keep insects away.

Family farming has a long history in America. When people live and work in the same place, a family's life is different than it is when parents go to jobs in factories or offices. The successes or disasters—from the birth of new calves to hailstorms that destroy a field of crops—are shared by everyone. Everyone, too, is aware of the small daily chores that keep a farm going. A farm and a family together create a way of living that has been important in Iowa and in the nation.



This family appears in another photo in this issue. Can you find them?

Living History Farms

by Jean Florman

If you visit Living History Farms, near Des Moines, you can experience Iowa farm life from 1700 to 1900. The three farms there are like giant displays in a museum. At each farm, men and women dressed in old-fashioned clothes plant, harvest, preserve, and cook food without gasoline-powered machines or electrical appliances.

At the Ioway Indian farm, corn, squash, beans, and pumpkins grow in a small garden near the “**nahache**” [*tree skin house*]. In 1700, only Ioway women worked in the gardens. After the first frost, men were allowed to harvest. Ioway women farmed with **dibble** [*hole poking*] sticks and bone hoes. Dried corn and pumpkins provided most of the winter food for their families.



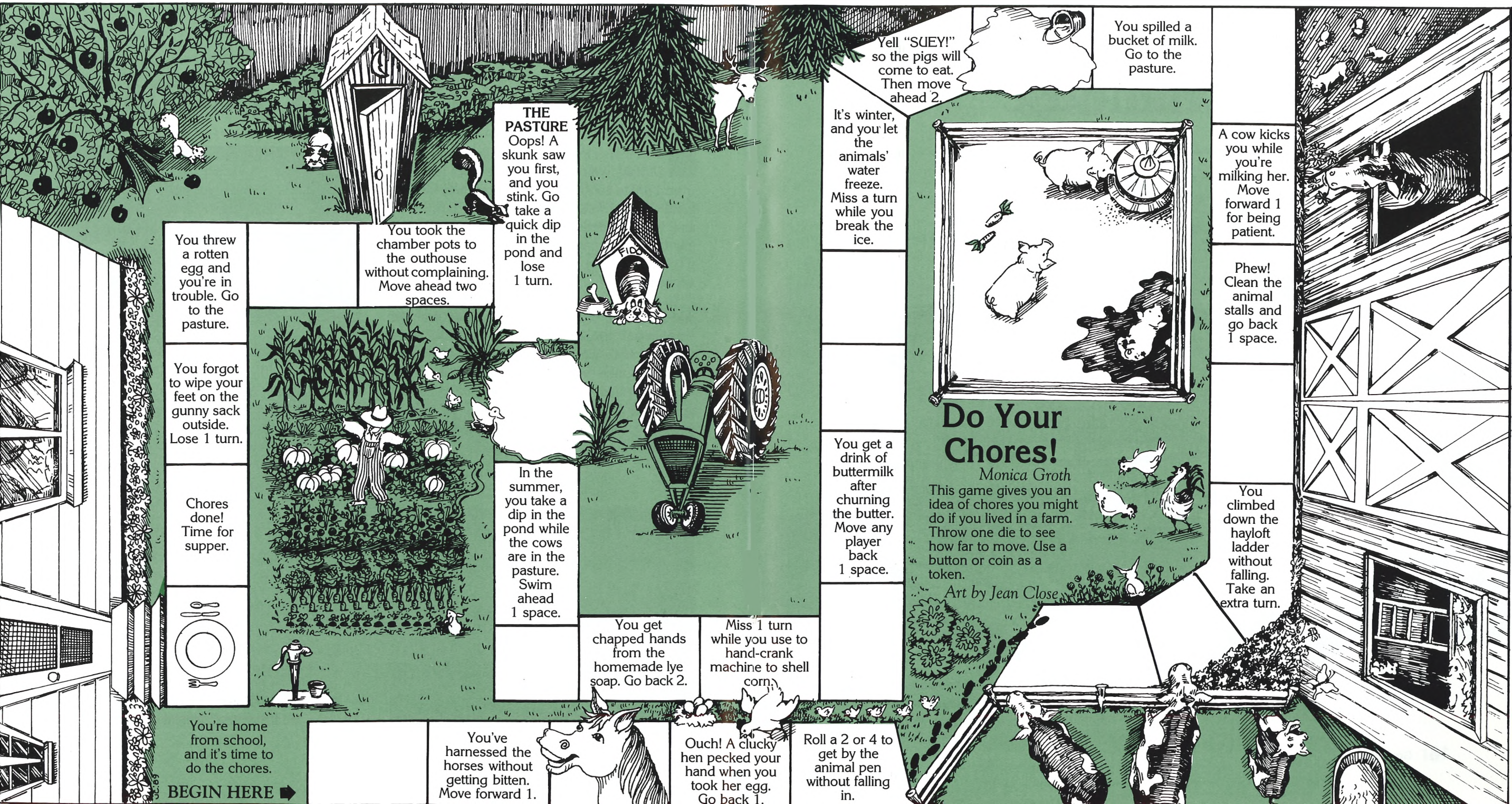
Living History Farms

Laura Ingalls Wilder would have felt at home in the 1850 Pioneer Farm Museum. Chickens wander through the one-room log cabin while women cook beans and cornbread in the black pots that hang over the hearth. In a nearby field, a man struggles to guide a walk-behind plow that a pair of oxen are slowly pulling through the sticky prairie soil. The women sometimes tend the hogs and, at harvest time, also work in the fields.

The women at the 1900 Farm rarely work in the fields or tend the large animals. In the large white farmhouse, a “farm wife” churns butter as jars of pickled beets cool on the windowsill. For the men, “sit-down” plowing on an implement pulled by strong work horses seems easy compared to walking behind the simpler plows pulled by one or two oxen during pioneer days.

The living History Farms opened in 1970. The museum is located in Urbandale.





You threw a rotten egg and you're in trouble. Go to the pasture.

You forgot to wipe your feet on the gunny sack outside. Lose 1 turn.

Chores done! Time for supper.



You're home from school, and it's time to do the chores.

BEGIN HERE ➡

You took the chamber pots to the outhouse without complaining. Move ahead two spaces.



THE PASTURE
Oops! A skunk saw you first, and you stink. Go take a quick dip in the pond and lose 1 turn.

In the summer, you take a dip in the pond while the cows are in the pasture. Swim ahead 1 space.

You get chapped hands from the homemade lye soap. Go back 2.



Miss 1 turn while you use to hand-crank machine to shell corn.



You get a drink of buttermilk after churning the butter. Move any player back 1 space.

It's winter, and you let the animals' water freeze. Miss a turn while you break the ice.

Yell "SUEY!" so the pigs will come to eat. Then move ahead 2.



Do Your Chores!

Monica Groth
This game gives you an idea of chores you might do if you lived in a farm. Throw one die to see how far to move. Use a button or coin as a token.

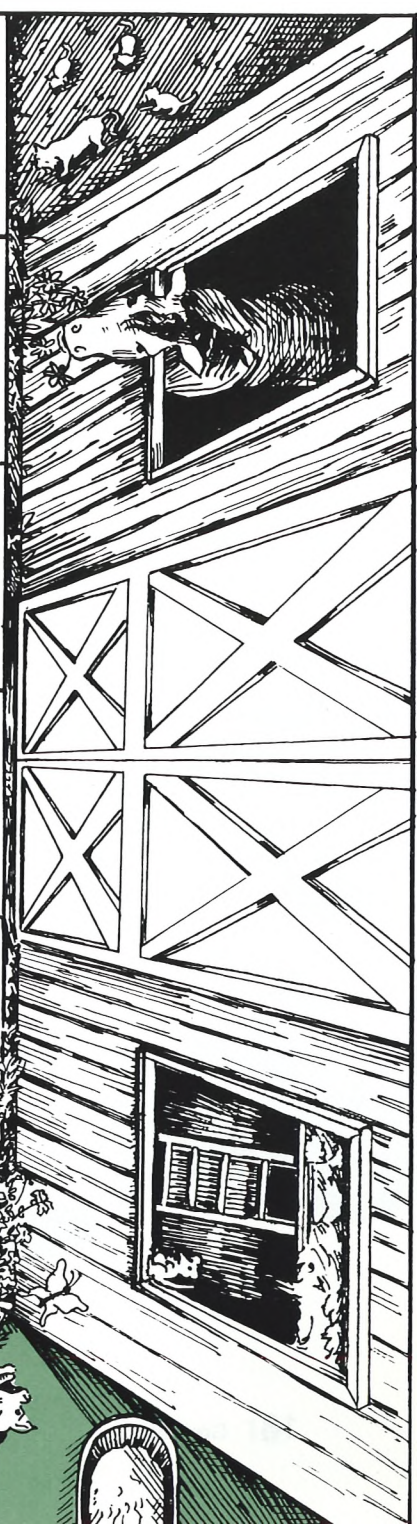
Art by Jean Close

You spilled a bucket of milk. Go to the pasture.

A cow kicks you while you're milking her. Move forward 1 for being patient.

Phew! Clean the animal stalls and go back 1 space.

You climbed down the hayloft ladder without falling. Take an extra turn.

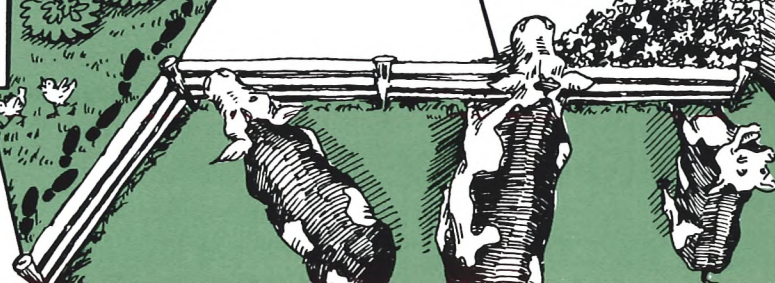


You've harnessed the horses without getting bitten. Move forward 1.



Ouch! A clucky hen pecked your hand when you took her egg. Go back 1.

Roll a 2 or 4 to get by the animal pen without falling in.

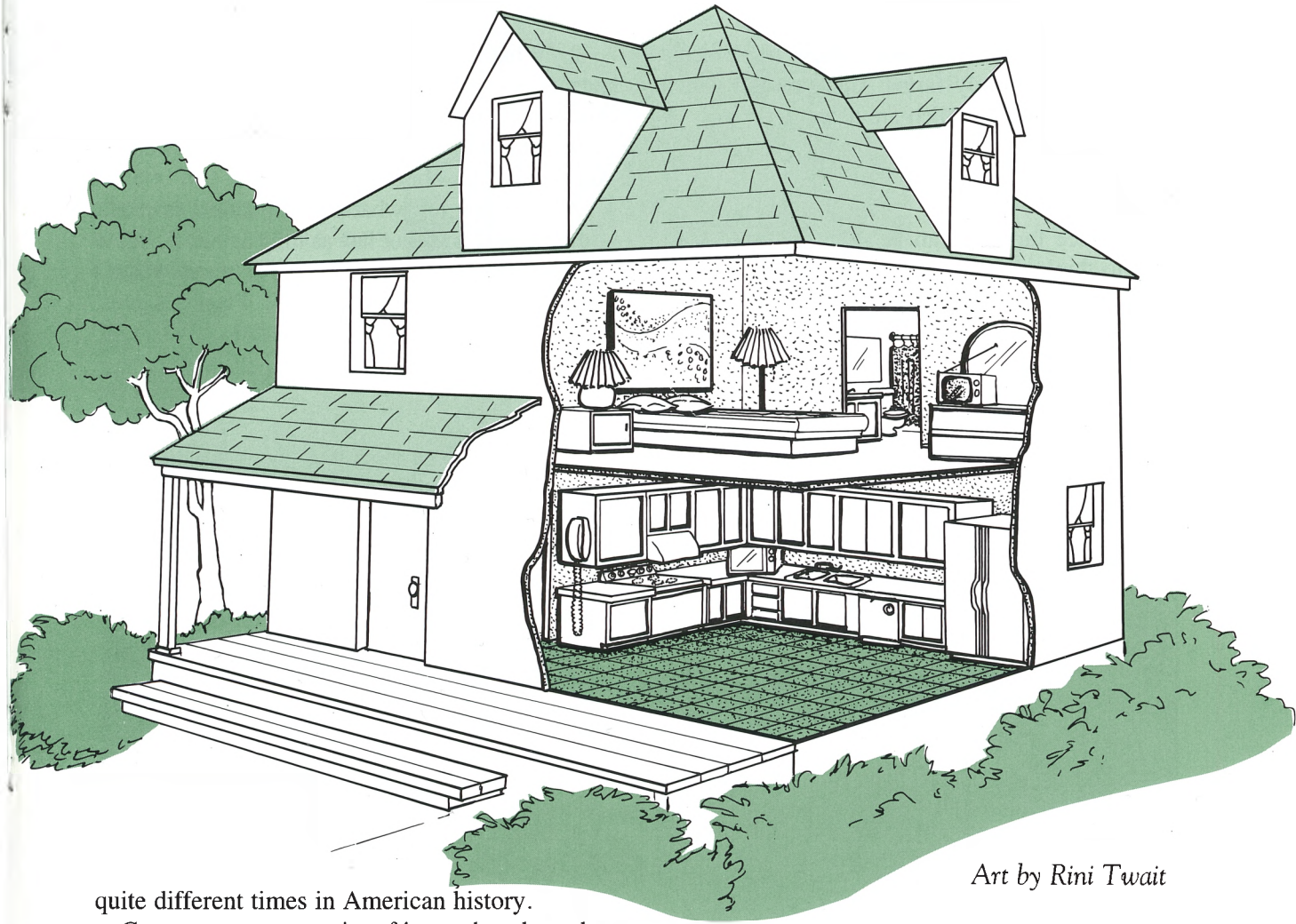


Farmhouse —Then



STYLES AND INVENTIONS CHANGE the ways we live. The household goods and appliances in these houses give us a look at two

and Now



Art by Rini Twait

quite different times in American history.

Can you name ten pairs of items that show the changes. Answers on page 31.

Implements-Which came first?

THE FOLLOWING PAGES show implements used on family farms. Can you tell which ones are older and which are newer?

CLUES

1. Since farming can be done by hand, one way to think about machines is how much work they do. Usually, newer inventions take away more work from the farmers' own muscles.

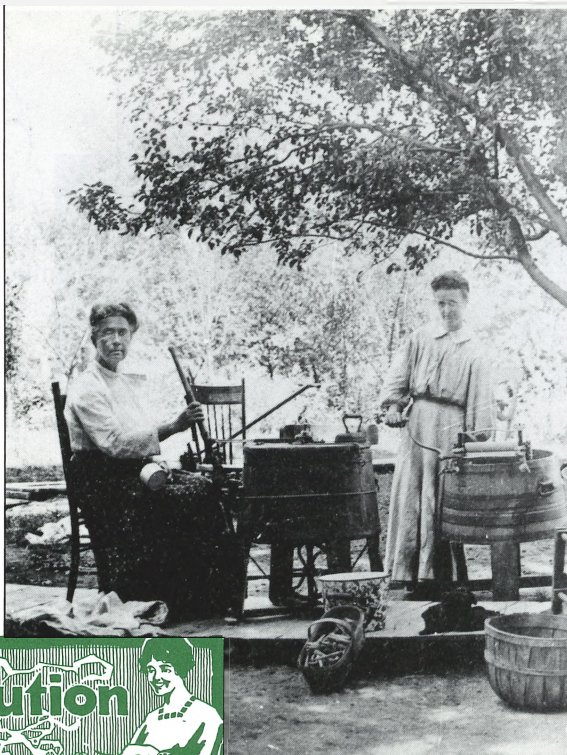
2. What is the source of power? Is it from the farmer or another animal? Is there an engine? Is it big, which may mean that it is a steam engine, or is it small, which may mean that it is powered by kerosene or gasoline.

3. Can you tell what the implement is made from? Wood does not last as long as metal, but it has been part of toolmaking for many years. Rubber is a quite recent material. Plastic is even more recent.

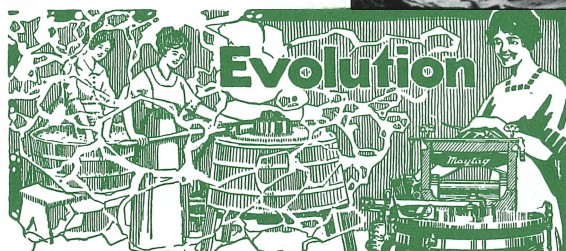


A threshing crew

This ad from 1916 shows changes in washing machines. The small engine, like a lawn mower engine, can run anywhere, even if there is no electricity.



These sisters are laundresses.



Grandmother Had the Tub—
Mother the Old Style Washer—
—You Now Can Have the

Maytag

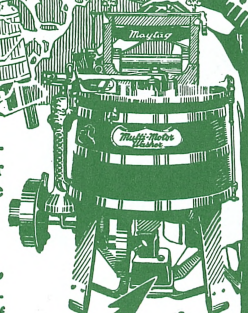
Multi-Motor Washer

which gives the house wife without electricity in her home the advantages of power washing that the woman with the MAYTAG Electric Washer enjoys.

It is Absolutely Safe

Smooth-running—quiet—clean. Runs on gas, gasoline, kerosene or alcohol.

Does a big wash for 5c. Not only washes and wrings, but the belt wheel enables it to do all work about the house that a machine should do.



It Works for You

It runs the churn—the ice cream freezer—food chopper—bone grinder—runs anything that requires power. Servants do not object to washing the MAYTAG way. Your husband uses a machine to do a machine's work. Put a MAYTAG in your home to do the same for you.

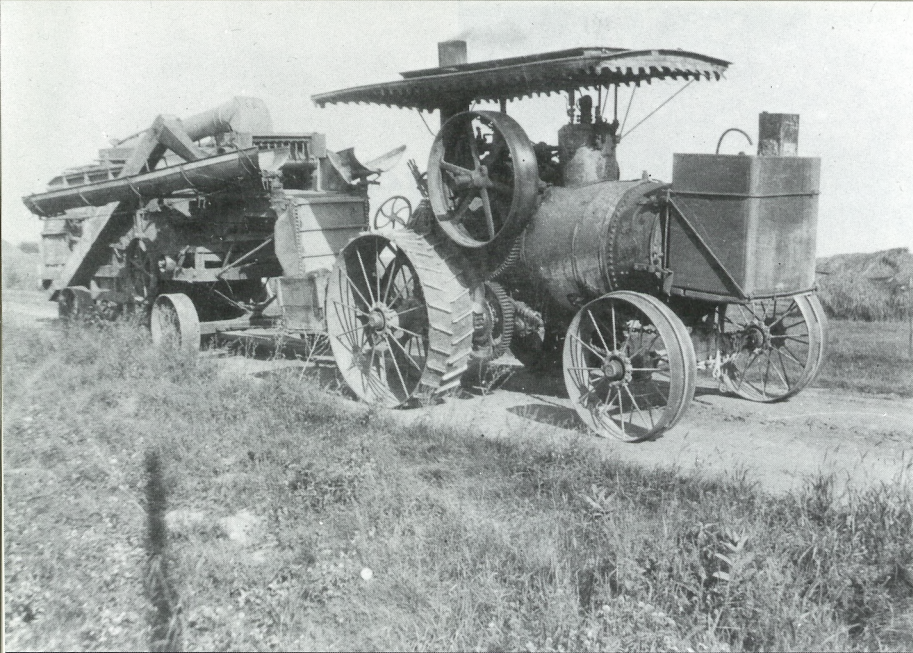
FREE—"THE MAYTAG LAUNDRY MANUAL" containing valuable formulas, compiled by expert laundresses, on laundering all fabrics. A post card brings it.

THE MAYTAG CO., Dept. 61 Gen. Offices and Works, Newton, Ia.
Branches: Kansas City, Mo., Minneapolis, Indianapolis, Fargo, N. D., Winnipeg, Man.,
Madison, Wis., Lincoln, Neb., Portland, Ore., Warehouses: Philadelphia, Detroit, Peoria, Ill.,
Sioux Falls, S. D.

There is a Maytag Washer of every type—hand—power driven—electric—all built to the enviable Maytag Standard
DEALERS—Our proposition will interest you. Write! Address The Maytag Co., Newton, Ia.

**SEE
THAT
ENGINE**





Field work has become much easier for farmers. Can you see why?

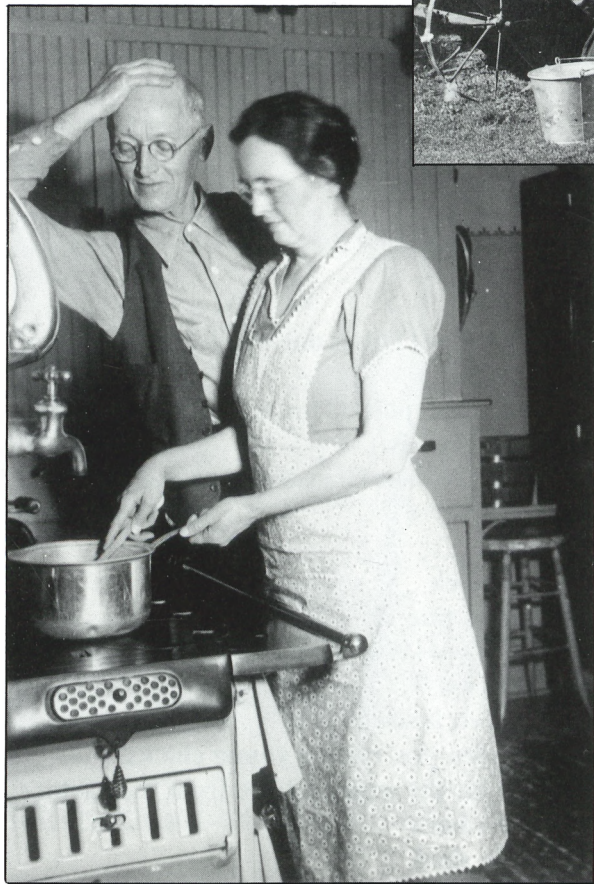


Men using sickles

100 years ago,
farmers grew enough
food to feed themselves.
Now, they grow enough
to feed another 40 people
all year long.




Making apple cider on a farm near Bagley.



Note the spigot on the left. A tank of water was left on the stove so that hot water was usually ready.

Farmstead

 **THE FIRST BUILDING IN A FARMSTEAD** was usually a shelter for the people. The houses had one room and perhaps a loft for children to sleep in and for storage. These first cabins were built of nearby trees that the farmers chopped down with an axe. The logs fit together on the ends with indents, called notches, that the farmer made by chopping the tree with the

axe, but not cutting all the way through.

Inside, a fireplace was built from wood, stone, and hardened mud. The floor was likely to be clay that was beaten hard. Another early floor was called puncheon [PUNCH-un]. This was made by splitting logs in half and laying them open, next to each other.

Corn cribs were another

early building. In the beginning, they looked like a large baby's crib, except they were tall and had no legs. Later, the cribs became closed buildings with openings for air to move in and out. Later still, the corn was taken off the cob and stored in silos. Silos were first built of wood, then of stone or bricks, now of cement or metal.



Here is a photograph of a farmyard. The snow gives us good shadows, and the shoveled paths also help us “read” this picture.


Each number is on or near part of the farmstead. How much can you learn about farm life here? See how many objects or landscape parts you can match. As you name things, you begin to understand some things about the activities of this farm family. Answers on page 31.

- A house**
- B barn**
- C silos (This is one of the ways you know the activities on this farm.)**
- D hog shed**

- E feeder**
- F truck, car (This is one way to tell the date of the farm.)**
- G telephone pole (This tells you where the main road is.)**
- H road between farmstead and main road**
- I fence**
- J pond**
- K hay stack**
- L clothes line**
- M our house (What does this tell you about the farm?)**
- N chicken house**
- O brooder (for raising young chicks)**
- P lane for the animals to go from the pasture to the barn**
- Q cattle shed**



Voices from the land

 MANY PEOPLE HAVE WRITTEN about living on farms in Iowa. The pages that follow have sections of letters, diaries or magazine articles that tell about some of the different experiences of people who lived on Iowa's land.

You'll see in the oldest writings that people used spellings and words that we don't use today.

Catherine Wiggins Porter wrote in 1939 about her childhood. She was born in 1873 near Clarinda, so here she recalls her life when she was 10.

1883/1884

The house in which I was born was a story-and-a-half building, about 16 by 20 feet. . . . There was no plastering on the walls, only heavy building paper tacked to the studding. This one room **sufficed** [*was enough*] for all purposes for some four or five years, when a "**lean-to**" [*a simple room added to a house*] was built at the back and provided a kitchen and small pantry.

All laundry was done on the washboard. The tubs at our house were made from molasses or vinegar barrels sawed in two. They were heavy and unwieldy and without handles. Ironing was a hard, hot job. A cook stove was kept hot enough to make the irons sizzle. The irons were really iron throughout, handles and all. Thick pads had to be used to keep one's hands from being burned.

Then there were baking days, possibly twice a week, when Mother made about six loaves of bread and a pan of rolls. Mother made her own yeast.

Except for coffee, sugar, and salt, most of our food was raised on our own farm. Wheat, buckwheat, corn, and sugar cane were taken to the mill and converted into flour, meal, or **sorghum** [*a dark, sweet syrup*], on **shares** [*the miller was paid with some of the flour, meal, or sorghum*]. The hogs provided meat and lard, the chickens, eggs the cows, milk and butter. We raised our own potatoes, cabbages, and turnips, which were either put into the cellar or "holed in" in the ground. A pit would be dug to below the freezing point and lined with hay or straw. Boards were then laid across the top, and dirt heaped over and around it all.

Sarah Jane Kimball began to write letters when she was a child and kept a diary through her adult years. Most of the diary has been lost, but the following entries show some household activities when she was 43 and 47 years old.

Sept. 15, 1885

"Saturday lots of work to do for mother and I. We churned, made bread, dressed a chicken, made sweet pickles, made up a pail of apples into apple sauce, cleaned my bird cage, then the rooms, and did the work upstairs, and it was nearly milking time. Tired at night."



1881

"Mother is making soap this week and tonight has a barrell full." [The soap was thick, brown, and syrupy.]

The Kimball farm in 1899. Can you find four adults and a child?





James Hearst
as a child.

James Hearst was born in 1900. He was a farmer-poet who lived to be 82, and he later wrote about his Iowa childhood in the early 1900s.

1910-1915

The day finally came when the switch at the plant sent the **juice** [*electricity*] through the wires and the lights came on. Not even the telephone changed our way of living, thinking, and acting as

much as the coming of electricity. This break with the past seemed an entrance to the modern world. Later we learned of some of the risks involved in our loss of independence.

The neighborhood became a number of private homes and farm operations, the group feeling disappeared. . . And, the independence of the farm eroded. Now a single copper wire took the place of the woodpile and windmill. The farm no longer existed as a **self-sustaining** [*independent*] unit. We had learned to depend on electricity. The helplessness of a farm without electricity came home to me when the power failed after an ice storm, and the city fire trucks had to haul water out to the farms for the livestock until the lines could be repaired.



Joanne Meusburger wrote about growing up in Sac County. She and her older sister, Ruth, were good friends and constant playmates.

1935/1936

My Grandmother Wilson had a great repertoire of poetry. She was the grandmother who lived next door to us on the farm, and I can remember sitting spellbound while she recited "A Leak in the Dike" or "The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere." My father inherited this gift and entertained us on long trips by singing songs and recalling poems passed down

by memory. We begged to hear them again and again, so that in time we learned them ourselves.

Besides our real dolls, we had hundreds of the paper variety. Some came from regular paper doll books but others we cut from the comic section of the Sunday paper where they were printed every week. Since these had



Courtesy of Joanne Muesberger

Joanne and her sister, Ruth, with friends.

limited wardrobes, we spent hours designing clothes out of wallpaper samples. Each character was carefully stored between two pages of an old copy of *Good Housekeeping*.

We also had a scrapbook which we made into apartments for these dolls. A blank page was divided into two parts—an upstairs and a downstairs. Furnishings were cut from pages of the mail-order catalog and pasted into place. . . .

New Year's Eve was the one night of the year when we were allowed to stay up past midnight. Mother would pop corn, and we would sit around playing "Old Maid" and "Authors." About 10:00 p.m. Mother would serve ice cream, and we would turn on the radio to Times Square to listen to the celebration. By midnight the grape juice toast to the new year was almost **anticlimactic** [*disappointing*].

On Halloween night, each member of the family would choose a costume from

the dress-up box in the attic. (This included my grandparents and Helen and Wayne, of course. Helen and Wayne were our "hired man" and "hired girl." In storybook fashion, they fell in love, married, and stayed with us to later buy into a partnership and manage the farm after my grandfather died and my father went into the seed corn business full-time. Eventually they had a family of their own to also share in our holiday festivities.)

The costume box held a wonderful selection, accumulated from grade-school operettas, minstrel shows, and Christmas entertainments. There was also the costume and mask Daddy had worn as the girl singer in a mock wedding, the riding outfit Mother bought when she taught school in Idaho, the long, bustled dresses Grandma wore in the Gay Nineties, and the kimonos Aunt Ha Ha brought us from Chinatown. Each year when we opened the lid, the trunk seemed as magical and mysterious as a pirate's treasure chest.

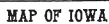
When everyone was appropriately dressed, we had a style show, complete with **dramatizations** [*short plays*]. For example, Mother and Daddy might team up to act out **Maggie and Jiggs** [*comic strip characters*], complete with rolling pin. It was always so much fun that we would go back to the attic to reappear in three or four different costumes before we ran out of ideas. 🍷

30

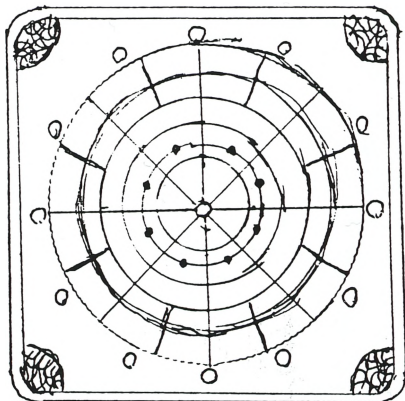
Goldfinch

MAP OF IOWA

Scale $\frac{1}{100000}$



History Makers



A mystery solved

In our last issue on World War I in Iowa, we printed parts of Elspeth Close's diary. In one entry, she spoke about playing board games, such as parchesi. We asked readers about another game called "eroquinol." Mrs. Eleanor Trummel wrote to us that Elspeth must have written croquinol. We misread Elspeth's handwriting.

The game is also spelled croquignole and crokinole. Mrs. Trummel owns the game and sent a drawing of the board. Four players snap wooden or plastic rings from the border into the circles. They want the rings to land close to the center, and they want to bump the other players' rings out of the center. After all of the rings are snapped, points are counted and the play begins again.

Page 12: For information on joining, write Farm Safety for "JUST KIDS" P.O. Box 458, Earlham, IA 50072.

Answers to house drawings: (You may have found others.)

OLD

no telephone in kitchen
kitchen floor of wood with rug
free-standing stove

ice box
no television
pitcher and basin

no dishwasher
old style bed
kerosene lamp
closet
coal heating stove

front door with glass pane

porch has posts and fancy trim

NEW

telephone
kitchen floor of tile
built-in stove with fan and hood
refrigerator
television
sinks with running water
dishwasher
modern water bed
electric lamps
bathroom
heat comes from furnace
wood door to keep heat in
porch is wide and clear

Answers to Farmstead

A 1	I 5
B 2	J 12
C 3	K 11
D 16	L 7
E 4	M 8
F 6	N 9
G 13	O 10
H 17	P 14
	Q 15

History Mystery



What would you do with this invention?

Hint: Schools may have used this in classrooms. It could be enjoyed by many people at once. It was used for education.

Learn more about this mystery in the April *Goldfinch*.

The **Goldfinch**

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State Historical Society of Iowa

402 Iowa Avenue

Iowa City, IA 52240

Solution from November's *Goldfinch*

Did you guess the History Mystery from the last issue? It was a chickens' water dish. Chickens were often cared for by women and children. Have you heard the expression "egg money"? Long ago, egg money was an important income for a farm family.

The dish in the picture was made of pottery. At first the dishes were made by hand; later, factories made them.

History Mysteries are furnished by Elise Dawson, Curator of Education, and museum staff members at the State Historical Society of Iowa in Des Moines.

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