

SOUTHERN IOWA AGRICULTURE 1865-1870

By *Mildred Throne*

The first few years following the Civil War were years of prosperity and optimism for Middle Western farmers. Immigration, which had lagged during the war, increased with a rush. Prices rose, new farms were opened, railroads resumed their march to the west, and farming practices improved. "As every year showed more decisively, the decade after the war was the period of the rise of the Middle West to agricultural dominance."¹

Iowa agriculture, in the post-Civil War years of 1865 to 1870, followed the general pattern of Middle Western growth. The development in the southern third of the state — an area dominated by 1870 by the Burlington & Missouri River Railroad — is an example of this growth. This area is typical of Iowa, typical of the Corn Belt as a whole. There is one variation in the Iowa picture in this region — while northern Iowa farmers turned more and more to dairy farming, those in the southern counties concentrated more and more on the corn-hog, grass-cattle phase of farming. Beef cattle, rather than dairy cattle, together with the famous Iowa "Fat Pig," became the prime products of southern Iowa farms.² For the purpose of this study, the three southern tiers of counties — thirty-one in all — have been chosen.

Population in southern Iowa, which had increased only 6 per cent during the war years of 1860 to 1865, in the following five years jumped 42 per cent. Of the total population of the area by 1870, 77.4 per cent was classed as rural, as compared with a rural population of 76.4 per cent in the state as a whole.³

Several agencies were active in encouraging farmers to come to Iowa in these years. An abortive attempt had been made by the state in 1860 to

¹ Allan Nevins, *The Emergence of Modern America, 1865-1878* (New York, 1927), 154.

² Earle D. Ross, *Iowa Agriculture: An Historical Survey* (Iowa City, 1951), 76, 78-83.

³ 1836-1880 *Iowa Census*, 196-9, 236-9.

form a board to promote immigration, but the war had intervened and the board was not revived until 1870. A private organization, the American Emigrant Company, had taken over many of the planned activities of this state board, and by 1865 had agents in several European countries.⁴ But the most important agency for increasing the population was the railroad.

The Burlington & Missouri River Railroad planned for a strong advertising campaign to attract new settlers to southern Iowa. The goal of the company was twofold: first, to sell the lands granted to them by the government; second, and perhaps of more significance to the future both of the state and of the railroad, to sell these lands to actual farmers. Charles Russell Lowell, treasurer of the Burlington & Missouri at Burlington, had written, as early as 1859: "We are beginning to find that he who buildeth a railroad west of the Mississippi must also find a population and build up business."⁵ In 1869 the Burlington had secured the services of George Harris, who had been in charge of the land department of the Hannibal & St. Joseph Railroad in Missouri. Harris heartily subscribed to the belief that success depended on the "price and credit policies" of the land department.

From the company's standpoint, the primary consideration in fixing land prices was one that was universally shared and approved at the time: the necessity of filling up the country. Only thus could the railroad have the indispensable clientele of shippers and travelers, and any sales policy that restricted immigration or antagonized actual settlers for the sake of some immediate pecuniary advantage would clearly defeat its own ends. The making of money from land sales as a separate business, although highly desirable and constantly in view, was to be subordinate to the progress of colonization.⁶

With this in view, the railroad made plans to sell their lands to actual farmers on a ten-year payment plan, with provisions for the cultivation of a certain minimum part of the land yearly.

However, since the Burlington lands were not placed on sale until 1870,

⁴ Marcus L. Hansen, "Official Encouragement of Immigration to Iowa," *Iowa Journal of History and Politics*, 29: 167-73 (April, 1921); Richard C. Overton, *Burlington West . . .* (Cambridge, 1941), 210.

⁵ Quoted in Overton, *Burlington West . . .*, 159. For the building of this road, see Mildred Throne, "The Burlington & Missouri River Railroad in Iowa," *The Palimpsest*, 33:1-32 (January, 1952).

⁶ Overton, *Burlington West . . .*, 293-4.

the influence of the railroad before that date was largely indirect but nevertheless powerful. Settlers were coming west rapidly in the postwar years, even without urging or propaganda. It was natural, in those years of railroad building, that they should follow the rails and settle as close as possible to quick transportation. In Adams County, for instance, in 1868 new settlers were "literally pouring in . . ." because of the "location and commencement of construction of the Burlington & Missouri River Railroad," which gave "a great impetus to immigration."⁷

The postwar years also saw a new type of land-seeker in Iowa. The true pioneer — the pathbreaker — was going farther west to the Plains. The men and women who came to Iowa in the sixties and seventies were looking for permanent homes, good markets for their crops, and prosperity. This is seen in the many reports of better houses, more barns, and improved methods of farming. Henry County reported in 1868 that the "transient settlers" had gone farther west, "where they can still be pioneers, and in their stead others locate, build fine houses, and erect substantial improvements, designing to pass a lifetime here." In Montgomery County in 1870 the pioneers were "pulling up stakes and starting for western Nebraska, and Kansas, and a better class of farmers [was] pouring in with means and taking up farms in our midst." Improvements were reported from Warren County in 1868, in a year full of "bustle and activity." New houses and barns and improved farming practices were in evidence. Farming was "fast becoming treated as a science, not as formerly, simply to plow, sow and reap."⁸ This same theme runs through all the county reports of these years.

The columns of the local newspapers were also effective agencies for securing new settlers. These columns were often copied by eastern papers, or the newspapers themselves were sent by Iowans to friends in the East. Letters to farm journals, describing Iowa lands and prospects, were another form of advertising and encouragement to easterners looking toward the West. The prices of \$10 to \$20 per acre for wild land, and \$20 to \$50 for improved farms, must have been a big inducement to residents of the high-priced eastern regions. The *Country Gentleman* in 1866 carried a letter

⁷ *Iowa Agricultural Report*, 1868, 327.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 379-80, 457; 1870, 496. For the subject of improving farm practices, see Mildred Throne, "'Book Farming' in Iowa, 1840-1870," *IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY*, 49:117-42 (April, 1951).

\$10 to \$20 per acre, with state "school lands" selling for as low as \$1.50.¹⁴

The new farmers buying these Iowa lands were interested not only in grain farming but in livestock as well. The wide expanse of open prairie especially in the less settled western counties of southern Iowa, was a great attraction to farmers interested in stock raising. The number of cattle in Iowa increased 86 per cent between 1860 and 1870; in southern Iowa this increase was 76 per cent. The significant fact, however, is that the greater part of this increase occurred in the newer western counties. In eleven counties in the southeastern part of the state — Des Moines, Louisa, Lee, Washington, Henry, Van Buren, Jefferson, Keokuk, Mahaska, Wapello, and Davis — cattle increased only 35 per cent during the decade. Comparing these figures with the totals of eleven western counties — Pottawattamie, Mills, Fremont, Cass, Montgomery, Page, Adair, Adams, Taylor, Union, and Ringgold — the increase in cattle was 162 per cent. Hogs, on the other hand, increased 230 per cent in the state in this decade and 179 per cent in southern Iowa. Taking the same eastern and western counties as a comparison, the increase in the east was 104 per cent, while in the west there were 461 per cent more swine in 1870 than in 1860.¹⁵ The eastern counties were older and had the advantage of the railroad all during the decade; the western counties were reached by the railroad only in 1869. Here then is another example of the cycle of frontier farming — first, livestock which can walk to market; then grains, when transportation facilities appear.

Many reports came from the western counties on the increased interest in both cattle and hogs. In addition to cattle owned and bred by the farmers, large droves were sent into southwestern Iowa for grazing during the summer months, some from the eastern counties and some from Missouri. Texas cattle were driven through this district on the way to the railhead at Ottumwa during the decade. "This practice stopped suddenly shortly after 1870. By this time the railroads reached entirely across the state and the prairie in southern Iowa was mostly taken by settlers."¹⁶

¹⁴ Oskaloosa *Herald*, Jan. 12, 1865; Mt. Pleasant *Home Journal*, March 23, 1866; Fontanelle *Adair County Register*, May 21, 1868; Jan. 6, 1870; Rufus Blanchard, *Hand-Book of Iowa . . .* (Chicago, 1867), 35-69.

¹⁵ These percentages were figured from tables in the *1836-1880 Iowa Census*, 350-51, 360-61.

¹⁶ John A. Hopkins, Jr. and C. R. F. Smith, "When Iowa Was a Range Country," *Wallaces' Farmer*, 53:59 (Jan. 13, 1928). See account of cattle drive across Iowa in 1866 in W. W. Baldwin (ed.), "Driving Cattle from Texas to Iowa, 1866," *Annals of Iowa* (third series), 14:243-62 (April, 1924).

Improved cattle were also receiving more attention in southern Iowa, but the greater majority were still "grades" and "scrubs."¹⁷ Distance from market, plenty of grass, and large crops of corn made cattle raising profitable, especially in the more isolated western counties, but the urge to improve the breed of the stock was still slight, although both newspapers and farm leaders never tired of pointing out to farmers the advantages of better breeding. A nucleus of fine breeding was to be found in Cass County, however, where Oliver Mills, as early as 1855, had introduced the Durham, or Shorthorn, into western Iowa. The impetus of this development had come from other southern Iowa stockmen — Timothy Day of Van Buren County and H. G. Stuart of Lee County.¹⁸

Hogs were increasing not only in numbers but in quality. "Since this stock is the principal medium of converting the corn crop into cash, any suggestion to improve the quality is seized upon with avidity, and the farmer who has not abandoned the common, and adopted the improved breed, must prove a rare exception," was the comment of the secretary of the State Agricultural Society in 1867.¹⁹

The relative profits of hogs and cattle were constantly discussed and debated. This interest is another indication that by the late sixties farming in Iowa had definitely lost its pioneer subsistence character and had become a business where profits and losses were carefully figured. A. G. Nye of Jefferson County considered both sides of the question:

In relation to the relative profits of raising hogs, and horses or cattle, it must be said in favor of hogs, that they come into market early at from fourteen to twenty months old, are raised with much less labor and attention, and require a good deal less capital than cattle or horses. On the other hand, they require the richest feed, nearly their whole feed being grain. If a farmer turns his principal attention to hogs, he must have almost his whole farm in corn, from year to year, which will soon exhaust even the rich soil of Iowa. "There are many fields in this neighborhood (which

¹⁷ Council Bluffs Bugle, Dec. 26, 1867; Fontanelle Adair County Register, June 16, 1870; Iowa Agricultural Report, 1867, 9; 1868, 13-14.

¹⁸ Iowa Agricultural Report, 1863, 134-5; History of Van Buren County . . . (Chicago, 1878), 582; Iowa Farmer and Horticulturist, 1:176 (January, 1854); John A. Hopkins, Jr., Economic History of the Production of Beef Cattle in Iowa (Iowa City, 1928), 65-6; Proceedings, Eighth Annual Meeting, Iowa Improved Livestock Breeders Assn., 1881, p. 102; Keokuk Daily Gate City, Oct. 8, 1855.

¹⁹ Iowa Agricultural Report 1867, 10; 1868, 15-16, 427; 1870, 14-15, 465.

has been settled twenty-five years) that will no longer produce a good crop of corn.²⁰

J. Jones of Davis County had a very low opinion of the popular and profitable hog. He considered hog cholera a "blessing in disguise." According to his figures, 15 bushels of corn would produce 100 pounds of pork, which was worth \$4.00, or 26 cents per bushel for the corn, while 90 bushels of corn would produce 100 pounds of beef worth \$66.00, or 73 cents per bushel for the corn.²¹ Others figured profits differently. A State Agricultural Society committee on swine reported their findings on the cost of raising hogs and cattle in 1867. A hog of 320 pounds would cost \$11.50 to raise, would sell for \$16.00, giving a profit of \$4.50. A "scrub" steer of 1,200 pounds would cost \$48.80 to feed, would sell for \$60.00, the profit being \$11.20. If the farmer raised Durham cattle, of 1,600 pounds each the cost of raising would be \$59.00, the selling price \$96.00, and the profit \$37.00.²²

If the farmer cared to do a little figuring from these estimates, he would find that he could raise four hogs with the same amount of labor and grain as he would spend on one scrub steer, and from these four hogs would net a profit of \$18.00, instead of \$11.20 for the one steer. He very probably did this figuring, or at least found by experience that he could make at least as much money on hogs with less labor, for by 1870 there were almost three times as many hogs in Iowa as cattle. In the southern counties alone there were 1,000,000 more hogs in 1870 than in 1860.²³ Iowa was definitely becoming a corn and hog state, in spite of many pleas for diversification.

The predominance of livestock led farmers to give more attention to the production of feed for this stock, and the farm machines which flooded the markets in the sixties enabled him to cultivate more land, thereby producing more grain. Perhaps the greatest change in Iowa farming during the decade of the sixties was the increasing use of this new farm machinery. While the scythe, the hoe, and the grain cradle were still in use, the new reapers, mowers, threshers, cultivators, corn planters, and wheat drills were gaining in popularity. The high prices of the war years encouraged many a

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 1867, 102-103.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 91-2.

²² *Ibid.*, 99-100.

²³ 1836-1880 *Iowa Census*, 350-53, 360-61.

farmer to invest in a machine he could not have afforded a few years before. The 1867 agricultural report contains a long illustrated list of the many different makes of equipment then in use. Cultivators at \$30 to \$60, gang plows at \$75 to \$95, the Marsh and Cayuga Chief harvesters (the latter selling from \$120 to \$185), reaping and mowing machines at \$130 to \$190, self-raking reapers for \$170 to \$200, threshing machines at \$500 to \$640 — these and many other elaborate and expensive machines were being used in Iowa.²⁴

Many of these implements were manufactured in the east, in Ohio and New York in particular, but frontier localism opposed buying "foreign" importations. Editors constantly urged their subscribers to buy at home, and each new manufacturing plant was greeted with an elaborate "puff." The Clarinda paper advertised the plows made by their "enterprising townsmen, Messrs. Chamberlain & Herrold," while a Washington editor extolled the virtues of the "very superior" reaper and mower made by Rose and Harrington.²⁵

Corn cultivation, which had not benefited by the reapers and mowers, now began to enjoy the advantages of the mechanical revolution. Riding and double shovel plows enabled the farmer to prepare his field quickly. Hand planters were used widely by the middle sixties. Cornelius Skiff of Grinnell had invented, in 1867, a combination corn plow and seeder which sold for \$75.²⁶ These tools brought a change in the cultivation of corn. Rufus Blanchard, in his 1867 *Hand-Book of Iowa*, described this method in detail:

The ground is plowed in early spring, one team and a man plowing two and a half acres per day. Next, the field is laid out in rows four feet apart, one team marking four rows at once with a marking machine, which is a simple shaft or piece of joist, sixteen feet long, with four sled-runner shaped planks inserted in it four feet apart, and a tongue attached to hitch the horses to. The next process is to drive across these rows thus made with a corn planter. One man and team will plant ten acres per day. When the corn is well up in the blade the cultivating process is commenced by dragging or harrowing it. Two rows are gone over at once, the team straddling a row, and the harrow teeth so set as to stir the ground thoroughly each side of this row to the next rows,

²⁴ *Iowa Agricultural Report, 1867, 219-61.*

²⁵ *Pacific City Herald, Feb. 2, 1860; Washington Press, March 15, 1865.*

²⁶ *Iowa Agricultural Report, 1867, 226.*

each way. A sulky plow is sometimes used instead of a harrow. This is a gig-shaped machine on two wheels, with diamond-shaped teeth projecting downwards from the axle. The driver rides on his seat and goes over the field two rows at a time, in the same manner as with the harrow. Next comes the cultivator, drawn by a single horse, going through one row at a time. After the corn has been gone through with a cultivator, it is generally ploughed through twice more with a shovel plough, and laid by till harvest. The corn is generally husked on the stalk, and stored in rough cribs made of rails built cob-house fashion, when it is ready for market.²⁷

This "market" was, more often than not, the hogs and cattle on the farm. Mr. Blanchard pointed out that corn would sell for but one cent a pound on the market, while pork and beef would bring twelve or sixteen cents a pound.

In Louisa County practically the same methods were followed. The corn rows were marked by "four wagon wheels properly distanced," double cultivators were used, and the seed was planted two rows at a time by corn planters. Henry County farmers plowed "stubble or stalk ground," planted with corn planters, and rolled or cultivated three times.²⁸

In the decade 1860 to 1870 the value of machinery in southern Iowa rose from \$2,354,441 to \$6,716,726. But much of this equipment had been bought "on time," and many voices prophesied impending disaster. In Clarke County it was suggested that "More labor and less buying *on credit* would be better," while an Adair County farmer warned that the advantages of the new implements "have been overcome in many instances by contracting debts in purchasing the same. . . ." "G. S." of Des Moines suggested that the buying of many of the machines was influenced by "flaming lithographic pictures" and even, at times, by "strong drink."²⁹ The war years and invention had overstimulated Iowa agriculture, but the prosperity of the decade made many blind to the financial shoals ahead.

Nevertheless, the machines, whether paid for or not, enabled the farmer to cultivate larger areas and thus produce more feed for his stock. In the central and western counties of southern Iowa most of the corn was fed to stock, but in the eastern counties, where there were fewer cattle and hogs,

²⁷ Blanchard, *Hand-Book of Iowa*, 27-8.

²⁸ *Iowa Agricultural Report*, 1869, 357; 1870, 485.

²⁹ 1836-1880 *Iowa Census*, 270-73; *Iowa Agricultural Report*, 1870, 388, 430; *Country Gentleman*, 35:772 (Dec. 8, 1870).

the farmers shipped a good deal of their surplus grain east by railroad. Jefferson County sent its surplus to Chicago; Des Moines County shipped corn in the ear both to Chicago and to St. Louis; Lee County sold corn in St. Louis; Van Buren County found a "ready market" on the Des Moines Valley Railroad; Henry County shipped corn to Chicago. Between 3,000,000 and 4,000,000 pounds of corn were shipped yearly via the Burlington & Missouri River Railroad between 1863 and 1869, while the number of hogs shipped ranged between 100,000 and 200,000, and the number of cattle from 20,000 to 30,000.³⁰ In the first flush of excitement and enthusiasm over the presence of the railroads, eastern Iowa farmers tended to neglect livestock and devote all their attention to the several grains. "Hawk-Eye" of Lee County complained in 1870:

Prices are good, but stock scarce and steadily year by year growing scarcer. This is one of the consequences of railroad transportation continually carrying off the grain as soon as raised, and less stock being reared than formerly. Spring calves bring almost as much as ordinary two-year olds, and the butchers play sad havoc with them. Butter and cheese are high because cows are scarce and milk still scarcer. It is said that the center of wheat production is moving steadily west — so it is with cattle.³¹

The counties in central and western Iowa, because of the expense of carrying their grain to the railroad, concentrated their attention on cattle.³² With the completion of the railroads across the state, and with the addition of some north and south lines, a better balance of agriculture would be obtained, but the staples — corn, hogs, and cattle — retained their dominance. The fertile Iowa soil could and did produce many other crops; but the coming of the railroads, which made specialized farming possible and profitable, drew Iowa definitely into the Corn Belt type of agricultural economy.

As the western less wooded counties filled with farmers and with livestock, the fencing problem became acute. Iowans, ever boastful of their state, were forced to admit at least one deficiency — a lack of timber. This was especially true in the western counties. The wood-burning railroad locomotives of the sixties added to the already large requirements for

³⁰ *Iowa Agricultural Report*, 1863, 15; 1864, 17; 1865, 32; 1867, 10, 11, 32, 145, 154, 158, 167; 1868, 30-31; 1869, 41-2; 1870, 262.

³¹ *Country Gentleman*, 35:581 (Sept. 15, 1870).

³² *Ibid.*, 35:772 (Dec. 8, 1870).

housing, fuel, and fencing. Likewise, until the railroads had reached the western counties, the cost of bringing in "foreign" lumber was prohibitive.

In 1867 the state had endeavored by legislation to solve the timber shortage. One hundred dollars of the value of a farm was exempted from taxation for ten years for every acre of trees planted.³³ J. R. Shaffer, secretary of the State Agricultural Society, pointed out that groves would protect the farm and its cattle and increase the fertility of the soil, and would also in time enable Iowans to use native timber and thus save the cost of importation. The railroads, which required one cord of wood to carry a train forty miles, had to buy their fuel outside the state.³⁴ Iowa's native timber in 1870 amounted to 2,524,793 acres, of which 1,222,001 acres were in the southern third of the state. The seventeen counties west of the center of this area, however, contained only 385,422 wooded acres. Adair County fared the worst, with only 8,529 acres. The acreage planted with trees was already increasing, however. In 1865, 20,825 acres had been planted; by 1867, when the state exemption was enacted, this number increased to 48,774 acres. Only 3,629 of these acres, however, were in southern Iowa. In 1875 this total had jumped to 13,223 acres in that area, but the state total had meanwhile increased to 65,549. A probable explanation of this lack of interest in a sorely needed product was the fact that by the end of the decade farmers could get all the lumber they needed by railroad. In 1868 the Burlington had shipped 16,283,034 feet of lumber and timber west; in 1869 the total was 24,872,367 feet.³⁵ This was the era of high prices and prosperity. The farmer could easily afford to buy his lumber and devote his farmland to more profitable crops, crops which would mature faster than slow growing trees.

The fencing problem, however, had not been solved in the sixties. The grain farmers still wanted to fence stock and make the stockowner liable for any damages, while the stock raisers saw no good reason why the grain fields should not be fenced. Since most farmers in Iowa raised both stock and grain, it was not a clear-cut issue. In western Iowa, where, it was claimed, "every farmer intends to make stock-raising his business," the various herd and stock laws engendered a great deal of bitter discussion. Stockmen claimed that grain farmers were too lazy to build good fences;

³³ *Iowa Agricultural Report*, 1868, 9.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 1867, 28-30.

³⁵ 1836-1880 *Iowa Census*, 346-7; *Iowa Agricultural Report*, 1868, 30; 1869, 41.

the grain farmers argued that the immigrant could not afford to put up expensive fences until he had sold one or two crops.

Adair County, with very little timber, discussed the question pro and con in the columns of the Fontanelle paper. The editor, interested in attracting new settlers, favored fencing stock. "Many of those who come in here to settle are limited in their means; and their first object is to get a piece of land, get it broken out and a house built — and to be obliged at once to build a hog-tight fence is a tax which many of them are not able to stand, and hence they are of necessity obliged to go elsewhere. . . ." ³⁶ When the law to fence stock came up for a vote in Adair County in 1870 the controversy grew bitter and quickly descended to personalities. W. H. Madison considered the law "a curse to the poor man and the county generally," and added that "of course the lazy farmer will vote for the Stock Law, for the reason that it enables him to exist without fencing his farm." ³⁷ A "True Friend of Progress" promptly retorted that Mr. Madison "talked as though he had his farm well fenced, when the fact is, he has about forty acres fenced on three sides with a post and two basswood splinters." ³⁸

Neither the dire prophesies nor the optimistic promises came true, however. The law was passed in Adair County, ³⁹ and the region continued to increase both in grain and livestock. The issue serves to illustrate an advance from pioneer farming to settled community activity. The farmer could not go his own way, regardless of others; he could not be the pioneer individualist he had once been. As areas become more thickly settled, and farm impinged on farm, neighbors had to decide among themselves, or by the traditional ballot box, such problems as arose.

The high cost of fencing in the sixties — estimated at \$600 for eighty acres ⁴⁰ — plus the desire to keep farming costs low in order to attract more settlers, resulted in the practice of herding in most counties. In 1870 a township "herd company" was organized in Adair County, and a boy was hired to collect the cattle each morning and return them at night. The cost of herding was comparatively low; in Pottawattamie County in 1870 it

³⁶ Fontanelle *Adair County Register*, May 7, 1868.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, July 7, 1870.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, July 21, 1870.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, Oct. 13, 1870.

⁴⁰ Council Bluffs *Bugle*, Feb. 10, 1870.

ranged from \$4.00 to \$5.00 per head per season.⁴¹ But with the passing of the free range this problem disappeared. When a farmer could not turn his stock loose to graze on the open prairie, but must keep them on his own pasture, both fencing and the cultivation of tame grasses were encouraged and fostered.

Tame grasses were still in the experimental stage during the sixties, although toward the end of the decade a definite pattern could be seen. "Meadows are produced by sowing timothy seed on rye ground in the fall and clover in the spring," was one report.⁴² Henry Wallace of Madison County had long preached the advantages of clover and timothy, especially clover. He vigorously attacked the common belief that clover would not grow in Iowa.⁴³ It would not be until the 1880's, however, when the wild grasslands were almost exhausted, that tame grass pastures really came into their own, and blue grass became one of the most important crops of southern Iowa.

Fruit also received more attention in this decade, in spite of a long standing belief that Iowa could not produce fruits. Careless horticulture had at first been a cause of discouragement. Trees, bought from tree peddlers or from "foreign" nurseries, were put out at random and corn or potatoes planted in the intervening spaces. Cultivation of these crops, plus injuries from animals wandering among the young trees, caused great loss, but gradually a few men developed fine bearing orchards.⁴⁴ Between 1863 and 1866 the number of fruit trees in southern Iowa almost doubled, from 1,320,533 to 2,183,802, the number being close to half of all the fruit trees in the state.⁴⁵ As in the case of all crops which required more care and attention than the pioneer farmer could give, the largest concentration in the sixties was in the older and more settled southeastern counties. The great expansion in fruit farming, however, was to come in the seventies.

Wheat and oats were secondary crops in Iowa, but they were an impor-

⁴¹ Fontanelle *Adair County Register*, Sept. 5, 1867; Hopkins and Smith, "Wheat in Iowa Was a Range Country," 48; Council Bluffs *Bugle*, Feb. 10, 1870.

⁴² *Iowa Agricultural Report*, 1864, 301-74 *passim*; 1865, 135-6; 1866, 359.

⁴³ Henry Wallace, *Uncle Henry's Own Story . . .* (3 vols., Des Moines, 1917-1919), 3:8.

⁴⁴ *Iowa Agricultural Report*, 1865, 138, 142, 143-4; *Iowa Horticultural Society Report*, 1867, 72-3; *Country Gentleman*, 43:56-7 (Jan. 21, 1869).

⁴⁵ State total—1864: 2,337,592; 1867—4,704,966. See *1836-1880 Iowa Census*, 342-5.

tant part of the farm economy of the sixties, with oats outstripping wheat.⁴⁶ Changes could be noted by 1870 in regard to several agricultural "crazes" of the early sixties. Sorghum, introduced with much fanfare as the North's answer to the South's sugar — cut off by the war — lost much of its popularity after peace had opened trade again. Many reasons were given for the failure of sorghum culture; one punster finally settled the question, to his own satisfaction, by saying that sorghum was "numbered with the hosts of humbugs that stalked out a miserable existence and then withered un-blessed," while another explained that the decline was because "not one in twenty likes the miserable stuff. . . ." ⁴⁷ Sheep, never too popular in Iowa, had enjoyed a "craze" during the war years, again due to lack of southern trade — this time in cotton. As wool prices rose, Iowa's sheep population increased from 259,041 in 1860 to a high of 1,598,226 in 1867. With the fall of wool prices after 1865, an immediate decline in sheep began — 855,492 in 1870 to half that number a decade later. Southern Iowa followed this trend, with about half the state's sheep in each of the enumerations.⁴⁸ Although there was considerable diversification in southern Iowa's agricultural picture by 1870, a definite trend was noticeable — away from the minor crops toward emphasis on hogs, cattle, corn, and grass.

Interest in farming as a business is everywhere evident by 1870. The whole subject of agriculture, of proper husbandry, better profits, the place of the farmer in social and economic life, the farmer and politics — all this was being discussed and disputed. The farmer of Iowa was no longer satisfied with mere subsistence. His work now became a commercial enterprise, a way of making money, even of growing rich. The isolation of the frontier did not appeal to the farmer of the sixties and seventies. Men of vision and foresight desired more social intercourse with their fellow farmers, because with increased speed of transportation and communication the farmer's horizon had widened. Newspapers and farm journals brought him into vicarious touch with other farmers, and a desire for a closer interchange of views with immediate neighbors was the result. This widened interest did not apply to all men, of course — it never has — but a sufficient number were moved by the changing age to bring about the beginnings of a new phase of farm life in Iowa and in the nation.

⁴⁶ 1836-1880 Iowa Census, 284-9, 296-8.

⁴⁷ Iowa Agricultural Report, 1872, 288; 1874, 468.

⁴⁸ 1836-1880 Iowa Census, 362-4.

During the Civil War, and especially in the years immediately following, neighborhood farmers' clubs sprang up in great numbers. The common purposes were to overcome the isolation which was, significantly, for the first time being widely regarded as a social handicap, and to cultivate the intellectual interests and capacities of rural people. . . .⁴⁹

The state and county agricultural societies brought farmers together once or twice a year, but the farmers' clubs in neighborhoods and townships provided discussion of farm problems almost at the farmers' dooryard. Meetings were held weekly, semi-monthly, or monthly, usually at the school house or at the township village center. As the clubs expanded to include several townships, or even a whole county, the members met at the county seat, usually during the winter months when the farmers' work was slack. These meetings were informal, they reached the individual farmer directly, and they helped to spread the gospel of better farming into all corners of the state.⁵⁰ The topics discussed covered a wide range of subjects: agriculture in all its many phases, horticulture, and stock breeding. Many of the clubs were also the instigators of new or revived county agricultural societies, while many more were forerunners of the Patrons of Husbandry in the seventies.⁵¹

The Civil War decade began as Iowa reached the end of her frontier period. The years may be called an interlude between pioneer subsistence farming and commercial agriculture. In these years the railroad crossed southern Iowa from east to west and sent branches north and south. The war years brought new markets, new machinery, and higher prices. They also brought debt and inflation, with the inevitable unrest and discontent when prices fell and mortgages or notes became due. Increasing communication of neighbor with neighbor brought organizations which would give voice to this unrest in the decade of the seventies, when the bill for the too-rapid expansion of the sixties was presented for payment.

⁴⁹ Paul M. Johnstone, "Old Ideals Versus New Ideas in Farm Life," U. S. Dept. of Agric., *Yearbook 1940* (Washington, 1941), 133-4.

⁵⁰ Throne, "Book Farming' in Iowa, 1840-1870," 132-3.

⁵¹ For the story of the Patrons of Husbandry, see Mildred Throne, "The Grange in Iowa, 1868-1875," *IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY*, 47:289-324 (October, 1949).