

## HUNTING IN NORTHWESTERN IOWA

The two narratives which make up this article were secured by interviews with the hunters and their related experiences were set down by a shorthand reporter. Only occasional changes have been made in spelling, grammar, punctuation, and capitalization. The conversational style has also been retained. The stories are part of a series of similar interviews which present a picture of hunting in Iowa in the vicinity of Spirit Lake.

### NOTES FROM AN INTERVIEW WITH E. C. HINSHAW<sup>1</sup>

My first remembrance of hunting was back in O'Brien County where I lived as a real small boy. My father was quite a hunter—he had to be. We lived in the town of Sheldon and then moved on a farm for two years. We lived on that farm some fifty years ago and I remember very distinctly the game conditions of that time. I remember the prairie chickens in the spring when the boys would go out shooting. In that county there weren't any hills, it is rolling but no sharp hills. We would find as high as twenty to twenty-five chicken nests on one knoll where the grass had been burned. Father always kept a bird dog. The first hunting I remember was being with my father and a friend of his when they went chicken shooting early in the season and I recall the birds were scarcely half grown. Of course, there were no laws then to protect them. We shot them in the spring, fall, summer, and winter.

Father had one of the first breech loading guns in that

<sup>1</sup>The date of the interview was February 23, 1930. Elmer C. Hinshaw was appointed Fish and Game Commissioner of Iowa on February 1, 1913, and served until April 10, 1919. At the time of the interview he was Mayor of Spirit Lake.

county. He also had a single barrel muzzle loader and one day he was out of primers or wads or something so he couldn't load his shells for his breech loading gun, so he took this single barrel muzzle loader and when we came in we had something like twenty prairie chickens which we got in a very short time.

We were out on a quarter section farm and the rest was all prairie. In those days it was just a matter of walking outdoors and shooting.

I came to Arnold's Park, forty-six years ago, in 1884. At that time market hunting was in its infancy. They weren't doing it on a big scale. Some fellows marketed and shipped them east. Then, in a very few years, there were built in this territory a number of freezers<sup>2</sup> where they bought game in quantities and shipped it to the eastern market in carload lots. They had two freezers at Spirit Lake and one in Arnold's Park. They bought game from the hunters and froze it solid in these freezers and held it until the market was right. By holding it until the shooting season was over and the birds had gone south, they could get a better price than when the hunting was on.

I would say that eighty per cent of the farmers in this whole territory supported themselves and families partially from market hunting.

There was no trapping that I know of, they shot them all except some winter trapping of prairie chickens, but very little of that. The farmers had guns and dogs and in their spare time they would hunt these birds and sell them to the men who ran the freezers. It didn't make any difference whether you had one bird or a dozen, there was always a market.

Forty years ago, a brother of mine and I put in an entire

<sup>2</sup> These freezers, as described by another hunter interviewed, were made of lumber, with sawdust and dead air spaces as insulation and a mixture of cracked ice and salt as the freezing agent.



year hunting for the market; that is, all the available time there was to hunt.

I remember one instance when we left Arnold's Park with a span of ponies and started west. We crossed the Sioux River almost directly west of Arnold's Park. There were a few houses along the river and then when you left them it was four miles across to what they called a herd ground where they kept large herds of cattle — they would herd them on these wild prairie stretches. We would start out with plenty of blankets, a grub box and ammunition and paid no attention to where we were going to be when night came — if it was a straw pile or a haystack, it was good enough for us, and there we'd camp. On this particular trip, we camped in a straw pile with the idea of going across to the herd ground the following morning for the purpose of hunting chickens. I owned one small English pointer dog and that was all the dog we had. I remember that he had a broken tail and when his tail was supposed to be straightened out on point, the back half of it would stick straight up. When he had a point, he had the habit of going clear down to the ground, laying his front legs on the ground with his head practically on the ground and his hind legs standing up. Many a time I have found him in the high grass by seeing that broken tail sticking up in the grass. I could see the tail when I couldn't see the dog.

We started across the herd ground that morning and I allowed the dog to run, to give him what we called his work out. A bird dog is like a race horse, he must have a little preliminary run as a work out to put him in shape for the day. We had barely started when he made a point. I got out of the buggy and walked over there. Being a dry year, the grass was eaten down so close that you wouldn't believe that an ordinary reed bird could have hid from you, but there were fifteen chickens within twenty feet of the buggy

and I was unable to see them until they raised. We followed them into a ravine where there was some cover, woods and heavy slough grass. At the next hill, he found another covey.

Along about the middle of the day we found seven or eight hundred mallard ducks in a large slough where the water had dried up, with the exception of possibly an acre in the center, leaving the balance of the slough all mud. The driver of our buggy, a small boy, also had a gun, one that I had discarded because I had blown two inches off the muzzle and had filed it off and didn't consider it a very good shooter. These ducks were so far from the shore that we couldn't reach them. We sent the boy around to the opposite side to scare them up. Brother located at one corner and I at another and while the boy was going around, the entire bunch flew up, made a circle and lit on the mud about thirty yards from the shore near the boy. There was a hill about twenty rods wide that left the boy in plain sight. He crawled on his hands and knees down to the edge of the slough without the ducks appearing to notice him. He shot two barrels into them and for a few minutes it looked like the whole slough was covered with dead ducks. Brother and I got a shot at them as they circled and we soon noticed that ducks were still getting up out of the slough. We both started across the slough. We prepared ourselves with our hip boots before we started and got there in time to kill a few that were getting away. When we finally gathered them up and made the count, the boy had killed forty-seven mallards with the two shots. This boy's name was George McCutchin. He is now a conductor on the Rock Island Railroad between Estherville and Sioux Falls. When we arrived at the freezer that evening we collected for 107 prairie chickens and 58 mallard ducks.

In those days, nobody thought anything of killing game



in that way, and when you get down to the matter of the decrease in the number of ducks, you find it has been ten times as noticeable since the close of the market hunting days. It is a matter of fact and history, so the market hunting can not be accused of being the cause of the destruction of the wild game.

I spent six years as State Fish and Game Commissioner and made quite a study of conditions and of the causes of the decrease of our game. One of the first things I did when I went into the Warden's office was to put up the fight that stopped the draining of the small meandered lakes of the State. I wrote the bill, that is now the law, that prevents drainage of meandered lakes. You can not stop the drainage of private properties.<sup>3</sup>

I went into the Commissioner's office in April, 1913, and this bill was presented at the session of the General Assembly in 1918. I organized the sportsmen of the State and secured its passage against the determined fight on the part of the drainage advocates who had control of it up to that time. They had been draining lakes at the rate of eight to ten small meandered lakes a year in the State.<sup>4</sup>

A meandered lake is State owned water. The State usually sold the lake to certain land owners or buyers, usually to adjoining land owners who drained the lake and farmed the bottom, if it was farmable. There were cases where, after they had ruined a beautiful body of water, they found it was absolutely valueless.

Rice Lake in the north tier of counties, north of Mason City, was a beautiful body of water, a great duck lake, feeding ground, and breeding ground. The best they were ever able to make out of it was a marsh and the people of that

<sup>3</sup> *Code of 1935*, Sec. 13116. The law prescribes that meandered lakes and ponds may not be drained unless such drainage is definitely prescribed by law.

<sup>4</sup> *Laws of Iowa*, 1915, Ch. 113.

community petitioned the State to take it over again and close the drainage and bring the lake back. I am not sure but that has not been done the last year or two.

While I was the Fish and Game Warden of Iowa I stated that a prairie chicken was a *prairie* chicken and when you destroyed the prairie you had driven the prairie chicken away, never to come back. The season was closed against my advice in 1917.<sup>5</sup> There has been a continuous closed season ever since and today there is less than one prairie chicken in Iowa to every two thousand there used to be. I can remember when at this time of the year, you could drive out in this part of the country and see chickens that were wintering here. You would see as many as three hundred in a flock all the time. Now this entire fall and winter (1930), I haven't seen more than a dozen.

I gave the same arguments for not closing the season on quail, for the reason that as fast as we remove the wild conditions where the quail has protection during the winter, the quail has to go. The only fellow who is interested in the quail has to go out and build shelters, spend large amounts of money for food, and see that they winter through. He is the fellow who is doing it from the sports standpoint and wants to kill the birds later. All the argument about the value of the quail to the farmer would never make him spend time and money to care for the quail. When the whole subject is thoroughly analyzed, the argument so far as the benefit to the farmer is a huge joke.

As to the destruction of insects by the quail, when figured out from a standpoint of the survival of the fittest, this is about what takes place. The quail eats a large number of insects. He is not particular what kind. He takes the spider and all other carnivorous insects. If there were no quail there would not be any more insects than there are

<sup>5</sup> *Laws of Iowa*, 1917, Ch. 202.



today, for the reason that when the quail destroys certain insects, he is destroying the things that destroy thousands of other insects. If a scientific study is made of the number of different kinds of insects destroyed by the quail, then we should also study the number of insects that would have been destroyed by these different kinds of insects which the quail had eaten. You would find that the number of insects would be decreased if they were left alone to their own habits of living and destruction of their kind.

For example, they will use such stories as the passing of the passenger pigeon and the buffalo. The passenger pigeon<sup>6</sup> disappeared over night. Nobody knows where, or why they are gone. They weren't killed. There were millions of them one year and the next year they were gone. It was done all in one season or one flight. They migrated to the north in the summer and they went south in the fall and I think it was in their migration to the south that they disappeared. The theory is that they either got some disease or on attempting to go across the Gulf of Mexico they were caught in a storm. It certainly wasn't the shooter who did away with these birds.

What would we do if we had big herds of buffalo<sup>7</sup> in Iowa now? The government would have to hire men to go out and shoot them.

During the time that I was State Warden, we had a large number of deer in the vicinity of Avoca. They were a matter of trouble for the department. Farmers were continually demanding damages. Finally, one farmer deliberately shot a deer, then called up and notified the Game Warden

<sup>6</sup> For another version of the disappearance of the passenger pigeons see E. D. Nauman's *Vanished Hosts* in *The Palimpsest*, Vol. XVI, pp. 169-173. Mr. Nauman says that the extinction was gradual, ending with their disappearance about 1880.

<sup>7</sup> For a discussion of buffalo in Iowa see H. Arnold Bennett's *The Mystery of the Iowa Buffalo* in *THE IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS*, Vol. XXXII, pp. 60-73.

that he had shot this deer. The Game Warden went out and arrested him. The farmer stood trial first in a justice of the peace court where he was convicted. The case was appealed to the district court where the conviction was upheld and later was taken to the Supreme Court which reversed the conviction on the ground that the farmer had a right to kill a deer which was destroying his crop or fodder, in spite of the fact that the law made the killing of deer a crime.<sup>8</sup>

When I was Game Warden, I advocated sanctuaries or game preserves where birds could rest, feed, and propagate without being molested, as the best method for the preservation of bird life. I started the first game reserve in this State by leasing large acreages from farmers. We paid for leases just to make them legal. This was for a period of five years, and the farmers co-operated with the Game Warden. The only place where we established a reserve was where enough farmers came in to make sufficient acreage for a reserve.

For this work I received a certificate of merit from the National Protective and Propagation Society of America. At that time this Society was the strongest organization of its kind in the United States. Senator Weeks was one of the authors of the migratory bird law — the Weeks-McLain Bill. He and ex-President Theodore Roosevelt were two of the directors of this organization. I received this certificate for having done the best work in the United States during that year for the protection and propagation of bird life.

The system thus started has been adopted in practically every State in the union, using of course, different methods, but still a large per cent of the game preserves are still obtained and controlled exactly as originally started.

<sup>8</sup> State v. Ward, 170 Iowa 185.



It would not be amiss to say a little about Fred Gilbert. He was the best game shot or trap shot the State or the world ever produced. His record stands out for a period of years which proves that. Everybody knows about him. Fred had a keen sense of humor. I remember one day he and I were sitting on the Isthmus, the flyway, waiting for ducks and the ducks weren't flying. We didn't know of any place else to go, and we were just about disgusted with the whole thing and ready to go home when another hunter, a stranger, came along and saw Fred sitting behind a stump. He walked over to Fred and said, "Say, partner, where can I go and kill some ducks?" Fred looked up at him and said in his dry way, "If I knew, I'd be sitting right there."

I was born in a sod house in Lyon County, Iowa, about nine miles northwest of Sheldon, in 1872. Lyon County is the extreme northwest county of the State. I think Fort Dodge was the closest trading point. Two or three years after I was born, we moved to the new town of Sheldon and we were in town until I was five and then my people moved on a farm again, and back into Sheldon when I was seven. They were getting along as well as the average persons in that community at that time, even better than the average, but we saw times when corn bread was practically all we had for breakfast, and corn bread was all we had for dinner, and corn bread was all we had for supper. If it hadn't been for the wild game and fish, there would have been times when we certainly would have lacked a large per cent of the calories and vitamins that nowadays we learn are so essential to the building up of strong bodies and minds. In later years, as soon as the game became marketable, it paid for practically all the little luxuries and most of the essentials which the average farmer had in this entire section of the country.

My father at that time was a harness maker by trade and

I remember his buying buffalo hides. They were in common use for robes, to carry in sleighs, wagons, and so forth, and as late as 1883 we had buffalo robes and buffalo overcoats for sale in the harness shop. At that time, we secured the first overcoat made from any other hide, that I had ever seen. It was a dog hide coat. The price of the two coats, buffalo and dog hide, was the same, twenty dollars each, and my father selected the dog hide for himself. Later he found he had made a great mistake.

We had two railroads in the town of Sheldon at that time and for six weeks at a time, during one winter, we never saw a train on account of the snow and cold. The fact that we had plenty of buffalo hides saved many from freezing to death and left us to tell the story at this time. I have seen the time when if we didn't have a bunch of buffalo robes in the house we'd all have frozen to death in it. Sheldon had two railroads, the Omaha and the Milwaukee, as far back as I can remember. The Omaha had a direct line from Sioux City to Minneapolis.

I can remember my father saying he shot elk in Lyon County. I remember one time my father and some other men chased three elk. They chased them with horses. They wounded one and chased it until dark and then lost him. Elk were very scarce. That is the only time I remember of hearing of any elk. Of course, this being an open country, the deer and elk wouldn't be here much except possibly in the summer time.

This whole country was open prairie except a little willow brush along the rivers. There is no such place anywhere where the conditions are the same as they were here fifty years ago. You can go to places where the conditions are as they were here twenty-five years ago, but there is no place on the continent where there is a game paradise such as existed here fifty to seventy-five years ago. There never



was a spot on the continent that was so well adapted to duck and chicken shooting as Iowa and the southern part of Minnesota, certain parts of Illinois, and the eastern part of Nebraska and the Dakotas. The best of it all, though, centered in Iowa.

The chickens used to migrate south in the fall and we could see swarm after swarm of them right here at Spirit Lake. There were certain points which they seemed to follow as they most invariably dodged crossing the water. They would rarely cross the lakes, but would go around them, and this made what we called chicken flyways and we'd go to those places at the break of day and probably a half or three quarters of an hour before sundown and catch the morning and evening flight. I have seen it when standing in one spot I could get twenty or twenty-five shots at chickens in the morning or evening while they were migrating and in flight. That didn't include the thousands that you saw going on each side of you that weren't close enough to shoot at.

You occasionally will find a chicken nest in this country, but if you do find a nest it is almost sure to be on a spot that never saw a plow — a railroad right of way for example.

NOTES FROM AN INTERVIEW WITH FRED F. PHIPPIN<sup>9</sup>

My people came here in 1861. I was in the stockade they built to get away from the Indians. My father helped build that stockade. This was in 1862, the time of the New Ulm, Minnesota, Massacre. The nearest the Indians came to us that time was Jackson, Minnesota. There were seventeen massacred at Jackson. My father helped to bury them.

Fish were very plentiful then. We could go out any time

<sup>9</sup> The date of the interview with Fred F. Phippin, of Spirit Lake, was February 21, 1930.

and get all we wanted and we didn't need any boat or anything. At that time the old bridge at Okoboji was about three times as long as it is now. We would drive down along Okoboji shore and there was a row of cottonwood trees there, and we would fish off that bridge and we weren't very particular what kind of bait we had because the fish would bite almost anything. Sometimes we would catch thirty or forty pike.

In the spring when the water began to come in from the small streams and the first fresh water would go through under the ice, then the fish would crowd in there and I have seen where you could throw them out by the wagon load.

What few people there were around there would go down after supper and fish and I have seen the pike lay there so that you couldn't stand. They would bite just as fast as you could bait your hook. In the spring time when they were running, pickerel would be the first to make the run up these small streams and people used to throw them out with pitchforks. Usually, we'd salt down two barrels of them for our summer use. If we wanted fish and didn't have time to fish for them we'd always go to the barrel. We just cut the heads off and the entrails out and salted them down and laid them in barrels and they would keep fine. We would lay the fish on the top of our kettle when we boiled potatoes and by the time the potatoes were done the fish would also be done and we would serve them with butter, and they were good.

In the winter everybody would spear the fish through the ice. I used to have a fish house when I felt like being out. I remember, one Christmas I went out and we used some decoys. I made mine out of wood shaped like a minnow, and balanced it with lead, and you could bend the tail and it would run around in there, and I have had eight or ten fish come in there at one time. One time they were coming



so swift I couldn't work my decoy and put the spear to them at the same time. Finally my brother came down and he worked the decoy and I did the spearing. We quit at three in the afternoon and we had fourteen pickerel, weighing four to eight pounds apiece, all we could carry, and we walked down through town carrying our string and everybody came out to look.

When I was a boy I did most of the plowing on our farm. There weren't so many fields to feed on in those days for the birds. About three o'clock in the afternoon geese, ducks, and brant would come along in the field and they were so tame I could walk along and almost touch them with my whip.

There were pelicans and swan down here. I shot the pelican they called "Old Abe". I shot him and got the tip of his wing. I brought him to town and the State Warden came along and asked what I'd take for him and I said several dollars and he said, "Let's crate him up and send him down to Chicago". That was at the time of the World's Fair. They had "Old Abe" down there for the fair and after that they let him loose.

Ed Osborn and Henderson were great hunters in those days. They cleared seven hundred dollars one winter on muskrat, beaver, otter, and wolf. My father used to trap all up and down the Rock River from here to Sioux Falls. There were elk here as late as 1867 and 1868. Osborn and Henderson would hunt elk right where Sibley and Worthington are now. They would sneak up on the elk calves and throw a blanket over them. Then the old elk would go back to the herd, and the baby elk would follow the men.

Before Kurt Arnold went back to Michigan (he used to run a grocery store here) he broke a pair of elk and he used them in the harness. I think he had three elk calves one summer running around in his yard.

There were no railroads in this part of the country when we first came here. We used to go to Fort Dodge and Mankato. We would go with oxen and it would usually take a week to make the round trip. It all depended on the roads. There were no roads then. We would just go across the prairie. There were grass trails.

Just where the railroad tracks cross East Okoboji there used to be an old sawmill, that is where they sawed the wood for the stockade. One day the men were working there and they saw a great buffalo on the oposite side of the lake, where Ralph kept his boats. When the water was low there used to be a long sand point nearly a third of the way across, and this buffalo came down through the point and started swimming across and the men saw that and they went after it and drove it into the ditch they had built to draw the water up to the mill. I helped eat it. I was eight years old then. This was in 1864. That was the last buffalo I saw here.

The winters were terrible. The snow used to come about the same time it comes now. We landed here on the 8th of October and it hadn't snowed as yet. There used to be much more snow then than now<sup>10</sup> and many people were frozen to death.

Father used to trap quite a good deal after the farming season was over. Usually, he trapped a good deal winters. He used to trap all up and down the Rock River clear to where Sioux Falls is now. There wasn't any Sioux Falls then. All there was there was just a shanty and it looked like it had been used for a blacksmith shop. About half way to Sioux Falls where Rock Rapids is now, there was a man married to a squaw. He was a professional hunter and he lived in a cabin, and that is all there was between here and Sioux Falls.

<sup>10</sup> This was written in 1930, before the record snowfall of 1935-1936.



One spring father found some wild goose eggs and he put them close to his body to keep them warm and brought them home and put them in a box near the fireplace and a hen hatched eighteen of them. In the fall when the geese came along they got to be quite bad and we had to clip their wings. Finally around Christmas we killed and sold them.

At that time land was worth almost nothing. There was all homesteads. There was nothing here at Spirit Lake, except the old courthouse inside the stockade. It was the first courthouse they built up here, and then they built up another one, and since that they have built the present one.

I used to trap quite a few muskrats. I never got any beaver. I used to catch quite a bit of coon. When men went out trapping they would sometimes stay out for a couple of months according to how their grub would hold out and so forth, but just how much of a catch they made I can't just tell. Sometimes they would have quite a bunch. They would also catch some otter. They would take teams to haul their provisions and furs.

An old fellow here (we used to call him Uncle Joe) named Wolford used to supply trappers and share with them. One night he got caught in a storm and froze to death.

When these men went trapping they didn't use tents but they would build themselves a cabin from the nearby timber and work from there. To keep from freezing Osborn and Henderson used to wear what they called elkskin suits. They would tan the hides, take the hair off, and make clothes out of them. My father never had a leather suit. He used to dress mostly in all wool clothing.

We lived in a cabin and father sold it in 1872 and we went back to the State of New York. I learned my trade there and came back to Spirit Lake in 1877 and went into business. Of course, there wasn't very much to the town then. There wasn't a railroad here.

We never put ducks or geese away for the summer because we got them here all the year around, any time we wanted them. You could also go out and get prairie chickens any time.

When I was a boy I had a double barreled gun, rifle and shot gun combined. Most of the guns in those days were muzzle loading shotguns and they were used especially for the small game, but most everybody used rifles for the larger game.

I never hunted ducks for the market, but there used to be an old bachelor here by the name of Wilcox who did nothing else but fish for the market. He would start out in the spring and fish until the fall and he used to make enough during the fishing season to keep him the year around. He used to ship the fish to Des Moines. We just shot ducks for ourselves.

There was a man here by the name of Winters<sup>11</sup> who used to have a dozen different men shoot for him, giving them a commission. Fred Gilbert, before he got to be what he was, used to hunt for this man.

Living here back in the sixties was pretty tight nipping sometimes. When we came here it took one year to get the land broke and ready for next season, and then we raised wheat. We had in a crop of wheat before the Indian outbreak happened in 1862. We also had a small piece of corn, about ten acres, and we had in about two acres of potatoes. We had our wheat cut and stacked. That was in August when the outbreak happened.

Two men came up here in the spring from Algona. They stopped with old man Crandall. He had a wagon built longer than most of the wagons but not as high. They went down to the grade at the foot of lake street and stayed there

<sup>11</sup> The stories of other men interviewed indicate that this was Joe Winters, but Fred Winters and Henry Winters are also mentioned.



and shot. At eleven o'clock they sent down for Crandall and he drove up here with that wagon full of ducks and that was only from daylight to noon.

After the grasshopper time here, everybody that could, would catch fur, farmers and all, and Mr. Jackson used to take them in exchange for goods. I have seen his counter when you couldn't put another hide there.

There was a man by the name of Henry Brookman who dealt in furs for many years. He would go to local places and buy furs and ship them in. I have seen that man go out of town with the furs packed in gunny sacks. He might have had some furs from some other town but when he left here his wagons were always full. He had two hayrack loads tied and bound down to keep them from falling off. The muskrats saved many a man in the grasshopper time.

Old John Gilbert, Fred Gilbert's father, bought fur for the market. He told me once he had 750 mink and said he had paid not more than seven dollars apiece for them. When mink went up to thirteen dollars, he turned them in at seven dollars because he was agent for a fur buyer.

Ed Warner went out and got seventy muskrats the first night of the season this year, 1930. I used to get fifty cents apiece for a good prime hide when I was a kid.

In 1872 father and I started for Iowa from the State of New York. That fall the horses had what they called the "Canadian Epizootic." They ran the mail from Algona, which was the nearest railroad town, at that time, across to Jackson with a one horse buckboard. There were so many horses sick that they couldn't run the stagecoach. We started for Algona afoot. There used to be a trail, they called it the Lone Hill Trail. Father was acquainted with it, but it had not been traveled very much. That year quite a snow storm came up. We started at Lake Minnewashta. It had snowed and it blowed the snow up into the

hills. Each of us had his pack. We tramped all day without a bite of food and finally we came to a big muskrat house and I sat behind it and tried to eat my lunch but it was all frozen, it had been so cold. I ate a few mouthfuls and then wanted to go to sleep, but my father saw me and pulled me on my feet and if it hadn't been for that I would still be lying there. There was a log cabin about half way between Spencer and Emmetsburg and we went in there and got our supper and they gave us a room. The next morning I couldn't put my clothes on. Father pulled me out of bed and helped me put them on. He was used to it, but I wasn't. We managed to get downstairs and eat a little breakfast, and the worst of it was to walk from there to Emmetsburg. They couldn't carry us because they just had a buckboard and a horse to carry the mail. We walked along and finally an old farmer came along and he took us near town. He wouldn't take us into town because of the Epizootic but he drove us up close to town. We went up to the old stage barn and asked the proprietor if he would drive us to Algona. He said he was sorry but he had thirty horses and not one of them was fit to make the ride. Finally he said he thought he had two horses that might make the trip. He charged us eight dollars. It was twenty miles but we were mighty glad to get there.

It was a mighty cold fall. They couldn't even ferry across the river. They laid ties on the ice and ran the train across the Mississippi River on the ice from McGregor to Prairie Du Chien. This was in 1872. In the summer time they had a railroad ferry.

F. O. THOMPSON