

The Army Helps the Farmer

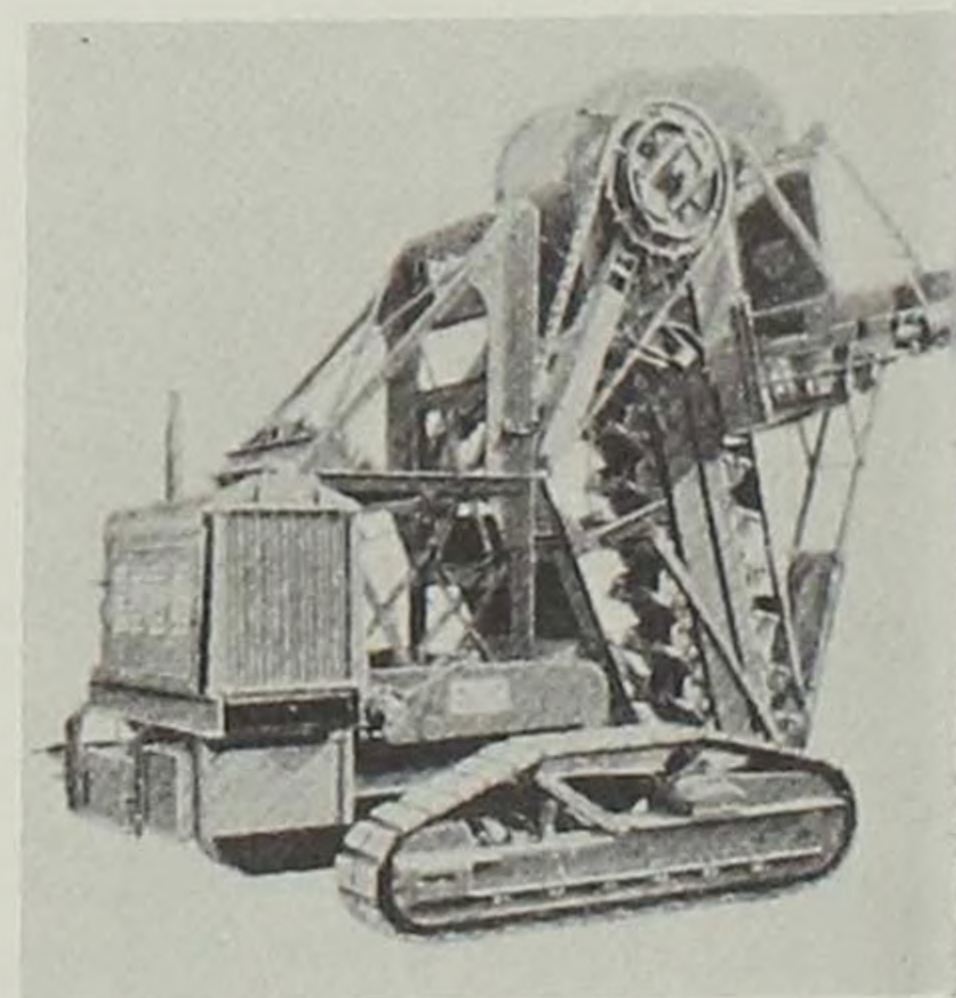
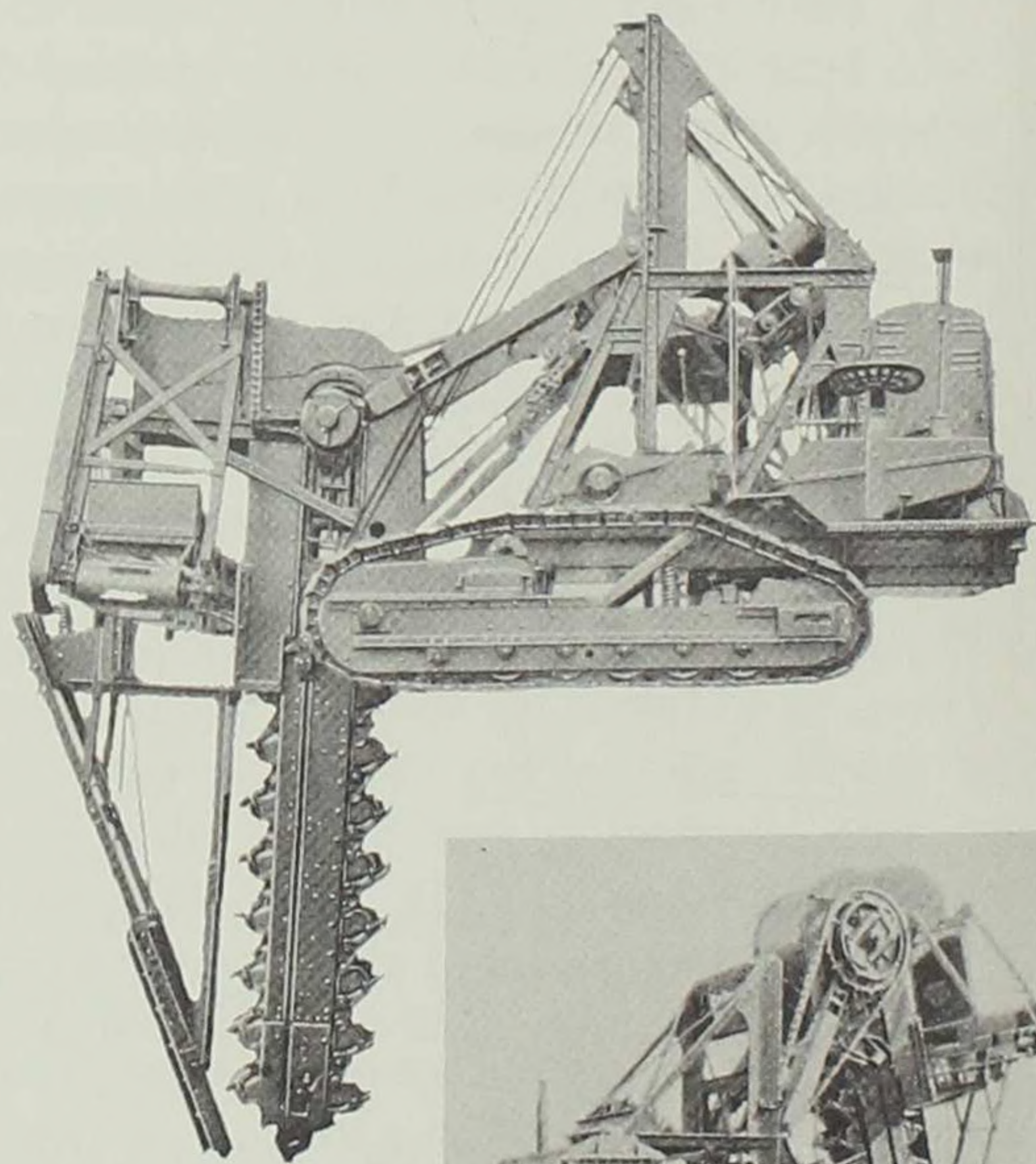
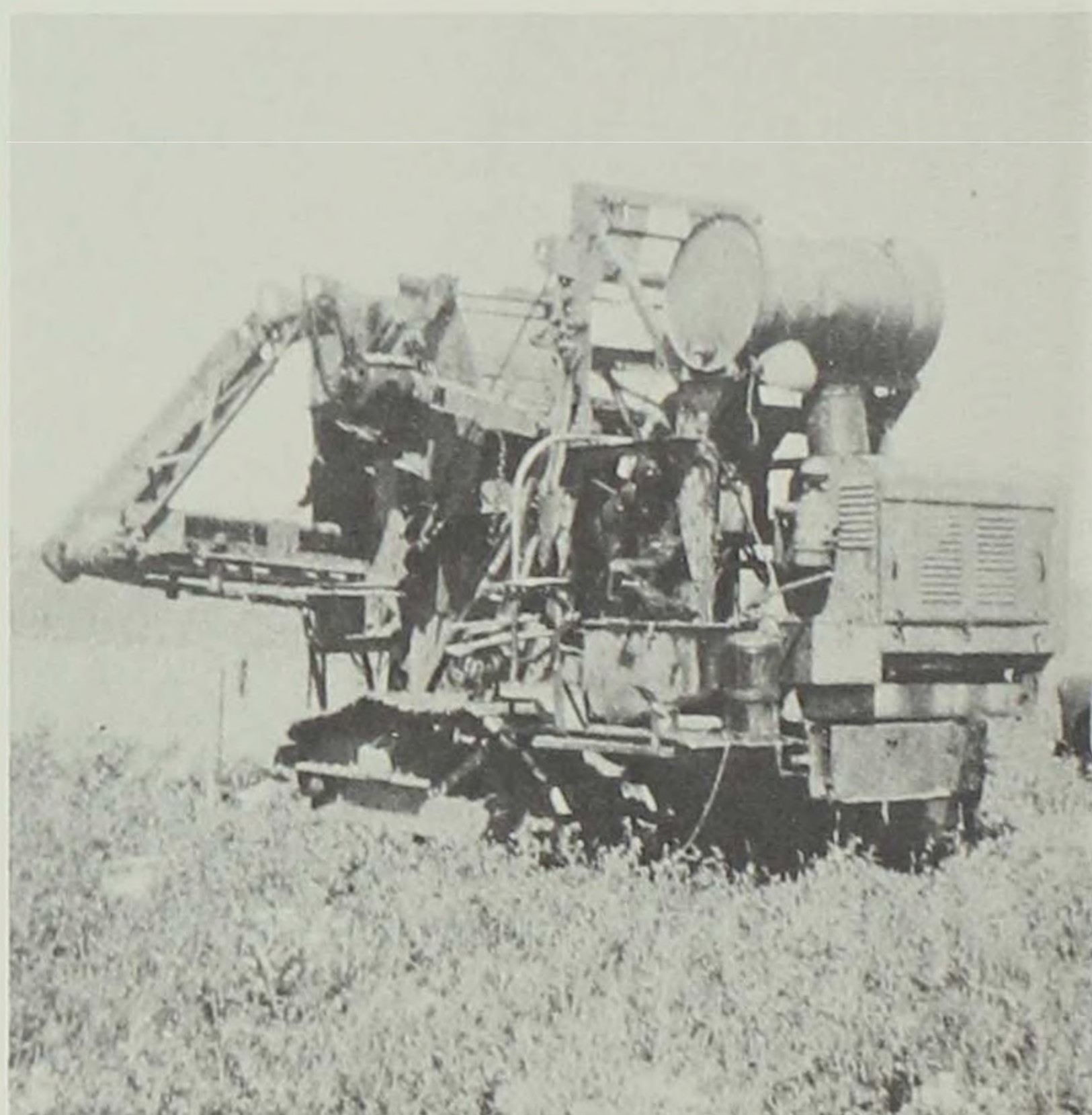
by James E. Ferguson

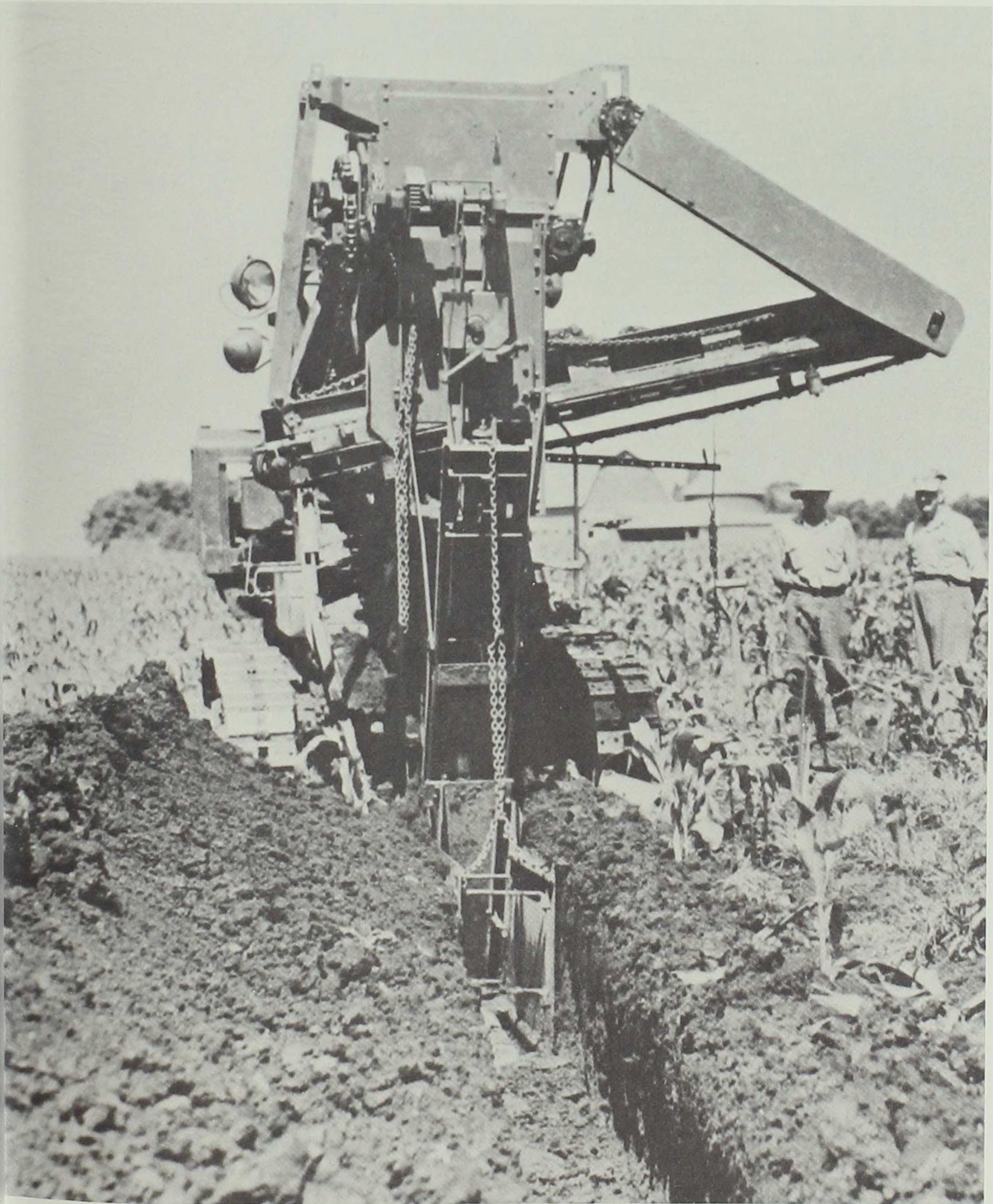
In March 1945, the United States Army released this ditching machine to Everett F. Ferguson (1901-1957) of Grand Junction, Iowa. Built by Barber Green, the eleven-ton mechanical digger cost \$7,500. Before Ferguson could buy the machine, however, the Army required that he obtain statements from bankers, landowners, and Agricultural Adjustment Administration and Farm Bureau officials attesting to the digger's utility in a variety of farm chores. The Army had never before released such equipment for sale to civilians.

The machine proved itself immediately, making quick work of such tasks as laying tile and digging trenches for sewers, water mains, and gas lines. Under favorable weather conditions, the digger removed earth at the rapid — for 1945 — rate of five feet per minute. The extensive land drainage made possible by the digger and similar machines helped Greene and Boone County farmers such as Ferguson increase crop yields in the postwar years, an ample return on their investment.

Everett Ferguson was the grandson of James Hickey, the first judge in Palo Alto County, and the nephew of Maggie (Hickey) McNally. Pictured on the opposite page with Ferguson (left) is Emmett M. Henry (1886-1970).

The digging machine released for civilian use by the United States Army in 1945. Pictured at right is one of two machines purchased by Greene County farmer Everett F. Ferguson. (all illustrations courtesy the author)





IOWA INNOVATIONS