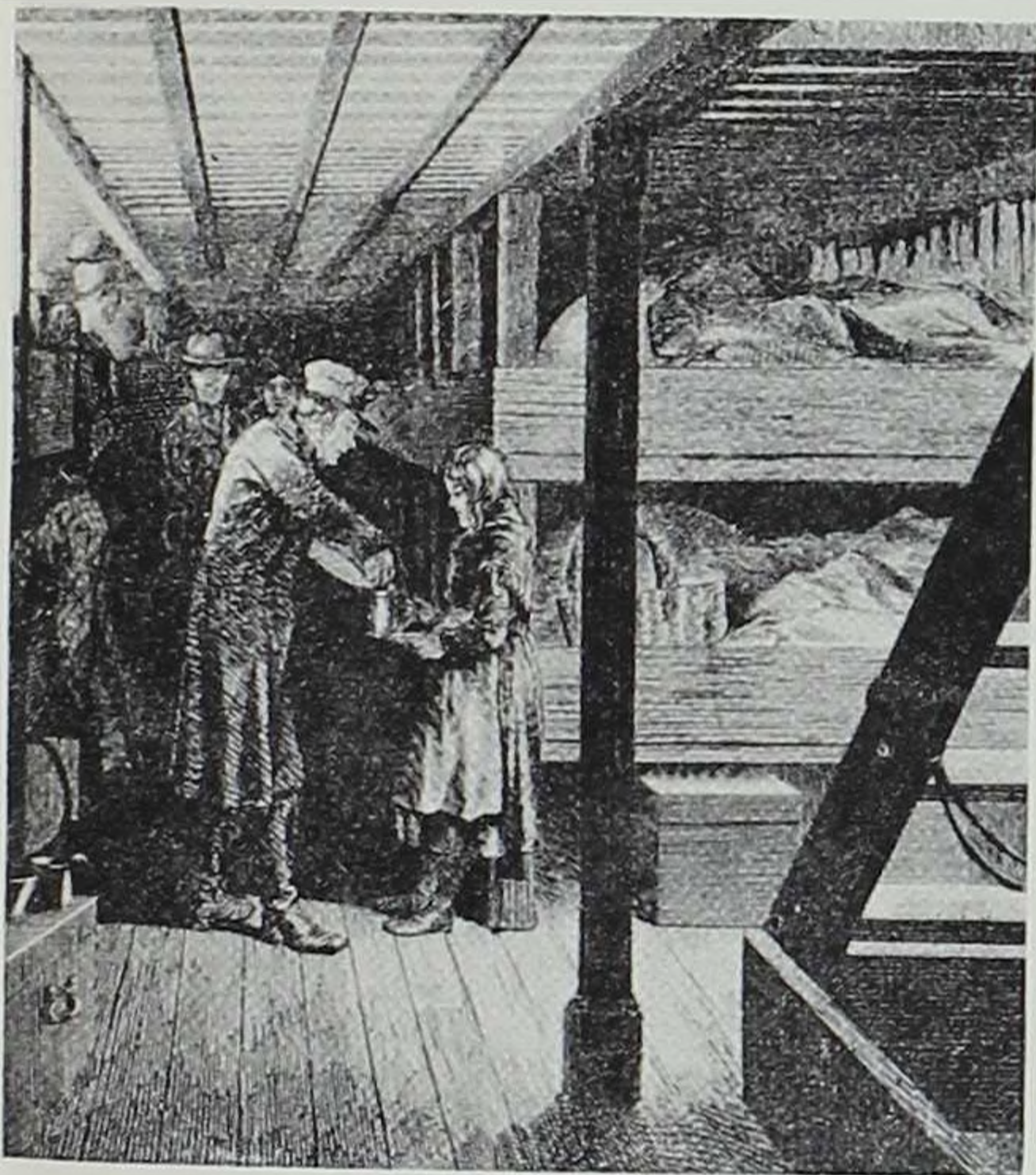


Economic Activity

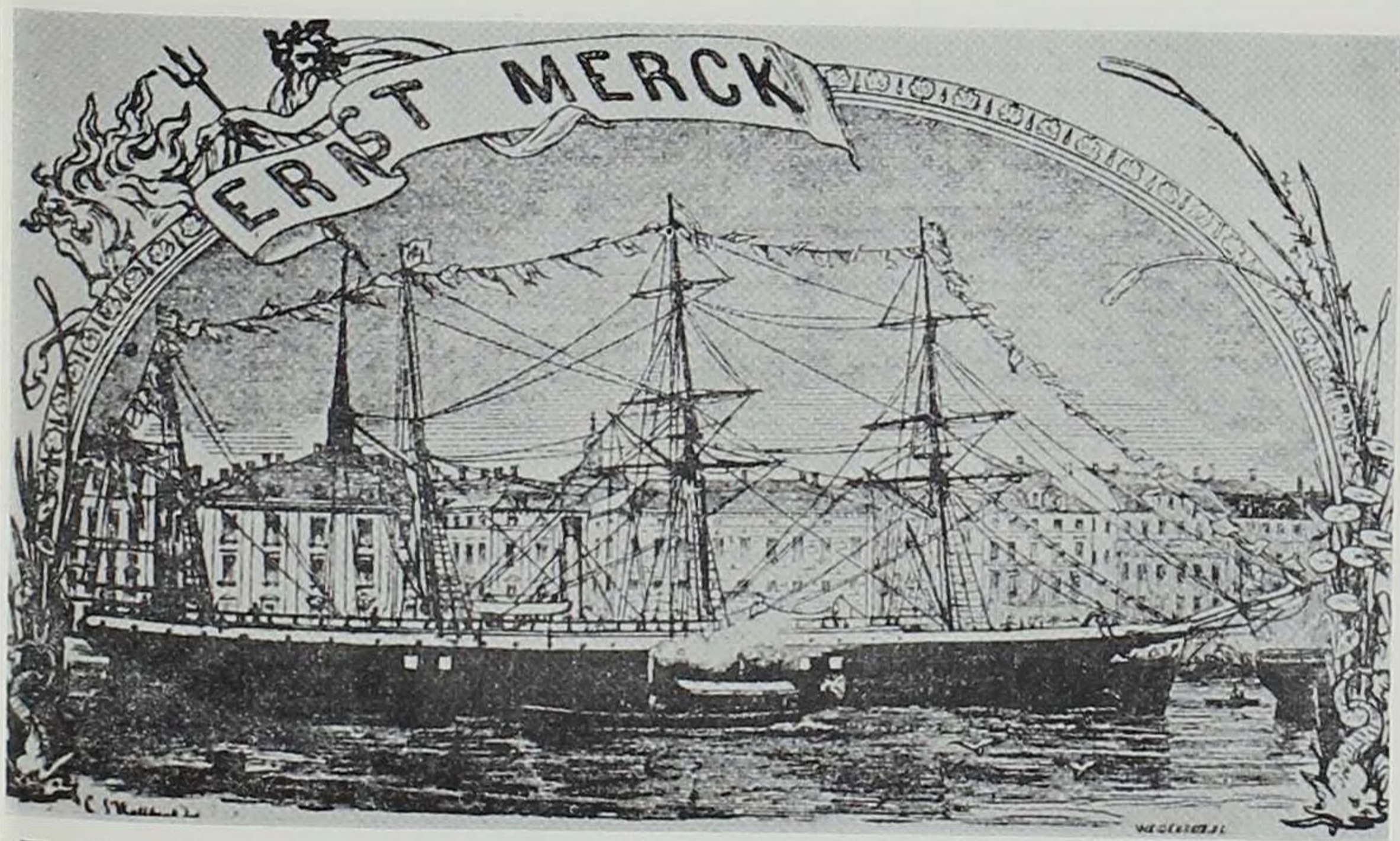
When horses provided the farm power and local transportation, towns of 300 to 1,000 population had several features in common. In the matter of handicrafts, one or two blacksmith shops were among the first services to be established. Sometimes they came before the stores. Equipment was not extensive, but each shop had a forge, an anvil, the required small tools, and also an operator with a strong arm to do the work.

During the late fall and early winter, much of the business was horseshoeing. The smith could subdue an ordinary horse by lifting his foot and holding on tenaciously. However, there were some animals that had to be lifted from the ground by a pair of suspension belts. The blacksmith, with his forge, could shape an iron horseshoe to fit a properly trimmed hoof. When such work was done by a farmer, the hoof had to be trimmed to fit the shoe at hand.

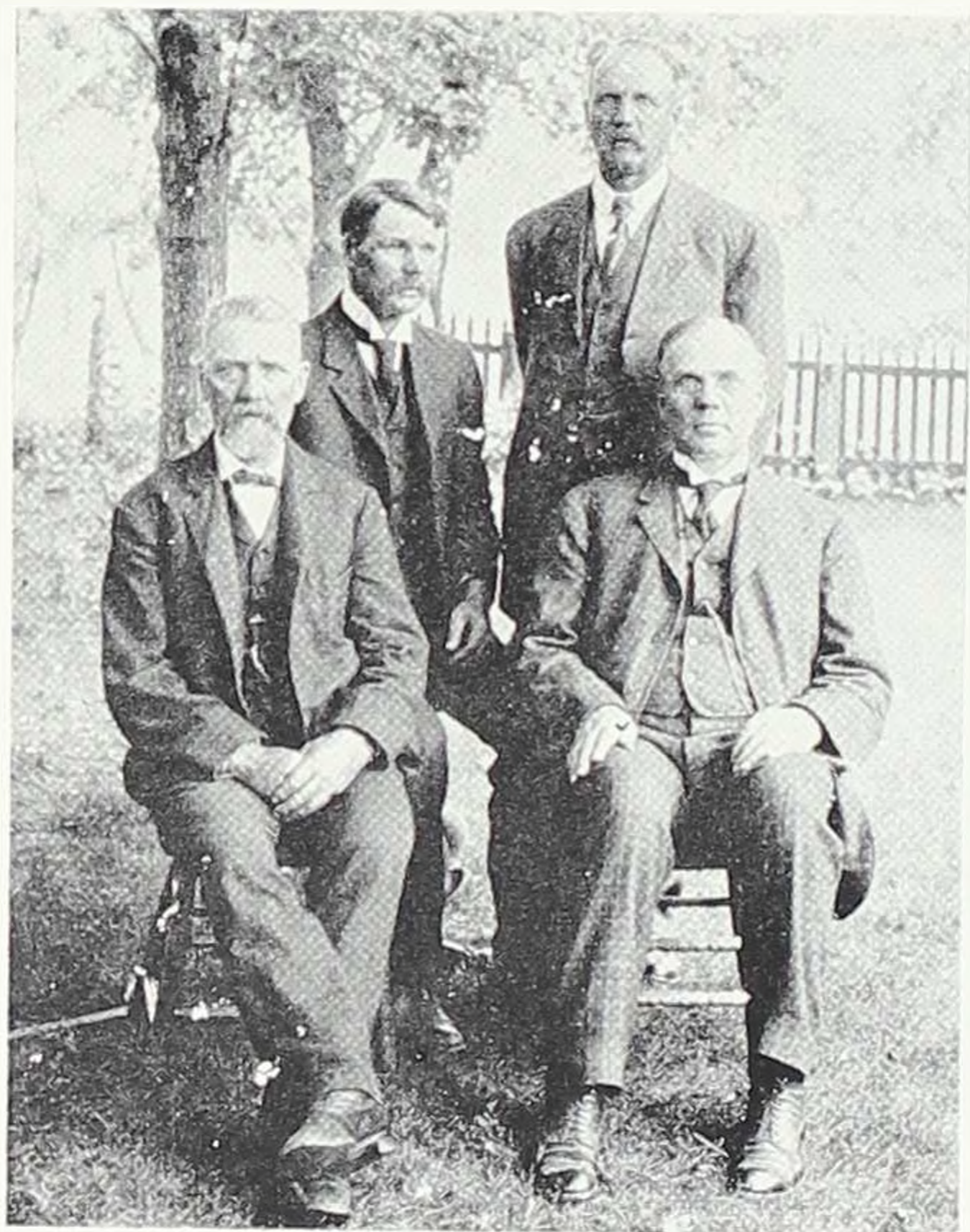
Another craft concerned with the requirements of horses was that of the harness maker. He made harness from sides of leather of suitable kinds. Making harness was an all-winter job, while repairs took an indefinite amount of time throughout the entire year.



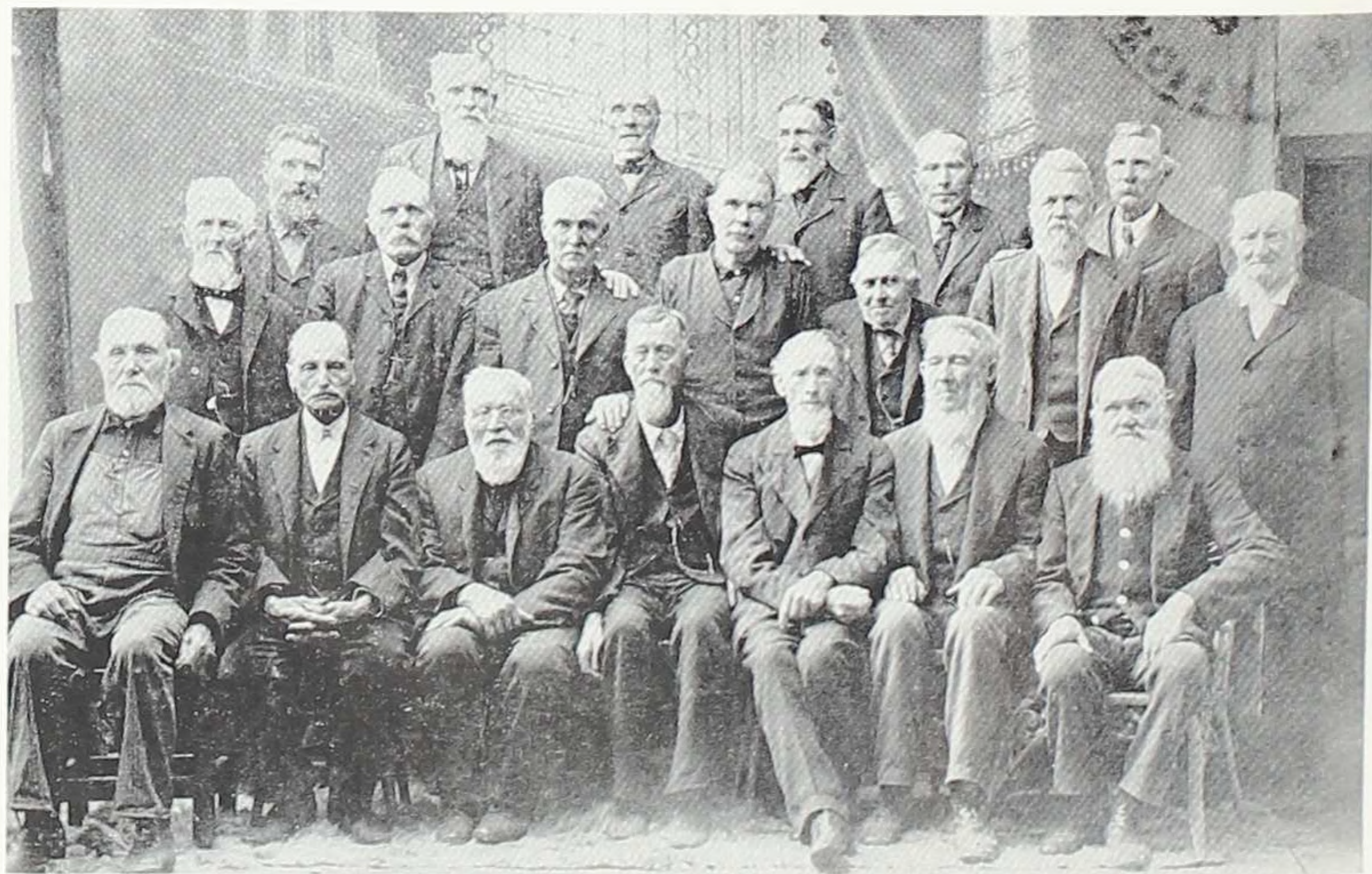
Living quarters in an emigrant sailing vessel
a century ago.



The *Ernst Merck*—one of the larger sailing vessels bringing Swedish emigrants from Göteborg
to Quebec.



The four Anderson brothers who crossed the Atlantic by sailing vessel in the 1860's



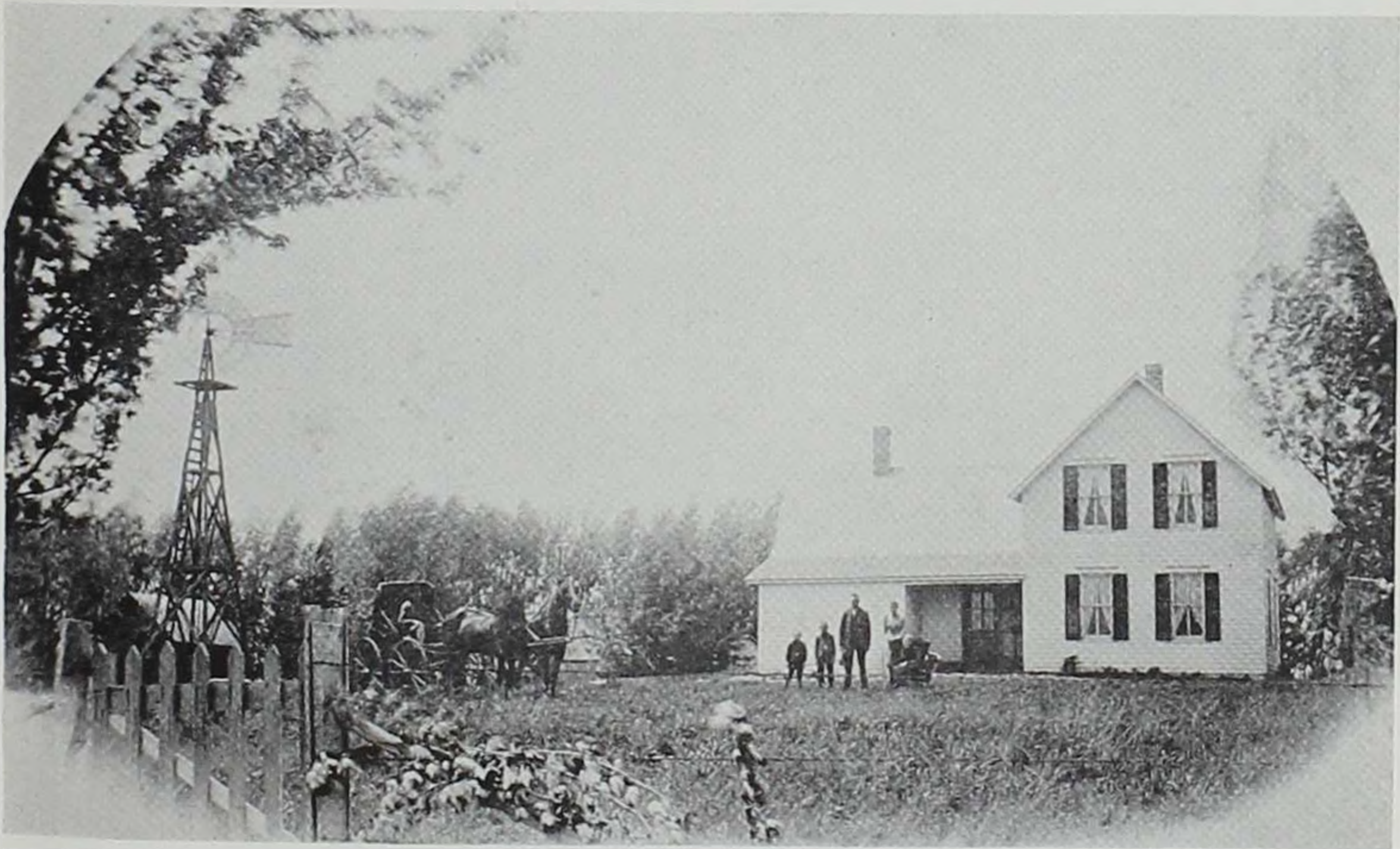
A group of retired first-generation Swedes living in Stratford. Photo about 1909.



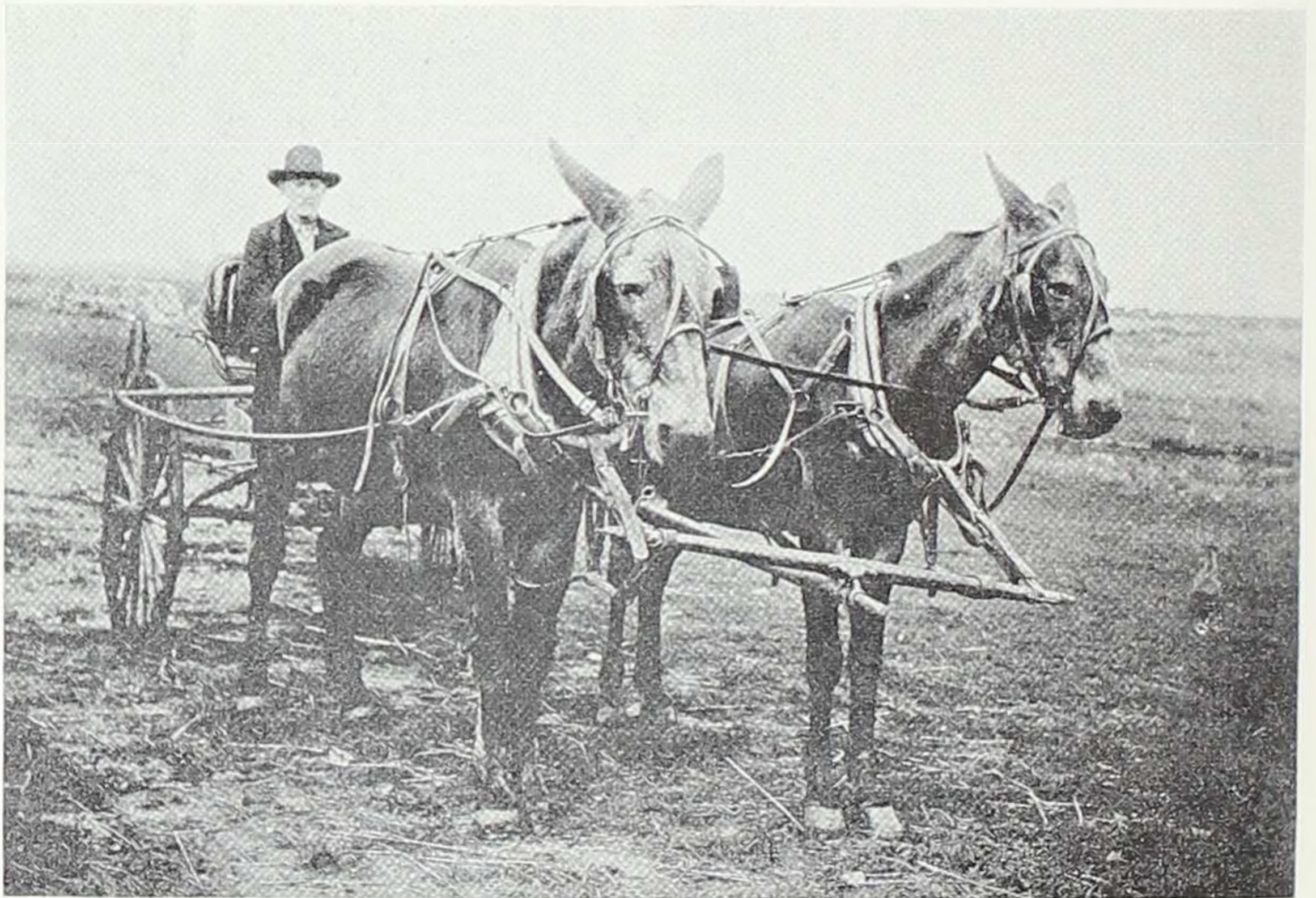
AUGUST H. ANDERSON—
Author's father as a boy of 17.



MYRON S. ANDERSON
Author as a lad of 16.



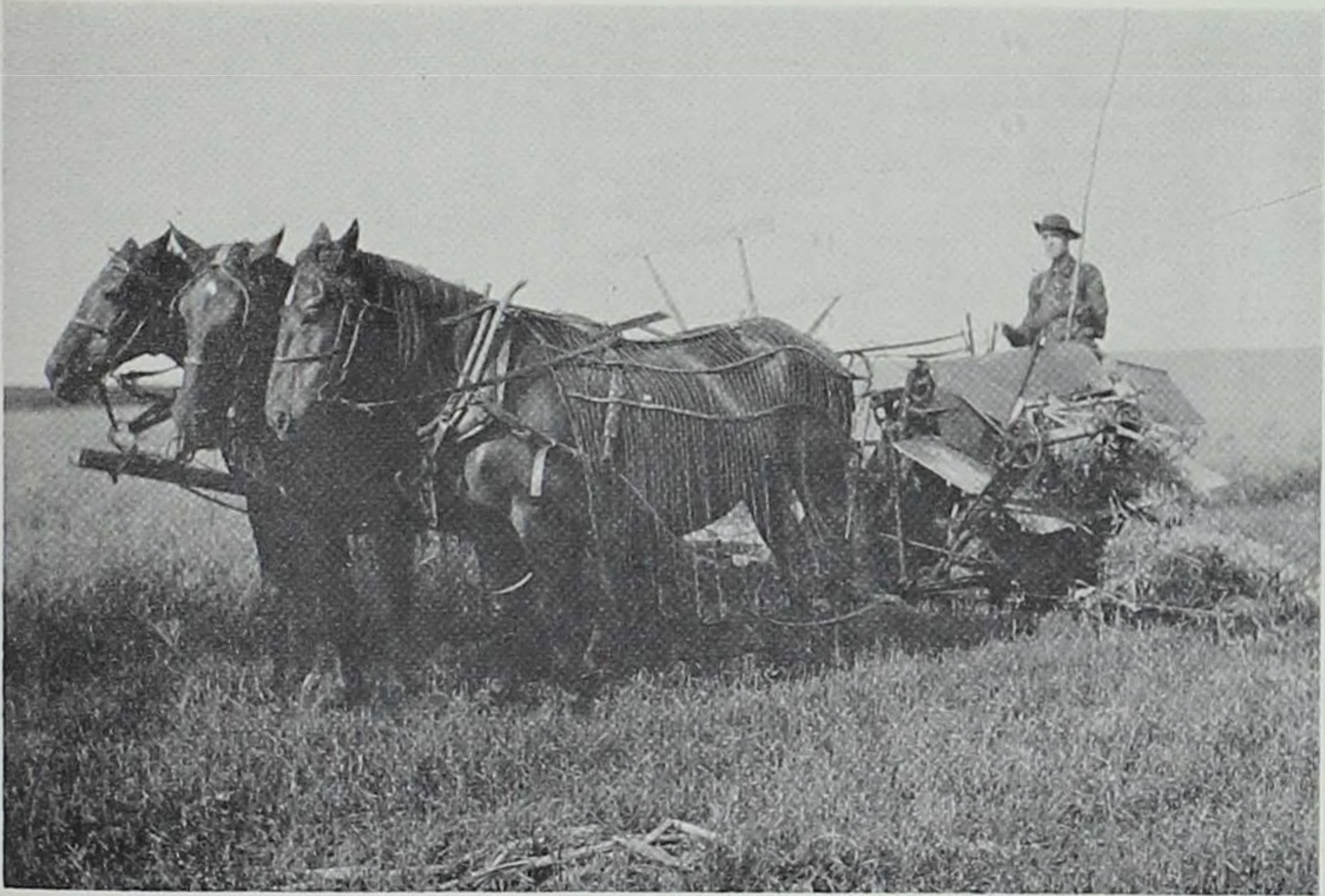
An Iowa farmstead near the eastern border of the Swedish settlement, where the author grew up. Photo about 1892.



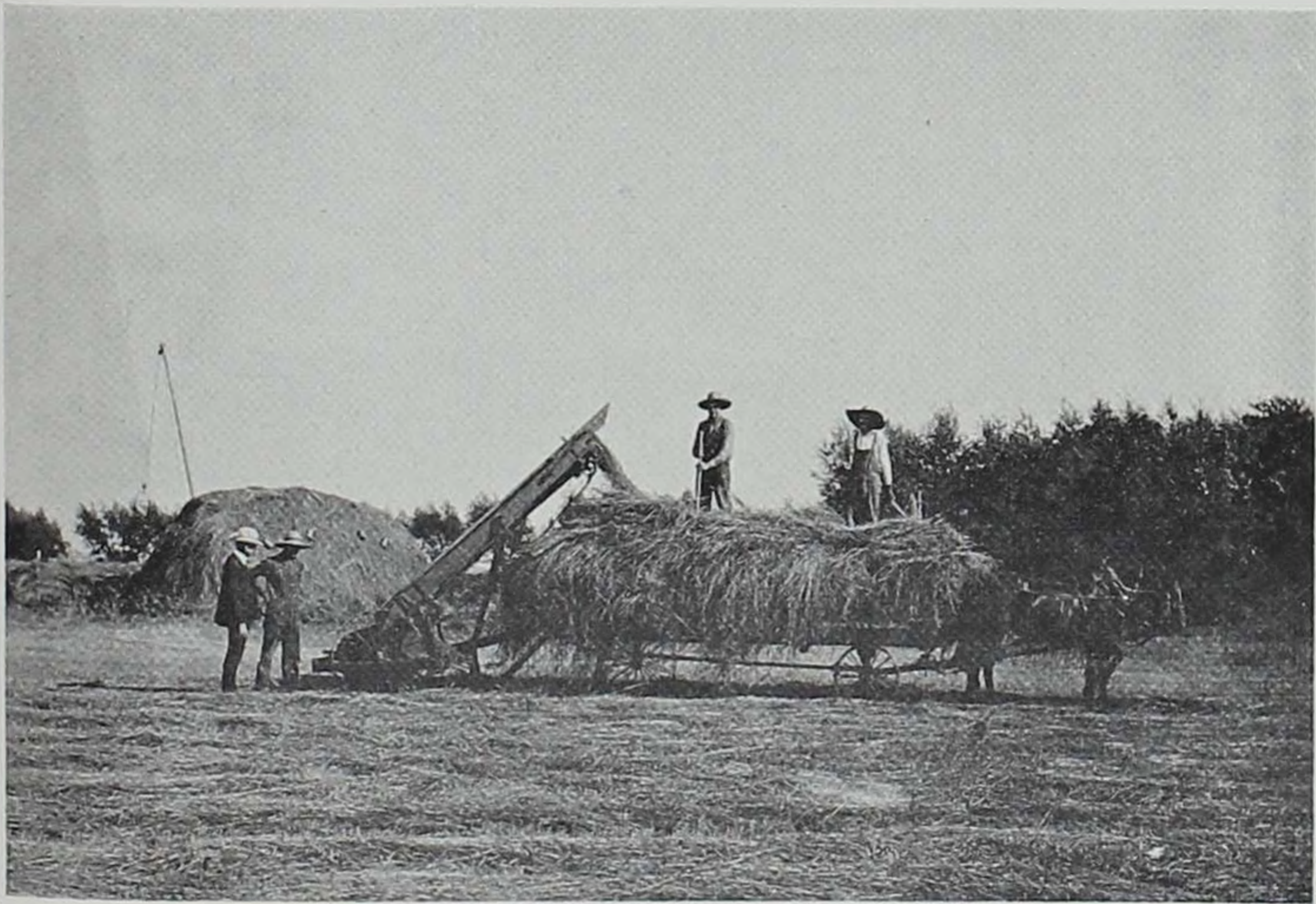
A Swedish farmer living near Stratford. His mules were ages 39 and 41 years.



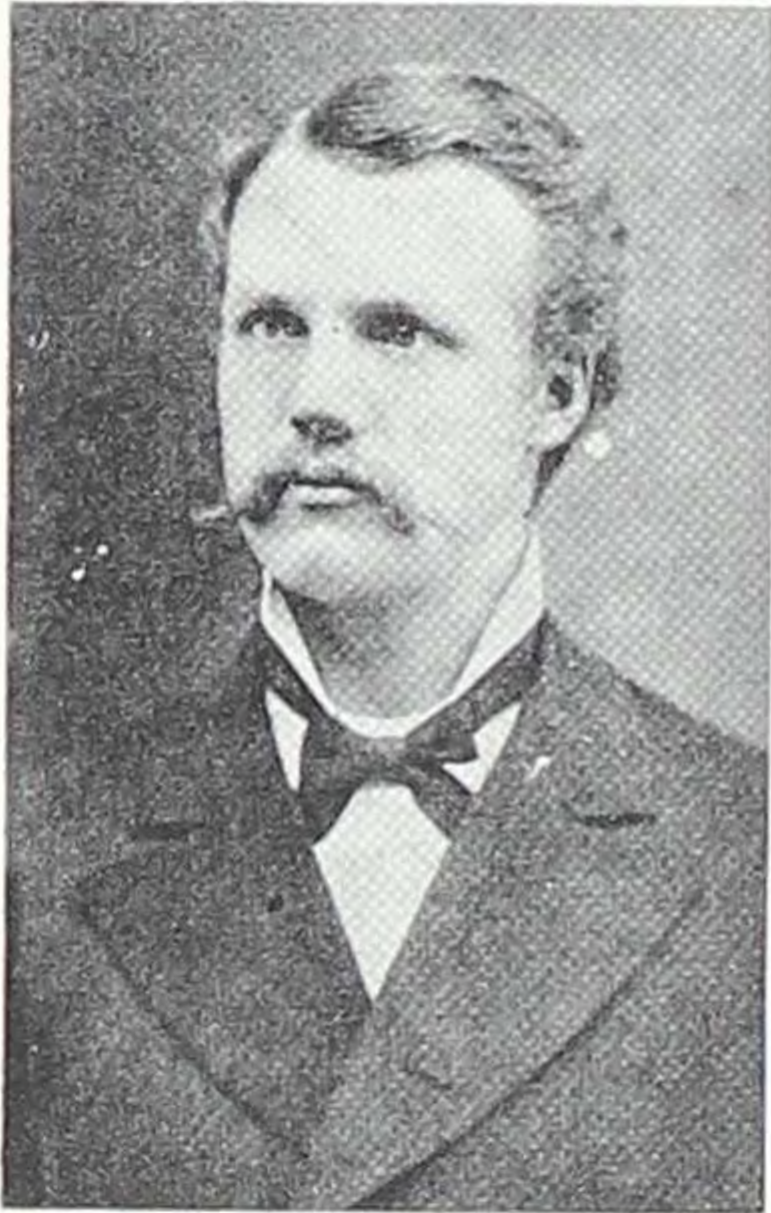
Threshing near Stratford about 1895.



Harvesting oats at the Anderson farm about 1907.



Making hay east of Stratford about 1907.



AUGUST H. ANDERSON
When he moved to Iowa.



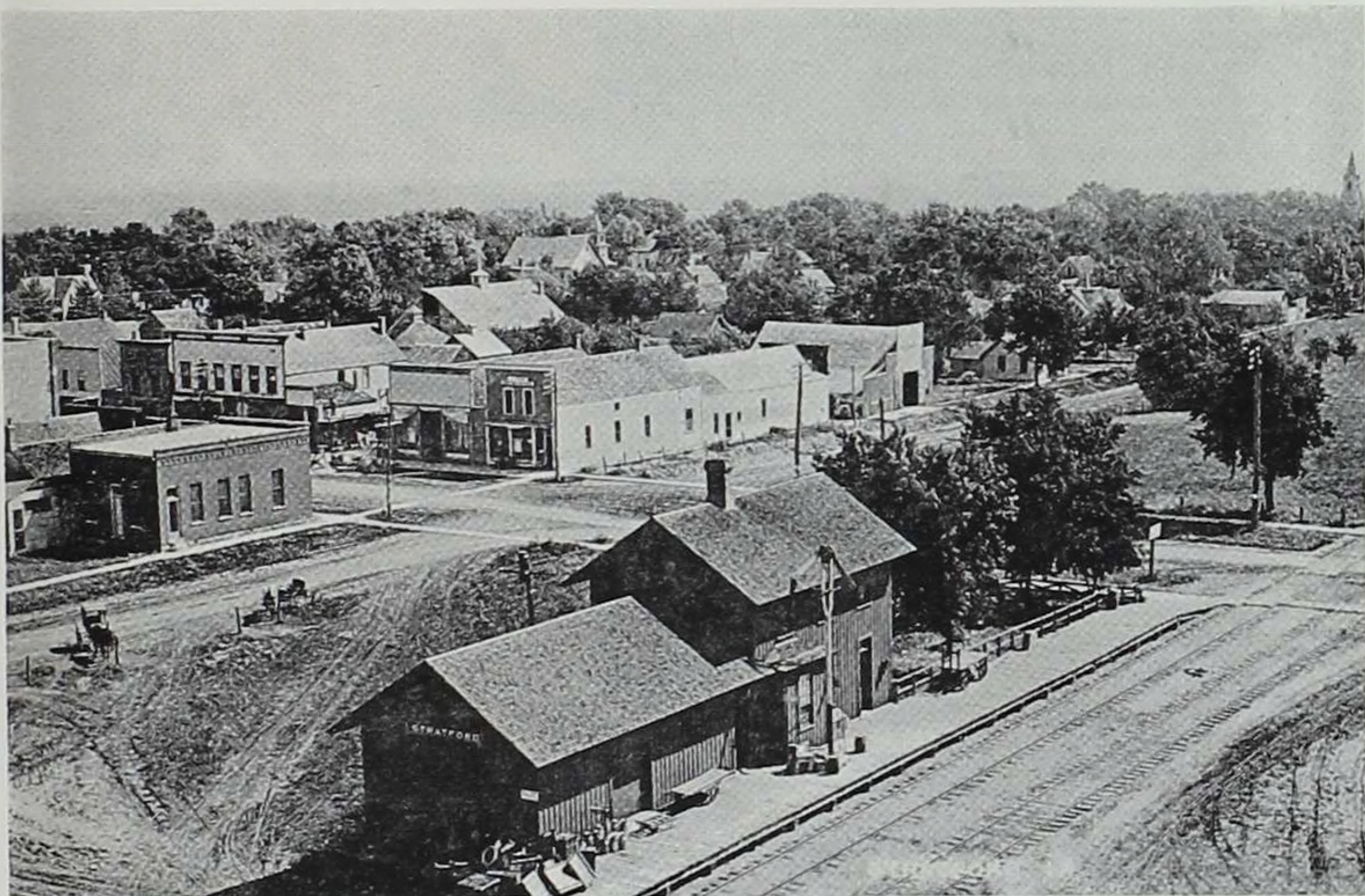
OLIVER SEALINE
Farmer and bank director.



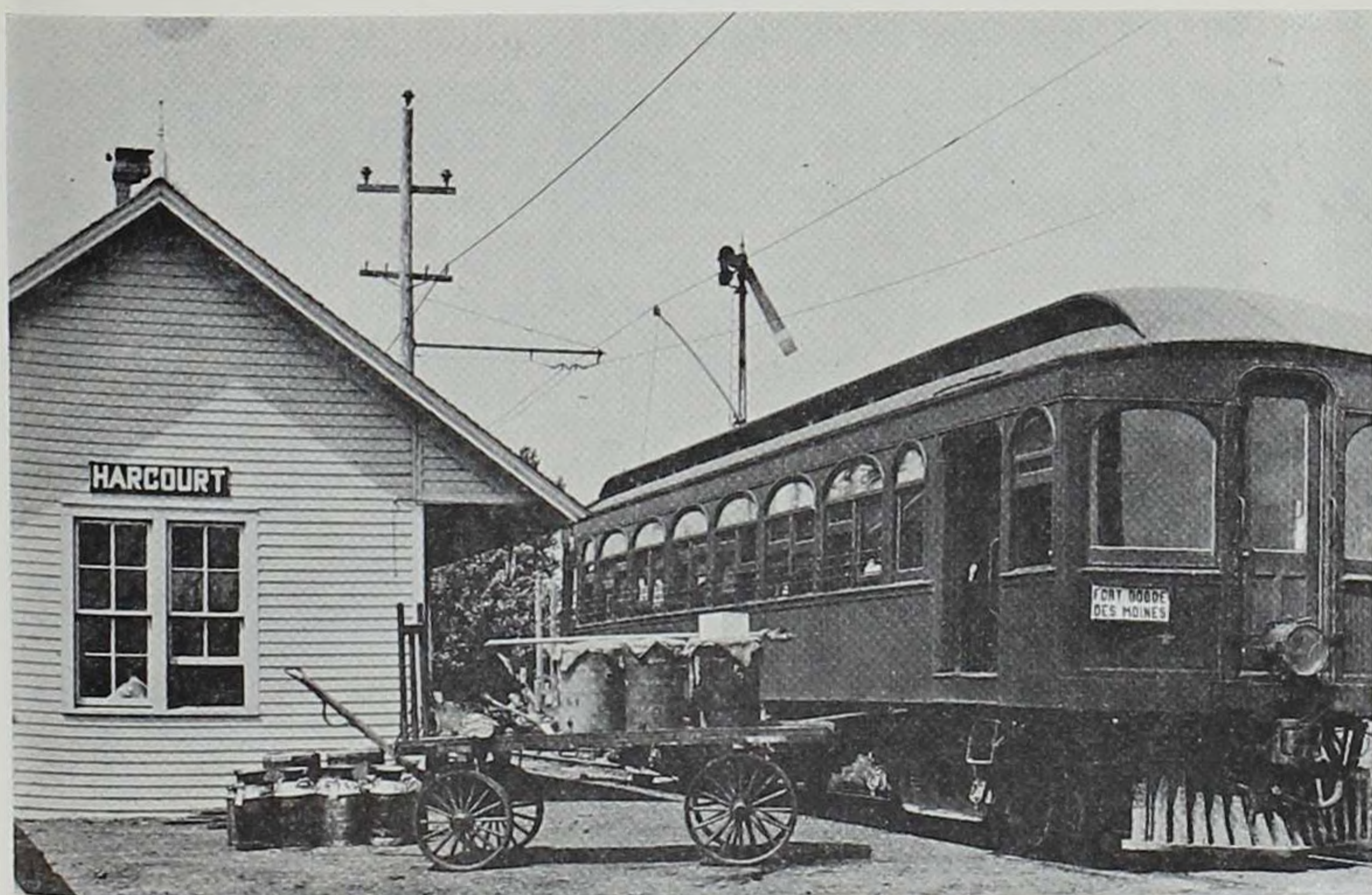
CLARA CARLSON ANDERSON
Author's first teacher.



Swedish Lutheran Parsonage at Stratford, built about 1890.



A view of Stratford showing the station of the Chicago and North Western Railroad.



An interurban electric car passes through Harcourt.



The Lutheran Church at Stratford was built in 1895.



First Swedish Baptist Church at Stratford.

The so-called shoemaker in early times did not actually make shoes. He did a repair business, servicing boots in the old days, and later, shoes.

The hotel and livery barn were among the early services established in Swedish towns. Traveling salesmen covered two or three towns in one day, ending in the town with the best hotel. The hotels were not expensive, and often local single men took their meals there. A restaurant was usually found in the small town, but the type of business conducted varied with the local situation and the passing years. Some served meals, while others sold only such items as bananas, peanuts, candies, and tobacco.

The meat market was operated on a local basis. Animals from the countryside were used for food. Sometimes only young animals in good condition were selected, while other markets, practicing economy, would slaughter older cows. Much bologna was made locally. A farmer, coming to town, could put together a lunch consisting of bologna from the meat market, crackers and cheese from the grocery store, and bananas from the restaurant.

One or two general stores were established very early. Dry goods, including many bolts of cloth, were at the front of the store, groceries farther back, and kerosene and other items in a shed at the rear. Flour was sold in 48-pound sacks and was usually kept in a mouse-proof room. Many

customers bought sugar in 100-pound bags. The cracker barrel was there, but frequently crackers were sold in boxes holding nearly a bushel. A store often had three kinds of coffee — 20-, 30-, and 40-cent grades. The most expensive grade was known as a Moca or Java, a blend of fine, mild coffees.

The hardware dealer carried a supply of farm implements, although some were bought on order. The common line of implements included plows, cultivators, mowers, and harrows. In addition, there were pumps, tanks, and a variety of hardware needed on the farm. Wagons and buggies were sold also.

The druggist was on hand in early settlements. He was sometimes a Swede; while the physician could be a man of almost any nationality, usually trained in a United States medical school. The undertaker frequently operated in conjunction with a furniture store. Funerals were held in private homes or churches.

Each town on a railroad had a grain elevator. At first these were owned principally by out-of-town companies, less frequently by a local group. During the late Nineties, cooperative elevators, which were owned by the farmers, came into being.

The printing press arrived early. For years each town had its own newspaper. The *Dayton Review*, which was founded in 1878, still exists

and publishes news from a number of towns in the area.

Local banks of small capitalization — \$10,000 to \$20,000 — were established by the early settlers. The farmers usually had confidence in their banks, and deposits soon grew to \$300,000 and \$500,000. The bank cashier, or some other bank officer, often had a substantial personal income from the sale of insurance.

In January 1885, a mutual insurance company was organized in Dayton. It has been in continuous operation for 80 years. At the time of its organization all records were written in Swedish. The Association was called *Skandinaviska Brandstods Bolaget*, and translated Scandinavian Fire Insurance Company. The names of the first nine directors were: Charlie Freed, Charlie Peterson, Frank Wise, S. F. Lofgren, Swan Johnson, Andrew Will, Andrew Carlson, Charlie Borg, and William Larson. The first policy was written for John M. Carlson, Boxholm, in the sum of \$1,285. This was a large policy; the average at that time was about \$800. The first loss paid was \$10 for a heifer killed by lightning. At the time of the first annual meeting, there were 51 policies in force, carrying \$46,149 in risks. Fifteen years later the total insurance in force was \$1,030,328. At that time, only Scandinavians and their descendants were eligible to take out insurance. This restriction has since been removed.

Before the railroad reached a town, mail was collected and delivered by horseback, stagecoach or some other horse-drawn vehicle. Dayton had its first post office in 1858 and Gowrie in 1871. The post office was usually set up in a store but sometimes in a home as in the case of Stanhope when Lucy J. Parker was named postmistress on February 9, 1882.

Early settlers located where timber for fuel was available. The home fuel supply for Swedish farm families changed as time passed. Wood had an important place in early times, but it was difficult to house an adequate supply. It was hard to keep a fire overnight in a heating stove, although it could be done with a knot of hardwood, and occasionally with a log.

With coal, a different type of stove was required, and it was easy to keep a fire overnight. Coal required less space, but it was a dusty material in the house. Residents of the narrow Des Moines River Valley and some of its tributaries noticed occasional outcroppings of coal, usually near the water line. Sometimes these deposits were worked without much equipment in winter while the river was frozen over.

It was not long, however, until excavations were made and mine shafts extended to reach the better coal seams that provided a merchantable fuel. A mine of extensive output was located between Stratford and Dayton, near a small village

then known as Linnburg. This town and mine have long been abandoned. Mines were located at Ridgeport and near Lehigh, the coal from which was regarded highly by Swedish settlers.

Residents along the eastern border of the Swedish settlement were about 10 miles from the mine at Linnburg and about 14 miles from Ridgeport. At these mines, coal was sold only to people who came after it. This was a real undertaking during the winter weather. The mines were usually located near the foot of a long hill. Two farmers worked together so four-horse teams could be used to bring each load up the hill. From that point, a couple of average farm horses could haul a load of about one and one-half tons. When a trip was planned to Ridgeport, the haulers would start about 2 a.m., reaching the mine before daylight. This was necessary because in winter the mine output for a 24-hour period was not adequate to supply one day's customers. The wagons were loaded by early afternoon and the return trip started.

The coal was sold mostly in chunks 6 to 16 inches across, but there was some less desirable small coal available. A purchaser was frequently required to take some of this.

The story of coal, which was mined in the Swedish settlement, is not complete without mention of the employment opportunities it opened to men in winter. When a newcomer arrived during cold

weather, he could usually get employment at the mines. Established craftsmen, such as carpenters, painters, and plasterers found little employment during the winter and often they went to work in the mines. In those days pay was usually on a production basis. When a miner encountered an extremely favorable coal deposit, he was allowed to take out only the equivalent of an average day's work. Then he went home. This was to allow another to share the advantage of an easily accessible coal deposit.

As mining operations expanded in the general area, it was possible to buy a railroad carload of coal and have it delivered on the rail siding of the village. Pool carloads were obtained in this way by a group of local farmers. Today, coal mines of the area are closed and many of the farm homes are heated by fuel oil or bottled gas.

The main business of this central Iowa settlement has always been farming. That is what brought my father to the community. When the first settlers came, they found beautiful landscapes, in early summer, on the unbroken prairies. Before the season's growth of grass, lovely flowers abounded. One of the most beautiful was perennial Phlox, known locally as Sweet William. In their natural habitat the colors were varied: red, white, blue, pink, and variegated. These flowers persisted for many years along railroad right-of-ways and on some roadsides. The pink strain

seems to have survived the best. One should not forget the Wild Rose, when speaking of flowers, for it has become Iowa's State Flower.

By 1880 some land had been plowed, but much of it still remained native prairie. This provided excellent pasturage or a crop of good hay.

The native sod was very tough. The black surface soil was intertwined with partially decomposed plant roots. The first step toward the growing of cultivated crops was to break the sod. A so-called breaking plow with a long, low moldboard was used for turning the shallow furrow of virgin land with minimum resistance. Sometimes seed flax was grown as a first crop, but more frequently a rather poor corn crop was grown on the freshly plowed land.

Three great field crops were grown here by early farmers: corn, oats, and red clover. A little wheat was grown, mostly for conversion into flour at a local mill. The climate was not suitable for its growth as a commercial crop.

Most settlers came with the idea of growing corn as the major crop. Such has been the case for nearly a century.

Swedes and others soon found that growing corn year after year on the same ground was not good practice. Insect troubles increased and the crop yields were lower. Growing oats after corn took care of some of the insect troubles, but fertility of the soil gradually declined. Oats provided

excellent feed for young animals and for horses, but the acre-value was smaller than when corn was grown. Red clover made an excellent hay crop and improved the land for growing corn later.

The names of Swedish-born farmers, and men of Swedish ancestry, loom large in the story of Iowa agriculture. Their contribution to the wealth of Iowa during more than a century of time is well nigh immeasurable and cannot be overlooked.