

THE PALIMPSEST

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Iowa Inventive Genius

A tool is but the extension of a man's hand, and a machine is but a complex tool. And he that invents a machine augments the power of a man, and the well-being of mankind.—Henry Ward Beecher.

The July 1969 issue of *The Palimpsest* was the first of two numbers devoted to the subject—"Iowa Inventors and Inventions." The present issue concludes the story that involves 1,910 persons, living in 395 cities, towns, and townships, who patented 2,300 inventions between 1843 and 1873. The July and August issues combined, coupled with their 32 pages of illustrations of patents discussed in the text, offer a glimpse of the deep-seated genius and widespread interests of the pioneers who lived in Iowa during the first four decades of settlement.

It has been said that "Necessity is the mother of invention." Judging by the number of inventions relating to agriculture there can be little doubt that farming offered the main source of

livelihood for the Iowa pioneers. The long hours involved in plowing the tough prairie sod, tilling the soil, and planting and harvesting the crops, were the common experience of most pioneers. It is not surprising, therefore, that fully one-fourth of the inventions patented by Iowans between 1843 and 1873 were related in some way to agriculture.

Only once before (in the case of Frank Luther Mott's *Iowa Magazines*, July-August 1963) have two consecutive issues been required to complete a particular story in *The Palimpsest*. One of Iowa's few Pulitzer Prize winners, Dean Mott's contribution is a classic illustration of concise writing on a tremendous subject. The same is true of this work on Iowa Inventions by Homer and Corrine Calkin. The magnitude of the material covered is revealed in every page, and by the maps and graphs prepared to illustrate the text.

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