

## Agricultural Societies

In 1857 the Commissioner of Patents, Joseph Holt, reported that agricultural societies had a beneficial influence. Since his information on their activities was not complete, Holt sent a questionnaire to every association on November 1, 1858, to gather uniform data.

Based upon the survey, there were 74 (66 agricultural, one horticultural, and seven agricultural and mechanical) societies in Iowa. Only New York, Illinois and Indiana—all older states—out-ranked Iowa in the number of societies, while Ohio had the same number.

Most of the Iowa societies charged \$1.00 as annual dues. Some provided life memberships—in the case of Davis and Fayette Counties upon payment of \$10.00 and in Johnson County, \$5.00. In addition, the State gave each county society an amount equal to that collected in dues, not exceeding \$200.00 annually. The societies reported that other sources of income included donations, receipts from entries and admissions at fairs, and rent from land owned by the societies.

The Agriculture Section of the Patent Office was particularly interested in knowing what benefits had resulted from each organization's diffusion



of agricultural knowledge, including improvement of domestic animals and increase in crops.

In reply, the Davis County Agricultural Society reported:

The benefits resulting from our organization have been—the assembling of agriculturists, and impressing them with a more exalted view of the dignity and importance of their calling; a large amount of information is gained by the exchange of ideas, experiments, and results; and the introduction of improved cattle. When this Society was formed, we had not a thorough-bred horse, bull, nor cow, in the county; but we have since taken the highest premiums for these animals at the State Fairs. We possess a few fine sheep and swine. This is the largest pork-raising county in the State. In the management of field crops, we have made great advances, putting them in more carefully, and being more attentive to the land.

In Dubuque County the breeding of domestic animals, especially swine, had been improved. Some of the members had learned the value of rye over other cereals for that area, and of the giant sunflower. One acre of the latter plant, when dried, was claimed to be the equivalent, as fuel, to 16 cords of wood. "There is no doubt that it may be thus used with advantage in places remote from timber, far west of us," it was added.

The activities of the Jackson County Agricultural Society had led to improvement in nearly all aspects of agriculture.

Many have been induced to leave the paths trod by their fathers, and to investigate for themselves, and consequent-



ly have learned that farming is as susceptible of advancement as any other division of industry, and for the farmer to become scientific is the shortest way to wealth and prosperity.

Methods of cultivation were improved; good breeds of cattle, horses, sheep and swine were introduced; the circulation of agricultural publications was increased; and "a new interest seems to pervade the farming community."

The Farmers' and Mechanics' Benevolent Reform Association of Marshall County tried "to induce our farmers to be observing men, to use the best means within their power for improvement, and to report progress." Four members, two of each sex, addressed the society each month on agriculture or any subject of interest they might select. The Association concluded its report by saying that its objective was . . .

benevolence and reform in the fullest sense of the duties of life, drawing attention to the necessity of cleanliness of person and the laws of health in general, economy of means and time, and everything that tends to the elevation of the masses, morally and socially.

The Patent Office also requested information on the date of organization, the number of members, the amount paid annually for premiums at fairs, the largest premium offered, and for what objects. The Iowa State Agricultural Society and 21 local organizations supplied the following information:



Name of Society	Date Organized	Number of Members	Amount Paid in Annual Premiums	Largest Premium Offered	Object for Which Offered
Iowa State Agricultural Society	June 1854	-	\$200	\$20	Bulls and stallions
Boone County Agricultural and Industrial Society	Oct. 24, 1857	Abt. 200	\$ 83	\$ 5	Best blooded stallion; Best brood mare
Cedar Valley Ag. & Mfg. Assoc., Black Hawk Co.	July 1, 1857	300	\$500 to \$1000	\$12	Best ploughing
Davis County Agricultural Society	July 16, 1853	224	\$400	\$10	Blooded bulls & stallions
Dubuque County Ag. Society	Jan. 12, 1853	Abt. 200	All money on hand	\$20	Best threshing machine
Fayette County Ag. Society and Mechanics' Inst.	Mar. 3, 1855	100	\$200	\$ 3	Best stallion
Henry County Agricultural Society	Oct. 30, 1852	206	\$275	Ag. periodical and \$10	Best herd of cattle
Jackson County Ag. Society	Feb. 22, 1853	93	\$250	\$ 5	Grain crops, Ploughing
Jefferson County Ag. Society	-	304	\$500	\$100	Best 3 acres of corn, Best bull, Best herd, Best stallion
Johnson County Ag. & Mech. Society	1853	370	\$700	\$15	Best managed farm
Kossuth County Ag. Society	October 1857	46	\$49	-	-
Linn County Ag. & Mech. Society	July 20, 1857	204	\$143	\$10	Best farm of 160 acres
Louisa County Ag. Society	Jan. 25, 1850	50	\$150	\$ 5	Blooded stock
Farmers' and Mechanics' Bene- volent Reform Assoc., Marshall Co.	Jan. 30, 1857	50	None by society	-	-
Agricultural Society of Muscatine Co.	Oct. 9, 1852	-	\$259	-	-
Polk Co. Agricultural, Horticultural and Industrial Association	May 28, 1853	295	\$295	\$10 (a silver cup)	Best cultivated and improved farm
Poweshiek Co. Ag. Society	1855	52	\$ 50	\$ 5	-
Scott Co. Ag. Society	August 1853	Abt. 500	\$663	\$10	Best conducted farm, Best 10 lbs of sugar from Chinese cane, Best stallion
Tama County Agricultural and Mechanical Society	August 1858	78	-	\$5	Stock of various kinds
Van Buren County Ag. Society	Sept. 27, 1851	400	\$500	\$8	Best stallion
Webster Co. Ag. Society	1858	200	\$200	\$5	Best female equestrian, Best matched horses
Wright Co. Ag. Society	July 31, 1858	48	-	-	-