

This 'N That

Living in the Olden Days

The early pioneer families shared their lives, they helped their neighbors in every way they could; from sowing oats, planting corn to harvest time, with wood sawing, building a cabin, house or barn.

Housewives gathered for quilting parties, sewing bees, helped neighbors cook for harvest hands and above all lending a helping hand in case of illness.

Families gathered for spelling bees and programs at the school houses, went to church on Sunday and joined friends for visiting and dancing where fiddlers and callers entertained with lively music.

In their homes housewives used washboards and wooden or tin tubs for washing clothes, heating the water in a large copper boiler or in a large iron kettle.

Water was obtained from a nearby stream, many times or some had rain barrels if one had a well they drew the water out by a rope and bucket. Later some had wooden washing machines with wooden handles they pushed back and forth to rotate the dolly.

Pioneer women often times made their own lye for soap. It was made by saving wood ashes, putting them in a barrel with holes near the bottom, pouring soft water over the ashes, the solution that drained off was a lye solution. They made soap at butchering time, after the lard was rendered, they put the cracklings and lye solution in a large iron kettle and cooked it. This was the only soap many had.

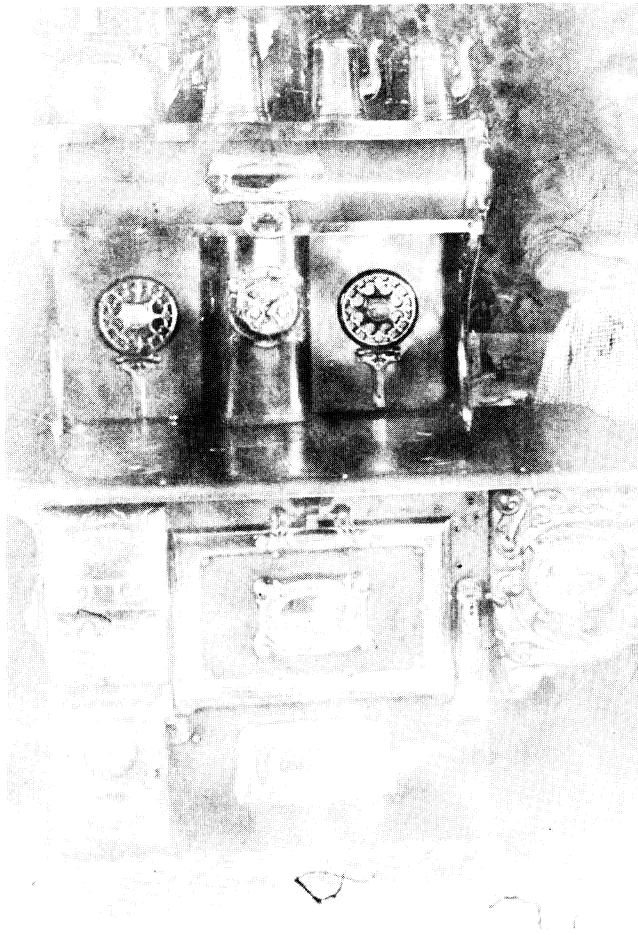
Clothes were hung on lines outdoors to dry or laid out on the grass in the sun, the sun being the only bleach. Sad irons, used to iron clothes were heated over coals in the fireplace or on a stove.

The cloth the clothes were made of was often homespun, or gingham or calico which cost three to five cents a yard. They also used flour sacks for making underwear.

During these early days most of the cooking was done in the fireplace over the hot coals, later iron clad stoves and ranges with warming ovens were used. Cobs and wood was the main fuel, coal if it could be obtained. Heavy iron skillets and kettles were used for cooking and wooden bowls for mixing.

The food consisted of home butchered meat, fried down to preserve it or if one had a smoke house, the meat was smoked. Most families had their own chickens, geese and ducks but there was an abundance of wild turkeys, prairie chickens and other wild game.

Corn was taken to the nearest mill, in Iowa City, to be ground for cornmeal, corn and apples were dried. This was done by spreading a sheet on the roof of the house, if this was not possible a wooden platform was made and placed on two saw horses. The apples and corn were placed on the sheet covering them with mosquito netting and letting the sun dry them. When they were dried they were put into flour sacks and hung in the pantry. Many of the pioneers brought seeds and shrubs with them when they came west. Vegetables from their gardens were stored in storm cellars or in large stone crocks and jars. Women made their own sauerkraut and pickles, often times making their own vinegar for preserving. Watermelon and wild grape juice was used for preserving fruit. In the summer there was an abundance of wild strawberries, wild plums, grapes and ground cherries.



Old stove like those of the early days.

Farmers grew cane and took it to a nearby molasses mill. The molasses was sometimes the only sweetener they had. Women churned their own butter and stored eggs in salt to keep them from spoiling.

Many homes had a pantry, a small room off the kitchen for storing staples, dishes and extra tablecloths, also sage, mint and dill hung in the pantry for seasoning the food, giving the air a tantalizing aroma.

The table was usually spread with a red and white checkered cotton cloth. The tableware was forks, knives and spoons with wooden handles, very little silverware.

A washstand with a water pitcher, basin or bowl was always prominent in the kitchen as well as the old pendulum clock. Also there was the ever empty water pail with a dipper hanging in it.

The bedrooms were furnished with a regular size beds and often times a trundle bed, a bed that would fit under regular beds. Babies had cradles for sleeping and sometimes these were made by using a hewn out log. The ticks, never called mattresses and pillows were made out of heaving ticking material, then filled with straw, chicken or goose feathers. The bedrooms were rarely heated in winter, a soap stone was heated over the coals in the fireplace or the stove and then wrapped in cloth and placed in the bed before retiring. Often times youngsters slept in a loft, a room above the kitchen, the only access to it was by a ladder.

Most of the homes consisted of a main kitchen and bedrooms, later on rooms were added and were called parlors or sitting rooms, a place where the family could relax after a hard days work. Parlors were furnished with rocking chairs, with crocheted doilies on the backs, a table with a lamp and the ever present bible. A leather or mohair couch was sometimes there or an organ where one could play the old hymns, "Turkey in the Straw" and many other tunes.

In the early days candles were the only light that people had, later kerosene was used in lamps and the glass chimneys got so smokey, it was a daily chore to clean them.

Carpets were made by sewing cotton rags together, these were out in strips and sewed, wound into balls, taken to a weaver. He would then weave the balls into strips, the desired length, on the loom, then these strips were sewed together. Newspapers or straw was laid down on the floor first, then the rag carpet put down. Many women also braided rugs out of cotton or wool material. Later ingrain carpeting was used, this was also laid down over straw or newspapers, tacked down then taken up in the spring and fall, hung on the line and beaten with a wire rug beater to clean it.

Screening for windows in the summer was uncommon in these early years so mosquito netting was tacked over the windows.

As we ponder about these pioneers, we wonder how they ever survived the rigors of the cold winters, forces of nature, fear of the Indians and by the simple and meager way they lived.



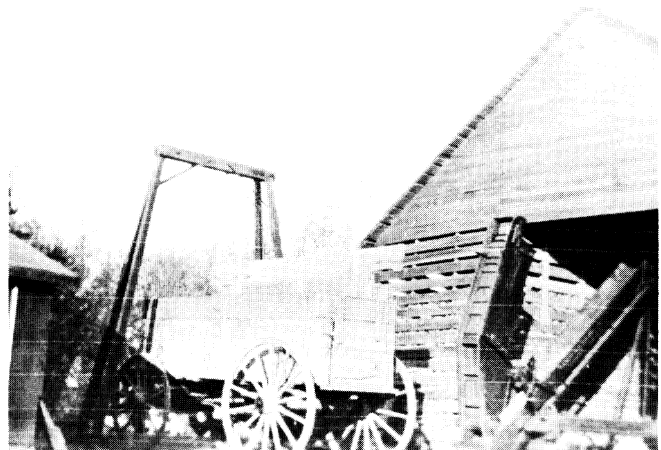
Katie Weeks (Baker)

They loved the prairie and the timber but very often experienced a terrifying ordeal of a prairie fire which often destroyed an entire crop and sometimes their homes.

They listened to the mournful call of the whippoorwill and at times heard the howl of the wolves.

We can look back upon these early settlers, our ancestors and be very proud of the wonderful heritage they have given us. Their stamina and stalwart characteristics make these centennial histories possible.

*Submitted by
Alice Ginter*



Unloading corn



Cavalry in the late 1930's marching north past the present Howard Eldridge Sr. home.



Cavalry camp just east of present Claire Gibbs home.

14th Cavalry at Rhodes

For several years in the late 1930's the 14th Cavalry, consisting of about 380 men, 16 officers, 370 horses, which were headquartered at Fort Des Moines, came to Rhodes. They were enroute to Camp McCoy, Wisconsin to engage in maneuvers with the 6th and 7th Corp area troops. They carried all their equipment, light machine guns, .30 caliber water cooled machine guns, 150 caliber machine guns, ammunition and radios in pack, four scout cars and trucks to transport supplies, rations and forage for the command.

The Cavalry started their trek by camping at

Bondurant the first night and on to Rhodes the second night. From Rhodes they went to Marshalltown. From there they marched thirty miles per day. On their return they marched from Marshalltown to Des Moines, 57 miles.

The Cavalry camped on the grass lot at that time bounded by Linn and Kimball Streets on the west edge of town. It was very interesting to watch them make camp. The band was with them and gave a concert on Main Street that night. They really invaded the town. It was quite a sight even then to see so many horses.



Pitching a tent.



Cavalry horses in the late 1930's.



Cavalry camp neat and tidy.



Cavalry camp in the late 1930's.

Indians of the Area

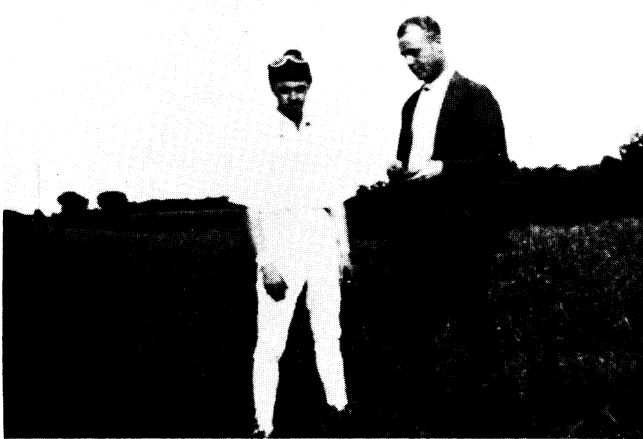
The Indians who camped near Edenville were called Tama Indians, because they lived in Tama County, though some called them Musquakies, they called themselves Meskwaki and their habitation, was Meshwakia. A party would come each summer to live in the woods on Clear Creek at the edge of town. The men rode ahead on ponies, then came other ponies, without drivers, which dragged the ends of two poles on the ground, the other ends of which were fastened to the ponies near their shoulders. On cross braces between these poles, near the ground, was the baggage. The women, some carrying babies, and the children, walking, formed the rear of the caravan. About the time I reached my majority, they ceased to come to Edenville, "because the woods became too much fenced."

*Submitted by
Plato Kreamer*

Flying High at Rhodes

1922

Frank Haddock and another boy came by airplane enroute from Fort Dodge, Tuesday morning. They spent the night at the home of Frank's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Haddock.

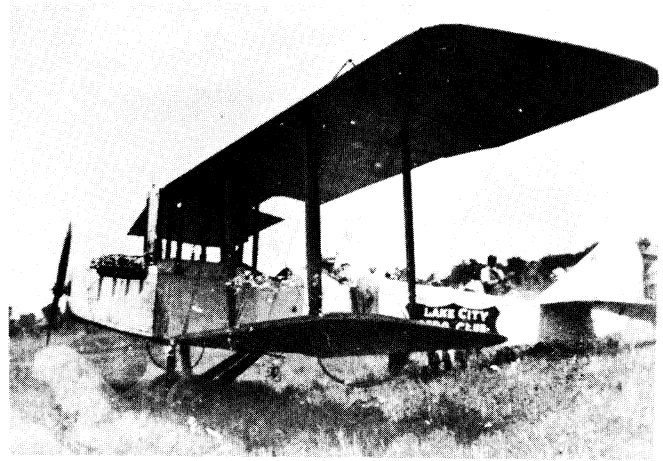


From the left, Frank Haddock and friend.

Wednesday morning they parked their plane on the ball diamond, where it was visited by a large crowd of men, women and children.

Bert Pike wanted to see how Rhodes looked from the clouds, so Frank took him for a spin over the town.

There were others, among them three young ladies, who had the nerve and grit to take a trip skyward. They were Gladys Pike, Marvel Robinson and Mildred Bohnsack, the first one to go up, was up 1,300 feet and traveled ninety miles an hour, staying up twenty minutes. The girls thought it was a great trip.



The plane Frank Haddock flew in.

Mrs. Haddock and Harry also took a trip and about noon the boys flew away to Maxwell where they were to do some stunt flying in the afternoon.

*Submitted by
Mildred Wilgus*

Rhodes Croquet Diamond

In 1916, a group of merchants decided they needed some relaxation. A vacant lot just south of the big brick building on the corner of Main Street was ideal. It was scraped clean of vegetation and then covered with sand and rolled into the clay soil.

Anyone was welcome to play without charge, but you had to have your own mallet and ball. Anyone that played was also expected to help keep the court level and clean. There were many hours of entertainment for those who sat on the sidelines. You may have heard political arguments before, but none can compare with the one's that took place on this court.

Some of the older participants were; Judd Miller, Lon Richmond, Walt Hix, Mac McClosky, Fred Robinson, Barney Breunig, Leo Perry, Les Breunig, Charles Hildreth and William (Billy) Beard.

Water Witching

In the early days, settlers didn't consider this a superstition. It was a valid method for finding a water supply. It was a necessity many times in late summer to find a new well.

The person looking for water carried a fork of willow branch or other tree branches. It would fork into a Y and be a total length of about 16 inches long. They would walk toward the east or west as water generally flows north and south. The stick would bend down and point out the direction of water.



This is the type of equipment used for early road and railroad right-of-way construction (William H. Wignall).

Early Road Grading

In the early days all the road beds and railroad right of way construction was done with mules, horses and manpower.

Bringing the roads up to grade was done with plows, wheel and slip scrapers, excavators and graders.

The plows were used to break the ground. There were walking plows, which were pulled by a team of horses. It would cut straight up and down on one side taking, between eight to ten inches.

Slip and wheel scrapers were also used to break the ground and haul the dirt.

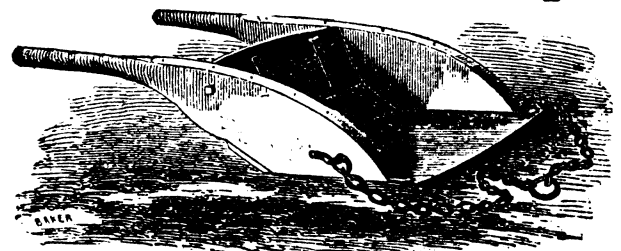
The slip scraper had a bottom about thirty to thirty-four inches wide and was made of steel. It had two handles one on each side and penetrated the unbroken ground easily. Every farm had one for odd job of moving earth and road work. The early scrapers had a big hand in the building of the nations railroads.

The wheel scraper or wheelers, as they were called, were much like the slip scraper only it had wheels and was larger. It would hold one-half yard to one yard of dirt. The wheelers had a handle in the middle, called the Johnson bar, and one on each side. This usually took two snap teams to operate.

Excavators were used to dig the ditches and move the dirt to the center of the road beds. If they had to fill across draws or creek bottoms, the hills were cut down with the excavator and the dirt put in dump wagons and hauled to the fill site. It took twelve head of mules or horses in the front and four head behind on the push cart. The excavator pulled the dirt onto a belt and the belt conveyed it into the dump wagons.

The dump wagons were pulled by three head of mules or horses, when the wagons were loaded and arrived at the site, two doors on the bottom were opened for unloading. The horse drawn grader was then used to level the dirt.

Steel Bottom Road Scrapers.



I remember in 1922, when I was twelve years old, I was with my dad on the following construction job; My dad, William H. Wignall was a road contractor in this area. He worked on many of the early road beds and railroad right of ways. One job he contracted was a road bed, starting four miles north of Collins and south to Colfax, Iowa. From Collins to Colfax was part of the Eldora to Colfax trail.

Our camp was located on Indian Creek bottom, which is now the junction of Highways 117, 65 and 330. We slept in tents under cottonwood trees.

He hired only local help. Some of the names I can remember on this job are; Kay, Wayne, and Everett Elliott; Aquila and Elzia Triplett; Dick, Wes and John Jewell; Jess and Loren Steir; Willie Bundy; "Gip" Shattuck; Elmer Brewer; Ed Wignall and Bill Coates. Charles Wignall was the foremen, with Harry Neff, the plowman and Fred Hale was the wheel holder. It usually took two men to operate the wheeler but Fred did it alone.

Maud Hale and Cora Wignall did all the cooking for the crew. For water, a sand point was driven in the ground and a pitcher pump attached to it. This water was used for cooking, bathing and watering the mules and horses.

The pay was four dollars a day with one dollar held out for room and board.

When the approach for the bridge, over Indian Creek was built he used thirty mules and horses. If more teams were needed, he hired a man and his team.

Forty to fifty cases of dynamite were purchased at a time to blow out trees, stumps and rocks.

Bill Leisle, who ran a harness shop in Melbourne, repaired all our harnesses and many times new ones had to be purchased.

With all the modern road equipment of today, it is hard to realize that it was done years ago with the equipment they used then.

*Interview with
W.B. (Bill) Wignall*

Hattie's Memories

Hattie Richmond was born April 19, 1884 in a log cabin near Collins. She had two brothers and seven sisters. Hattie attended Mt. Vernon District No. 5, locally known as the Little Dutch School.

Hattie remembered walking a mile and a half to school, playing crack the whip and anti-over the schoolhouse.

Her mother made almost all their clothing. Calico was 5¢ a yard, gingham 10¢ and a pair of overalls cost 50¢. Pillow cases and sheets were made from flour sacks.

Toys were dolls made of clothespins and rags which her mother made, also marbles.

The family's meat was butchered at home and salted. When they were ready to cook it, it was soaked in water



Hattie Williams

to remove some of the salt. Hattie remembered their first bakery bread, which was square and cost 10¢.

When she was a small child, she remembered the Indians, that are now at Tama, moving to Iowa from Kansas. They rode in covered wagons, on horses and were ferried across the Missouri River.

At threshing time the entire family went from farm to farm. The ladies cooked the meal, the men threshed and the children played. Farmland rented for \$2.50 to \$3.00 an acre. Steak was 25¢ for three pounds, a 50 lb. sack of flour cost 45¢ and Hattie's father took corn to the mill to have it ground.

When Hattie was a girl, peddlers with satchels, filled with various sewing supplies would make the rounds of the neighborhood. A man also collected old rags to be made into newsprint. She remembered the first time she saw a car. Montgomery Ward Company bought a car and took it from town to town on a railroad car to show it to the people. When it came to town they drove it to the end of the street where it stalled, and had to be pushed back to the railroad car.

The year women were given the right to vote, Hattie voted. She couldn't remember which president it was, but she knew for sure he was a Republican and that he won.

Hattie learned to crochet as a young woman. She continued to crochet the rest of her life. She made many beautiful gifts, tablecloths, a bedspread, pot holders, purses, afghans, doilies and slippers.

She came from a long line of people who lived to a ripe old age. Her mother lived to be 92, one sister lived to be 100 and her other sisters are 89 and 85.

Hattie saw many changes, some good, some bad. She had a wealth of information and stories that she told her family.

Hattie, Grandma Williams, whatever you called her, was quite a woman. She died September 4, 1981 at the age of 97.

*Taken from an interview with
Hattie in 1979*

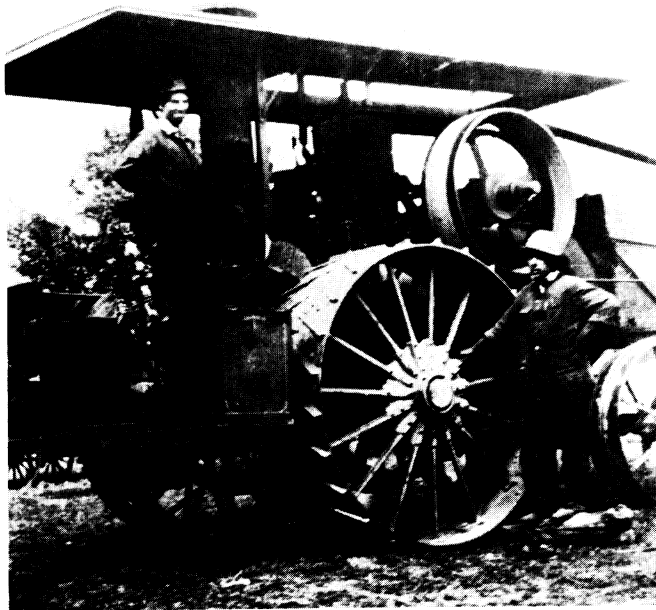
Threshing Crews

It took a lot of hard work to get the crops harvested before the modern day combines were used. Threshing crews were a common sight on the farms during harvest time.

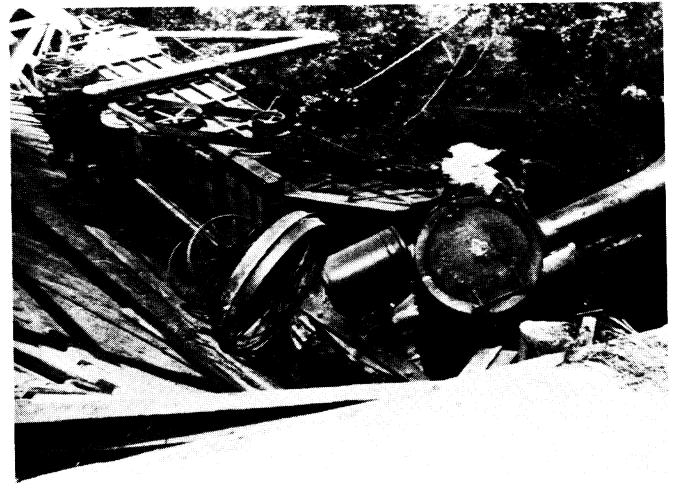


Threshing machine owned by Capron and Mansfield.

The men that owned the threshing equipment, which consisted of a steam engine with a tender box, a separator and water tank, would start out and go from



Steam engine in 1923, owned by Cy Huffacker, from the left; Cy and Dorsey Wilson.



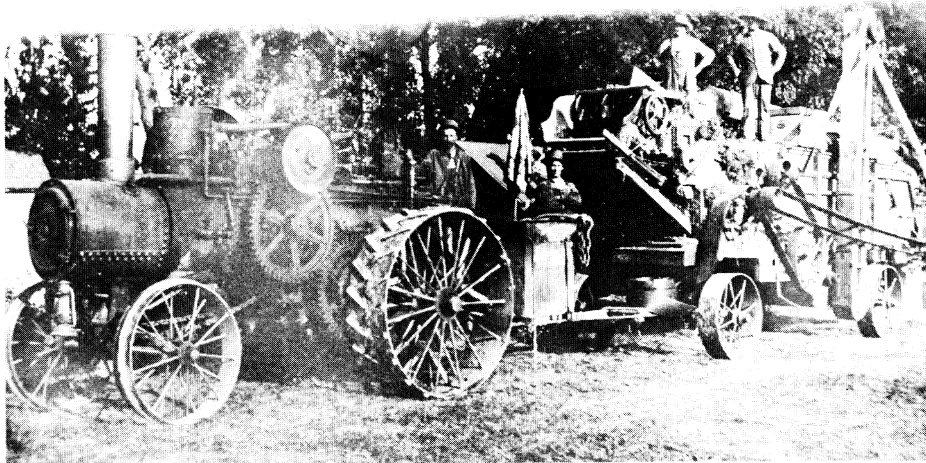
Steam Engine which fell through Skunk Creek Bridge east of Rhodes.

farm to farm in a neighborhood until all the oats were harvested. There were usually three regular crew members. Coal would have to be taken along to fire up the steam engine. The shrill whistle of the engine would tell the neighborhood that threshing was going to start.



Steam Engine which fell through Skunk Creek Bridge east of Rhodes. On bridge: Bill Steiner, standing on left; Bill Bodie and Henry Halter.

All the men in the neighborhood would gather with their horses and racks to help. They would go out in the field where they loaded the oat bundles on to the racks. The bundles would be taken to the thrasher and pitched into the separator. Before there were knives on the separator, two men would be kept busy cutting the bands on the bundles before they were pitched into the separator. It took as many as eight or nine racks to keep things going.



Albert Robinson's steam engine and threshing machine.

There were several types of separator, the web type or elevator type would pile the straw in a pile to be stacked. The blower type separator, separated grain and blew the straw into the barn or in a pile to be stacked.

On some threshing machines there was a scale, a type of bucket that measured the oats, dumped it into an auger and then into the wagons. The men would unload the oats into bins. They would know how much oats was harvested. Some of the men that owned threshers around Rhodes were Percy Mansfield and E.C. Capron, Charles Dewey, Albert Robinson, Bill Steiner, Chris Gauch, Cy Huffaker, Harry White, Ed Jackson, Harold Robinson and others.



Albert Robinson's threshing machine.



Neighbor's Picnic on August 29, 1909.

Young boys would be kept busy taking water to the thirsty men. The men would gather in the yard at noon, wash in a basin on a bench under a shade tree, dry on a towel hanging close by and go into the house and enjoy a bountiful meal prepared by the lady of the house and her neighbors.

This information was furnished by Fred Hale and Lawrence Guckert.



Making hay in 1940.

Threshing

Albert Robinson's machine.



Putting hay in the barn.

Cy Huffaker and
family making hay in 1923.



Making hay the hard way.



Plowing corn on Clover Bloom farm, now the Don Buck farm, from the left; Alfred Buck and father, Henry.

Depression Days

In the depression days a man with a team of horses and a dirt scraper worked all day for the railroad for \$1.00.

Grandpa and Dad had \$10 cash between them when the banks closed, as they had just sold hogs. Hogs sold for 3¢ a pound.

Eggs and churned butter were taken to the store and you received credit for food supplies. Potatoes and onions were bought in 100 lb. sacks. Those that could, churned their own butter. Parched corn was used for snacks.

Big gardens were common with vegetables raised for canning, butchering was done in the spring and the meat also canned.

Neighbors shared newspapers, catalogs, and magazines. If farmers needed extra help you exchanged with your neighbors. Women gave everyone "bowl" haircuts as there wasn't enough money to go to a barber.

Grandma Andrews cut carpets rags, made rugs and

used denim overalls for doormats. Bill Pyle and his wife had a loom for weaving, living where Glen Holcomb resides now.

Sickness was a disaster, and families did not go to the dentist or eye doctor regularly.

Cobs from the feed lots, old oak fence posts and old railroad ties, if you could get them, was used for fuel. Also corn was used instead of coal, as it was cheaper.

Bill Witte picked corn by hand, hauled it to the elevator scooping it off for 8¢ a bushel.

If grain was needed to feed livestock you borrowed it from your neighbors, paying them back in grain after harvest in the fall. There wasn't any salt or protein for livestock in those days.

A team and wagon was taken to the Rhodes Elevator in the fall to get flax seed. They were the only ones who carried it in the bulk, as sacks were too high.

You could use a three year old colt all season if you could break him.

Surplus buttermilk was given to farmers by the creamery for the hogs.

Chicken feed was bought in printed sacks so the sacks could be used for making clothing. Grain sacks, (alfalfa, timothy and clover) were used to make overalls.

Grandma bought double flannel by the yard to make mittens, starting in September, for the cold winter months.

If you got two Christmas gifts you were very lucky. You didn't buy the best, you bought the cheapest.

During those days people did their own repair work, made do with what you had, stayed home and tightened their belts.

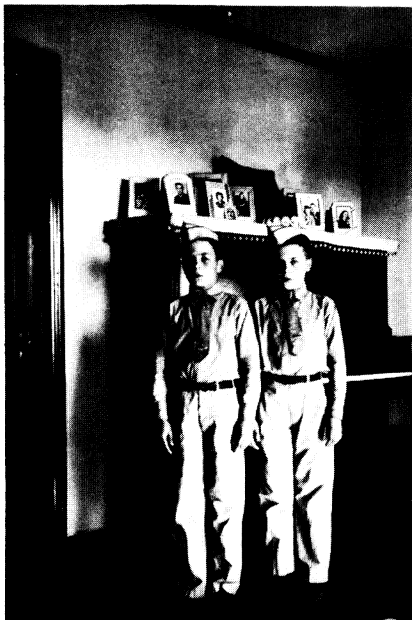
*Submitted by
Leonard Nason*



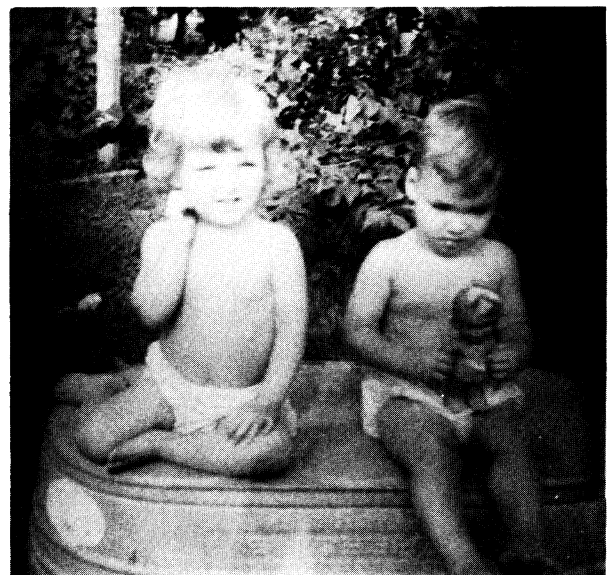
Tea Pot - 25¢; 16 foot board - 27¢; light wagon axle - \$1.75; yeast cakes - 5¢; can of salmon - 25¢; butter - 16¢.



Mrs. Luig's Class around 1953. Front row: Joan Severidt, Karen Ellis, Carol Lang, Bill Overman, Paul Evans, Jim Ficken, Dennis Kloppenborg and John White; Second row: Donnie Failor, Clarence Gregerson, Jan Shryock, Barbara Richeson, Max Huffaker, Beverly Hildreth, Mary Bailey, Miriam Hix, Karen Elliot and Danny Clement.



Klass Twins - from the left; Merlin and Marvin.



Raney Twins - from the left; Vicky Kloppenborg and Ricky.



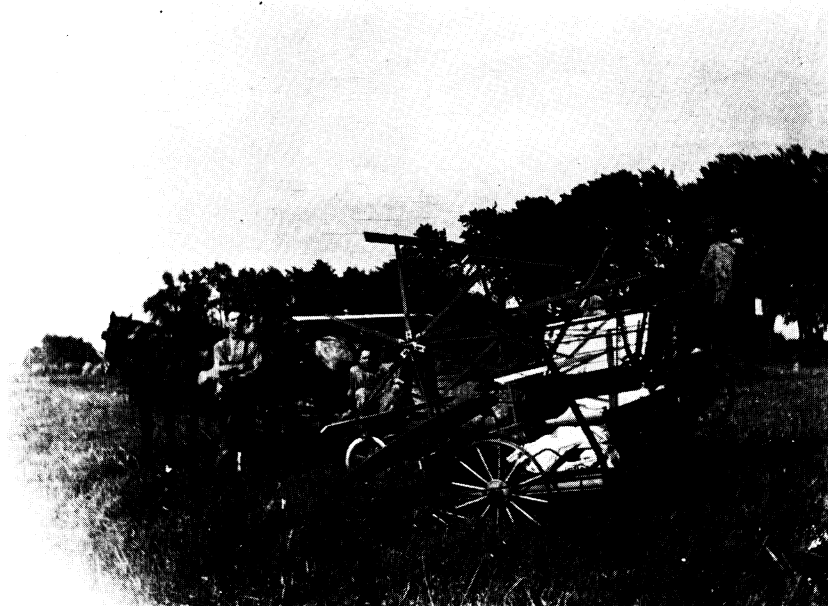
5th & 6th Grades - 1933, from the left, front row: Elmer Williams, Gerald Dewey, Donald Roberts, Melvin Shimel, George Wignall, John Guckert, Stewart Failor, Lloyd Steiner; Second Row: Shirley Rohrer, Cecile Gray, Lavonne Hoy, Frances Shattuck, Lorraine Schelker, Leo Alexander, Harold Landis, David Shattuck, Donald Richeson, Phil Buck, Everett Blink; Third row: Teacher - Vera Floto, Lorraine Wallace, Ruth Cowan, Ruth Jewell, Dorothy Walker, Maxine Smith, Harriet Vasey, Jean Jontz, Edna Hoy, Carole Appel, Doris Jontz and Lois Luig.

Spencer Twins -
from the left;
Edna Wignall and
Edith Northway,
Beatrice Butler.
and
Bessie Morgan





Junior High - 1935, from the left, front row: Frances Shattuck, Cecile Gray, Carole Appel, Lavonne Hoy, Lorraine Wallace, Frieda Coates; Second row: Everett Blink, Lloyd Stiener, Stewart Failor, Harold Landis, Lois Luing, Ruth Cowan, Ruth Jewell, Lorraine Schelker, Shirley Rohrer; Third row: Phil Buck, George Overman, Ralph Robinson, John Guckert, Donald Richeson, Donald Roberts, Leo Alexander and Teacher - Arlene Schneider.



Charles Goodman sitting on his oat binder with sons; Herbert, Louis and Joseph.



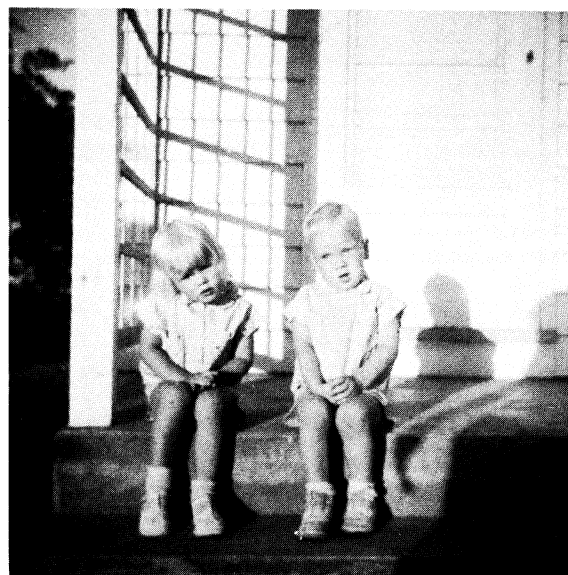
5th & 6th Grades in 1926, left to right, front row: Linton Smith, Eugene Floto, Aaron Hale, Paul Bodie, Harvey DeVault, Margaret Malloy, Elizabeth Bear, Edith Sink, Delores Fricke, Lura Meyer; Second row: James Wignall, Glen Robinson, Verle Thursby, James Freland, James Hale, Leroy Mallicoat, Irvin Camp, Delmar Wilson, Ada Snowgren; Third row: Gladys Phillips, Jessie Cowan, Urban Goodman, Ralph Richeson, Hassell Smith, Maurice Sink, Gwendoylin Good, Ina Richeson, Claude Sanders; Fourth row: Evelyn Ginter, Alice Tribby, Elzia DeVault, Margaret Darling, Bill Blink, Ronald Richeson, Viola Richeson, Unknown, Max Duncan and C.F. Kennison.

Memories

The girls basketball team of 1927-28 lost to Laurel 95 to 5 (and this is not an error). Marie Robinson was the team Captain.



Alexander Twins - from the left; Leland and Lela Long



Thomae Twins - from the left; Delaine Aves and Dewaine