



The Fred Brandt family on the porch of their farm home which stood on Donlea Road.

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“The Sound of the Saw Was Constantly Heard”

Building a Life on the Prairie

In 1856 Johann Muller and his wife, Caroline, squatted on land west of Barrington along the banks of Spring Creek just north of what is now called Spring Creek Road. There was only a path marking the road which was sod and mud.

They cleared a place for a log cabin on a little rise of land on the west side of the creek, and more land was cleared to raise a crop. This work was all done by ox team and back-breaking manual labor. The produce provided a bare existence for the family. In the spring this was supplemented by wild duck and prairie chicken eggs which were plentiful at that time. Many a prairie chicken filled the pot for a good meal.

The few cattle and oxen owned by the family were watered at the creek, and during the cold winter months, the ice had to be chopped open to water the stock. To hold the animals, rail fences were fashioned from oak trees and other available timber, which had to be split by hand. Osage orange was planted and used for hedges.

A water-powered wheel ground the grain into meal at the grist-mill which had been built on a stream about three-quarters of a mile east of what is now Braeburn Road and just south of Plum Tree Road. It was necessary to carry the sacks of grain on their backs to and from the mill in order to have flour for their bread.



*Caroline Muller, who joined her husband Johann in 1856
in settling on land on the west bank of Spring Creek.
This photo taken in 1880's.*

It is not known how many years the Mullers lived at this location, but one day a stranger arrived at their home and notified them that he had recorded their piece of land in his name, and they would have to move. The Johann Mullers, natives of Germany and new in this country, were not aware of the proceedings required to obtain ownership of their property and never had it recorded. They then bought land north of Barrington in what is now part of Hanover Hills, east of Highway 59, for the price of \$10 an acre. Their log cabin home was dismantled and moved to the new location.

When they discovered their new land contained clay soil with the necessary properties for making bricks, a kiln was built, and the family made bricks to sell. To this day some buildings and foundations to be found are made of these very same bricks. — W.H.K.

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The sound of the saw was constantly heard as trees were cut and squared. This was called "log rolling," a method used to build homes, barns, and outhouses with three holes. As for inside plumbing, they just didn't have it.

Some of the families were living in little sod houses. Most of the pioneering experience was theirs. One day a windstorm lifted off a sod roof. On another occasion at the Miller cabin in Cuba township a snake crawled out of the roof into the house. Wood was scarce on the prairie, and some of the time cow chips were used as fuel.

Settler's cabins were made of round logs. They had to help each other, there can be no doubt, for the work demanded at least two "corner hands" to handle the logs. Besides brawn, a certain amount of skill was required, for the ends of the logs had to be saddled and notched in a certain way. If this were not done properly where a door or window was cut, the weight from above would force the logs out of the adjacent corners and warp them on the sides of the opening.

Walls were carried up from eight to ten feet before the gables were formed by placing shorter logs at the ends. The roofs were constructed of poles and almost invariably were covered with log shingles on rough boards. The floors were made of roughly laid logs hewn flat only on the

top side. Most cabins had dirt or adobe brick floors — a mixture of clay and straw.

It must have been at times almost too much to bear.

One of the openings cut was to the chimney outside the cabin. It was built of cut logs lined with stone or clay four or five feet wide and then with a crib of sticks plastered inside with clay.

An ordinary house was built in one day, at least up to the roof. The walls were so open that in many places there were four inches between each log. In the winter these openings must be filled in with wood splinters and clay or a mixture of thick mud and prairie hay to make the house reasonably tight. This was called "chink and daub." Some of the chinking fell out and left holes so large that a cat could pass freely in and out.

People seldom had more than one room to serve as both living and sleeping quarters. A loft overhead was reached by a crude ladder nailed against the wall. This served as a bedroom when there were more people in the house than could sleep downstairs. It is probable that with accommodations so exposed to draft and drifting snow, the bed sometimes was covered with snow in the morning.

As soon as they provided shelter for their family, our Barrington ancestors set about digging a well by hand with a shovel. They dug from twenty to sixty feet deep in a four foot circle and lined it with stone. Barrington had hand-dug wells until 1898. If their cabin wasn't built near a stream, river, or lake, they needed a well so they could have water by dropping a wooden bucket down into the well on a long rope and pulling it back up by hand. Then they slid the wooden cover back over the top of the well to keep out foreign elements. — M. S.

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Furniture was primitive at first. Chairs were a rarity, and a stump or a box served instead. The table might be the immigrant's chest. A bed you would build along a wall near a corner.

The bed had only one leg hewed out of a square post with two holes

State of Illinois,

County of Lake,

ss.

COLLECTOR'S OFFICE,

Town of Eldon,

1850.

Received of

Johnathan Alexander

\$ 3.41

dollars in full for County, State, Special and Road

Taxes assessed for the year 1850, on the following Real Estate, situate in said Town, viz:

Town.	Lots	Sub	Sec	Block	Valuation	Co. Tax	State Tax	Spec. Tax	Road Tax	Total
	24	25	26	27						
SE 1/4 & NW 1/4	7	41	4	110	88	72	8	12	280	
				111	63	66	5	7	271	
									341	

N. C. GEER'S Print, Waukegan.

August Miller

Constable & Collector of said Town of Eldon.

1850 real estate tax bill for \$3.41 annual tax on 320 acres owned by Johnathan Alexander, and later by August Miller. Land was at Rand and Miller Roads.



Wintertime on the Waterman farm on Penny Road. 1887.

bored in it and one into the log of the house. Poles were put in, for siderails, and boards were laid on top of rails. Then they would go out and gather some fresh hay or straw to stuff the ticking for a mattress that completed the bed.

Benches were split logs, hewn flat on the top side with holes bored in the round side of the logs for legs. A table was four poles with narrow boards for a top. If you had no nails, the boards were put together with wooden pegs. That is where the old saying originated that you would like "room and board."

A cradle was made out of a hollow oak tree cut down and split open, with planks nailed on the ends and rockers added. One of the first luxuries was the American rocking chair.

Settlers cooked in the fireplace or over an open fire outside the cabin. As for cooking utensils, the cast iron spider was the most common. It was a big iron skillet with a cover and a long handle with three legs that could be raised or lowered over the fire. The iron all-purpose pots were hung in the fireplace, usually on a crane.

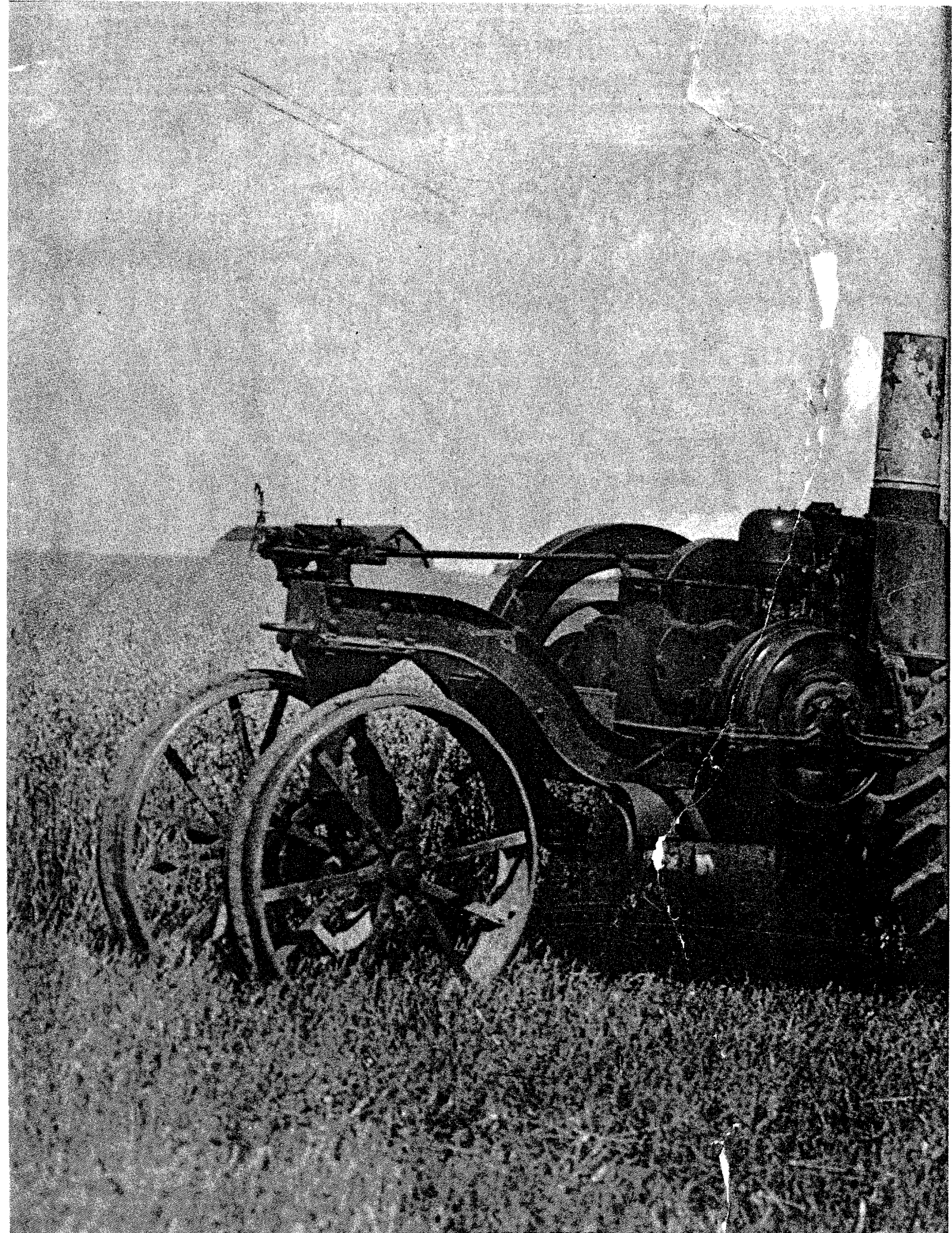
Many a wild duck, prairie chicken, or deer was fried and baked this way, even cakes and stews. Glowing peat sod, if you were fortunate enough to have it to put on top of the pot, made an even heat for baking. This was the beginning of the phrase "pot luck." — M.S.

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To clean, the settlers had to make their soft soap and the lye with which to make the lather. They would gather greasewood brush, burn it, and put the ashes in a barrel with tiny holes. Then water was poured over the ashes, and the liquid that slowly drained from the holes into the barrel became the lye.

The women made cloth from hides. They dressed the hides by putting them in strong suds made of lye soap and water and a spoonful of lard. They let it remain all night by the fire to keep it warm. They would wring it out as dry as possible, then pull, stretch, and rub till perfectly dry and soft as cloth to make gloves or trousers.

To make a shirt, they would use a fawn skin and color it. To make



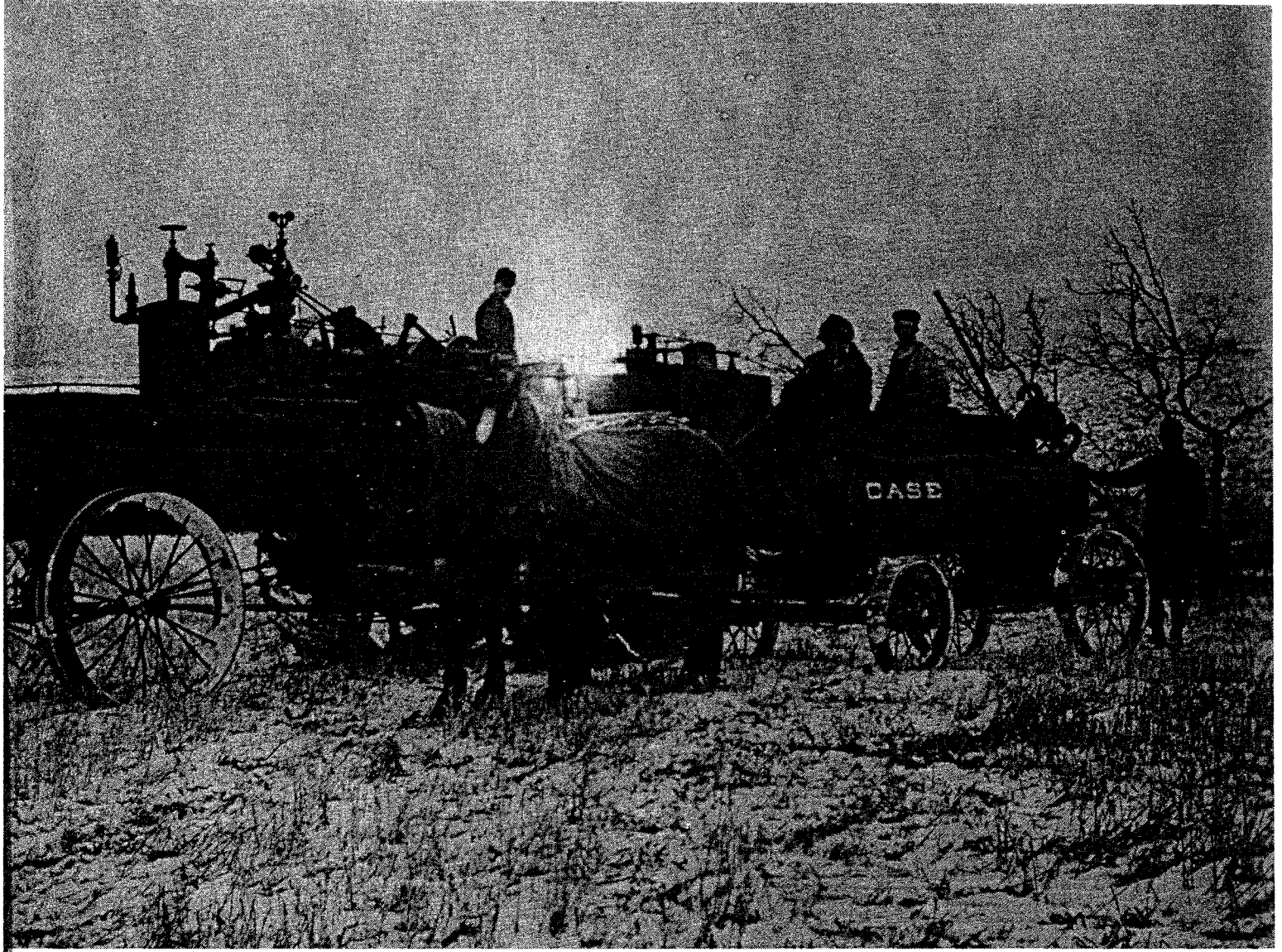


Preceding page: Mogul tractor, one cylinder, pulling McCormick grain binder. Machine cut oats with cutting bar below reel which pushed grain back onto apron and into grain binder which even tied up the bundles of grain with hemp binder twine.

Case steam engine and horse drawn water wagon used in late 1800's for operating threshing machine, moving houses, corn husking, silo filling, and operating sawmills.

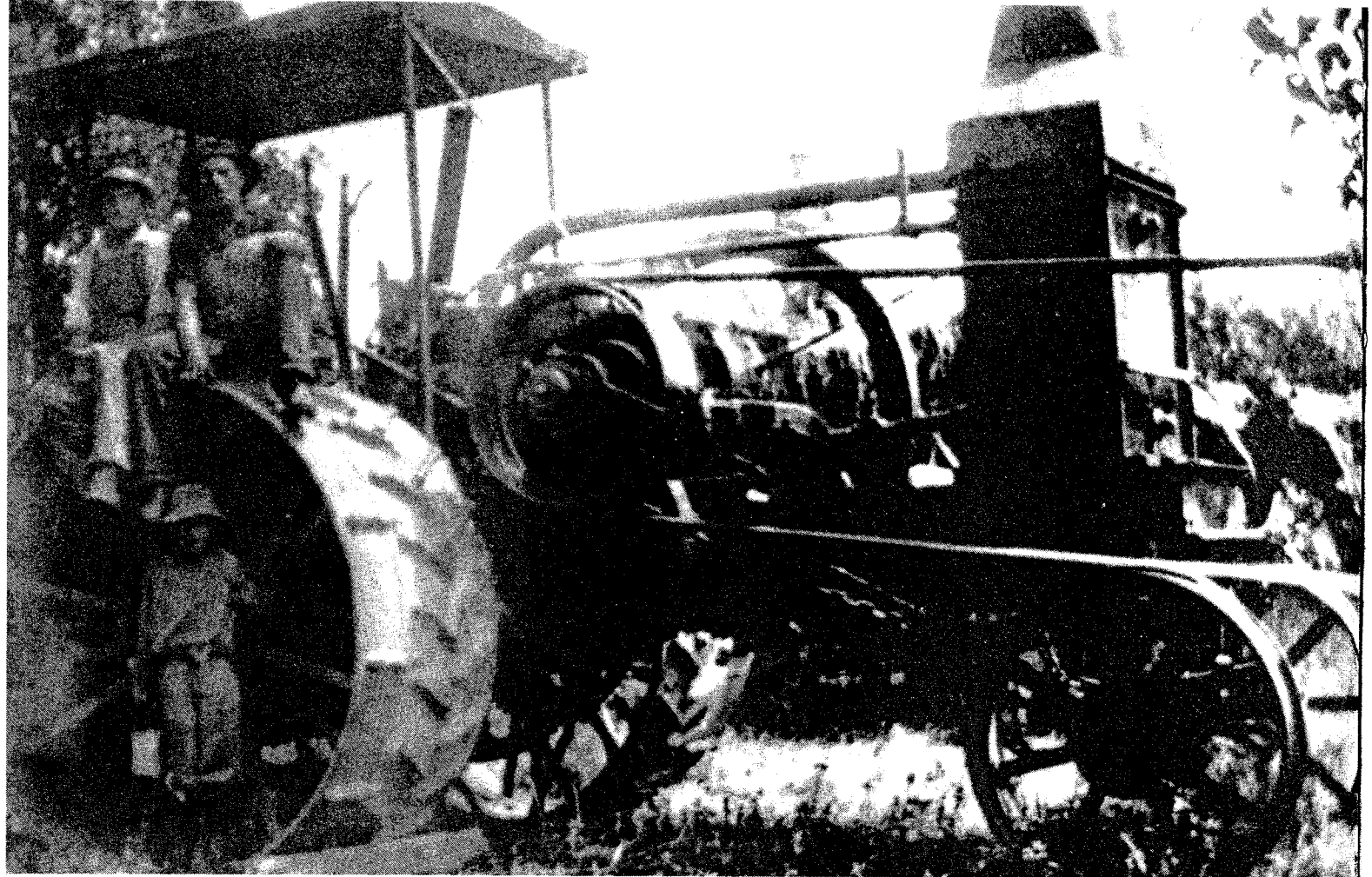
Abraham the Holstein, born on Abraham Lincoln's birthday in 1916, with proud owners Ray and Bill Klingenberg, ages nine and twelve.





their stain, they used bark and leaves from oak and walnut to color the thread or cloth. Walnut made a pretty dark brown, brookweed made yellow, and chapparal roots made yellow, also.

For tumblers they would take a long, smooth bottle, either black or clear glass, and take a buckskin string and see-saw it around the bottle till it got hot, then drop a little cold water on it, and it would come apart. One of the pioneer women who had left her rolling pin behind and just could never replace it to the end of her days, rolled out pie crust with a beer bottle. — M. S.



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Here is a set of authentic rules for doing the wash written in the 1800's by a grandmother for her granddaughter who was about to become a bride. Here are the rules with the original spelling:

1. Build a fire in backyard to heet kettle of spelling.
2. Set tubs so smoke won't blow in eyes if the wind is pert.
3. Shove hole cake of soap in bilin' water.
4. Sort things. Make two piles. 1 pile white, 1 pile cullard.
5. Stur flour in cold water to smooth, then thin down with bilin' water (starch).
6. Rub dirty spots on board. Scrub hard, then bile, rub cullard, but don't bile, just rench.
7. Take white things out of kettle with broomstick handle, then rench, blew, and starch.
8. Spread the towels on grass. Hang old rags on fence.
9. Pore rench water in flowr bed. Scrub porch with soapy water.
10. Turn tubs upside down.
11. Go put on clean dress. Smooth hair with side combs. Brew cup of tea, set and rest and rock a spell and count your blessings. — M. S.

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My grandfather, August Miller, used to say that in the old days the fuel you used gave you heat twice — once when you cut the wood and once when you burned it. — W. H. K.

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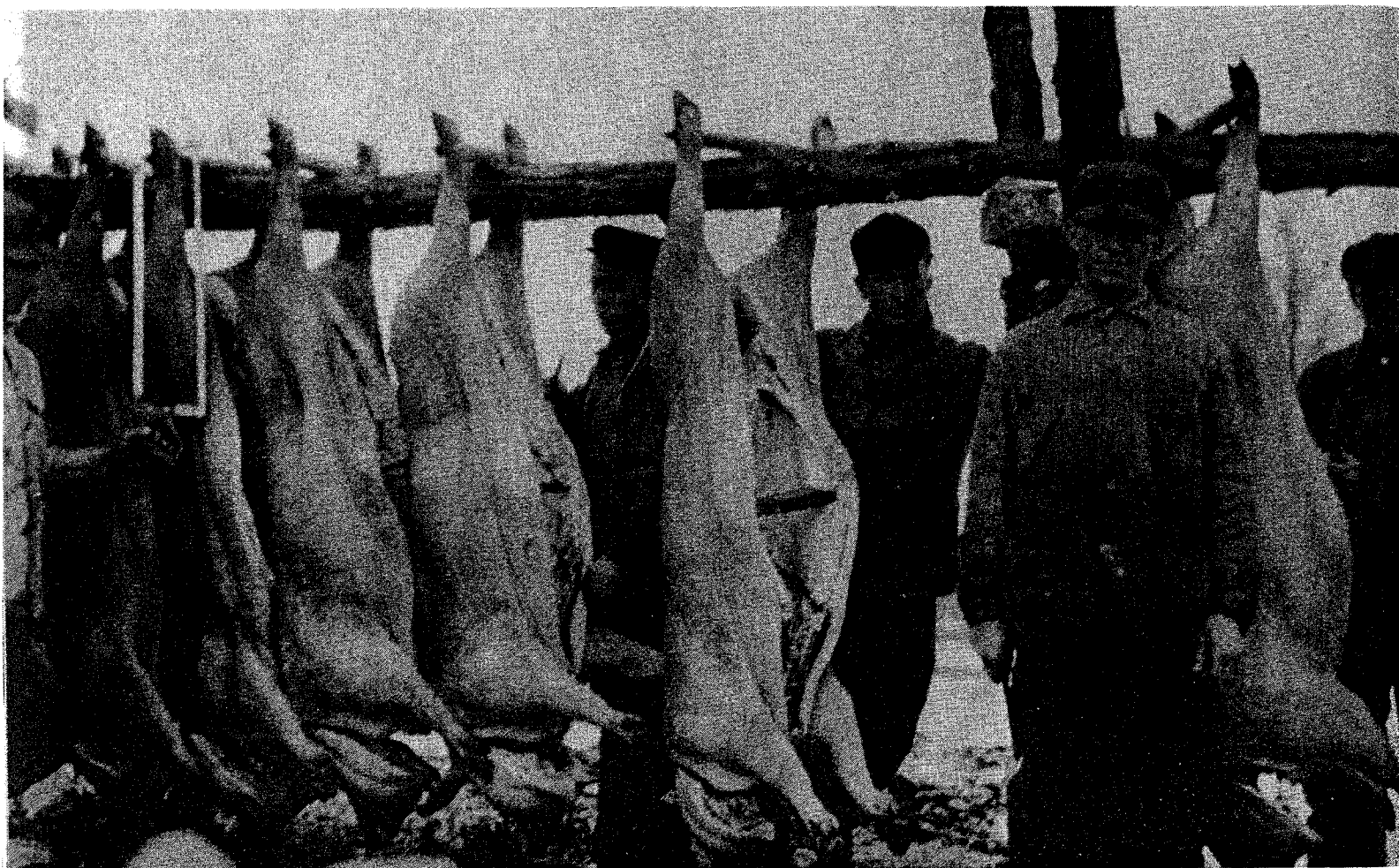
They made it on the early farms around Barrington with their backs and hands. One man broke two acres of ground and raised a little corn and potatoes the first year. The next summer he raised enough of both grain and potatoes for family use. It was not until the third year that he was able to sell or barter a little with the store merchant.

They cut their grain with a cradle scythe, planted corn with a hoe, and scattered wheat by hand. Threshing in those days was still done almost as it had been for 300 years. The sheaves of wheat were laid on hard ground in a large circle, then threshed by hand with a flail to beat out the grain. Three or four yoke of oxen were chained together in such a

Above: Rumley tractor used in 1919 to drive threshing machine. It had fifteen horsepower on the draw bar and thirty on the belt. Below: This threshing machine got its power from a tractor like the one above.







Butchering hogs on the August Miller farm in the late 1800's.

way that a man could stand in the center of the circle and drive them around over the grain. When the grain was stamped out, the straw was taken away, and new sheaves were laid out.

In 1912, wheat threshing outfits on the great plains were pretty elaborate. Powered by a huge one-hundred-ten horsepower Case steam

engine, there were six or more bundle wagons, a mobile cookhouse for the crew of ten to twenty men, and a tank wagon driver whose sole duty was to haul water for the thirsty engine which gulped it by the tankload.

You could see the tank wagon coming across the stubble field with a load of water from the nearest windmill. While the engineer impatiently blew the water signal on his steam whistle, we stood by the high wheels of the threshing engine and watched the wide leather belt move between the engine and separator. The high grain wagons furnished by the farmer and his neighbors moved in and out from the separator in an endless stream.

One could watch the straw stack grow under the big blower pipe and see the bundle wagon drivers battle the uninitiated teams up to the big, noisy machine. After awhile the horses would stand within inches of the high speed belts and even sleep while the pitchers unloaded the wagons. An old timer in his Model T Ford would haul the drinking water for the crew in milk cans. He didn't bother with roads; he just raced across the stubble fields to the windmill for water and back. The harvest hands were a tough, migrating, hardy bunch and took it all in stride. — M. S.

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The fall of the year was butchering time on the farm. Hogs were slaughtered for our own use, and some were sold to local meat markets. The boys would gather up wood and make the fire under the huge iron kettle used for scalding the hogs. The folks would make sausage, put the fresh hams and bacon in salt brine for a spell, and then they smoked them in the smokehouse. It was our job to gather up hickory bark for the fire in the smokehouse. This would give the meat a delicious flavor, and it was pleasant just to go in there to savor the aroma. In the spring this butchering would occur again so that we would have meat and sausage for summer use.

After threshing time in the fall we would take our wheat to the steam-powered flour mill located just north of the North Western Railway and east of north Hough Street and then operated by Pomeroy and Wesolowski. It would be ground into flour, and in the spring we would go through the same procedure. If you had flour ground for too long a time, worms would get into it. — W. H. K.