

The First Home. 1875 and Later

There wasn't much corn planted here at first, although most farmers had a few acres. Almost from the first settlement, corn had been grown in the state. They needed this crop to round out the diet. Corn was the main feed for the hogs and chickens, corn and water. Dad and the kids got corn meal mush and johnny cake most every day. Of course, they had white bread also. Corn meal was used a lot in the kitchen, and so they planted corn. It wasn't a money crop; that was wheat.

Our first cultivator was made of wood, except the two shovels, which were steel. It was a one horse affair. The driver walked behind and guided it with the two handles. Sometimes on a hot day he would take off his boots and go barefoot. We had that old cultivator until a few years ago, when our barn burned down. It was over head in the cow barn. Next came the single row machine. It was quite a complicated affair, with two wheels and a tongue. You were supposed to grease the wheels with axle grease. Many years later we got a single row riding cultivator, with wooden wheels. The frame was largely of wood also. Two horses handled it nicely. You just set there, and chewed tobacco, whistled and let the horses do the work. It was wonderful, but you still didn't need golf clubs to get your daily exercise. The riding, single and double row machines were next.

By this time, with the improvement in machinery, the corn acreage had increased a lot. Wheat wasn't doing so good any more. They were growing more livestock, especially hogs, and that took more corn. Our farmer west of us, it is said, had the cost problem licked. He would raise his hogs on prairie hay and water. That was plentiful and cheap. All went well he said, and they were just getting used to that simple diet, when they, for no apparent reason, died. They passed away in the midst of plenty.

The first hay on the new place was cut with a scythe, and raked by hand. Then it was hauled to the barn, and stacked nearby. There were many small sloughs on the prairie then. This prairie grass held the water and did not permit it to run off so fast. Our farm had its share of them. Near these sloughs the grass grew coarse and rank. Probably, Dad would cut some of this for fuel. The native bluejoint grass grew tall and thick in places on the prairie. It made very good hay. It derived the name from the joints, which were a blueish tinge in color. They needed lots of