THE OLD HOME PLACE

by
Mary Corbin Sasse
and
Elaine Corbin Artlip
1984

I don't see my sister Mary very often, but when we do get together, there is a lot of talk about when we were kids, back on the farm. Mary and her husband, Calvin, visited us at Memorial time, 1984. When they had been here a couple of days, Calvin said that he had already heard the story of our childhood three times. No doubt he heard it a few more times before the week was over.

Mary and I decided that our memories of life on the farm should be preserved. We agreed that probably we are the only ones who care anymore, but that we are going to do it anyway. We are sorry that we didn't do this while Van was living; he could have contributed a different set of memories.

We haven't intentionally slighted Frances and Pat; it's just that they were so much younger, they had little part in our memories of life on the farm.

The chart of the home place in 1900 was prepared under the direction of Glade Corbin Flatt, age 94.

Calvin Sasse drew the delightful cartoons illustrating Mary's stories. Thanks, Calvin.

Elaine Corbin Artlip
Villisca, Iowa 50864

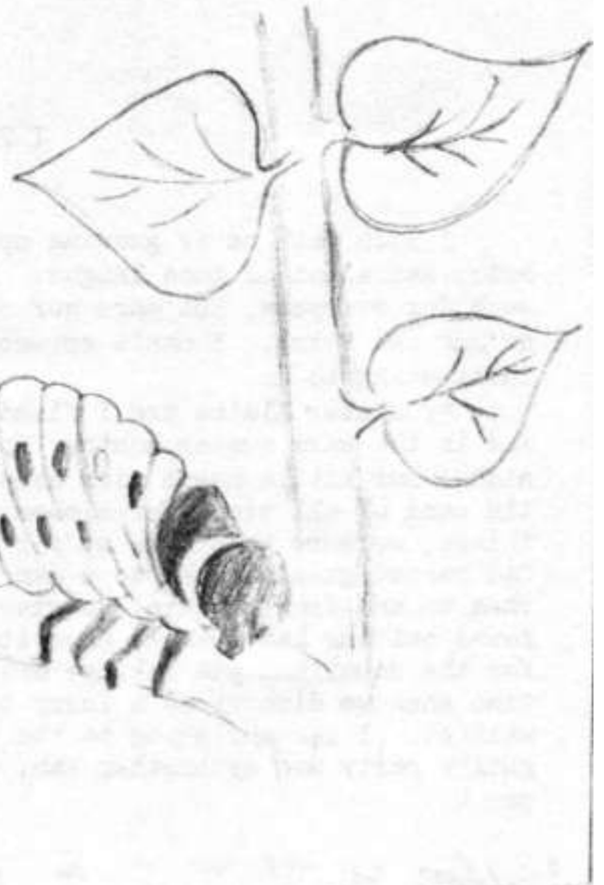
I REMEMBER.........

MCS

I look back on my growing up years on the farm with a lot of fond memories and a lot of good laughs. Living on a farm creates a large amount of work for everyone, but once our chores were done, we were pretty much free to do our own thing. I can't remember when we were ever at a loss for something interesting to do.

My sister Elaine and I fixed up a play house in one end of the coal shed, and in the warm summer months, spent as much time there as possible. We furnished our little house with some old curtains of Mom's, boxes to sit on, and tin cans of all sizes for dishes and pans. What we lacked for in material things, we more than made up for in imagination. About this time in our life, Dad rented grazing land to a man who raised sheep, and for our help in taking them to and from pasture, he gave us a lamb to raise. A short time after we found out our lamb was to have its tail docked, we went out to the playhouse for the usual mud pie baking, dress up and pretend. We were having a great time when we discovered a furry tail hanging over the edge of our beat up old skillet. I ran shrieking to the house to tell Mom, and we found out the guilty party was my brother Van, who was especially good at this sort of prank.

Our chores on the farm were many and varied, and being part of a fairly large family, we were company to each other while performing these jobs. One job that arrived every summer was what I called, picking potato bugs. Probably the reason I remember this so well, is that we were paid a penny for each one hundred bugs we captured. At the time the pay seemed very reasonable to



me. The tools needed for this job consisted of a small tin can with a little kerosene in it, and a stick to knock the bugs into the can. We worked hard, and were pleased with the few pennies we earned.

Without a doubt, the biggest cross I had to bear in those early years was wearing long underwear, trap door and all. This is a piece of clothing we wore for warmth, from the day the cold weather arrived, until spring. I felt sure I'd end up an old maid, and my future looked pretty dismal. No matter how hard I worked at smoothing them out, I always ended up with lumps up and down the backs of my legs. To make matters worse, this garment tended to stretch badly, and my legs were rather thin anyway, so that meant more material to work with, and bigger lumps. I was still trying to cope with the problem, one long winter, when our grade school teacher organized a basketball team, with the game to be played in the school gym. To the ones chosen to play, it was the most exciting thing that had happened all year. The fact that we would be wearing shorts and there would be boys watching caused a lot of giggling and whispering. For a while I even forgot my problem, that miserable long underwear. I would have to roll it up or take it off, and it would be too embarrassing to remove it in front of my girlfriends, who lived in town and never had to wear it. Definitely, I'd roll it up under my shorts, knowing if it fell down I'd be ruined forever.

It's a funny thing, I don't remember who won the game, but I do know the underwear didn't fall down.

No matter where you live, neighbors become a part of your day to day living, especially on a farm where work was shared during threshing season, and for other things that came up during the year. However with today's modern machinery, I'm sure that has changed a lot since I was growing up. In those days, horses and mules furnished most of the power for farm machines.

There was a time when I was young that I didn't care much for that good neighbor policy. Ralph Givan lived on the farm north of us, and he absolutely delighted in teasing me, not just once in a while, but everytime he saw me, which was far too often for my peace of mind. Walking by his place on my way to school was bound to cause me a lot of trouble. There were mornings when he would chase me madly down the road yelling that he was going to cut off my ears with his pocket knife. Believe me, I got so I started running before he even said anything, which I'm sure made it all the more fun for him. We were on our way to school one day, when we met Ralph with his team and wagon, which made me feel fairly safe, because I didn't think he would leave them. Not so, because he stopped the team, jumped down, and the chase was on. My brother Van and sister Elaine came to my rescue by starting up the team, and he had to give up chasing me to catch them. I'm surprised that I was able to concentrate on my schoolwork, after some of those hair raising experiences. After I left the farm, I didn't see Ralph again until the reunion and Bicentennial celebration in 1976, and would you believe I didn't recognize him.

There were times on the farm when life became hard on man and beast, especially during the severe cold in the winter. We always gave our animals the best care we possibly could, and in one way or another, they provided us with a big share of our livelihood. All of us kids liked animals, and we gave them names, and made pets out of as many as possible. We had cows with names such as Pansey, Mabel, Old Blue, and a very large Holstein named Tiny. Most of them were on the gentle side, and didn't protest too much if we rode them around the barnyard. Oh, we got dumped sometimes, and not always in the best spot. On days after we'd had a good rain we liked to go to the barnyard, and if there were calves there, we'd grab hold of a tail and just hang on. They took off at top speed, and we had a short, wild ride, sliding in the mud.

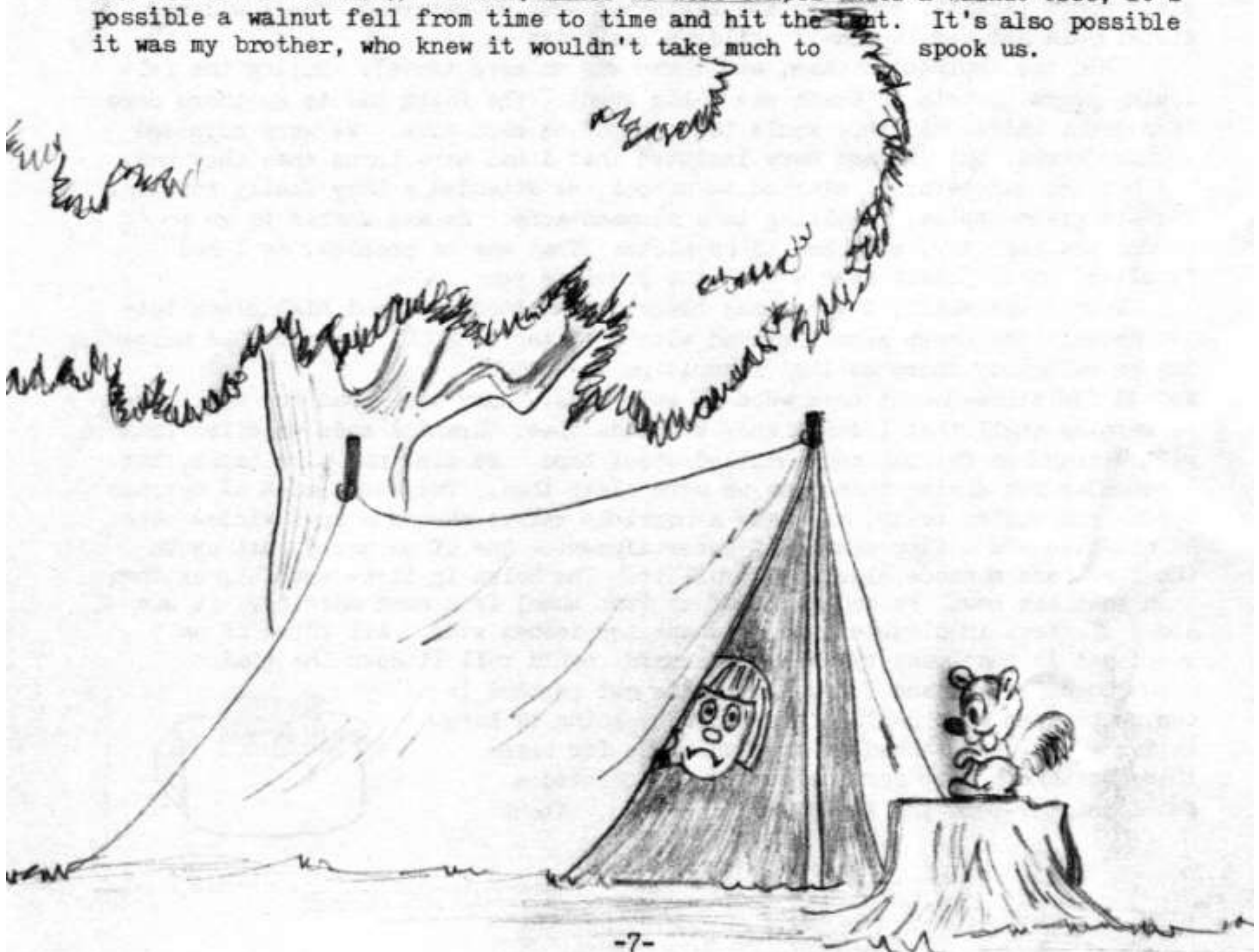
Once in a while our kitchen started looking a little like Ma and Pa Kettle's place. It was not unusual to have a box full of squealing little pigs on the oven door of our big wood range. They were warmed up, had some warm milk spooned down them, and were ready to go back to their mother. Our ducks spent the cold nights in the chicken house, and because they don't roost off the ground like a chicken, one extremely cold night they froze their feet. There was a lot of squawking going on, but we got them gathered up, put them in the big round washtub, and brought them into the kitchen. Some of them eventually lost their feet, but still managed to get around very well. Sometimes Dad would bring in a little new calf that was chilled, and put it by the stove to get warm. Just a little extra care made all the difference in the world.

My nursing skills were really put to the test when a ground squirrel caught one of our young chickens. I heard the commotion and dashed to the rescue, but not before the poor chicken had a large piece taken out of his back. I took him to the house, put a bandage on his back, and fixed up a box for him to lie in. He recovered, and was a good looking Rhode Island red, except for the fact that his tail tilted to one side. My brother Van named him Whizzer, which seemed as good as any. About this same time, I also had a duck named Henry, whose fondness for swimming in the big stock tank sent him

to an early reward. One day when he was having a swim, the water line fell so low he couldn't get out.

I really feel that people who grow up without being exposed to animals have missed a lot.

Throughout my school years, I had a lot of friends, but the three I spent the most time with were Ella Maye Westerlund, Bonnie Ruhl, and Mary Ailene Chalmers. One day we got our heads together, and made plans for a camping trip. The logical place to go was the timber on our farm, and we made a detailed list of provisions we would need. When the big day arrived, we had so much stuff it looked like we were going on safari for a couple of months. Van hauled us down to the campsite with a team and wagon. We had quite a time, but finally got the tent up and things stowed away. Next on the list of chores was to gather wood for a fire. That didn't take long, and after the fire died down, we baked potatoes in the coals. We all agreed we could survive these primitive conditions for a long time, if necessary- sort of live off the land, and really rough it. We decided to turn in early, and settled in for the night. It was just a short time later when we started hearing a noise from time to time. It sounded like something hitting the tent, and the more we listened the worse it sounded. In no time at all we decided to head for the house. Dad and Mom had gone to Grant, and when they came home, found the four of us stretched out on my bed. Our story was, it started to rain and the tent leaked. We did go back the next morning, but were packed up and home before nighttime. I've thought later, since we were camped under a walnut tree, it's possible a walnut fell from time to time and hit the tent. It's also possible it was my brother, who knew it wouldn't take much to spook us.

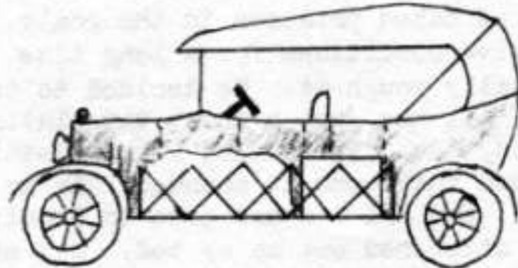


ODDS AND ENDS

ECA

My Grandfather held strong opinions on almost every subject, including the selection of names for us kids. Granddad ignored the fact that he and my parents didn't see eye-to-eye in the matter, and proceeded to call me "Judy" so relentlessly that soon everyone else was doing likewise. I was known as Judy until I started to school.

The summer that I was four we went on my first trip. Dad and Mom took Grandpa and Grandma Corbin to visit relatives in southern Missouri. Mary stayed with Aunt Glade; she was given a doll buggy as consolation. We had a big touring car of some kind. Van and I sat on folding canvas camp stools behind the front seat, and there was still plenty of room for our Grandparents' feet. We carried a tent in a running board luggage carrier, and the folks, Van, and I slept in it. Grandpa and Grandma were provided with a bed in each home which we visited.



The next summer, Mom, Mary and I went to Washington on the train, to visit Mom's parents, brothers and sisters. When we returned, Mom's widowed sister Lola and her two small children came with us.

Then the depression came, and there was no more travel. During the following years, a trip to Omaha was a big event. The folks had to go there once in a great while, and they would take one of us each time. We were supposed to take turns, but Van and Mary insisted that I had more turns than they had.

On the day before I started to school, we attended a Lary family reunion. Van ate green apples, resulting in a stomach-ache. He was unable to go to school the next day, so I had to go alone. That was no problem, as I had "visited" school about once a week the previous year.

When I was small, I wore long black ribbed stockings and high black button shoes. The shoes were fastened with a button hook. I remember Dad helping me button my shoes so that I could go to school.

We had few store-bought toys when we were kids. Mary and I had rag dolls when we were so small that I don't know who made them. Grandpa made whistles from willow branches for us, and whittled spool tops. We also had tick-tacks, but I remember Van making those, so we were older then. They were made of notched spools and rubber bands, and made a horrible racket when run up a window pane. An old tire was a fine source of entertainment. One of us would curl up in the tire, and someone else would roll it. The holes in tires were bigger then than they are now. We had a rim of an iron wheel from some machine. It was about six feet in diameter, and perhaps ten inches wide. All three of us would get in that, and by walking forward, could roll it down the road.

One day, Mary and I found a little owl perched in the grapevines. We decided that we were going to keep it for a pet, and looked in the junk pile for something to make a nest for the bird. We selected a small chamber-pot, and lined it with grass. About

that time the mail carrier came to the door for something, and Mary took the owl, container and all, out to show to the mailman. After that, the folks ordered us to put the owl back where we found it.

Each fall, we went to the timber and picked up black walnuts. We ran them through the hand corn sheller to remove the husks. Dad always growled about us doing that, but he didn't forbid it.

We weren't too bright when we were kids. We used to hide out in the corn field to do things we weren't supposed to be doing, such as smoking corn silks and eating green apples. Then we would just drop the cigarette butts and apple cores when we finished with them. Years later, Mom told me that one time she and Dad came along so close on our heels that the apple cores hadn't even turned brown.

We ate lots of popcorn - the homegrown variety. We had a long-handled popper which was heated on the kitchen range. Occasionally we made pop corn balls. Mom cooked a syrup, using molasses, and poured it over the popped corn. After buttering our hands, we kids shaped the sticky mess into balls.

Each summer, Dad hauled wheat to the Grant mill, where it was ground into flour. The sacks of flour were left at the mill, and we picked one up when ever it was needed.

One summer, Dad raised some buckwheat, and had flour made of it. It is a heavy, strong-flavored flour, which we used for pancakes. When liberally doused with sorghum molasses, they make a filling meal. We usually had them for supper as it took too long in the morning to cook enough for all of us. Van could eat any given amount, quitting only when the batter was all used.

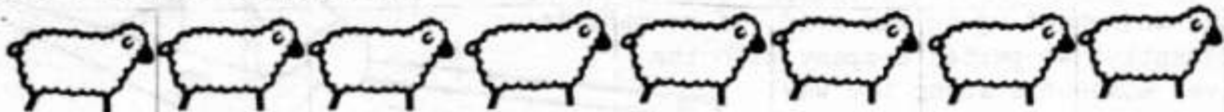
For several years, Dad raised sorghum cane, and had it processed at the Fred Davis mill, south east of Grant. It was stored in a wooden keg which stood on the landing of the cellar steps. When something is said to be as slow as molasses in January, I know exactly what is meant.

One summer Dad had the west field in clover. He rented it to a man from Lyman as pasture for a flock of sheep. The sheep walked to our farm, being driven, western style, by men on horseback.

We were having some trouble at the time with a dog pack in the neighborhood, and there was always the possibility of coyotes, so the owner hired us kids to watch the sheep when they were in the pasture. I don't remember what we were paid, but whatever the small sum was, it seemed princely to us. We took the sheep to pasture each morning, then took turns sitting on the hill where we could see them. Each evening we took them back to the barnyard. Our dog, Sam, could be trusted to keep intruders away from there.

We had a neighbor who teased Mary unmercifully. She would have walked five miles to avoid him. And of course he saw her out there with the sheep. He called her "Sheepherder" for years after that.

We had a small lot north of the house that had become overgrown, and Dad decided that the easiest way to mow it would be to put the sheep in there for a day. So early one morning, the family gathered for that purpose. We herded them through the lane into the yard, but then the leaders dodged the gate to the lot, and took off around the chickenhouse. Sheep are good followers, so when the leaders caught up with the end of the line, there was a tight ring of sheep running round and round the chickenhouse. It took some time and effort to get it broken up.



The Winter of '36

When old-timers get together, the talk eventually gets around to the weather. And inevitably, the winter of '36 will be discussed. For hardship, misery, and sheer cussedness, it was unparalleled.

20 January, 1936; Red Oak Express: ...... 16 inches of snow in one week...... 17 to 20 below....... coldest since 1930..........

31 January, 1936; Red Oak Sun: .... twelve men on the county crew are working two 12-hour shifts in their efforts to keep the county roads open........ tremendously heavy and recurring fall of snow and ultra sub-zero temperatures.

3 February, 1936; Express: January snowfall, 38 inches......

7 February, 1936; Sun: Monday evening was probably the worst of the many bad ones of the winter...... blizzard.. ... the snow in the roads has become so hard plows won't go through....... Sometimes the plow will go right up over the top of the drift. The plow and tractor combined weigh about 16 tons........

14 February, 1936; Sun: The blizzard which started last Friday evening undid all work which had been done on the roads...... snow piled 8 to 10 feet deep along the roads..... one crew of three worked 34 hours with only three out for rest, digging out a stuck plow.... first heavy snow 17th of January.

20 February, 1936; Express: .... 31 days of sub-zero .... 118 year record for cold broken........

Grant: School was not held last week due to cold and blocked roads..

24 February, 1936; Express: Cold Wave Broken

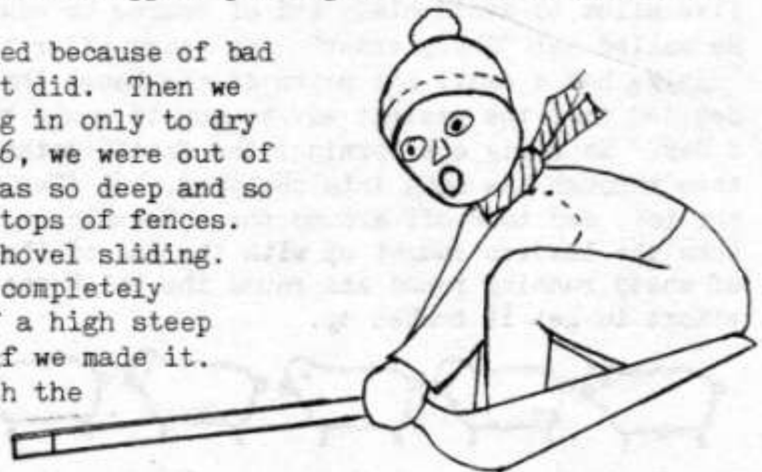
27 February, 1936; Express; Grant: Grant school opened again Monday after a two weeks' vacation due to bad roads and cold weather.

6 March, 1936; Sun: Floods........

We Corbin kids were always outdoor types, even in the middle of the winter. When it snowed, we played fox and geese, made snow angels, and spent hours and hours with a sled. We had only one sled for the three of us, but seemed to manage all right. The sled was even a hand-me-down, as it had been Dad's. But we didn't feel deprived; that sled seldom lost a race.

Sometimes we pulled the sled to school so that we could coast at recess and noon. We walked the mile and three-quarters to and from school, and then occasionally walked back to town after supper, pulling the sled, to coast with our schoolmates.

The Grant school seldom closed because of bad weather, but we were happy when it did. Then we could play outdoors all day, going in only to dry our mittens. In the winter of '36, we were out of school for two weeks. The snow was so deep and so hard that we could walk over the tops of fences. We discovered the joys of scoop shovel sliding. The ditches beside our road were completely filled. We started at the top of a high steep bank, and ended up on the road, if we made it. Frequently, we parted company with the shovel somewhere along the way.



The long hill north of our place was always bad to fill with snow, even in normal winters. In that winter of '36, Dad and Van scooped it several times, but it was soon blocked again. It became so deep that it was too much for them, so we had to wait for the county plow.

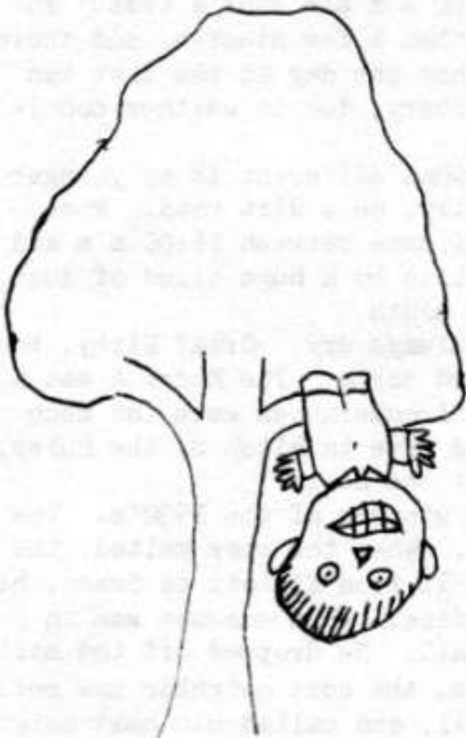
Eventually the rotary plow went by, and Dad was wise enough to take the car to the top of the hill and leave it. That night we had another blizzard, and it was six weeks before we had the car home again.

A short distance south of our house, a gate opened into the pasture on the east side of the road. While we were snowed in, Dad could drive a team and wagon to town that way. The wind kept the ridge fairly free of snow, and on the east side of the pasture, another gate opened onto a wood road which ran beside the Nodaway River. The snow was deep there, but not drifted, as it was protected from the wind. Two more gates led onto a Grant street. Dad brought home needed groceries and the neighborhood mail. One day when Dad was in town, a trucker came in with a load of coal. As we were very low on wood, Dad bought the coal, and had it unloaded by the alley at Grandpa Corbin's house. Then Dad brought home some coal each time he went to town.

When Dad returned from one of his trips to town, he had a deck of cards. Then we spent many long winter evenings learning to play pinochle.

Finally, the long winter was over, and the snow started to melt. By the first part of March, what wasn't flooded was knee-deep in mud. At the top of the hill north of us, a gate opened into the same pasture as the south gate. Dad could drive on the grass to the bottom of the hill while the road was still too muddy for travel. That cut down on the distance we had to walk to get to and from the car.

On Top of the World



I feel that the biggest problem facing parents is to keep the child alive long enough for him to develop some judgment. That can prove difficult, given the tendency of the average child to risk life and limb daily, from the time he is able to move around by himself.

Kids love to play with fire; they sneak matches from the box as soon as they can reach it. They are fascinated by water, and spend hours playing in the river when they can't swim a stroke.

But it is probably in the art of climbing that kids develop the greatest skill in the game of driving parents out of their minds. This activity begins before the child can walk, and he may never outgrow it. It can appear later in such odd quirks as an urge to climb Mt. Everest.

Van climbed the windmill tower at the age of two. When I was two, we climbed onto a box in the back yard, and big brother

pushed me off, resulting in the only broken bone we older kids ever suffered. While my arm was still in splints, I was on top of everything in the house.

We soon graduated from boxes to trees. We practiced on apple and cherry trees. Van built a tree house. It was a random collection of boards nailed in the crotch of a box-elder tree, and it wasn't even very high, but our feet were off the ground.

And we climbed higher and higher. Our favorite climbing tree was a maple in the back yard. I liked to go so high that the branches swayed with my weight, and then sit in a crotch, reading, while the wind rocked me.

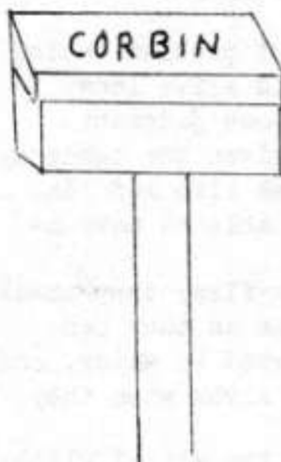
The barn was the scene of some of our earlier climbing. We played in the loft and jumped onto the hay. As we became more daring, we climbed the wall, carrying the end of the hay rope with us. We swung out on the rope, and dropped onto the hay. We sidled across narrow ledges and walked the beams, even when there was no hay under us.

We eventually became bored with the inside of the barn, and climbed out a window onto the lower roof. That wasn't very exciting, so one day when our parents were gone, we climbed to the top of the upper roof and walked the ridge. That was fun, but we did it only when the folks were away.

Then we turned our attention to our three story house. We pulled the decrepit old ladder to the attic, and went out on top. The view was great. Again, this was done during the absence of our parents.

Why do kids do such things? I don't know. I can only conclude that it was a miracle that the three of us survived, intact, our years of climbing.

R F D



I live in a house beside a paved highway, and my mail arrives, by RFD, at 9:00 a m six days a week. The time seldom varies by more than a few minutes, and there probably hasn't been more than one day in the last ten years when there was no delivery, due to weather conditions.

The situation was somewhat different in my younger days. We lived in the country, on a dirt road. When the roads were dry, the mail came between 11:00 a m and noon. The arrival was heralded by a huge cloud of dust, moving up the road from the south.

But the roads weren't always dry. Orlaf Kirby, the carrier, drove a Model A Ford coupe. The Model A was a good mudder, but sometimes circumstances were too much even for it. Then Dad would have to hitch up the mules, and pull the Ford out of a ditch, or to the top of the hill.

And then there were winters - those terrible winters of the 1930's. The country roads might be blocked for a month or two. When the snow melted, the roads were bottomless. If the carrier could make it from Elliott to Grant, he left the mail for our neighborhood at the post office. When someone was in town, he checked, and if there was mail, took it all. He dropped off the mail for each house he passed, and when he reached home, the next neighbor was notified. That person came after the mail, took it all, and called his next neighbor, and so on, until it was all delivered. This was all accomplished on foot,

on horseback, or by team; no cars were moving.

We didn't complain about the service, or lack of it. We considered ourselves fortunate to have mail once or twice a week when the roads were bad.

The Woodpile

The woodpile was a necessary part of our life during the depression years. After school, Mary and I carried the daily supply of wood to the house. We liked snow, as we could use the sled then. The split sticks were put in the wood box by the kitchen range, while the chunks for the heating stove were stacked on the back porch.

But that was the end of the story. The beginning lay in the wooded area that we called the timber. In the late fall and winter, when the daily chores were the only farm work that had to be done, Dad started cutting the next winter's supply of wood. He took his lunch, and spent the day felling and trimming trees. A fire was kept going for warmth, burning the small branches trimmed from the trees. Dad carried coffee in a half-gallon syrup pail, which was set in the coals so that the coffee was hot at all times.

The tree trunks and larger branches were sawed into manageable lengths, and eventually they would be hauled or dragged to the house, where they were piled in the back yard.

The wood was sawed with what we called a "buzz saw". The circular blade must have been about 24 inches in diameter, and fitted into a sturdy metal framework. It was run by a belt from a tractor. Dad had a saw, but no tractor. Ralph Gridley had a tractor, but didn't have a saw, so they joined forces. They sawed their own wood, and also did custom work for neighbors. It took several men to handle the logs, to run the saw, to throw the stove-length pieces from the saw, and someone to dodge the thrower while putting the chunks into a pile. The thrower had the hardest job, and it took a rugged character to last through the day.

One time our high school basketball coach came to our house the night before a sawing was scheduled. He didn't know anything about sawing wood, but volunteered to help. Dad's off-beat sense of humor led him to start the poor guy at throwing. He didn't last long.

After the wood was sawed, there was still another step to be taken. The large chunks had to be split into pieces that would fit the stoves. The heating stove could handle all but the largest pieces, but everything except the smallest branches had to be split for the cookstove. That was done with an axe and lots of muscle.

I don't remember all the kinds of wood we burned, but there was oak, hickory, elm, and some ash. At times circumstances forced us to burn some cottonwood and willow. You could freeze to death that way.

Dad spent hours and hours each winter filing the teeth on the large saw blades. Ralph Gridley used to say that Albert was the only one he knew who knew how to sharpen a saw. In my younger days, I regarded that as a hobby of Dad's - sort of like Mom's hobby of sewing buttons and darning socks.

Now, again, many people have woodburning stoves or fireplaces; it is the "in" thing to do. But there have been some changes in the job of procuring

fuel. Modern woodcutters are equipped with chain saws, pneumatic wood splitters, and four-wheel drive pickups.

The Gooseberry

When it comes to gooseberry pie, there doesn't seem to be any middle ground- either you love it, or you hate it. I'm quite fond of it myself, but there have been times when I heartily wished that no one in my family could stand the stuff.

During the depression years, Mom canned everything she could get her hands on. That included gooseberries. But before they could be canned, they had to be picked and stemmed.

Any union would label gooseberrying as unacceptable working conditions. We started out early in the morning, and after wading through wet weeds and brush, we were soaked by the time we reached the timber where the gooseberry bushes grew. Hoards of mosquitoes awaited our arrival. Pick and swat. Pick and swat. Gooseberries have thorns. They stick your fingers, scratch your arms, and snag your clothing.

Then there were the hornets. When Mary was stung on a finger, her hand swelled like a balloon. She couldn't pick, so she was allowed to go home. I envied her that talent. When I was stung, I just kept on picking, with a sore finger.

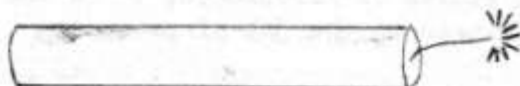
There were other wild life encounters. It was rather disconcerting to lift a branch, and discover that it had concealed a snake, curled up on the next branch. One day, I was sitting on the ground, picking from a heavily-laden bush. Hearing a noise, I looked up, and found a skunk sniffing at my feet. I froze, and soon the woods pussy wandered off.

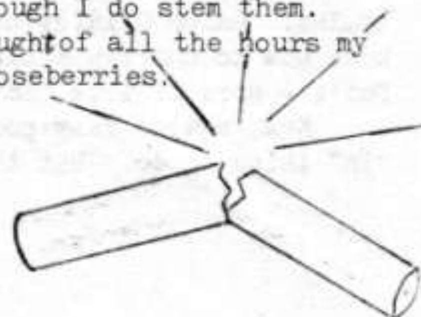
After our buckets were filled, we went home and started stemming. A stem end and a blossom end had to be removed from each little berry. How many gooseberries in a quart? We had a wooden box, with a screen over the top. Mom rubbed the berries over that, and it removed some of the stems. That helped.

Eventually, the day would arrive when Mom would announce that she had had it with gooseberries. Then an amazing thing happened. We kids promptly charged off to the timber and picked gooseberries with great enthusiasm. Then we could sell all that we picked. We received ten cents a quart, and didn't even have to stem them.

This venture in capitalism financed our Fourth of July celebration. The more gooseberries, the more fireworks. We started with a cap gun and caps. Then we added fire crackers, sparklers, Roman candles, spit devils and snakes, according to how many gooseberries we had sold. In a good year, we might even have a few rockets.

Nowadays, I still manage to have a gooseberry pie occasionally, but things have changed. I don't have to pick them, although I do stem them. Then I stick them into the freezer, with hardly a thought of all the hours my mother spent slaving over a kitchen range, canning gooseberries.





Fowl Play

My earliest fowl memories indicate that Mom had Rhode Island Red chickens. They were big, heavy birds, as were the few Buff Orpington and Plymouth Rock hens kept by my grandmother.

In the spring, most of the hens wanted to set. The old chicken house was used as a hatchery. Mom set a few hens there, each with a dozen or more eggs. The others were thrown into the coal shed until they gave up maternal urges.

Mom had several little tin coops. After the chicks hatched, a hen would be installed in each coop, and a string tied to one leg so she couldn't wander off. The little chickens would stay with the hen, and she raised them.

Then, when fall came, the young chickens had to be taught to go to the chicken house, and sleep on the roosts. To accomplish this, we waited until dark, then caught the birds, carried them to the chicken house, and placed them on roosts. The idea was that after a few nights of this, they would do it on their own. There were always a few that taught themselves to roost - in a tree. It could be real fun to pick them out of a tree in the dark.

One day we kids were playing out doors, barefooted as usual. We started a race and as I rounded a corner of the house, I stepped on a tiny baby chicken, still in the downy stage. It squished. Maybe that is why I dislike chickens. I disposed of the remains, and never did tell Mom.

I was still small when Mom changed to Black Minorca chickens. They were big birds, but rangy, not given to fat like the heavy breeds. They laid very large white eggs.

For a few years, Mom bought baby chickens from a hatchery, and they came by mail. We had to teach them to eat and drink. Mom never did have a brooder house. There always seemed to be enough hens who were willing to take the infants.

After Mom had built up her flock, she acquired an old kerosene incubator, and hatched her own chickens. We had to turn the eggs every day while they were in the incubator. We marked one side with a pencil so that we could keep track. A hen can manage without pencil marks.

Mom became well-known among Black Minorca fanciers. She shipped hatching eggs all over the country.

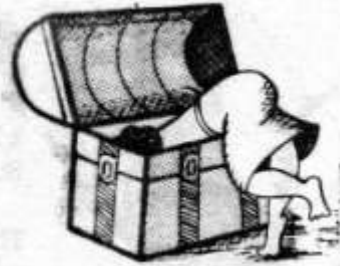
Someone had to gather all those eggs, and of course Mary and I helped. In the spring time, I was stuck with a large portion of the chore, as Mary was intimidated by setting hens; they were inclined to peck.

Of course, we got in on feeding those birds, too. One year, Dad raised a lot of Kaffir corn, a kind of cane. Every day after school, Mary and I had to cut two or three buckets of heads from the cane to feed the chickens.

Mary and I usually had a few chickens which we raised as a financial project. They were always of a different breed than Mom's, so we could tell which ones were ours.

One day, Dad brought home three Muscovy ducks- a drake and two hens. They were around for years. In the summer, they spent most of their time under the lilac bush. One laid an egg occasionally, and we had one batch of baby ducks- about four, I think. The whole duck business was very unexciting. I think one ate Dad's class ring, which I had been wearing. Apparently I threw it out with the dishwater.

The Storeroom



After my parents were married, Grandpa and Grandma moved to a small house. It wouldn't hold all their possessions, and the leftovers were stored in the northeast up-stairs room in the house which they were leaving. When Mary and I were young, that room was one of our favorite spots. It was full of interesting things, and we spent many hours there, especially on rainy days.

There was a trunk, which had a few old clothes in it, but our favorite dress-up items were the huge hats found in the closet. There were two of them, one red and one blue. They had gobs of artificial flowers, ribbons and veiling. Of course, we couldn't keep them on, as we didn't have hat pins or long hair to anchor the pins.

There was a stereopticon, and a stack of slides for it. The slides were kept on a large plate, which had a wide lattice border. We became well acquainted with such places as Central Park in Winter and The Garden of the Gods.

For years, Mary and I had a house for paper dolls in the store room. It started out with one cardboard box; we added more boxes as time went on, until we had quite a mansion. We made furniture and furnishings, even papering the walls. We used acorn cups for dishes. Paper dolls and their wardrobes were printed in the comic sections of the Sunday paper.

The north side of the walk-in closet was filled with shelves, and on the shelves were large old-fashioned picture frames. We weren't interested in them, and I don't remember all the pictures, but one was of my great-grandfather, Benjamin Corbin, in his Civil War uniform, holding a long pistol against his shoulder.

I don't remember details of all the things that held no particular interest for a kid, but there were odds and ends of furniture, dishes, and kitchen ware, including a coffee grinder. When Mom bought an incubator for hatching chickens, things were shoved out of the way to make room for the big box on legs.

Mary and I had the northwest bedroom, but it was small, and had no closet. Eventually, we moved into the store room, and our old room became the store room. A ladder was kept there, which was used to reach the attic. In the fall, pop corn and black walnuts were spread on newspapers on the floor to dry, and then stored in cardboard cartons. Pears were also spread out to ripen for canning.

The farm was sold early in 1944, and the folks moved. Dad hitched the mules to the wagon, and backed it up to the kitchen door. Most of the things from the storeroom were loaded into the wagon, and taken to a ditch where they were dumped. They would be worth a fortune now.

Sam

I was so young when Sam came to our house that I don't remember it, but I was told that he was just a pup. Mary was a toddler, and everytime she went out doors, Sam knocked her down.

Sam was part bull dog, but you had to take a second look to see it. He was of medium large size, with a long muzzle, and a yellow-brown coat. Only when you noted his thick neck, powerful shoulders, and bowed front legs, did you recognize the dominant part of his ancestry.

Sam was undisputed champion of the local dog population. If a stranger was rash enough to pick a fight, he soon regretted it. Sam circled warily, waiting for the right opening, and then grabbed his opponent. The fight was over; Sam clamped his jaws and held on until he was pried loose.

Sam would have given his life for us kids, but we didn't always appreciate his devotion. For example, we couldn't play tag with visiting children, as Sam wouldn't allow them to chase us. He just grabbed the "it" by the seat of the pants, and hung on, thus effectively stopping the game.

Sam was afraid of thunder and firecrackers. When a thunderstorm came up, you had better be sure the kitchen door was closed, or he would come right through the screen door. As we kids got older, we tended to just open the door and let him in. Sam spent most of each Fourth of July season hiding under the porch.

One day, Van and Gordon Long went to the timber to cut wood. Norman Long was with them, and of course, Sam went, too. Later, Mary and I went to where they were working. We didn't stay long, and when we started home, Norman was trimming branches with a hatchet. We went up the ditch, puttering along the way, and when we reached home, Norman was sitting in the kitchen while Mom doctored a gash in his foot that he had made with the hatchet. After the accident, Norman had grabbed Sam's tail, and hopped along as the dog towed him up the cowpath to the house.

Sam was old and crotchety by the time Frances was born, and he didn't like her. No doubt he would have done his best to protect her if danger threatened, but only from a sense of duty. He probably would have been delighted if she had met with an accident, as long as it happened outside his sphere of responsibility.

Eventually, Sam became so lame, blind and deaf that he was helpless. None of us could put him down, so Mom approached Norman Long on the subject. She offered him a chicken as payment. He agreed, and came to our house with his rifle. Then he chickened out, too, and couldn't do it. A few days later some salesman came to the farm, and Dad had him shoot Sam.

A Cold Bed

The battle to survive an Iowa winter was fought on many fronts. One of the problems was how to keep warm in bed. Our parents slept over the dining room, where the heating stove stood, and Van slept above the kitchen. In the floor of each of those bedrooms was a register, which allowed some warmth to seep through, even when closed. Mary and I shared one of the north rooms. There were no registers in those rooms, and even if there had been, there was nothing under them but more cold. If we took a glass of water with us when we went to bed, it might be frozen solid by morning.

Grandma Corbin had kept geese, and we were well supplied with featherticks. You haven't really lived until you have tried to make a bed with a feather tick on it, but they did help fend off frost bite. We used lightweight flannel blankets for sheets. They were one-piece affairs which were

about fourteen feet long. They folded at the foot of the bed to make both top and bottom sheets. With three or four heavy comforters piled on top, we had a sporting chance of surviving until morning.

The proper attire was necessary, of course. We wore long flannel night gowns and stockings. We slept snuggled together, spoon fashion, and if one of us turned over, the other had to do likewise. On the coldest nights, we heated flatirons, wrapped them in towels, and took them to bed to keep our feet warm. One night the irons were too hot, and we each received a deep burn. We have never been able to figure out how we could have been burned like that without waking.

- A Little Light on the Subject

If one of our grandchildren were to see a lighted kerosene lamp, I'm sure the reaction would be, "How on earth did you see anything by that?" I'm inclined to feel the same way now, but at the time we managed very well.

We had a lamp for the kitchen and one for the dining room. If you had reason to visit the rest of the house while both were in use, you did so in the dark. If a light was really needed for a brief time, you "borrowed" a lamp, and then returned it as quickly as possible.

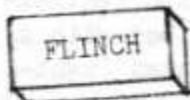
After the evening chores were finished in the kitchen, the lamp was extinguished. It would have been wasteful to keep it burning. But if a family member was out past bedtime, that lamp was left burning (turned low, of course) until the wanderer returned.

The dining room lamp stood in the middle of the round oak table where the family gathered after the day's work was done. Mom spent most evenings sewing or mending. The rest of us were usually reading, although sometimes we kids played games or did schoolwork.

It was an exciting event in our lives when Dad brought home an Aladdin lamp. It provided almost as much light as an electric lamp would have done. If an Aladdin lamp is turned too high, it will build a carbon deposit on the mantle. It was amazing that the whole family could sit there until practically the whole mantle was black before anyone noticed. You just turned the wick down a little then, and soon the carbon would burn off.

We also had a kerosene lantern which was used for choring and other outdoor errands. Occasionally someone carried it while walking to town in the dark.

There were a few chores connected with the use of those providers of light. The bowls had to be filled with kerosene. The chimneys had to be washed, and they are exceedingly fragile. You had to have a lot of experience at dish washing before you are trusted to do a lamp chimney. And trimming wicks takes a steady hand. If not done properly, the lamp smokes. That is another plus for the Aladdin- the wick doesn't require trimming.



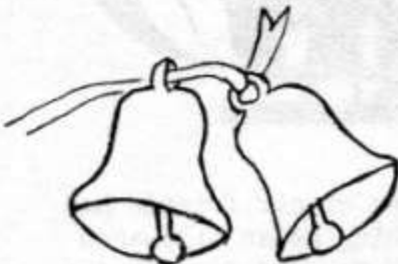
$\sqrt{9409}$

Billy the Kid

I don't remember where the little goat came from, or why we had him. He was as playful as a pup. We children used to line up on the cellar door, and then race around the house. Billy would line up with us, and then wait until we were out of sight around the corner before he started. He whizzed past us and by the time we returned to the cellar door, Billy was there waiting, as if to say, "What took you so long?"

But little goats soon become big goats, and it wasn't long until Bill was playing rough. His famorite game was to sneak up behind people and butt them. When Mary was the victim, she usually ended up on the ground. Eventually Dad sold Billy (or maybe paid to get rid of him!) to a fellow who needed a goat to lead a flock of sheep. Sheep aren't very bright. You can train a goat to go where you want him to go, and the sheep will follow him.

A Christmas Tree



When I was a child, people didn't buy Christmas trees - at least not the people I knew. In fact, about the only families who had trees were the ones with kids promoting the project. And if you did want a tree, one likely could be found in the woods. If you didn't have a woods, or timber, as we called it, you probably had a relative who did. Or you could find a tree along the brushy country roads. Those trees were usually cedar, usually small, and always spindly. And there was a rusty look to the green foliage.

One year, a while before Christmas, my parents received notice to pick up freight at the depot in Elliott. They were mystified; they weren't expecting any freight. Dad went off to collect our surprise package, and returned with a Christmas tree!

Uncle Ray Lary lived in the far-off state of Washington. I don't know why he decided that we should have one of Washington's finest, but there it was. Dad removed the twine that held down the branches, set the tree in a bucket of sand, and placed it in front of the big dining room window. The top brushed the ceiling. And then, slowly, the branches opened like a bud unfolding. It was the most beautiful tree we had ever seen. We stood there, lost in admiration, until finally, someone asked, "What on earth are we going to put on it?"

The supply of Christmas ornaments was as meager as any other luxury in our home. It consisted of a few rather dog-eared red paper honeycomb bells. There was one large bell, which we always hung from the center of the dining room ceiling. Red and green crepe paper streamers from the bell to the corners of the room completed our holiday decorations. There were three or four small bells, and those we placed on the tree.

We strung what seemed like miles of popcorn. We used quite a lot of Mother's flour to make paste for red and green construction paper chains. We stuck bits of foil to cardboard stars carefully cut from the backs of our Big Chief and Goldenrod tablets. We tied apples to the branches. We never did get that tree covered, but we had fun trying.

Skunks and Skates

My brother Van had a pair of skates-shiny, nickel-plated skates. And I envied him; I, too, wanted to skate. I could just see myself flying over the ice, swooping and gliding as gracefully as a bird.

But the Great Depression stalked our land, and for an Iowa farm family there was never enough money for the bare necessities of life, and certainly none for luxuries such as skates.

No money had been spent for Van's skates; they were left over from our father's youth. In those days, our grandfather had been quite comfortable financially, and according to Dad's sisters, he had been badly spoiled. Many of our possessions came from the same source: the sled shared by us three children; a carom board; checkers; Flinch cards; marbles; a football; and even the rocking horse of our younger days.

Of course we didn't realize that we were poor. None of our friends had any more than we had, and some had even less. Such a thing as an allowance was entirely unknown to us, and pennies and nickels were few and far between. If you wanted money, you had to figure out some way of earning it. And that wasn't easy, with cash being such a rare commodity. In the late fall and winter, the most popular path to solvency, among the older boys, was the trap line. There was a steady market for furs, and while the prices paid were small, they looked quite attractive if you had no money.

Van was an enterprising type, so he became a trapper. Steel traps, of course, were quite expensive, but once again Granddad's wealth of yesteryears came to the rescue. All that was necessary was to go the shop, and take the traps down from the nails where they had hung, unused, for many years. A few drops of oil made them as good as new, and Van was in business. As there had been no hunting or trapping on our land since Dad was young, it was almost impossible for even a beginner to come up empty-handed. And a good skunk fur could bring up towards $1.50.

I was much impressed by this sudden affluence, and I soon saw a way of obtaining those skates that I so ardently desired. The objections from my parents were loud and long when the subject was broached; the chief argument, as I recall, was that "girls just don't do such things". But I had been hearing that complaint with great regularity throughout my life, so at last I wore them down, and I became a trapper. I'm sure my long-suffering parents thought that I wouldn't last more than one day.

I dug up a couple of rusty old traps that had been discarded, and soaked them in kerosene until they were restored to usefulness. Van was delighted at the prospect of company on his lonely rounds, and helped me to locate promising sites and set the traps.

We arose at 4:00 a m, donned heavy clothing, and taking a kerosene lantern, walked the trap line in the dark and the cold. By the time we returned, Mom had a hot breakfast ready.

There were a number of small furbearing animals native to our area, but the one most easily caught was the skunk. So that was the reliable money-maker for young trappers. And inevitably, each trapper would acquire that distinctive aroma. Classrooms in our school during the trapping season were pungent places, indeed. But there were so many offenders that it was impractical to send them home, so the teachers were expected to grin and bear it, although, on occasion, a particularly odorous culprit might be removed from the immediate vicinity of a steaming radiator. I was probably the only girl who ever attended our school in that condition, but I was undistinguishable in the general atmosphere.

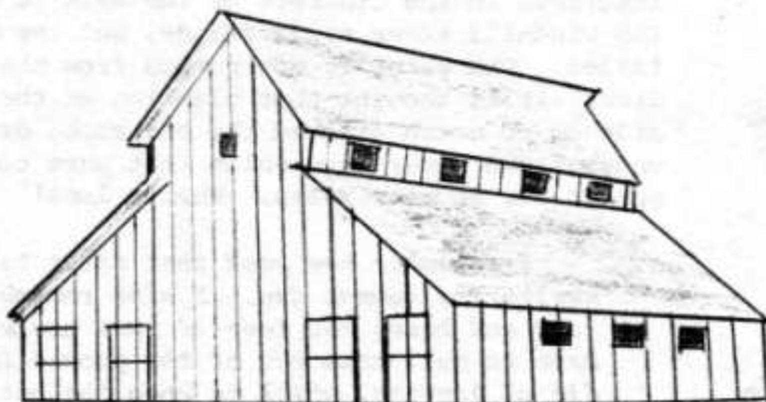
After a couple of weeks, we had an old-fashioned Iowa blizzard, and the mercury disappeared into the bottom of the thermometer. Dad helped Van pull the traps, and that was the end of my career as a trapper.

I had a modest success with my venture, and it was a big day indeed when Van brought home my share of the proceeds from the sale of the furs. I immediately made out an order to Sears Roebuck for a pair of skates.

But somehow, the swooping and gliding failed to materialize; I was a klutz on skates.

* *

The barn was built about 1903.



THE OLD HOME PLACE

Thomas Wolfe was wrong; you can go home again - at least for a few hours. My sister Frances came to visit, and on a beautiful fall day, we packed a lunch and went back to the farm where we were born.

The house looked much the same as it had for nearly 70 years. The changes have been minor. The railings are gone from the roof and the top of the front porch. The back porch is enclosed now, but we went through the same door into the kitchen. It looked so small! I had remembered the rooms as large, but now they didn't seem that way. Everything looked neat and well-cared-for. The original oak woodwork gleamed under a coat of wax. As we walked into the dining room I could picture the heating stove which used to stand by the west dining room wall.

The stove was the focal point of our lives during the long cold winters, from the time we dressed behind it in the morning until we stood there for a last moment of warmth before dashing up the cold stairs to a still colder bed.

We again mounted those steps and stood in the hallway. I felt an urge to hop up on the railing, and shinny up the wall to the attic as I had done so many times.

A rather rickety ladder was kept in the store room to provide access to the attic, but of course we weren't supposed to be up there. We thought we were putting something over on our parents, and weren't bright enough to realize that the dirty marks left on the wall by our bare feet proclaimed what we had been doing.

We went into the store room, which had never been painted. There were the names of Van and Mary, written on the wall. I don't remember if we received what we deserved for that. My name wasn't there; we probably couldn't spell it.

Back out doors, and there were our names again, inscribed in the concrete of the walk to the well. The windmill tower still stands, but the well has failed. The water is now pumped from the south fence line. It is thought that blasting at the quarry a mile or so north cracked the bed rock, draining the underground river from which that pure cold water was pumped for so many years. What a loss!

I remember how good that water tasted on a sweltering summer day. I also remember how long and heavy 160 feet of rods are when you have to pull them out of the ground in the middle of January, which is when the bottom leathers always seemed to wear out.

The little garage - "car shed", we called it - was still there. How on earth did we ever get a car in there? Grandpa built the garage when he bought his first car - a red 1909 Auburn.

I was surprised to find the coal house still standing. It was dilapidated when I was a child. Mary and I used to have a playhouse in the east end. Many

were the mud pies baked there, enriched with sparrow eggs, and liberally decorated with kernels of corn. We peeked in, and saw that another little girl was using it for a playhouse.

The maple tree was in the right place, so it must be the one in which I spent so many hours, but there is little resemblance between the present giant and the tree I remember.

One day a young blue jay fell from a nest in the tree. When Van attempted to return the bird to the nest, the parents attacked him. So Van put an old pail over his head and returned to the fray. What a clatter it made when the birds hit the bucket.

The chicken house looked normal, but behind it the old granary had collapsed, and was just a roof sitting on a pile of rubble. We crossed the barn yard, marveling at how green it was.

In an earlier day, the lot was as bare as concrete, and almost as hard in dry weather. Of course, it was a different story during a rainy spell; then the mud seemed knee-deep.

The barn is different. The original center section still stands, but the south wing is gone, and the north part is so altered that it is unrecognizable. But a flood of memories came rushing at us.

I thought of all the livestock that the barn had sheltered: the mules that terrified Mary; the runt pig that turned into my first piano; the cows that we called by name; Black Joe, the huge Angus bull. Van used to lean a board against Joe's flank, and walk up the board to the broad back.

On rainy days we played in the loft, or hay-mow, as we called it. We hunted for hen's nests in the hay, and if we found rotten eggs, we used them as ammunition to throw at targets. We climbed all over the barn, and destroyed sparrow nests. But we weren't allowed to disturb the pigeons.

We climbed over the gate behind the barn, and I remembered the day my cousin Norman and I set a speed record for going over that gate, with an irate sow breathing on our heels.

Just beyond the gate was the spot where a straw stack usually stood when we lived there.

Threshing was an exciting event in the life of a farm kid. On the eve of the big day, we kept an ear cocked as we went about our chores. Then, finally, we would hear the rumble of the huge Avery gas engine. Soon it would appear, pulling the separator. Les Embree, the skillful operator, would make a wide swing and pull into our driveway. After everything was made ready for morning, Les left, and then we clambered over the machines until bed time.

On threshing day, there was work for everyone. Mom had to prepare meals for all the men who were helping with the threshing. I didn't think it fair that Van got to carry water to the threshers, while I had to help peel potatoes and wash dishes.

After the threshing was done, we used the new stack for a slide, ending up with our clothes and our skins full of wheat beards.

As we followed the narrow road between the tall rows of corn, the resident dog trotted behind us. I remembered our dog, Sam, who had accompanied us on so many such excursions.

Sam went with us almost every place we went, as long as we walked; he wouldn't ride. As the years went by, it became more difficult for him to keep up. One day, the family drove to the timber for some reason. We were ready to go home by the time Sam caught up with us. He was exhausted, and we decided that he would have to ride home. He seemed to realize that, too, as he didn't put up much of a fight as we boosted him into the back seat of the car. But he wouldn't sit on the floor; he climbed up on the seat so he could see out, and sat there like the dignified old gentleman that he was.

The road took us down to the west field. It seems strange that it stretches to the river now. Chokecherry trees still grow along the fence. I wondered if the plows still turn up arrow heads; there was even an occasional tomahawk.

We crossed the field and climbed through the fence. Here was where the Corbin brothers settled when they came up from Missouri about 1878, and where Grandpa brought his bride in 1879. When we were children, it was easy to see where the house had stood, and the site of the well. Now all that was gone. The grass still made a thick carpet under our feet, but it was covered by tall weeds.

We sat on the grass under a large oak tree, and as we ate our lunch, we looked about. The grove of large black walnut trees had fallen victim to the high price of walnut lumber. Gone, too, are the gooseberry bushes which were an important part of our lives during the depression years.

Our picnic site overlooked the small area we had called the willow flat. Every rain had sent water from a ditch flooding out over the place, and it was covered with a willow thicket. Now the ditch has washed out enough to be lower than the flat, and the water runs around the foot of the bluff. So now the willows are gone. We walked across to the old river bed, where we used to skate in the wintertime. We went down along the fence to the farthest corner of the farm. About a quarter of a mile on south is where the White family settled when they came to Montgomery County in 1855.

We crossed to the bluff, where another house once stood, but the underbrush was so thick we couldn't find the exact spot. The first murder in Montgomery County took place near that site. There is a good stand of timber on the bluff. Dad used to cut wood there.

We turned back then, starting up the ditch, as we had so many times before. A small stream of clear water meandered through the sand and around the rocks. Yellow leaves floated on the water and rustled under our feet. As we made our way upstream, we had to jump back and forth across the water, sometimes not quite making it. We climbed over occasional fallen trees. A tiny turtle scurried in slow motion from our approach.

Frances wanted a rock to take home so we watched for a suitable one. We would carry one a ways, only to discard it as we discovered a more attractive one. Finally, we found just the right one. It was a beautiful red color, and large enough to be very heavy. We took turns carrying it.

We left the ditch then, by an old path where we used to drive the cows home in the evening. An earthen dam has been built across the head of the ditch, and we crossed it.

To our left, there used to be an Osage Orange fence. When we were kids, we played ball with the hedge balls. What a mess that made. That sticky, smelly milk was hard to remove from hands and clothes.

On the ditch bank to the right was where we picked wild black raspberries. On the Fourth of July, we made a two-gallon freezer of ice cream, and ate it with raspberries. We kids took turns sitting on the freezer to hold it down while Dad turned the crank. That resulted in some cold bottoms.

We went up the hill to where my grandparents' house had stood when I was a child. All that is left to mark the site are a few pieces of tile block in the fence row.

When we were kids, a well-worn path ran beside the road between our place and our grandparents' home. Granddad must have lived near a canal in Ohio, as he called it a "tow path".(- or was he saying "toe path"?) Anyway, we kids misunderstood him, and said "toad path".

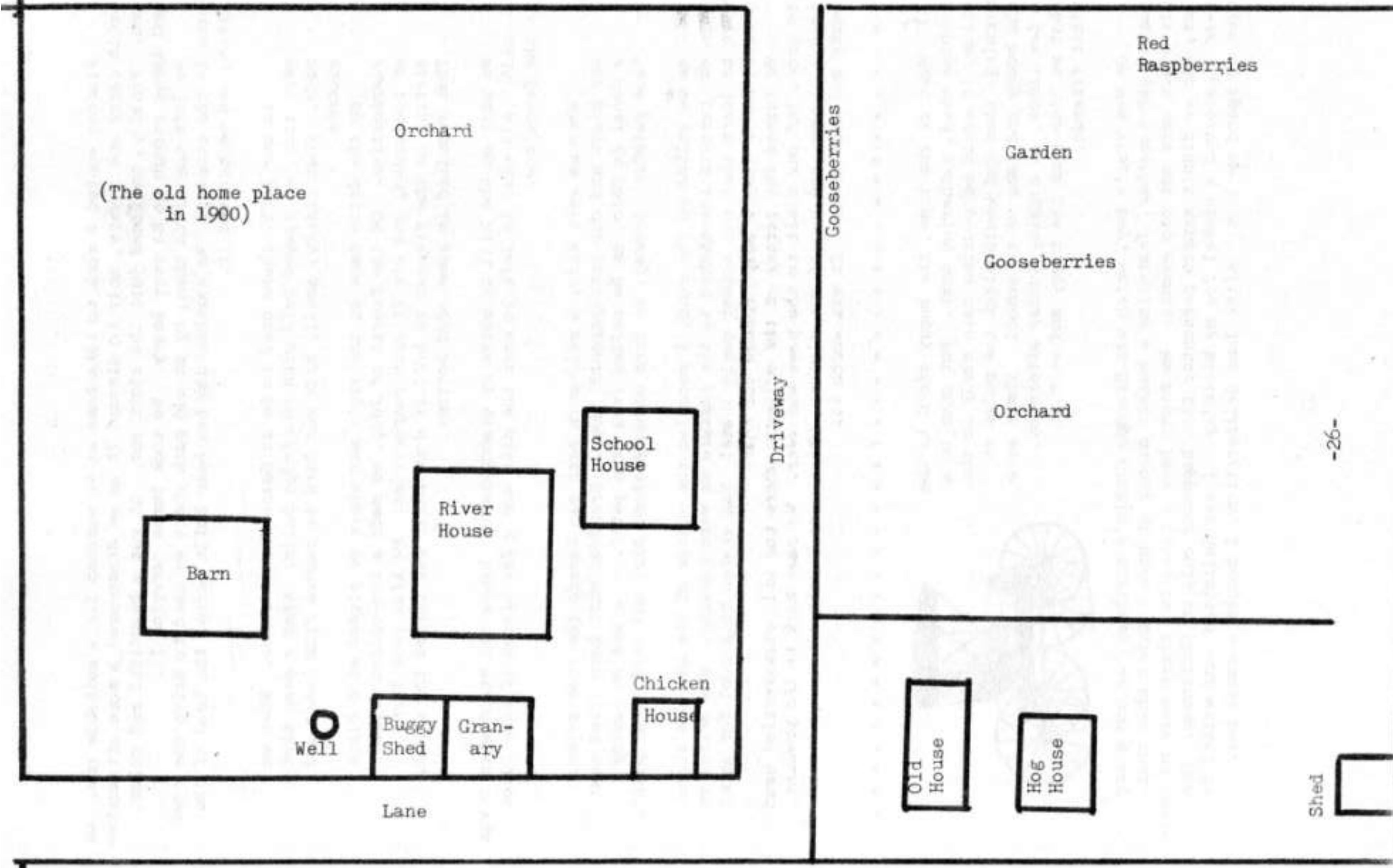
As we walked up the road, I recalled the winter of the big ice storm, when our parents ice-skated in the pasture we were passing. How amazed we were to learn that our mother could skate! Van skated to school for about a week, but I wasn't adept enough for that.

We turned the corner of the driveway where the wild strawberries used to grow, and our visit to the past was over. We came back to the present, took a shower, and burned our clothes, which were hepelessly covered with burrs and weed seeds. It was worth it.

* *

Most of the time, the buggy stood in the machine shed, gathering dust. But once in a while, it would be pouring rain early in the morning; then Dad would hitch the mules to the buggy and take us to school. There were a few times, on a rainy Sunday afternoon, that we kids took the buggy and went to visit friends.

On New Year's Day, which was Grandpa Corbin's birthday, we had a big family get-together, featuring a basket dinner at noon. Other than that, birthdays were not big events. We might have a cake, but there were no candles, and we didn't expect presents; that happened only on Christmas. One year I received a nickel for my birthday. I was delighted, and walked to town to spend my loot. After long deliberation, I bought a candy bar.


N Road S
(The old home place
in 1900)
Orchard
Barn
River
House
School
House
Well
Buggy
Shed
Gran-
ary
Chicken
House
Lane
Driveway
Gooseberries
Red
Raspberries
Garden
Gooseberries
Orchard
Old
House
Hog
House
Shed

OLD HOUSES ON THE HOME PLACE

The River House

The first Iowa home of the Corbin brothers stood on the east bank of the old Seven-Mile River. I don't know when it was built; the Corbins rented the land in 1878 or early '79. It was a good sized house for its day, having four rooms and a floored loft. It was a frame building, and the walls were finished with lath and plaster.

After Rich moved up to the road, his cousin, George H. Corbin, lived there for a time. Other tenants included Anson White, Bert Lemon and John White. Apparently none stayed long.

When I was a child, 50 years later, the site was a pleasant place, with thick bluegrass turf stretching to a black walnut grove. The cows kept the grass mowed. There were two apple trees still bearing, and a white lilac bloomed each spring. Indentations in the ground marked the location of the house and well. No trace remained of the barn (really a shed with a straw roof) or the small chicken house, which stood east and south of the house. There was an orchard north of the house.

Sometime around 1900, Rich decided to move the house to the place on the road, but it was so large that he cut it in two, and moved the sections separately. The building was placed a short distance north of the little school house. Will Coryell slept in one of the south rooms, and the other one was used as a shop. The two back rooms were stripped to the outer walls, and cattle were fed there.

After a few years, the old house from the river was moved to a site west and a little south of the new house. The building was then used as a hog house, except for the room which housed the shop. My Grandfather's carpenter tools were kept there, and other equipment needed for farm repairs. Steel traps hung from nails, and odds and ends of wood and metal littered the place.

Mary and I spent many rainy days in the shop. We pulled laths from the walls and used them to build doll furniture.

The building wasn't maintained, and by the time the farm was sold, it was dilapidated, but still standing.

The Old Schoolhouse

Alice White Corbin was born in 1860. She attended the Little Red School, which stood in Section 20 of Douglas Township. In 1868 or '69, Alice moved with her family to Adams County.

When Alice was married to Rich Corbin in 1879, she moved to his home on the Seven-Mile. In 1885, Abe Corbin bought 40 acres adjoining Rich's farm. In 1893, Rich bought the 40 acres from Abe, and moved onto it. It was on the road and nearer to Grant. The house on that land was the old schoolhouse which Alice had attended in the 1860's. It had been divided into two rooms, and a lean-to kitchen was built on the north side. No doubt Rich made all sorts of promises to Alice when she had to leave the comparatively large house, and move into the tiny schoolhouse. But it was 12 or 13 years before the new house was built; the new barn was higher on Rich's priority list.

In 1905 or early 1906, the schoolhouse was moved to the north, out of the

way, and a new house was erected. Glade and Will Flatt lived in the little house for a time. Later the place was used for storage.

Albert was married in 1920, and shortly after, Rich moved the little schoolhouse about an eighth of a mile south and added two rooms, to make a home for him and Alice.

I spent several weeks with my grandparents one summer, probably in 1931. Grandma was a semi-invalid and I was there to help with the housework and run errands.

I slept in the bedroom part of the schoolhouse, which was on the south side of the house. There was just enough room along the east wall of the room to hold the bed. I had to climb to get into the feather bed, and the old fashioned high headboard towered several feet above me. A door opened to the outside on the south side of the room, and apparently the west end was used for storage, as I have only a vague memory of things hanging and boxes stacked. A door in the north wall opened into the kitchen.

Apparently Grandma and I spent most of our time in the kitchen, as my memories of that room are vivid. The main entry to the house was from the porch into the east end of the kitchen, near the south wall. I have a feeling that there were coat hooks on the south wall, just inside the door, but I can't actually picture them. West of the bedroom door, along the south wall, stood an oak drop-leaf table and some bentwood chairs. Grandma had a padded table leaf which she laid on the table for an ironing board.

On the west side, by the south wall, was a window. Just north of the window stood an oak kitchen cabinet. North of the cabinet, by the north wall, was a sink, or zinc, as Grandma pronounced it. Of course there was no running water, but I think there was a drain of sorts.

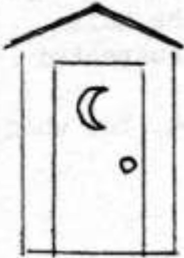
Most of the north wall was taken up by Grandma's big black kitchen range. Water was heated in the teakettle, or warmed in the reservoir. On ironing day, sad irons were placed on the stove to await their turn on the handle. After the tin dish pan was emptied it was set on the stove for a few minutes to dry, so that it wouldn't rust. One Saturday evening, I was in a hurry to go home, so that I could go to town with the family, and in a moment of carelessness I burned my hand severely on that dishpan.

To the east of the stove, a door opened into the living room, and along the east wall, between the two doors, was a tall walnut cupboard. It held Grandma's "good" dishes, a set of blue and white English china, which had been a birthday gift from her Baptist Sunday School class.

My impression of the living room is "crowded". It was a small room, and held a heating stove, an old-fashioned couch with one raised end, two large wooden rocking chairs, a square clawfooted lamp table, and an oak bookcase-secretary. A door opened in the east end of the south wall to the north end of the porch, but in the winter, when the stove was up, the head of the couch was against the door.

My grandparents' bedroom contained a bed and dresser, which had glove boxes on top of it, but that is all I can recall of it. Apparently I didn't spend much time there.

There was no basement, but on the west side of the house, a trap door



opened into the foundation. Granddad's bull dog, Snap, slept there, under the house.

There was a small garden along the fence, north of the house. West of the garden was the out house. Grandma delicately referred to that structure as the flag-stop or the state house. On past the privy was a small hen house and pen.

There was no well at the house, and Grandpa hauled water from our house. He hitched an old blind horse called Bird to a sledge, which held a wooden barrel. After the barrel was filled at our windmill, Grandpa would lift us kids to Bird's back, and off we would go.

Early on the morning of Thursday, 17 September, 1931, the house burned. It was assumed that the fire started from a defective flue. Everything from the house was saved except the kitchen range. It had a fire in it, and couldn't be moved.

Grandpa owned a small house in Grant. My cousin, Thelma Long Dotson, and her family were living in it. They had to move, and Grandpa and Grandma lived there until Grandma's death.

The Granary

There is a ten-acre tract which was stuck onto the southwest corner of the Corbin farm. It was worthless as farm land, being one half wooded bluff, and one half sandy river bottom.

In the very early days, a log cabin was built on the bluff. On 6 January, 1860, the first murder in Montgomery County was committed near that cabin.

The tract was part of the farm bought by the Corbin brothers in 1881. Apparently Abe and Rich gave their shares of the ten acres to John when he was married in 1885, although no such deed has been found. John and Ollie lived with Rich for about five months, and then moved onto the ten acres.

I don't know if John built the small frame house they lived in, or if it was already there. The building was just one room. It was finished with lath and plaster walls. When I knew it, there was a center divider, but it was just rough boards, about six feet high, which divided the house into grain bins. Apparently there had been a crude cellar under the house. When I was young, the hole where the house had stood was still visible, but when I was there in the 1970's, the brush was so thick that we couldn't find the site.

I don't know just when John moved from the ten acres. On 27 February, 1897, John and Rich bought a farm south of Grant, and John lived there until he sold the place in 1915. In 1898, John sold the ten acres and his half of the rest of Rich's farm to Rich. At the same time Rich deeded his interest in the farm south of Grant to John.

After John moved out of the little house, Rich moved it to his homestead on the road. It stood west and a little north of the house, and was used as a granary for ear corn. An old buggy shed leaned against the north side of the granary.

After the old chicken house became unusable, Mom put her setting hens in the east side of the granary each spring. After the baby chicks were hatched, Mary and I sometimes had a play house there. In wet weather, we kids ripped laths from the walls for kindling.

A small stray dog, female, of course, came to our house one day. We kids wanted to keep it, and shut it in the granary that night so it couldn't escape. Next morning it was gone, and we wasted a lot of time hunting for the hole that was large enough for the dog to crawl through. We never once suspected our parents of having a hand in the affair.

The old house was still standing when the farm was sold in 1944, but when I was there in the '70's, it had collapsed.

John White's House

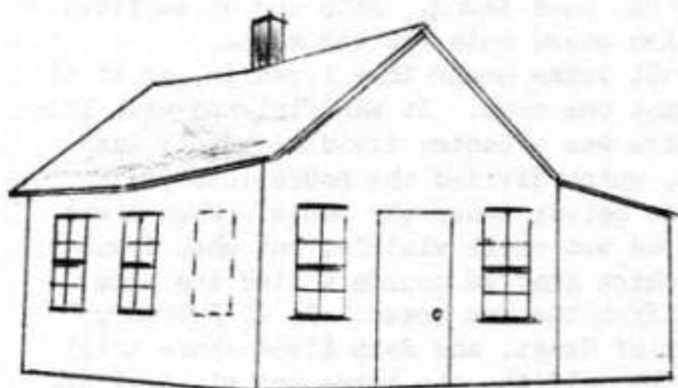
John and Annie White lived for a time in the house by the river. John wanted to be near the road, so he built a little shack along the road, by the south fence line. After living there a short time, he moved into Grant, and took the house with him.

Another House

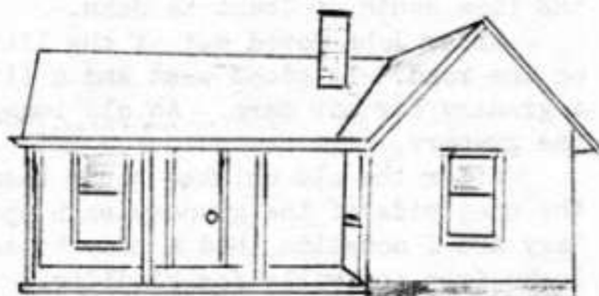
When Rich and his family moved into the old schoolhouse, there was another house on the place- a tiny old house which stood southwest of the schoolhouse. Perhaps it was the original house on that 40 acres.

That may have been the hog house that was in that area when I was a child. It is amazing how hazy my memory of that building is, but I was seldom in the lot where it stood. As I recall, it was a long, narrow building, with an almost flat roof. It had windows, a house-type door, and a wooden floor, indicating that it had originally been a house.

* *



This is the way the old schoolhouse looked in 1900.



The section behind the porch is the schoolhouse, after two rooms were added in the early '20's.