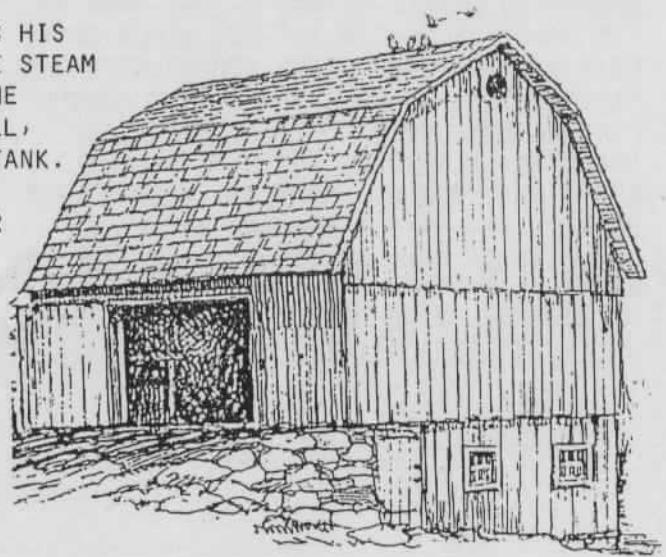


GROWING WHEAT IN THE BRIGHTON AREA (Cont.)

ON THE DATE SET FOR THE THRASHERS TO COME TO ONE'S FARM, AN AUDIENCE OF GOGGLE-EYED YOUNGSTERS GREETED THEM. CAN YOU PICTURE THIS? THE HUGE, SELF PROPELLED STEAM ENGINE BLOWING OFF STEAM AND SMOKE AS IT MADE ITS WAY UP THE ROAD AND INTO YOUR BARN YARD. THE BIG, RED GRAIN SEPARATOR CAME BEHIND AND THAT WAS FOLLOWED BY A WAGON WITH A LARGE, ROUND-BOTTOMED WOODEN TANK FILLED WITH WATER FOR THE STEAM ENGINE. THE ENGINEER ANNOUNCED HIS ARRIVAL WITH A MIGHTY BLAST OF THE WHISTLE (AS IF THAT WAS NECESSARY) WHICH DELIGHTED THE CHILDREN. THEY HAD BEEN ANTICIPATING THAT EAR SPLITTING SHRIEK AND THE ENGINEER DIDN'T DISAPPOINT THEM.

UPON ARRIVAL THE STEAM ENGINE WOULD 'SET' THE MASSIVE SEPARATOR IN THE BARNYARD OR ON THE BARN FLOOR. SOMETIMES THE BARN YARD WAS SOFT OR WET AND THE ENGINE COULDN'T GET ENOUGH TRACTION TO PLACE THE SEPARATOR WHERE THE FARMER WISHED. THAT'S WHEN THE WATER BOY AND TEAM WERE CALLED UPON. THE TEAM BILL PLESS USED WERE BLIND, HAVING BEEN 'PULLED BLIND'; PERHAPS WITH AN IMPOSSIBLE LOAD BY A PREVIOUS OWNER. THE HORSES WERE VERY NERVOUS AND HIGH STRUNG SO THEY WERE DEPENDENT ON THEIR DRIVER'S EYES AND HANDS TO GUIDE THEM. BILL HAD BEEN BORN ON A FARM AND HAD DRIVEN HORSES SINCE A VERY YOUNG AGE. THE TEAM WAS ACCUSTOMED TO HIS MANNER AND WOULD RESPOND WILLINGLY. THE AUDIENCE, COMPOSED OF THE CREW AND FARMERS, KNEW THE UNWRITTEN RULE THAT THE "DRIVER IS HANDLING THE TEAM AND EVERYBODY ELSE KEEP THEIR MOUTHS SHUT." IN THE CASE OF BLIND HORSES, ESPECIALLY, WHOSE SENSE OF HEARING IS MORE ACUTE, THE SILENCE WAS IMPORTANT FOR THEM TO RETAIN THE SENSE OF TRUST THEY HAD IN THEIR DRIVER.

BILL ALSO REMEMBERED THAT AS WATER BOY IT WAS HIS JOB TO KEEP PLENTY OF WATER AVAILABLE FOR THE STEAM ENGINE. THE TANK WAGON HELD 15 BARRELS. AT THE NEAREST LAKE OR STREAM HE PUMPED THE TANK FULL, HURRIED BACK TO THE ENGINE AND REFILLED ITS TANK. THEN BACK TO THE LAKE FOR ANOTHER WAGONFUL. THIS AVERAGED ABOUT FOUR TRIPS A DAY. HOWEVER HIS WORK DIDN'T END THERE. HIS OWN TEAM AND THE SEVERAL WHICH BROUGHT THE WHEAT FROM THE FIELD TO THE LOADER, HAD TO BE UNHARNESSED, CLEANED, FED, WATERED AND BEDDED. THIS PROCESS WAS REVERSED IN THE MORNING; WITH A FEEDING AND WATERING AT NOON ALSO. (BY MARIEANNA BAIR. TO BE CONTINUED.)



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