

## GROWING WHEAT IN THE BRIGHTON AREA

IN 1843 THE LIVINGSTON COUNTY AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY WAS FORMED FOR THE PURPOSE OF ENCOURAGEMENT AND ADVANCEMENT OF AGRICULTURE. THIS IS BARELY TEN YEARS SINCE THE FIRST SETTLERS CAME TO THIS WILDERNESS AREA. IN THAT SHORT TIME LAND WAS CLEARED OF TREES, SWAMPS WERE DRAINED BY DIGGING DITCHES AND THE PRAIRIE WAS FURROWED BY THE PLOW. THE FOREMOST CROP AT THE TIME WAS WHEAT. THIS WAS THE MAIN INGREDIENT IN THE PIONEER'S DIET. WITH OXEN, OCCASIONALLY A HORSE, TREE STUMPS WERE PULLED AND BURNED. PRIOR TO THIS THE TREES HAD BEEN GIRDLED IN ORDER TO ALLOW THE SUN TO REACH THE GROUND. PLOWING THE SOIL ALWAYS BROUGHT STONES OF ALL SIZES TO THE SURFACE. ONE OF THE DAILY JOBS OF THE CHILDREN WAS TO PICK THEM UP INTO PILES.

WITH A PAN OF WHEAT, OR A SEEDER STRAPPED OVER THE SHOULDER, THE FARMER SCATTERED THE SEED. AFTER 3-4 MONTHS AND WARM WEATHER THE RIPE WHEAT WAS READY TO BE HARVESTED. WHEN THE HEADS WERE HEAVY WITH GRAIN THE PIONEER'S ANXIETY GREW WITH EACH PASSING WIND OR RAIN STORM. WOULD HIS GRAIN BE FLATTENED TO THE GROUND WHERE IT MIGHT BE WET AND BEGIN TO ROT? HIS FAMILY, THE CATTLE, SHEEP, ETC., WERE DEPENDING ON HIM.

FINALLY AFTER SEVERAL HOT, DRY DAYS IT WAS TIME TO CUT THE WHEAT. ONE WALKED THROUGH THE WHEAT SWINGING THE CRADLE SCYTHE, LETTING IT FALL IN WINDROWS. FAMILY MEMBERS FOLLOWED, GATHERING UP THE WINDROWS UNTIL THE ARM WAS FULL, THEN TYING IT WITH A HANDFUL OF GRAIN STALKS. SEVERAL OF THESE BUNDLES WERE STACKED, ON THE CUT ENDS, INTO SMALL GROUPS SUPPORTING EACH OTHER.

THESE BUNDLES WERE THEN PITCHED ONTO A WAGON, HAULED TO THE BARN, OR SOME PROTECTED AREA. A CANVAS, OR SOME SORT OF GROUND COVER WAS SPREAD OUT. THE DRY WHEAT WAS SPREAD ABOUT AND THE BEATING OF THE WHEAT WITH A FLAIL BEGAN. SOMETIMES THE OXEN OR HORSES WERE DRIVEN OVER THE WHEAT TO EXTRACT THE GRAINS. INGENIOUS, FARMERS SOON FIGURED OUT A ROLLER TYPE CONTRAPTION TO WHICH THE DRAFT ANIMALS WERE HITCHED, TO THRESH THE WHEAT.

WIND POWER WAS USED TO SEPARATE THE GRAIN FROM ITS HULL. EITHER BY TOSSING IT INTO THE AIR BY HAND OR THE USE OF A FANNING MILL. THIS WAS TURNED BY HAND, WHEREBY AIR WAS BLOWN THROUGH THE GRAIN. THE WINNOWNED GRAIN WAS USUALLY Poured INTO GUNNY SACKS. LATER BARNs WERE BUILT WITH A GRANARY OR A SEPARATE BUILDING CONSTRUCTED. THE REMAINING CHAFF AND WHEAT STALKS WERE USED TO REFILL THE FARMER'S MATTRESS EACH YEAR AND AS BEDDING FOR THE CATTLE. (BY MARIEANNA BAIR. TO BE CONTINUED.)

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