

Farming

Facts &

Fables

A story of 70 years on the Strouts' family farm
in Morris County, Kansas 1935-2005 AD

By Lawrence Russell Strouts

Copyright-all rights reserved

DEDICATION

This brief history of a family farm is dedicated to my wife, Betty. She never really liked the farm or farming but learned to drive a truck or a tractor and to endure success, failure, disappointment, snakes, mice, raccoons, possums, rainy weather or drought. Since we also had homes in Dorrance and Solomon (where I was a high school science teacher) and Texas (after retirement), she often commented about having to pack up and move well over 100 times.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Certainly this would not have been written but for the dedication and hard work of my parents, Howard and Linnie who basically put it all together. Thanks also to my sister, Marjorie, for her stories, daughter Julie for the cover title, son Daryl for the farmstead photo and, collectively, to all five of our children, Dana, Myrna, Brian, Daryl and Julie. They never complained about the moving, crowding, hard work and everything else it took to make some dirt a farm.

Lawrence Strouts, December 2005

IN THE BEGINNING—The story of the Strouts' family farm by Lawrence Strouts

I am writing this in August of 2005, thinking that it might be of interest some day to someone. It is mostly based on fact and records, but once in a while memory and opinion come into play.

My grandparents, Herb and Mary Strouts lived in New York state in the late 1800's where he operated the street car from Buffalo to Niagara Falls and she taught in an elementary school. Mary's sister, Alice (Howard) Whiting had moved to Sylvan Park in Morris County, Kansas where she and her husband, T.W., owned a ranch. They induced Herb and Mary to join them circa 1900 when my father, Howard, was a toddler. Their daughter had just been tragically scalded in an accident and died. Herb had hoped to become a wealthy rancher but wound up being more of a hired man, living in several different places, mostly around Wilsey.

My father, Howard, was in the first class to graduate from Parkerville which was the first Rural High School in Kansas. He served in the Army briefly during World War I, was discharged when the conflict ended and married Linnie Good circa 1922. They lived in various places, doing odd jobs and farming. There was a miscarriage about 1926. I was born in 1928 followed by sister Marjorie in 1932. Our first home was the Schultz place just north of the Highland Cemetery which is north of Wilsey on what is now 1800 road.

Two miles north, the Shrontz children had lost their mother and were being raised by their father, Walter. While putting hay in the barn, he jerked on a rope to release the sling, the rope broke and he fell back striking his head on a fence post. He died in a few hours.

Ed Melzer (an uncle) and his wife took over the farm and were raising the Shrontz children.

A decision was made to sell the farm NE 1/4 of 5-16-7E.

Howard and Linnie were interested, but had absolutely no money. They talked to neighbor, W.P. Tischhauser about it and he replied " Oh, hell, Howard, you can do it". I assume some sort of contract was drawn up and a search was on for the \$5,000 purchase price. Needless to say, this was 1934 during the great depression /dust bowl days and there was very little money anywhere.

Howard had a schoolmate named Dr. Leitch and it was thought he might have some funds, so the family made the trip to see him in Kansas City, driving the 1928 Chevrolet. The doctor had no money available. I recall the lights failed on the car east of Council Grove and the rest of the trip home was made by holding a flashlight out the window.

Time was running out, but Dr. Kerr in Council Grove rather unexpectedly acquired the five thousand and the purchase was made, much to the surprise and consternation of the Melzers and their neighbors, the Youngs. While eavesdropping on the party line, Linnie heard Mary Young comment that "the Strouts were damn fools for buying the farm!" Hard feelings ensued for years.

In the spring of 1935, the wood shingle roof caught on fire from a chimney spark. A line ring went out and the neighbors came in, formed a bucket brigade and doused the flames.

The move was made on March 1, 1935 by wagon, pulled by horses. Linnie owned a 20x20 chicken house that was also relocated.

It appears that Dr. Kerr held the deed for two years, having said that "he would just as soon have the land as the money". The interest was paid and some farm proceeds went toward the principal. Linnie's aunt Emma had died and the \$600 inheritance was added. A Mr. Meadowcroft held the mortgage for a while and then the account was transferred to the Morris County Savings and Loan. Profits from the chicken business finally settled the debt in 1938.

MORE LAND

I recall that Howard was very ambitious and when land became available, he was always eager to buy. My mother was conservative and heated discussions were held.

The following is from memory and records obtained at the Morris County Register of Deeds office. The price paid for land was often kept secret and some of the prices are derived from the amount of the tax stamps.

As previously stated, the "Home Quarter" (NE 1/4, 5-16-7E) of 160 acres was purchased from the Shrontz family in 1934 for \$5,000. \$31.25/A

Next was the "Quarter across the road" (NW1/4, 4-16-7E) of 160 acres from Fred Kinkel in 1943 for \$3,000. \$18.75/A

Then the "Gentes place" (NW 1/4, 16-16-7E) of 160 acres from H.G, Pickett in 1948 for \$9,000. \$56.25/A

We bought the "Home 80" (N1/2, NE 1/4, 17-16-7E) of 80 acres from Frank Garretson in 1954 for \$4,000. \$50.00/A

The folks bought "The windmill field" (NW1/4, 5-16-7E) of 160 acres from O.C. Sheldon in 1957 for \$13,000. \$81.25/A

Finally, we acquired "Rocky Acres" (W1/2, SW 1/4, 32-15-7E) of 80 acres from Thelma Roy in 1988 for \$8,000. \$100.00/A

Anecdotes--

When purchased in 1934, there was a "devils lane" around the home quarter. This was created when, for some reason, previous owners were not satisfied with a single fence, so each built their own fence back 3 feet on their own property, creating a 6 foot "devils lane" My fence no longer exists.

The Gentes place was originally a section and we had it surveyed to establish fence lines. I recall digging a post hole in the center of the section and setting a used power line pole there. Lightning struck the pole and just made splinters of it shortly thereafter.

We moved the "little house" to the Home 80 in 1954 and spent summers there until 1973. Frank Garretson had drilled a well there and planted trees, expecting to someday build his own home on the 80.

The windmill field pasture was purchased by my parents hoping to enhance the cattle business. I plowed up (broke) the east half of the quarter in 1980. The windmill is no longer there.

I had rented and farmed Rocky Acres ever since 1947. In 1988, government conservation programs indicated that erosion was a problem, so we purchased it and put the entire 80 in the Conservation Reserve Program. It is now in its second 10 year contract. The payments have paid for the land.

A DAY ON THE FARM

My parents always set the alarm and arose at 4:00 AM and retired at 9:00 PM, the children being sent to bed at 8:00PM. I am not sure why they got up so early, but I suppose it was because there was so much manual labor to do.

During the winter, my father woke up the whole family by shaking down the ashes in the wood burning stove, then building a roaring fire and by the time we children came downstairs, we could dress by a warm fire. The upstairs was not heated and it would get below freezing during the colder months. During the worst cold spells, we moved beds into the room where the stove was and all slept, ate and lived in the one room. Conversely, it was so hot in the summer that we slept outside on the grass in the front yard.

After breakfast (usually cooked oatmeal), it was time to milk the 8 or so cows, then carry feed and water to chickens. The chickens might be babies in brooder houses or laying hens in the hen houses. In the brooder houses, it was also necessary to fill the brooder stoves with kerosene.

Everything was done by hand, utilizing two 5 gallon buckets which would total about 80 pounds.. This was tiring, especially when we had chickens upstairs in the barn.

The buckets of milk had to be carried to the milk house and the separator cranked by hand to produce the cream. I would comment that milking was no fun when the cow had been sleeping in mud and manure and came into the barn covered with snow. Likewise, in the summer, she would be kicking and swatting her tail at flies.

Eggs were gathered into wire baskets, carried to the cave, graded, packed into cartons and lids nailed on for shipment. Young chickens would be caught after they went to roost at night and loaded into crates for market. Stray chickens would be caught by a long wire that hooked their leg.

One had to be careful around roosters, especially bantams, that wanted to fight. If there was a hen on the nest, she would peck you quite painfully when you reached for the eggs.

The baby chicks were ordered and the mailman delivered them. In later years, we had our own electric incubator.

Both the brooder houses and chicken houses had to be cleaned weekly or so by scooping out the manure and putting down fresh litter.

Sometimes, we would hunt for nests of eggs where the old hens would hide in the weeds. We would gather the eggs and put them in the water tank. The ones that were spoiled would float, the ones that sank were considered good enough for market. I am sure the quality was badly compromised.

After the chores were done, Margie and I would walk the 1 and 1/2 miles to Central school, Dist #2 where classes started at 9:00 AM.

If the weather was really bad, we might go in the car but this was not possible if the roads were muddy. A few times during blizzards, our dad took us in the box wagon wrapped in blankets and pulled by horses. I do not recall school ever being cancelled because of bad

weather. In later years, I also rode my new bicycle or my Shetland pony named Buster. This was bareback as we did not have a saddle. Buster had a bad habit of "shiing" at imaginary things, jump sideways and dump unwary riders. Margie was usually a "hanging on" passenger.

After school, there were more chores, gathering eggs, hauling wood from the woodpile and stacking it on the porch and again milking the cows and separating the milk. The cows would of course be in the pasture, so I had to go get them. On occasion, I would carry a handful of oats in my pocket to entice Buster and have a ride back to the barn. Sometimes, I would just pretend to have oats--the horse never caught on.

Supper was at 6:00 PM, then we got to listen to the radio and off to bed at 8:00. The meals were around a big round oak table and it was covered, not with a table cloth, but with Kansas City Star newspapers. I remember eating most of my meals reading about what was happening in Kansas City.

I remember being cold but do recall ever being hungry. We always had milk and cream, produce from the garden and fruit from the trees.

If a chicken got ran over in the road, it was dressed and we ate road kill. Sometimes, the Leghorn chickens would roost in the trees and I would take my .22 rifle and shoot one for dinner. Dad always carried a rifle when he went after the cows and we ate a lot of rabbits. We never went on welfare but some of the neighbors did and got commodities. We looked up to people on welfare.

Sometimes, a bum would stop by and offer to work for a sandwich and a chance to sleep in the barn. We usually accommodated them.

There was not too much social life. The cars and roads were just too undependable. The big event each month was "community meeting" at the school on the 4th Thursday each month, usually involving a program by the students. Then there was the "last day of school dinner" where boards

were laid over the desks and everyone brought food. This was about the third week of April as it was an 8 month school. I was allowed to walk to the neighbors to play for one hour each week. We would go to Wilsey on Saturday night and see a movie that cost 5 cents admission.

If you could afford it, popcorn and soft drinks were available for a nickel also. I did not see a basketball game until I was in high school. I did not see a football game until I was in college. I learned to swim in a creek and we sometimes got to the pool in Herington.

We sometimes went to the State Fair in Topeka but people were so afraid of polio that we often stayed home.

We of course celebrated Christmas. Our tree was a limb cut off the cedar tree and stuck in a one gallon can filled with sand. We had one ornament, a beautiful pink and blue thing. We would decorate with popcorn. Children made gifts for their parents at school using wooden orange crates to cut out door stops, napkin holders and such. One year, my parents spent 25 cents to buy me a fountain pen and 25 cents to get Margie a toy metal stove. They bought nothing for each other. Many people did not exchange gifts at all.

Cars were absolutely undependable and flat tires were the norm. If you really needed a car to start on a cold morning, it was necessary to remove the battery, drain the oil, drain the radiator and keep all this by a warm stove all night. Then install these items, pour boiling water over the intake manifold, say a short prayer and hope it would start.

The above all sounds like a life of hardship, but people were generally happy because they did not know any better.

THE FARM HOUSE

Generally, when people chose a spot to live and farm, the first thing they did was dig a well to see if there was water. The well here is about the only good one in the area and, at 58 feet, serves the farmstead in good shape. It does become murky after heavy rains, probably from surface runoff somewhere.

The next things settlers did was dig a cave and build a small house over it to serve as a "wash house", the one here being 12 x 14 feet.

The main house was built circa 1909 by a family named Fulton and is about 30x 30 feet with two rooms downstairs and two bedrooms upstairs with a stairwell running up the middle and a porch on the south. It was conventional wood frame construction, not boxed and boarded solid inside to hold the plaster.

The roof is a bit unusual, I would call it Dutch style, in order to make more space in the upstairs bedrooms.

The outhouse was at the end of a path some 40 feet to the northwest.

Water was obtained from a windmill/hand pump with a circular open tank for storage. There was also a hand dug cistern that filled with rainwater from roof runoff and pumped by a hand crank. Illumination was by kerosene lamps and later from Aladdin lanterns/lamps.

The house was heated by a wood burning stove located in the west downstairs dining room.

According to folklore, the first Central school a half mile south was dismantled about 1920 and the lumber salvaged to build a one story kitchen and bedroom on the north side. A porch was also built on the west at about the same time. That was the configuration when we bought the farm in 1934.

In Feb of 1935, sparks from the chimney set the southeast part of the cedar shingle roof on fire. A line ring went out by telephone, neighbors quickly came, formed a bucket brigade and quenched the fire before major damage was done.

Rural electrification came thru about 1938 and the house and outbuildings had lights and electrical outlets. Electricity was then used to pump water from the well and also the cistern. The kitchen stove had a water jacket and we had hot and cold running water of a sort. A used bathtub was placed in the kitchen and covered with a table. This was an improvement over heating water on the stove and bathing in a wash tub. We were on a rural telephone party line with magneto phones.

In the 1940's, the kitchen was extended a few feet to the west, the west porch was closed in and a bathroom created in the middle of the north rooms. The kitchen had built-in cupboards, the bathroom a flush toilet, water heater and sink. This was possible from an electric pressure pump being placed in a pit dug over the well and water lines I dug by hand running to the house and all the outbuildings. Liquefied Petroleum Gas was also piped in and a floor furnace installed.

We had a gas stove and electric refrigerator was in the kitchen. We were truly modern! By

1960, we even had dial phones. The stairwell was changed and the two lower rooms were opened up at about the same time.

In 1965, I removed the south porch and built on the south addition with Anderson south windows and the sliding doors on the east end. It was heated electrically as electricity was .01/kilowatt. The dormer windows were added to ventilate the upstairs shortly after.

At this writing, even tho threatened by fire and termites, the old house still stands in pretty good shape.

THE RED BARN

While there is no record, it is most likely the barn was built in 1910. To begin with, it was 40 feet wide and 30 feet deep. Sometime in the 1920s, according to Mabel Shrontz, the west wall was moved back 10 feet making it 40x40 feet. I did not know about the extension until I interviewed her in the year 2000 or so. If one looks carefully, the splice can be seen.

Originally, there were milking stalls along the south, horse stalls along the north and room for loose hay in the center. There was also a small grain bin along the east wall.

The milking stalls had locking stanchions and a trough for feeding the cows while being milked. Likewise, there was a trough where the horses could feed while tethered.

There are two large sliding doors under the roof on the front and a sort of trolley track that runs the length of the peak of the roof. Loose hay was put into the barn by placing a series of rope slings on a hay rack and covering each with pitched hay, perhaps 500# or so. Then a hook device was lowered from the trolley, attached to the hay loaded slings and the assembly raised to the peak of the roof. The pulling was done by a team of horses hitched to a long rope that went out the side of the barn. When the end of the track was contacted, the trolley released and the load traveled any given distance into the barn. Then, one of the crew jerked on a trip rope, one sling released dropping the loose hay, the trolley was pulled back and the whole process repeated.

A mishap in the process occurred when the trip rope broke as Walter Shrontz pulled it. He fell backward, striking his neck on corral post and died a few hours later. A weak rope lead to his untimely death which led to our family buying the farm.

As we expanded the chicken business in the late 1930's, the barn was made into a big chicken house with a floor being added to make a second level. The south slope of the roof was cut east and west about half-way up and the lower part dropped some 4 feet. This opening was screened and provided ventilation for the second story. A false ceiling was created of wire mesh, covered with straw and the upper floor was much warmer in the winter time. This was also a haven for rats. The lower floor was covered with concrete and many hundreds of Leghorn laying hens made the old barn their home.

After the chickens were gone, the south roof was restored to its original configuration, the upper floor was removed and the boards used to make the entire structure into a big grain bin. At one time, it held some 8000 bu of milo grain. Holes were cut in the north roof to facilitate the filling process. Removing the grain was a tedious job, involving much scooping.

At this writing in 2005, the old barn is mostly empty, storing some miscellaneous items, some used lumber and a couple of cords of firewood.

OTHER OUTBUILDINGS

There were a number of other outbuildings when we moved here in 1935 as follows:

A corn crib was located about 50 feet north of the barn. This was a small frame building boxed with 1x4s spaced about 1 inch apart. The ear corn was put in the crib to dry and the slatted walls allowed air to circulate freely.

Another 50 or so feet north was the location of the machine shed. It wasn't much and collapsed on the first pull type combine during a thunderstorm circa 1938.

The yard was fenced, I suppose to keep animals and chickens out. The toilet was just inside the fence and about 40 feet northwest of the house. A small coal shed was outside the fence west of the house. A very small milkhouse was just north of the kitchen and used to hold the cream separator.

The granary was about in the center of the farmstead with one large bin on the west side, a smaller bin on the northeast and an even smaller bin in the southeast corner. Just inside the south door was a feed grinder. The tractor would be parked facing the building and belted to the grinder (thru the open door) in order to grind feed for the chickens and livestock. This was a common chore, done almost daily. The bins were filled by scooping thru small outside doors placed high on the walls.

On north of the granary was a long narrow henhouse. This was widened to accommodate a larger flock in the 1940's. A garage/shop was just west of the henhouse and barely large enough to hold our 1928 Chevy plus a workbench along the east side.

For some reason, my mother brought a chicken house into the marriage and it was moved to the premises when we took possession. It was modified into a garage in 1966 and a shower was placed in the southeast corner. Two black tanks on the roof collected solar heat to provide warm water for the shower.

There have also been 6 brooder houses for baby chickens which could be moved from place to place. They no longer exist.

The government encouraged us to store grain on the farm in the late 1940's and 1000 bushel circular steel bins were constructed at the rate of about two per year. There are now 11 of them in a long line north of the barn. They have been filled and emptied many times in the last 60 years.

In 1982, I tore down the henhouse and erected a metal 24x36 Morton building where it had been. This serves as seed storage, farm shop, garage and office.

A carport is attached to the north side of the kitchen. In 1990, I built a free standing metal carport to house the motor home. It is located north of the house.

The buildings, at this writing, are in good repair, most being covered with masonite siding and nicely painted.

I should add that the small wash house located over the cave when the farmstead was first established served as a home for my grandmother Good during her final years. It was also the first home for Betty and me as newleyweds, then moved to the farm we bought some two miles south in the spring of 1954. It was eventually torn down in 1973 and the lumber used to constuct the backyard barn at our home in Solomon.

THE LITTLE FARM HOUSE

When Betty and I were first married in 1949, we lived in the 'wash house' over the cellar at the home place.

This was 12 ft x 16 ft originally. My uncle Cecil Good had added an 8 ft x 10 ft kitchen when his mother

(my grandmother Sarepta) lived there during the late 30's until her death in 1945.

The previous owner of the 80 acres we bought in 1954 had someday hoped to build a house there and had put in grass and some trees next to the road. It was natural we should move, so we took the kitchen off and moved the buildings in two trips, pulling them with my tractor. They were placed on a foundation of flat rocks and reassembled. There was already a drilled well (which only produced about 100 gallons of water per day) and we soon had REA electricity. The phone was a German army phone which Betty's brother had brought back from the war. Our number was 01 on 46 which was a short and long ring on line #46.

We salvaged a coal shed from a school south of Solomon and built on two lean to's for bedrooms and obtained an outhouse from somewhere. A windmill tower was moved from Rocky Acres and served to support a TV antenna. Two 30 gallon water tanks were painted black to absorb solar heat and placed near the top of the tower, being filled with water from a submersible pump in the well. The bottom part was enclosed and served as a shower. A tank of propane gas supplied the stove and a small heater.

My parents were worried about tornadoes, so we had a bulldozer dig a hole and moved a cut stone limestone cave from Rocky Acres to the dug hole. This was done by backing a pickup into the old cave, loading rocks, pulling it out with a tractor, driving to the new site, backing in, unloading and pulling it out with another tractor. A patio top was added and many pleasant summer evenings were spent there watching the stars come out and the moon rise.

Sometimes, an approaching thunderstorm provided even more excitement.

I salvaged some elevator grain doors and built a two car garage on an existing foundation where there had previously been a small barn. Three 1000 bu. grain bins and an overhead fuel tank were added and we had most everything we needed.

The children, unwilling to be 'cooped up' spent most of their time outdoors in tree houses placed in the catalpa trees. The nearby sinkhole was sort of a mysterious place and rarely explored.

Pygmy rattlesnakes were common and I killed an average of one a year including one that somehow got in the kitchen and was caught in a mouse trap. Fortunately, no one was ever bitten.

We planted a large cedar tree shelter belt to the northwest, thinking we might someday retire there and build a house on the premises. That didn't happen.

FARM STORIES — Tractors

I do not have any first hand recollection, but my father's first tractor was a Hart-Parr. This was a two cylinder, probably with bore and stroke of about 8x10 inches. There were no sleeves or cylinder liners, so when worn, he just replaced the block. I remember him saying that he started it with ether and I think it ran on kerosene.

Circa 1934, he came driving home on a new Oliver Hart-Parr painted red and green. This was a 4 cylinder and rated 18/28 horsepower (drawbar/belt). It had a single front wheel. I never did drive it but got big enough to sit on it while threshing and was supposed to quickly shut it down if a pitchfork went in the threshing machine.

I think it was 1938 when Oliver came out with the 70, so named because it burned the new 70 octane regular gasoline. It came thru a dealer in Wilsey and I helped bolt on the steel "tip-toe" rear wheel lugs. It was streamlined, had an electric starter and was state of the art for its time. It caught on fire on day while I was driving it in the field south of the house. Dad came running with a bucket of water, threw it under the hood and the steam put out the fire. The cultivators were mounted and lifted by hand.

There were no new tractors during the war, but when production resumed, Dad and I rode with dealer Mike Metcalf to Topeka early one morning in 1946 and got a brand new 70 that was hidden in a garage. I drove it the 65 miles back to the farm at half throttle as I was forbidden to operate a new engine any faster. The trip took all day. We were one of the first to have a tractor on the fancy new rubber tires.

In 1948, I bought my first Oliver 70 for an even \$1,000 (borrowed of course) . Many years later, I found what was left of it in junk yard, bought it back for \$25 and restored it.

In about 1955, dad bought a new Oliver 88 and I bought his 77, overhauled it and ran it for several years. This was traded for a new Oliver 770 in 1959. By now I had moved up to hydraulic cylinders and a PowerBooster which was sort of an underdrive transmission and a live power take off.

We had umbrellas in the summer which wind tore up, then home made canvas shades and finally buggy tops. In winter, Comfort Covers helped a little. You would bake in front and freeze on the back side.

The first John Deere was Dad's 1965 Model 4020 Diesel. This was an open tractor with a cab being added later which was hot, or cold and unbearably noisy. Then came my 1968 Model 2510 with a serial number of 10,000 which I still have.

The larger tractors were traded about every three years (sequence record is somewhere). The Sound Gard body was circa 1975.

At this writing, my 7710 has been replaced with a 7420 which, again, has all the bells and whistles. The list price is about \$80,000 compared with \$1,000 I paid for the first Oliver. The price is wheat is still about the same as it was in 1948.

TILLAGE IMPLEMENTS-Plows

The first plow I remember was on steel wheels and pulled by the Oliver tractor. It was a two bottom, each share cutting 12 inches. When the cutting edge of the share dulled, it was removed and taken to the blacksmith in Wilsey who was located just west of the Post Office. He would heat it red hot and, either by hand or using a trip hammer, beat the cutting edge thinner. It was then tempered by quenching in water. I would guess the sharpening process would need to be repeated every 2 or 3 days or so. Then there was an Oliver plow that used disposable Raydex shares which eliminated the sharpening process.

In 1947, I bought a new International 2x14 plow on rubber tires. It had slatted moldboards which made it pull a bit easier. The depth was adjusted by reaching back from the tractor and raising a lever up and down. Lateral leveling was accomplished by another lever. A trip rope engaged a cam device which picked up the entire machine so turns could be made. The plow was attached to the tractor by a hook which engaged a clevis on the drawbar. If a rock was hit, the spring hook released and the plow stopped while the tractor went on. Then we had to back up, rehook, fasten back the trip rope, raise the plow over the rock and start over. The shares were conventional and, when dull, Phillips Shop would arc weld a layer of Stellite along the bottom side of the cutting edge. As the steel above wore away, the Stellite would remain very sharp. This was quite durable and lasted for many acres.

Plowing was a slow, tedious process and we could cover about one acre per hour. I spent three weeks one summer plowing the 80 we called Rocky Acres. The tougher soils would pack badly if we harvested when wet and the plow would dig out big chunks and pull extremely hard, sometimes halting the tractor with the tires just spinning in place. Once, I hit a big rock with such force that the plow rolled over on its back.

The next plow on the JD 2510 was a 3x14 mounted and this pulled easier and was about twice as fast as there was more power. We also had a 5x16 on the diesel tractor which a big improvement as it had automatic trips that allowed the bottoms to fold back if a rock was struck.

At this writing, I still use a plow to build up terraces each summer and it does a good job.

During the 60's we also had a 6 foot one-way that worked fairly well on good ground, not so on gumbo.

An offset disk was used for many years for primary tillage. It was made by Wilbeck, was very heavy, about 10 feet wide and cut about as deep as we were plowing. It had the advantage of leaving more residue on top of the ground.

For the last twenty years or so, I have used a chisel plow. This has 12 twisted 3inch shanks spaced one foot apart and leaves even more residue. It will cover about 7 acres per hour and is quite an improvement as it is fully mounted and controlled from inside the tractor cab.

TILLAGE AFTER PLOWING

The ground would mellow after plowing and the next operation was to use a tandem disk. The first was about 8 ft wide and the blades were about 10" in diameter. It did not work very good and sometimes would take several passes to break up the plowed chunks. To move from one field to another, the gangs had to be straightened by hand and just rolled, without cutting much down the road. This was followed by a peg tooth harrow in order to get a seed bed, also requiring several trips over the field.

The disks gradually got better, bigger and heavier. They are transported on rubber tires, adjusted by hydraulic cylinders and generally do the job in one pass. My present equipment is 24 feet wide and has 22inch heavy blades.

For many years, we also used a spring tooth harrow for finishing operations which generally did a good job unless weeds were a serious problem.

Final tillage is now done using a 24 foot field cultivator which has 47 seven inch sweeps. It can cover some 15 to 20 acres per hour and does a super job of killing any weeds and preparing a seed bed.

TILLAGE OF ROW CROPS

Weeds were always a problem in row crops and had to be controlled mechanically.

The 42 inch rows of crops were first tilled with a two row cultivator we called a curlier when the crop was only an inch or two tall. It had shields to prevent covering up the tiny plants and the shovels and rolling blades were designed to cover up the weeds. The first pass was called "throwing out". Then, in week or so, another pass, called "throwing in" was made that brought more dirt around the plants and hopefully covered more weeds. The next operation might be to pull a peg tooth harrow over the ridges to level them. In another two or three weeks, a cultivator was mounted on the tractor and more dirt would be moved to kill more weeds. The tractor had to be steered precisely to avoid covering up the crop, especially around the curves of the terraces and on the turn rows at the end of the fields. The weight of the mounted cultivator made steering very difficult. The cultivator was raised and lowered by hand at first, then with a power lift and finally by hydraulic cylinders. Cultivating would likely be repeated a time or two. In all, 5 or 6 passes would be made to deal with the weeds and control was, at best, mediocre.

The next development was to pull a rotary hoe over the tiny plants and then spray with a selective herbicide. What had previously taken many hours and days was accomplished in just one pass and in about 1/10 of the time and weed control was nearly 100%.

PLANTERS

Planting of wheat, oats, and milo grain sorghum (first called Kafir corn) depended on a seed bed being well prepared in advance. It was also hoped that moisture conditions would be appropriate.

Row crops such as milo were planted by a lister in 42 inch rows. I suppose this width was chosen as the space necessary for a team of horses to walk when cultivating, but persisted when tractors came into use. Then this was narrowed to 30 inch rows, 15 inch rows and finally 7 and 1/2 inch rows used by a grain drill. A lister opened the ground with a pair of "plow like snouts" and generally made a rather deep furrow. It did not work very good in damp or sticky soil. It also placed the seed in colder dirt and germination was slow.

In about 1968, we bought a planter which planted six of the 30 inch rows in a shallow furrow opened by disk blades. This was a big improvement and gave much better stands. It was slow when planting soybeans though as the seed hoppers were small. This planter was equipped with a fertilizer attachment so that nutrients could be added during planting. It required much maintenance as the fertilizer drew moisture and plugged up the works.

Wheat and oats were planted by a grain drill in narrow rows. The first VanBrunt drill only held 7 bu of seed and had to be frequently refilled. I presently use a 20 row John Deere which holds 40 bu and only needs to be refilled twice a day. It has double openers, covers the seed and firms soil around it. This does very well on both wheat and soybeans, making small adjustments to accept the variations in seed size. I can plant about 80 acres per day with this drill.

Fertilizing is generally done as a pre-plant starter for wheat prior to seeding in the fall followed by top dressing and herbicide in the spring. Soybeans are sprayed with herbicide about a month after they emerge in the early summer. We currently use Roundup Ready seed which is genetically modified to stand the effects of the herbicide.

HARVEST MACHINERY

As a young boy, I got big enough to shock the bundles of wheat that were left in the field by the McCormick binder. These shocks allowed the grain to dry until ready for threshing. My dad had a Nichols and Shepard thresher driven by long belt from the Hart-Parr tractor. My job was to sit on the tractor and shut it down if something went wrong such as a pitchfork going into the thresher. I also helped load bundles of wheat onto the horse drawn wagons that were alternately pulled alongside the feeder of the threshing machine. The grain went into a box wagon to be hauled to a grainary and the straw was blown through a large pipe out the back of the machine. One of the crew stood under this blowing straw all day and formed a suitable strawstack which livestock later used for fodder.

Kafir corn (what we now call grain sorghum/milo) was a different matter. It too was formed into bundles by a corn binder and shocked to dry. Then a box wagon, pulled by horses went to the shocks and each bundle was lifted by one person part way on the side of the wagon while another person swung down a hinged, six foot knife that cut off just the heads. These heads were then hauled to the threshing machine. The bundle butts were fed as fodder.

Circa 1946, we bought a new Oliver combine, powered by its own engine, with an 8 ft draper header. This eliminated the shocking/threshing operation with everything being done in one pass thru the field. Of course, the grain had to be left standing until dry in the case of wheat and oats. Milo was a different matter and continued to be cut, bound and shocked. A combine header attachment turned the sickle vertical and men picked up the bundles from the shock and pressed them against this sickle, the cut heads falling directly into the combine. This was extremely dangerous, but to my knowledge, none of the neighbors were ever injured.

In a few years, the 8 ft Oliver was replaced by a 12 ft machine. It was still rather primitive and required lots of repair work. The header was raised and lowered by reaching back from the tractor and pulling or pushing a long lever. Then a big improvement was to replace the lever with a reversible electric starter motor and finally a remote hydraulic cylinder.

My first combine was a used 6ft John Deere power take off machine. After a couple of years, I bought another junker and rebuilt the original. The grain tank held 20 bushel. When the fields were wet, we would pull it with two tractors chained in tandem. From time to time, we would have the whole assembly mired in the mud, have to unhook, pull out the combine and reassemble.

In 1960, Hostetter's from Hope came to our rescue with one of the new self propelled Gleaners. It just sailed thru the mud compared to what we had. So, in 1961, we bought our own new Gleaner "A" for \$6500. It served for many years and a series of used Gleaner C's, G's and finally the present L2 came into use. One of the C's ran on propane and had an AC that used evaporating propane piped thru a blower to cool the cab. It would leak raw propane into the cab, but never did blow up.

A shed was built to house the first Gleaner with its 14ft header driven in forward. Now I can barely back the L2 in, leaving the header out in the weather. I would also observe that the rather modest acreage I harvest would hardly justify purchasing a new combine for something like a quarter of a million dollars.

MOVING STUFF

Around the farm, it seemed that there was usually a need to move something from where it was to where it was needed. If the object was large and unwieldy, it was somehow put on runners and just drug to a new location. Medium size things, such as fence posts, hay, household goods and logs would be placed on a lumber wagon which was a sort of wooden platform about 8x12 feet. This was mounted on 4 steel wheels and pulled by a team of horses. Smaller items, such as grain, ear corn and sometimes people would be loaded into a box wagon. This was about 4x8 feet and some 4 feet deep. It would be on 4 large wood spoked wheels, likewise pulled by a team. Neither of the above had any suspension and the ride was very rough, especially if the ground was frozen. Brakes were not needed, just pulling power.

Grain was scooped by hand into the granary, hay unloaded with a pitchfork or sling and most other things by just tugging and pulling.

My parents first car was a Model T Ford and I barely remember it, then there was the 1928 Chevy which I leaned to drive at age 8 and would put two cans of cream in the back and haul it to the neighbors. This was followed by the 1934 Ford sedan. It was often used as a truck by removing the back seat and loading in cases of eggs, chicken feed or what have you. Two bags of coal could ride on the rear bumpers. There was also a small two wheeled trailer we pulled behind.

By 1942, we were operating big enough that we needed a truck, but nothing could be found as the war was consuming everything. My dad found a 1938 Ford pickup which had crashed into a bridge, pushing the right front fender and wheel back and bending the frame. It had also been cannibalized for some parts. He pulled what was left of it to the farm with the tractor and we completely dismantled it. Then we went to Salina and got a used frame, put it on blocks in the garage and started reassembly, piece by piece in November. We put a stove in the garage as it was winter time. We had to scrounge for parts and were extremely fortunate to be allotted 5 brand new military surplus tires. Finally in March of '43, I installed the battery and we had a truck! It had a flathead V8 engine and later became known to our children as "Old Rackety Boom". It served us well and I remember driving it to college, hauling grain, going to movies and so forth. In order to reduce unloading effort, we installed a grain blower under the bed, powered by the power take off and blew the grain up a pipe into the bins. It made a lot of noise and did not work very good.

The old Ford later got traded for a pale green 3/4 ton and dad finally got his first new one in 1966. This is the red Ford which I still have. During harvest, we would load a used combine bin into the back and unload by gravity into an auger hopper.

Circa 1960, we bought "Old Bernie" which was a 1949 Chevy that had started life a a fuel delivery truck, then converted to a farm grain truck with a hoist under a dump bed. Unloading grain suddenly became much easier. I moved the bed/hoist onto a 1969 GMC chassis years later, but the truck is still known as Old Bernie.

A former student of mine had started to farm, then found a better job. He had bought a used Kansas City utility 1984 International two ton chassis, stretched the frame and mounted a

steel bed and hoist. This is the Navistar I now have.

We fill the bins with a large tractor powered auger, then empty them with an electric powered auger which moves about 1000 bu/hour.

The volume is such that most of the grain is temporarily stored in bins on the farm, then moved by semi-trailer to the terminals.

My first pickup was a used 1952 short bed Chevy. This was followed by a series of new ones and I am currently driving a new 2005 GMC with all the bells and whistles. It is a far cry from "Old Rackety Boom".

THE CARS

Shortly after they were married, my parents bought a new 1924 Ford Model T coupe for \$425. It was the deluxe model with a starter, swing out windshield, folding steering wheel and balloon tires. I never did get big enough to drive it and recall my mother commenting that whenever she wanted to go someplace, my father had the car torn apart for repairs. It seems there was a constant need to make new babbit bearings for the engine and put in new transmission bands. As a youngster, I dismantled it for lack of anything better to do. I truly wish I had saved and restored the old "T".

Next came the 1928 Chevy sedan. It had some sort of vacuum operated fuel pump that was prone to failure. The seats folded forward and I learned to drive by putting coffee cans under the driver's seat to prop it up so I could reach the pedals. Broken axles were common along with flat tires.

Circa 1938, we got a 1934 Ford sedan with the forward opening "suicide doors". It was the flathead V-8 and would really go. Stopping was another matter as the brakes operated by adjustable rods going to each wheel that tended to pull toward one side or the other. In freezing weather, the system would freeze solid and there were no brakes at all. The dealer had removed the radio before we took delivery and told us he would give us the radio if we could sell another car for him. We did and he did. The radio, AM of course, was a big thing about the size of a suitcase that filled the right side of the dash. The antenna was screen wire in the roof (metal tops were not yet used in cars, just a canvas covering). The radio ran with tubes which took about a minute to warm up and the vibrator made a humming sound. We were going first class as most cars did not yet have radios. The windshield wipers were vacuum operated and would stall when you accelerated. The heater was sort of a funnel behind the engine fan that ducted air over the exhaust manifold and into the car. The Ford was tan when we got it and I brush painted it black. I spent a lot of time taking it apart and putting it back together. The fuel pump often failed and if you took a corner too fast, the bolt holding the front transverse spring to the cross member failed allowing the front axle to slide sideways.

When World War II was over, we put our name on the list at Herington for a new car. New cars were much in demand and most got sold on the black market for an inflated price. We were sure this was happening as we waited and waited, but no new car even though we were told that we were next on the list. One morning, my grandfather Herb called from Council Grove and said a truck driver hauling cars had just told him he had a load for Herington. We followed the load over and were able to buy a black two door for \$1425. It had a hot water heater, seat covers and a fancy radio that had a button on the floor you could push with your foot to change stations and the fancy new sealed beam headlamps. I added a spotlight (similar to what troopers use now) and we were the first in the community to have a new car.

When Betty and I were married, she had a model A Ford. We traded it in on a 1949 Ford two door. It cost \$2120 It was maroon and had a BorgWarner overdrive transmission. This unit would "free wheel" up to about 25 mph so you could shift gears without clutching. Above that speed, the driver would momentarily release the accelerator and the unit would automatically shift into overdrive. Flooring the accelerator would give you an automatic downshift for passing. I wonder why BorgWarner overdrives are no longer used.

After the above came the 1952 Ford, the 1954 Ford, the 1958 Chevy, the 1963 Olds wagon, the 1969 Pontiac wagon, the 1974 Pontiac GrandVille, the 1984 Olds 98 and finally the current 1997 Cadillac DeVille(list \$40K) which is certainly a tremendous change from the Ford Model T that we first had.

CATS AND DOGS

Cat populations have a way of expanding exponentially. We would have a few and then the cats had kittens and the cat's kittens had kittens and so forth until there would be as many as 30 or so. Then they would get what we called "cat disease" and most would die. The cycle repeated itself time after time. Josephine was memorable in that she sort of adopted us and would go through the house each morning calling out with sort of a chirping sound to awaken everyone. The slow risers would be greeted with a nip on the nose. Lucy liked to ride around on my father's shoulders while he did chores. She also insisted in bringing her newborn litters into the house. One one occasion, Dad looked in on a new mother cat and she greeted him by raking her claws across his face, drawing lots of blood. After cleaning up, he came to the house with Lucy on his shoulders and stepped in the kitchen door saying "Linnie, come see what a NICE cat looks like!" At that moment, the kitchen door slammed shut on Lucy's tail and she raked him on the other side of his face.

As a foolish young lad with a new BB gun, I shot and killed a pigeon one day. Unfortunately, she had young in the nest. My mother was irate and declared that the orphan was my responsibility, so I brought it into the house and managed to nourish it by holding feed in my hand, in loco parentis, so it could eat. It grew to maturity and we named it Pidgey. It was an albino with a bad temper and had all the other animals, even the cats, completely bluffed by walking up and just slapping them with his wings. He would even grab the cats ear in his beak and twist and pull. He sometimes followed me to grade school, flying along from fence post to fence post. He seemed to think he was different and did not consort with the other pigeons.

My first dog was named Fluffy, I barely remember him. Circa 1937, my second cousin, Helen Kelly, was leaving on a trip to Europe and asked me to keep her little toy terrier named Spunky. When Helen returned, Spunky had grown and we sort of inherited a dog. Spunky later gave birth to two illegitimate pups, Sport and Pete. Sport was sort of an ugly brown color and looked a bit like a coyote. Pete was black and white and short and fat and also ugly. All three of them, being terriers, were born rat killers and we had lots of rats in the chicken houses who would come out at night to eat the chicken feed. It was great sport to wait until after dark when the chickens had gone to roost, then call the dogs and go rat hunting. We would walk up to the chicken house, fling open the door, switch on the lights, and yell "sic 'em". The dogs would charge, the rats would scurry. Each dog would grab a rat, shake it to death and go for more. When a rat would squeal, it seemed that rats appeared from everywhere to see what was happening. The kill usually ran a dozen or so a night. In total, the rat population was hardly affected.

My father later acquired a full blooded German shepard named Rover. Rover was very protective and would never let strangers approach the house unless he was told that it was OK. He was a total coward when it came to loud noises and could hear thunder miles away, taking cover under the porch. If he was in the field, he would get in the front seat of the pickup and could not be dislodged. He took up the bad habit of chasing the mailman's car and we were afraid he would get run over, so we had the mailman bring a revolver loaded with blanks and he emptied it on the next trip. Rover headed under the porch with his tail between his legs and never even barked at the mailman again.

SOIL CONSERVATION

The soils on this farm are quite susceptible to wind and water erosion and it has been necessary to do as much as we can to be good stewards of the soil.

We were among the first in Morris County to establish terraces and waterways in the mid 1930's. There was no agency to lay out terraces, so we just wired a level to the hood on tractor pulling a plow and drove around the hills "about half a bubble off" of level. These terraces were made with multiple passes of a plow, raised a bit with a tractor pulled grader and are still in use some 70 years later. Many young men were unemployed during the depression, so the government established the Civilian Conservation Corps to give them something to do. They dug the waterways by hand, using shovels and wheelbarrows. These waterways were seeded to brome and caught the run-off from the terraces. One of them is still in use today as originally built using masonry drops.

We later moved some dirt as necessary using a Fresno tumble-bug scraper pulled behind a tractor. In recent years, I have built more terraces using a plow and tractor dozer. Most of the larger projects are done by contractors.

The CCC boys also planted shelter belts and maintained them until established. This was the origin of the trees north and west of the farmstead.

Tillage operations have gradually gone from conventional plowing and tillage to minimum tillage and we are just beginning to employ no-till procedures.

PRODUCTION

My father always had ambitions of being a rancher, so we had a breed of cattle called Shorthorns and even our own registered bull for a while. Basically, he got in the cattle business when he should have been staying out and got out when he should have been staying in. Considerable money was lost, I do not know how much.

We also had hogs for a short while and I mostly remember them getting out of the pen and tearing things up around the yard.

The chickens and eggs sort of saved the day. During the war, there was a good market for broilers at Ft. Riley and for many years, we crated eggs and shipped them to Deming, New Mexico.

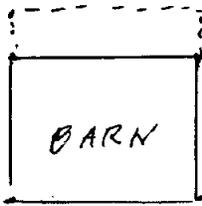
The grain production started with wheat in the 1930's and gradually worked into Kafir corn which we now call milo. We were quite successful growing it and those crops paid many of the bills and even paid most of my parents new house in Wilsey in 1973. There was also a milo field "over by Lafe's" that helped with some college expenses when our children were at K-State. We tried corn a couple of times, but it did not do very good. Flax was planted several years during the war as there was demand for linseed oil. There was sometimes barley and occasionally an oats field. We have been growing soybeans rather recently as the varieties and now much better. Most of the production though has been dedicated to wheat, milo and soybeans over the years.

We got into the certified seed business as a 'value added' sort of thing in the 1930's. I am not sure when, but we have one of the lowest numbers at the Kansas Crop Improvement Association. This started with Midland and Westland milo and then Atlas sorghum. It was difficult but we managed to harvest the Atlas while it was standing. Recent years have been devoted to Certified seed wheat production. We start with Foundation from K-State, then Registered and finally Certified grade which we sell to local farmers. We are also AgriPro Associates and grow under contract for them.

For many years, I had my own cleaner and conditioned many thousands of bushels here on the farm.

Even though the acreage is rather modest, doing most of the work ourselves and managing the seed business has made the total operation reasonably successful over the last 70 years.

The following twenty year interval maps were drawn from photos and mostly from memory. I do not know when the land was first broken out, probably 1905-1910. The lintel over the entrance to the cave is carved 1909 and I recall my mother stating that she could remember being a little girl when the house was built, likely 1909-1910. The other buildings followed after as per the maps. The grain bins were built from about 1945 to 1947.



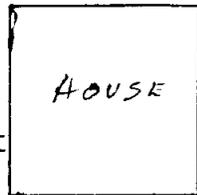
← EXTENDED CIRCA 1925

EXISTENCE
OF OTHER
OUTBUILDINGS
IS UNKNOWN
IN 1920



LEGEND

- W = WELL
- ⊕ = TANK
- = COLVERT
- ☒ = TOILET



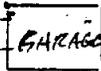
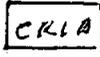
MAILBOX 44M
→

MORRIS CO HWY 400

1920 AD

NOT TO SCALE, BUT CLOSE

1 sq. = 10'



CORRAL

LANE

SIX BROODER HOUSES.
AT RANDOM

17
FO.



LEGEND

- T = TREE
- W = WELL
- P = POLE
- YD = YARD POLE
- WH = WASH HOUSE
- F = FUEL
- MB = MAIL BOX
- C = COLVERT
- CS = COAL SHED
- MH = MILK HOUSE
- (T) = TANK
- T = TOILET

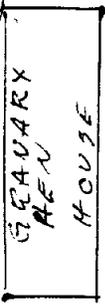
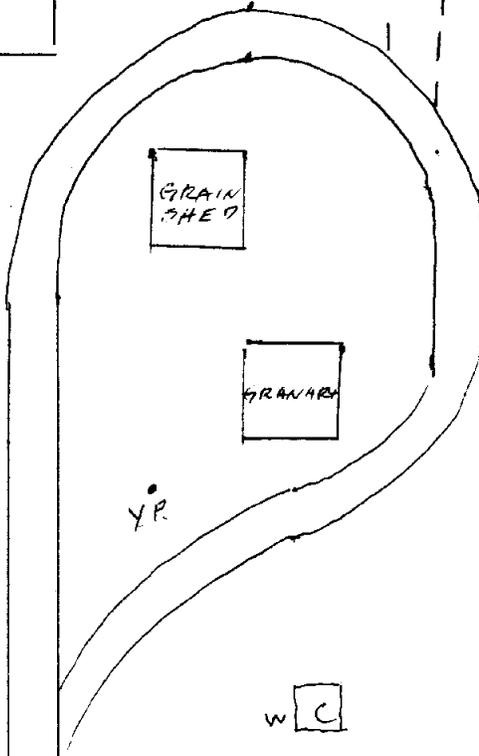
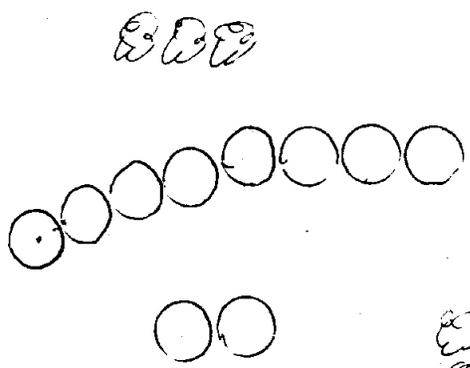
M B MORRIS CO HWY 400

940 A.D. NOT TO SCALE, BUT CLOSE
STROUYS PURCHASED 1935

1 Square = 10'



LANE



PEAR TREE

LEGEND

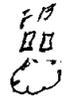
- ☺ = TREE
- W = WELL
- ⋮ = POLE
- ⊙ = YARD POLE
- ⊙ = CELLAR
- ⊙ = FUEL
- ⊙ = MAIL BOX
- ⊙ = CONDUIT
- = 1000 BUBBIN
- ⊙ = TOILET

MORRIS CO HIGHWAY 400

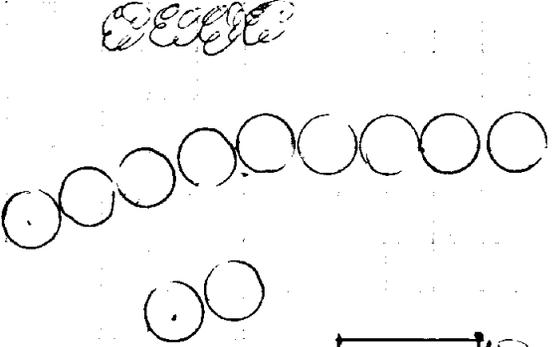
1960 A.M.

NOT TO SCALE, BUT CLOSE

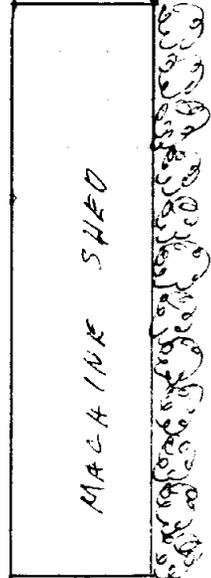
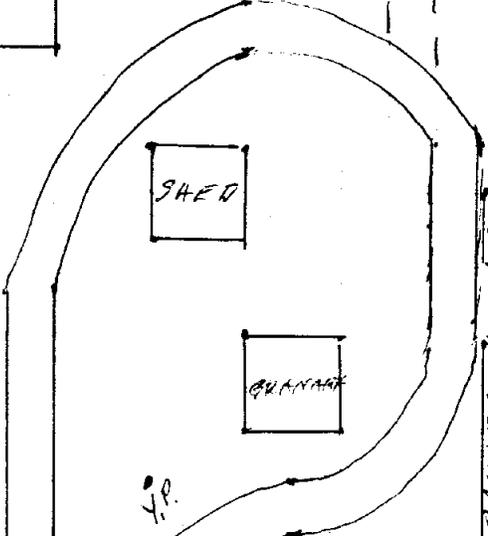
1 Square = 10'



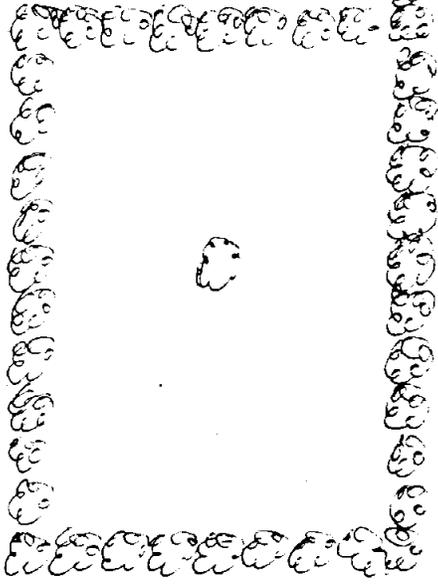
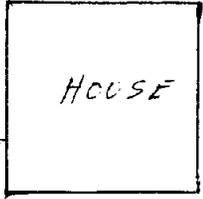
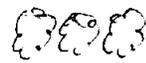
L A N E



APPLE TREE



Y.P.



LEGEND

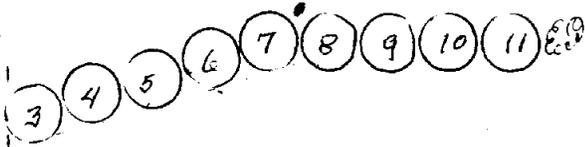
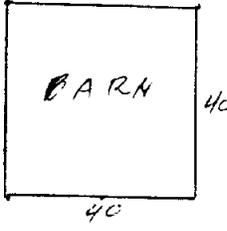
- TREE
- W = WELL
- = POLE
- Y.P. = YARD POLE
- C = CELLAR
- T = TULL
- MB = MAIL BOX
- = COLVERT
- T = TOILET
- = 1000 Bin

1300 S. 1800 KD

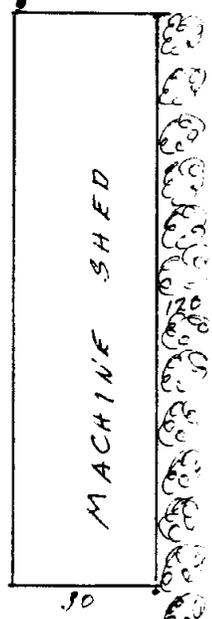
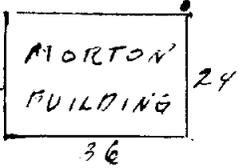
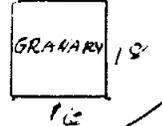
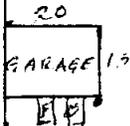
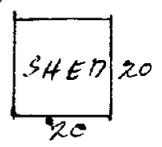
1980 AD

NOT TO SCALE, BUT CLOSE

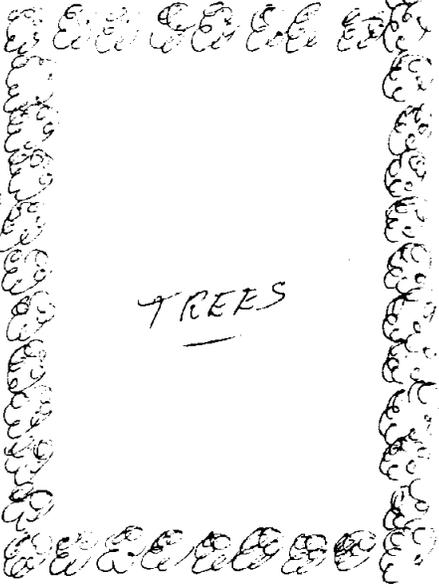
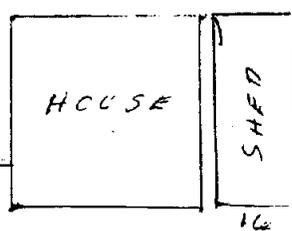
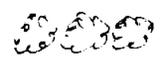
(Scale = 10')



LANE



Y.P.



LEGEND

- () = TREE
- W = WELL
- = POLE
- Y.P. = YARD POLE
- C = CELLAR
- TB = FUEL
- M.B. = MAIL BOX
- = CULVERT
- () - 1000 Bw Bin

1300 S. 1800 ROAD

2000 R.O.

NOT TO SCALE, BUT CLOSE

1 Square = 10'

