

# Vacant Houses Indicate Success and Not Poverty

Farmers Cultivating So Much More Land with So Much Less Labor That They Do Not Need Those Extra Houses

"Farming has become the most exciting occupation in the world. There's something new all the time. It's developing so fast that I can't wait to get up in the morning to see what's going to happen next."

This enthusiastic appraisal of U. S. agriculture, 1948, came from a man who knew what he was talking about—Farm Operator Bob Garst, of Coon Rapids, Ia. It was Garst's answer to the first of many questions put to him by the well-known reporter and author, John Dos Passos, on a recent trip through Iowa and Nebraska to get first hand facts for his feature story, "Revolution on the Farm," which appears in the August 23 issue of Life magazine.

Main objectives of his trip, Dos Passos said, were to find out whether there is any chance of this country's population outgrowing its food supply—and to get facts on the rate of increase in farm production, per man, per acre, in the last 10 years.

For information, Dos Passos talked with such well known operators in the area as Garst, the Choat brothers, Elmer and Clarence, of St. Edward; and Hans Larsen, of Central City; Fred Teigler, of Fremont; I. W. Hepperley and Paul Stewart, of Waterloo, (Nebr.); and Mrs. Leo Hutcheson, of Coon Rapids.

Life's pages stress the fact that corn is the basic product in American agriculture, just as steel is in industry; and today's agricultural revolution started with hybrid corn. By inbreeding it is possible to get desired characteristics, and by crossing inbreds it is possible to produce the particular corn a certain farmer wants, to meet special needs in his section of the country. Breeders today can produce strains cut to fit individual needs, just as a tailor cuts a suit to fit your figure.

Valuable characteristics that breeders have worked for and achieved—such as the long stalk that goes through mechanical picker with minimum loss—are the combined result of improvements in the strain, in mechanical equipment, fertilization, and irrigation.

Fred Teigler, of Fremont, described vividly the advantages of having good short season hybrid variety available—and using it. Dos Passos reports, "This man spent a lot of time thinking about improving his land. He played a kind of chess game with nature. He made a move and then nature made a move. He took me out to show me a patch of corn he'd had to plant three times. First, standing water had ruined it. Then the wireworms had eaten it. He'd found he could get rid of the wireworms by plough-

ing in a DDT barn spray. Now at last he had a stand. But it wouldn't have been possible, Teigler pointed out, if there hadn't been that good short season hybrid variety available and if he hadn't known an agricultural scholar over at Waterloo who advised him to try the DDT."

Many of the men Dos Passos talked with clearly remembered the era of the team and the walking cultivator, when it took a long day of hard work to cultivate 40 or 50 acres. Now a man with a tractor can cultivate 40 or 50 acres, better, faster, and without breaking his back. When the grasshoppers come, the crop isn't lost, it gets an aerial spray and lives and thrives.

Newest of all mechanical equipment which Dos Passos saw, is the seed, or grain dryer. Bob Garst's dryer is housed in a long, tall, narrow building faced with bright aluminum sheeting and powered by an oil burner. Not recommended for small farms, but invaluable for big ones. "Here's what it's going to mean," he explained to Dos Passos. "We can get the small grain harvest into the elevator in a very much shorter time. Once we've fiddled with the combines a little so that they can handle the damp grain, we'll be able to harvest grain in the morning. No more waiting for the dew to dry. We can work all night if we want to because in the dryer we can just take the moisture down to the percentage desired. That means we can get it to the elevator in time to meet early high prices. What it's going to mean in the saving of hay and small seed like clover is terrific. I wouldn't be surprised if this dryer paid for itself in a single season."

Driving along straight roads through miles and miles of corn, one afternoon, Bob Garst gave Dos Passos some basic illustrations on the neglect of fertilizer and some basic information on its use.

As they passed a white house in the cottonwoods, Garst pointed out that the surrounding land showed tragic results of potash deficiency; the rows of corn tapered off, gangling and pale, into the ditch. Watching the clouds pile up behind the hills on the horizon, Garst said, "We could use two inches of rain right now. I don't claim that heavy applications of nitrogen are a cure for drought but they sure do make your corn crop stand it better. And to think that they were telling us when the war stopped that we wouldn't need all those nitrogen fixing factories they built for munitions. We need 'em all over the country."

When fertilization is properly used, Dos Passos observed, and when irrigation is readily available, farmers are not as dependent on the weather as they once were. In the Platte Valley today, farmers profit from the abundant electric power brought in by the Rural Electrification Administration; they use it for pumping when they have to, and thus get full benefit from the abundant water table that had so long, and tantalizingly, been 12 or more feet below the surface in this area.

Back in the '30's, before electric power was put in, this area suffered the depression and the drought, barely missed being part of the dustbowl. Many folks sold out and moved away.

But vacant houses today are no longer a sign of poverty, Dos Passos learned. The farmers who stayed on and won out are now cultivating so much more land with so much less labor that they don't need the extra houses for themselves or for people who work on their farms.

"In the old days," Garst told Dos Passos, "we used to think 40 bushels of corn to the acre a pretty decent crop. Now I know men who don't sleep nights unless they get twice that. And—most important of all—the improvements in corn have started off improvements all down the line, such as hybrid strains of chickens bred for laying, and the production of specialized hogs." Dos Passos' visit to Mrs. Leo Hutcheson's 500 hybrid pullets found her excited about results already achieved with her hybrid stock, and a little concerned about the pellets because they'd just been vaccinated.

Hybrids like hers have been on the market only 5 or 6 years, but they have already shown their worth by increasing egg production considerably. Mrs. Hutcheson declared that the Iowa egg crop has a higher dollar value now than the whole citrus crop of the state of California and most of it comes from flocks of 300 or 400 hybrids, raised by farmers' wives like herself.

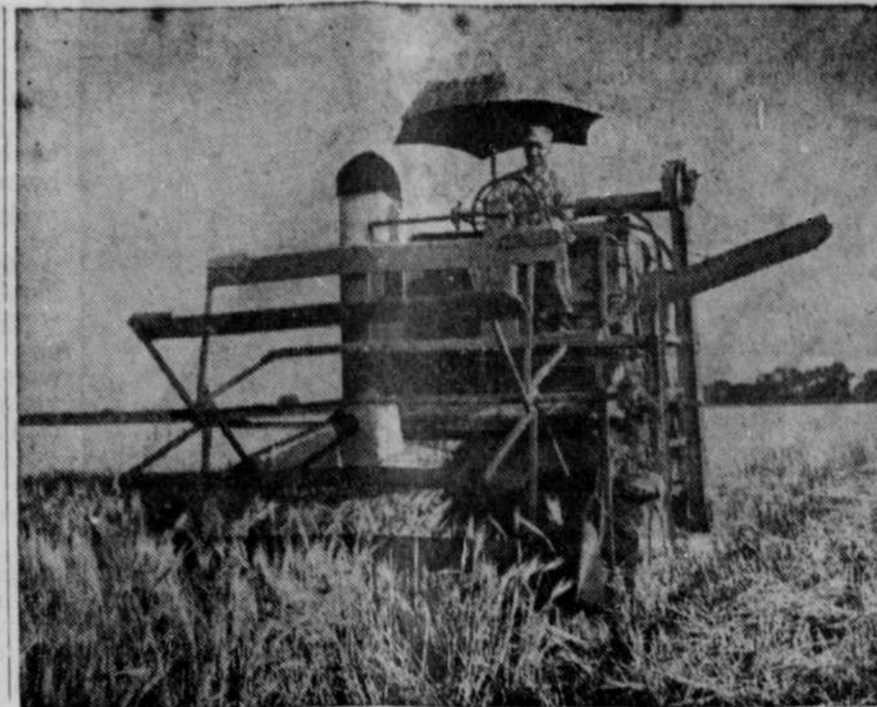
When Dos Passos had completed his 4-week swing through this highly productive area, preponderantly owned and operated by progressive farmers, he stopped in at Bob Garst's for a final exchange of ideas and review of his findings.

Garst said: "Less labor, more speed, higher efficiency—that's the story of farming today. Soon, we're going to be able to cultivate sixteen hundred acres of some of the most productive land in the country so as to get the highest possible yield out of it, with only seven or eight hired hands. And the thing that keeps me excited all the time, is watching how one little improvement in farming leads to another. Link 'em all together and the results are revolutionary. Makes me feel we haven't begun yet." He suddenly turned and gave Dos Passos a searching look. "Does that answer your question?"

The pivotal question asked and answered in Dos Passos' Life report, has recently received a further and continuingly optimistic answer from the U. S. Department of Agriculture. The department last week predicted that U. S. farms this year will produce the largest corn crop in history.

4 Honored on Birthday Anniversaries — Mr. and Mrs. Blake Benson entertained 35 guests at their home Friday evening, August 13, in honor of Carroll O'Neill, Ed and DeMaris Thornton, and Millie Benson. It was the birthday anniversary of the above group. The evening was spent with music and cards, after which refreshments were served.

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**PROVES EXCELLENT INVESTMENT . . .** This picture of Emerson Hurich, of Fremont, appears in the August 23 issue of Life, illustrating John Dos Passos' feature story on "Revolution on the Farm." Life reports steady rise in U. S. farm production and stresses fact that constantly increasing mechanization of U. S. farms has been basic factor in rise. Machines such as this combine have proved excellent investment for progressive farmers, and for welfare of this nation and other nations facing a growing need for food supplies.—Eisenstaedt—Pix.

## PAGE LOCALS

Mr. and Mrs. Roy Stuart, of Burwell, spent a few days last week visiting at the home of her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Rollie Snell, and with other relatives.

Mrs. Hester Edmisten left on Thursday, August 19, for North Platte to visit her daughter and son-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Carl Backers. Her grandson, Carl, jr., who had spent the Summer with her, returned to be accompanied by Mrs. Kenneth his home. She was also accompanied by Mrs. Clyde and daughter.

Mr. and Mrs. A. L. Dorr and son, Vernon, left Thursday, August 19, for Lorrain, Ore., to visit her brother, Ben Ademic, and family and other relatives.

## Difficulties May Be 'Ironed Out'

BY A. STROLLER

Was talking with a friend the other day and he said, referring to some misunderstanding between two of his acquaintances, "I am glad they ironed the matter out."

The thought suggested itself that the slang expression, "to iron out," in the sense of adjusting differences of opinion or settling some dispute or clarifying some misunderstanding is exceedingly expressive. It is a figure of speech for which no equivalent suggests itself.

And to "iron out" in the sense of smoothing out some difficulty between two people is strictly slang. You won't find it listed in the dictionaries in that sense. The word "iron", of course, refers in such a connection to the work of smoothing out the wrinkles in a garment and it is tremendously suggestive.

Slang is an important part of the English language and, while some of it is senseless and even coarse and vulgar, other expressions are virile and eloquent.

"To iron out" is such a slang expression. It is a picturesque phrase which suggests a woman standing at an ironing board, smoothing over the clothes she has washed the day before and it may very appropriately be used with reference to the misunderstandings which arise in the contacts of people with each other.

And the further thought suggests itself that, if the notion of the world would get together and make an honest effort to "iron out" their misunderstandings, disputes and suspicions, it would be a long step

forward toward permanent peace.

Attend Jubilee Celebration — Mr. and Mrs. J. L. McCarville, sr., and son, John spent Sunday and Monday in Bone-steel, S. D., attending the golden jubilee celebration of Gregory county.



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