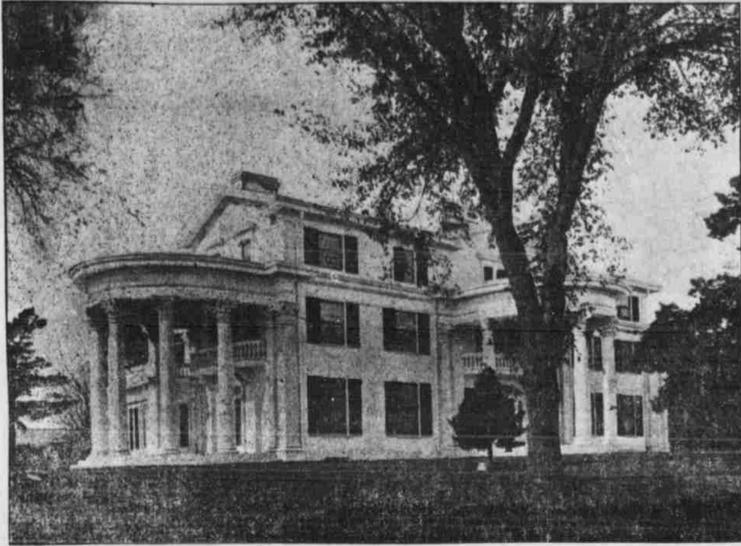


HOW FOUNDER OF ARBOR DAY CREATED FAMOUS ESTATE

The Story of J. Sterling Morton, Who Planted Many Trees, Helped Found a Sovereign State and Turned a Quarter Section of Barren Prairie Into a Beautiful Country Home, as Told by Paul Morton.



SOUTH AND EAST FRONTS OF ARBOR LODGE.

Lodge is an arborium, and Morton park, an adjoining tract of forty acres given by my father to the city, also contains many noteworthy trees. In one part of the estate there is a long avenue of elms and soft maples, planted by my father, which is probably without an equal on this continent.

The main entrance to the estate is on the east. From this entrance to the house runs a broad drive, 150 yards long, bordered with white pines. Back of this double row of pines are broad lawns, bordered on their outer edges with trees, shrubs and flowers. There are mixed evergreens, beeches, oaks, maples, etc., as well as flowering shrubs and a few perennials and bedding plants.

To the south of the house are the terraces and pergola. There are bedding plants, roses and perennials on these terraces. Flower beds lie beside the walks, while the red brick terrace walls are clothed in Boston ivy, with hardy perennial borders at their feet.

To the north is a long, pleasant, grassy walk, with rows of barberries on each side and various ornamental shade trees and evergreens.

In 1878 my mother and my youngest brother, Carl, visited Pike's Peak and brought back two baby fir trees. My father described them as no larger than a lead pencil. Now they decorate the lawn at Arbor Lodge, two good-sized beautiful evergreens.

The most important tree-planting feature of the estate, however, is the pinery. There were practically no pine trees in the state fifty years ago. They are being grown now by the thousand at Arbor Lodge, and I believe another fifty years will see this pinery one of the sights of America.

In 1890, 10,000 pines, less than one foot in height, were brought from an Illinois nursery and were planted in the Arbor Lodge pinery. They nearly all thrived and now average fifteen or sixteen feet in height—a lesson in practical forestry worth taking to heart.

Mr. C. E. Dwyer, the manager at Arbor Lodge, is more closely



BRICK-PAVED, PINE-BORDERED DRIVE FROM THE EAST ENTRANCE.

"The memories that live and bloom in trees, that whisper of the loved and lost in summer leaves, are as imperishable as the seasons of the year—immortal as the love of a mother."—J. Sterling Morton.

I SUPPOSE the story of a successful pioneer will always interest and encourage people. The narrative of a strong, far-sighted man who makes something out of nothing seems to put heart into the average worker. That is why I am telling the story of how my father, J. Sterling Morton, and his young wife, set their faces toward the west, one October day in 1854, and built them a home on the prairies.

Arbor Lodge as it stands today, with its classic porticoes, its gardens and its arborium, the present country home of my brother, Joy Morton, is not the home that I remember as a boy. That was a much more modest edifice. Yet even that house was a palace compared with the first one, which was a little log cabin standing on the lonely prairie, exposed to blizzards and Indians and with scarcely a tree in sight.

My father was a young newspaper man in Detroit, only recently out of college, when he took his bride, two years his junior, out to the little-known frontier. Attracted by the information about the new country brought out by Douglas and others in the Kansas-Nebraska debates in congress, he conceived and acted on the idea that here were fortunes to be made. Taking such household goods as they could, they traveled to the new land, making the last stage up the Missouri river by boat.

Nebraska at that time was the Indian's own country. There were not over 1,500 white people in the entire state. All the country west of the Missouri was called in the geographies the Great American Desert, and it took a good deal of faith to believe that anything could be made to grow where annual fires destroyed even the prairie grass and the fringes of cottonwoods and scrub oaks along the rivers. Today this section, with a radius of some 200 miles, includes perhaps the most fertile soil in the world and has become a center of industry, agriculture and horticulture for the middle west. There was then no political organization, no laws; men went about fully armed. There were no roads and no bridges to speak of in the entire state; it was "waste land."

This was part of the land of the Louisiana Purchase, and my father bought a quarter section (160 acres) from the man who preempted it from the government. The price paid was \$1.25 an acre. Today the estate comprises about 1,000 acres and the land is readily saleable at a hundred times this price.

On the spot where Arbor Lodge now stands my father built this first log cabin. This was soon replaced by a modest frame house; there was not then another frame house between it and the Rocky mountains, 600 miles away. On the same place two succeeding houses were built by my father, the present, and fifth, Arbor Lodge having been built by his sons after his death. My father called these first four houses "seed, bud, blossom and fruit."

The first winter was a mild one, fortunately, but there were plenty of hardships for the young couple. There were no very near neighbors, the village of Fort Kearny, now Nebraska City, being then over two miles away. The Indians formed the greatest danger. I can remember a day in my boyhood when we had everything packed up, ready to flee across the Missouri to Iowa from the murderous Pawnees and Cheyennes, who, fortunately, did not come that time. A part of that first winter my father and mother spent in Bellevue.

When spring came they set about building their home. Later on they had young trees sent to them from the east, including some excellent varieties of apples, peaches, cherries, pears, etc. Things grew fast out there; it was only the prairie fires that had kept the land a desert so long, and year by year these fires had enriched the soil.

The farm was located on the old California trail, the favorite route to Pike's Peak and the El Dorado. Many of the Mormon emigrants crossed the river at that place. I can remember the big trains of ox and mule teams passing the house.

My father's interests were always inseparably joined with those of the community; he was in public life from the start and Nebraska's fortunes were his. His neighbors all had the same experiences and many a farmer who started with nothing is now wealthy. The farmers had to bring in from Missouri and Iowa all the food for themselves and their horses and cattle the first year. They were living on faith. During the first spring and summer the anxiety was great, but they were rewarded by a good harvest in the fall. The success of that harvest settled the Nebraska question forever. It was a land that could support its inhabitants.

But the end was not yet. The "get-rich-quick" fever struck the community. Immigration was over-stimulated and town lots were manufactured at a great rate. In a few months they increased in price from \$200 to \$2,000 apiece. Banks were created and money was made plenty by legislation. My father never caught this fever, being always a sound-money man and believing in wealth based on the soil.

At the end of the second summer the crop of town lots and Nebraska bank notes was greater than the crop of corn. But the lesson was not learned until the panic of 1857 drove out the speculators and left the farmers in possession of the territory. With the spring of 1858 sanity came to rule once more and there was less bank-making and more prairie-breaking. The citizens had learned that agriculture was to be the salvation of the new country. In 1857 \$2 a bushel had been paid for imported corn, but in 1859 the same steamer that had brought it in bore thousands of bushels south at 40 cents a bushel, bringing more money into the territory than all the sales of town lots for a year.

The first territorial fair was held in Nebraska City in 1859, and on that occasion my father made a speech in which he reviewed the history of the new territory up to that time. I speak of these things because my father was always a man of public interests and his fortunes were wrapped up in those of the territory. His hardships came when the community went crazy, and his fortune grew when sanity was once more restored.

Though not a working farmer in the strict sense of the word, my

father devoted much attention to the agricultural interests of the territory and state, as well as to the development of his estate. For many years he was president of the State Board of Agriculture, a member of the state legislature and finally national secretary of agriculture at Washington during President Cleveland's second administration. He was the first to import fine horses into Nebraska and made a specialty of Devon cattle and Suffolk pigs. In 1873 he took the first exhibit of Nebraska apples east to the Pomological society of Boston.

The present arborium at Arbor Lodge is a witness to his interest in arboriculture. From the first cottonwoods, transplanted from the creek, he continued to beautify the place with trees, importing many rare varieties. Furthermore, he tried to teach his neighbors the great value of tree planting to posterity, and in the early '70s he put through the state legislature a law setting apart a day each year to be devoted to tree planting, becoming thus the originator of Arbor day.

The idea was first given to the State Horticultural society in 1872, and in the same year the plan was approved by the State Board of Agriculture, which offered a prize of \$100 to the county agricultural society which should plant the largest number of trees on that day, and a farm library worth \$25 to the individual Nebraskan who should plant the most. As a result of this stimulus over 1,000,000 trees were planted in Nebraska on the first Arbor day, April 10, 1872.

The success of this day proved to be an inspiration to Nebraska and started a world-wide tree-planting movement. In March, 1874, my father's birthday, April 22 was set apart by proclamation by the governor of Nebraska, and since then Arbor day has been adopted by practically every state and territory in the country, and by England, Japan and other nations as well.

Public man though he was, over and above his love for politics my father loved trees. All his life he preached trees, and nowhere was his influence felt more strongly than near home. One may still drive overland for miles in central Nebraska or eastern Kansas and not see a pine tree, but every farm near Nebraska City has a few in the dooryard, while at Arbor Lodge pines are being grown by the thousand.

The entire estate of Arbor



First, the Log Cabin on the Prairie; Second, the Modest Frame House; Third, the Home of a Prosperous Nebraskan; Fourth, the Mansion of J. Sterling Morton, the Secretary of Agriculture; Fifth, the Present Arbor Lodge.
ACTUAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE MORTON HOME IN FIFTY YEARS.



VIEW TO THE NORTHWEST FROM THE ROOF OF ARBOR LODGE

in touch with the present condition of the estate than I am. He writes:

"The arborium is being added to each year as we find out what kinds are hardy here. As much of the planting here was entirely new and untried in this state, we did not at first try more than one variety of a species, and in many cases only one species of a genus. A party of forestry students from the State university visited us this summer to look over the plantings and brought with them a list of forty-seven trees which they had ardently studied. This list was increased to 116 in the two or three hours they spent here, and then there were a few left. I do not mean, of course, that they could not have found more outside, but it will serve to show that a large number of trees here are not found elsewhere in the state.

"The climate here is not so favorable to evergreens, especially the broad-leaved kinds, as it is in the east, but about sixty varieties have done well here for three or more years, and we hope to have equal success with more in time. We have some others which have lived through one winter and we will try many more now that the protective plantings of the hardy pines and spruces are getting large enough to shelter colonies of the weaker varieties.

"It may interest you to know that the Nebraska State Horticultural society, in its bulletin of 1907, says that it is absolutely useless to plant rhododendrons, kalmias and azaleas outdoors in this state. Doubtless they are right for ordinary conditions, but in the openings in the grove of white pines planted by Mr. J. Sterling Morton in 1890 they seem perfectly at home, and have bloomed without a failure since they were planted, five years ago. Last winter their only protection was a mulch of pine needles and a light covering of pine boughs. This spring we had a late, hard frost which killed the leaves on the native oaks, but the rhododendrons were uninjured and bloomed as usual. The Japanese maple planted in the shelter of this grove did so well that more were used in other places, but these others have failed.

"The Garden Magazine, about a year ago, recommended the Canadian yew for hedges in this state. I have been able to raise it in the shade of the pines, but even in sheltered places, if it got full force of the afternoon sun, it promptly

turned brown and died. The best hedge for eastern Nebraska, aside from the coarse-growing Osage orange used for field fences, is the Ithya privet. During a five-year trial this has proved very satisfactory. It is perfectly hardy and stands wet feet or drought. We have a very fair hedge of it along the road, the hedge line coming within four feet of the trunks of a line of big old soft maples which are about the worst to sap the ground of anything I know. For a low hedge the Thunberg's barberry is very good, and it is one of the few plants which has brilliant autumn colors here. We have also used it along the walks in the formal garden. When kept trimmed to one foot in height it makes the best substitute for box that will grow here. The Van Houtte spirea is perfectly hardy here as to the plant, and makes a very pretty, loose, graceful hedge line, but the flower buds are often destroyed by late frosts.

"We have about twenty varieties of hardy perpetual roses and find that nearly all the kinds commonly recommended by the nurserymen do well as to hardiness and growth of bush. The flowers are beautiful in the morning, but are spoiled much more quickly by the sun than in the east. Gruss an Teplitz, Captain Christy and Hermosa, of the more tender kinds, have also done well with the protection of a foot of strawy manure during the winter. The rambler types are grown everywhere very successfully, and the wild roses come up in the meadows from seed.

"To sum up, we can grow nearly everything here which can be grown in Massachusetts, the especial difference being that we have a deep loam and clay soil, containing a good deal of lime which seems to be unfavorable to the beeches; we have a much drier climate, hot winds and long, dry falls, which are very hard on thin-barked trees and broad-leaved evergreens unless well protected."

The gardening at Arbor Lodge was started by my mother, who set out a number of rose bushes, peonies, etc. There were flower beds extending along the drive from the entrance of the estate to the house—a distance, all told, of a quarter of a mile. She did not indulge in any very elaborate gardening, however, the terrace gardens, etc., having been developed since 1902.

There are many other interesting features of the estate, though the tree planting stands pre-eminent. Adjoining the estate there are forty acres which have been leased to the Nebraska City Country club for a golf course. On this tract there is a piece of the virgin prairie, just as it stood in 1855, which has never known the plow. It is just as the Indians left it, and the fact that it is probably the only bit of land still unbroken in eastern Nebraska shows how thoroughly the country has been given over to agriculture since the first corn was planted.

There is, unfortunately, very little water on the place. My father tried repeatedly to make an artificial lake by damming the creek in the gully south of the house. At one time he was fairly successful and there were boats on the lake, which he called Lake Jopamaea, after his four sons, Joy, Paul, Mark and Carl. But the spring freshets carried away the dam every year and after spending thousands of dollars on it he was forced to give up the attempt.

My father started the importation of blooded stock into Nebraska, but he never did much with horses. That interest has fallen to my brother Mark, who has gone into horse breeding extensively on his place, a few miles away. The estate of Arbor Lodge now makes a specialty of Shorthorn cattle and Poland-China hogs, as well as nursery stock, and although it is not yet self-supporting, the income is increasing annually and the estate has been put on a firm business basis. At present a flock of Shropshire sheep is busily engaged in cleaning up the stubble and enriching the soil.

The present house is largely colonial in style and includes the fourth house in the series, which forms the rear portion of it. The new part was begun in the fall of 1902, soon after my father's death, and was finished in 1903. Its most prominent features are the classic porticoes which show in the pictures. It is a fine, large house of which we are all very fond. Inside it has been furnished luxuriously and, we think, artistically. There are spacious rooms and broad staircases, and the ample fireplaces consume a hundred cords of wood a year.

My brother has collected a number of good paintings, which are a feature of the interior. In the library there is a unique group. First, there is an oil painting of a buffalo and one of an Indian, the original owners of the land. There is a portrait of the Spanish king who ceded the land to the French, and also a portrait (which once hung in the French embassy in Washington) of Napoleon Bonaparte, who sold the land to the United States in 1803. Then follows a portrait of Uncle Sam, and one of my father, whose title to the property was conveyed by the United States fifty years later, making a complete abstract of title by portraits from the original owners to the Morton family.

Another very interesting historical picture hanging in the house is a large oil painting depicting the concluding of the Pawnee Indian treaty, which was effected by General Denver, then Indian commissioner, in September, 1857. The treaty was entered into on the very land now occupied by Arbor Lodge, and my father was a witness thereto. This was before the city of Denver had been named after the commissioner. The picture, which was painted by William H. Coffin of New York, portrays a complimentary war dance given by the Indians on account of the signing of the treaty by which they added to the United States all the interests the Pawnee tribe had in the lands that now comprise the states of Nebraska, the Dakotas, eastern Colorado, Wyoming and Montana.

Public life occupied my father's time to a great extent during his later years, until about 1898, when he gave his attention to the publication of a paper, The Conservative, devoted to political and economic questions. This paper he conducted until his death. It gave him greater pleasure than almost anything else except his trees, and these crept occasionally into his editorial columns.

I know of nothing that better illustrates my father's private character than an editorial which he wrote and published in The Conservative a short time before the untimely death of my brother Carl. The fact that both the author and the two loved ones of whom he so tenderly wrote have passed to the Great Beyond imparts

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