THE FARMER AND MINNESOTA HISTORY[1]

We stand at what the Indian called "Standing Rock." Rock is history. The nature of the earth before the coming of man he interprets as best he can from the records in rock. Rock in its varied formations is abundantly useful to man. It is of particular interest to the farmer as the soil he tills is composed largely of finely divided rock.

The great variation of soil is determined mainly by the rock from which it is derived. How fascinating that the student of the soil after reading the records of the rock finds by experiment in certain cases that by adding rock to rock — as limestone, nitrates, phosphate, or potassium to the soil — it may be made more responsive to the needs of man. Rock history then is quite engaging to the farmer, and if to him, to others also.

Soil determines or may modify civilization. The rôle played by soil has determined the development of agriculture in the older countries of the world — Asia Minor, Spain, China, Greece, and Rome.[2] Who would not say that the soil has been a major factor in the development of America?

Hennepin made a pointed inference when, in the latter part of the sixteenth century, after exploring what he called "a vast country in America," he wrote:

I have had an Opportunity to penetrate farther into that Unknown Continent than any before me; wherein I have discover'd New Countries, which may be justly call'd the *Delights of that New World.* They are larger than *Europe,* water'd with an infinite number of fine Rivers, the Course of one of which is above 800

[1] This paper was prepared for presentation at Castle Rock on June 16, 1926, as a feature of the fifth annual "historic tour" of the Minnesota Historical Society. See *post,* p. 254. *Ed.*

[2] Milton Whitney, *Soil and Civilization, A Modern Concept of the Soil and the Historical Development of Agriculture,* 183–216 (New York, 1925).

Leagues long, stock'd with all sorts of harmless Beasts, and other Things necessary for the Conveniency of Life; and bless'd with so mild a Temperature of Air, that nothing is there wanting to lay the Foundation of one of the Greatest Empires in the World.[3]

The fulfillment of the prophecy of Hennepin and what the vast soil resources of this continent mean to our civilization probably have not been better described than by President Coolidge in a recent address on the attainments in the field of American agriculture.

No one can travel across the vast area that lies between the Alleghenies and the Rockies without being thoroughly impressed with the enormous expansion of American agriculture. . . . Other sections of our country, acre for acre, are just as important and just as productive, but it is in this region that the cultivation of the land holds its most dominant position. It is to serve the farmers of this great open country that teeming cities have arisen; great stretches of navigation have been opened, a mighty network of railways has been constructed, a fast increasing mileage of highways has been laid out and modern inventions have stretched their lines of communication among all the various communities and into nearly every home. Agriculture holds a position in this country that it was never before able to secure anywhere else on earth.[4]

In view then of the relations of history and rock, rock and soil, soil and civilization, it is most appropriate that we tarry at this distinctive rock formation to consider "The Farmer and Minnesota History."

The beginning of agriculture in North America was made by the Indians. Twenty-eight definite farm practices have been credited to the American Indians north of Mexico. They reproduced wild plants, propagated cultivated varieties of wild plants, practiced plant breeding, planted seeds in hills or rows, used fertilizers, broke and pulverized the surface soil, repressed weeds and grass growing in crops, practiced multiple cropping,

[3] Father Louis Hennepin, *A New Discovery of a Vast Country in America*, 1:3 (Thwaites edition, Chicago, 1903).

[4] This address was delivered before the American Farm Bureau Federation at Chicago on December 7, 1925. It is summarized in the *Minneapolis Tribune* for December 8, 1925.

cleared forests, invented the corn crib adopted by the white farmer, and dried corn by air circulation. They discovered the narcotic effect of tobacco smoke; cured tobacco by artificial heat; made syrup and sugar; preserved fruits, berries, and meats; buried vegetables for purposes of preservation; extracted oil from nuts; extracted paints and dyes and stains; utilized vegetable fibers by spinning and weaving; gave the white man the priceless legacy of Indian corn, of which they raised no less than a million bushels yearly; contributed sweet corn, pop corn, tobacco, pumpkins, squashes, and some varieties of beans; cultivated, spun, and wove cotton; practiced irrigation; performed varieties of agricultural undertakings coöperatively; kept meat in cold storage or refrigeration, that is, in snow; and developed agriculture to such a degree in large regions that their subsistence was chiefly derived from cultivated plants.[5]

There are many records of the growing of corn and other cultivated crops by the Indians in Minnesota. Winchell in his volume on *The Aborigines of Minnesota* states that "Throughout the area of the United States, the aborigines, when first visited by Europeans, were found to be cultivators of the soil. The earliest travelers found corn, beans, squashes and tobacco in general use and derived from more or less regular crops. But the industry of agriculture was feeble, and mainly in the hands of the women. The implements were awkward, and their use entailed not only great labor but indifferent results."[6]

Although the Indian evolved many agricultural practices it is evident that his supply of food from cultivated plants was limited and variable. In 1834 but a small part of the necessary food supply of the Sioux was composed of corn, according to Samuel W. Pond, the missionary, for he states:

[5] G. K. Holmes, "Aboriginal Agriculture — The American Indians," in Liberty H. Bailey, ed., *Cyclopedia of American Agriculture*, 4: 24–39 (New York, 1912).

[6] Newton H. Winchell, *The Aborigines of Minnesota*, 490 (St. Paul, 1911).

At most of the [*Indian*] villages a very little corn was raised by some of the families, but only enough to supply them with food for a few days. Before 1834, no land had been plowed by or for them, except a little at Lake Calhoun. Mr. Renville's relatives raised a little corn at Lac qui Parle, but only a little. More corn was raised at that time at Lake Traverse than anywhere else among the Dakotas. Mr. Mooers, who had been there many years, had persuaded the Indians to plant corn. Major Long found him at Lake Traverse, and mentions the corn fields which he saw.

Pond also declares that "In 1835 the Indians at Lake Traverse seem to have raised a surplus of corn, for Joseph R. Brown bought large quantities of it, some of which he carried seventy miles to Lac qui Parle and sold for a dollar a bushel. But in 1834, except at Lake Traverse, there was very little corn or anything else raised here by the Dakotas." [7]

In 1842 the Indians' corn crops were largely failures. The Indian agent at St. Peter's, writing on September 15, 1842, reports on conditions in the Indian villages along the Minnesota River extending westward to Lake Traverse. He speaks of "the corn crops having almost entirely failed," and also of the scarcity of game and of wood.

About twenty-five years ago Mr. Rainville, the present trader at Lac qui Parle, induced a part of them [*the Indians*] to commence planting corn at Lac Traverse and Lac qui Parle. For some years they gave but little attention to it, as abundance of buffaloes were near them some part of every year. About the year 1829 the buffaloes having gone far west, many of the Indians perished in a severe winter of starvation. . . . This convinced them of the necessity of giving more attention to planting. In the year 1835, twelve or fifteen families had corn enough to do them most of the winter at Lac qui Parle. . . .

. . . In 1840, it was estimated that they made as much corn as in any two years previous to 1839. Last year their corn suffered from drought. . . .

They never planted so much corn, or made such great exertions to obtain a crop, as this season; but the cold weather in May, the ravages of the black-birds, worms, and ground-squirrels, the several frosts between the 10th and 20th June, and the subsequent

[7] Samuel W. Pond, "The Dakotas or Sioux in Minnesota as They Were in 1834," in *Minnesota Historical Collections*, 12: 342.

dry weather, have so entirely destroyed it, that it is doubtful whether they will have as much as one sixth, or even an eighth as much as last year. Some families who have annually put away sixty bushels, have this year not so much as they planted. . . . at the large village near Lac Traverse, where, a few years since, it was said, more corn was grown than at any other in the Sioux nation, it is thought that they can not have more than one tenth of an average crop.[8]

The agricultural methods and tools used by the Indians of this region must have impressed the white man with the need for improvement. One author speaks of the "slight disturbance of the soil" by the Indian tools, which were flat stones, often called blades or leaves, to which handles were attached to serve as hoes or shovels. He also records that "old cornhills appear to have been used the second and the third years, and probably for indefinite periods."[9]

Soon after arriving at Fort Snelling in 1834 Samuel W. Pond was informed that the Kaposia band, living on the present site of South St. Paul, "wanted plowing done and had a plow and oxen, but could not use them." The missionary therefore "volunteered to go down and help them." "When the Indians learned that I would plow for them," writes Pond, "they took down the plow in a canoe and I drove down the oxen. At Kaposia the chief was Big Thunder . . . and the chief soldier was Big Iron. These two held the plow alternately while I drove the oxen. I suppose they were the first Dakotas who ever held a plow. The dogs or Indians stole my provisions the first night I was there, and I did not fare sumptuously every day, for food was scarce and not very palateable." Dr. Folwell states that Pond at this time gave "a week's lessons in plowing."[10]

[8] Amos J. Bruce to John Chambers, in 27 Congress, 3 session, *Senate Documents,* no. 1, p. 427, 428 (serial 413).

[9] Winchell, *Aborigines of Minnesota,* 490.

[10] S. W. Pond Narrative, 1:13–15; William W. Folwell, *A History of Minnesota,* 1:185 (St. Paul, 1921). The Pond Narrative is a manuscript in the Pond Papers in the possession of the Minnesota Historical Society.

Corn with the Indian was not alone a necessity but also a cause for festivity. In August, 1820, Governor Lewis Cass and Henry R. Schoolcraft witnessed a corn festival at Little Crow's village, below Fort Snelling on the Mississippi. Schoolcraft describes the reception accorded Governor Cass, in connection with which the chief addressed the governor at some length, and then continues:

While these things were going forward, the Indian women were busily engaged in gathering green corn, and each one came into the centre of the chief's cabin and threw a basket full upon a common pile, which made a formidable appearance before the speakers ceased, and it was absolutely necessary to forbid their bringing more. This was intended as a present, and we took away as much as we could conveniently find storage for, in our canoes.

Our attention was now drawn by the sounds of Indian music which proceeded from another large cabin at no great distance, but we found the doors closed, and were informed that they were celebrating an annual feast, at which only certain persons in the village were allowed to be present, and that it was not customary ever to admit strangers. Our curiosity, however, being excited, we applied to Governor Cass to intercede for us, and were by that means admitted. The first striking object presented was two large kettles full of green corn, cut from the cob and boiled. They hung over a moderate fire in the centre of the cabin, and the Indians, both men and women, were seated in a large circle around them. They were singing a doleful song in the savage manner, accompanied by the Indian drum, and gourd-rattle. The utmost solemnity was depicted upon every countenance not engaged in singing, and when the music ceased, which it frequently did for a few seconds, there was a still and mysterious pause, during which certain pantomimic signs were made, and it appeared as if they pretended to hold communication with invisible spirits. Suddenly the music struck up, and the singing commenced, but as we did not understand their language, it is impossible to say what they uttered, or to whom their supplications or responses were addressed. In the course of these ceremonies a young man and his sister, joining hands, came forward towards the centre of the cabin. We were told they were about to be admitted to the rights of partaking of the feast, but there was nothing striking in the ceremony, and all its interest was lost to us, because we could not understand the questions which were asked and the answers given. The voice of every one appeared to be taken in their admission, which was unanimous. When this ceremony ceased, one of the elder Indians, dished out all the boiled

corn into separate dishes for as many heads of families as there were present, putting an equal number of ladles full into each dish. Then, while the music continued, they, one by one, took up their dishes and retiring from the cabin by a backward step, so that they still faced the kettles, separated to their respective lodges, and thus the ceremony ceased. We are told, however, that several important things were omitted on account of our being present. From all that could be learned, it was a feast in honor of the Cereal goddess, or manito, of the Indians, which is annually held when the corn first becomes suitable for boiling in the ear.

This festival, Schoolcraft relates, was known as the "green-corn dance," and the young man and his sister were received into the "green corn society." [11]

The subject of Indian agriculture in Minnesota has been but partly studied and recorded. These few illustrations of the Indian as a farmer are merely suggestive of a valuable and fascinating field for further study. Is it not possible that racial conflict may have caused the white man to overlook much of the contribution of the Indian to agriculture?

The white man has now been farming Minnesota soil for nearly a century and a quarter. He began farming, which included stock raising, about the trading posts, missions, and military posts. It has been pointed out that trading posts were the earliest centers of agriculture in the Northwest, and to demonstrate this fact one student has published the manuscript account of northern Minnesota written by George Henry Monk, Jr., in 1807.[12]

In describing Fond du Lac, an "Establishment" of the Northwest Company three miles above the mouth of the St.

[11] Henry R. Schoolcraft, *Narrative Journal of Travels from Detroit Northwest Through the Great Chain of American Lakes to the Sources of the Mississippi River in the Year 1820*, 317–320 (Albany, 1821); *Summary Narrative of an Exploratory Expedition to the Sources of the Mississippi River, in 1820*, 159–161 (Philadelphia, 1855).

[12] Monk's "Account of the Department of Fond du Lac or Mississippi," with an introduction and notes by Grace Lee Nute, is published under the title "A Description of Northern Minnesota by a Fur-trader in 1807," *ante*, 5: 28–39.

Louis River, Monk writes: "Here are two Horses, a Cow, a Bull, and a few pigs; with the manure of these animals a garden of 3 acres is Cultivated, which produces about 220 Bushels Potatoes." Upon visiting Sandy Lake he relates that "On the south side of the lake the N. W. Company has a fort and a garden; the latter produces about 1000 bushels potatoes, some beans and peas. The Company has introduced horses and pigs into that quarter. . . . While the men hunt beaver in the Spring, the women make maple sugar on which they and their children subsist." Of the region about Leech Lake, Monk records:

> The North West Company have an Establishment at the west end of Leech lake, where five acres of ground produce 1000 bushels potatoes, 30 bushels oats or rice, cabbages, carrots, beets, Beans, Pumpkins, and Indian Corn. The Company have introduced, horses, cats, and hens into this quarter. Hunter's meat is scarce in this country, every possible effort is made in the fall to lay in the necessary stock of provisions for the winter; consequently a quantity of wild rice is purchased from the natives.[13]

Pike, in his *Expeditions,* gives a detailed description of the Northwest Company's post at Sandy Lake. On January 9, 1806, he writes of the establishment:

> It has attained at present such regularity as to permit the superintendent to live tolerably comfortable. They have horses procured from Red river of the Indians; raise plenty of Irish potatoes; catch pike, suckers, pickerel, and white-fish in abundance. They have also beaver, deer, and moose; but the provision they chiefly depend upon is wild oats,[14] of which they purchase great quantities from the savages, giving at the rate of about $1.50 per bushel. But flour, pork, and salt are almost interdicted to persons not principals in the trade. Flour sells at 50 cts.; salt, $1; pork, 80 cts.; sugar, 50 cts.; coffee, ———, and tea, $4.50 per pound. The sugar is obtained from the Indians, and is made from the maple tree.

Pike also records the following facts about the Sandy Lake post:

[13] Monk, *ante,* 5: 34, 36, 38.

[14] The writer probably meant wild rice.

On the W. and N. W. is a picketed inclosure of about four acres, in which last year they raised 400 bushels of Irish potatoes, cultivating no other vegetables. In this inclosure is a very ingeniously constructed vault to contain the potatoes, but which likewise has secret apartments to conceal liquors, dry goods, etc.[15]

The Northwest Company's fort at Leech Lake is the subject of another description by Pike.

The fort is situated on the W. side of the lake. . . . It is built near the shore, on the declivity of a rising ground, having an inclosed garden of about 5 acres on the N. W. . . .

The main building in the rear, fronting the lake, is 60 x 25 feet. . . . The E. end is a large store 25 x 20 feet, under which is an ice-house well filled. The loft extends over the whole building, and contains bales of goods, packs of peltries; also, chests with 500 bushels of wild rice. Besides the ice-house there are cellars under all the other parts of the building.[16]

In 1832 the Sandy Lake post was visited by William T. Boutwell, the missionary, who found there "stables for 30 head of cattle, 3 or 4 horses, and 15 swine." William A. Aitken, the trader in charge, Boutwell relates, "raised 600 or 700 bushels of potatoes last year. He has from 12 to 15 acres under improvement, cultivates barley, peas, and potatoes to a considerable extent, but no corn. Still, I am persuaded it would grow here. His potatoes look exceedingly well. His barley has been overflowed by the Savannah, and most destroyed." [17]

The military post of Fort St. Anthony or Fort Snelling must be credited with important beginnings in agricultural production in Minnesota. Schoolcraft, who visited the fort in 1820, writes:

Since their arrival, the garrison have cleared and put under cultivation about ninety acres of the choicest bottom and prairie lands,

[15] Zebulon M. Pike, *Expeditions to the Headwaters of the Mississippi River*, 1: 139, 281 (Coues edition, New York, 1895).

[16] Pike, *Expeditions*, 1: 282.

[17] Boutwell Diary, July 3, 1832. Most of the passage here quoted has been used by Nute, *ante*, 5: 36 n. A copy of the diary is in the possession of the Minnesota Historical Society.

which is chiefly planted with Indian corn and potatoes; besides a large hospital — a regmental, and several company, and private gardens, which supply vegetables in great abundance for all the men. Here we were first presented with green corn, pease, beans, cucumbers, beets, radishes, lettuce, &c. The first green pease were eaten here on the 15th of June, and the first green corn on the 20th of July. Much of the corn is already too hard to be boiled for the table, and some ears can be selected which are ripe enough for seed corn. We found the wheat nearly ripe, and melons nearly so. These are the best commentaries that can be offered upon the soil and climate. To ascertain, however, that the former is of the richest quality, a cursory examination is only required. It presents all the peculiar appearances which characterize the fertile alluvions of the valley of the Ohio. In favour of the climate all the officers of the garrison speak in terms of the highest admiration.[18]

The progress of wheat production at Fort Snelling during its early years is well indicated in the following letter written in the summer of 1823 from the office of the commissary general in Washington to the commissary at the fort:

I am in the receipt of yours of 12th June covering an estimate of provisions required for the year commencing 1 June 1824. From a letter addressed by Col. Snelling to the Quarter M^r Gen^l dated the 2^nd^ of April I learn that a large quantity of wheat would be raised this summer. The Ass^t^ Com. of Sub. at S^t^ Louis has been instructed to forward sickles and a pair of mill stones to S^t^ Peters. If any flour is manufactured from the wheat raised be pleased to let me know as early as practicable that I may deduct the quantity manufactured at the post from the quantity advertised to be contracted for.[19]

At Fond du Lac in St. Louis County, where one of the American Fur Company's establishments was located, an interesting contribution to early Minnesota agriculture was made. Thomas L. McKenney, who visited the post in 1826 to assist in negotiating an Indian treaty, makes the following observations under date of July 28, 1826: "Between the buildings and the hills, on the north, is a piece of cleared ground, picketted in, for the growing of potatoes, and in the enclosure

[18] Schoolcraft, *Narrative Journal*, 294.

[19] George Gibson to Lieutenant Nathan Clark, August 5, 1823, Clark Orderbook, in the possession of the Minnesota Historical Society.

is a small patch of wheat, some of which is just beginning to head. . . . The potatoes here are not yet in blossom." Again, on August 8, 1826, McKenney writes:

> There is a patch of wheat in the enclosure back of the buildings . . . and I mention this merely to state that it is raised, not to be ground, as we grind wheat, for there are no mills in this country, nor to be eaten by pounding into flour, but for chickens' victuals, and to mention that it is only just now in full heading. It is spring wheat — indeed all kinds of sowing must be made here after the winter is past. It is true, it was sown a little later than it might have been, on account of a freshet which swept over all this place last spring, and carried away every thing that could be floated.[20]

Agriculture as an enterprise of the individual farmer, either Indian or white, took form slowly in Minnesota. Until 1837, when a large area was acquired by Indian treaty, no lands within the present limits of Minnesota were open to settlement to the whites, for except for the military reservation all was Indian territory. The abundance of wild food may also have been a factor in delaying agriculture, for "when Philander Prescott came to the upper country, in 1819, the natives depended much on the wild product of the country for food," and it was still used to some extent when John H. Stevens arrived in Minnesota in 1849. "In most instances it was easily gathered," writes Stevens, "and I found . . . that even a white man would soon become fond of the wild sweet-potato and one or two other varieties of the wild tubers the squaws served up to us in their tepees." These tubers included prairie turnip, artichoke, wild bean, and swamp potato. The cereal wild rice also was much used by the natives.[21]

As an outstanding illustration of individual enterprise in the field of agriculture in Minnesota the story of Joseph Renville is of interest. In agriculture, as in other fields, he links

[20] Thomas L. McKenney, *Sketches of a Tour to the Lakes*, 277, 337 (Baltimore, 1827).

[21] John H. Stevens, *Personal Recollections of Minnesota and Its People*, 61–63 (Minneapolis, 1890).

the past with the present in the history of Minnesota. He had an active mind and was afforded some educational opportunities by his father. As a youngster he was employed by a British fur company, and later he served as a guide for Pike. In the War of 1812 he was a captain in the British army; for a few years thereafter he remained in Canada, but about the period of the building of Fort Snelling he returned to the United States, serving for a time as an interpreter. Finally he located at Lac qui Parle and erected a trading house, and there he resided until the end of his days. Dr. Folwell states that: "He taught the wild Indians about him how to plant corn. He accumulated large herds of horses and cattle and a flock of sheep." The same author also cites "an account of how Renville paid one Gibson . . . $732 for fifty-eight head of cattle from a drove abandoned by the owner on the upper Minnesota." Henry H. Sibley declared that Renville was "the first stock-raiser in Minnesota, since he had owned sheep by the hundreds and cattle by the score at Lac qui Parle more than twenty-five years prior to 1856." [22]

"Curiously enough," one author comments, "the first permanent settlers who sought to live by agriculture in Minnesota came from the wilderness to the north, being refugees from the Selkirk settlement in the Red River Valley of Canada." The first came in the autumn of 1821 and others continued to come from this colony during a period of about twenty years. Many, after resting at Fort Snelling, went farther down the Mississippi. "A goodly number, however, remained and became the earliest settlers in the oldest towns of the state within a radius of twenty miles from Fort Snelling. A number of farms were opened on the military tract in 1827 and were quietly cultivated until after the ratification of the treaty of 1837." [23]

[22] Folwell, *Minnesota*, 1:190, 191 n.; Edward V. Robinson, *Early Economic Conditions and the Development of Agriculture in Minnesota*, 40 (University of Minnesota, *Studies in the Social Sciences*, no. 3 — Minneapolis, 1915).

[23] Folwell, *Minnesota*, 1:217; Robinson, *Agriculture in Minnesota*, 40.

Joseph Haskell and James S. Norris, both settlers in what is now Washington County were referred to by Sibley "as the first farmers in Minnesota who demonstrated that our lands are equal to any other in the West for the production of the cereals, a fact which was denied not only by men not resident in the territory, but by individuals among us. These men opened up farms near Afton and Cottage Grove, respectively, about 1839." Haskell's farm is said to have been "the first opened north of Prairie du Chien." [24]

Joseph R. Brown was another of the Minnesota pioneer farmers. Some rather strong claims are made for him by the historians of the Minnesota State Agricultural Society, who name Brown as "The first white man to raise wheat successfully, and to demonstrate that this crop was adapted to Minnesota." He became an Indian trader under Sibley and farmed at intervals at Gray Cloud Island and Lake Traverse. According to Dr. Folwell, Brown "is said to have broken up a piece of prairie near Minnehaha Falls and to have raised a crop in 1829." Stevens relates that "where Hastings now is, Joseph R. Brown had in 1831 a field of twenty-five acres of wheat, which was the first crop of wheat raised in Minnesota." Earlier records of wheat production have already been cited, however. Stevens also claims that Brown was "the pioneer in raising tame grasses, having introduced timothy on his farm as early as 1831." [25]

Stevens himself made an important contribution to early agriculture in Minnesota. He settled in Minnesota in 1849 and built the first dwelling west of the Mississippi on the site of Minneapolis on what he refers to as "My old farm where

[24] Folwell, *Minnesota,* 1: 230 n.; Warren Upham and Rose B. Dunlap, *Minnesota Biographies, 1655–1912,* 306 (*Minnesota Historical Collections,* vol. 14).

[25] Darwin S. Hall and Return I. Holcombe, *History of the Minnesota State Agricultural Society from Its Organization in 1854 to the Annual Meeting of 1910,* 11 (St. Paul, 1910); Folwell, *Minnesota,* 1: 232; Stevens, *Personal Recollections,* 98.

Minneapolis now is." He was the founder of the Minnesota Territorial Agricultural Society and during many years was president of the Minnesota State Agricultural Society. His volume of *Personal Recollections* is a valuable source of information on early Minnesota agriculture.

After the coming of the Selkirk refugees several agricultural colonies were established in the vicinity of what is now St. Paul. In 1844 Benjamin Gervais founded Little Canada, an agricultural colony nine miles north of St. Paul. It has remained predominantly a French settlement to the present day.[26]

At the time of the census of 1840 the only part of Minnesota open to white settlement was the district between the St. Croix and the Mississippi, which formed a part of St. Croix County, Wisconsin. In the entire county there were but 815 head of live stock of all kinds, including swine and poultry; more than half, or 434, were cattle, probably oxen used about the lumber camps. The dairy products of the region were valued at $220; and the yield of crops amounted to 9,031 bushels, of which 8,014 were potatoes and 606 were corn.[27]

Fur-trading and lumbering preceded agriculture, though a certain amount of agricultural production accompanied both. Robinson declares, however, that "the close of the decade of 1850–1860 saw the new state an agricultural community solidly planted upon the soil."[28] The great sweep of agricultural development that follows this decade quite naturally falls into three periods. (1) The period of extensive wheat and small grain farming which continued generally for twenty to twenty-five years. (2) The period wherein the livestock system of farming became quite well developed covering approximately another twenty years. (3) The present period of business organization wherein an effort is being made to

[26] Robinson, *Agriculture in Minnesota*, 41.
[27] Robinson, *Agriculture in Minnesota*, 40.
[28] Robinson, *Agriculture in Minnesota*, 45.

treat farming not alone as a mode of life but as a business enterprise with profitable returns and satisfactory rural living.

Some of the larger phases of the present-day agriculture of Minnesota may now be briefly considered. In contrast to the beginnings and the meager agriculture reported in the first census of 1840, there were in Minnesota according to the 1920 census 178,000 farms. Thirty million acres of land were in farms, of which twenty-one million were improved. The value of all farm property grew from less than a billion dollars in 1900 to nearly a billion and a half in 1910, and this in turn to $3,787,000,000 in 1920. As against 434 head of cattle in 1840, there were over three million cattle in Minnesota in 1920. Other live stock increased accordingly. The corn production amounting to 606 bushels in 1840 increased to over eighty-four million bushels in 1920, and all other crops increased proportionately. In 1840 Minnesota dairy products were valued at $220; the state department of agriculture reports that the Minnesota creameries paid eighty-nine million dollars for butter fat in 1925.

The remarkable agricultural development that has taken place in the past seventy-five to eighty years proves that this phase of Minnesota history is of great importance. Apparently the farming people of the state have been so busily engaged making history that they have not adequately considered the broader significance of their work.

Every agricultural organization, for the sake of accuracy, complete information, and in the interest of its own as well as of the general welfare, should concern itself both with its own history and with some of the larger phases of agricultural history. The Minnesota State Agricultural Society has issued a valuable historical work covering the period from its organization in 1854 to 1910. But the publication, as noted in its preface, was greatly delayed because of the "difficulty of obtaining authentic data for the purposes of a correct history. . . . Nearly all of the record of the Society needed was very

difficult to obtain, and much of it could not be found. The written records are very incomplete and imperfect; those of early days have entirely disappeared." This frank acknowledgement ought to serve as a fair warning to all other agricultural organizations carefully to record and preserve material valuable for historical purposes. In this connection, I take pleasure in calling attention to the *Twin City Milk Producers Bulletin* for December, 1925, which is an "Annual Meeting Number and History." It records the early experiences of this association and some of the developments of its first ten years of operation. Other organizations may well study this example.

All rural communities should in like manner become actively interested in local agricultural history. Several have already recorded and commemorated important contributions to agriculture. In Carver County on June 10, 1924, the entire countryside came together on the farm of the late Wendelin Grimm. Here by appropriate word and by a permanent marker they endeavored to show their appreciation for a most valuable contribution to the agriculture not only of Carver County but of the entire state — the bringing of Grimm alfalfa to the region. Similarly Pipestone County has honored its first white settler and one of its first farmers, Daniel E. Sweet, with a splendid bronze plate on a background and foundation of the famous pipestone, placed in the corridor of the Pipestone County Courthouse. Near Excelsior on June 15, 1912, a tablet was unveiled with appropriate ceremony in honor of Peter Gideon, who grew the original wealthy apple from a seed planted in 1864 on his homestead.

As I travel about Minnesota I am everywhere confronted with other important agricultural achievements or with personages whose contributions to agricultural history should be appropriately observed. On a recent trip to Waseca County I learned that its name is a Sioux word and that it was given to the white settlers "in response to inquiries as to the Indian

word for fertile." [29] How stimulating to the imagination! Nature must have provided generously for the Indians living in this vicinity. The soil must have responded abundantly to their cultivation. What an opportunity here for the artist with his canvass and camel's hair to reproduce his conception of the historic meaning of Waseca — fertile soil!

Indeed in the field of local agricultural history there are endless opportunities in which communities should become interested. There has been a remarkable development of coöperation among Minnesota farmers. The organizations and institutions involved have a history well worthy of record — and the mistakes as well as the successes should be registered. There is a great strength of farm leadership in Minnesota. This is made evident by the uniform success of farmers' coöperative organizations in the state, and by the energetic manner in which local farmers have participated in the several phases of the "agrarian crusade" — the Granger movement, the Farmers' Alliance, and others of minor or major importance. Certain individuals stand out as leaders of these movements. Oliver H. Kelley, who for a time lived in Elk River Township, was a conspicuous character in the Granger movement which, for a number of years beginning in 1869, exerted a considerable influence on Minnesota agriculture. Later in 1883 came O. C. Gregg with the Farmers' Institute work in Minnesota. Several persons conspicuous in agricultural leadership have been associated with the farm journals issued in the state, which in themselves are an important source of historical data in agriculture.

During the last half of the past century in all the states, as in Minnesota, land grant colleges, schools of agriculture, and systems of experiment stations were founded and developed. A long line of leaders in Minnesota agriculture, including W. W. Pendergast, Dr. Otto Luger, Willet M. Hayes, Samuel

[29] Warren Upham, *Minnesota Geographic Names, Their Origin and Historic Significance*, 564 (*Minnesota Historical Collections*, vol. 17).

B. Green, T. L. Haecker, Harry Snyder, A. D. Wilson, Andrew Boss, and many others, became associated with these institutions.

A most forceful and energetic character in agriculture as well as in transportation and commercial affairs was the empire builder, James J. Hill, the maker of the Great Northern Railway. He was an aggressive advocate of agricultural development.

Throughout the entire countryside investigation reveals individuals whose contributions to agricultural development are worthy of record and revelation. As an illustration, the Minnesota Historical Society recently received the remarkable diary of the farming operations of Allen W. Dawley, who lived at Smithfield and at Highland in Wabasha County and later at Northfield. This diary was begun in 1864 and was kept continuously until the death of the author in 1925. It is filled with items of interest and value for studies of the weather, crops, harvests, church, school, community life, and other affairs in the localities where the diarist lived. Another important diary owned by the historical society is that of Edward B. Drew of Winona County. According to local annals, the author of this diary broke twenty-five acres of ground in 1852 and planted some corn and a garden. "In the fall he sowed a small patch of wheat by way of experiment. The following year, 1853, he harvested the first crop of wheat ever raised by the settlers in southern Minnesota." From about two bushels sown on about two acres, seventy bushels of grain were secured.[30]

Since both individuals and communities have made such valuable contributions to agricultural progress, is it not true that both the individual and the local community ought to become more interested in local agricultural history? One authority writes:

[30] *History of Winona County, Together with Biographical Matter, Statistics, Etc.*, 262 (Chicago, 1883).

Agricultural history is a most fertile field for the student and one which has been only partly explored. There are a few agricultural economists who have followed the broader lines of agricultural development and worked out something of the philosophy of agricultural history. Even this has been imperfectly done because, for the most part, the study and treatment have been confined to an interpretation of statistical data and of the migration of populations. The great body of local agricultural facts is almost altogether an unexplored field. No one has thought it worth while to record the simple happenings of country life.[31]

More study needs to be devoted to agricultural history, its accumulation, organization, interpretation, and use, though there are some splendid beginnings upon which to build. Much of the history of Minnesota is agricultural in character. The Minnesota Historical Society is fortunate in having as its superintendent a leader in the field of agrarian studies. This central historical body is splendidly equipped to extend its leadership in the field of agricultural history. It remains only for the counties, the communities, and the individuals of the state to act with the society to make further investigations.

The historian is interested in preservation. All nations must be concerned in the preservation of their agriculture or insure continued subsistence from other regions. For a people to know, to interpret, and to understand their agriculture should be occasion for them to love it, promote it, protect it, preserve it. Have not the historian and all who aid him in the making, the preservation, and the use of records a great responsibility in relation to agricultural history?

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[31] W. A. Lloyd, "The Relation of the County Farm Bureau and the County Agent to the Collection of Historical Data Relating to Agriculture," in Mississippi Valley Historical Association, *Proceedings*, 9:446 (Cedar Rapids, Iowa, 1919).