"Typical Eastern City," The Eldora Herald, pp. 1, 1 September 1900. Courtesy of Newspaper Archive
State Street in Chicago, Illinois, 1905

Iowa City, Iowa, 1907

Fort Dodge, Iowa, 1907

Interview of Harry Reece about His First Trip to Chicago, Illinois, November 29, 1938 (pg.1)

FORM A

Circumstances of Interview

New York

Earl Bowman

NAME OF WORKER

86 West 12th St. New York City

ADDRESS

Nov. 29, 1938

DATE

HARRY REECE (DACA) ... HIS STORY

SUBJECT

Nov. 28, 1938; interview at subject, Harry Reece's Book Store, 63 Washington Square, South, New York City

1. Date and time of interview

2. Place of interview

Harry Reece, 63 Washington Sq. So.

3. Name and address of informant

4. Name and address of person, if any, in touch with informant. (Name selected him myself I have known informant personally for more than ten years.)

5. Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you

Informant's own place of business; an old book store, in the basement of 63 Washington Sq. So. N. Y. C.

6. Description of room, house, surroundings, etc.

A perfectly typical second hand book place with the intimate, friendly, air of thousands of old volumes cluttering shelves and walls and counters.

Use as many additional sheets as necessary, for any of the forms, each bearing the proper heading and the number to which the material refers.)
Interview of Harry Reece about His First Trip to Chicago, Illinois, November 29, 1938 (pg.2)

STATE New York

NAME OF WORKER Earl Bowman

ADDRESS 86 West 12th St. New York City

DATE Nov. 29, 1938

SUBJECT Harry Reece (Daca) His Story

1. Ancestry Native born American; born in Illinois; on paternal side English descent, of American ancestry back to the Revolutionary War. Other racial stocks Dutch, French, and possibly a bit of Indian.

2. Place and date of birth
   Born in Illinois; declined to give exact date but his age somewhere in the range between fifty and fifty five.

3. Family
   No family connections save a living mother; past eighty; who resides in Illinois.

4. Places lived in, with dates
   He has lived in so darned many places that I'm afraid this old typewriter ribbon wouldn't last long enough to tell about them.
   All over the world.

5. Education, with dates
   Academic education not given; but he is highly cultured in every way.

6. Occupations and accomplishments, with dates
   At present his occupation is operating a book store; accomplishments musician and singer also composer.

7. Special skills and interests
   I'd say his special skill is in music; his interest a lively consideration and understanding of life in general.

8. Community and religious activities
   No definite religious affiliation that I have been able to learn about.

9. Description of informant
   "Daca"—Harry Reece is about fifty years of age; dark eyes and contour of face very pleasant, almost benevolent; height about 5 ft 7 inches weight about 150. Athletic in build; strong;
   Hair abundant; dark graying just a little.

10. Other Points gained in interview
    He is a darned good looking and generally well dressed person.
    And he is always affable, good natured and kindly disposed toward his fellow man.
FORM C

Text of Interview (unedited)

STATE New York
NAME OF INTERVIEWER Earl Bowman
ADDRESS 86 West 12th St. New York
DATE NOV. 29, 1938
SUBJECT HARRY REECE (DACA) ... HIS STORY

HARRY REECE'S STORY

"I was born in the middle west. Out in the state of Illinois ... and it was quite a while before the Chicago World's Fair of 1893. Measured by the things that have happened since then it seems like a long, long time indeed.

We lived on a farm, and even telephones were curiosities to myself and the country boys of my age. Electric lights were something to marvel at...the old Edison phonograph with its wax cylinder records and earphones was positively ghostly...and trolley cars, well they too were past understanding!

"Speaking of trolley cars reminds me of a trip to the 'city' once when I was about a dozen years old. My father and a neighbor, Old Uncle Bill Brandon, had to go up to the Big Town, which was Chicago, on some sort of business...and I suppose I'd been extra diligent at doing chores, weeding potatoes, killing worms on the tomato plants, or something...and Father rewarded me by taking me along.

"A country boy in a large city for the first time isn't any more curious to the city than the city is to the country boy! They
are both something to look at ...and marvel about.

"You can imagine what a time I had seeing things I'd never
seen before, in fact had only dreamed about or heard about. Curiosity
wasn't the name for it. Speechless incredulity came nearer describing
my emotions. (After twenty years down here in New York...and all
the intervening years in the cities of the world, American and
European, my reactions are different. Nothing surprises or excites
me any more.)

"But when I saw my first trolley car slipping along Cottage
Grove Avenue in Chicago...slipping along without horses or engine
or apparent motive power...well it was just too darned much for me.
I didn't know what to think.

"Uncle Bill Brandon was almost as much in doubt about the
reality of the darned thing as I was myself—and Uncle Bill Brandon
was, locally, that is out on the farm, considered a very, very wise
and sophisticated person. And he was wise, too. He had seen a
lot of life...Too much, he sometimes said—especially during the
four years of the 1860's when he was fighting in the Union Army.

"Uncle Bill could understand horses, hogs and cattle, steam
engines, army miles and row boats, and such thing—but that trolley
car, with the little spinning wheel at the end of the pole, spinning
along against the electric wire above it, was too much for him. Still,
he didn't want to confess 'that there was any doggone thing on earth
that he couldn't figure out! And he didn't want to show his 'ignorance'
and especially to my Father or to myself, a twelve year old edition
of young Americans, species rusticana.

"I wasn't so anxious to conceal my own ignorance, so with
legitimate curiosity I asked my Father and Uncle Bill what made the
thing go.
"My Father was a thoughtful man, and before answering studied
for a moment. Uncle Bill was more spontaneous.

"Gosh a'mighty, can't you see what makes her go?" he exclaimed,
'It's that damned rod stickin' up out of the top of her. People's
gettin' so cussed smart these days all they need to do to run a street
car is to get a fish-pole and stick it up out of the roof of her!"

"Father let Uncle Bill's explanation ride. And I've never
forgotten it, but since then, when I've heard variations of the same
theme, I've wondered if Uncle Bill's rather doubtin' Thomas definition
of the native power of trolley cars was entirely original.

"Sometimes I wonder (although I still chuckle at it) if
Uncle Bill hadn't been present when the alleged Chinaman, seeing
an American trolley car for the first time, exclaimed excitedly:
"No push-e--no pull-e--but all same--se go like hell-se! I rather
think Uncle Bill must have heard the Chinaman's comment, taken his
wisdom from the Celestial and added the 'fish-pole' as a delicate
touch of completeness!

"Anyhow, I've remembered the incident.

"From the farm home in Illinois, while yet in my teens, I
listened to Horace Greeley's advice and like human beings have been
doing in masses and individually ever since time began, obeyed the
call to ...'Go West!' Followed the 'trail of the setting sun:

"It was out there, in the cow-country, yes, and the sheep
country, that I began to sing; perhaps it was because there is
something about the open plains and the lonely life of cowboys and
sheep-herders (although it is unpardonable to couple the words 'cow-
boy and sheepherder' in the same sentence, except in mortal combat!)
that makes the sound of the human voice--even if only one's own--
sometimes a welcome sound.
"Before 'ambition' led me again toward the East I had learned all the old range songs, from "The Dirty Little Coward Who Shot Mister Howard," to and including "The Dying Cowboy!" I still sing them and I still thing they are great songs...

"But I have learned other songs since then and other things...too much and too many to tell all at once..."
Woman, Man and Child Between a Corn Field and a Stream in Iowa, 1897

“Country Life,” 1904

Excerpts from the Report of the County Life Commission, 1909 (pg.1)

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REPORT OF THE COUNTRY LIFE COMMISSION.

be trained. These leaders will see the great underlying problem of country life, and together they will work, each in his own field, for the one goal of a new and permanent rural civilization. Upon the development of this distinctively rural civilization rests ultimately our ability, by methods of farming requiring the highest intelligence, to continue to feed and clothe the hungry nations; to supply the city and metropolis with fresh blood, clean bodies, and clear brains that can endure the strain of modern urban life; and to preserve a race of men in the open country that, in the future as in the past, will be the stay and strength of the nation in time of war and its guiding and controlling spirit in time of peace.

It is to be hoped that many young men and women, fresh from our schools and institutions of learning, and quick with ambition and trained intelligence, will feel a new and strong call to service.

I. GENERAL STATEMENT.

Broadly speaking, agriculture in the United States is prosperous and the conditions in many of the great farming regions are improving. The success of the owners and cultivators of good land, in the prosperous regions, has been due partly to improved methods, largely to good prices for products, and also to the general advance in the price of farm lands in these regions. Notwithstanding the general advance in rentals and the higher prices of labor, tenants also have enjoyed a good degree of prosperity, due to fair crops, and an advance in the price of farm products approximately corresponding to the advance in the price of land. Farm labor has been fully employed and at increased wages, and many farm hands have become tenants and many tenants have become landowners.

There is marked improvement, in many of the agricultural regions, in the character of the farm home and its surroundings. There is increasing appreciation on the part of great numbers of country people of the advantage of sanitary water supplies and plumbing, of better construction in barns and all farm buildings, of good reading matter, of tasteful gardens and lawns, and the necessity of good education.

Many institutions are also serving the agricultural needs of the open country with great effectiveness, as the United States Department of Agriculture, the land-grant colleges and experiment stations, and the many kinds of extension work that directly or indirectly emanate from them. The help that these institutions render to the country-life interests is everywhere recognized. State departments of agricultural, national, state, and local organizations, many schools of secondary grade, churches, libraries, and many other agencies are also contributing actively to the betterment of agricultural conditions.
There has never been a time when the American farmer was as well off as he is to-day, when we consider not only his earning power, but the comforts and advantages he may secure. Yet the real efficiency in farm life, and in country life as a whole, is not to be measured by historical standards, but in terms of its possibilities. Considered from this point of view, there are very marked deficiencies. There has been a complete and fundamental change in our whole economic system within the past century. This has resulted in profound social changes and the redirection of our point of view on life. In some occupations the readjustment to the new conditions has been rapid and complete; in others it has come with difficulty. In all the great series of farm occupations the readjustment has been the most tardy, because the whole structure of a traditional and fundamental system has been involved. It is not strange, therefore, that development is still arrested in certain respects; that marked inequalities have arisen; or that positive injustices may prevail even to a very marked and widespread extent. All these difficulties are the results of the unequal development of our contemporary civilization. All this may come about without any intention on the part of anyone that it should be so. The problems are nevertheless just as real, and they must be studied and remedies must be found.

These deficiencies are recognized by the people. We have found, not only the testimony of the farmers themselves but of all persons in touch with farm life, more less serious agricultural unrest in every part of the United States, even in the most prosperous regions. There is a widespread tendency for farmers to move to town. It is not advisable, of course, that all country persons remain in the country; but this general desire to move is evidence that the open country is not satisfying as a permanent abode. This tendency is not peculiar to any region. In difficult farming regions, and where the competition with other farming sections is most severe, the young people may go to town to better their condition. In the best regions the older people retire to town, because it is socially more attractive and they see a prospect of living in comparative ease and comfort on the rental of their lands. Nearly everywhere there is a townward movement for the purpose of securing school advantages for the children. All this tends to sterilize the open country and to lower its social status. Often the farm is let to tenants. The farmer is likely to lose active interest in life when he retires to town, and he becomes a stationary citizen, adding a social problem to the town. He is likely to find his expenses increasing and is obliged to raise rents to his tenant, thereby making it more difficult for the man who works on the land. On his death his property enriches the town rather than the country. The withdrawal of the children from the farms detracts from the interest and efficiency of the country school and adds to the interest of the town school. Thus the country is drained of the energy of
youth on the one hand and the experience and accumulation of age on the other, and three problems more or less grave are created—a problem for the town, a problem for the public school, and also a problem of tenancy in the open country.

The farming interest is not, as a whole, receiving the full rewards to which it is entitled, nor has country life attained to anywhere near its possibilities of attractiveness and comfort. The farmer is necessarily handicapped in the development of social life and in the conduct of his business because of his separateness, the small volume of his output, and the lack of capital. He often begins with practically no capital, and expects to develop his capital and relationships out of the annual business itself; and even when he has capital with which to set up a business and operate it the amount is small when compared with that required in other enterprises. He is not only handicapped in his farming but is disadvantaged when he deals with other business interests and with other social groups. It is peculiarly necessary, therefore, that Government should give him adequate consideration and protection. There are difficulties of the separate man, living quietly on his land, that government should understand.

**THE PURPOSE OF THE COMMISSION.**

The commission is requested to report on the means that are “now available for supplying the deficiencies which exist” in the country life of the United States and “upon the best methods of organized permanent effort in investigation and actual work” along the lines of betterment of rural conditions.

The President’s letter appointing the commission is as follows:

**OYSTER BAY, N. Y., August 10, 1908.**

**My dear Professor Bailey:** No nation has ever achieved permanent greatness unless this greatness was based on the wellbeing of the great farmer class, the men who live on the soil; for it is upon their welfare, material and moral, that the welfare of the rest of the nation ultimately rests. In the United States, disregarding certain sections and taking the nation as a whole, I believe it to be true that the farmers in general are better off to-day than they ever were before. We Americans are making great progress in the development of our agricultural resources. But it is equally true that the social and economic institutions of the open country are not keeping pace with the development of the nation as a whole. The farmer is, as a rule, better off than his forebears; but his increase in well-being has not kept pace with that of the country as a whole. While the condition of the farmers in some of our best farming regions leaves little to be desired, we are far from having reached so high a level in all parts of the country. In portions of the South, for example, where the Department of Agriculture, through the farmers' cooperative demonstration work of Doctor Knapp, is directly instructing more than 30,000 farmers in better methods of farming, there is nevertheless much unnecessary suffering and needless loss of efficiency on the farm. A physician, who is also a careful student of farm life in the South, writing to me recently about the enormous
problems and discouragements. There is every evidence that the people in rural districts have welcomed the commission as an agency that is much needed in the interest of country life, and in many of the hearings they have asked that the commission be continued in order that it may make thorough investigations of the subjects that it has considered. The press has taken great interest in the work, and in many cases has been of special service to the commission in securing direct information from country people.

The activities of the commission have been directed mainly along four lines: The issuing of questions designed to bring out a statement of conditions in all parts of the United States; correspondence and inquiries by different members of the commission, as far as time would permit, each in a particular field; the holding of hearings in many widely separated places; discussions in local meetings held in response to a special suggestion by the President.

THE CIRCULAR OF QUESTIONS.

As a means of securing the opinions of the people themselves on some of the main aspects of country life, a set of questions was distributed, as follows:

I. Are the farm homes in your neighborhood as good as they should be under existing conditions?

II. Are the schools in your neighborhood training boys and girls satisfactorily for life on the farm?

III. Do the farmers in your neighborhood get the returns they reasonably should from the sale of their products?

IV. Do the farmers in your neighborhood receive from the railroads, highroads, trolley lines, etc., the services they reasonably should have?

V. Do the farmers in your neighborhood receive from the United States postal service, rural telephones, etc., the service they reasonably should expect?

VI. Are the farmers and their wives in your neighborhood satisfactorily organized to promote their mutual buying and selling interest?

VII. Are the renters of farms in your neighborhood making a satisfactory living?

VIII. Is the supply of farm labor in your neighborhood satisfactory?

IX. Are the conditions surrounding hired labor on the farms in your neighborhood satisfactory to the hired man?

X. Have the farmers in your neighborhood satisfactory facilities for doing their business in banking, credit, insurance, etc.?

XI. Are the sanitary conditions of farms in your neighborhood satisfactory?

XII. Do the farmers and their wives and families in your neighborhood get together for mutual improvement, entertainment, and social intercourse as much as they should?

What, in your judgment, is the most important single thing to be done for the general betterment of country life?

(Note.—Following each question are the subquestions: (a) Why? (b) What suggestions have you to make?)
SPECIAL MESSAGE.

To the Senate and House of Representatives:

I transmit herewith the report of the Commission on Country Life. At the outset I desire to point out that not a dollar of the public money has been paid to any commissioner for his work on the commission.

The report shows the general condition of farming life in the open country, and points out its larger problems; it indicates ways in which the Government, National and State, may show the people how to solve some of these problems; and it suggests a continuance of the work which the commission began.

Judging by thirty public hearings, to which farmers and farmers’ wives from forty States and Territories came, and from 120,000 answers to printed questions sent out by the Department of Agriculture, the commission finds that the general level of country life is high compared with any preceding time or with any other land. If it has in recent years slipped down in some places, it has risen in more places. Its progress has been general, if not uniform.

Yet farming does not yield either the profit or the satisfaction that it ought to yield and may be made to yield. There is discontent in the country, and in places discouragement. Farmers as a class do not magnify their calling, and the movement to the towns, though, I am happy to say, less than formerly, is still strong.

Under our system, it is helpful to promote discussion of ways in which the people can help themselves. There are three main directions in which the farmers can help themselves; namely, better farming, better business, and better living on the farm. The National Department of Agriculture, which has rendered services equaled by no
other similar department in any other time or place; the state departments of agriculture; the state colleges of agriculture and the mechanic arts, especially through their extension work; the state agricultural experiment stations; the Farmers' Union; the Grange; the agricultural press; and other similar agencies; have all combined to place within the reach of the American farmer an amount and quality of agricultural information which, if applied, would enable him, over large areas, to double the production of the farm.

The object of the Commission on Country Life therefore is not to help the farmer raise better crops, but to call his attention to the opportunities for better business and better living on the farm. If country life is to become what it should be, and what I believe it ultimately will be—one of the most dignified, desirable, and sought-after ways of earning a living—the farmer must take advantage not only of the agricultural knowledge which is at his disposal, but of the methods which have raised and continue to raise the standards of living and of intelligence in other callings.

Those engaged in all other industrial and commercial callings have found it necessary, under modern economic conditions, to organize themselves for mutual advantage and for the protection of their own particular interests in relation to other interests. The farmers of every progressive European country have realized this essential fact and have found in the cooperative system exactly the form of business combination they need.

Now whatever the State may do toward improving the practice of agriculture, it is not within the sphere of any government to reorganize the farmers' business or reconstruct the social life of farming communities. It is, however, quite within its power to use its influence and the machinery of publicity which it can control for calling public attention to the needs and the facts. For example, it is the obvious duty of the Government to call the attention of farmers to the growing monopolization of water power. The farmers above all should have that power, on reason-
able terms, for cheap transportation, for lighting their homes, and for innumerable uses in the daily tasks on the farm.

It would be idle to assert that life on the farm occupies as good a position in dignity, desirability, and business results as the farmers might easily give it if they chose. One of the chief difficulties is the failure of country life, as it exists at present, to satisfy the higher social and intellectual aspirations of country people. Whether the constant draining away of so much of the best elements in the rural population into the towns is due chiefly to this cause or to the superior business opportunities of city life may be open to question. But no one at all familiar with farm life throughout the United States can fail to recognize the necessity for building up the life of the farm upon its social as well as upon its productive side.

It is true that country life has improved greatly in attractiveness, health, and comfort, and that the farmer's earnings are higher than they were. But city life is advancing even more rapidly, because of the greater attention which is being given by the citizens of the towns to their own betterment. For just this reason the introduction of effective agricultural cooperation throughout the United States is of the first importance. Where farmers are organized cooperatively they not only avail themselves much more readily of business opportunities and improved methods, but it is found that the organizations which bring them together in the work of their lives are used also for social and intellectual advancement.

The cooperative plan is the best plan of organization wherever men have the right spirit to carry it out. Under this plan any business undertaking is managed by a committee; every man has one vote and only one vote; and everyone gets profits according to what he sells or buys or supplies. It develops individual responsibility and has a moral as well as a financial value over any other plan.

I desire only to take counsel with the farmers as fellow citizens. It is not the problem of the farmers alone that I am discussing with them, but a problem which affects
every city as well as every farm in the country. It is a problem which the working farmers will have to solve for themselves; but it is a problem which also affects in only less degree all the rest of us, and therefore if we can render any help toward its solution, it is not only our duty but our interest to do so.

The foregoing will, I hope, make it clear why I appointed a commission to consider problems of farm life which have hitherto had far too little attention, and the neglect of which has not only held back life in the country, but also lowered the efficiency of the whole nation. The welfare of the farmer is of vital consequence to the welfare of the whole community. The strengthening of country life, therefore, is the strengthening of the whole nation.

The commission has tried to help the farmers to see clearly their own problem and to see it as a whole; to distinguish clearly between what the Government can do and what the farmers must do for themselves; and it wishes to bring not only the farmers but the Nation as a whole to realize that the growing of crops, though an essential part, is only a part of country life. Crop growing is the essential foundation; but it is no less essential that the farmer shall get an adequate return for what he grows; and it is no less essential—indeed it is literally vital—that he and his wife and his children shall lead the right kind of life.

For this reason, it is of the first importance that the United States Department of Agriculture, through which as prime agent the ideas the commission stands for must reach the people, should become without delay in fact a Department of Country Life, fitted to deal not only with crops, but also with all the larger aspects of life in the open country.

From all that has been done and learned three great general and immediate needs of country life stand out:

First, effective cooperation among farmers, to put them on a level with the organized interests with which they do business.

Second, a new kind of schools in the country, which shall teach the children as much outdoors as indoors and per-
haps more, so that they will prepare for country life, and not as at present, mainly for life in town.

Third, better means of communication, including good roads and a parcels post, which the country people are everywhere, and rightly, unanimous in demanding.

To these may well be added better sanitation; for easily preventable diseases hold several million country people in the slavery of continuous ill health.

The commission points out, and I concur in the conclusion, that the most important help that the Government, whether National or State, can give is to show the people how to go about these tasks of organization, education, and communication with the best and quickest results. This can be done by the collection and spread of information. One community can thus be informed of what other communities have done, and one country of what other countries have done. Such help by the people's government would lead to a comprehensive plan of organization, education, and communication, and make the farming country better to live in, for intellectual and social reasons as well as for purely agricultural reasons.

The Government through the Department of Agriculture does not cultivate any man's farm for him. But it does put at his service useful knowledge that he would not otherwise get. In the same way the National and State Governments might put into the people's hands the new and right knowledge of school work. The task of maintaining and developing the schools would remain, as now, with the people themselves.

The only recommendation I submit is that an appropriation of $25,000 be provided, to enable the commission to digest the material it has collected, and to collect and to digest much more that is within its reach, and thus complete its work. This would enable the commission to gather in the harvest of suggestion which is resulting from the discussion it has stirred up. The commissioners have served without compensation, and I do not recommend any appropriation for their services, but only for the expenses
that will be required to finish the task that they have begun.

To improve our system of agriculture seems to me the most urgent of the tasks which lie before us. But it cannot, in my judgment, be effected by measures which touch only the material and technical side of the subject; the whole business and life of the farmer must also be taken into account. Such considerations led me to appoint the Commission on Country Life. Our object should be to help develop in the country community the great ideals of community life as well as of personal character. One of the most important adjuncts to this end must be the country church, and I invite your attention to what the commission says of the country church and of the need of an extension of such work as that of the Young Men’s Christian Association in country communities.

Let me lay special emphasis upon what the Commission says at the very end of its report on personal ideals and local leadership. Everything resolves itself in the end into the question of personality. Neither society nor government can do much for country life unless there is voluntary response in the personal ideals of the men and women who live in the country. In the development of character, the home should be more important than the school, or than society at large. When once the basic material needs have been met, high ideals may be quite independent of income; but they can not be realized without sufficient income to provide adequate foundation; and where the community at large is not financially prosperous it is impossible to develop a high average personal and community ideal. In short, the fundamental facts of human nature apply to men and women who live in the country just as they apply to men and women who live in the towns. Given a sufficient foundation of material well being, the influence of the farmers and farmers’ wives on their children becomes the factor of first importance in determining the attitude of the next generation toward farm life. The farmer should realize that the person who most needs consideration on the farm is his wife. I do not
in the least mean that she should purchase ease at the expense of duty. Neither man nor woman is really happy or really useful save on condition of doing his or her duty. If the woman shirks her duty as housewife, as home keeper, as the mother whose prime function it is to bear and rear a sufficient number of healthy children, then she is not entitled to our regard. But if she does her duty she is more entitled to our regard even than the man who does his duty; and the man should show special consideration for her needs.

I warn my countrymen that the great recent progress made in city life is not a full measure of our civilization; for our civilization rests at bottom on the wholesomeness, the attractiveness, and the completeness, as well as the prosperity, of life in the country. The men and women on the farms stand for what is fundamentally best and most needed in our American life. Upon the development of country life rests ultimately our ability, by methods of farming requiring the highest intelligence, to continue to feed and clothe the hungry nations; to supply the city with fresh blood, clean bodies, and clear brains that can endure the terrific strain of modern life; we need the development of men in the open country, who will be in the future, as in the past, the stay and strength of the nation in time of war, and its guiding and controlling spirit in time of peace.

THEODORE ROOSEVELT.

THE WHITE HOUSE, February 9, 1909.
APPENDIX A.

One of the most illuminating—and incidentally one of the most interesting and amusing—series of answers sent to the commission was from a farmer in Missouri. He stated that he had a wife and 11 living children, he and his wife being each 52 years old; and that they owned 520 acres of land without any mortgage hanging over their heads. He had himself done well, and his views as to why many of his neighbors had done less well are entitled to consideration. These views are expressed in terse and vigorous English; they can not always be quoted in full. He states that the farm homes in his neighborhood are not as good as they should be because too many of them are encumbered by mortgages; that the schools do not train boys and girls satisfactorily for life on the farm, because they allow them to get an idea in their heads that city life is better, and that to remedy this practical farming should be taught. To the question whether the farmers and their wives in his neighborhood are satisfactorily organized, he answers: “Oh, there is a little one-horse grange gang in our locality, and every darned one thinks they ought to be a king.” To the question, “Are the renters of farms in your neighborhood making a satisfactory living?” he answers: “No; because they move about so much hunting a better job.” To the question, “Is the supply of farm labor in your neighborhood satisfactory?” the answer is: “No; because the people have gone out of the baby business;” and when asked as to the remedy he answers, “Give a petition to every mother who gives birth to seven living boys on American soil.” To the question “Are the conditions surrounding hired labor on the farm in your neighborhood satisfactory to the hired men?” he answers: “Yes,
unless he is a drunken cuss,” adding that he would like to blow up the stillhouses and root out whisky and beer. To the question “Are the sanitary conditions on the farms in your neighborhood satisfactory?” he answers: “No; to careless about chicken yards (and the like) and poorly covered Wells, in one Well on neighbor’s farm I counted 7 snakes in the Wall of the Well, and they used the watter daily, his wife dead now and he is looking for another.” He ends by stating that the most important single thing to be done for the betterment of country life is “good roads;” but in his answers he shows very clearly that most important of all is the individual equation of the man or woman.

The humor of this set of responses must not blind us to the shrewd common sense and good judgment they display. The man is a good citizen; his wife is a good citizen; and their views are fundamentally sound. Very much information of the most valuable kind can be gathered if the Commission is given the money necessary to enable it to arrange and classify the information obtained from the great mass of similar answers which they have received. But there is one point where the testimony is as a whole in flat contradiction to that contained above. The general feeling is that the organizations of farmers, the grangers and the like, have been of the very highest service not only to the farmers, but to the farmers’ wives, and that they have conferred great social as well as great industrial advantages. An excellent little book has recently been published by Miss Jennie Buell, called “One Woman’s Work for Farm Women.” It is dedicated “To farm women everywhere,” and is the story of Mary A. Mayo’s part in rural social movements. It is worth while to read this little volume to see how much the hard-working woman who lives on the farm can do for herself when once she is given sympathy, encouragement, and occasional leadership.
Family Posed with Haystack and Horse-Drawn Wagon in Dubuque, Iowa, ca. 1910

“Family posed with haystack and horse-drawn wagon, Dubuque, Iowa, 1900s,” ca. 1910. Courtesy of University of Iowa Library and Archives
Lee, Russell, “Untitled photo, possibly related to: Children reading Sunday papers, Rustan brothers’ farm near Dickens, Iowa. Note convenience of running water in background. This farm was formerly owner operated but they are now tenants of Metropolitan Life,” December 1936. Courtesy of Library of Congress
Selected Graphs from “Changes in Agriculture,” 1950

Horses and Mules and Tractors on Farms:
1900 to 1950

MILLIONS OF HEAD

MILLIONS OF TRACTORS

1900* 1910* 1920 1930 1940 1950

* DATA FOR TRACTORS NOT AVAILABLE

Selected Graphs from “Changes in Agriculture,” 1950 (pg.2)

Farms reporting and number of tractors and number of work stock on farms, for the United States and regions: 1920 to 1950

Selected Graphs from “Changes in Agriculture,” 1950 (pg.3)

Selected Graphs from “Changes in Agriculture,” 1950 (pg.4)

PERCENT OF FARMS REPORTING
MOTORTRUCKS, TRACTORS, AND AUTOMOBILES
FOR THE UNITED STATES AND REGIONS:
1920 TO 1950

Selected Graphs from "Changes in Agriculture," 1950 (pg.5)

PERCENT OF FARMS REPORTING ELECTRICITY AND TELEPHONES, FOR THE UNITED STATES AND REGIONS: 1920 TO 1950

Selected Graphs from “Changes in Agriculture,” 1950 (pg.6)

TOTAL POPULATION AND FARM POPULATION: 1900 - 1950

* DATA FOR FARM POPULATION NOT AVAILABLE FOR 1900.
** EXCLUSIVE OF ARMED FORCES PERSONNEL OVERSEAS.

Selected Graphs from “Changes in Agriculture,” 1950 (pg.7)

We suffer very great inconveniences from lack of postal service. I reside 6 or 8 miles from the village of Pecskill, the latter being but 41 miles from New York, the nearest post-office being more than 2 miles away, and only three mails a week; so that when a Sunday paper until the following Tuesday night, and it is a source of great inconvenience to go that 2 miles, no matter what the weather, “to find out whether there is mail or not,” and very often having to wait an hour or two for the one-horse mail wagon, that has to cover 50 miles in the day, and the driver to do errands and transact all kinds of business for every one along the route. Another thing is, should you receive a letter Tuesday that required an answer it lies in the post-office until the following Thursday, or received Saturday an answer can not be forwarded until Tuesday, and all this inconvenience in mail facilities within 50 miles of New York.

In England it has for some time been an accomplished fact, showing that it can be done under conditions there. Then, why not here? Increasing the means of communication throughout country districts by free delivery of the mails will make country homes pleasanter; will save many steps and much time; will enable farmers to keep better posted in buying and selling, and in a general way aid in detection of crime; will do for country districts what rapid transit does for cities—equalizing values in a measure, for nearness to the post-office is a valuable consideration; will open the way to make the proposed postal telegraph a success by furnishing a cheap way to deliver messages sent from distant points; will enable the Government to perfect a system of weather forecasts and warnings of storms and frosts; will remove a grave hindrance to the business of summer boarding in retired localities; will enable the city business man of some classes to keep track of his business by means of daily reports while he is recuperating health and strength; will increase the receipts of third and fourth class post-offices many fold; will tend to break up the conservative spirit and foster a progressive one; will give impetus to inventions for mechanical carriers for small parcels by means of trolley wires and the electric motor, and perhaps aid in solving problems of value; finally, it will be doing justice to a class who bear unequal shares in the burdens of taxation in support of the Government of which this is a part.

To say that I rejoice to see you inaugurate this free-delivery system in the country districts is merely, in a feeble way, to echo the voice of hundreds of farmers and newspapers with whom my business (lending money) brings me into constant contact, and since you commenced to agitate this free-delivery system there is hardly a day passes but some, in their letters, express the desire that “Mr. Wanamaker will do it.” As it is now, it often takes weeks before the preliminary correspondence necessary before accepting an application for a loan is concluded, and then sometimes expires before we can close the loan; and we are left to decide to have our Eastern correspondent’s money lie idle or make the borrower pay a month or two of interest on money that he had no chance to use; and we are often asked by foreigners why it is that this great and enlightened Government has no free-delivery system in the rural communities like they have in Europe, where it has been in use for years and years. About 1874 the writer had some star-route contracts, and for the sake of a small box and the sum of $1 per annum we supplied the farmers along the line of our routes, leaving the mail in those boxes for them, after we had passed their post-offices, and taking out of the boxes the letters they wanted to send away, besides doing some little local business in leaving invitations to hunting bees, etc.

The plan was so popular that a committee waited on me at one time, offering me a bonus if I would send my carrier by another route past their places. There is no question that your plan, once established, would be a great factor to keep the young folks on the farm, to keep them from joining the great army of the unemployed in the cities; to take away the loneliness of farm life; to teach farmers that merchants, corporations, railroad companies, and big bugs are not forever, in some mysterious way, getting up some plan of oppression for them, or are ready to devour them. It will make their homes more sociable; give them, during the winter months, a chance for self-education and means of social intercourse; it will give their city friends a better opportunity to visit them, by announcing their intended coming so that they can meet them at the train. It will bring the farmers into contact with the basis of supply. They can send away and get their goods cheaper. It will make country life more sought after, and our cities, already overcrowded, less desirous by the coming generation who are now filling our streets with malcontents. Our fields will be better tilled and farmers, what they ought to be, the most cultivated of men.
Excerpt from “President’s Message” about Rural Mail Delivery, December 3, 1900

Rural Delivery Recommended.

The continued and rapid growth of the postal service is a true index of the great and increasing business activity of the country. Its most striking new development is the extension of rural free delivery. This has come almost within the last year. At the beginning of the fiscal year, 1899-1900, the number of routes in operation was only 351, and most of these had been running less than twelve months. On the 15th of November, 1900, the number had increased to 2,624, reaching into forty-four states and territories, and serving a population of 18,013,534. The number of applications now pending and awaiting action nearly equals all those granted up to the present time; and by the close of the current fiscal year, about 4,000 routes will have been established, providing for the daily delivery of mail at the scattered homes of about three and a half million of rural population.

This service accelerates the isolation of farm life, promotes the growth of trade and industry, and increases the dissemination of general information. Experience thus far has tended to show the advantage that it would be so expensive as to forbid its general adoption or make it a revenue burden. In fact, the number of routes now in operation can be accomplished and be accomplished by the national government for what the increased revenue and the accomplished savings together materially reduce the cost. The evidence which points to these conclusions is presented in detail in the annual report of the postmaster general, which is contained in the proceedings of the Congress. The full development of this service, however, requires such a large outlay of money that it would be undertaken only after a careful study and thorough understanding of all that it involves.

Very efficient service has been rendered by the navy in connection with the occupation of the Philippines and the recent disturbances in China. The most satisfactory settlement has been made of the long-standing question of the manufacture of armament. A reasonable price has been secured and the necessity for a government armament plant avoided.

I approve of the recommendations of the secretary of the navy for new vessels and for additional officers and men which the required increase of the navy makes necessary. I commend to the favorable action of the Congress the measure now pending for the erection of a statue to the memory of the late Admiral David D. Porter. I commend also the establishment of a national naval reserve and of the grade of vice admiral. Provision should be made, as recommended by the Secretary of the Navy, for suitable rewards for special merit. Many officers who rendered the most distinguished services during the recent war with Spain have received in return no recognition from the Congress.

The attention of the Congress is called to the report of the Secretary of the Interior touching the necessity for the further establishment of schools in the territory of Alaska and favorable action is invited thereon.
"Is Our Pace Too Fast?" June 18, 1903

“Physical Culture of Beams and Girders,” Iowa County Democrat, pp. 7, 12 May 1904. Courtesy of Library of Congress
**Woman and Her Ways**

_Leisure—A Lost Art_

By ESTELLINE BENNETT

The so-called leisure classes lead as hurried and strenuous an existence as people who work ten hours a day for a mere existence, and often the women of the rich who need not think for the morrow, what they shall eat, or what they shall drink, or whether they shall be clothed, have nevertheless taken into the same rush and hurry as the men who are fighting for fortunes and fame. Every one knows the obligations and occupations of the fashionable woman. She must be charming, and to keep her youth and beauty taken time. She must give hours to her hair dresser, her masseur, her manicurist; she must take her daily exercise. Her dressmaker takes much of her time, and when all this is done, she has no opportunity. She has her luncheons, teas, receptions, charity fairs, dinners, balls, and theater parties, and to accomplish all these she must always rush. The automobile, telephone, electricity, all practical modern things which have the advantage of moving quickly, of gaining time, seem to push and hurry modern life into a round of perpetual motion. It is characteristic of modern life. If a woman finds a little time between times for leisure, she does not take it for rest. She does not take a sesta on her couch or read a musical book, she plays bridge. And when she plays bridge, it is good to play pleasant comradeship, interesting thoughts, or intelligent conversation. There is only the table and the cards. They make work of their play. And that is the resume of modern life. Society women not only endure it, but they seem to love it. When summer comes one would naturally expect them to take a little much needed rest; the majority of them beset themselves to wintering places or mountain resorts where they find the life of the city reproduced.

And yet, when all is said and done, life is no different, nor women so different, from one century to the next. Women simply progress with the age, they keep abreast of the times. They do more today than they did in Colossal times because it is possible to do more in a given time than in the days of our great-great-grandmothers. One can travel faster and farther than in a pony chaise.

From the beginning of time, the daintiness and pretention of the fashionable woman has been her most audacious need, her dominant occupation. Whether it be the Fashions of the Century days or today, whether she plays bridge for high stakes, whether she drives in a coach and four, or more in a 1907 motor car, or she does, as she did in Colonial days before conversation was a lost art, or whether she drives for high stakes, whether she drives in a coach and four, or more in a 1907 motor car, or whatever she does, in whatever age or time, she dresses for the part, and it took as long to powder the hair and don a stiff brocade as it does to have a marbled menu set into a creation of satin dresses. Then, too, in the olden days, people dined earlier so that the day was shorter. And through it all, the duty of her degree, and still more was done, and more were made herself charming. If she had more leisure and more repose, it was because the time and the men of the time demanded it. If the woman of today is and strenuous she is simply what the men of to-day would have her.

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_The Problem of a Home_

To the women who work and who do not live at home the question of how to live is a new and an important one. It is an open question. There seems no solution of it. The boarding house is not a solution. There never was a man, woman, or child who liked to live in a boarding house. The hotel is not a solution. It gives more comfort than the boarding house, but it costs more and it lacks as well an atmosphere of permanence which is necessary to the making of a home. To live in some one’s else family is out of the question. And the last resort is usually an apartment of one’s own. Then the real trouble begins, and for the simple reason that no one person can be home maker and bread winner at the same time. That is what the woman tries to do when she sets up her own establishment, even though it be only a tiny apartment, while she is working for the wherewithal for her daily bread. So it comes back to the original statement. There is no solution of the problem. The woman who is a bread winner must either live in her own childhood’s home or she must be homeless. The woman who goes deliberately out into the world to make a career for herself should consider this. If she is forced out of the home nest by grinding necessity; she can only make the best of things.

_Now the Lady Cab Driver_

All Paris is agitated over the fact that two women have recently taken to driving cabs. One of them was the wife of a cabbie who taught her to drive, and after his death she decided that the simplest way of making a living was to continue his business. That was simple enough. The French woman of the working class frequently understands her husband’s business well enough to carry it on alone, and although this first one to drive a mountain resort where they find the life of the city reproduced.

Mrs. Chambers Kellar

Mrs. Chambers Kellar of Deadwood, South Dakota, who was, before her marriage, Miss Flop Bullock, is considered the most beautiful woman in South Dakota. She is the daughter of Captain Seth Bullock, who is a close friend of President Roosevelt. The friendship was begun in the days when the president was riding the range and lassosing steers on his own ranch north of the Black Hills. Later, Captain Bullock won his title with the Rough Riders in the Spanish War. He is the chief ranger of the Black Hills Forest Reserve and early established a record for requiring strenuous service out of the rangers under him in the protection of the forest against depredators and fire.

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An experienced teacher says that pupils…" The Tucumcari News and Tucumcari Times, pp. 17, 12 October 1907. Courtesy of Library of Congress