E

Dear Jack;

When I was a small boy and listened to my parents tell stories of their early childhood, I knew they were talking about a period of time that was gone forever. However, I had the feeling that my experiences as a child had changed from their times and that what was happening to me would go on for all children for all generations. After taking part in this society for over sixty years I can see how far from the truth that thought has been. Both of my parents who were born in Iowa, had gone to Kansas with their parents in Covered wagons. That was soon after the Civil War and the territory was quite new. By the time I could remember very well the county was considered civilized. Some of the people had automobiles and could drive them in warm weather if the roads weren't muddy, but people mostly traveled to town and the neighbors in buggies, surreys, and wagons. The trains on the railroads were used for long distance travel.

I can remember one day when Giles, my older brother, and Pansy, my sister, went to a country store about one and one-half miles from our home. On the way back a neighbor's dog ran out and barked, frightened the horse which turned around sharply and upset the buggy. Pansy hurried home across the field, telling the folks excitedly that "we had an upset." Most of the buggies were lightweight affairs and not much damage was done. My father had a forge, as most farmers did, - and did most of the necessary blacksmith repairing.

With horses being the main source of power at that time, "run-aways" were always a danger to equipment and the men working with them. I can remember my father driving six head of horses on a 10-foot "push binder". The horses were hitched behind the machine with the neck-bar

and the rotating reel out in front. When some of the younger horses needed a days rest he took three of the stronger ones and put them on a six-foot "pull" binder. This had the reel behind the horses and when it started to turn, they panicked and ran out of control across the field marking a trail down flat through the standing wheat.

Although we lived ten miles from to the nearest town I do not recall remember of any feeling of loneliness. I can remember getting up early in the morning and helping my father throw scatter wheat out on the ground to feed the chickens. Often at that time of day, looking off to the south over a little swale and on to a rise at the horizon, we could see a coyote traveling from west to east. Evidently it had its den somewhere in the area for I can remember of seeing it a number of times. We had to keep the chicken house door closed at night. The coyotes would sometimes come into the hamlet and fight our dog, "Shep". He was a big strong dog but some mornings there would be cuts on his legs. Sometimes the men of the area would get together and make a drive across the country. They would form a line and advance closing in on an area. They would get some coyotes, but they were awfully smart in escaping.

Jack rabbits were plentiful too. I went with Giles, out into the fields one time. He had a colt 22 repeating rifle. We spied a dark object in the grass far up ahead of us. He shot at it, it was a jack rabbit, and it jumped up and ran away.

As I look back over the years I do not quite understand why I did not feel loneliness, or at least do not remember about it. I was probably about five years old when I went to the field with Giles who was plowing with horses on a gang plow. I remember staying at

one end of the field while he made a "round". He left me his watch and his pocket knife. He explained ~~with this that watch~~ of his watch that when the long hand made a complete revolution around the face that he would be back again. With the pocket knife I could pretend it was an automobile and I could make roads around in the freshly turned loam and amuse myself.

It must have been a large field to require an hour to make a round. Wish I could find an hour now and then to while away today.