

MEMORIES OF FARM WORK
VINCENT BUSCH
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Horses were a major source of power for farming in the 1930s and 1940s. We used them for drilling grain, harrowing or, like we called it, dragging, to smooth the ground after plowing. Two horses in the lead and three behind made a team for plowing. They were used for cultivating corn. For corn planting, we used a two-row planter. We checked the corn so it could be cultivated from both directions. Checking corn was accomplished by stretching a wire across the field, sometimes a half mile long. The wire had knots every forty two inches so corn could be cultivated crossways. Used a team of two and a one-row cultivator which we steered with our feet. Was a slow job.

After corn cultivating horses pulled five foot mowers cutting hay, then for raking with a ten foot dump rake. We put as much hay in the hayloft as we could in the summer. We loaded the hay onto wagons with a hay loader which was pulled behind the wagon pulled by horses.

Later Dad built a hay stacker which over shot the hay onto the stack. Hay was put onto the stacker with a buck, a horse on each side of a bunch of teeth. Dad also built this. Hay was pushed onto the stacker and thrown up onto the stack. One of us was up on the stack to level each load. Between ten and twenty stacks were built a year.

Harvesting was the next big job. Four horses were used to pull the binder, which made bundles of grain. The horse had a nose basket over his nose and a fly blanket on to protect them from the hungry flies - no fly spray in those days.

Threshing was the next job. Horses pulled the bundle wagons. One time a fellow bundle hauler got too close to the threshing machine when the horse switched her tail. The tail got in the drive pulley and was torn off. It caused quite a commotion. After that the guy said they were making sausage.

Some of the horses were bought. Had a western bronco called nigger, another yellow one which liked to run away. He had a hard mouth which you couldn't pull on the reins hard to stop. There was a stallion called Kernel, from whom came many of our horses. Horses were left to run during the day in the fall and winter. They fed on the straw and were pretty well fattened out over winter. Each day after school we would round them up and put them in the pasture. Had a fine little team of sorrels, Sally and Fritizie were their names. Used them to haul hay and manure all winter.

Horses also ate a good share of the hay and oats. A bin in the barn was filled in threshing time to feed them and the other animals. It seemed to me the horses ate all the time.

Colts were fun to have around and sometimes ran alongside the mare while she worked in the field. Then there was the job of breaking them in to work. Also to ride. They liked to buck, but finally became useable.

This is a little about the horse as used in agriculture.

Art Busch

Written September 9, 1999

I still vividly remember several occasions when I was about 5 years old (about 1933). Days were extremely hot and dry during the drought and I would go to the garden with my mother, Rose. She was replanting vegetable seeds in a effort to get something to grow to feed the family. Because of the extreme heat and lack of rain previous plantings did not grow, so she would have to try several times. I would usually play under a sparsely leafed plum tree by the garden where a little shade kept me cooler. Occasionally a sparrow or blackbird would land in the branches above me to get out of the sun and extreme heat. It was traumatic, even at that age, to see the birds sit there with their wings spread and mouths open attempting to stay as cool as possible.

Due to the lack of rain and extreme heat the birds normal sources of drinking water, as dew on the morning plants or in water puddles, were not available, so they would bravely come to the steel stock watering tank by the barn to drink. Occasionally one would fall into the tank and drown which prompted us to put blocks of wood on the water for the birds to sit on while they were drinking.

On a more pleasant note, but more trying compared to today's school buses, etc., was our daily trek to and from school. The Henrietta township country one room school house. It was across the neighbor's field about $\frac{3}{4}$ mile. When the snow was too deep, or the weather mild, we would walk the road, which made the route about one mile. In real bad weather Dad would take us in a horse drawn sled or wagon or in later years by car. Regardless of the weather, etc., getting to school was very important to Mom and Dad, so they made sure we got there one way or another.

Things got a little more difficult when the country schoolhouse closed and we had to go to the Berlin School. I was in sixth grade then. This required Dad to take us, or we drove ourselves by wagon or car. A couple of years later a rickety old school bus became available to take us. We were occasionally late for school due to a bus breakdown or getting stuck in the snow or mud. Anyway, we lived through it and got our high school diplomas and memories of the good old days on the farm.

GOING TO THE BUSCH FARM, RURAL BERLIN, NORTH DAKOTA

By Dick Bernard, the grandson of Ferd and Rosa Busch.

This story is written from the memories of a boy between the ages of 5 and 18, during the years 1945-58. During this time period, we basically lived in towns to the north and west of the farm, though in 1954-57, we lived in a country community to the south and east. These impressions are meant to be seed for other stories from other readers.

For me, Grandma and Grandpa's farm was like the hub is on a wheel. It was always central to my life, the familiar place. We lived in many places and houses during my growing up years, but the farm was more like home to me than anyplace else - always there, familiar.

I looked forward to our trips there. We would go "to the farm" for holidays, for anniversaries, for celebrations, and sometimes, for no particular reason. We would go to the farm more often than we would go to Grafton to see the Bernard grandparents. Perhaps this happened because Grafton was further away, or the Grafton house was very small, or, most likely, because Grandparent Bernard's spent the winters in Long Beach, California. Whatever the case, our excursions most often led us to the farm and its treasures.

Until 1951, we all rode to the farm in what I believe was a 1937 Ford. "We" included five people till Frank was born in November, 1945; then six, until John was born in May, 1948; then seven, after John's birth. In 1951, Mom and Dad bought a gray Plymouth Suburban, which was an early station wagon, and which carried the large family until it was traded in for a new Chevy in 1958. I don't recall if we had a car radio in either the Ford or the Plymouth. We certainly didn't have air conditioning, or stereo or FM. Cars were to get from one place to another, period.

Our trips in the car were a bit different than today's trips. Mom would pack a lunch. There was no such thing as McDonald's or other drive thru or sit down restaurants enroute. Cans of soda were unknown then, I believe, and I don't recall soda being taken along in any event. Most of the roads were paved, but slower and narrower than today. From whatever direction we came, we could count on a fair amount of gravel - or even unimproved - road when we got closer to the farm. Coming from Jamestown, at least the last 20 miles was gravel; coming from LaMoure, the last four miles were either gravel or a country path, which was impassable in wet weather.

Reaching the farmstead itself was always exciting. We would drive up the farm lane, and park along the hedge to the south of the house. Usually, but not always, other relatives would be there, or coming. During the years in question, Grandma, Grandpa, Vince and Edithe were always there; in the early years, Uncle Art was sometimes around.

There was a great sense of adventure for a kid at the farm, especially if you didn't have to work! (I was, I will admit, about as lazy as they come!)

We could watch cows being milked by hand, and even had a chance to try. We could take our turn at the cream separator which was turned by hand (Art bequeathed this separator to me some years ago, and it rests in my storage locker in Apple Valley – not quite a centerpiece for a small condo in the big city!).

There was always assorted livestock around. Sometimes sheep, and geese; always chickens, pigs, cows, horses, a dog and cats, were in evidence. We would sometimes take a turn at getting the eggs out of the hen house (what a smelly place that was!).

There was delightful cold water from a well just outside the barn. I suspect it lacked for purity by today's standards, but it was really good.

Sometimes we would help with some aspects of harvest, mowing or etc. I am old enough to have actually done mowing and raking with horses at the farm. They "suffered" me – I wasn't a "regular" – and they would do their work until it was time (from their point of view) to quit. At that time, they would just head home, and there wasn't a whole lot of control I could exert. Sally and Friskie are two names of horses I can recall. They were big farm horses – strictly for farm work. Though occasionally they were used by someone for riding, too.

Everything was used at the farm. "Slop" – which was garbage of assorted foods – was fed to the hogs or other livestock. Leftovers did not exist. Everything was used.

In the house, very small when I look at it today, there seemed constant activity. The kitchen was a very busy place, with a very hot stove which was sometimes stoked with corn cobs (which made a very hot, though short, fire). Sometimes we would be allowed to try our hand at making butter with one of two hand butter churns. It seemed like it took a long time, but it was fun when you could finally see results!

Meals were always very hardy, and very, very greasy. Cholesterol was off the charts, mostly. Lard was used for everything, it seemed. The old dining room table had plenty of food on it for everyone. Sometimes there would be a treat, like whole cream on bread, or some other delicious

concoction. "Store bought" prepared foods were seldom seen. An exception was the gallon cans of Karo syrup.

Always there was the potential for the trip to the outhouse, serving as the refuge for all of us sometime during the day. Even after indoor plumbing was installed, the outhouse served its yeoman duty at the northwest corner of the yard. (It was a two-holer, very rough construction, but it served the purpose. Old catalogs, usually, served as toilet paper.) Another of my proud possessions, in my storage locker, is

The old toilet seat from that outhouse! I rescued it when Vince and I hauled away and burned the by-then collapsed outhouse in 1997, or was it 1996?

In the earliest memories, the farm did not have "regular" electricity, but rather used a windcharger and storage batteries in the basement. There were electric lights, but my memories are that the lights were fairly dim, and not often used since electricity depended on charged batteries, and the batteries couldn't charge if there was inadequate wind!

It seemed that a constant feature of time at the farm would either be music and cards. A piano stood in the corner of the living room, and invariably someone would play something that those interested could sing to. Grandpa Busch would often play a fiddle tune or two – he was, in his younger years, an accomplished country fiddler. Canasta and Whist seemed to be the two standard card games, and we always played them. There were various board games, like chinese checkers.

For readers, there were books available. I particularly remember adventure books about Flash Gordon – a space fantasy kind of book. These books, printed perhaps in the 1940s or earlier, had people fighting with something called a ray gun. I think of this all the time when I see assorted laser technology being used, like bar code readers in grocery stores. We couldn't imagine these kinds of things today.

In the early years, in the dining room, hung a telephone which rang by a crank. People were on what was called a "party line", so if you called someone else, everyone would (covertly, of course) listen in. I think the term "rubbernecker" was used for these eavesdroppers. And everyone was probably, more than once, an eavesdropper. Each house had its own signal as, "two longs and a short" or "two shorts", etc. If you didn't want the whole neighborhood to know you didn't pass the news on via the phone. If there was an emergency, I believe there was one ring that was an emergency ring, and everyone picked up the phone when they heard it.

During this entire time period of 1945-58, the farm relied on the radio for media information. I don't recall a television at the farm during that time period. We first had our own television in 1956.

The main source of news was, thus, the radio. Also, the newspaper and farm magazines brought much information into the country, delivered by mail. I can vividly remember when Sputnik was launched in October, 1957. At that time, newspapers would show the track of the Soviet satellite, and you could see its blinking (from tumbling) in the sky if you looked at the right place. I first saw Sputnik on the lawn of the farm. The launching of this little satellite raised fears galore in the United States, and really led to the space race that culminated with the man on the moon at the end of the 1960s.

Every trip to the farm included a trip to the park at Grand Rapids, or to the dam at LaMoure. Both these locations were on the James ("Jim") River, and were a constant source of entertainment for those who liked to fish. Many meals came from these waters. Grandpa and his cronies would play horseshoes in the park. There would be a picnic lunch, usually. The park was only about five miles from the farm, but in those days it seemed further.

By Sunday afternoon, people were beginning to leave for their homes. But before the first one would leave, the group would be gathered together on the south lawn for a group photo. There are group photos in my possession that go back to the late 1930s. Who began the tradition of group photos is unknown, but thanks to them, a delightful pictorial record remains of the trips to the farm.

Written fall 1999

RON PINKNEY, Grandson

Time Span: 1948-1952

My childhood on Grandpa's farm in North Dakota provided many warm and wonderful memories. The passage of time fused this collection of memories into a delightful period of my life.

#1. I remember that during the summer, my brother and I would go with mother to stay at the farm for one to two weeks. We were able to help with the harvest by hauling grain to the grainary using horses to pull the wagons. Grandma would let Jim and I take turns driving the horses to the grainary from the field. Uncle Vince would shoe the horses before the harvest begin and to watch him drive those long nails into the foot of the horse, without any pain to the horse, was a fascinating procedure.

A vivid and exciting adventure was when Grandpa would take some of the grain to town in the pickup. He would let Jim and I ride in the pickup box with the grain. The trip was always twofold in that Grandpa would get meat from the meatlocker after the grain was sold. The road to Lamour involved crossing railroad tracks. The tracks were build up high and the grade approaching the tracks and leaving the crossing was very steep. Grandpa would drive the entire road at the same speed and when we went over the railroad tracks, it was like taking off from a ramp. The grain would fly up, Jim and I would fly up, and the truck seemed to leave the ground. We got a thrill feeling in the tummy each time we went over those railroad tracks, only when Grandpa drove. Uncle Vince and Uncle Art slowed down at the crossing. When the grain was disposed of Grandpa would go to a walk-in meat locker to pick up the meat for Grandma. We were so impressed to see our breath and be that cold during the summer.

It was a fantastic day when Grandpa took us to town to sell some grain. We got a carnival ride, were able to experience winter in the summer, and, of course, as with all Grandpas we got an ice cream cone at the meat locker plant.

#2.

Our holidays were always spend at the farm with Grandpa, Grandma, Vince, and Edith. As we got older, Dad's schedule required that we spend only the day and return to our home leaving the farm about 3:30 P.M. What was enjoyable about the return trip were the radio programs we listened to starting at 5:00 P.M. I fell assleep on the return trip many times listening to the Jack Benny Show, Gunsmoke, Lux Radio Theatre, and others.

#3. Aunt Edith would take my brother and I to the grove to look for bird nests. She would lift us up to see if there were any eggs in the nest and would then identify the bird. It seemed to be always windy, we always found bird nests, and it was always in the afternoon. Aunt Edith would have to listen to her programs on the radio first and then we were able to go see the nests.