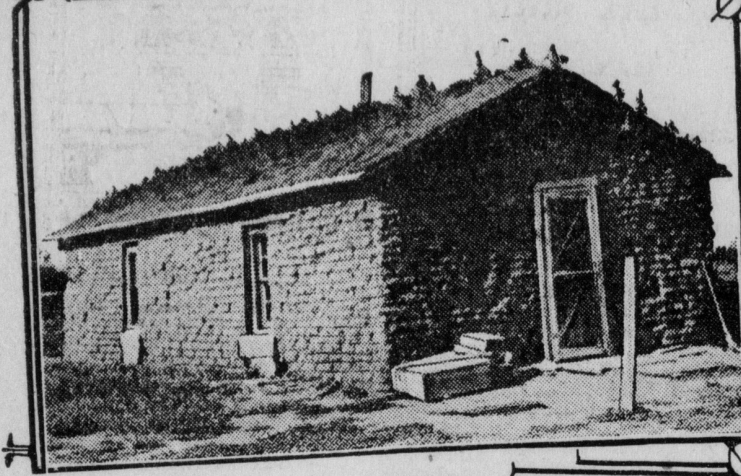


The Passing of the "Soddy"



THE OLD—TYPICAL SOD HOUSE OF THE EARLY 70'S



THE NEW—FARM HOME OF MR. AND MRS. JOHN F. JOHNSON, MACON, NEBR.

By KARL L. SPENCE
Editor, Franklin (Neb.) News.

FIFTY-SIX years ago this spring the first settlers commenced arriving in central Nebraska, bent upon permanent homes for themselves and their families. Passing up the opportunity of securing the rich bottom lands along the Republican river, the first settlers went back from the river a few miles and settled along the different creeks, which were heavily timbered, and had an abundance of fine spring water. The fuel bill was also solved here, as the new settler had plenty of timber for wood, and posts for his fencing. These first settlers were able to build log houses or dugouts, which were log houses built in the banks of the draws or along the streams, the lower story being dug out of the bank and the house built over it.

During the years of 1871, '72 and '73 nearly all of these desirable homesteads were taken up, the settlements running up the streams north from the Republican river for a distance of several miles, with the intervening lands left vacant for a few years. As these lands were well grassed, the settlers along the creeks were able to use them for pasture as all unoccupied lands were owned by the government and were free range.

One or two portable sawmills were brought into the country and for a time native lumber, sawed from cottonwood and elm trees, was available, but at its best this lumber was not very satisfactory, as it was liable to buckle, warp and twist into many fantastic shapes while curing in the sun. Many of the first houses were built from this lumber and one can still find a few of these pioneer dwellings in this section of Nebraska.

The Rush Into the West

And so we come to the time when the rich prairie lands, which contained no timber, were all that was left for the homesteader. And they came in swarms, as this was the period in our history immediately following the Civil war, when thousands and hundreds of thousands of young men, virile and full of hope for the future, were striking out to make homes for themselves. It was a new country, money was scarce, and many of the settlers did not see enough money to buy a sack of corn meal from one year's end to another. Trade, such as it was, was carried on by barter. A man traded what he had a surplus of to his neighbor or the small pioneer storekeeper, for what he absolutely had to have. He raised his own corn for corn meal, his wheat for flour, and these he took to the mill, often on horseback, the grain being tied behind the saddle in a bag. Here he waited until it was ground into meal or flour and paid the miller a share of the finished product for the grinding, the balance being taken home in the same sack the grain was brought to the mill in. The prairie homesteader had no timber to build himself a log cabin, and no money to buy the lumber or logs, so that it was up to him to provide a substitute. He did this by building a "soddy." First selecting a likely site for his new home, he took a team of oxen and hitched them to a breaking plow that is peculiar to the prairie regions. Instead of a solid plowshare this plow has a share of heavy rods, which does the same work as a solid share without causing the friction that it does. Setting his plow to a depth of about three inches, he plowed a long straight furrow as near to the location of his soddy as he could, so that he would not have the labor of moving the sod any great distance. This sod was impregnated with fibrous roots of the grasses and prairie plants so that it held together remarkably well. Strips of sod a foot wide and three feet long are then brought to the site of the new house and the building begins. After the dimensions of the house have been decided upon, the ground is smoothed off so that a space is left for the walls, which will be two feet or more in thickness. The growing grass is left on the sod and this forms the chinks between the layers, so that it is not necessary to chink up the spaces between the layers of sod. The walls are built up to a height of seven or eight feet, openings being left for the windows and doors which are recessed into the walls for a distance of a foot or more. Many of the first soddies did not have glass for the windows, but instead used oiled paper or muslin for lights.

Setting the Ridgepole

After the walls were completed a ridgepole was secured, usually being a native tree, with other smaller trees or branches to be used for rafters or supports. Over this brush was thrown and then a layer of prairie hay or straw, after which the roof of sod was put on, the layers being leveled off and chinked up so that not a drop of water enters and the structure drains per-

fectly. Doors and windows are then made by the homesteader from native lumber or perhaps from the boxes he brought with him in his overland journey to his new home.

The soddy is now ready for the homesteader and his family to live in, though in many instances to make it more attractive, a coat of whitewash is given the inside walls, which has been made from native lime, which he secures from the hills along the river and burns himself. Most of the pioneer soddies had no wood floors, the floors being made of clay which was dampened and tamped down until it was smooth and even. The furniture of the pioneer soddy was very primitive and except for a few pieces brought by the homesteader when he first came to the new country, had been made by himself. The beds, tables, chairs and what few other pieces of furniture he possessed, show his handiwork. The roof of the soddy, being made of dirt as it is, usually presents a drab appearance, as does the whole building, but in many cases the homesteader or his wife has gone to a great deal of trouble to beautify the humble home which flamed cactus, or perhaps a number of wild sunflowers bravely blooming on top of the soddy, where they have been, carefully planted and nurtured by the family. Occasionally the whole top of the soddy will be a mass of bloom from a bed of portulaca or rose moss, which requires little attention and will bloom in the hottest and driest weather. In fact it seems to do its best under the most adverse conditions. Morning glories shade the windows, while beds of petunias, bachelor's buttons, zinnias and other gay-colored flowers make a bright spot about the soddy. Nearly the first thing that the new owner did after completing his sod house was to plant a small grove of trees which he cared for tenderly during the many dry spells and which have made a noble monument to him in his after-years.

The roof of the soddy, being built as it was from brush, straw and sod, made a fine home for many different kinds of rodents and snakes and often the pioneer looked up during the warmth of the evening to see a rattler or a giant bullsnake coiled around the rafter of his dwelling and stories are told of the packrats that came during the absence of the family and carried off the food store as well as other bright objects which attracted their voracious eye. One pioneer tells the story of how he spent the night once with a neighbor. When night came on, the homesteader's wife placed the jars of milk on the floor in the room, where he was expected to sleep, in order to keep the milk cool. Just as daybreak came a mother skunk with seven or eight babies came through a hole in the wall of the soddy and they all had a nice breakfast of fresh milk. The visitor, fearing that the mother skunk would resent his presence, wisely kept still and allowed the early morning visitors to depart in peace.

A Refuge in Time of Storm

With walls two feet thick and a roof from eight inches to a foot thick the soddy made a fine home for the pioneer family, being warm in winter and cool in summer. Fuel was scarce and the pioneer had to depend upon cow "chips" for fuel. Ice in summer was unknown, and this finally led to the building of caves or outside cellars, where the perishable vegetables, milk and canned goods were kept. This cave was also used by the pioneer family, who took refuge in it when tornadoes threatened.

Water on the prairie was hard to secure and wells were put down, being dug by hand, sometimes to a depth of 200 feet. The pioneer well-digger had a dangerous job and many a well has cost the life of a man before being completed. Later wells bored by machinery and tubular wells were put down and most of these were equipped with windmills, so that the back-breaking labor of pumping water for household use and for live stock has been done away with and large tanks are provided for storage during the occasional spells when the wind does not blow.

The average soddy contained one or two rooms, though occasionally some well-to-do homesteader had a soddy containing four or five rooms, but usually when the homesteader was able to build such a house he would build from lumber which he freighted in by ox-team from a long distance. Many of these larger soddies had wooden floors and these houses were the meeting places for parties and dances among the pioneers. The first school houses and first churches were built of sod and many of the native sons and daughters secured their first rudiments in the three R's while attending school in a sod school house.

A Menu of Wild Fruit

The pioneer family lacked variety in their menu, but this was overcome to a certain extent by the homesteader's wife, who canned and dried the wild fruits which grew along the numerous streams in abundance in nearly every section of the country, as well as choke-cherries, and in different localities there were black and red raspberries, gooseberries, sand cherries and black currants, which grew wild. The family usually took a day off each year when these fruits were ripe to pick a supply for canning. The plant known as the buffalo bean also furnished the makings for pies, and while rather insipid in taste, was used by the homesteader when nothing better could be secured, and make a dish quite nourishing.

The outbuildings on the new home of the homesteader who lived in a soddy, were nothing more substantial than a lean-to shed against some bank or a shed made of poles and covered with straw or hay. Usually by spring this had great holes eaten into it by the stock and during the summer months was little else save a roof and the framework of poles.

In the early days of settlement fierce storms raged during the winter. Blizzards, driven by high winds, swept over the prairies, and while the homesteader and his family, living within the two-foot thick walls of his soddy, was immune from their blasts, as long as the food and fuel lasted, his live stock, which was housed in flimsy structures, often suffered from the cold and snow. One pioneer tells us of a snow and windstorm which kept up continually for three days. He had a team of mules tied to the manger in a shed barn which was built of boards running up and down, with a good-sized crack between each board. When the storm ended it was found that the mules were still tied up, but all that could be seen of them was their ears and the tips of their noses. They were in a solid cake of snow and had to be dug out before they could move. At that time there were thousands upon thousands of acres of lands that had no trees on them, but these storms have greatly diminished since windbreaks of trees and groups of buildings dot every quarter section of land.

Abundance of Wild Game

A milk cow, a pig or two and a small flock of chickens helped to provide the living of the pioneer family, but these chickens had to be jealously watched by the household to keep the prowling coyote and the watchful hawk, who were always on the watch, at a safe distance. Besides this domestic supply of meat, the early settler depended much upon his gun to provide meat for his table, as the prairies teemed with bison, antelope, deer, wild turkey, sage hens, prairie chickens and many other varieties of wild game. In spring and autumn the annual migrations of the ducks and geese made a welcome variety to the family larder and the homesteader could secure meat for his table in a very short time.

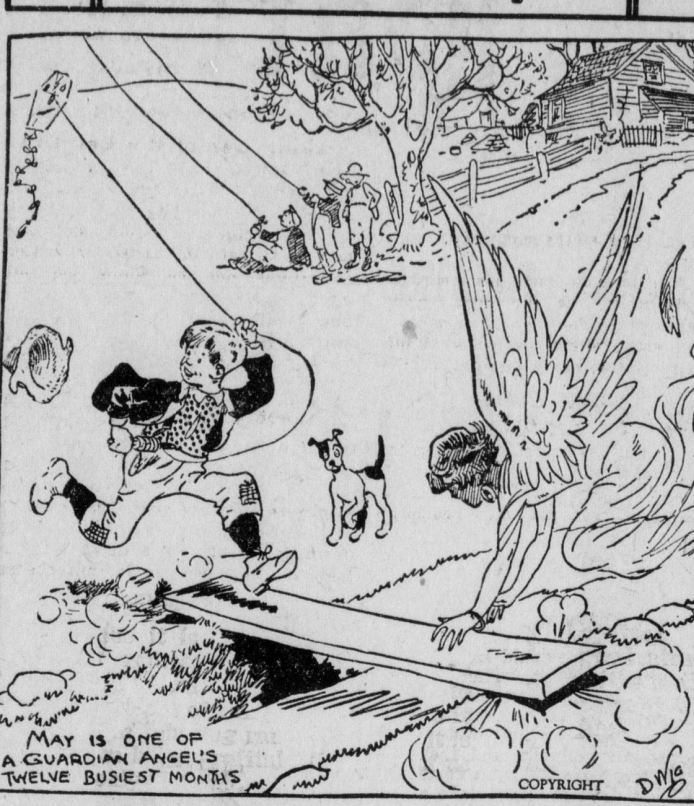
Many homesteaders became discouraged before proving up on their claims, others stayed long enough to prove up and then left, selling their land for a song or letting it go back for taxes. One homesteader, whose name is unknown, in leaving his homestead after finally proving up, writes the following dirge:

FAREWELL TO MY HOMESTEAD SHANTY

Farewell to my homestead shanty;
I have my final proof.
The cattle will hook down the walls,
And some one will steal the roof.
Farewell to my sheetrock stove
That stands in the corner all cold;
The good things I have baked in the oven
In language can never be told.
Farewell to my cracker-box cupboard,
With gunny sack for a door;
Farewell to my store of good things
That I shall never want any more.
Farewell to my little pine bedstead,
'Tis on thee I slumbered and slept;
Farewell to the dreams that I dreamt,
While the fleas all over me crept.
Farewell to my down-holed chair,
With bottom sagged down to the ground;
Farewell to the socks, shirts and breeches
That fill it again to the ground.
Farewell to my nice little table,
Where under I tenderly put my feet,
Then chose from the bounty of good things
The substantial of life for to eat.
Farewell to my sour dough pancakes
That none but myself could endure;
They did not taste good to a stranger
They were sure the dyspepsia to cure.
Farewell to my tea and my crackers;
Farewell to my water and soap;
Farewell to my sorghum and buckwheat;
Farewell to soddy and hope.

A virgin soil, undrained course, youth and a spirit of home-making were sure to win for the pioneer homesteader and his little dirt soddy was soon changed to a modern home with the comforts that his pioneer fathers had never dreamed of, and today we find that while the old soddy has passed into the beyond, back to the dust from which it came, it has left a well-settled country of prosperous farmers who have builded for permanence and the future. His trees, planted and tended with such tender care, have grown into great groves which shade thousands of acres of ground and provide a fitting resting place for himself in his old age and for the generations which are to come. He builded wisely and well. His work has borne fruit beyond the imagination of the men of his time. Where once stood the lowly soddy with the straw covered sheds for the live stock, now stands the modern Nebraska farm home with modern outbuildings surrounding it. Instead of the slow and steady team of oxen, the farmer now has his automobiles, his tractors and labor-saving machinery of various kinds, so that one man working half the time that he used to can now produce twice as much grain by his labor. Where once were trails, are now great traveled highways that are covered daily by hundreds of automobiles going at the rate of thirty or more miles per hour, where once that distance would have been considered a big day's driving. Through the coming of the pioneer settlers Nebraska has developed into a great commonwealth with a population of more than a million and a half.

SCHOOL DAYS



MAY IS ONE OF A GUARDIAN ANGEL'S TWELVE BUSIEST MONTHS

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

By F. A. WALKER

ART OF RECUPERATION

THE idea prevails that when one is inclined to lag a bit in one's field of routine duty one needs a season of absolute idleness, as if loafing were the open sesame to perfect rest and the fairyland of youthful dreams. Generally speaking, no thought is more erroneous and misleading. There is nothing quite so befogging and injurious to the active mind as a sudden cessation of its energy or curtailment of its habitual effort. Rest is not to be found in idleness but in a change of activity, where both body and mind perform a new form of work. When the thinker becomes tired and feels that he cannot proceed another step in the direction he has been so long pursuing, he is in need of change in his mental environment, where he will encounter new thoughts in new settings.

The brain requires a new diet, a savory dish of some sort which will be easily digested and leave a pleasant taste. Frequently a radical change in reading will work this transformation in a day or two, and rekindle the slumbering fire from live embers hidden in the ashes. If you are worn out in the tiresome chase of letters, turn awhile to figures, where you are compelled by the mere novelty of the change to endure up some long-forgotten rule in algebra. Should that fail to satisfy, take a peep into the body of your old Latin reader, or dip into astronomy, where you are forced to think in new dimensions and move out into the immeasurable vastness of which our own little globe is but a speck no larger than a grain of mustard seed. In a little while you will find that this novel operation of the mind gives rest to your thinking faculties, broadens your vision, refreshes and strengthens your whole being.

Life assumes a new meaning. The dull skies become golden and glad-some. Frowning faces wear winsome smiles, and in the very joy of your new existence you go back to your old, dry humdrum work, which in some way realizes that you are the master to whom it must yield in the future with utmost complacency.

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THE YOUNG LADY ACROSS THE WAY



The young lady across the way says it must be awful when a flapper must decide whether to show her new-style bob or wear her new hat.

Mother's Cook Book

In a sense, love is everything. It is the key to life, and its influences are those that move the world. Live only in the thought of love for all and you will draw love to you from all. Live in the thought of malice and hatred and malice and hatred will come back to you.—Trine.

MILK DISHES

MILK, the best of all foods for children, is always a good foundation for any number of desserts, wholesome alike for old and young, and for those of weakened digestion. A smooth, good custard is made by using a pint of milk with two eggs, adding a pinch of salt and such flavoring as suits the taste. If one wishes a custard thick enough to mold, add three to four eggs to a pint of milk. The more egg the more nutriment, so it is a dish to be recommended for those who would be built up.

Baked Custard.
Beat four eggs slightly, add a half cupful of sugar, a pinch of salt, a half teaspoonful of grated nutmeg or cinnamon, and one quart of milk. Set into the oven in a pan of water and bake until firm enough to cut with a knife, and the knife comes out clean. Overcooking will curdle or coarsen the custard, making it less digestible and far less attractive in appearance. A perfect custard should be as smooth and even grained as cream. Remember to remove the custards from the water pan when taken from the oven, or they will continue to cook in the hot water. Set into cold water to chill and serve well chilled.

Ginger Custard.
Line buttered custard cups with strips of Canton ginger, then pour in carefully a thick custard, using four eggs, a pint of milk, one-third of a cupful of sugar, a pinch of salt and two teaspoonfuls of the ginger sirup. Lacking the sirup, flavor to taste with orange or lemon. Beat the eggs very slightly, add sugar, salt, milk and flavoring, then strain into molds. Set into hot water and bake until firm. Serve with a spoonful of the sirup over the top of each.

Caramel Custard.
This is a custard which is particularly well liked. It may be made by adding the caramel (melted sugar until brown) to the custard prepared as above or the sugar may be browned and poured into the molds; have them hot and turn until the bottom and sides are well coated with the caramel, then turn in the custard and bake as usual. As it is well to remember that caramelizing sugar destroys some of its sweetness, more sugar should be used than is usual.

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Do You Know That:???

THE expression "A little bird told me" is based on the popular idea that the bird from its point of vantage in the upper air found out all sorts of strange and mystical things and then revealed them to those who understood. This is a very old idea and we even read of it in the Bible, Ecc. 10:20: "Curse not the King, no not in thy thought; and curse not the rich in thy bedchamber; for a bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter."—Anna S. Turquist.

Tender Flower

"Well, Algy, I hear you have taken up walking as the doctor ordered. How does it go?"
"Seems a bit awkward at first without a windshield."—The American Boy Magazine.

SUCCESS

By SIDNEY J. BURGoyNE

"**A**S A man thinketh, he is," my friend:
So if you would win Success,
You must THINK and WORK to that very end.
And you'll have Success—no less.

When you are ready, you'll find it there
Waiting outside your door,
And you can take just as big a share
As you deserve—but no more.

Success doesn't come to those who shirk,
It's not at your beck and call—
You must add to your "thinking" some darn good work.
And EARN Success—that's all.

So THINK Success—But don't stop there,
Pitch in and work for it, too;
There's nothing too great to do and dare
To help you "put it through."

If you'll "use your dome" to THINK Success,
And your hands and heart and soul
To tackle the job and WORK for Success—
You're going to reach your goal!

But don't let a thought of failure in,
And shut every fear-thought out;
For there's one thing sure—no man can win
Success through distrust and doubt.

You've got to KNOW you can and will,
And value yourself at par
Whatever the job you have to fill;
AS YOU THINK AND WORK—
YOU ARE.

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THE WHY of SUPERSTITIONS

By H. IRVING KING

THE MEASURING WORM

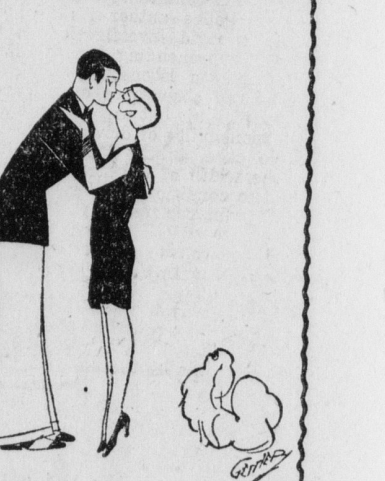
IF YOU are sitting on the piazza of a farmhouse and see one of those little creatures known as the measuring worm looping its way over your clothing, brush it off right away. If you don't you are likely to die before your time—as any country-bred person can tell you. They will probably laugh at the superstition as they recount it, but, nevertheless, watch how quickly they brush off a measuring worm if one gets on them.

This old superstition arises from that association of ideas with things, so common with our prehistoric ancestors and so natural to the human mind in all ages—not by any means excepting this age. The little larva of the geometrical moth has feet only at bow and stern, so when he moves he draws up his hind feet, places them close to his front feet and then sends his front feet on ahead for a fresh foothold; apparently measuring off the person upon whom he crawls in slow and solemn manner.

Why is he making this peculiar motion, so different from the method of locomotion with other worms? The submerged, primitive mind arises from the "unconscious" and answers: "He is measuring out the life of man"; "He is measuring for a shroud." It is useless to argue that he may be measuring you for a new suit of clothes; for the primitive mind's natural tendency is to look on the dark side of things and regard the unusual as the threatening. The writer has heard children cry with awe: "Brush off that measuring worm! If you don't, when he takes his last measure you die."

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GIRLIGAG?



"A wart on the chin doesn't enhance beauty," says Sentimental Sally, "but it's surprising what a help they are in keeping kisses from skidding."

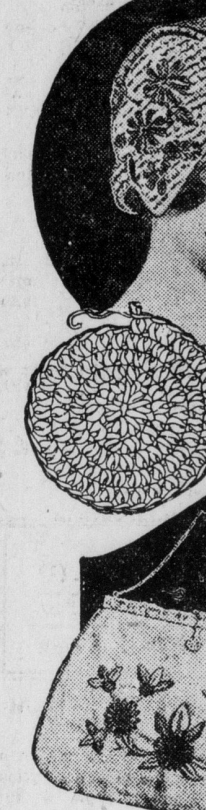
Safe Parachute

A new type of parachute has been developed in Switzerland that works by machinery. It is so contrived that after it is launched from a balloon or airplane it automatically stops falling within a few feet of the ground, thereby preventing the contents of the basket from being damaged.

Pretty Mac

CROCHET crepe paper you rubbing your ing again to see alright? Yes, of paper they are not only as would wish, but practical as well. To make fascinating pastime, crepe twist has been made it durable and raffia.

The hat to the left is crocheted in single pl as are the visca hats w



EASY TO MAKE AN MAKING

moment among the sm linery items. To make must begin by crocheting which measures four inches from center to accustomed to crocheting how to do this. First st two, then join. Make fo this ring and join. In e every so often two stit made in one. After the row, no more widening is continue by making one stitch (this is for the stit this hood or cap m inches from the top e edge. Bring this to p by skipping a stitch no. Add one inch to front starting three inches from crocheting around hat et inches from center back sides. Then break three second row one-fourth in each end and each succe half inch shorter for six make one row all around



pletes the crown. The is widened and designe to the ingenuity of the on

When finished, brush (inside) with liquid past it. The creases that hel crown are put in while still damp with paste. A coat of varnish will gi straw effect and will hel hat shower proof.

The star-stitch is used o hat in the picture. This fanciful stitch requiring s thrown over the neck, together with a slip stit For the bags shown o them stamped as pictur or one can buy canvas b t cut to fancy. They are