



OH, MY ACHING BACK!

By L.E. Buchholz, who farms near Lehr, North Dakota

PLOWING. THE SINGLE-BOTTOM hand plow was first. It was easy to load and take along, pulled by a team of oxen, horses, or mules. The work was slow and hard. But with it, sod could be turned into crop land. Much romance surrounded it. Picture that scene of old-fashioned plow, horses, and farmer followed by sea gulls hungry for the juicy worms of the freshly-turned earth. Unfortunately, the driver had to work as hard as the horses. But never mind. In the plow's wake, the farmer could see prairie chickens and sometimes even coyotes. The sodbusters had a dream, and they believed in what they were doing. The building of a house and then the raising of a crop both seemed achievable possibilities.

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In due time, the hand plow was replaced by the sulky plow. It still had only one bottom and was pulled by three horses. But on it the driver could ride. A new demand came with the sulky. It had three wheels, and they needed greasing. With this plow, three times as much work could be accomplished than with the hand plow. The sulky could be foot-set and lifted, and it had two or three easy-to-adjust set-handles, a pole, eveners, and a neck-yoke.

One horse walked land-side (that is, on ground that had not yet been plowed), one in the furrow, and one on plowed ground. If a solid rock was hit, the driver could be



Yours truly herding sheep in 1930. The pony shown here was named Billy. Some Ashley and Ellendale readers may recall Rudolf Kempf, whom we bought it from for the then-record price of \$35.

hurled into the framework or even cast skyhigh! On side hills, it was subject to tipping.

The machine came with a colter disk, tool box, and an oil can. Those were always given to the customer with the purchase of a new plow.

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The final word in plows was when the two-bottom gang plow was aligned on the prairie homestead site. This was just like the sulky, but it had two coltered bottoms, requiring five horses to pull it. If hitched abreast, three horses walked landside, one in the furrow, and one on plowed ground.

This machine was designed for use on crop land and was not prone to tipping. In its time, the phrase about the smell of newly turned ground appeared, and by then plowing was referred to as spring plowing, summer-fallow plowing, and stubble- or fall plowing.



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The lays and mold boards on all plows were supposed to be mirror clear, and were supposed to scour freely. Often all three of those above-mentioned plows were used on one farm. Most farmers used at least two

plows, but this custom came to a final end and the scene vanished. Factories discontinued making those kinds of plows, dealers no longer stocked them, parts could not be found, and so the era died.

With the horse plow, the blacksmith, who in season worked from dawn to dusk reshaping and sharpening lays, also folded up. Tractor-driven plows used throw-away lays, and so the light of the forge was turned off and the sound of the hammer silenced. I consider it a pleasure to have lived in those days.

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When a new plow was bought, two lays for each bottom came with it, and a parts and maintenance manual along with an oil can and a fitting set of wrenches. The neck-yoke, pole, and eveners were not on the plow, but were tied in a neat bundle, kept indoors. All was neatly painted. Picture in your mind what it would be like to go to town and see all of this in stock now!

(Readers are advised to discern between breaker and cropland plows. A breaker plow could only be used for breaking up sod. A cropland plow could only be used on cropland. But even that could be a misunderstanding because it was possible to change the bottoms for whichever use was to be undertaken.)□