

## PRAIRIE PHILOSOPHER SEZ...



# Riding and Driving

By L.E. Buchholz

**Riding.** We used many really fine saddle horses. While it is true that saddle horses, for the most part, performed behind the scenes, and are unsung heroes, that should not mean they might not have been famous and adorable contenders.

We had a goodly collection of tack, such as pony saddles, army saddles, and many stock saddles. Additional items were bridles, blankets, cinches, tie downs, breast collars, martingales, saddle bags, tapaderos, scabbards, bits, spurs, and lariats (to name a few of the general items).

Riding ponies were used, as well as mules, jacks, and regular saddle horses—365 days per year. In those days, most work horses were also broke to ride, and that often came in handy. One of my pet peeves was to hear light horses referred to as ponies, or riding ponies.

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**Driving.** Buggies came in different styles, such as a one-horse or team buggy, a one- and a two-seater. The poles on all buggies could be in-changed at will, to shafts. Those buggies were easy to pull, comfortable to ride in, were fancy, and had class. The tops could be put up, or down, and could be taken off all together. The neck-yokes and eveners on all buggies were sheer works of art. Some single trees had twist hooks. Others had slip-on ends with lace-leather stays. People also made wide use of carts.

For winter use, the sleigh came into its own. Those cutters were plenty fancy, too. They had side doors, seats, dash boards, and whip sockets. The main requirement was how to dress and cover so as to be comfortable on the trip. It was a work of art to see how different people covered the horse or team on arrival. Coal fire foot warmers were used, and children were tucked in and bundled up so that the saying "warm as toast" could be employed.

As cars began to replace the horse and buggy, owners of those early cars preferred to drive in private, because horses spooked and became uncontrollable when in competition with them, and that was an insult to the car driver. The question arose why horses should panic at the sight of a quiet, little car, and not take note of a noisy, rattling, lumber wagon. The answer given was: What would you do if you saw a pair of pants walking without a man in them?

It all fell into place, but only after many years of trial and error.

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**Hauling.** Hauling was different than doing field work or driving. But it was a type of heavy-duty team work and could be done with wagon,



**A full wagonload of hay gets hauled to the barn.**

trailers, and sleds. Hauling hay, hauling grain, hauling coal, hauling rocks were all common phrases. In most cases, it involved a trip or chore farm work.

An older man was asked if he could help haul bundles. That was in the war years, when help was hard to find and tasks were great. His reply was: Yes, but he was not going to load or unload—only drive.

So that concluded that subject.

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**Mule Story.** A farmer to the west of our farm had a team of medium-sized mules, named Jenny and Mike, which we had sold to him. He had a quarter of hay land across a county road which separated us. He would show up with those mules hitched to a mower, and would cut around his entire 160 acres, continuing the work until all of it was cut. After those mules walked two or three days, they were followed with a dump rake. And then the haulers came, loading it all up and hauling it home.

Talk about team work of a family! Those tireless mules and several teams of horses worked like machines! I took my hat off to those mules more than once!

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This is the final segment in this series, except for on corn culture to be submitted in May. We wish to thank the readers of *PRAIRIES* for their interest and support. Farewell, and thank you all. □