

PRAIRIE PHILOSOPHER SEZ...

By L.E. Buchholz



Road Work Was Nothing To Sneeze At!

Blading. We used a four-horse county road blader. The driver stood on a platform. The machine had a side seat, but it never seemed to get used. There were two large wheel turns to set it in a desired pressure level. A good job could be done with it on rough or wet weathered rutted roads. The end result was a smooth, level surface.

Scraping. We had two of these. One was the common two-handle slip scraper. It was pulled by a team of horses, could only be filled or dumped on the go, and was designed for ditch digging and loose earth moving. Another handy farm use was its being employed in barn cleaning.

The four-horse Fresno only had one handle with a six- or eight-foot rope tied in the eye handle. It also had runners on which it could be moved in an upright position. But there was an element of danger. When filling it, a jar could throw the driver overhead onto the horses' rumps. Or, when half-filled, a drop hit could break a man's shoulder—or even smash his skull. If overfilled, it could get stuck and would have to be pulled out in reverse. But a volume of work could be done with it in a day's time.

Both scrapers and Fresnos were used in basement digging, yard cleaning, and in snow removal work. We made much use of both of them for many years.

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Dump Wagons. We had three genuine roadery dump wagons. They were built super sturdy with plank wood and enforced iron bands. The driver was seated on a board and had a chain winch crank to his right. He could drop the dividing floor boards at will and then crank them back again. We used them for manure hauling, filling long field gullies, rock hauling, gravel and sand hauling, graveling, and cementing. They were fifth wheelers and always were easy to unload. No wagon was ever made better or stronger. They were attractive to do team work with.

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Events of the Decades. In the late summer of 1930, we had made a round or two around a quarter of land with two mowers and a dump rake when one of the better farmers in these parts came over to chat with Dad. State Highway Number 13 was in the building stages then. Referring to Dad, the farmer said, "Buchholz, they are going to grade this into a highway and gravel it. That can only mean one thing. We are not going to be able to drive or haul on it anymore with our horses or mules."

As I now recall, neither one of them at the time believed that the horse would vanish or that they would be driving pickups, cars, and hauling



Dime, Dolly, Mae, and Queen, shown as a four-in-hand. They were fine performers on the blader and Fresno Scraper.



Mae and Queen hitched to a roadery dump wagon.

with trucks—or that they would do all their field work with tractors.

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During the Great Depression years in the 1930s, we saw car after car heading west with a bed tied on the top, the back seat filled, and a trunk attached to the spare of the car. People left their farms and business places with the hope of topping beets in Montana and then finding work in the promising state of California. Every train that pulled by had people called bums, riding the boxcar tops in the hopes of finding a job.

Some ten years after this, train carloads of horses, truckloads of horses, and herds of horses were cleared off the farms to make room for power machinery and bigger farms. An uncle of mine then said he thought we were going to be ruined, too. But we stayed and weathered the Depression. At the time, he had 85 head of quality Percheron horses and was beginning to raise thoroughbreds. He said that four brothers like them would not become a horse farming family of any comparison soon. And he was right. □