

Threshing and Schocks in the Grain Fields

By R. Rueben Drefs, Toledo, Ohio

I grew up on a farm when threshing was still being done and have researched the earlier times, too. In the 1940s, the bundles that your e-mail person wrote and the letter described were called schocks. The schocks were loaded onto a hay wagon and driven up to a stationary threshing machine, the McCormick Doering being the most popular model.

But, I also discussed with one of my older cousins as to the the procedure in the 1920s. Then they hauled the schocks into the farmyard and stacked them with the straw bottoms out and the heads inside to protect them from rain. I understand this was done for two reasons.

- 1.) The early Steam engines threshing machines did not have a blower to make a straw stack. Instead the machine had a conveyer belt that dumped the straw at the back of the machine where it had to be pitched manually into a straw stack. This would have required smaller straw stacks than with a blower machine.
- 2.) Some of the early gas machines such as Hart Parr tractor had a stationary model, although it was not really stationary, as it had wheels but was very combersome to move. So this reason is not so clear. It may have been a transition period when threshing changed from steam engine to gas tractor belt power. The other reason for the smaller stacks on the farmyard was that there were only a few threshing machines and therefore some threshing did not take place until September and the grain would have deteriorated if left in the original schocks in the fields. So they were stacked on the yard and the threshing machine was moved next to the bundle stacks. I'm still not clear on what method was used in the early 1930s.