Starke County No. 34 ------- Farming

In the last tidbit, I mentioned how Starke County was an agricultural community.

A little personal history ---------

Years ago, all of our corn (and beans) rows were spaced 40" apart - "the size of a horse". Today, most of the corn rows are spaced 30" apart - beans are generally drilled with 7" or 15" spacing. As a kid, the first planter that I remember was a JD 2-row with **knob wire** for checking the corn, so that we could cultivate in both directions - cross cultivating (see attachment). It had a 1/4 mile length of wire on a roll with knobs set at 40". You would unroll the wire, stake each end and attach it to the planter. It would hill drop 4 seeds each time it was tripped by the knobs. On a good day, after swinging the 1/4 mile wire over at each end of the field, Dad could plant up to 10 to 12 acres a day. Today, a planter (for $340,000 and a $250,000 tractor) can plant 12 acres in 7 1/2 minutes! I haven't seen any that size around here, but that is what John Deere is advertising - it is 120 feet wide - at least 4 times as wide as most farmers have in Starke County.

We had a 1-row cultivator (2 horses) with foot pedals to weave the cultivator shanks in and out around each hill of corn. Dad did that - not me. I would have zigged when I should have zagged. Next we had a 2-row cultivator mounted on an H Farmall with a unit attached to the front steering post that would help guide the shovels. If you would turn the steering wheel to the right, the shovels would move to the right a little faster than the tractor. Neat invention. Then the 4-row, 6-row and then a 12-row, and now, herbicides (no cultivation).

Our first corn picker (after the shucking peg, bang boards and horses - that's another story, picking corn by hand) was a one-row JD semi-mounted on the side of the tractor. You would have to knock down the first 3 or 4 rows of corn when you started a field. A little later after you had gone a few rounds, you would go the opposite direction to (hopefully) pick up those 3 or 4 rows.

Then came the two-row picker mounted on an M Farmall. Now talk about dust. Dad was right in the middle of the shucking beds and the dust would roll up at him. Plus all of the noise. Like the 1-row, this 2-row had an elevator to carry the ear corn back to a towed wagon. When the corn cribs were full, I would take the wagon load with the H Farmall to Guy Wells coal yard in Knox (where the Post Office is today), have it weighed, drive across the street to the west and have the front of the wagon hoisted up to unload the corn into the pit of the elevator. Then I would weigh the empty wagon and hurry back to get the second wagon that by now, Dad had filled.

Now everything is harvested with 6 or 12 row combines and the grain is hauled with semis. Since the 1930's we have seen a lot of change in agriculture. I wonder what great things will be in store for us in the next 50 to 100 years. Do you suppose that in the future, the combines will have a transponder on them that will, with radio waves, deliver the corn to the market? It would save a lot of road use with the trucks.

I just knew you could not get along without this information. :-)

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Starke County Historical Society

http://www.starkehistory.com
http://www.scpl.lib.in.us/historical/

Check planting corn --

Planting corn with a check-row planter wasn 't simple. The following was taken from a 1933 McCormick-Deering No. 102 corn planter operator's manual and shows just how tricky the procedure could be.

Reel can be used on either side of planter. In laying out wire, drive Planter to edge of field and place in position to drive across field where the first two rows are to be planted. Take wire from underside and directly off of reel. Hook wire on anchor stake, leaving a few extra links back of hook, then set anchor stake to the rear of Planter near fence and about twice the distance between rows out of line with center of Planter toward near edge of field.

Throw reel foot pedal forward and rest foot on it lightly so as to give a slight pressure on friction wheel of reel. Now drive carefully straight across field so that wheel marks can be used for a guide on the return when planting first two rows. Having driven to far end of field, detach reeling attachment and turn Planter in position for planting first two rows, driving Planter far enough in field to allow for about four links of wire between back of Planter and fence. Now remove enough wire from reel to reach to end of field, allowing a few extra links, hook on anchor stake, drawing wire fairly tight, set stake in rear of center of Planter near fence. In setting stake, see that wire is of proper tension when stake is shoved into the ground.

Starting to Plant

Disconnect marker from support and lower on side toward field, taking care that it is adjusted properly to conform with width of Planter.
Now place wire in fork and see that fork prongs have the proper adjustment. Close up pulley holder, set lever so as to allow runners to go into ground the proper depth and drive a steady gait to opposite end of field, using wheel marks as a guide.

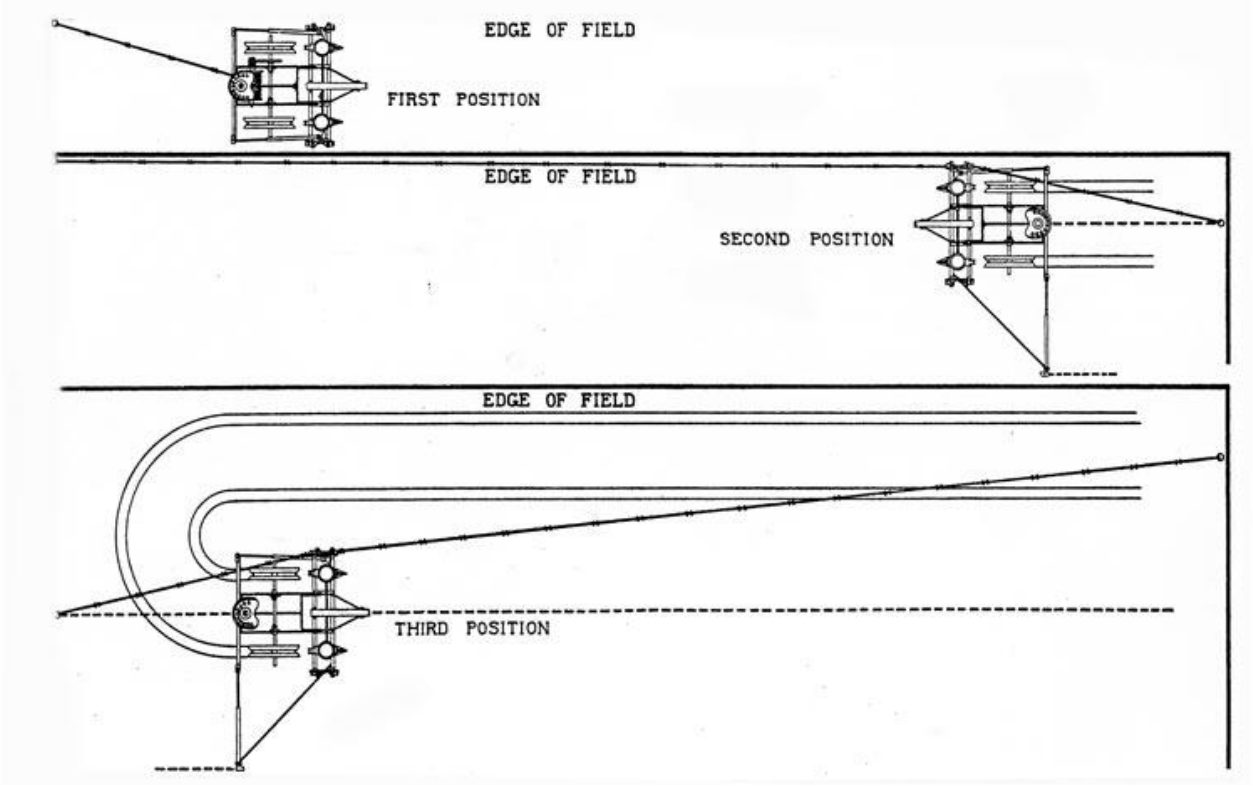
It is not good policy to drive Planter nearer than about four knots of the end before tripping pulley holder and releasing wire, unless in an open field where you can set anchor stake far back of end of field. This plan will leave room for planting one round or four head rows across end of field and will relieve much unnecessary strain on the wire.

Securing a Good Check

To be sure of a good check, it is advisable after having planted a few rows across the field, to dig up several hills, across rows, out some distance from the end of field and see whether or not they are in check. Should the hills show out of check, the distance of this offset is twice the amount of adjustment required of the boot heel to correct the error. For example, if the hills are two inches out of check, an adjustment of one inch of the heels of the boots will throw them in line.
If it is found the hills are dropped too soon, throw heel of boots forward by raising front of planter, using tongue adjustments. This will cause the hills to be carried a little farther before they are dropped. If the hills are carried too far before dropping, throw heel of boots to the rear by lowering front on tongue adjustments. This correction, if not too great, can also be made by raising or lowering end of pole slightly with breast strap.

Taking up Wire

Place reeling attachment on Planter, fasten wire to reel and put in guide so that it will feed from the front and over top of reel. Press foot firmly on foot pedals so that friction wheel will keep wire tight in front of reel when driving toward anchor stake across field. Use shifter to distribute wire evenly on reel. When all wire is on reel, throw foot pedal back so as to remove friction wheel from drive wheel.


EDGE OF FIELD
FIRST POSITION
EDGE OF FIELD
SECOND POSITION
EDGE OF FIELD
THIRD POSITION