

# ***TO THE GRANDPARENTS' FARM WE GO***

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Our Grandparents owned an eighty-acre farm near a small settlement called New Era. It is located about fifteen miles from Muscatine, Iowa, the town where we lived. The settlement had a general store, a church, community building, the parsonage and several other houses.

Several of us children would visit the farm at one time. Grandma, having raised seven children of her own, probably couldn't contend with us all at one time.

Grandpa had a small herd of six or eight dairy cattle. After the morning milking the cows would be let out to pasture until about five in the afternoon. We looked forward to going on our big cattle drive. We would dawdle along and pick blackberries if they were ripe. The farm dump in the ravine looked mighty interesting. We picked up some pretty colored bottles and took them home with us. I think Mom threw them away. The flea markets are full of pretty glass bottles today and have some pretty prices on them too.

I tried my hand at milking but didn't have any luck at it. I must not have had the right touch or had cold hands. The truth was that I was afraid of the cows.

The milk was strained and put into a cream separator. It had to be going very fast to separate the cream from the milk. Some of the good rich cream was put into pitchers for table use. It sure tasted good on homemade strawberry shortcake. The rest of the cream was put into cans to be taken to the dairy and traded for butter and extra cash. The skim milk was fed to the pigs. We would get to churn some butter while we were there. It was a fun time then because it wasn't something we had to do.



## ***TO THE GRANDPARENTS' FARM WE GO*** *continued*

The wood-burning stove in the basement was used to can vegetables in the summer for winter use. Grandma also used the stove to make cottage cheese. A big pan of milk was put on the stove to heat. She would stir this with her hand until it was too warm to keep her hand in it. She then drained it in cheesecloth, washed it with water and drained it well again. After it was well drained, it was put into a bowl and with some of the rich cream mixed in. I wouldn't eat it at the time because it was made out of sour milk. Some time later I learned to like it and ate my share.

Grandma would let us go to the hen house to gather the eggs. I remember one mean hen didn't want us to take her eggs and would peck us on the hand. Grandma would go get them and probably thought it would have saved time to have done it herself in the first place.



I can still see Grandpa walking behind his one horse plow back and forth over the hill. He would have been plowing the land for planting or cultivating corn already growing. At one time he had a collection of Indian relics that he dug up out of the land.

One sister and I usually went to the farm at the time the church in the settlement had its vacation Bible School. We enjoyed being with the farm children. Later we went to High School with them. No school buses then, car pools were the thing.

The community building had a gym in it. It also had a stage for programs. In the basement many good church suppers were served.

The general store was just that. Everything was sold there; food, household goods, farm seed and what have you. Also located on one side was an ice cream parlor. It had wrought iron tables and chairs. It was taken out to make more room for merchandise. Living quarters were above the store. After the older couple that ran it retired, one of our uncles ran the business. I don't remember how long he stayed there. The store is still in operation.

# ***TO THE GRANDPARENTS' FARM WE GO*** *continued*

In the late 1930's their large farmhouse burned down. It has been said that Grandma filled her apron with some of her favorite dishes, went to the back yard, dropped her apron and broke them all. While a new house was constructed, they moved into an old house in the back yard. They had lived there before the large one was built. This old house had been made of logs, a top floor was added and it was covered with siding. When the farm was sold a few years ago the log house was torn down, the logs were numbered and stored. I don't know where they are but I think the historical society is in charge of them.

A trip to the farm wouldn't have been complete without a trek down the road about a mile to a state park called Wild Cat Den. An old gristmill located on the stream is still there. The park had a lot of trails and rock formations. There is a place between the rocks called Fat Man's Squeeze. I used to go through it like a breeze. I said used to. The park has been updated since then, the mill renovated, restrooms and picnic tables were added. An old rural schoolhouse has been moved there also. Perhaps this would be a great place for the log house.

