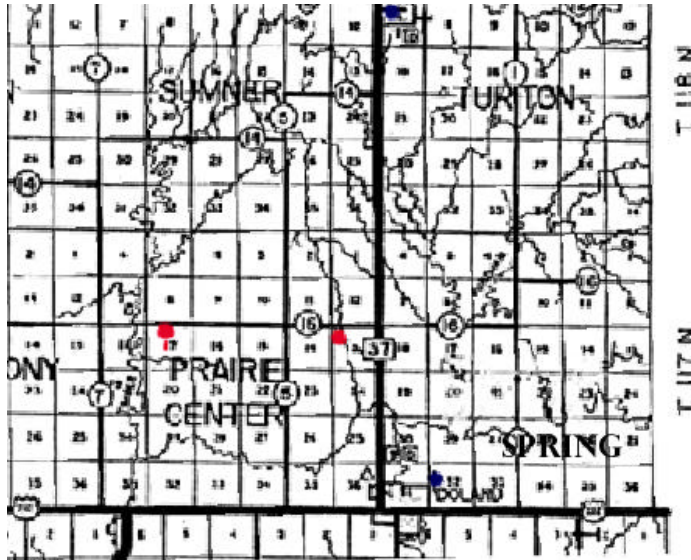


Rainfords: A Farming Family in South Dakota

West Farm-1931, East Farm-1942

In Spink County, South Dakota, the flat, even land was laid out in regular 1-mile sections that made up a 36-section square 6 miles by 6 miles. Two of those



Spink County SD West Farm-#17
East Farm-#13

sections, 16 and 36, were always set aside to rent to farmers to support the school system. We rented about 80 acres each year on the south side of road between the second and third mile west of our farm.

After 1931, the Rainford family spent 11 years on the West Farm located in the north 320 acres of section 17 of Prairie Center Township. The farm was 4 miles west, 4 north and ½ mile west of Doland.

Then they had a chance to move to a new farm with

more buildings and more land in the fall of 1942. The East Farm was 3½ miles east in Section 13 of Prairie Center Twp. It was 4 miles north and 1 mile West of Doland. The farm was 640 acres, which was the whole square mile, including more pasture and some hay land. On one hand, the land was more hilly and rocky. But it had a larger house and barn and sheep barn and cattle shed.

Crops



The name of the game in South Dakota was diversification, so if one crop failed the others would carry you through. The Rainfords didn't do much winter wheat—they planted rye in the fall and a spring Durham wheat. They planted the barley and oats and got the corn in about the 10th of May for a three-month growing season. In addition to these crops they had cattle, pigs and chickens. They milked 8 or 10 cows in a herd of 50 cattle with no milking machine.

The soil was a light loam, different from the heavy loam in Minnesota or Iowa. Back then, 20 bushels an acre was a good crop. Now it's 40 bushels with fertilizer.

It was rocky on the south end of the East Farm. Stones would 'heave' or rise to the surface over the winter. Kids had to pick rocks so they didn't break the plow.

Chores

When the kids came home from school they had to clean the gutter, a trough that collected manure and used straw where the milk cows were kept in stanchions at night. They also spread new hay, carried grain from the granary and kept busy with chores until suppertime.

Of course, before kids went to school in the morning there was the milking and stock to be fed

Farm Equipment



The Rainfords were able to buy an Alice Chalmers (B) tractor in about 1944, which meant we could rent another quarter across Highway 37 in section 7 of Richfield Township. They also made hay on section 16 of Prairie Center Township. In the late 50s, they farmed the southwest quarter of section 8 of Prairie Center Twp across the road from the farm on County Road 16.

Most farm work was done shovel by shovel. There were no elevators or augers to move grain up to the peak of the granary. Standing on the back of a pickup, it was an overhead reach with a shovel load of grain. There are 75 bushels of grain in one pickup load. The pickup had to be shoveled out briskly to get back to the fields where the combine was continuing another round of the field. If the combine had to stop and wait for a pickup to dump, somebody was in trouble.

Hay Stacking

In those days before bailers, we had a steel frame work about 18 feet high bolted to the front of our farm tractor. It had a "bucker basket" with wooden tines which scooped up the hay from windrows. When we drove over to stack and engaged a power cable winch to pull the basket up, the steel frame work track then drove forward and tripped the bucker basket from horizontal position to a vertical position. The hay would slide off the tines to fall on top of the haystack. We had to drive carefully on rough terrain because the center of gravity was so high with this frame. Darrel mention this because it was prerunner to hydraulic bucker stacker and very few were sold.

Milking by Machine

When Dona Jean married Everett Felderman, Dolly lost a fast cow milker since Jean could beat the boys. Fortunately about 1951 a new milking machine was installed and the cream separator was moved from the house to a room on the end of milking parlor.

This was a wise move that saved effort. We did not have to haul buckets of milk uphill to house to separate it and then haul it back to barn to feed calves and pigs. The Rural Electrification Act (R.E.A.) brought electricity to farms in 1949. There may have been an electric motor installed on the separator by then so they did not have to hand-crank it. Dee-Dee always claimed she milked all the cows all the time but never disclosed the fact she did it with a milking machine!

Brooder House

The brooder house was right near the family house so Dolly could take a lot of care with the baby chicks. Dolly and the girls picked eggs and the boys were responsible for feeding the chickens and cleaning the henhouse.

Milk Cows



A milk cow by 1930 standards was any cow that gave milk, and color or size or breeding made no difference. Our parents paid \$7-\$12 or \$16 each for cows during The Dirty 30s.

We had About 8 Milk cows when we were kids. We had Bonnie and Pet, two spotted black and white big boned cows called Holsteins. They filled a 12-quart pail each milking, but the butterfat content was only 2 to 3 percent. We had a little Guernsey cow named Betts who only produced 7 quarts but the butterfat content was at 6 or 7 percent. Marion was a Brown Swiss, an ornery critter that would as soon kick you as not while milking her. She was a brown cow with muted black stripes running down each side; the rest were just roan or black.

Dee-Dee remembers milk cows named Star and Charlotte.

Breeding

Clyde said it was time to improve our cattle herd and milk production, so Clyde and Darrel got in our 1939 International pickup with the wooden box Clyde had built for it, about 7 ½ feet by 9 feet with a stock rack. We drove to Norwood, Young America, out by Highway 5 and 212 which is almost to Minneapolis, MN. Clyde purchased a purebred registered bull (milking shorthorn.) I believe we paid \$400 for it which was a monstrous sum of money in those days. That Norwood farm had whitewashed milking parlor with electricity and running water in the barn--sort of an eye opener for a scrub South Dakota boy. The milking Shorthorns were a deep-bodied animal like a Hereford beef cow, but they produced nearly twice as much milk as Herefords. By the second generation our steer calves were selling for more than Herefords at the sale barn.

Bulls have to be replaced every few years. Our next bull was quite large; I can't recall where we acquired him but he had a ring in his nose so a rope could be attached to lead him around. We gave him wide berth when he was in the corral since he would snort and paw the ground. He never attacked anyone, but then we never put him in a corner, either. He never bothered us when we were on horseback so we never worried when we rode down the pasture to fetch the cows for milking.

Cattle dehorning, vaccination



Once a year, likely in the fall, would be time to dehorn, vaccinate and castrate all the bull calves, all male sheep, all male colts and male pigs. We also would vaccinate the heifers.

We would get the dehorn chute lined up in the barn door, the syringes filled with serum to prevent Brucellosis. We got ropes ready to tie the legs of calves and colts so our home-trained veterinarian Lawrence LaBrie [Dolly's brother] did not get his head kicked off while performing the delicate operation. The crew usually consisted of two or three neighbors and 5 or 6 kids. The kids' job was to drive the cattle into the dehorn chute and lock the gate behind them. The men on the front end had to lock the stanchion to secure the critter for limited movement. The dehorn shears had two blades – one stationary and one moveable--driven by 3-foot handles with a mechanical advantage of handle to blade. Opening the handles of the shears opened the shear blades. We had to place the shears over the horn and maneuver it down so as to get all the horn including the root (which would include some of the head and hair.) Some horns were very brittle and may take two men to close the handles and make the cut. The blood would squirt two feet high; it was a dirty job. If the dehorning wasn't complete then a scrub horn would grow back which looked worse than leaving the original horn. Calves' horns would only grow to 5 or 6 inches in length, but that was enough to injure another cow in your herd.

Darrel tells this story because in the 1930's and 1940's this was a ritual once a year. But come 1948, both Clyde Rainford and Lawrence Labrie [Dolly's brother] died. Dwight was 15 years old and Delmar was 13 years old and they had very little experience performing this ritual and it cost a lot of money to have

a vet come out to the farm. It's not clear how this job was accomplished in later years.

Running the Grain Drill



Donny also could pass on some good advice about farming to Dwight and Delmar, who were only 15 and 13 years old. Advice like: one acre equals 1 rod (16 ½ feet) wide by one half mile long. The old Mc McCormick Deering grain drill was probably 20 years old. It had a chart inside the cover that told how to pick the number to set the gears in order to plant exactly one bushel per acre. That drill had a 12-foot span. By filling the grain box full when starting to plant, they would cover 48 feet wide at one-half mile long. For the boys, that was after two rounds: up and back twice to plant approximately 3 acres. That means 3 bushels of seed grain should fill the grain box to original level. Once you had established, that they could drill—plant grain—in the rest of the field.

Seed Wheat

Each spring it was necessary to clean one bin in the granary *extra* clean for the Seed Wheat. It was home-grown wheat, likely 'CERES' as we did not use hybrid seed until later years. We set up a fanning mill and installed proper sieves to eliminate weed seeds, chaff and grasshopper parts. At this point, a poison powder was applied to the seed grain to prevent smut (a fungal infection) of the crop. Some grain would get spilled in the process and chickens would eat it from the ground.

The eggs tasted awful but we ate a few anyway. In later years we read that the United States shipped some treated wheat to a third world country for seed during a famine. They were so hungry they ate the seed instead of planting it and some of them died.

Grain Elevators



Doland had three grain elevators near the depot. Everyone burned coal so the coal barns were located along the railroad track and sold by the ton in bulk. You shoveled it onto your truck and weighed in at the elevator. We sold our grain to the farmer's coop elevator, but when harvesting grain came in fast and furious, "Oscar" the grain buyer would say "Can't hold any more till we move some loaded boxcars." We would take the International pickup loaded with wheat and pull out a couple of loaded boxcars and spot a couple of empty ones. The long, round spout pipe on the side of the elevator was to load grain in boxcars.

Trains

There were many more train lines in the James River Valley then. These small lines were important to get coal in and grain out. There was a once-a-day

passenger train called the “Galloping Goose.” During the 40s, scrap iron was hauled out for the war effort and new machinery was hauled in.

The House

The kitchen of the West Farm house was on the south edge in a shed-type room behind the front porch. The big stove was in the living room on the northwest end of the main floor, across from the master bedroom. The stove pipe went through the boys’ room on its way to join the chimney. That pipe was the bedroom heating system. Needless to say, they didn’t hang around that room to get dressed but used the teakettle on the stove downstairs. The girls’ room was above Dolly and Clyde’s room. The dormer held a staircase and storage.

Dolly never had a refrigerator. Darrel thought she never needed one because there was never anything left over with all those kids. Those who had iceboxes had to cut ice from the James River 14 miles away during the winter and store the ice in sawdust all summer.

The first refrigerators were kerosene. Dolly never had one but her sister Irene bought one in the 30s. It was called a ‘servelle.’ To run it, kerosene would fuel the fire that expanded the Freon and circulated it up to cool the refrigerator compartment. As the Freon cooled, it would drop down to be reheated.

Well water

The artesian well was on a slight hill so there wasn’t enough pressure to feed the pump in the kitchen. There was no electricity on the farm until 1949, so we couldn’t use a pressure pump. By burying a tank 6 feet in the ground, there was always water to draw in with the kitchen pump.

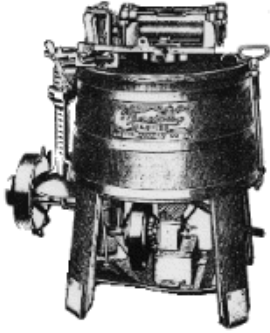
Also, the stock tank was downhill from the well so the water always ran fresh from the well and never froze. The waste water from the kitchen ran through a pipe to the circle area in front of the house.



The Outhouse

The outhouse was a good distance away from the house, beyond the clothesline. It was a trip that most people avoided at night if they could during the winter.

Clothes Washing



Dolly had a Maytag washer with a Briggs and Stratton engine. She would pump a foot pedal to start the 1- or 2-horse engine and then run a flexible hose out the door for exhaust. Behind the range in the kitchen there was a hot water tank. The copper boiler on the back of the stove kept the water warm since the stove was fired up all day. The warm water was poured in the washer and after the clothes were clean, Dolly ran them through the wringer into a square washtub for rinsing. Then they could be hung on the clotheslines to

dry.

Baths

The square washtub was also used for baths on Saturday night. Kids were scrubbed one after another from the smallest to the largest with no water changes in between.

Getting to School

At the West Farm, the Rainford kids went a mile and a half to the one room Ed Sapp School every day, winter and summer. Sometimes there were three Rainford kids lined up on old half-blind Pedro. Pedro was blind in his left eye. If a pheasant flew up out of the ditch on his blind side, he would shy and dump everyone off. Unlike most ponies, he would settle down and rather than running all the way back to the barn, go over to nibble grass while the kids picked themselves out of the dirt.

Our perfect pony was born about 1942 and we named him Pronto. His mother was a purebred bay Hambeltonian trotter named Mabel that we acquired from a breeder in Huron S.D. The pony's father was a purebred Shetland owned by Chet Seaman of Doland S.D. Pronto was a very intelligent horse with a lot of gentle common sense; white with brown and black spots. Pronto was taught many tricks: to kneel so little kids could get on; to rear up on hind legs at a tug on reins; to come to you when you whistled.

He was spirited when older kids rode him for sorting livestock but with young unsure riders he was so careful and gentle. If the rider began to slip or fall off, he would just stop. We believe he lived until 1954 so even the youngest child [Delaine] got to ride him.

West Farm



Later, Art Grandpre gave us a small black Shetland named Buster who was quite cantankerous who often wouldn't take the little kids where they needed to go. Darrel remembers the move to the East Farm because he had just graduated from eighth grade going all that way every day and the new schoolhouse was across the road.

Education

At the Ed Sapp School, the one-room schoolhouse had as many as 21 kids in eight grades.

Duane read everything he could get his hands on from the time he learned to read. There were two books in the school library and a few dozen in the Doland Library so he read them all. It was a great day when he found out that books could be ordered from the Redfield Library. Duane read by kerosene lamp until they got a Coleman lamp which gave even, bright light and that was a very big deal.

Duane graduated from Sap School in 8th grade, but he claims high school didn't go as well. In high school one nice Indian summer day, he and a friend

took the afternoon off and the principal suspended them for a week. Mr. Thiebault was the bald-headed principal at the Doland High School; he was called "Cue Ball" although not to his face. Duane didn't figure that he needed any more time off since he was behind anyway from starting six weeks late after harvest. So he never went back to school after the suspension.

Darrel also had problems with the late start and early finish school schedule. When he joined his class November 1, they were well into math or history so he had to scurry to catch up. Just about the time he was back on track it was spring and time to help with plowing and planting the crop. Big chunks of math that are taught in the fall and spring will come up later to cause problems. By Christmas of his sophomore year in high school, he was finished and stayed home to farm with his Dad.

Donovan finished school in Turton. Duane figured that Donny didn't know how much fun they were having in Doland so he just kept going till he graduated.

Living on the Farm

Donny called Diane the 'Kool-Aid kid' All summer she liked to suck on Kool-Aid constantly and you could tell what flavor it was by the color of the ring around her mouth.

Delmar liked cucumbers and Dolly would make a big bowl full at mealtime. When they came to Delmar's turn would rake a big portion on his plate in case there were not enough for seconds.

Delmar had an uncle (Lee Wolfgram) who always had a bottle of wine when picking corn in the fall. Lee never completely emptied the bottle and would put it under the seat of the truck. Delmar was about 9 years old when he noticed this and every day would show up and rummage under the seat and clean out the wine bottles.

The Depression and Drought

If Dolly ever worried about poor crops and other calamities that happened, she never showed it. She just went about her business as best she could and never a 'why me lord.'

Sickness and Health

No one ever broke a bone on the Rainford farm but it wasn't for lack of trying. There was the machinery and heights and sharp objects and animals. But Darrel doesn't remember visiting the doctor in town even for stitches. Probably the worst accident was when 16-year old Donovan LaBrie shot off half his thumb and half the middle finger on his right hand. He was shooting rabbits with his single-shot 410 and set the rifle upright. Donovan still had his trigger finger, however, so he served in the Navy later on.

Darrel also caught his middle finger in the door hinge of a Model A. It was pretty flat and it's still flat now but it works.

On the West Farm, the Rainford kids used to chase each other to the haymow and shoot out the upper door, 8 or 9 feet off the ground and keep running.

When Dardy started school in September 1943 at the school house right across the road from the East Farm, she was six years old. A chain on the swing broke and came down on her head with only a month of school. She began having pains in her head so we took her to Huron Hospital. Without a way to examine her skull, they said she was fine. But her head kept hurting so we went back to the hospital again. Clyde and Dolly took turns staying at the hospital with her for several days at a time. The doctors asked Dolly if that was the only child they had. That went on all winter. In the spring she got Rheumatic Fever which made her legs swell and hurt so bad we could hardly touch her. Then she got better and went back to school the month of May. They called head pains "meningitis." She went into next grade the next year. Dolly remembers that as the nightmare year.

In the Service

Every Rainford boy served in the military.

Donovan enlisted in the Navy that day after he graduated from high school.

Duane was in the Navy and had a great time with his shipmates, college guys who taught him a lot about doing calculations with a slide rule for navigation.

Darrel was advised by friends who said "Don't go to the Army. You lay in the mud and they shoot at you." He decided to enlist in the Air Force and get training. The Air Force was recruiting farm boys as aviation machinists since they were good mechanically and great at problem solving. When the tractor breaks down in the middle of the field, you don't call AAA. Farmers replace the part themselves and if they don't have a part they make one.

Delmar went to the army and was stationed in Germany.

Dwight was also in the navy, Delroy.

LaBrie Farmhouse

The farm house owned by Dolly's parents was built by Ferdinand LaBrie in 1910. It had all hardwood floors and 32-volt electricity with big glass batteries in



a room by the side of the house on a shelf. They had a gas engine put-put that they'd start and run to generate 32 volts and charge the batteries. They charged up every couple of days for the lights at night. Batteries were two feet tall by 12 feet wide and made of glass. They had 12-20 of them.

One thing about the house that was unusual was a stairway going right downstairs by the kitchen interior door. The cook stove had a

big tank behind it so there was always heated water, winter and summer.

Between the living room and dining room they had wood colonnades with a grid below for the gravity fed furnace. It was a beautiful house, very modern for its time. It burned and has been gone for years; only the foundation remains

Smokehouse

The LaBrie Smokehouse was about 8 feet square, a wood building where hams were hung for preservation or to flavor with hardwood or corncobs. South Dakota hardly had trees, so when a wagon wheel went bad and couldn't be fixed any more, that was hardwood. Nobody but Grandma Francis did the smokehouse work. There wasn't one at the Rainford house. In later years, Clyde used smoke salt to rub in meat for that smokehouse flavor.

Being from a German family, Grandma Francis knew all the recipes like Blood Sausage using washed-out intestines to case the sausage. We kids used to be careful right after butchering if she offered us food.

Francis learned to cook when she was 19 years old and she had to prepare the food for 25 men on her brother's threshing crew. Tony Klapperich furnished the cook car and food; she did the rest. She was a good cook and wasted very little when butchering or gardening. She made the best beet pickles and she never had a fridge until 1940.

But all through the tough times of the 30s and 40s, we used to go to Grandma's on Sunday and the Mannies, Fraziers, and Blooms would be there. She could drag a dinner out of nowhere and feed 10-12 kids just like that. She would gather that whole troupe of kids to the table and then we would go out to play on the farm for 3-4 hours. Then before we went home she would feed us again. Lawrence and Irene were still at the farm and they sort of spoiled the kids.

Soap

Francis also made her own soap. She got the fat from rendering it during butchering. The fat went in a big copper kettle to heat on the stove, and then she sprinkled lye crystals on top of the cracklings. After adding the water she boiled and stirred until it was done. Then she poured it into a box 18-24" long by 2 bars wide—about 12 inches—and three inches high. There were slots in the side of the box to help you cut the bars evenly. Here's her recipe:

HOME MADE SOAP

11 CUPS GREASE (CAN USE RANCID LARD)

1 CAN LYE & 5 CUPS WATER

1 CUP BORAX

MIX BORAX AND WATER IN CROCK JAR (USE WOOD PADDLE)

ADD MELTED LARD & STIR IN LYE; STIR UNTIL THICK

POUR INTO WOOD BOX WITH 2 INCH SIDES

LET COOL AND HARDEN CUT INTO SQUARES

CUT OFF BOTTOM (JELL- LIKE SUBSTANCE) AND THROW IT AWAY

STORE BARS TO WASH CLOTHES

Food

Pork was a staple food during the hard years. The cows were too skinny to butcher, so we ate pork and pork and more pork. When the first cow was butchered in 1942 after times improved, they ground it into hamburger. It was so good, they ate it all immediately.

It was like that with the first bib lettuce each year, too. The Rainfords had a big garden each year where they grew food for the table and preserved for winter. There wasn't that much green during the winter since it wasn't shipped in and folks mostly canned a few beans or peas.

Weather

In winter of 1947, South Dakota had 100 inches of snow. Arnold LaBrie, who lived across the road, teamed up with our tractors and hayracks to fight the snow. We each had 50 head of cattle plus horses and sheep that had to have load of hay every other day to survive. Together, we hauled one day for the LaBries and the next day for us. When it got toward spring, we were driving on two feet of packed snow and a tractor would sometimes break through the crust. That's when it was important to have two tractors.

The hot weather of the 30s was idea for grasshoppers to multiply. The droves of hoppers could eat and wipe out a complete field of grain or corn overnight. In the hot summer they would completely cover the north side of every telephone and fence post to hide in the shade. The federal government offered farmers an insecticide for them: sawdust mixed with arsenic to be spread around the perimeter of the filed with a pull behind the tractor spreader. Needless to say, the grasshoppers preferred the green crops to sawdust. Clyde Rainford bought some molasses to mix in but droves of them just kept coming. Some cattle did get out of the pasture and the grasshopper poison killed them.

Windbreaks

After the drought years, the government helped farmers in Raymond and Frankfort plant windbreaks. The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) put rows of trees along the edge of their farm building yards to prevent the winds from carrying topsoil off the farm. Darrel can't remember a single tree on the 640 acres they farmed. Generally trees only grew up by the creeks that carried runoff. It is hard to get trees to grow because much of the well water is artesian and has too high a mineral content to be used for irrigation. Most have to depend on rainfall.

Land

The land in the James River valley spread out 30 miles or more in every direction to the horizon. After sunset, the night sky was like a deep black bowl. A moonless night was truly black, with miles and miles of darkness. The single pole lamp that marks each farm yard didn't come till after rural electrification in the late 40s. It is never silent in South Dakota farmland: the wind seldom stops blowing and the crickets and small critters move through the fields.

End of an Era

Farming with horses meant that the largest farms that one family could manage were 300 acres, while most were 80 to 100. With tractors, South Dakota farmers could manage 300 to 1,000 acre farms. The Rainford farm was 640 acres in Section 13 plus rented land a mile away for a total of 800 acres.

As the machinery became more powerful, the farms got bigger and bigger. The Rain ford's 3-bottom plow would turn over 42 inches. Now the plows go 20 feet wide. The family farmer couldn't make a go of it as the size of farms became bigger. Farmhouses were abandoned when old people moved out or

young people left for the city. The houses and outbuildings stood for a while and then fell down. Grass grew up over the roads that had fallen into disuse.

The East Farm buildings are all gone now and the neighboring farm families are also gone. Larry and Joe Rahm are farming that land as part of the 7,200 acres--45 quarters of 160 acres each--that make up their farm.

Young people who went off to college and never came back to Spink County to live. As the older generation died and fewer families farmed more land, the businesses closed. Hotels, cafes and bars along main street closed, the movie theatre was shuttered, banks closed in the 60s and 70s. Services like libraries and fire departments were staffed by volunteers. The farm implement dealer left. Churches became 'missions' that hosted a rotating pastor. The prairie towns that grew up in the early part of the century slipped away bit by bit.