



AGRICULTURAL ENGINEERING NEWS LETTER

AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION DIVISION
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

UNIVERSITY FARM, ST. PAUL, MAY 15, 1935—No. 38

FARM BUILDINGS THAT PAY

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For several years past the members of the Division of Agricultural Engineering have frequently endeavored to call the attention of agricultural leaders to the importance of repairing, painting and rebuilding farm buildings as a means of furnishing employment and of maintaining American standards of farm life. It can not be said, therefore, that we have been negligent, but I am sometimes inclined to think we have not always been quite as aggressive as we should be in stressing the importance of building good farm structures.

During the past year millions of dollars have been paid to farmers of the United States for curtailing their production of food products and thus avoiding the accumulation of an enormous surplus. This would indicate that farmers and farm advisers have been spending too much effort on production and not enough on consumption, or upon other kinds of farm work such as the repair or construction of their necessary buildings and the general upkeep of their farms. Surely now is the time to make every effort to start a farm building program of a substantial magnitude. If action is not soon taken, faith in farming will be lost, effort will cease, and a still more serious depression will follow. There are few other possible movements that would be more helpful to all classes of people, give more universal employment, and return more enjoyment per dollar or per hour of work than a movement that would put a good home of modern buildings on every farm in the United States. One remarkable fact is that a building program keeps the dollars in circulation and they are still here after the buildings are completed.

We should beware of false prophets or economics which treat only of money. A reasonable amount of money is desirable. Its use, however, is similar to the use of lubricating oil in that it reduces the friction of barter and facilitates the exchange of goods or property, but it does

not take the place of goods or property unless it is made into jewelry or other ware.

Wealth includes property, and property comes from the ability of people to do useful work, to produce raw materials such as digging gold, copper, iron, salt, etc., to produce grain and livestock, as well as to make tools, to build machines, homes, churches, schools, etc.

The United States in the past 150 years has become a very wealthy nation, partly due, of course, to its natural resources but largely due to the customs, traditions, and standards which our ancestors brought from other countries and have given to us as the basis for a wonderful type of civilization. We have a rich heritage. May we not be found wanting in our attempts to carry on. We should realize that when men of wealth die, their property and their money both remain here and are inherited by succeeding generations. More gold and silver are mined each year, and they remain here either in the form of money, bullion or precious ware. This accounts partly for the large amount of money in the banks of the United States at the present time. When buildings, factories, machinery are being constructed, money is in circulation but it is not consumed. When the building processes are completed, we have both the things built and the money. The money has changed owners and circulates from the workers back to the other owners or their bankers to hold for new loans or other investments.

The big problem in the United States at present is to get the money into circulation again in proper channels to the proper persons. One important solution is to start individuals building good homes and tearing down or rebuilding poor ones, and to pay good wages to persons who work. They will keep the money in circulation by buying an abundance of good food and clothing at good prices and eventually building good homes

for themselves and paying their share of our ever necessary taxes. This will keep them out of the farming business and our farms will again be prosperous.

In Minnesota we still have some excellent examples of the developments that naturally take place in establishing a permanent farming business. Most of our farm land was in its natural wild condition seventy-five years ago and, like all new states, money was scarce and building materials were limited. The first buildings were usually made from sod or from logs. They were built by the farmer himself or by local labor when not occupied with other farm work. Many of these had dirt floors and no conveniences. The life of the ordinary log buildings was about twenty-five years.

As time progressed and farmers prospered, sawmills were established and in about twenty-five years the sod and log buildings were replaced with frame houses. These houses, as a rule, had cellars for vegetables, usually under the living room, but no full basement, no furnace heat, no toilet facilities or electric lights. The life of such houses is about fifty years. Their life could be prolonged but in most cases this is not desirable. They should be torn down and replaced by modern homes. Modern homes should have full basements with furnace heat, hard and soft water, electricity, hardwood floors and finish. They should be large enough to house average families together with room for occasional guests. Houses of this character properly built should last for at least 100 years if they are kept reshingled and properly painted. During their lifetime they will provide good homes for at least three or four successive families and they will be much more desirable homes than the log house or the old-fashioned frame house.

It must be recognized that it is not possible to make sufficient profit on farm products to pay for new buildings in a few years time, and that to be profitable, buildings should be erected that will last over a long period of time, 40 to 100 years at least. This very often necessitates long-time, low-rate loans, possibly with renewal privileges. It is of course realized that inefficient farmers will not be able to negotiate loans. They will benefit, however, by the rise in prices of their products, and they may be able to find extra work at good pay helping neighbor farmers who are able to build or repair their buildings.