THE STORY OF

HENRY FIELD

Frances Hope Field

World Radio History

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affectionately,

Hope

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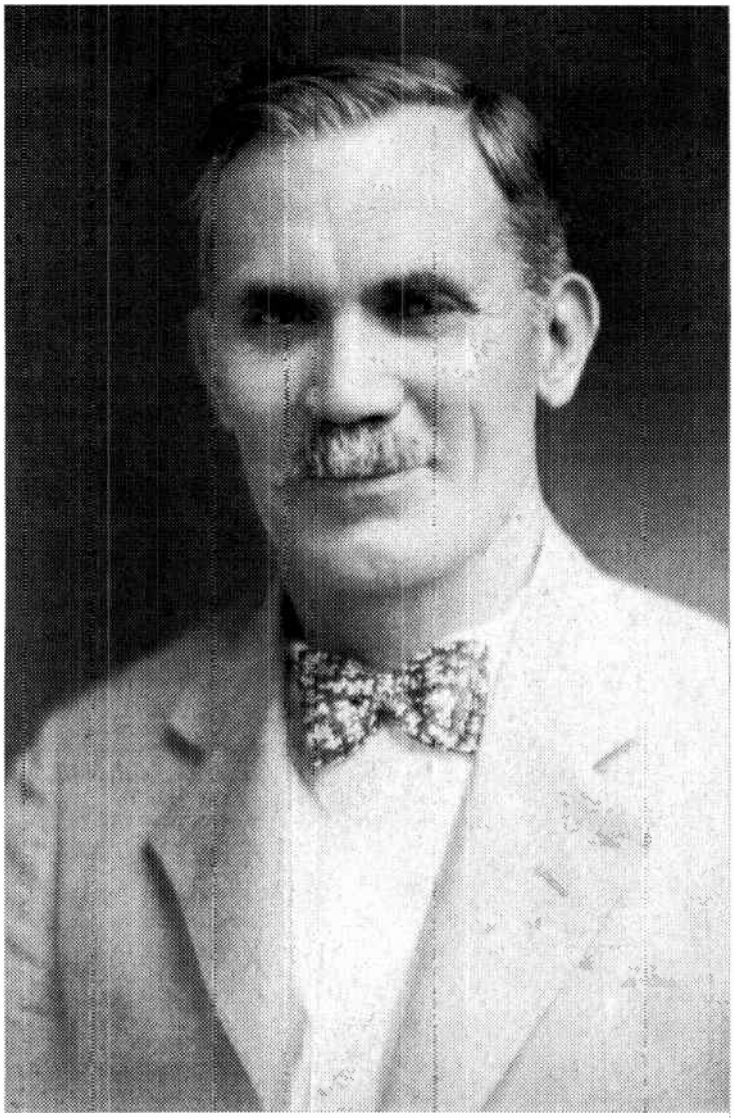

Henry Field

World Radio History

THE STORY OF

HENRY FIELD

By Frances Hope Field

Production by William & Jean Pawek

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Acknowledgements

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I am deeply grateful for the emotional support of my sons, **Bill** and **John Pawek**, for the many hours spent by **Bill** and **Jean Pawek** producing this project, and for the many careful recommendations by **Sandra Pawek**.

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Preface

Henry Field, my father, died October 17, 1949. His death impressed me with a strong conviction: his life story should be told.

For several years, in the early 1950's, I collected all data I could locate pertaining to his life: letters, clippings, interviews with people familiar with his life, and massive amounts of material from his successful seed business.

Then under the tutelage and guidance of George Stewart, the well-known author and professor of English at the University of California at Berkeley, California, I put the book together, and there it has lain for these many years.

During the 1930's and 1940's, Henry Field had become a well-known and popular figure through his radio broadcasting from Shenandoah, Iowa. His activities were familiar to thousands of people in the Midwest and nation-wide.

Now forty years later it is a different time. Henry Field's era has vanished and become unfamiliar, but no less interesting. To his fast increasing descendants and to all those interested in historical America, I present:

THE STORY OF HENRY FIELD.

F.H.F.

December, 1994

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Introduction

On the night of February 22, 1926, an Iowa radio station celebrated its second birthday and set a new world record. For thirty-four hours, Henry Field's Friendly Farmer Station at Shenandoah, Iowa, broadcast old-time fiddling and accordion music played by more than two hundred performers. The first radio marathon in history had most of the receiving sets in ten Midwestern states avidly tuned to Henry Field's wave length.

All that memorable period it was Henry, himself, who presided at Station KFNF—the thrill and excitement of carnival time in his stimulating, compelling voice. Listeners were stirred into a frenzied eagerness to respond. Telegraphed messages poured in from every state in the Union, Canada, Mexico and Nova Scotia. For three days, telegrams—226,000 of them—swamped the little local office with such a tide of response as has possibly never been equaled in radio history, unless perhaps by the reaction to other appeals made by "Henry, himself".

A few months after the 1926 birthday marathon, he was able to garner two million letters of support which the Federal Radio Commission recognized as powerful reason for allotting a favorable wave length channel for Henry Field's radio station.

Henry Field's Noontime Letter-basket Hour established a record (which was to stand until 1949) as the oldest program on the radio. During this broadcast hour, a casual remark made by Henry has been known to elicit a response which taxed the entire postal facilities of Shenandoah, Iowa. Such was the remarkable power of Henry Field's suggestion.

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> Thousands of radio sets bought back in 1925 and '26 were purchased for one main reason!—hearing the Field station. By 1926 there were many stations on the air, but in thousands of Midwest homes the dial was never changed. They were set so the listeners could hear Henry Field.
>
> Behind the whole picture is something else: the story of a boy who succeeded according to American tradition.[1]

This is the story of Henry Field, seedsman, legendary radio personality, and prairie philosopher, who devoted a lifetime to the interests of the middle-western farmers.

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[1] An excerpt from an obituary/editorial in the *St. Joseph, Missouri News-Press* Tuesday, October 18, 1949.

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PART I: 1870-1899

The Early Years

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Chapter 1: Solomon Elijah Field

ABOUT THREE HUNDRED YEARS AGO, a number of immigrants from England named Field settled around Deerfield, Massachusetts. Many of their descendants are still there. Some of them, such as Marshall Field, the Chicago department store tycoon, Eugene Field, the poet, and Cyrus Field, who courageously laid the first transatlantic cable, and others are well-known and outstanding personalities. The Field name also has been borne by more than the usual number of ministers, educators and creative workers.

One scion of this group, Solomon Elijah Field, was born July 8, 1834, in Conway, Massachusetts. As a young man he helped settle Illinois, did his bit to free the slaves by serving in the Civil War[1], and then took up land in Iowa in 1868.

Solomon Field's older sister Philena Field Pease, who was like a second mother to him, had gone out with her husband to southwest Iowa before Sol came west. Their farm was about five miles southwest of the new little town of Shenandoah and three miles west of the nearest post office, the Mormon settlement of Manti.

There were few settlers in the region and fewer trees. In all directions the view was the same—rolling, hilly prairie land covered with wild grass—and nothing else. Here and there a wagon trail cut through the long grass. A few trees grew along the Nishnabotna River west of Shenandoah, and near Manti Creek to the south there was a large grove of native timber.

Sol Field located six miles straight east of his sister and two miles southeast of Shenandoah. A year and a half later, he wrote this letter to his father, Elijah Field, in Massachusetts.

Toulon, Illinois
Nov. 7th 1870

Dear Father:

When one is happy he always wants to share his joy with those most dear to him, and I felt that Father

[1] The War Department sent a Civil War medal to Henry Field in January, 1936 for his father's service with 138th Illinois Infantry.

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should come first on the list. Your poor boy has been cuffed about the world a good deal since he went out with his Father's blessing, but I feel at rest now. I have a home and a wife who is just such a woman as our dear sainted Harriet.[2]

I have worked very hard since I went to Iowa, but have had God's best blessing—the love of a fine woman—to sustain me and have accomplished a great deal. I have my eighty acres fenced and nearly all under the plow, a snug little house that I built all myself, a stable, sheds, yards, and a well—and the first of last April it was a bare tract of prairie with the rank growth of wild grass alone on it.

I have a heavy team of horses that will be five years old next spring, and a nice little brood mare seven years old besides a two year old colt. I raised a fine lot of corn by cutting it through the sod with a corn planter, and lots of nice pumpkins, squash, buckwheat, beans, and potatoes. I often think how you would enjoy making a farm here if you were a young man, but you have done your share.

We have a small debt on our land, but with willing hands to help we will be able to clear it off before long if we continue to be blessed with the good health that has always been the lot of both of us.

My wife's name was Celestia J. Eastman. We were married yesterday morning before church at her father's house. We shall visit at Knoxville this week and be back here at a family gathering on Thanksgiving, and shall then leave for home soon after.

I am very sad because I cannot come to you with your new daughter. I know she would love her new father and that you would love her, but I have had to practice the most rigid economy to be able to fit up our home, and even if we had the money for so long a journey it would be our duty to use it in making our home comfortable. I did not know where the money would come from for my trip to Illinois, but just in the time of need a dear kind friend came to my aid even at his own inconvenience.

[2] Elijah Field's mother.

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Mother or Frank can answer this letter for you. Let me have my Father's prayers and blessing.
With love to you all, I remain your loving son,
Solomon.

So Solomon Field brought his new bride, back to Shenandoah. When Lettie (Celestia) Field alighted at the box car depot, she saw two short rows of one story wooden buildings facing each other across a muddy street. The haphazardly placed, crude structures sat flatly in the middle of the empty prairie without a sidewalk to hold them together, or a tree to give permanency.

The railroad (C.B.&Q.) had come through Shenandoah only that year, definitely locating the station, and ignoring Manti, the dying town to the south.

Sol and Lettie rode horseback diagonally southeast to the 14x16 board shanty away out on the prairie—not a house in sight, not a fence nor a tree—just miles and miles of gray prairie. Lettie made the shanty into a *home*. She papered the unplastered walls with newspaper pictures and wrote to her family in Illinois about the "white, muslin curtains" on her windows, but did not add that they were made from flour sacks.

The first winter was a busy one. Both Sol and Lettie taught school, riding off on horseback every morning in opposite directions. Lettie Field taught Shenandoah's first school, which was held in one-half of a two-room home. The eighteen pupils brought their own boxes and nail kegs to sit on and most of them had no books. But the young bride set out gaily each weekday morning down the hill, through the low, swampy place, and up the last hill. She rode sideways without a saddle, sitting gracefully on the hand-knit blanket covering her pony facing northwest bravely into the intense cold and stinging snow driven by a furious wind. (These severe driving snowstorms were first called "blizzards" ten years later in 1881 when newspaper writers applied the word.)

Sundays, the Fields rode six miles across the unfenced prairie to see sister Philena. Lettie sat on the chest in Philena's kitchen, all seven of the Pease children trying to get as close to her as possible. She made them feel they were very good and very smart; she could do almost anything, so they thought, and was so kind and tactful. When it was time to go, Philena sent gifts and love away with them.

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Chapter 2: Henry Arms Field

Henry Arms Field came into the world on the cold, wintry day of December 6, 1871. He was a long and healthy baby and survived well the horseback rides to his aunt Philena's—Sol and Lettie passed the bundled baby back and forth and laughed as they strove to keep him right side up.

Lettie with Henry

A tintype made of Lettie and Henry at this time shows her dark hair parted exactly in the middle of her high forehead, combed straight back behind her ears and into a large bun all covered smoothly with a net. The barefoot baby clutched at the white lace collar and black bow on the pretty gray dress with its stylish black braid, and ruffles stitched around peplum, wrists, and deep shoulder line. She had arranged her watch so it was half-revealed above the tight belt. Her wide-set gray eyes looked straight into the camera, and the tintype shows clearly the large, serious mouth and strong cleft chin which were also Henry's heritage.

When Henry was six months old, a five-year-old orphan girl was taken into the tiny, two-room home and loved as a daughter. Maggie entertained tiny Henry while his mother was busy cooking, sewing, washing, and carrying water from the outside well—such were the never-ending, backbreaking tasks which were the hard lot of prairie homemakers in the 1870's. Still, Lettie Field managed to find time that summer to help organize a Baptist church in Shenandoah. The town had incorporated, with all sixty-one of the male citizens casting their votes for town councilmen. Uneven wooden sidewalks were being laid before the stores.

Settlers were coming daily to stake out the fertile Nishnabotna valley land they had purchased, sight unseen, from a land agent back east. Some land sold for as little as four dollars an acre.The

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empty prairie was filling up with people. Shenandoah was growing, too.

Next year, the economic Panic of 1873 closed even the largest eastern banking houses, which struck the new farmers a hard blow. There was no market for Sol's corn, wheat, hogs, and cattle. The already scarce cash money almost disappeared. So, like other families, the Fields burned corn for fuel, because it sold for only fifteen cents a bushel. Coal would cost them thirty cents, which was too expensive. Covered wagons went by their door daily, all through the steamy hot summer and even after the cold rains came in October. They were filled with easterners, going west, seeking land in Nebraska and Kansas. Though their own need was great, Sol and Lettie shared their food with the movers, and even gave them shelter in the small shack. There were nights in the tiny house when every available inch of floor space was covered with blankets and straw-filled "shake-downs". Lettie graciously served the travelers breakfast, with no hint of the sacrifice behind it. Cheerfully, the Fields shared what they had.

In 1874 when Henry was two years and three months old, his brother Stephen was born. Sol built on two more rooms to accommodate the three children and ever-present guests. However, the adored Stephen lived only seventeen months. His death affected Sol and Lettie for years afterward. That was the summer, too, when the black cloud of grasshoppers came and in two days ate every trace of vegetation down to the barren ground. But in spite of these losses, Sol invited Frank Forbes, his nephew, to share their home and teach school in Shenandoah. Frank marveled at the loving hospitality extended to him, and the way the growing community sought out Sol Field for highly respected advice on business, social, educational, and political affairs.

The next spring the first daughter, Helen, was born, much to Henry's disgust. To his four-year-old mind a baby brother was quite desirable, but he could see no use for a sister.

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Henry at 5 years

When Henry Field was five years old, he chose his life occupation. Later, he recalled:[3]

> I think it all started from the reading of the James Vick catalog, when I was a boy five years old. James Vick was really the father of the mail-order seed business, and I can remember just how that catalog looked to me. It was my dearest possession, and I can remember having my mother read it out loud to me. After studying that catalog, I wanted to be a seedsman, and I insisted that my mother write to Mr. Vick to that effect.
>
> The dear old man wrote me a personal letter in reply which I carried around till I wore it out. He also sent me a colored picture of gladiolas, the first I had ever seen.
>
> All the next summer I was saving seed every chance I got, but when fall came, to my sore disappointment, I could not find anyone who would buy them. Finally Aunt Martha Long, a kind-hearted old lady, out of the goodness of her heart, gave me an order for 50 cents' worth of flower seeds, and I think I must have worked several days making up by hand the little envelopes to put the seeds in and getting them filled to my satisfaction.

[3] From *The Henry Field's Seed Catalog*, 1911

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Chapter 3: Henry's Childhood

Henry's second sister Martha was born in 1878, when Henry was seven. Additionally, the Fields opened their home to another orphan girl, twelve-year-old Lucinda who gratefully responded to all that Lettie taught her. She shouldered part of the laborious house work on the pioneer farm, while Maggie helped with the new baby girl.

Henry, a quiet, independent little boy with serious brown eyes and home-barbered brown hair, was taught at home, since no school was near and his teacher-parents were quite competent. He was glad to stay in the loving circle of his own family. He followed his father around the farm and helped him with the chores. He liked most of all to work in the garden. He helped with the planting, carefully weeded the rows, and knew when the vegetables were ready for picking. His father gave him a free hand. He spent happy days in the garden, wanting no other playground.

The next year Lettie left for a visit to her home, taking the two little girls with her. Henry was left in the care of his father. Lucinda cooked very nicely for them, using the pretty tablecloths and putting flowers on the table just as his mother did. Maggie washed his ears gently and played with him, but Henry sorely missed his mother.

Then a letter came addressed to Henry Field, Shenandoah, Iowa.

Celestia (Lettie) Field

Wildcat
June 5, 1879.

My Dear Son,

You don't know how glad I am that I have a dear little boy to write to me when I am so far from home. I think you write real well. I can read it as well as I can Papa's.

When I heard you were going fishing I told Grandma I was

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afraid you would fall into the river but you did not, did you?

There was a wolf that killed one of Grandpa's sheep the other night on the hill in front of the house.

Your Uncle John caught a muskrat in a trap, he tied a string to its leg and dragged it into the house. He told Mattie it was a wolf and she thinks it was. Its fur was not nice so he let it go again. Grandma had six nice little goslings but a rat got them and the hogs got all her little turkeys but two.

Your little sisters want to see you so much. Cousin Sarah wants to keep Mattie, but she don't want to stay. Shall I leave her?

I expect you have learned a great deal since I came away. And I expect you need some new pants by this time. Maybe the girls have made you some.

Your mother,
L. E. Field

Henry saved the letter for seventy years, treasuring the loving words in faded ink on time-yellowed paper that were sent to a lonely little boy wanting his mother.

Helen, Jessie, Leanna, and Martha

Another girl was born in that house not long after![1] Besides the growing family, there were always many guests and numerous visiting relatives in the Field home. The large family of Philena Pease came frequently to see the Fields. Philena came most often, to help Lettie, and she was an inspiration to Henry. He loved her as if she were a dear grandmother and he developed a life-lasting love, too, for his cousin Jessie Pease, who was nearest his age.

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The summer he was eight, Shenandoah had grown to two thousand people. Every day Henry walked barefoot the two dusty miles to town, carrying a basket of vegetables on each arm. His interest in gardening had led to selling vegetables in partnership with his father. At the end of the summer, his little black account book showed $3.65 as his share for the season. Ten cents of this hoard was spent to see his first theater, a traveling troupe called *Tennessee Minstrels.*

One and a half miles east of the Fields lived the Wilson family. The two families were very friendly and Walt Wilson had become Henry's closest chum. The boys were the same age, but Walt was a larger, handsomer boy with a lively aggressive manner. Henry admired him greatly. One morning Walt came over to see his friend. "Pa is giving me ten cents to snap two loads of corn," he said. "See if you can get ten cents and we'll go to see the *Tennessee Minstrels.* You can stay all night with me afterward." (Spending the night together was a favorite recreation.) It would take Walt nearly all day to fill two wagons with unhusked ears of corn stripped from the standing stalks, but the farm-bred boys agreed that ten cents was a good wage. When Henry's mother was approached with the plan, she said, "Walt, wouldn't you like to spend the night with us?" "Naw!" Walt exploded, "there's too gol-danged many girls in this house!"

Sol Field was prospering, his farm was well developed and beautiful, and Henry was growing up. Sol built a large new home at Sunnyside Farm when Henry was ten. In Henry's handwriting, on a mouse-chewed piece of paper, he wrote this description:

My Room[2]

> In the year 1881, one mile south and one mile east of the college, a brick house was built. This house contains seven rooms on the lower floor and five on the upper floor. It is one of these latter rooms which I shall try to describe.
>
> It is the southwest corner; it has a carpet on the floor and pictures on the walls. It has a window on the south and west and two doors on the east, one of which leads to the hall and the other one to the closet where I keep clothes, shoes, books and what not. Between these two doors is a third door, not more

[1] Picture from *The Story Of An American Family* by Lucile Driftmier Verness

[2] Henry probably wrote this undated essay in his nineteenth year while attending Western Normal College in Shenandoah, Iowa.

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than half as wide as either of the others, which opens into a small bookcase that is built in the side of the closet. In the upper part of this bookcase I keep books and papers and in the lower part gun implements, powder and shot and other things of no particular value to any one. On the wall between this bookcase and the hall door is a picture of foxes.

The north wall is adorned by a diploma granted my roommate by the Shenandoah Public School. On the floor just below this document with its lid turned back against the wall is a large trunk. Not as large as it should be perhaps, still large enough so that when packed it has caused many a poor baggage man to turn red in the face and break the second commandment.

On the west side of the room to the right of the window stands a black walnut bookcase and on the bottom shelf of the upper half which is wide to serve as a well-worn desk I see, not a skeleton, not a pair of socks, not a stand up collar, not a hat, but a razor strop which by the way belongs to my room mate.

And what are all these papers scattered around? Vain attempts at an essay on My Room.

On the second shelf I see among other interesting books a copy of the Senate Journal for 1890. The other shelves contain books of a great variety. On the south side of the room to the left of the window stands the bed and above this a map of Iowa tacked to the wall. Last but not least a flower press used in Botany and the leather strap which hangs on a nail behind the door.

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Chapter 4: The *Country Jakes*

"I consider myself a twin brother of Shenandoah[3], the far-famed 'daughter of the stars'! In the rapid growth and development of the town, you see a parallel of my own. My mother superintended the early education of both.

"I need say but little as to myself. I had little or no education until my advent in the town school in 1881. I was at once set down as a *country jake* of the most pronounced type and treated accordingly. My life would have been unbearable if it had not been for one or two trusty friends, notably Walter Wilson, who was like myself, from the country.

"My most vivid recollection of that year is of a gang of town boys imprisoning us under a dry goods box and charging ten pins a peep at the only Original Country Jakes."

This day, after dismissal, two boys detained Henry, while another ran off to bring a large crate commonly used to ship chinaware from Austria. The crate was slatted—the slats being made of pencil-size rounds bound together to make six-inch solid strips.

With a boy at each arm, they tried to force Henry into the crate. Walt relates that he came to Henry's defense.

"Now this has got to stop." he yelled.

"Who says so?"

"*I* do!" and Walt knocked down two boys in rapid succession.

In the meantime, other hecklers had shoved the crying, infuriated Henry under the crate.

Walt was finally overpowered and thrown into the crate, also. Henry was blind with rage and humiliation—so mad he had to fight someone. As Walt came under the box he struck out at his loyal defender.

"What'd you want to pitch into *me* for?" bellowed Walt. And the angry, weeping boys tussled and strained.

"Come and see the only ***Original Country Jakes!***" their tormentors shouted from atop the crate.

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[3] The word "Shenandoah" means *Daughter of the Stars*

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"Look they're alive! They're alive!" as the crate heaved from the fighting within. "Come see the live country jakes! Shipped straight from Austria!"

The shock and hurt of those jeering words made a lasting impression on the sensitive little boy who had known until then only loving approval. A painful memory forever—to the town boys, Henry Field was a *country jake!*

Two months later came the day of the Hunt. Game and wild fowl were plentiful on the prairie and hunting and fishing an important source of food. At Henry's school, the Town Boys challenged the Country Boys to a Thanksgiving Hunt to be held the Saturday before Thanksgiving.

They agreed on the number of points to be given for each kind of game, and chose up sides for the two groups. Walt Wilson was captain of the Country Group and tells this story. As his turn came, he chose his boys carefully, trying to pick those who could shoot.

"Billy Patterson," he chose. "Wes Jones." Henry was the only boy left.

"Henry, have you got a good gun?"

"I've got an old Zulu gun," he answered, "But I can shoot a squirrel *right thru the head!*"

The Town Boys hooted derisively, but Walt chose Henry, at last.

On Saturday, the boys began to straggle in early, most of them carrying jackrabbits in their bags. Rabbits brought only one point because they were so numerous as to be a serious pest in the country. Still, by five o'clock the Town Group was ahead.

Walt counted off his badly-beaten team—all in but Henry. Just as it was growing dark, Henry came over the hill, loaded down with his bagged game.

"Five points apiece for the partridges," Walt exulted. "Five for the pheasant. Fifteen each for the five squirrels, and three for the prairie chickens."

"And I even hit a deer in Manti Woods," insisted Henry. The respectful boys believed him. Henry had won the Hunt for the Country Group!

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Chapter 5: Frances Johnson

Sol and Lettie Field helped to found the Western Normal College in Shenandoah. It opened formally in 1882.

The college at first was beset with financial troubles and one day suffered a nearly mortal blow. As Henry and his friend Walt came out of school a strong wind blew them flat to the ground when they held the backs of their jackets high over their heads for sails. On their way out of town, the boys rode their ponies south on Center Street past the college at the top of the hill where Summit Avenue crossed Center. The gale had blown the roof off the new college! It was a major financial disaster. But the college roof was replaced. Western Normal College gradually gained prestige and attracted an increasingly larger number of students.

One of the students, Frances Johnson, an intelligent girl, alone in the world, was struggling to get an education and become a teacher. In her own words, she "learned of the Western Normal College, and upon arriving at Shenandoah, a kind of providence led me to Sunnyside Farm.

"I never knew what it was to feel welcome until I entered this hospitable home. How well I remember that day! Henry was about ten years old and the other five in steps down to the 'Resurrected Leanna,' an infant just recovering from the dread cholera infantum...

"I was installed as a member of the family. Space will not permit even a brief recital of all the interesting events in this home. They filled every hour. There was never a dull or prosy day at Sunnyside...

"I see Helen in her bee bonnet, hiving bees to my utter consternation. Then strawberry time, the army of berry pickers and the making of the boxes, a recreation in which Helen again distinguished herself by composing poetry and setting it to the tune of the hammer.

"The different fruits came in succession varying our work without loss of interest, even tempting the festive Fourth of July picnickers to our shade by 'Welcome to Sunnyside' in big letters of

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evergreen over the entrance.

"The program of the summer closed with the cider making in the fall. Great loads of apples were lined up awaiting their turn at the mill, some having come from points in Northern Missouri...

"Father and Mother Field were the two broadest minded people I have ever known. Their home was a refuge for all who needed shelter. The traveler in the 'prairie schooner' was permitted to build his fire by the gate and replenish his store of food from the abundance of the farm.

"...those happy days at Sunnyside..."

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Chapter 6: Boys Will Be Boys

A school report card dated 1884 and proudly saved is evidence that Henry Field attended Shenandoah Public Schools when he was thirteen years old, and that Miss Kitty J. Laws was his teacher. S. E. Field had signed the card approving these grades:

Deportment	95	Drawing	98
Arithmetic	95	Grammar	95
Reading	99	History	98

Monthly School Average 97

Henry sometimes met Walt and the other boys in town on Saturday evenings. All the stores were open—Saturday was the day most of the farmers came to town to "trade" and see their friends. Main Street was a milling, slow-moving throng of laughing, chattering groups, dressed in their best.

Henry and his friends thought it was great fun to get together on a moonlight night and race their ponies the four miles to Manti. The country roads were rough, gullied-out wagon tracks and there was great danger that the horses would stumble. Henry usually won the race, according to Walt Wilson but he added: "It's a wonder we didn't go off on our heads!"

Other evenings when the boys met, to the query, "Is Henry coming?" Walt would answer, "Henry isn't much for going out nights. He is always working in that blame garden or staying home with his folks."

When Halloween came, though, Henry was in on all the fun. The boys practiced running for thirty days before Halloween, so they wouldn't get caught and as they phrased it, "get kicked good!" For throwing ammunition, they piled up large hoards of soft, wet, rotten apples. On Halloween night there was an evening meeting at the school house with all the prominent citizens attending, including the Fields and the Wilsons. Henry and Walt had previously driven a large heavy spike on each side of the only door.

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After everyone had entered, the boys wired a heavy post across the door, securely fastened to the spikes. Their giggles brought adults to the windows, which were several feet from the ground. The barred door was discovered and caused great consternation because no one felt able to jump to the ground and remove the bar.

With unerring marksmanship, the boys splattered those at the open windows with the brown, clinging wetness of very rotten apples, then left the adults to their predicament.

Next, a heavy wagon was located, which the pranksters pulled to the bridge crossing the swampy creek on the south edge of town. They blocked the bridge effectively with the turned over wagon bed, removing the wheels so it couldn't be righted.

Then they piled into their spring wagon, Henry, Walt, Wes Jones, Billy Patterson, the Deerings and two or three others. They found an empty kerosene barrel. "Load it in, fellows!" So it was put aboard.

At this point, the rival "Billy McCullough Gang" spied them and gave chase. Shouting at the horses, they careened madly along the country road. The heavily loaded wagon was being overtaken by Billy McCullough's gang. "For gosh sakes, let go that barrel!" shouted Henry. It was pushed out and the dancing, bobbing barrel rolled down the hill like a live thing.

Billy's horses leaped through the hedge at the side of the road and no coaxing could make them pass the place where the barrel had frightened them, so Henry and his friends got safely away.

When their parents arrived home after a seven mile drive around the blocked bridge, the boys were asleep, happily dreaming of next year's Halloween adventures.

There's Money in Gardening[1]

Before he was 15 years old, Henry Field's garden was known throughout the section of Iowa in which he lived as the finest and best conducted for miles around. Squashes, cabbages, and pumpkins that dwarfed the best specimens of other agricultural experts became a matter of everyday occurrence there. "That Field boy's flowers" was a synonym for beauty and gorgeous coloring and there was hardly a country *[sic]* fair at which Henry did not walk off with first prize.

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[1] excerpt from *MAKING MORE MONEY* by Public Ledger Co., Le Sueur, Minn.

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> It was only natural therefore, that neighbors began to ask him for seeds so that they, too, might produce the monster vegetables and beautiful flowers which the Field garden boasted. At first, Henry gave these seeds away. But he soon began to realize their value and put a price on them that would cover their cost, plus an adequate margin of profit. Packets of seeds were sold here and there and almost before he knew it Field has the nucleus of a mail order business which, in a few years, was netting him $12,000 annually.

Henry spent most of his after school hours at home in the garden getting more and more into the market gardening business on his own.

Sol Field was primarily interested in livestock farming but was also developing a thriving market-gardening business. He raised and sold many wagon loads of vegetables and his wonderfully large and luscious strawberries were eagerly sought after in Shenandoah.

Besides the produce they raised, his father took orders every fall, bought, and delivered to his customers the desired bushels of potatoes, cabbages and root vegetables which the Iowans must store for the winter. Henry followed right along in the same business. Some people, seeing the fine vegetables he grew, asked to buy "some of the same seed" Henry used.

Henry and his father developed a thriving business selling sweet potato plants. During 1885, when Shenandoah panicked Southwest Iowa with its raging smallpox epidemic, no one was allowed to enter the town for six weeks. All schools, churches and businesses were closed. Henry hitched his pony to the little two-wheeled sulky, tied baskets of sweet potato plants under and over the vehicle, and spent the time selling his plants throughout the county.

In common with the other settlers, Sol Field had planted trees in great numbers. The hills which had shown neither bush nor tree in 1870 now were closely dotted with many varieties of greenery. Everyone had hastened to plant fruit trees. Sol had many cherry trees and such a large apple orchard that he had built himself a wooden cider press. Other farmers paid Mr. Field fifteen cents to press a load of apples into cider, for the over-plentiful fruit sold in the stores for only ten cents a bushel.

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Other shrubbery was provided as more and more landowners planted hedge for fences. The nurseries had come early to Shenandoah, and they paid school boys $1.50 a bushel to gather osage orange apples or hedge-apples as they were called. They were needed for seed to supply the demand for hedge plants.

The barren gray prairie had poured forth riches with a lavish fecundity—the fertile black soil had produced a profusion of wealth. It was a lush, green land, now, fulfilling the promise of abundance and plenty.

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Chapter 7: High School

> There was a meeting of the Lincoln Club last night, but owing to the absence of several, the programme for discussion was dispensed with. There was in its place an informal discussion of questions of interest to the club and the Republican Party. The primary election was discussed by S. E. Field. The remarks of Mr. Field were so interesting that he was tendered a vote of thanks. (*The Shenandoah Sentinel*)

S.E. Field

In 1886 the farmers were demanding a voice in making Iowa's laws. Many people in Page County felt that Sol Field was the man to go to the State Legislature, but Lettie shrank from the publicity and mud-slinging politics of the day and she dreaded to have Sol gone from home for two long winters. Solomon E. Field, Jr. was just two years old and the sixth child, Leanna, born that spring, was a sickly, feeble baby. Sol was both doctor and nurse when illness struck in the family—his wise, gentle care healing even the most serious cases. He was greatly needed at Sunnyside Farm.

Lettie realized, however, that the children would gain in many ways if their father went to the Capitol, so she reluctantly consented. Sol entered and won the Republican primary election for Representative from Page County. Shenandoah and Page County were traditionally Republican so the winner of the primary was conceded the fall election.

The Shenandoah paper commented:

> The *Clarinda Democrat* pokes fun at us Republicans for our legislative candidates, saying that in the late primary election we pitted a pumpkin peddler against a pill peddler; that the pumpkin peddler was the favorite as the grangers have far more faith in pumpkins than they have in pills, which accounted for Field's triumph and Dr. Van Sandt's defeat...

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> We tell you, Mr. Democrat, you can't always tell just how far even a frog can leap judging by its appearance. We back our man.

Later that year S. E. Field was elected Representative to the Iowa Legislature and went to Des Moines. Henry went with his father—a never-to-be-forgotten experience which set the course he followed for the rest of his life.

> At fifteen I got my first experience in a real seed business. At that time, Livingston's Seed Company, then and now of Columbus, Ohio, had a branch house at Des Moines, Iowa, in charge of one of the sons, Josiah.
>
> I went to Des Moines, and worked in the seedhouse all winter for him. It was there I met the late A. W. Livingston of tomato fame, a lovable old man, and gained from him a bigger and better idea of the seed business than I had ever had up to that time. I worked for $3.50 a week that winter, and paid $3.00 of it for board, but what I learned and the inspiration I gained, made it richly worth while.
>
> I could not get into the seed business on my own account, yet, but all the time I was dreaming about how I would run a seed business if I got the chance, and the plans formulated at that time were the identical plans that (later) made my seed business a great and prosperous firm.[2]

Henry was strong and wiry. He was never sick, always vigorously healthy, and he showed a driving persistence for long hours of hard work. Any other course, he thought, was pure laziness.

"You girls enjoy being sick," he scornfully told his sisters, and secretly felt that they "took advantage of their illnesses to gain attention from Papa and Mama."

Henry returned to high school the next winter while others of the Field children went to Des Moines with their father. He easily caught up with his class, and pursued, after hours, his constantly growing interest in plants and gardening.

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[2] From *The Henry Field's Seed Catalog*, 1911

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"That Field boy's garden" was known throughout that section of Iowa, not only for the huge vegetables he grew, but also for his beautiful flowers. Demand for "the same kind of seeds he used" brought in a tidy profit. It was the nucleus of his planned-for seed business.

> The announcement of Hon. S. E. Field as a candidate for re-election as representative to the General Assembly appears in this issue. Mr. Field served faithfully with his party during the last session, and proved a friend to the farming interests of the state. It has been customary to give a man two terms.
>
> The temperance convention last Saturday was fairly well attended, the notice being short. S. E. Field was called to the chair (and he made a right good chairman too)... Twelve delegates were selected to go to Des Moines for the temperance meeting. (Among them was Hon. S. E. Field.) Uncle Sol Field is sound on prohibition. (from *The Sentinel.*)

It was a busy time for the family. A seventh child, Susan, was born, May 25, 1888—Henry now had five sisters and one brother.

Sol Field was elected for a second term, and Henry again accompanied his father to Des Moines. This time he served in the legislature as a page boy, and Lettie received the message, "Henry is doing very nicely. Your hubby, S. E. Field." It was a broadening experience for the seventeen-year-old.

But the next fall, Henry went back to high school, planning to graduate the following spring. The sober, studious boy was an excellent student, and was somewhat out of place in the "Bad Boys Room". Henry was inclined to obey the teacher, John Sogaard, but, according to Walt Wilson, "The big, rawboned young instructor 'licked the tar' out of some of the boys in his efforts to keep order".

One day Sogaard requested the zoology class to bring in specimens. Jeff Munro brought a harmless snake to school, and soon informed the aghast teacher that it had escaped from the box and was loose in the room.

"If anyone apprehends the missing specimen, he will proceed to dispatch it with promptness", Mr. Sogaard instructed.

The class nervously gave half-hearted attention to their lessons. Every few minutes, a girl squealed as one of the grinning

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boys ran a teasing finger up her back.

Walt Wilson walked over to the large ten pound dictionary lying on one desk. Suddenly he raised the heavy book in the air and brought it down with a loud smack on the seat. The jittery girls screamed loudly; the boys jumped to their feet.

"Walt!" the teacher demanded, "Why did you do that?"

"You asked us to dispatch the escaped specimen, didn't you?" Walt asked with a righteous air.

"Did you - er - dispatch it?"

"I thought I did." Walt said.

However, investigation showed Walt's efforts to be unsuccessful.

School was disrupted in that manner, until recess, when Mr. Sogaard and the boys, searching diligently for the reptile, finally spied it wriggling happily over the floor!

Another zoology specimen brought greater disaster. Walt again was the culprit. He trained a skunk to follow on a leash, being very careful to stay in front of the animal. Bringing it to school in a box he told the teacher he had an animal for the class to identify.

The too trustful Sogaard told Walt to produce his prize. Walt grasped the string and led the skunk before the group. Amid the ensuing excitement and rush for the door, the teacher unwisely got behind the odor-producing mammal.

School was suspended for three days while the building was deodorized, and John Sogaard was indignantly "run out of town".

The "Bad Boys Room" met its match in the next teacher. Mrs. Bliss tolerated no mischief and sternly kept every boy at his lessons. She attacked Henry for his poor handwriting, shaming him in front of the others.

"How do you ever expect to amount to anything writing like that?" she asked him sarcastically, as he stood forlornly at the blackboard.

His brown eyes flashed. For once, he "answered back".

"You never saw Shakespeare's or Milton's writing, did you?"

At last the Bad Boys were to graduate. But first, the Boys must make one last effort to show their independent spirits. They agreed among themselves in deepest secrecy that all five boys would appear for graduation in overalls! Not a new suit was bought.

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Wayland Deering and his sister Anna were graduating together; Anna was valedictorian. She somehow got the story of the conspiracy from her brother, and the nine feminine graduates refused to appear on the stage with the boys.

Graduation plans were at a standstill when the parents came to the rescue and rushed recalcitrant young males down town for any sort of dressy, and sometimes impractical suits—anything that was available at that late hour. Henry acquired a coat with long tails, and Walt Wilson had to accept an unwanted white tropical number.

The Sentinel reported the grand event:

OUT OF THE NEST INTO THE WIDE, WIDE WORLD
FOURTEEN TALENTED YOUNG STUDENTS
GRADUATED IN THE HIGH SCHOOL COURSE,
FRIDAY EVENING, MAY 31st, '89,
AND STEP ONTO THE WORLD'S STAGE TO ACT THEIR PARTS.

At the appointed hour, into the Opera House and onto the stage, marched the fourteen young graduates—five gentlemen and nine ladies—the light of hope and intelligence modestly beaming from their brows... The young ladies all were dressed in pure white, and amid their floral surroundings looked lovely as the children of the rosy Morn. The young fellows, too, were manly, dignified, and tasty in dress and appearance... The K. P. Orchestra discoursed sweet music, enlivening the hours as the evening melted into night and the night grew into the wee Sma' hours that usher in the morning. Where so many graduates had to deliver their essays—all had to be heard without partiality—the audience resolved to be just, and make a night of it...

The first graduate to speak was Walter Wilson... Then Blanche Monk, At the Crossing of Life...

Passing from the real life with Blanche we come to the ideal life with Jessie Wingert...

From the real of Blanche Monk and the ideal of Jessie Wingert we come, by easy transition, to the indefinably erratic of Henry Field, who when a child, was known among us as

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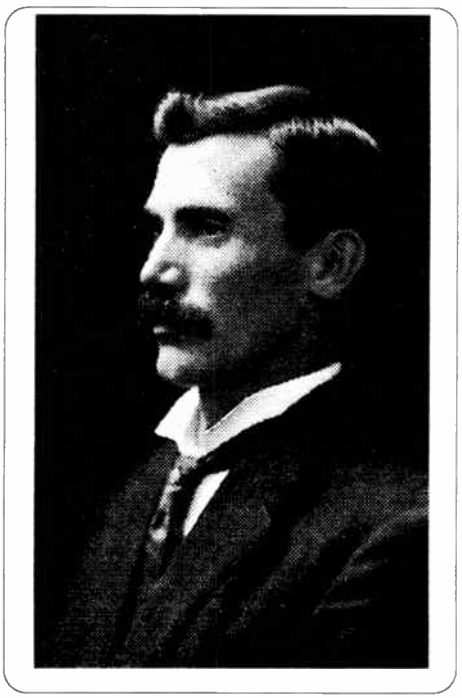
"Young Spurgeon"[9]. He has lots in him, and the lungs and voice to give birth to it in speech. He spoke on Cranks, and as this nation is supposed to contain about 60,000,000 of them, he hit nearly everybody in it. His subject was a big one, but he was equal to it, and acquitted himself well as usual...

The President of the School Board, John Mentzer, presented the graduates with their credentials and an address replete with wisdom, in which he expressed the kind wishes of the Board for the success of the young graduates now starting out in life.



[9] Spurgeon was the founder of a successful chain of retail stores.

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Chapter 8: Papa Goes to Des Moines a Second Time

Representative Hall
3/3/90

Dear Mama,

I think of you and baby Susie all the time. I do hope Susie is better so you can get away and have a rest. I shall go to the station every night till you come. I thought I was over my cold but had a hard coughing spell last night.

I got the Sentinel today. Secretary Jackson and Tama Jim said my article was just grand.

Blind Boone is here. I have a mind to go and hear him tonight.

Mr. and Mrs. Perkins and Mr. and Mrs. Townsend are going to Mr. Holbrook's for supper tonight.

I think we ought to have at least six bbls. of sweet potatoes, perhaps more, Henry can do as he thinks best. Get one or two bbls. of red nansamond.

I shall look for a letter from you every day till you come to see me.

With love to all.
Papa

The year after his graduation from high school, Henry Field managed Sunnyside Farm while his father was in Des Moines. Sol was extremely proud of his eighteen-year-old son, and gave him full authority to manage the farm while he was away. Henry did so well that his mother at last yielded to Sol's urging and made her first trip to the Capital.

Cousin Emma Pease came to stay with the children, and Sol was proud to welcome little Jessie and the tall, beautifully dressed woman in the wine and gold gown and the full-length coat of rich, dark-blue broadcloth.

Lettie wrote the family after her arrival:

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Representative Hall
March 7, 1890

Dear Emma, my own dear children,

I have tried ever since I came up here to get time to write, but this is the first time that I have been up to the Capitol. I have been just as busy as I could be. I am having a nice time and I guess Jessie is too, but she is so timid we have to push her out. Yesterday she went to visit the school of little folks where Mattie went.

We got her a real pretty little cloak for $3.50 and also one for Helen, a real nice one.

I was so glad to get Emma's letter yesterday. I do not feel worried about the children though I should like to see them all every morning and night. I was so proud to know that my Sollie was good. I know how good he can be, even when he has a sore toe and those dreadful sores on his face. I don't see any boys that I like as well as I do my Sollie and Henry.

Mrs. Perkins is here and Mr. P. says he is going to keep her until time for her to begin plowing.

Emma, I should be having a perfect time if I could get over feeling guilty about taking up your precious vacation time. But I am so selfish I do want to stay another week if you are all well. I am anxious to hear from Henry. I do wish Aunt Philena was up here with me. I knew little Leanna would be good. I always know that, and I know Helen and Mattie will try to be good too, and all try to keep Susie good.

It has been very cold until this morning—there was a sugar snow last night and this morning it is warmer.

Oh, I wish I could be home and here too.

All of you be real good to yourselves and each other, and I hope Emma will attend the teachers' meeting and go to White Cloud to the box supper. Henry don't plague the girls, and Mattie and Helen help all you can.

Lovingly yours,
Mama

And for Henry there was a special letter from his father.

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Representative Hall
3/1/90

Mr. H. A. Field, Dear Son,
I will reply to your questions this very minute.

1. *I want to seed the south field and you may buy 2½ bushels of clover seed as cheap as you can. It will not need to be done till April. I will sow a light seeding of oats with it and timothy and pasture or mow it. We will stir it with a cultivator thoroughly.*
2. *If you need a hand and think you can get along with Dean you can hire him.*
3. *You need not do anything about breaking Doc till I come home.*
4. *I think that colt was not trained but he will do no harm for some time yet.*
5. *You will not want to do anything with those mares before June.*
6. *I think we will want all our meadow for hay.*
7. *You had better not buy hogs till I come home unless you can get some good ones at a bargain.*
8. *I think the old place will do for the hot beds.*

We are all well. Mr. Bigelow of Ames died Sunday. I should have gone to the funeral had I not promised to help my Des Moines friend on an amendment to the annexation bill and an important matter before the school committee...

Henry wrote his father that he was "doing two day's work in one" and heard from his father in reply:

Des Moines
3/25/90

Dear Son,
I got your letter this morning and according to your report it seems I need have no worry about getting home. I am sure I could not do two day's work in one if I were there and doubt it I could do one day's work in two or three.

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If your oats are good and bright, two bushels will be enough. You had better cut the stalks when the ground is in good order.

Perhaps we had better have a new work harness. Figure with our shops and let me know what you can do. I will do the same up here.

We commence having two sessions a day from now on. And I never saw a stronger disposition to do away with buncomb and get down to hard work.

I am watching every corner in the interest of the Clarinda asylum. The prospects are good in the House.

I want you to get Mama a girl if you possibly can...

The Sentinel wrote:

> Hon. S. E. Field, our farmer representative in the legislature, has now closed his second session and is ready to render an account to his constituents...

There was a jubilee and great celebration at Sunnyside in 1890 when Sol Field returned to his family for good. But in August of that year he departed again—this time a pleasure trip to visit the boyhood home in Massachusetts which he had left almost forty years before. Lettie and six-year-old Sollie accompanied him and Lettie wrote Philena from Deerfield on August 13, 1890:

My Dear Sister,

We took a sleeper at Red Oak and had a comfortable night but trains were crowded and behind time and it was ten o'clock by the time we got into Chicago. Charlie Arms and George Barber had been looking for us but had given up. We went into the depot and Sol went out and found them and came back for me. We went to call on Aldia at his place of business and then to see Charlie Arms. Aldia's wife and also George Barber's family were out of the city at Lake Geneva, a summer resort where Mr. Barber owns a cottage. Mr. Barber came at three o'clock and took us to his house to see Aunt Lucinda and take six o'clock dinner. We left Chicago at 9 P.M. Thursday. Could not get a sleeper but got along quite well. We made no stop at Niagara Falls...the trains were all

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behind time and the roads crowded with extra trains. We had a delightful ride Friday through Canada. Were not very much crowded Fri. night and Sat. at noon we got to Greenfield where we had to stop four hours.

Sol got a room at the hotel and we took a good clean up and made ourselves decent to meet. Aunt Helen and Uncle Charles inquired if any of the folks were in town. A man told him Henry had come in with a horse and buggy and gone somewhere on the cars and left the horse at the hotel so we got his horse and went out, and surprised them. Sol went to Boston Monday. About forty Conway people went from here at the same time bound for Boston. Nellie's lover Mr. Greed came from New York and spent Sunday with her. He is very nice and real handsome. He went back Sunday night.

The trunk just got here last night (Tues.) but we got along very well. I bought Sollie two pretty flannel waists in Chicago. I did not get a wrap. Such as I would have worn would cost $115. and I could not afford to pay so much just for looks.

I got Nellie's letter. I am glad you went to the picnic. I have not heard yet, but do hope you went down to see Jessie Sunday, and I do hope that sweet babe was well by the time she started. I had a letter from Emma today saying that she expected to be home Wed. morning. When she comes you must have them take you down to Lena's to rest and get your dress fixed. I mean when you get ready to go; you and Emma can talk that over and fix it to suit yourselves. I am so far away that I can't help you. I don't dare to think how far away I am. I am real uneasy since Sol went to Boston, but I can't give up.

Sollie is doing very well, goes with Henry's little girl to fish for frogs and get berries. Sollie is real nice and good. He says he is bad at home because the girls abuse him. So queer, is it not?

Aunt Nell is making doughnuts. Uncle Charles can't eat without them. She sends much love to you. She is not very strong, gets tired very easily. The hills are so grand and there are so many strange plants; it is like a new world to me. For breakfast we had such nice baked

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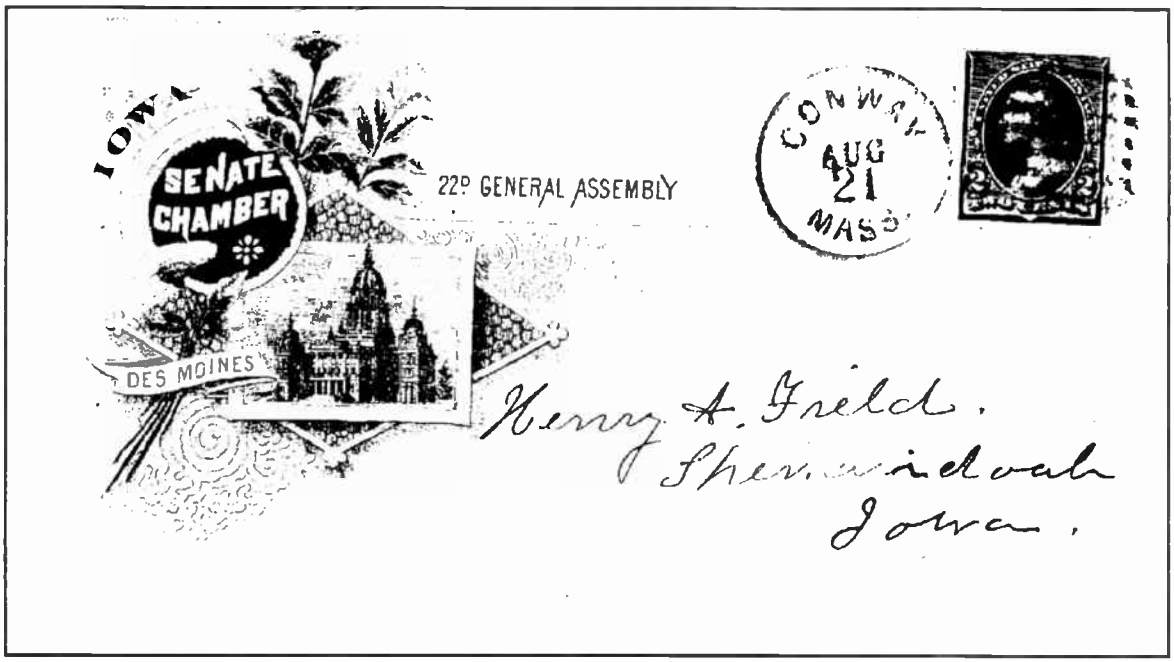
potatoes and William's gravy. It is fat pork fried thin, chopped fine, and egg and milk mixed with it. The men at Conway have such queer overhalls, I shall make Papa and Henry some.

Aunt Nellie and I went to the P.O. yesterday and took a little drive around. I enjoyed it so much. It is quite cool. I find my thick dresses just the thing. Mr. Sol Pease called here yesterday to see us and enquired of you. I shall have much to tell you when I come home as well as very, very, much to thank you for. Aunt Nell has four large buds on her night-blooming cereus she thinks will bloom Friday.

Love to all,

Lettie E. Field

And to those at home:



So. Deerfield

8/17/90

Dear Ones.

I came down to Aunt Nell's today from Ashfield in the stage. Left Sol there to visit a little longer. The Academy dinner will be tomorrow at Ashfield and Sol thought he must not miss that. I am getting tired visiting, but Sol is having a good time meeting so many to visit with. I got a

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letter from Henry and Helen today. It rains here every day and there is much fog. I do hope Aunt Philena will go to Creston and Helen go with her, but you Henry ought to pay Auntie's expenses, too, as well as Helen's. I do hope you will not lose your melons. I am glad you have a good hand. Oh, I have so much to tell you when I get home, I do want to live life over again so I would know more and do better. The nearest I can come to it is to have you learn what I missed.

Yours Lovingly,
Mama

It was late in September when Sol and Lettie returned from Massachusetts. 1890 had been a successful year culturally and financially. Henry, barely turned nineteen, prepared and kept a neatly hand-written record of the income from the farm produce—the apparent results of his work that year.

GRAND SUMMARY 1890

Amount Rec'd		$1716.69
Paid for help		-234.00
Lived up		$1482.69

Apples	40.00	Onions	48.44
Asparagus	38.00	Peas	53.60
Beans	55.30	Peppers	1.40
Beets	23.55	Plums	101.20
Cabbage	273.20	Potatoes	44.90
Cherries	42.30	Pumpkins	.65
Cider and work	125.00	Radishes	68.52
Citron melons	2.25	Raspberries	66.90
Crab apples	20.35	Strawberries	78.96
Cucumbers	31.00	Strawberry plants	106.20
Kraut	7.50	Sweet Corn	40.95
Lettuce	33.17	Sweet Potatoes	131.70
Muskmelons	10.35	Tomatoes	40.20
			$1716.69

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Chapter 9: Henry, the Collegian

The Western Normal College in Shenandoah by this time enrolled five hundred students a year. A worn, four by six inch blue card reads:

MEMBERSHIP CERTIFICATE
OF THE
WESTERN NORMAL COLLEGE

Scientific Department — **Nov. 1, 1890 to Jan. 13, 1891.**

Admit Henry Field — **Being for a period of ten weeks.**

No. 1879. — **Wm. M. Croan, President.**

On the reverse side of certificate:

The President will not be responsible for any articles that may be lost.
Money... valuables of any kind may be deposited with the President.
No one should be absent from school without the consent of the President.
No one should be absent from class without permission of the teacher of that class.
No student will absent himself permanently from a class without consent of the management.
This certificate is issued subject to all the Regulations for the time issued.
All sickness must be reported to the President

Other blue membership cards show that he enrolled in the Scientific course—from January 13 to March 24th—and also from March 24th to June 2, 1891. Besides the Scientific and Normal courses, he also added classes in the Civil

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Engineering Department in order to learn surveying. He took twice the usual number of classes and still managed to excel in all of them.

PROGRAMME[1]

GENERAL EXERCISES IN THE CHAPEL HALL AT HALF-PAST NINE A.M.

CLASSES

BRANCHES	AUTHOR	ROOM	TIME
Arithmetic	W. & H.		
Algebra	**Wentworth**	**N**	**1-2**
Higher Mathematics	**An. Geom**	**N**	**7:30**
Grammar	Reed & Kellogg		
Rhetoric	Kellogg		
Literature	**Shaw**	**N**	**2-3**
History	Barnes		
Political Economy	Chapin		
Natural Science	**Baker, Physic**	**L**	**8:30**
Physiology	Steele-Martin		
Commercial Law	Williams		
Book Keeping	Rogers		
German	Warman		
Geography	eclectic.		
Shorthand	eclectic.		
Civil Government	Andrews		

DRILLS

Elocution	Hanil		
Reading and Orthography	Academic D		
Penmanship	paper, etc.		
Drawing	**Davidson**	**C H**	**11-12**
Training	Brooks		
Letter Writing	paper, etc.		
Vocal Music	Case		

[1] Bold face type indicates courses taken by Henry Field.

"Now when I was in college", he wrote later, "I majored in English. I was a wonder in English Literature and in Rhetoric. I was a leader in the Literary Society and in the Debating Society..."

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Henry joined the Olympic Literary Society and was called upon to appear before them at one of their meetings. He had a natural ability to express himself in writing and in speaking. On this momentous occasion, the carefully hand-written manuscript of the address he delivered before the Olympic Literary Society of Western Normal College in 1890 was preserved by Henry in its entirety.

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY
by Henry Field

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am in a state of mind, and I'll tell you why. I have been detailed by the Olympic Society to write an autobiography of myself. Now if I had been called on for an autobiography of some other great man, it would have been easy, but modesty will preclude my telling all my own remarkable experiences...

Henry in 1890

First I want to say that I am come of good old Yankee stock—all wool and a yard wide—and am wholly and altogether American. I believe in the doctrine of *America for Americans*, I believe in the *American* form of government, and above all, I believe in the *protection of American industries*. But I am wandering from my text. I believe I was talking about New England. My ancestors, as far as my knowledge of them extends, were hardy down-east farmers, with a fair sprinkling of Baptist preachers.

My father, Solomon Field, was born in 1834, in a little brown house on the banks of the Connecticut, near old Deerfield, where his father owned a farm, and, in connection ran a small woolen mill. In 1852 young Solomon came west to the little known country of Western Illinois. Here he by turns worked on the farm and taught school till the war broke out, when he enlisted as a private. At the close of the war he

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resumed his old vocation of teaching.

In 1868, he emigrated in a prairie schooner to this place and located on a farm two miles southeast of here, where he has since resided, returning to Illinois for his bride the following year.

This busy city with its fourteen churches, its two colleges, with its electric lights a reality, and two palatial saloons in the near future, was then a minus quantity, the post office being the little Mormon settlement of Manti, three or four miles southwest of here, which at that time was a town of some two hundred inhabitants. Of this town no trace now remains except a few old log cabins slowly falling into decay and an old graveyard grown up to weeds and briars.

The story of the leaving of the Mormons affords a good example of the confidence which this people had in their prophets. During the Civil War their main prophet, old Alpheus Cutler, claimed he had a revelation from God that the war would come north and the streets of Manti would run with blood. The people were so affected by this that they left their farms, or sold them for whatever they could get, and fled to the north part of the state, but at this time most of them have drifted back. The grave of the prophet is yet to be seen at the old cemetery. It bears simply the words, "Alpheus Cutler, age eighty-one years."

But I am forgetting my text. These old places have a singular fascination for me and I am apt to forget everything else when I get to talking of their history.

The subject of this sketch was born on a cold, wintry day in the latter part of 1871... One year ago I enlisted in the Western Normal College for life—or until I finish the course—and here I am.

Now that you know who I am, and can see what I look like, I propose to tell you what I am.

I am a Republican from principle, a farmer by choice, and a prohibitionist by nature. Tall of stature, ugly of face, and slender of figure, I was born a Baptist and raised a Congregationalist, to this I owe my uprighteousness and honesty. I attribute my eloquence to my ancestry of hard-shell preachers.

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> I know not to which of my ancestors to attribute my modesty and deep sense of the rights of others, but certain it is that I realize to the fullest extent how anxiously all these other people are awaiting their turn, and how anxious I am to be done, for truly I am frightened at the sound of my own voice, so without more ado, I will make my bow.

Henry's friend, Walter Wilson, was also attending Western Normal in the Engineering Department, and Walt was still playing practical jokes. One day, the professor, talking of the power of suggestion, convinced the science class that if enough people tell a *well* person he is ill, then that person will actually *be* ill.

Walt and his friends decided to try it out with Henry as the victim. The next morning, as Henry came over the hill with his load of vegetables for the dining hall, George Bartlett stopped him.

"My, Henry!" he said, "You look bad! Don't you *feel* bad? What's the matter?"

"I feel all right", Henry answered.

Walt stopped him as he turned the corner.

"Henry, what's *wrong* with you? You look terrible!" he exclaimed.

Waile Phillips chimed in."Don't you feel bad? You don't look well at all!"

Henry looked worried.

Mattie Finley who ran the lunch room had always been his friend. I had better talk to her, he thought. But Mattie was in the conspiracy. As he entered the kitchen, she gave him a piercing look.

"Henry! For land's sakes! Whatever is the matter with you? Do you feel well?"

Henry felt very sick, indeed.

"No, I *don't* feel well. I think I have been working too hard. Guess I'll go back home."

He always insisted afterwards that he was really ill—he wouldn't admit that he had been fooled.

Botany was another class in which Henry, of course, excelled. He *knew* plants and flowers—could tell a Winesap from a Jonathan apple tree by a glance at the bark. His herbarium was one of his major interests. This interest was shared with another student—Annie Hawxby, a plump girl with brown hair and

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intelligent brown eyes, who looked enough like Henry to be his sister. Henry confided he thought Annie was *wonderful* because she was just as smart as *he* was!

After classes one day, Henry brought around the horse and buggy which he drove to school and he and Annie set out to gather wild flower specimens for their herbaria.

As they drove off, Walt Wilson walked by with some feminine companions.

"Look what old Henry is up to!", he exclaimed.

"I don't know why he should take Annie Hawxby buggy riding", sniffed one girl.

"Oh, she's a nice enough girl", Walt answered, "but not to my taste— too standoffish."

"But she doesn't care a thing about her looks!"

"Henry doesn't either!" Walt retorted. "They are just cut out for each other. Annie never went with anyone before and Henry hasn't either."

After they had gathered their specimens, Henry stabled his horse and went into the dining hall for supper. The large room was noisy with several hundred students sitting at the long rows of wooden tables. They paid $1.15 a week for five suppers. There was much merriment at the tables where a student was absent—his dessert was auctioned off amid spirited and hilarious bidding.

After supper, Annie pressed the flowers with a heated, iron-handled, "smoothing iron" before mounting. Accidentally she scorched one specimen.

"We will have to get another lily", Henry decided.

"But it is dark! We can't see where they are!"

"I know exactly where they are", Henry said positively. "There is a patch of them out by Five Corners right by the railroad track. I can find them with my eyes shut. We will drive out and get them."

Henry made good his boast, going directly to the flowers in the dark. The botany lesson was completed.

All of the girls were *wild* to go buggy-riding. The young men most favored then were those living in the country—the proud owners of buggies. Henry might have been quite popular if he had cared more about his appearance—still, many girls were envious of his chosen companion. As far as his friends knew, he asked only one girl to go buggy riding with him on Sundays: Annie Hawxby.

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Chapter 10: Western Normal College Consumed!

Another membership certificate records that Henry Field again enrolled at the Western Normal College on November 3, 1891 for the ten weeks' course running to January 13, 1892. He expected to finish his studies and graduate in June.

Henry rode home one Wednesday afternoon, as usual. The next morning, as he topped the last rise almost in sight of the large buildings, one of the students called to him:

"Where you going, Henry?"

"To school," he answered.

"Look up there!"

Henry looked.

A smoldering pile of ashes was all that remained of the magnificent building - Western Normal College had burned to the ground.

Grief-stricken, Henry drove home and not until *The Sentinel* came out that afternoon did the Field family learn the details of the disastrous fire.

The Sentinel cried:

FIRE!

THE WESTERN NORMAL COLLEGE CONSUMED!

CAUSE OF THE FIRE UNKNOWN

Thousands of Citizens Watch a Small Flame Fanned into a Terrible, Consuming Fire!

Shenandoah, Ia, Dec. 3, 1891. Last night about eleven o'clock the citizens of Shenandoah were awakened from their first sleep by the wild cry of "Fire!" Springing from their beds they gazed out and beheld the roof of the great college building, the pride of Shenandoah, in flames. When the reporter reached the scene, the flames were eating into the belfry and the roof at the southeast corner of the building. Hundreds of students and citizens were on the ground and thousands more

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came eager to do something to save the building, but without water and water works it was useless... All who could, entered the building and carried or dragged forth everything movable, filling the streets and alleys for a block in every direction.

A high wind was blowing from the south, and burning cinders and showers of sparks were carried all over the south part of the city, but men were stationed upon the housetops and in every yard ready to extinguish the first appearance of flame. The Cline and Ericsson buildings just north of the college were in great danger but constant wetting with water from buckets saved them until a welcome shower drenched the whole city...

To most of our people, unfamiliar with a great fire, the spectacle was an awful one. Long before the fire had eaten into the lower rooms, the bell fell with a crash; next the wind caught the burning belfry and hurled it blazing into the yard north of the building, then sections of the roof went sailing down. At last the roof fell in, then chimney after chimney toppled in and the walls of the old building fell with a terrific crash. It was a fascinating yet horrid spectacle.

A. W. Murphy says: "Prof. Croan... saw the fire and called my attention to it... When I first saw it, it was burning just south of the main cupola. We went to the college together and as we passed the telephone in the office I seized it and sent a message to the central to give the alarm by ringing the fire bell. I then ascended the stairs to the fourth floor where the fire originated near the attic. I think if I had had water at my command at the time I could easily have extinguished the flames, but the buckets were all locked up and there were no persons to carry the water. I have no idea as to the cause of the fire, but can say that it started in the attic of the college..."

The cause of the fire is not certainly known. A reporter interviewed Professor Croan regarding the fire this morning. He said: "I have no theory as to the cause of the fire..."

Prof. Croan estimates his loss as follows:

"Value of building $60,000, insurance about $25,000."

Ere the last walls had crumbled and while the pile was still blazing, arrangements were begun for continuing the work of the classes on the very next day. Prompt offers of the use of all

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the churches and the opera house were made. A circular to the students, stating the situation and directing them what to do, was printed last night. Programs of the different classes and hours of recitation in the several churches were at once gotten out.

The chapel exercises were held in the opera house this morning at the usual hour. The large auditorium was crowded with students and a large representation of our leading business men. It was an enthusiastic meeting. Stirring talks were made by each member of the faculty concerning preparations for class work and hopefulness for the future... Private families had already furnished breakfast for hundreds and were ready and willing to continue serving them in every way possible. Offers of financial aid were numerous.

The next afternoon (Friday), *The Sentinel* continued the story:

Shenandoah, Ia, Dec. 4, 1891. The opera house was crowded last night with citizens interested in the rebuilding of the college. Mr. A. S. Lake, as chairman, and several others, made ringing speeches. Sentiment was all one way—in favor of rebuilding... A committee, as follows: J. T. Stuart, John Mentzer, A. W. Murphy, R. W. Morse, R. B. Crose, T. H. Read, Geo. Bogart, A. S. Lake, W. P. Ferguson, G. B. Jennings, Jacob Bender, T. N. Pace, Fred Rockafellow, F. C. Woodford, Geo. Trotter, J. G. Schneider, M. S. Mell, J. C. Stevens, W. E. Irwin, A. Palmer, Frank Anshutz, D. S. Priest, John McComb, Ed Day, Wm. Makison, was appointed to meet Prof. Croan at the Baptist Church tonight...

And on Saturday morning:

Shenandoah, Ia, Dec. 5, 1891. The large hall was again crowded to overflowing. Intense interest is being taken in this matter by rich and poor alike. After an able but brief exposition of the objects of the meeting by Chairman Lake, Prof. Croan substantially repeated his statement of the night before. He explained his desire and determination to remain in this city and go on in the grand work on a greater scale than ever before...

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A committee of five, John Mentzer, R. W. Morse, R. B. Crose, Jacob Bender and T. H. Read, met the members of the faculty to make arrangements for continuing school. With Profs. Sands, Shearer, and S. L. Wilson, the work of the normal and scientific classes can go on and graduate this summer. These teachers are willing to work for two-thirds pay...

The Committee adjourned to consult with Prof. Croan as to what amount he would pledge and how much the citizens could raise. The students were dismissed until three P.M.

THE ULTIMATUM—About four o'clock this afternoon the faculty dismissed the three hundred loyal students who have remained. It was found impossible to make arrangements to continue. All the members of the faculty spoke feelingly. It is a sad alternative but there seems to be no hope for it. There will be another meeting of students next Monday but there is probably no hope for re-opening the school till next fall.

On the streets of Shenandoah, the talk was that Prof. Croan wanted the citizens to put up most of the money for the new building. They could come to no agreement.

A student wrote in 1892:

In Memory of the Western Normal College

Impromptu

We boasted a flower of value rare
We watched it, sheltered it and tended with care
And our hearts beat bright with pride,
For soon its marvelous growth would tell
Of a plant that promised to flourish well.
And timely culture would impel
The hopes that were implied
Of a future so gloriously fair
Promising bounties every where.
But is was rudely plucked from our midst one night
While the stars of heaven hid their light.
Plucked, mid the splendor and bloom of youth,
This fair young plant in the bud of fame,
Flourishing on a western plain,

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Promising fields of golden grain,
Surrounded by tendrils of golden light,
Pointing to paths of virtue and right.
But the demon came with destroying hand
While darkness hovered over the land
And all was hushed in peaceful rest.
Came silently, stealthily, creeping along
With gaping jaws and fiery tongue,
Nearer and nearer the sleeping throng;
An unbidden, unwelcome guest.
And with flaming sword demands
This precious flower from our lands.
He goes his way, his work is done
Although now cooled is his fiery tongue
And we halt and gaze on all that's left
Of a once proud hope that promised much,
Leveled now by the demon's clutch.
And we long for the power of fairy touch
To bring back all to those bereft
And replace on its stately throne
The Western Normal, minus William M.Croan.

* * * * * * *

We have a hope that yet may thrive,
Though the body's dead, the spirit's alive
And seeking even now to find a home.
Then let us with a courage true
Clothe this spirit all anew
With beautiful body through and through
And place it again on its golden throne,
Then woe to the demon who dares do strive
Of us our treasure to deprive.

(From a clipping dated 1892)

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Chapter 11: The New Teacher

> Mr. Henry Field was home over Sunday from his East River School. He reported forty-six scholars and that school work is moving along smoothly. (From a newspaper clipping.)

Because of the stalemate in resuming college classes, Henry prepared to teach school for the twelve weeks' winter term. December eighth, just two days after his twentieth birthday, he took the county examinations and was awarded a second class certificate to teach. Impressive grades were recorded thereon:

Organization	98	Physiology	100
Reading	100	U.S. History	95
Writing	100	Theory and Practice	
Arithmetic	99	of Teaching	100
Geography	97	Synthetic Reading	95
Grammar	98		

Charles Morgan, school director of East River Township School, arranged to pay Henry $38.00 a month, starting December fourteenth.

So it was that Sunday, December 13, 1891, Henry wrote:

Dear Folks at Home,

First I want to say that my throat is lots better... Mr. Morgan had made arrangements for a boarding place for me at Walls'... They are York State people...

I went over to Morgan's this morning and got the key and went to take a look at my kingdom. It's a miserable tumble down affair. Morgan has just been putting in new windows and that helps it out some, but the desks are terrible. My desk is a shaky old pine table that has been used for fifty years as near as I can judge. There is a chart for the little people but not a map except a RR advertisement map of the U.S. The stove is a long, low, rusty old wood stove that will burn four foot wood, and the

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pipe - I won't say anything about it. But I find that it has the name of being a good school and I guess I'll get along some way.

The folks here (where I board) have no papers except The American Baptist *and* The Clarinda Herald, *and no books but the Bible and a few religious books; still they like to read and my books are a windfall for them.... I have the front room to myself and a good fire—in fact, I'm pretty well fixed...*

There is a church 2 miles south of here but they only have preaching every other week, and today is the off day. *Goodbye, Henry Field*

Monday Evening. I'm through my first day at school and through it alive, but I'm almost tempted to say I'm sick of my job. I'm tired to death tonight. I have about thirty-five enrolled in my school and at least half of them were tardy. I don't know what I'll do about it. I have five arithmetic classes and four spelling classes and altogether about thirty-one classes. I have some scholars that are quite bright and some that don't know anything. It is a tolerably well behaved school, but there are several big boys, one 19 and five over 15. Some of them could handle me if they wanted to but I hope they won't want to. I won't write any more now, so bye, bye.

Henry

P.S. Send me The Sentinel *right along, and* The Public Opinion *sure.*

His father answered in part:

Shenandoah
12/20/91

Dear Boy,

We got your letter yesterday and were glad to hear from you as we had been anxious all the week, the weather had been so bad.

Mama and I were in town yesterday. There was a big crowd on the streets. I sent you papers that will tell you of College Matters better than I can in a short space. There

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is a determination to rebuild...

We have been busy all the week plowing, getting our manure and fixing up things. Have dehorned fifteen head of cattle.

When you get in running order, your school will be more punctual. It was a bad morning for a start. The big boys won't whip you if you are not too sweet on the big girls. You will have to condense your school into fewer classes if possible...

Mama wants you to be sure and come home Christmas...

Meanwhile, Henry had written again.

Clarinda,
Saturday, Dec. 19, '91

Dear Folks,

I wrote to you last Sunday, but I did not get a chance to send the letter till yesterday...

I am through my first week now and I like it first rate. I believe I'll make a pretty good teacher yet. I haven't had any trouble of any consequence yet, except Thursday. They were behaving so well I relaxed my vigilance a little and at night found several paper wads on the floor. Yesterday I watched them sharp and I came down pretty heavy on some. It seemed to have a good effect and I had splendid order. I was over to see the director last night, and he said that his girl told him the scholars had been throwing paper wads, and he didn't want me to allow it. I told him I'd watch them closer after this. I have 36 *scholars and two more intend to start Monday, one is a boy of* 17 *and one a boy (?) of* 24. *The lady teacher next south of me whipped seven boys in one day the other day, big ones too, and I tell my class they may take that as a fearful example of what I will do if I get started. I'm going to keep order if I have to kill a few. Morgan says I may if I want to, and I guess there's some that wouldn't be missed...*

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Morgan says he will give me Christmas day so you may look for me home. Meet me at the H & S Thursday eve...

Write me all the news for I don't hear any here. That's all, bye, bye.

Henry Field

From left, Solomon E. Field, his children: Susan (on his lap), Helen, Sol Jr., Jessie (seated in front), Martha, Leanna, Henry, and their mother Lettie. (1892)

After Christmas when Henry returned to Clarinda, the next letter he received from home was dated 1/3/92.

Shenandoah, Iowa.

My Dear Henry,

I meant to have sent a letter so you would find it at Clarinda Sat. but did not do it... There are many sick with la grippe. *Now be careful and very kind to my boy and remember I wish him a very happy and prosperous New Year.*

Your Mama,
L. E. Field

His father enclosed a note also.

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Dear Son,

It was so awful cold and rough Friday that we did not get down with a letter for you. We have all been busy trimming hedge, husking popcorn, covering the strawberries, etc... The arrangement is about completed for the Stock Co. to rebuild the college...

Father.

Late in January, his father wrote:

The college talk now is that some party will put in $100. to the citizens $50.—buy forty acres of land and put the balance in a college on it.

You could sell your mares at grand advantage, and perhaps it would be best. We have so many young mares coming on. If we go into partnership next fall you would have to sell them.

And his mother wrote under the date 1/28/92:

You looked so badly when I saw you in Clarinda that I worry. Keep at home nights. Tell Mrs. Wall I said you must.

And on February 18, Henry learned from his father that "the college fund is counting up pretty well—between twenty and thirty thousand. Haven't worked the country yet. G.A.R. Social next Monday eve. Helen will speak: 'Soldier Frank!'"

Meanwhile Henry was completing a successful teaching term. At the beginning, his scholars asked him if he was going to post some rules. "There's only one rule in this school," was the prompt reply, "and that is everyone has to behave himself."

Furthermore, Henry told them that he was hired to teach, not govern, and that was what he proposed to do. He named a body of five of the older and more influential scholars, and when any trouble arose it was left to this committee as to what should be done with the culprit. It was one of Henry's original ideas and he made it work. He told others there was "no copyright on the idea and if they thought it would do them any good to take it."

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And after the term ended March seventh, Henry treasured these recommendations:

March 2, 1892.

To whom these present may come,

This Certifies that Henry Field has taught three months school in Sub. Dis. No. 7, East River T. P., Page Co. P.O. and gave satisfaction, and furthermore is both a gentleman and scholar.

A.W. Wall, Ex. Sub.Dir.

And:

Clarinda, Iowa, March 5, 1892

Dear Sir,

The honest Mr. Henry Field, who has been engaged in the work of teaching in this district, is, I am pleased to say, of good standing here. I have had two children attending his school, and in their advancement he has proved himself possessed of both pleasing enthusiasm and a high degree of practice. His character is above reproach and I cheerfully recommend him to a position in your school.

I am very sincerely yours,

Charles W. Morgan,
School Director

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Chapter 12: "The Bonnie Bride and the Gallant Groom"

With spring, that year, came good news about the college:

Shenandoah, Iowa.
May 11, 1892

We take great pleasure in announcing to you that your Alma Mater, the Western Normal College, of Shenandoah, Iowa, still lives. The main building, which was burned to the ground Dec. 2, 1891, will be rebuilt during the coming summer after the latest improved plans.

At a recent meeting of the Alumni Association of the Western Normal College it was unanimously decided to hold our ninth annual meeting in Shenandoah, July 27th and 28th, 1892. We are adding several features to our regular program which we trust will be interesting and entertaining to you. Sociables, picnics, and class reunions will be of frequent occurrence during the week. The citizens of Shenandoah have volunteered to open their doors and welcome you back to your college home. The banquet will be tendered free to all the visiting Alumni and tickets will be furnished at cost to all other students wishing to attend. Arrangements are being made to obtain reduced rates on the railroads.

We trust that you can conveniently arrange your work so you can spend a few days with us and enjoy the festivities of this occasion. We hope you will stand by the Old Alumni Association and willingly respond to her invitation to revisit your college home. Let all the old students join with the members of the Association and we will make this one of the grandest reunions the Alumni have ever held. If you will inform us of your intentions we will be pleased to write you further particulars.

Hoping to hear from you, we remain,

Yours truly,
Emma A. Morse, President.
B. M. Taylor, Sec'y-Treas.

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Western Normal College was rebuilt that summer and reopened in the winter—advertised as, "The only college in a city without saloons." But Henry wasn't interested in returning to college. Henry was back at his gardening, in partnership with his father: Their letterheads read:

> *Field and Son*
> *Fresh Fruits and Vegetables Delivered to all Parts of the City*

Also, he had not forgotten Annie Hawxby. When the college burned the previous December, she had returned to Nemaha, Nebraska and took a teaching position.

In the green Mark Twain Scrap Book which he had kept since high school days, among the pages of poems, Henry carefully pasted the clippings which Annie sent him concerning her teachers' meetings. She intelligently discussed (so the clippings said) How to Overcome Whispering and Laughing During School Hours and Should a Teacher Understand Psychology? One clipping she sent him declared that "Miss Hawxby has taught the most successful school Nemaha City ever had and the district as a unit is asking her return."

The Junior Exercises of the Nemaha City Schools on June 17, 1892 (of which she sent Henry the Program) finished the school year for Annie.

Fleming, Ohio
Nov. 13, 1892

Dear Cousin,

Well! Well! Henry, and what are all these rumors floating to me from West and East? "Henry is to be married at Thanksgiving..."

No one will tell me the name of the favored lady. I don't know if it is Polly Jones, or Sally Smith, or Amanda Brown, or someone else. Your mother wrote "she is a nice girl", my mother that "she lives in Neb.", another that she is a farmer's daughter, another that she graduated in the class of '90— your class—but none tell me her name, and

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that, too, when I have repeatedly asked it. Of course it does not matter. The name will soon be Mrs. H. A. Field—but then you see my curiosity has been aroused. I want to know who my cousin Henry has chosen, if I ever knew her or ever saw her.

Now, Henry, whether I ever know her name, or whether she has any or not, I want to present to her my cousinly respects and tell her I wish her joy in her new life. Knowing her lover and her mother-in-law (to be), I feel sure she will find much joy.

With love to all the family and with loving congratulations to you, I am as ever,

Cousin Jet.[1]

Henry saved this clipping from *The Sentinel*:

Field–Hawxby. At the residence of the bride's parents near Nemaha City, Nebraska, Thursday, November 24, 1892. Henry Field of Shenandoah, Page County, Iowa to Miss Annie Hawxby. Rev. Frank Day of Meadville, Mo., uncle of the bride, officiating.

Henry

Annie

The bonnie bride was a classmate of the gallant groom in the Class of '91 at the Western Normal College in this city, where besides using them to study with, "eyes looked love to eyes that looked it back again" and where Cupid's wiles wove their meshes so securely around our young Spurgeon's heart and carried it captive to Nebraska, that the only condition on which he could recover it was to wed its fair captor there, and then return in triumph to the Kingdom of Page County, which he accordingly did—a fitting triumph for Thanksgiving Day!

The pretty bride was dressed in cream *Henrietta* and the groom in conventional black. Both wore bouquets of

[1] Jessie Deming, daughter of Henry's aunt, Philena Pease.

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beautiful flowers from the Sunny Southland, a present with compliments of Wilbur Deering of Pensacola, Florida. It was a very happy wedding, as well as Thanksgiving Day in the fair young bride's Nebraska home, where mirth and joy spread their mingling charms and where a bountiful dinner crowned the wedding festival. Congratulations were showered on the young couple who returned to Shenandoah the next morning to receive from friends and kindred here a hundred thousand welcomes home.

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Chapter 13: Annie and Henry Build a Life Together

Sleepy Hollow Farm, home of Henry and Annie Field, was a meager, box-like square white house with two crude sheds and a bucket well behind. One-fourth mile straight south of the college, just at the edge of Shenandoah, it sat low and flat in lonely, treeless isolation surrounded by snow-covered barren fields.

December 6, 1892, Henry Field celebrated his twenty-first birthday, was newly married, and was under contract to teach the Morton Township School for twelve weeks at $40 a month.

A year later, in November, 1893, another teacher's certificate showed examinations passed to teach school for the third winter. And a newspaper clipping reads:

> Mrs. Henry Field is visiting her parents at Nemaha City, Nebraska, where she will remain until after Thanksgiving. Mr. Field will join her a day or two before Thanksgiving and they will celebrate their first wedding anniversary and the 25th anniversary of Mrs. Field's parents together.

Another carefully hoarded clipping describes the celebration.

> On Thanksgiving Day, in spite of the extreme cold and threatening sky, a large company of relatives, neighbors, and friends gathered at the hospitable home of Mr. and Mrs. John Hawxby to celebrate the 25th anniversary of their marriage.
>
> A number of beautiful and valuable presents were given them in token of the high esteem in which they are held by all who know them.
>
> At one o'clock, a bountiful dinner was served, and jokes and merriment made it an occasion long to be

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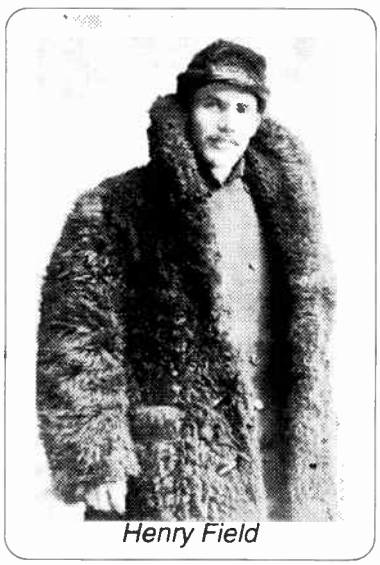
remembered by those who were present. Mrs. Hawxby's dinners need no comment for so many can testify to the excellence of her cookery. Sufficient be it to say that this time was no exception to the general rule.

After a pleasant day wherein all felt that it was good to be there, all returned to their homes wishing this bride and groom of twenty-five years' standing, long life, happiness and prosperity, and that they may live to celebrate their golden wedding.



Henry Field

From the year 1894, Henry worked through the winter months on his growing seed business, at first doing the whole thing himself, from order taking to delivery wagon—his supply of seeds in a few cigar boxes behind the kitchen stove. Taking a pocket full of samples and an order book, he donned his shaggy buffalo-skin overcoat and sealskin hat with the flaps that could be worn down for ear protectors. Driving a spring wagon, he canvassed the country.

I canvassed for seven years in the country at this time of year... I'd meet a man in the road maybe, and his horses were stamping, and he was cold, too, and I had to sell him and sell him quick. I've met many a man in the road and without him getting out of his buggy or without me getting out of mine, I'd sell him and have his order and be gone in three minutes. I made 67 calls one week and sold 62 of them. I went back the next week and got three of the ones I had missed. I found out how to talk to a customer...

When I met a man in the road, he was anxious to go, and I knew that what I had to say, I had to say in a few minutes...

I didn't wait to write an essay. I just shot it right at him.

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Orders began to come in; the parlor was turned into an office; the barn into a seed house. Without even a catalog, Henry Field was in the seed business.

Summers he drove a one-horse vegetable wagon on the streets of Shenandoah selling beets and sweet corn by the nickel's worth. He worked up quite a local trade in strawberry plants and seed potatoes. The neighbors marveled when he grew three crops on one plot, planting cherry trees the proper distance apart, and peach trees utilizing the space between. Then underneath the trees, he thriftily planted vegetables. Admiringly they said, "Only Henry Field would think to do that!"

In addition, he had secured the appointment of County Surveyor of Page County. Hand-printed business cards advertised the partnership of H. A. Field and W. L. Wilson as Engineers and Surveyors.

Walt claimed that he supplied most of the engineering knowledge, for Henry's instruction in engineering had been slight, but Henry made up for this deficiency. It was he who peeled off his clothes and swam the rivers to make sure the chain line was exactly straight and was able to say, "It wasn't off an inch!"

A son was born April 6, 1894. They named him Frank for Annie's brother. Henry and Annie were very happy.

Annie became quite plump after the baby was born, according to Walt Wilson. He thought that "Annie looked a fright when she went downtown in a loose 'Mother Hubbard', carrying the baby under one arm with his bare butt sticking out behind." But Henry didn't care how she looked—and Annie cared less. They were in perfect agreement on everything : "more alike than brother and sister." A picture taken of Henry at this time shows him tall and gaunt with a long drooping mustache below his high cheekbones. He wore the old sealskin hat on the back of his head and his clothes were shapeless and uncreased.

The years passed happily at Sleepy Hollow Farm even though they had to make many trips to Annie's folks for wheat in the drought years of the nineties. Henry admitted that he was "having a terrible time getting started."

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A deposit slip for the Farmers and Traders Bank reads "Deposited by Henry Field, Shenandoah, Iowa, Oct. 22, 1896: Currency—$5.00, Silver—$5.00. Total $10.00. Signed by J. W. Alden, Pt."

Henry kept a scrap of paper from these years on which a storekeeper had itemized a bill for *Mrs. Hendrefall* [Mrs. Henry Field].

Blue ropper	.75	*Too Blue D Boy*	.50
Black dress	1.50	*Boys pattern*	.05
Red Ropper	.75	*Gray Wast*	1.25
Boys Red Dus	.25	*Red Ropper*	.75
Pink	.25	*Skirt*	.25
Under close	.50	*Brown Wast*	.50
Shirts	.50	*Black Dress*	.75
Corset Wast & Skirt	.25	*Vin Collered Rapper*	.75
			9.55
		Apprens	.40
			9.95

Although Henry had his own home at the edge of Shenandoah, it was only one mile south and one mile east to his father's farm—even closer when he cut diagonally across the fields. Emotionally, Henry never gave up his childhood home. For all his life time, he remained the beloved eldest son and insisted upon love, loyalty, and obeisance from all members of his family. And if he happened in at Sunnyside around mealtime, he never failed to find that his mother had kept his place set; she knew he would feel badly if he saw someone else in it.

The year 1895 was marked by the Silver Wedding celebration of Sol and Lettie Field, and a Thanksgiving Day again spent with the hospitable Hawxbys, this time for the wedding of Annie's brother, Frank.

In 1896, Henry turned in his surveyor's transit, link chain and marking pins, for his time was now completely taken up as gardener-seedsman.

His fame was spreading afar. *The Rural New Yorker* published an article lauding Henry Field as a cabbage raiser, with a picture of

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Henry in the familiar sealskin cap standing beside a wagon piled high with "100 Iowa cabbages weighing a ton." At the County Fair, his display of vegetables won first premium and "in the way of cabbage," they said, "Mr. Field beats the Dutch!"

This is not an ordinary fake overdrawn "catalog picture," but is an actual photograph of a load of real Cabbage grown by me from my special strain of SUREHEAD, the same seed I will sell you at $2 per lb. If you have any trouble getting Cabbage to head, try this strain.

Illustration used in the 1908 "The Seeds that YIELD Are Sold by FIELD" Annual Seed Catalogue of Henry Field Seed Company. (Photograph taken in 1896.)

The *Daily Post* wrote:

> If any reader of THE DAILY POST doubts that Henry Field is the prince of gardeners, we would seriously invite him to step into the seed and vegetable department at the fair grounds, this city, and take a good honest survey of Henry's exhibit there, consisting of egg plant, radishes, beets, shorehead cabbage, onions, nutmeg melons, and above all, his display of twenty varieties of Irish potatoes that are without a peer. Mr. Field also displays one hundred fifty varieties of garden seeds.

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Henry Field has brought into his market gardening a large amount of intelligent scientific study as well as practical experience. He loves his calling and he gets the most out of it—in satisfaction and profit. He reads up; he knows what earnest men are doing in the same line through the world. For instance, one of his favorite potatoes is the Carman No. 3, a variety produced by E. L. Carman, editor of *The Rural New Yorker*, who made a special study of potato growing for years. All his fine exhibit of potatoes were the result of a like discriminating selection. Those who saw those potatoes noticed that they were wholly free from scab, that pestiferous disease that is so injurious to the potato. He dips the seed-potato before planting, in a solution that kills the bacteria. If left in the seed, the ground becomes infected and there is no riddance. Mr. Field's potatoes are remarkably smooth and large, and by the way he was yesterday awarded first premium on all his potatoes and nearly everything he had on display. The committee were so pleased with his exhibit that they awarded him a premium on his seeds on which nothing had been offered, but which he had tastefully displayed on the wall.

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Chapter 14: Peaches in Nebraska

Using a Sears Roebuck camera with three inch glass plates, Henry Field made a picture of the little square house surrounded now by shrubbery and orchards in 1897. Family groups of visiting Hawxbys were photographed.

Many pictures were made of eighteen-year-old Edna Thompson who had come from a neighboring farm in Nemaha to live with Annie while attending college. One small glass plate gives a clear print of Edna's beauty and stylish clothes—the long, gold chain around her neck leading to a watch at her tightly-laced waistline—the white handkerchief pinned smartly on her left shoulder—the huge leg-'o-mutton sleeves—the bow of ribbon on her high collar—the curled hair.

In sharp contrast were Annie's undecorated clothes and severely drawn-back hair, and Henry's careless work clothes, the old sealskin cap on the back of his head.

Edna posed later carrying strapped schoolbooks, her ankle-length skirt topped by a short fur cape with a high, turned-up collar, and her head balancing a small round flat hat resembling an inverted pot lid.

In spite of poverty—happy times—at Sleepy Hollow Farm!

In a feature article *The Sentinel* explained:

PEACHES AND PICTURES
O.H. BARNHILL OF THE SHENANDOAH SENTINAL
TELLS HOW THEY WERE OBTAINED
BY HENRY FIELD AND HIMSELF

We started shortly after five o'clock on the morning of September 3, 1897. We took the Sunnyside market wagon to which was fitted over a mover-wagon cover, and in which was stored over two hundred fruit baskets, a half bushel of provisions, two kodaks and some watermelons. Mr. Bob Smith accompanied us. He lives near where we were going and had

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missed the train he intended taking. He came to Shenandoah to see his son started to college here. There were other colleges nearer home, but Mr. Smith preferred the Western Normal because Shenandoah was a prohibition town.

It was while we were eating our dinner that Mr. Smith and I began to realize the real magnitude of Mr. Field's appetite for fried chicken. I would tell how much he ate, only I fear someone would be inclined to impeach my reputation for conservative veracity. Just before we hitched up, this champion chicken demolisher played an ornery trick on Smith and I. He winked his kodak at us while we were rapidly surrounding a large, red watermelon. We offered him an exorbitant price for the negative, but he refused to sell.

Arriving at Hamburg, Mr. Field and I chased around awhile trying to find a photograph gallery where we could reload our kodaks. Mr. Smith heard some bystander remark that they supposed we were hunting snake bite medicine.

Passing through Watson, we came to the Brownville ferry late in the afternoon. By the way, anyone who has never seen anything of the kind should embrace the first opportunity to see the Missouri River bluffs. They very much resemble a miniature chain of mountains. The boat was over on the other side of the Big Muddy when we arrived upon the scene and did not seem inclined to come over. We set up the flagpole and rang our bell, but all to no avail. After exhausting our patience and provisions, Mr. Field went down to the edge of the water and shook his fist at the ferryman. While he was trying to think of some cuss words, they weighed anchor and pulled over.

The Nemaha Valley is similar to the valley of the Nishna. Corn looks better than it does here. We passed a fine field of Armstrong's famous Yellow Rose on W. T. Russel's farm.

We stopped at the hospitable home of Mr. John Hawxby, who is Mr. Field's father-in-law. Mr. Smith owns a farm near Mr. Hawxby, came to Nebraska during territorial days.

The next morning, in company with Mr. Hawxby, we started for Simon Gongwere's where we were to get our peaches. On the way over we took a picture of a large farm house which was in the course of construction. It is being built

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by Mr. Thompson, whose daughter, Edna, is attending college here.

At Mr. Gongwere's we filled one hundred seventy-three baskets with a superior quality of peaches. To tell how many peaches I ate while we were loading up would be doing violence to my reputation as a temperance man. I will only say that Mr. Field says I have a storage capacity for ripe peaches that is simply astonishing. We were shown a tree that bore twelve bushels of peaches one year. Some of the budded peaches we got were as large as the largest California fruit. Mr. Gongwere is an old Union War veteran and was once a prisoner in Andersonville. Mrs. Gongwere understands picking peaches and is an excellent cook.

Early the next morning, Mr. Field and I started home, accompanied by a generous supply of eatables, topped out with a luscious peach cobbler from good Mrs. Hawxby. We crossed the Missouri at Aspinwall where there was no sand bar to pull over. The Aspinwall ferryboat is fastened to a cable stretched across the river and is pushed across the current striking the boat obliquely.

Shortly after leaving the ferry, Mr. Walter Baker and Mr. Thos. Brengman paid us a quarter each for taking pictures of their teams. I stopped at a rude looking cabin to get a drink and inquired if there were any pawpaws[2] growing near. Being told by a pretty, barefooted, young woman, "There are lots of 'em just back of the cow lot." I went back and got a hat full. We afterwards gathered two basketfuls of these "Missouri bananas" from bushes by the roadside.

We passed through Phelps, which is disgraced by a saloon and within a mile or so of Langdon, the noted fishing resort. Old corn is evidently getting scarce in Missouri for we stopped at three farm houses without finding any for sale. At the last place the proprietor said, "I hain't got any corn to spare, but anybody who will offer to buy corn, instead of stealing it out of the fields, sartinly ort to be accommodated. You kin have enough for yer horses and ye deserve a red ribbon."

That evening we camped on the banks of the Nishna near Hamburg and the way we were feasted upon by mosquitoes re-

[2] *Asimina triloba*, commonly known as custard apples.

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> minded us of what we had read of the Klondike gold fields. There were ten other wagons camped on our side of the river. One outfit was accompanied by a large, wicker-covered jug, so we were not surprised to learn that they were on a fishing trip.
>
> We arrived home about eleven o'clock. It is said that a man eats a peck of dirt in a lifetime, but we felt as though we had already eaten more than that amount. We took fifteen pictures with our kodaks. I have refrained from telling some things on Mr. Field which would doubtless make interesting reading. I find it well to deal gently with those who are moderately muscular.

A glass photographic plate indelibly records Edna once again. Beautiful in a long-sleeved, high-necked white dress, she holds a folding fan and parasol, and her fluffy white hat is tied on the top of her head with a flattering face veil. She wears flowers at her shoulder and arranged on a chair are baskets of flowers and graduation gifts. There is a book of Evangeline inscribed, "For Edna, with the very best wishes and congratulations of Mr. and Mrs. Sol E. Field, Shenandoah, July 27, 1898."

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Chapter 15: Farewell to Annie Field

1898: the S. E. Fields retired from farming and moved to Shenandoah to live.

But the big news of that year was the Spanish-American War. April 26th, Shenandoah's "Company E" was bid "God speed". They were going to war.

Two brothers, Clarke and Si Coulter, had been working at Sleepy Hollow. They were long-time friends of Henry and the war touched him closely when they left to enlist. He saved the letters they wrote to him.

Red Oak,
June 16, 1898

Dear Henry,

I passed all right this morning and start west sometime today. I just weighed in, 120 lbs. with the aid of a liberal quantity of water, about two and a half quarts, I think. Am not certain, but it was a good deal.

Dr. paid special attention to the vital organs and feet. Exam was very strict. There were only thirteen places for one hundred men. Am in a hurry but not nervous as you might think from my writing.

Bye, bye,

Clarke.

And in August, Si Coulter wrote from the Presidio, San Francisco, that Clarke was not as fat as he was—they didn't get enough to eat, and that they were feeling blue because they hadn't gotten to Manila yet.

Clarke wrote from San Francisco in September to his "Dear friends, Henry, Annie, and Frank" that he was downtown and ate half a watermelon, imagining he was back in Henry's patch, but the fruit was hardly up to the standard he was used to! Still waiting to go to Manila, they spent their leaves gathering shells and climbing a high cliff to get a fine view of the Golden Gate.

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Finally by the next spring they were at San Fernando, Philippine Islands, and Si Coulter wrote that although Otis claimed the Volunteers didn't want to go home, "there is not one in a hundred that wants to stay!" He also said, "I would like to get back in watermelon time but can't do it—will be one more month here, one month on the water, and one month in Frisco before I will be mustered out."

Early that spring (1899) Henry Field, Seedsman, had put out his first printed catalog—a four page folder which he printed himself on a hand-power press. He had to print several thousand of them for besides supplying half of the county with seeds, he was getting many mail orders from farther away.

April 14, 1899, Henry Field, as usual, inserted a large advertisement in the paper. He announced that he had some fine raspberry, strawberry, and blackberry plants for sale.

The next issue detailed the building boom in Shenandoah, but Henry Field's customary ad was missing. It was the rush season for his seed and plant business but Henry had no heart for business.

Shenandoah, Ia, April 28, 1899. Mrs. Annie S. Field died this morning at 7:30 at her home a quarter of a mile south of town after an illness of three weeks. The trouble was rheumatism of the heart. Her age is 28 and she leaves one child, a little boy. In her death, Mr. Field has met with a severe and irreparable loss, for she was indeed a good woman, a faithful and invaluable helpmate.We condole with him in his hour of sorrow, feeling how poor and inadequate are any words of consolation and sympathy. His grief will be shared by hundreds of friends. Her mother came from Nemaha, Nebraska two weeks ago and was with her until the end.

The funeral rites will be held at the Methodist Church (of which church they were members) Sunday afternoon at three o'clock conducted by the pastor, Rev. F. L. Hayward assisted by Rev. Peebles of the Congregational Church. The casket will be open from three to eight P.M. tomorrow at the residence.

From *The Shenandoah Sentinel*—April 28, 1899.

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Interlude: Musings by Henry Himself[3]

"You don't know who Walt Pitzer is but he has been with this seed business since before it was a seed business.

"You have heard the old saying, that, 'in order to know a man you must summer and winter with him'. But I'll tell you what is better even than that. If you want to know a man thoroughly, just batch with him for a year.

"Did you ever keep batch? If you haven't, you have got something coming to you. Walt Pitzer and I batched together for a year once. I did the cooking and he washed the dishes. Confidentially, there wasn't very much cooking done nor very much dishwashing either.

"When you go camping, it is lots of fun to do your own cooking and keep batch for a few days, but when you actually have to keep batch for a year with no woman on the place to wash dishes or make the beds or have supper ready when you come in from work in the garden; it is no fun I can tell you, and it takes a pair of pretty even-tempered fellows who can batch together for a whole year without pulling each other's hair occasionally.

"I was running a market garden, and part of the time there was a third young fellow with us. That was Si Coulter. He was down to see me the other day to talk over those days with Walt and me.

"Yes, Walt and I have been 'down to Jericho together'."

[3] Henry describes his life during the year after Annie's death.

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PART II: 1899-1929

The Growing Field Family

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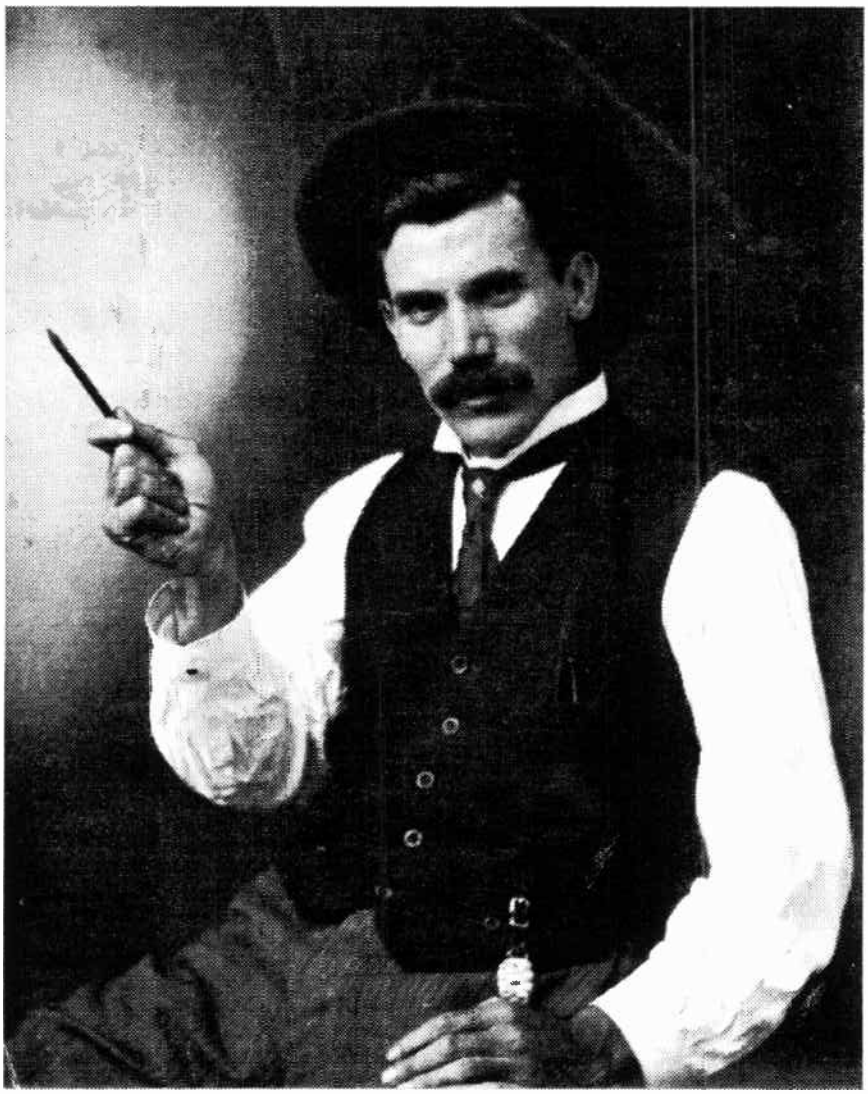

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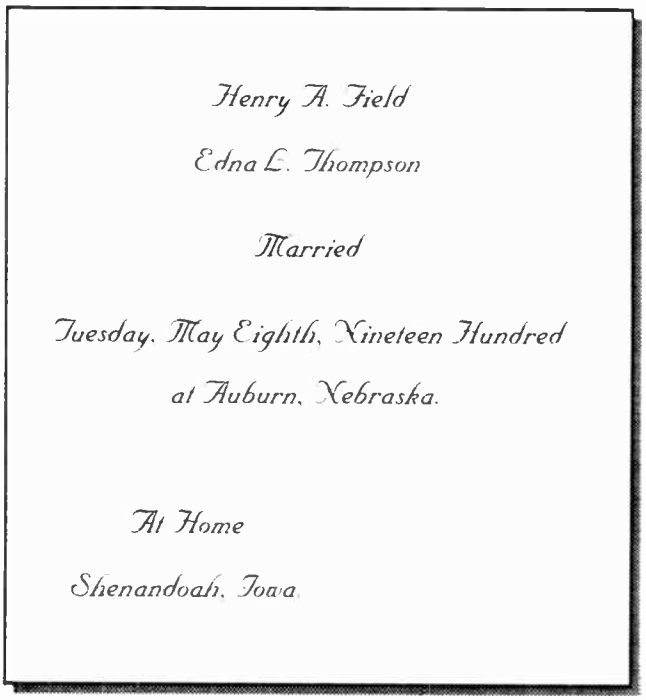
Chapter 16: Edna Thompson and the Seedsman

The August following Annie's death in the spring of 1899, Henry presented Edna Thompson with a book of poems inscribed:

> *To Edna, in remembrance of a birthday, Aug. 3, 1899.*
> *Henry Field.*

The second period of Henry Field's life began the next spring when he married Edna L. Thompson on May 8, 1900 and brought her to Sleepy Hollow Farm to live. His renaissance warmed a letter written soon after his marriage while Edna was visiting in Nebraska.


Henry A. Field

Edna L. Thompson

Married

Tuesday, May Eighth, Nineteen Hundred

at Auburn, Nebraska.

At Home

Shenandoah, Iowa.

Shenandoah, Iowa
Sept. 12, 1900

My Dear Edna,

I won't get this letter off to you in the morning but I'll write it anyway; I haven't anything hardly to write. We are getting along about the same as ever. Jessie[1] *sent us over an angel food cake last night, a big one, and we have it nearly eaten up. It is about 8:30 in the evening. Walt and I played three games of chess and I beat him every time.*

[1] Henry's sister

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We are selling lots of melons now and have some fine ones. We had one that weighed 46 pounds; it is not an extra large kind either. Pedie took a load in on the one horse dray and sold on the street this afternoon. I'll write more to go with this tomorrow, so bye-bye for now.

I was disappointed not to hear from you today. H.

Thursday P.M.

I just got your dear letter and was so glad to hear from you. You seem to be having a great time. I expect you will be glad to get home so you can get full sleep. I haven't much to write. We are getting along about the same as ever. We don't cook much except meat and tea and coffee; that and bread and butter and Grape-nuts are about all we eat.

I'll be awful glad when you get home again.

Bye, bye, Dearie.

Lovingly yours, Henry.

"Auntie" Jo Collins with Josephine on her lap, Lynn Collins, Philip, Edna, Hope, and Faith sitting in front. 1906.

On their first wedding anniversary a daughter was born and named Faith. Thirteen months later, Hope, another daughter was born, and on her second birthday Philip arrived. By March 1906, Edna had borne four children. "The talk around town," Walt Wilson said, "was that Henry got Edna for breeding purposes."

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Faith (on right) and Hope in 1902

"A Dollar's Worth of Seed Corn and About a Million Dollar's Worth of Girl" (Hope in 1904)

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The six years had brought changes in Henry's business. In 1901, he printed a 12-page catalog, complete with pictures, which stated on the front page: "We come before you with this modest catalog soliciting your patronage."

Henry's old friend, O. H. Barnhill, wrote an article about him for the January 30, 1902 issue of the *New York Tribune Farmer*. With a splendid picture of Henry in his buffalo fur coat[5] and another standing beside his ton of cabbage[6], the two-column article began:

> One of the most successful fruit and vegetable growers in this section is Henry Field..." The last paragraph reads, "It has been only two years since Henry Field left college to grow fruits and vegetables, his chosen occupation...

That year he borrowed $500 and built his first seed house with

HENRY FIELD SEEDSMAN - GARDENER

in large letters, proudly painted across the front of it. It seemed a terrible venture to him to put that much money into a story-and-a-half building to be used solely for a seed business, and it was really larger that it seemed he would ever need. But the following year he built an addition and in a few years had built onto every side.

The First Seedhouse

The 1903 catalog had 32 pages and a colored cover. On the first page of the 1904 catalog, Henry Field told his customers he had been born and raised a market gardener and was *still* a gardener.

[5] Please see picture on page 56.
[6] Please see picture on page 59.

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He wrote,

> The seed business is carried on out here in the country within a stone's throw of Shenandoah, a beautiful little city of 4,200 people. I have a nice office now and a big seed house with a seed farm around it—all right here in the country—and the town just over the hill. I own the whole thing, no rent to pay, and plenty of good help at country prices.

He ended:

> Come and see me at Sleepy Hollow Farm. If it is summer you will find me in overalls at work in the garden. In winter you will find me in my office with a stack of letters a foot high on the desk. I will show you everything on the place.

It was in the 1904 catalog that he started the crusade to sell seed corn in the ear instead of shelled so customers could see what they were getting. The other seed houses laughed at him at first and then, as Henry Field was swamped with orders, they said he was unsettling the whole seed corn business.

For several years, too, he had been urging the farmers to plant a leguminous crop, such as sweet clover hay, to maintain the natural fertility of their soil. In the seed catalog he printed a recommendation for clover written by "Uncle" Henry Wallace of *Wallace's Farmer*. The farmers were told that they must cut clover while it was young and tender for they often waited too long and allowed the sweet clover to grow rank as a weed. Farmers grumbled, "Sweet clover is a pest—we can't get rid of it—Henry is ruining our land with his new-fangled ideas."

Henry's "new-fangled" ideas frequently put him ahead of the time. His faculty for whole-hearted and intense concentration and his intelligent mind enabled him to recognize at once the full possibilities of new aids to farmers. His greatest contribution to farmers of the country was his prompt recognition of helpful farming ideas and his persistent and effective way of bringing them to the attention of farmers.

The editor of the Shenandoah paper in March, 1904, wrote:

> Very few of our home people realize the important place that Henry Field, one of our local men, has attained in the world of seedsmen. Henry has been raised right here in this

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community, and his growth from a market gardener to one of the big seedsmen of the United States has been so continuous and gradual that his local friends have hardly comprehended it. He is now but a young man, only 32 years old, yet he is known in every state of the Union. He is an everlasting worker, he is honest, he is enthusiastic. He is a student of his business and thoroughly fond of it. There are only 600 minutes in the average man's day of ten hours; yet his orders on Wednesday came in at the rate of nearly one every minute and a half...

One of Mr. Field's peculiarities is his love of system—everything about his business is run on a definite system. When his mail comes in, one of his helpers sorts it into three piles: postal cards, letter inquiries, and orders.

Percy Miner takes the postals and the inquiries, making a filing card on the typewriter and addressing a catalog to each writer. With each catalog Mr. Field sends out samples of some of his seeds.

He will spend more than $1,000 this year in advertising. He uses the strongest papers and gets good results. For instance, he paid $71.40 for a two-inch single column ad, run once in the Farm Journal of Philadelphia, which has over half a million subscribers. From this one little ad he has received 480 keyed inquiries in the last 10 days. He keys his ad in this Farm Journal by instructions to send to a box number, so he knows when he gets an inquiry addressed in this way that it comes from a reader of this one paper. He has had over 8,000 inquiries so far this year...

He expects to get orders from one-half of the inquiries, and as the orders run from $4 to $5 each (4,000 orders would amount to about $20,000), it will readily be seen that this will make him a big business.

Mr. Field gives his personal attention to the order letters, checks them over to see if the prices and the amounts of money are correct, marks shipping and other instructions, and numbers them with an automatic numbering machine. If a letter accompanies the order, he gives it the same number as the order. Then Murl McDonald takes this pile of orders and from them makes out the typewritten invoice with three duplicates, the first being used for the shipping label and the other two cards for filing.

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In the evening, Walt Pitzer and Bert Gowing make out the shipping tags and superintend the work of packing and shipping them the next day.

After the orders are filled they are turned over to Randall Henderson who files them away. Mr. Field can refer to any man's order in just a half minute whenever he wants to, under his system of filing, which was gotten up by himself. After all this, comes the letter writing; this is done by both Mr. Field and Murl McDonald.

Mr. Field now employs a force of about 25 men. He grows some of his seed and buys a lot of it. He gets his cabbage from Long Island, beans and peas from Michigan, tomatoes from Ohio, watermelons from Nebraska, lettuce and pole beans from California, beets and flowers from Denmark, and so on. Mr. Field knows how to get the best seed and then tells the exact truth about it in his advertising matter. The result is that he inspires confidence among those who buy his seed and makes friends of them.

He is peculiar and individual in his advertising and in the way he handles his business. He makes a big success of it, and we are glad of it.

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Chapter 17: Shenandoah—'05-'08

The city fathers solicited companies for Shenandoah:

TO LEGITIMATE MANUFACTURING INSTITUTIONS SEEKING A NEW AND DESIRABLE LOCATION IN 1907.

FIRST: Shenandoah is a city of about 5000 people, located in the valley of the Nishna river which is noted far and wide for its productiveness, fertility and beauty. The soil is rich as the richest, the crops as large as the largest, and prices are based on an accessible market. The people seem to be possessed of more push and energy than the average cities of the Middle West, and the vigor in this direction the good people have displayed in the past has given our city an enviable reputation far and wide.

SECOND: one of the things that appeals to the average man seeking a new location is the desirability of a place to live and bring up his family. Here we excel: a most excellent system of schools, a college, a Carnegie Library, and fifteen church organizations representing nearly all of the prominent denominations. These churches are strong and progressive, which fact demonstrates the character of the people. Another fact in this connection, that must appeal forcibly to the man who employs labor, is that Shenandoah has no saloons ... nor do they sell liquor in any way as a beverage. Waiving one's own desires in this matter, everyone will admit that it is a great deal better for the labor employer and the laborer that places of vice and temptation are not staring the working man in the face and draining him of his wages every hour he is away from work. Saloons are the places in which labor troubles and complaints are agitated and brooded over.

THIRD: one of the strongest arguments we have in our favor is the fact that no labor organization exists in our midst or nearer than twenty miles. The people do not want them and will not

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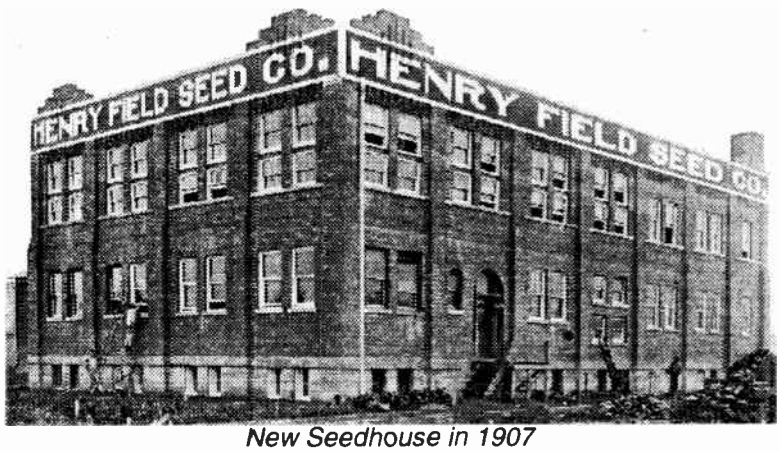
> tolerate them. Our common labor is principally American and Scandinavian: strong, reliable, and intelligent. There is no ... vicious foreign element. The common wages run from $1 to $1.50 per day. While these prices seem very low, the living expenses are so very low in Shenandoah that people on these wages save and buy homes on the installment plan and furnish them in a most creditable manner, and by reason of their investment, they take an active interest in all public affairs which tend to the prosperity of the city. It is doubtful if there is a better or more contented class of labor anywhere.

The Sleepy Hollow place was rapidly becoming inadequate; the need for a larger building imperative. The nearby town of Malvern tried to induce Henry Field to move his business there. With Harry Eaton (his sister Martha's husband) as adviser, he investigated Malvern's tempting offers. But Henry could not bring himself to leave Shenandoah.

His friends said he ought to incorporate and offered to help him. J. J. Dunnegan, the Reads, and others offered financial help. It was decided to incorporate for $75,000. Edna's father sold his farm in Nebraska and joined forces with his son-in-law. Sol Field, who was moving to California to live, invested several thousand dollars in his son's business. Henry was to be president and general manager and have a half interest in the stock.



New Seedhouse in 1907

The new company built a large four-story, fireproof brick building with a seed corn annex. It was located at the end of Sycamore Street. at the north edge of Shenandoah. Impatient to get under way, Henry's force occupied the building before it was finished. They were in, and the seed business flourishing, while bricks and scaffolding

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still lay in the yard. Workmen were painting the window sills and temporary wooden steps led up to the front door with a tacked-up sign, "Office Entrance". But tulips bloomed brilliantly by the wooden stairs near the scattered piles of lumber.

A six-foot-wide strip of flowers bloomed behind the iron hitching posts bordering the muddy unpaved street which looked more like a section of plowed field than a thoroughfare. Henry thought it was all very beautiful and looked often and proudly at the huge letters spelling out his name across the top of the new building. He moved his family to town for the winter so he could spend every waking hour at the seedhouse.

Henry Field, the Ear Seed Corn Man

The 1908 catalog was increased to 50 pages. On the first page was a picture of Henry Field, self-styled the "Ear Seed Corn Man", standing nonchalantly before the shelf bins of seed corn with his wide brimmed hat jauntily on the back of his head, high-single-thickness stiff collar close to his firm chin, and very large, black, drooping walrus mustache completely covering his large mouth. Underneath the picture he said he was getting older: "the wrinkles and gray hair are beginning to show, (at 37!), but the corn is getting bigger and better."

He announced that with one exception he now had the biggest mail order seed business in the West and expected to be selling seeds for fifty years more in his fine new building—the largest in the West.

The Office Room at the New Seed House

The big office room was filled with busy workers, an almost equal number of men and women. The men reigned at the typewriter desks while the girls, in their high-collared white shirtwaists and dark skirts with back fullness dragging the ground, did minor clerical chores at wooden tables. Bertha Mitchell was the women's foreman. Harry

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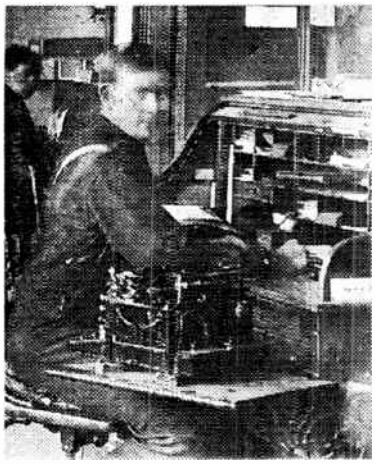


Eaton, the treasurer, sat before a roll-top desk with a great many small labeled drawers.

In the adjoining office near the front door, Henry Field, general manager, sat on an elevated platform so he could see from his windows the outside surrounding flower beds.

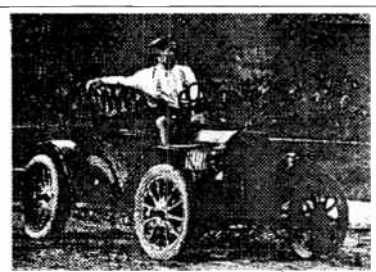
On the wall was an enlarged portrait of his father. A large sign above his desk demonstrated his lifelong and outspoken antipathy to smoking.

For the benefit of newcomers, it said:

WE DON'T SMOKE IN THIS BUILDING.
WE FIND THE STUFF OFFENSIVE TO SOME OF OUR WORKERS.
AND A FIRE COULD PUT A LOT OF US OUT OF A JOB.
LEAVE IT OUTSIDE.

Next door to the seedhouse, a brick home was being built for the fast increasing Field family. Jessie, the fifth child, was born in 1908[1].

In the meantime, there was the drive every day from Sleepy Hollow. Never a lover of horses, Henry Field invested in a red Brush runabout car. It had two bucket seats in front and a box behind. The wheels were wooden spoked, like small size buggy wheels, and the dashboard had been lifted without change from the buggy manufacturers. The car had no doors (horse carriages had none) and the steering wheel, of course, was on the right—the side from which horses were driven.



Brush Runabout Car

[1] The fourth child, Josephine was born in 1906.

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Henry sometimes had to use the whip he carried in the socket to chase the hooting, small boys away. They were enough to bother the most confident driver as they ran alongside the strange, new vehicle and threatened to dart in front of the slow-moving wheels. The Brush converted Henry to gasoline engines—no more horses for him.

His sister Jessie had a Brush, too. Homer Croy mentions it in his story[2] about the founding of the 4-H clubs.

> Miss Jessie Field was a country school teacher; you know the kind of school—one room, a coal stove, an iron pump, and two little buildings out behind. About the last place in the world you'd expect an internationally famous club to be born.
>
> One day she asked the boys to stay after school hours and talk about corn judging. Usually when school was over for the day, the boys raced away as if pursued by hornets, but today they stayed.
>
> She held up some ears of corn and got the boys to discuss which were the best ears, then the best way to plant corn and the best way to husk it. Interest in school doubled.
>
> So successful, so inspiring was she, that she was elected county superintendent with 131 one-room schools under her command. This was the year 1905.
>
> She had two main ideas: country school children should be organized and they should have their interest aroused by friendly competition.
>
> There was to be a national corn show at Omaha and her boys and girls wanted to enter. They voted to have some kind of emblem and chose a three-leaf clover which was meant to stand for scientific farming. On each leaf they placed the letter H and in the middle the word "Page", which was the name of their county. The three H's stood for the training of the Head, Hand, and Heart. Her boys and girls pranced off to Omaha and won.

[2] Homer Croy's story was reprinted in The Clarinda Herald-Journal Dec. 25 & 29, 1947.

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Now comes a bit of mystery. Somebody said, "Why a three-leaf clover? Why not a four-leaf clover?" and so the fourth leaf was added with the H to signify Health. Everybody began to call it the 4-H club.

So good were her boys and girls in contests that Miss Field decided to send them out on a whirlwind tour. In Chicago they won an automobile and voted to give it to her. It was a Brush runabout—a car you probably never even heard of.

Jessie Field's Brush Car

Thereafter she chugged over Page County's rough dirt roads, being careful about frightening horses, for, as someone pointed out, "the farmers would get mad at her and she wouldn't be re-elected!"

At last, Henry's new house was completed, a few feet south of his office door. He took the only north bedroom in order to keep a constant watch over his beloved seedhouse. He was in his office at seven every morning when the bell rang and, following the habit started years before, went back after supper every evening to work until bedtime.

Edna slipped away from the children many evenings, to sit by his side as he worked. He showed her the friendly letters he had received from H. W. Collingwood, editor of the *Rural New Yorker*, and from E. T. Merideth of *Successful Farming*.

"And the letters I get from my customers!" Henry said. "My wife says she believes that if I wasn't making a dollar at the seed business I would stay in it just for the sake of the letters I get..."

Here's a pointer from Kansas:

Some of my neighbors tried to discourage me buying seed corn of you, as they said it would take it three years

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to get acclimated here in Kansas. Well, if it does, I will need a log wagon to haul it out of the fields then. I was out today and shucked a load and had on an extra top box and could only get on three rows then, and had to raise the top box at that. I've got corn, and the other fellow that knew it all ain't hardly got nubbins!

F. E. Johnson

Henry and Edna with daughter Hope in 1909

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Chapter 18: Henry's Trip to the National's Capital

"For fifteen years, I wasn't away from home more than one day at a time. It just seemed to me I couldn't get away—that things would everlastingly go to smash if I let go for as much as two days at a time.

"In 1909 I had to go down East on a business trip. It wasn't quite the busiest time of the year, but was in May when we were pretty busy. I was gone two weeks and was as far east as Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, and Norfolk. It was surprising how nicely things kept going while I was gone!"

Henry Field stopped in Chicago for a conference, and mailed Edna a picture postcard of the Montgomery Ward building, under which was printed:

I am up in the sky where the wind blows hard,
And I wish I were home in my own back yard!

From Chicago, he went to Harrisburg, Pennsylvania and found the seedsmen there to be "fine people with a wonderful organization." He did not close his business at Harrisburg but rushed away promising to take it up by mail later.

Then on to Washington to see his old friend, W. D. Jamieson (formerly of Shenandoah) who was now Representative from Iowa in Congress. Jamieson's office in the three-million-dollar office building across from the Capitol looked like a marble palace to Henry. He was further amazed that Jamieson paid $40 a month rent for two rooms and bath and considered it very cheap. He got up at his usual early hour the first morning in Washington and found the Jamiesons had not yet arisen, so set out on his own and got in several hours of sightseeing.

He thought the Capitol grounds very fine and carefully examined the labeled trees. For the first time he saw magnolia, plane, and tulip trees and bamboo. Roses and peonies were a month earlier than in Iowa—it was all very wonderful to him.

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About ten o'clock Jamieson and Henry went over and called on Senator Cummins and had a nice visit with him. The anteroom was full of folks waiting to see him, but he called Jamieson in ahead of all of them and "slammed the door in their faces." ("Jamieson is just as good a hand as ever to get what he goes after. He goes everywhere as if he belonged there.")

Then they went to see President Taft. He was in his business office in a separate building in the same yard with the White House. The public was not admitted except on certain days and at certain hours, but Jamieson went right in, and the door keepers all bowed and seemed very respectful. They found Taft in the Cabinet Room, standing and talking to some important callers. Henry was introduced, shook hands, and chatted a little. ("Taft is a better looking man than his pictures show him. Fine looking.")

A somewhat awed Henry told later, "I was talking with a man from Carolina who said he had been to Washington twelve times and had never got in to see the President once. He was trying it again, but I think he got turned down for the colored doorkeepers didn't seem to pay much attention to him."

They went to see the President's private secretary next. "Put on lots of dog, the man at the door don't seem to know Jamieson and was very lordly to us. The head doorkeeper slipped over to this colored man and I heard him whisper that it was 'Jamieson of Iowa'. Then Mr. Doorkeeper had a change of heart and was all bows and smiles."

Then back to the Capitol again to see the House in session. Henry saw Joe Cannon in action and all the celebrities. After it was over, they went to the Senate and saw a hot debate with "lots of excitement". Root of New York was in the chair temporarily as presiding officer while Sherman, the Vice President, was down on the floor consulting with Cummins. Henry saw all the big fellows. To Henry's surprise, "Most of them are very common looking men."

They went to Jamieson's rooms at noon for dinner. While they were eating, Miss Kitty Laws came in. Jamieson had telephoned to her that Henry was there and told Henry that his old teacher of twenty five years before was "way up in some important sort of an office now. Has a whole house of her own and that is rare here in Washington."

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"She was sure tickled to see me. Sure had a nice visit with her," Henry wrote in a letter to Edna. He continued,

My, but it is fine here in Washington, the greatest and prettiest city I ever saw, I will tell you all about it when I get home. I am going to leave here on the boat at six-sixteen this evening for Portsmouth and Norfolk, Va. Will be there all day tomorrow and then go from there to Philadelphia. I am going to visit at Philadelphia with Mr. Stokes, the seedsman. I had a nice visit with him at Harrisburg. He is a mighty fine fellow. He wanted me to promise to stay long enough to go over to his country home in New Jersey, but I told him it was out of the question. Every one here in Washington looks at me as if I was crazy when I say I am only going to stay the one day here.

Do not think I will go to New York. I begin to want to get back home. Will wire you from Philadelphia on Saturday as to my plans. I want to see you awfully bad and am going to hurry home right soon now. Don't know for sure what day, but will let you know by wire.

Take good care of yourself and the kids. I am thinking of you all the time. I enclose some postcards with this. You can show them and the letter to the folks at the office and to your folks.

Yours,
Henry.

As the train approached the K & W crossing at the north edge of Shenandoah, Henry was on the platform, his bag in his hand. "Let me off when the train stops for the switch," he told the conductor. "That is my seedhouse you can see right over there, and I've got to get over there quick. I've been gone two weeks!"

Henry walked into the back door and through the shipping room. A man looked up from his job, said "Hello, Mr. Field." and went on working. He walked into the office. Everyone busily working. A girl smiled a welcome. Everything just as usual.

"<u>I couldn't see that they missed me at all!</u>"

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Chapter 19: Camping in the Early 1900's

Having discovered to his surprise that the business could function without him for a time, Henry decided in 1910 to make a trip to California. Going by train, he took Edna and the two youngest girls, Jessie and Mary, for a three weeks stay with his father and mother at Redlands, California. Henry found the West quite as fascinating as the East. He forthwith added travel to his widening interests and became a firm believer in vacations.

The train trip was too limited in scope, so in 1911 Henry bought an EMF touring car in which to go traveling. That summer he made a daring, trail-blazing trip to Colorado.

EMF Touring Car 1911

An enthusiastic good roads booster, he had helped greatly to bring about better roads. He dragged roads himself with a road-drag behind his car, and painted black and white Waubonsie[1] trail signs on the telephone poles. He was a vigorous leader in the good roads movement. Country roads in 1911 were for the most part, single-width, ungraded gullies lying lower than the bordering fields. With every downpour of rain, they became impassable rivers of mud which dried slowly into cavernous ruts. And rains came often in Iowa and Nebraska.

The EMF (license number 11175 IA) was a most modern and well-equipped vehicle—a commodious, two-seated affair having a door for the back seat which made it convenient for packing in children and luggage. Two large spare tires were strapped on the right running board as permanent equipment. True, they blocked the driver's entrance, but it was still possible to get in on the left side after climbing over passengers and the suitcases tied to the front fender.

[1] An early road running East-West through Southern Iowa passing through Shenandoah

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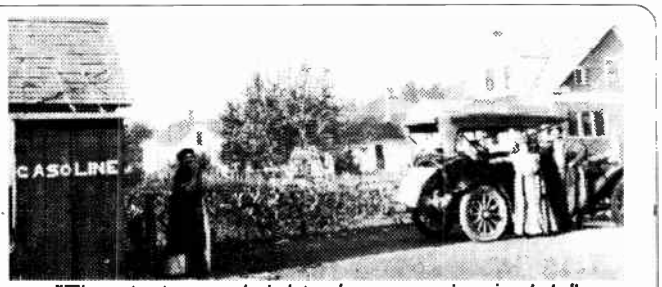
The collapsible cloth top was held forward by two straps buckled to the front lights. Bright pennants printed:

SHENANDOAH, IOWA

proudly waved from the straps. Two more spare tires were fastened on the rear—tires were perishable in 1911!. More luggage was piled on a rack below and tied to the tires. A large printed canvas covered all the rear, proclaiming:

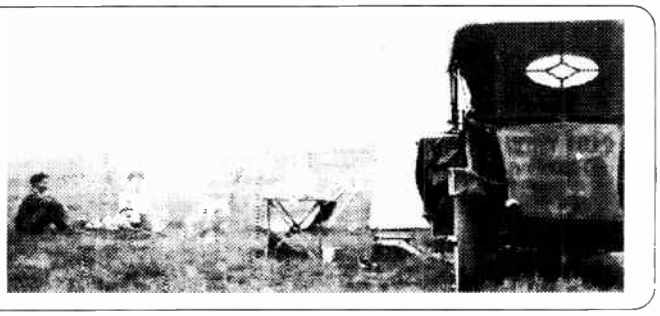


"The start, on a bright, clear morning in July"

HENRY FIELD
PATHFINDING CAR
SHENANDOAH TO DENVER

With three of the six children, Hope, Philip, and Jessie, they started off very early one July morning and drove straight west through Nebraska.[2] they stopped overnight at Fremont to see Henry's favorite cousin, Jessie Pease Deming, then on to Colorado.

They drove as many as 150 miles some days and camped out at night in the dry stubble by the side of the road. Their shelter was a simple triangular tent with a rope ridge along the top which needed only two trees, one at each end, to hold the rope taut. If only one tree was available, one end of the rope was tied to the car. Henry did most of the cooking over what he called an Indian fire—the frying pan sitting directly on the coals and two upright forked sticks with a branch across holding the coffee pail over the heat. In this manner, he and Edna cooked fried chicken dinners by the side of a narrow, dusty road in an unfenced, grass-covered region with neither house nor human as far as they could see.



[2] Along the Lincoln Highway

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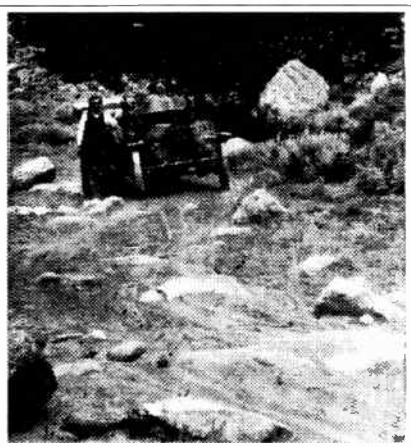
At Loveland, Colorado they entered the mountains. Climbing 4,000 feet in twenty five miles, they followed the narrow, winding road up Big Thompson Canyon to Estes Park. An icy mountain stream crashed against the boulders in its path and rushed madly down the canyon filling it with a never-ceasing roar of deafening sound. The EMF toiled up the grade, twisting and turning with the winding river. Steam spouted from the radiator, and the engine stalled repeatedly. When it stopped, they stood in awe before a tumbling waterfall while the soft mist dampened their faces. Again they stopped in the cool shadows of high canyon walls and drank in heady draughts of the light pine-sweet air. They were alone with this majestic beauty, for in 1911 few motorists dared the 7,500 foot elevation of Estes Park.



For a few wonder-filled days they camped three miles from Estes Park Village under tall, wind-swaying pines with no near signs of human habitation except for a small sawmill. But Henry had to turn his wheels east again and reluctantly he left the mountains.

The trip home was without incident until they were near Holbrook, Nebraska. There they came upon a bad mud hole where a heavy rain had washed across the road leaving it a muddy lake. Henry raced the engine, trying to make a fast run through the spot. The car plunged in and began to sink in the soft, soupy mire, rocking from side to side, straining for traction. Suddenly the car tipped toward the right and came to a stop. When Henry stepped gingerly out into the knee-deep mud, he found the right rear wheel lying flat on the ground, broken off at the axle.

Everyone piled out onto the high and dry roadside bank and set up camp in a conveniently near tree-shaded farmyard. Henry got a ride to town, telegraphed Omaha for parts and arranged for a man

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1911 Roads?!

to pull him out of the mud hole. Within two days the new axle was shipped from Omaha and installed by the local mechanic. The axle cost $6.00 and the mechanic charged $6.00 more. There had been only two days delay, and Henry proceeded homeward without further trouble. The trip took them seventeen days in all.

The next year, he bought a 1912 Everett car—quite similar to the EMF, but larger. When he first got the Everett he put it up to fifty miles an hour, but half a mile of that was enough. Fifteen or twenty miles an hour and one hundred miles a day were enough for anyone, he decided.He took all six of the children for the trip to Colorado this time. Their experiences were similar to the year before, except that they camped longer in Estes Park and took a different route home.

At Rocky Ford, Henry inspected the melon fields where his Rocky Ford muskmelon seed was grown, then went through Kansas, stopping to see several of his customers. He also drove as far south as Oklahoma City to visit Frances Johnson, the school ma'am to whom his mother had given a home so many years before. In Oklahoma City they feasted on Elberta peaches and Kleckley Sweet watermelons averaging a melon an hour during their stay. Coming home through Oklahoma, Henry struck fine sand, sank to the axle and bent the transmission shaft. As a consequence the reverse pedal wouldn't work. He came home with it that way, being careful not to get into a spot where he would have to back out. The last night Henry drove until midnight so the homesick family could sleep in their own beds in Shenandoah.

A trip to the Ozarks in the summer of 1913 was Henry Field's next automobile camping-out vacation. There were now seven children in the family since baby Ruth had joined them in January.

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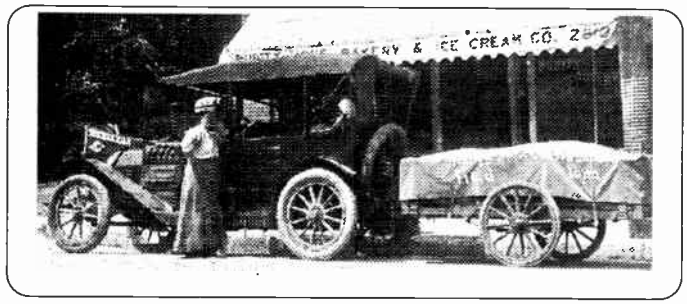

They all crowded into the Everett, towing an eight foot luggage trailer fastened with clevis pin and eye bolt to the back cross frame of the car. The tarpaulin on the trailer was amply printed on each side:

Henry Field
Shenandoah Iowa

Often they stopped overnight with hospitable Missouri customers, eating their fill of hot biscuits and country ham. Henry said he had planned so he would be in the Ozarks when the "Elberta peaches, Kleckley watermelons and fried chicken were ripe." . He had timed it right—the trip was a great success.

After the rush of business slackened the next summer (1914), Henry again planned a camping trip. He and the family joined the thousands of Iowans who camped every year in Des Moines on the Iowa State Fair grounds. A large wooded area near the pavilions was laid out in named streets and provided with lights and water. It was free to campers for the two weeks of the fair. Many Iowa families came year after year to enjoy the comfort of a restful camp while taking in the elaborate State Fair.

Every day, the Field children rushed through breakfast, then raced off to the playgrounds and to see the sights. Every night there was the dazzling fireworks show—a thrill never to be forgotten. Tiredly, then, the crowd straggled back to the tents among the trees. Someone called: "Oh Joe, here's your mule!", and at the far end of the campground another took up the old Civil War cry.

Then quiet and sleep after the wonderful excitement of the day. It was great fun.

During these years when Henry Field was indulging his newly-acquired taste for travel and discovering the world around him, so also, was the world discovering Henry Field.

From the nearby tiny town of Coin, Iowa came the editor of the *Coin Gazette* and May 24, 1912 he ran headlines in his paper.

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A GREAT INDUSTRY
WHAT THE EDITOR SAW ON A TRIP OF INSPECTION
SOME BUSINESS THAT!

While in Shenandoah the other day I had the extreme pleasure of seeing the grand sight of Henry Field's mammoth seed house in full operation. I had little or no idea of the extensiveness of the positively wonderful workings of the enormous volume of business this seed house is doing these days when nearly all other lines of business are enjoying a dull time.

Henry Field is doing well and is a great honor to a town and country.

If you have never had the great pleasure of seeing this seed house in full speed during the rush season you have missed something worth while.

Henry with Tomatoes in 1912

As we passed on a tour of inspection the first department entered is the one where garden seeds are being made ready for shipment. At this, just now, ten girls are busily at work from morning till night. Here are filled orders which go to all corners of the United States, and they feel safe in stating all parts of the world.

Beyond this area is the assembling department for the garden seeds where nearly two dozen girls are placing all the seeds for an order together.

We note there are many more girls employed than boys. Mr. Field tells us that girls do better work and tend to business better. We were also surprised at the wages earned. In many cases they are paid by *piece work* and they earn from six to eighteen dollars a week according to their experience. Think what this means to the town!

Here is a place where modern machinery does all the work which can be done. No hand is turned at work where machinery can be procured to save time and strength. Where in

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former years the packets were filled by hand they are now filled, licked and sealed by the iron hand of machinery at the rate of many thousands per hour. It is wonderful the way the corn is handled from the time it arrives until it goes out as good seed or refuse. Not a hand touches it. A belt carries it to the elevator, a belt carries it to the rooms for testing, a belt carries it to the sheller and to the order filling room, and the refuse is carried on belts to the big 35,000 bushel bins where it is carried out on belts to the wagons of the feeders and elevator men who buy it.

Then too there is their method of testing seed which is wonderful. The kernels are fed through a machine that takes out all the ill-shaped ones of any size, then the perfect kernels are sorted into different widths so that every kernel in each order is within one sixty-fourth of the same size as every other kernel. Some of this corn is tested by the old knife test, but for those who want it and are willing to pay $2 more per bushel for it, the corn is all tested ear by ear in a germination tester.

This is the very height of the season's business. The season starts about the first of January, works up to a climax in March and dwindles off to the middle of May. The business this year will considerably top that of any other year since the company began doing business. Orders have been piling in at the rate of 5,000 per week. They average from $4 to $5 per order. Five weeks ago $21,000 was received and banked, the proceeds of 5,028 orders.The high water mark for the best day in the history of the concern was about four weeks ago, when the mail brought in over $6,000 in cash orders. Counting on even a fair run over the customary period of activity for the remainder of the season, the number of orders will run over 55,000 and the season's business over $250,000.

Mr. Field tells us, "The payroll runs about $1,000 per week for the force of something over 100 who are employed" As a newspaper man I was interested greatly in their printing department. Few newspaper offices are more modern or more thoroughly equipped. And in fact there are few of them that can turn out the class or variety of work that the Field printing company does. Nearly half of the top floor is given over to the printing of the company's circulars, forms, and advertising.

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Three or four color work is turned out with the same precision that is found in a large city office.

Then we were amazed at the amount of mail—a real post office in itself. You should see the mail! A day's orders, over 800 of them, and we are told they will average five dollars each. This means he pays out as much or more for postage stamps then all the rest of the town put together.

Mr. Field is a self-made man. Only a few short years ago he drove a one-horse vegetable wagon through Shenandoah streets and sold sweet corn by the nickel's worth. He is rather proud of that part of his career, too. Nothing *stuck-up* or aristocratic about Mr. Field. He could spend most of his time, if he wanted to, riding around the country giving speeches at colleges and after dinner talks at banquets. But he says he hasn't time for that foolishness. His seed business takes his entire time and attention. We thoroughly enjoyed their trip and will enjoy going again.

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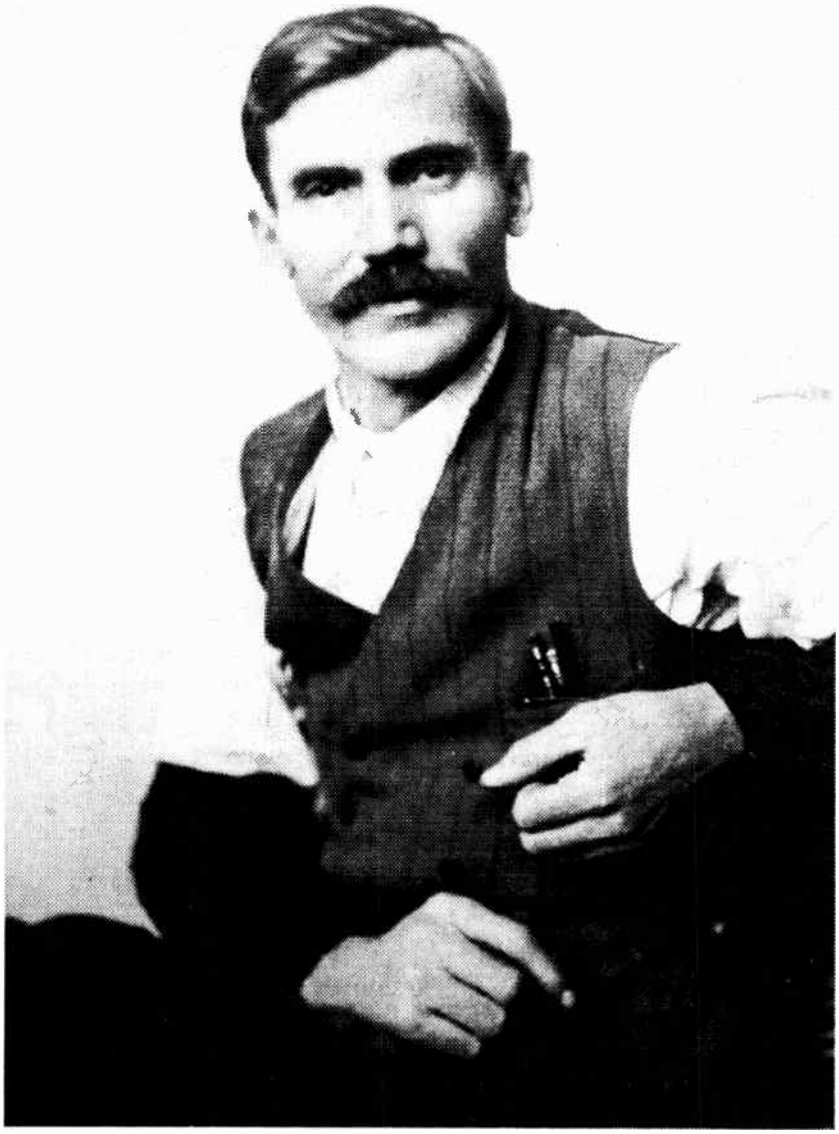

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Chapter 20: Seed Sense: a Small Town Newsletter

In addition to traveling, Henry developed another hobby—a little publication called *Seed Sense* which he started in 1913 and mailed each month to every name in his file. It was a combination news letter and price list in the form of a small magazine and also contained customer letters and pictures from Henry's camera. It was interesting, primarily, because of the personal writings of Henry Field. Sometimes it was a sermonette expressing his preference for simple country living or an enthusiastic description of brilliant tall-spiked gladiolas, so dear to his heart. Written in the friendly, folksy, midwestern vernacular familiar to farmers, it was liked by his customers.

GLADIOLUS, GLADIOLI, or GLADIOLAS

I suppose I am asked 500 times a year which of these names is correct and how to pronounce them, and to tell the truth I have generally dodged the question... But in plain United States language ninety-nine people out of a hundred speak of them as Gladiolas, and as I believe in using plain United States language that is what I am going to call them, so if you see it written Gladiolas here in this book, please take notice that I really do know the correct spelling, but I hate those Latin words and I am too contrary to use them. H.F.

The front page of the April 1913 issue of *Seed Sense* "preaches" alfalfa.

> I want to warn you right now that if you get me started talking alfalfa I'm not going to stop till I run out of paper. It's pretty near a religion with me, this alfalfa business, and for a good many years I've been doing more missionary work for alfalfa than I have for the heathen.
>
> My neighbors say I'm crazy about alfalfa and maybe I am, but it's a good bit like it was with one good brother here years ago who went to a camp meeting and got full of the real old-time religion, the kind they used to have when you and I were boys.

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FIELD'S
SEED SENSE

"FOR THE MAN BEHIND THE HOE"

Vol. 1 *Shenandoah, Iowa, May 1913* *No. 4*

Woman's Rights In The Garden

NOW don't get scared. There's no politics in this You are not going to get me into any political argument. Not even on womens' rights.

I do believe though, that when it comes to gardening, a woman has some rights, even though they may not be enumerated in the Constitution of the United States.

To begin with, I believe that every woman has a right to a garden. It's natural to want to garden and dig in the dirt and watch things grow and pick flowers and vegetables

And especially the woman on the farm. If I was a woman on a farm, I'd have a garden or have a fight. And it wouldn't be a little old weedy corner next to the hedge, but a nice, big, clean piece of ground, the best land on the farm, fenced hog and chicken tight and plowed and harrowed by the men folks first thing in the spring.

And above all a woman is entitled to good first class tools to work the garden with.

Honest now, sister, what kind of tools have you got to tend your garden with? Show 'em up. I know just about the list anyway. It's an old common hoe, probably rusty and dull, a rake with several teeth broken or bent and the handle loose and probably an old butcher knife and maybe a spade that the men wouldn't use to dig post holes with.

And you plant the seed by hand in a row made with the corner of the hoe or the end of the rake haudle, stooping along and dropping the seed by hand and then coming along and covering them with yogr feet. It looked like sin but it was the only way you could do.

Do your men folks plant and tend their corn that way?

No Ma'am. They have the latest two row edge drop planters and riding cultivators. Several generations ago they used to plant and tend corn with a hoe, but men don't put up with that kind of tools very long, at least not in their own work. They get machines with wheels and seats on them even if they have to go in debt for them.

But when it comes to paying out $12.00 for an up to date tool that will plant easily and perfectly everything in the garden and tend it ten times as easy and fast as it can be done by hand in the old style why then he'll holler like a stuck hog. Can't afford it--all foolishness--mother never had nothing of that kind--wouldn't work nohow a woman don't know nothing about machinery anyway.

Mrs. Field trying her hand at a wheel hoe. The children keep her too busy to get any chance to do much in the garden, but she enjoys the work, when she has good tools to work with. It gives her a change from house work.

All right brother. I hope when you get yours in the hereafter it'll be humping your back over an old dull rusty hoe, in a weedy, lumpy, crooked rowed garden with a sunbonnet over your head and the thermometer 87 in the shade.

But all joking aside (and I wasn't joking much anyway, that's mostly gospel truth) there ought to be an up-to-date garden drill and wheel hoe in every garden. They are as necessary as a cornplanter or a riding cultivator and don't cost one fourth as much.

A good garden is half the living, and it is a mighty hard matter making a good garden without good tools. It can be done but it's uphill business.

With a drill you can plant the send in nice straight rows, all just the right depth, evenly distributed, and so every seed will grow. Your seed will go nearly twice as far. It looks nicer, too. Looks like business. **It gives you a garden you can be proud of.**

With the wheel hoe you can tend the garden 10 times as fast as you possibly could by hand and you do much better work besides. When the ground is just right to work, you can get over the whole garden in one forenoon and kill the weeds before they come up. That is the secret of tending a garden easily.

You can work both sides of the row at once and throw a little dirt into the row so as to cover up any little weeds that may be starting there. If you do it right you can do away with hand weeding entirely Don't that sound good?

And it's easy. Any woman that can run a sewing machine can run one. You walk along standing straight with your shoulders back and your head in the air. The machine has big light wheels that run easy and carry all the weight. Of course it takes some muscle, but no more than a carpet sweeper or a baby wagon.

The machine comes equipped with all the different attachments and tools needed for any kind of work in planting and tending anything in the garden. It's guaranteed to work perfectly for anyone and in any kind of soil. It's so simple that any woman or boy or girl can get the hang of it in five minutes.

You can get the different styles ranging in price from $3.25 to $12 each All are good but the complete $12 outfit is of course the best of any. I will ship them on approval and on the $12 outfit I will prepay the freight anywhere east of Denver.

You can a good deal more than raise enough extra stuff in the garden on accouut of it to pay for it the first year. Besides the satisfaction of making garden in an up-to-date United States way.

Yes, of course you can get along without it. You can get along without washing machines, too, and sewing machines, and incubators and corn planters, and riding cultivators and self binders, combined listers and lawn mowers But would you? The garden is the best paying piece of ground on the farm Why not make it more profitable yet by using modern tools there too?

Honest sister, if you don't throw away that old rusty hoe and and get a wheel hoe this spring I'll think you haven't the spunk of a mouse. If the old man won't let you have the money don't feed him any garden stuff till he comes across. Starve him to it.

And by the way, some day I'm going to write an editorial on that subject of a woman having to ask her man for every cent of money she needs. It will be a red hot one, too. Good Land! didn't you earn the big half of it? And ain't it yours by rights? Just as much as it is his? Why shouldn't it be a common pocket book and both use wisely what was needed without begging the other one for it.

But as Kipling says, "that's another story." I started out to talk garden and wheelhoes and have wandered from the text.

It's just time of year now to get the wheelhoe. You will find them deseribed and listed in my catalog or if you wish I will send you a special catalog of them. We have them right here and can make prompt shipment. They're guaranteed satisfactory to you in your own garden or no trade. The ones I handle, the Iron Age, are the best kind made and are reasonable in price.

Now, I've had my say and it's up to you. H. F.

P. S. I will not be responsible for any divorce cases or assault and battery cases that may be caused by this editorial. H. F.

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In fact he got more religion than he could hold, and it set him to jumping and shouting he was so happy. It was reported to him that the neighbors said he was crazy. "Well," he said, "if I'm crazy, it's a mighty good kind of crazy anyway." And that's the way I feel about this alfalfa business. And I'm going to keep on shouting about it. If you don't all get alfalfa it won't be my fault.

Now I know lots of you have heard that it's hard to start, and that it isn't suited to your land, and that you've got to inoculate and do this and that, until you're going around in circles and scared to death about it. Now the most of that is just highbrow bosh.

The truth of the matter is, it's easier to get a start of alfalfa than it is red clover. Twice as easy. It will grow on any fairly good land that will grow clover, corn, wheat, or potatoes, and some where they wouldn't grow...

Now you remember at the old-time revival meetings they didn't use to talk theology nor long arguments to us. They just said, "Brother if you simply believe and have faith, the rest is easy. Cast away your doubts and make a start right now." Didn't they? And didn't we come through all right?

It's the same way with the alfalfa. You can grow it all right if you will only think so and have faith and make a real earnest effort. Quit worrying and get to work. Don't believe all this talk about it's being hard to grow. It's easy to grow.

And it's worth growing. If there is any crop on earth that will pay the bills and make a man rich and improve his soil and make life pleasanter for him, it is alfalfa.

The magazine was instantly in demand and became a regular part of the seed company's published material.

It was Henry's personal hobby, and he spent much time on it, writing readable, intimately personal material that inspired trust and warm friendship. Henry was very proud of his efforts as a magazine publisher and particularly enjoyed the opportunity it gave him to expound in a direct and straightforward manner his sometimes radical and unfashionable beliefs. He believed in bright flowers for the living, women's rights, and the wholesome life in country towns. He believed just as strongly and somewhat irrationally

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that high school and college ruined young people for business life—that the best training for working, was to work. He had great disdain too, for those who "aped city airs." His writings were often as undiplomatic as his personal manner, but the farmers loved them and loved him. Henry was one of them.

Field's Seed Sense was an extension of this same friendly approach but even more intensely personal. He printed pictures of his family with names and ages. Farmers in far-away states could name them chronologically and clamored for more of the expressive baby pictures with the entertaining captions under them, such as the picture of baby Ruth trying to open a watermelon and saying: "Oh, dear! Ain't it awful to be close to a feast on watermelon and then lose out simply because I forgot and left my knife at home in my other pants pocket. If anybody in the crowd's got a knife I wish to goodness he'd pass it over."

In *Seed Sense*, Henry Field kept on plugging for alfalfa and sweet clover. Always quick to learn about any crop which might be beneficial to farmers, he promoted Sudan grass. It was a new fodder plant of the sorghum family introduced about 1910 by the U.S. Department of Agriculture from the Sudan, Africa. It would make more and better fodder under dry weather conditions than anything yet known. Henry did a great deal to popularize it.

He was not quite so successful, however, in popularizing another farm crop. About 1910, he was among the first to experiment with hybrid corn. He planted two distinct pure-bred varieties of seed corn in alternate rows, detasseling all the stalks of one variety so it would be pollinated by the corn in the other row. The corn on the detasseled stalks was a cross of the two kinds, and when planted, gave a fantastically greater yield. If plantings from this strain were carried further, however, the corn degenerated into a very low quality. Henry crossed his Cornplanter and White Elephant varieties naming the resultant cross "Mule Corn" because it could not propagate itself.

To get people interested in this new, high-yielding corn, he offered it for a dollar a peck. That wasn't much more than the $3.00 a bushel which all good seed corn brought, but, in 1912 the country wasn't ready for hybrid corn. Some bought the new "Mule Corn" that Henry kept talking about and, when the crop matured,

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FIELD'S
SEED SENSE

"FOR THE MAN BEHIND THE HOE"

Vol. 1 *Shenandoah, Iowa, November 1913* *No. 10*

Ruth and the Watermelons

1.

I found a couple of Pickaninny Watermelons in the yard where papa had left them, and as there seemed to be no one in sight, I decided to try and get inside of them, for I sure do like watermelon.

2.

Of course I didn't have my knife with me, and the melons were so big I couldn't slam them down on the ground and bust them open, so I rolled them over and over hunting for a crack where I could pull them apart.

3.

As there was no crack, the next thing to do was to try and make some, so I pounded them as hard as I could with both fists at once, but it was no use. And I was getting hungrier for watermelon every minute.

4.

Oh Dear! Aint it awful to be this close to a feast on watermelon and then lose out simply because I forgot and left my knife at home in my other pants pocket. If anybody in the crowd's got a knife I wish to goodness he'd pass it over.

Ruth.

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did as they had always done: they went out into the field and picked corn to plant the next year. This second planting reacted as Henry had said it would, producing a mongrel corn. Hybrid corn was too new, too different. Muttering that it was "just another tricky idea these seedsmen think up," farmers refused to become interested in hybrid corn at this time.

His seed catalog, also, had always been "different"—written in a chatty style, "with a hearty handshake and a laugh on every page" as one customer wrote.

"Asparagus is easy to grow," the reader was informed:

> Plant seed or set plants early. This talk about trenching is all bosh. Just get the roots in the ground right side up and cover 3 or 4 inches deep. That's all. Keep the weeds hoed, of course. Plant 10 inches apart in the row. Rows any convenient distance apart. It really grows like a weed
>
> Just give it room and decent cultivation and you can't help but succeed. No crop first year, but a good crop for next year and plenty from then on for twenty years. Great moneymaker. Can't freeze out or dry out, drown out or hail out. Sure income. One of the best spring tonics known.

Well, you had a better opinion of asparagus immediately.

You were compelled to believe when he waxed eloquent about his own seed corn.

> I have sold a lot of seed corn in my time, but never have I seen as beautiful a lot of high-bred, heavy-yielding, dry, sound, strong-germinating seed as this.

You grew positively enthusiastic over the very idea of seed corn. The guarantee ran as follows:

> Of course, I can't guarantee you a crop for I can't be there to plant it and tend it, but you can take the seed home and examine it and test it and call in the neighbors. If you think you have been beaten you can have your money back. Of course, my guarantee must end when you begin to plant as the outcome of the crop depends on the weather and soil and leniency of the bugs and worms and many other things too numerous to mention. That's fair enough. All I ask is, you give me a fair shake, and I'll leave matters in your hands.

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People were more ready to accept Everbearing strawberries. In late 1914, even other seed dealers still thought that strawberry plants which would bear all summer and into October were "just another fake." One of these was Mr. Livingston of the seed store in Des Moines, where years before Henry had received his first knowledge of, and impetus toward, the seed business. Livingston came down to Shenandoah in October to look over Henry's grounds. When they walked out into the strawberry bed, he could hardly believe his eyes—some single plants had as many as one hundred berries. He began to eat the spicy, dark red fruit and, between mouthfuls, begged Henry to sell him some plants!

In 1912, '13 and '14 most businesses were dragging, and 1914 was considered a dull year in the seed trade. 1915 had been a drought year and agricultural sections were experiencing slow business in all lines.There was nothing dull, however, about Shenandoah's largest business.

> We have just finished our 1916 year, and I am happy to say, we have had the biggest and best year in the history of the business. Our sales this year amounted to $412,912.29.
>
> Here is our history for the last four years, tabulated in a form where you can see at a glance what we have been doing. The top line gives the number of orders each year for the last four years; the second line gives the amount of sales in dollars.

Year	1913	1914	1915	1916
No. of orders	60,804	82,628	105,122	133,652
Amt. of sales	$170,973	$241,486	$313,373	$412,912

> You can see what gains we have been making and how our business has increased from year to year. I could carry it back still further, but four years back is enough to show how it has been running.
>
> Of course, there is a good reason for this increase, but I am too modest to mention it. You can figure it out for yourself. I will say one thing, however, and that is that we couldn't make

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any such gains if we had to get a new lot of customers every year. We win out by keeping our old customers and getting new ones through the recommendations from the old customers. We do some advertising, of course, but our records show that practically all of our new business comes from people sent to us by our old customers, and you may be sure we appreciate it.

You will note the average size of the order has increased a little every year. This year the orders being the largest we have ever had, or a trifle over $3.00 per order, average. Of course, we get lots of orders that run up to $10 or $15, or even on grass seed to $100, but the bulk of our orders are for garden seeds, strawberry plants, and such things as that, that run about $2 or $3 to the order, and then of course there are lots of little orders for 25¢ or 50¢ or $1.00 or something of that kind that pull the average down. Still an average of a little over $3.00 to the order is certainly good, and I do not believe there is a seed house in the business that gets bigger average orders than we do, or nicer orders either.

Our business is not only one of the biggest in the country, but one of the nicest in the country. I don't believe there is any seed house going that has as nice customers and as pleasant business relations with them as we do.

Of course, we made a good, fair profit out of the year's business, but that is what we have got to do to keep going and pay the help, and pay taxes, and all the rest of it. We don't make any extra-ordinary big profit, but still we have made a nice fair profit, enough to live on, every year since we have been in business.

This year our profits were a little better than usual, so in addition to paying a dividend on the capital stock of the company, we also paid what we call a "Labor Dividend." That may be a new term to you, and I confess it is a new one with us. We just made it up so as to have some way to define what we are doing. We simply gave to the employees, who have been working with us and helping us fill the orders and take care of the business, a share of the profits. We paid to each one of the employees, who had been with us for fifteen weeks or more

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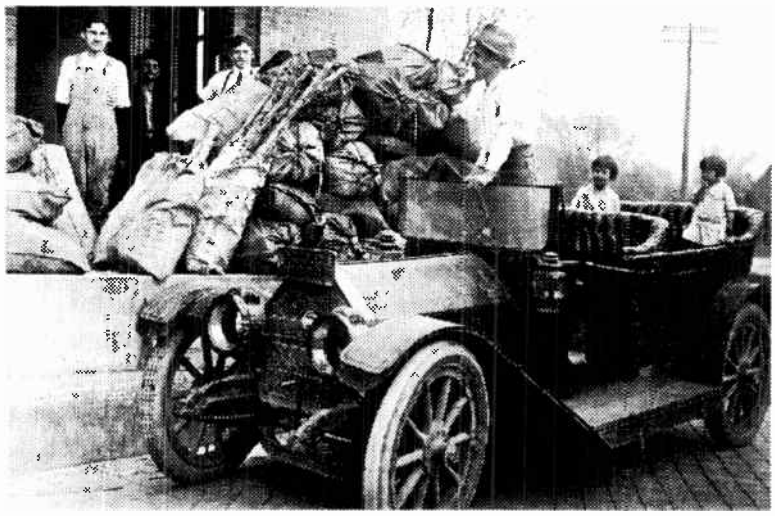
during the past year, a dividend check of 10% on the amount of wages they had drawn during the year. For instance, a girl who had been getting $12 a week during practically the whole year and had drawn wages amounting to, say, $600, would get a dividend check for $60.

We paid out in this way a total of about $4,200 to 107 people. Of course, if they had been here the whole year, it would have amounted to a great deal more than that, but lots of our help are just with us through the busy season of three or four months, so it cut down the average for each one.

But you may rest assured, it was a very pleasant surprise to these 107 people who have been working hard all winter helping fill your orders, and taking care of your letters, and the rest of the thousand and one things that have to be done here.

Of course, theoretically and according to the ordinary rules of business, all the profits go to the owners of the business, that is, the capital stock. But we considered that after a fair dividend had been paid to the owners, the workers who had helped to take care of the business ought to have a share in the profits and gave them a dividend too.



Out-going mail from The Henry Field Seed Company

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Required reading for every seedhouse employee:

ARE WE "SMALL TOWN"?

Yes, I think we are, And furthermore I think our future lies in that direction. I have given a lot of thought to this angle of our business, and the more I study it, the more I talk with our customers, and with other businessmen, and read the letters from our customers, the more I believe that the most valuable asset we have is our "small town" attitude, and "small town" point of view. Don't get the idea, however, that this conflicts in any way with the idea of doing a big business. The two do not conflict in any way. We can do a world of business and still keep our "small town" attitude—in fact, by very reason of it.

Our customer almost without exception is a farm or small town resident with the farm or small town point of view, and the nearer we can come to putting ourselves in tune with him the farther we can go.

To make it more definite, I believe that we should at all times stick to our traditions of old-time music, old-time honesty and liberality, and the "one big family" feeling among ourselves, old-time courtesy, and genuine good nature and good feeling with each other with our visitors, liberal and "human" treatment of our customers, and an air of enthusiasm, fun, tolerance, and success.

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Chapter 21: The Manti Summer Home

The busy, work-filled years were piling one on another. Henry Field was forty five years old, and he thought often of the "ten acres and a garden" he had always meant to go back to. He wrote in *Seed Sense*,

> Don't be surprised some of these times if you hear that Henry Field, seedsman, has suddenly retired from business and moved onto a little truck patch[1] and that the doctors say he isn't crazy, either.
>
> When I saw where this seed business was taking me, I said that, anyway, when I got to be forty years old, I was going to retire from business and do the things I wanted to do.
>
> But you know how it is, when the time came I couldn't let go, and I haven't let go yet. But some of these times I am going to just walk out and tell the rest of the boys they can go ahead and run the business. I am going out to the edge of town and get a few acres of ground and raise flowers and vegetables and fruit and a little patch of alfalfa and a big patch of strawberries—and more flowers. I'll sit out on the porch with a pile of vegetables in front of me and have my picture taken! H.F.

He even advertised to buy a farm home in the Ozarks. Of course, there was consternation and panic among the stockholders and employees when his intentions became known. It was very much Henry's business; he had built it around himself, and they begged him not to leave. But the tie that really held him—he could not bring himself to leave Shenandoah—his town.

So instead of retiring to the Ozarks, he had a better idea.

OUR SUMMER HOME IN THE TIMBER AT OLD MANTI[2]

> In the last SEED SENSE I promised that I would tell you this month all about our new home in the country. In the first place it isn't a house, but six houses, or rather six houses and a

[1] Garden produce raised for the market

[2] *Seed Sense* August 1916

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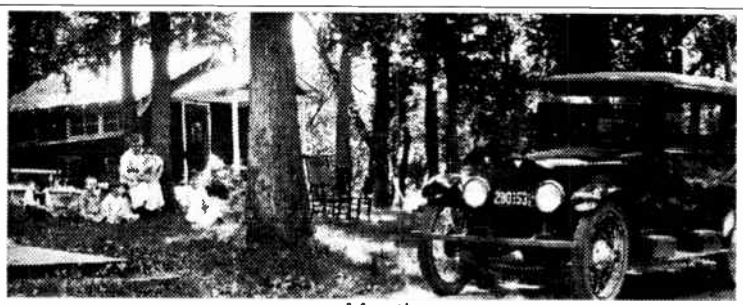
garage. And the garage isn't a garage, but a garage and a pony stable, and a woodshed, and a buggy shed, all under one roof.

Now, I suppose you wonder what on earth we want of six houses. Well, you must remember there is a pretty big family of us, and it takes a lot of house for us to live in, and none of us likes a big house, so we compromised by making a lot of small houses or cottages. Not so very small either. They are 14 x 28 ft., all the same size. And the wide, overhanging bungalow style, shingled all over roof and sides—stained shingles, green on the roof and brown on the sides. It is shady and cool there, and quiet and comfortable.

You know this is about four miles from town in a patch of wild timber land I bought this spring, near the site of the old town of Manti. It was quite a town in the 1850's and 1860's, but when the railroad came through, everyone deserted the town and moved to the new town of Shenandoah.

We moved out there the last day of May and will stay till late in the fall and then move back to town. I drive in every afternoon to tend to my work at the seedhouse. The children have a pony and can ride or drive a cart into town occasionally, but we don't care to come in anymore than is absolutely necessary. We are all tired of town.

I started to tell you why we had so many houses and how we divide them up. In the first place, we divided the children into three groups, and each group has a house and keeps house independent. The oldest girl, Faith, has Josephine and Mary. The next girl, Hope, has Jessie and Ruth. Philip is keeping bachelor hall by himself. And Georgia boards around wherever she takes a notion. The children have the three houses in the back row. Faith has No. 4, Hope No. 5, and Philip No. 6.



Manti

They do all their own housekeeping and their own cooking, except dinner. We all eat dinner together in No. 2, where

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the whole house is given up to kitchen and dining room. It takes an old fashioned extension table 12 feet long to hold us all. We eat on the screened porch part of the time though, and then we divide up at two smaller tables so as not to block the passage across the porch.

My wife and I live all alone in house No. 1. Sometimes Georgia is with us, but more often she is with Faith. It is the first time we have ever had a chance to live alone, as even when we were first married, we had several hired men with us all the time. I tell her this is our honeymoon. We have breakfast and supper by ourselves, and it is hard for her to get used to cooking for just two. Georgia eats with us a good bit of the time though, and sometimes Philip gets tired of batching and comes over.

Manti Houses No. 1, 2, and 3

House No. 3 is my office, or den, or "Papa's house" as the children call it, where I can go to read or write, or fuss with my photography, or entertain business visitors, or do whatever I please.

So you see, we use the houses all right and have no more room than we need. There is a stove in each house, cook stoves in all but mine. The children have small cook stoves, and we have a big range in No. 2. As for hot weather, we have an oil cook stove. We have a pressure water system with an electric pump and a pneumatic tank to keep up pressure, so we have running water and the finest of modern plumbing in every house, and they are lighted with electric lights from our own private plant.

You see we have all the town comforts and conveniences, with none of the town discomforts and drawbacks. We have an electric washer, and an electric flat iron, and an automatic electric pump that never has to be started or stopped, but keeps the pressure just so, and a fountain in the front yard, and a patch of Everbearing strawberries and all kinds of garden in

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the back yard, and the cool, clean smell of the timber, and the chatter of the tree squirrels and the birds, and two refrigerators with cool stuff in them, and town only 15 minutes away over good roads. What more could you want?

And incidentally, those children are getting some mighty good practice in domestic science and a few other things. The girls have to plan their meals, and do their own cooking, and keep their houses clean, and care for the smaller children, and help with the washing, and do their own ironing, and have most of the responsibilities of regular heads of families. And it don't hurt a boy a bit to know how to cook and keep his house clean. And besides, Philip takes care of the electric machinery and the water supply and the ponies.

It's all working out fine, and we all enjoy it, and we're all getting fat. We sometimes think that we will never come back to town at all, but just stay out there winter and all, and me come back and forth to my work at the seedhouse. Can't tell yet what we will do. We left the town house completely furnished so we can go back there any time on a day's notice if we take a notion.

We are having a fine time, and doing just what we want to do, and living just the way we want to, and we are living quietly, simply, and comfortably, wearing our old clothes and gaining flesh, and what more could anyone want? H. F.

But the unusual arrangement attracted attention. Walt Wilson said he was going to drive out and "see what Henry Field is up to now." Elbert Read told him, "Let Henry alone—give him some peace." Walt stormed, "He can't get away with that, with *me*. I'm going out there to see him."

And Henry welcomed his old friend as Walt drove in through the gate and past the sign:

NO VISITORS WANTED

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Chapter 22: Two Weeks in California

The United States declared war on Germany June 6, 1917. The next day, Western Normal College burnt to the ground for the second time. War fever was at a high pitch. It was generally believed that the destruction was a result of war sabotage.

After the first fire in 1891, Western Normal College had been rebuilt the following year but had never fully recovered its former prestige. It had deteriorated steadily and when this second fire occurred in 1917 there was no thought of rebuilding. Instead, Shenandoah's school board built a much needed new high school on the site, and memories were all that remained of the once proud college.

His two oldest girls were ready for high school, but Henry had other plans for them. He had become firmly convinced that schooling beyond the eighth grade was unnecessary—more than that—downright harmful, instilling ideas that had to be unlearned and delaying the learning that came from actual experience. It became a lifetime obsession with him, building up to a great intensity of bitterness as he interpreted almost all criticism as the probable result of too much formal education.

With his five sisters and his brother Sol Jr., he had prepared a loving tribute to their parents as a Christmas surprise in 1915. It was printed in book form at Henry's seedhouse print shop and presented as the *Memory Book* to his father and mother. They all wrote of their happy childhood at Sunnyside Farm and of the loving freedom they had been accorded. Henry wrote:

> *One thing stands out very plainly in my early training, I was urged to develop my own individuality and follow my own inclinations... If I wanted college training I could have it... I have always thought one of the most wonderful things my parents did for me was to let me develop along my own lines.*

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In the light of his reverence for his own childhood conditions and the self-development which he had been allowed, Henry Field was unaccountably inconsistent in the sternness with which he enforced his own will upon his children. Even as he wrote the eulogy to his parents, he was decreeing that his own children must develop not according to their own lines but according to his pattern. He believed almost fanatically that his way was right and that others must accept it.

Whatever Henry said was right with Edna, but she compensated for his stern domination by enveloping each child with her warm love. She managed to make each one, individually, feel the security of being especially loved and adored. She was a loving wife and a completely devoted mother.

There was now a new boy in the family—after a succession of five girls. They named him John Henry, and the summer of 1917, Henry wrote in *Seed Sense*:

> Yes, since the last SEED SENSE we have all been to California and back again. You see, John Henry had never seen his grandfather who lives in Redlands, California, and we thought it was about time they had a visit, and the rest of us had to go along to take care of John Henry. Yes, we all went. There were eleven of us, nine children and their mother and myself. We made quite a party, and it took some money for the tickets too. We filled two sections and a stateroom on the pullman, but the children didn't stay in their places much of the time. They were all over the train, and the porter had to round them up on the station platform at the stops. We got along fine though and had no trouble of any kind.
>
> John Henry was the wonder of the trip. He is always good anyway. If there ever was a born gentleman it's John Henry. But on this trip he was better than usual. Most people think it's awful to take a seven months old baby on a trip, but he wasn't a mite of trouble. Made friends with everybody, slept sound all night, and never growled about the heat.
>
> One woman saw my wife going through the car on her way to the diner and said, "Surely you are not traveling with three children!" She just about had a fit when she found out that it was nine instead of three.

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BACK: Hope, Edna, Henry, and Faith
FRONT: Josephine, Mary, Georgia, John Henry, Ruth, Jessie, and Philip

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We made a flying trip and were gone only seventeen days in all. We spent most of the time visiting with my father and mother at Redlands as that was what we went for. We also visited a sister[3] there and my brother S. E. Field Jr. who has an olive ranch at El Toro.

I also had a short visit with some of the seed growers who produce lima beans and onion and lettuce and carrot and sweet pea seed for us out there on the Pacific coast.

Of course, we had to go to the seacoast too, so we spent a day at Catalina Island.

The first thing everybody asked us was "How do you like California?" Well, it's a nice country, but I don't like it nearly so well as Iowa. I tried to be impartial, but I couldn't make it look as good as Iowa to me. I found hundreds of Iowa and Kansas and Missouri and Nebraska people there, and they all seemed to be happy. They looked like they would take a leg off of me if I dared say a word against the climate. My opinion must be wrong for I was a hopeless minority out there. But anyway, Iowa is plenty good enough for me, and the finest thing I saw while I was gone was the corn fields in Kansas on the way back.

By the time we had been there a week we began to be homesick for Iowa and the cornfields and the little houses under the big trees at Manti and wondering if the roasting ears were ready yet.

Well it was a great trip, and we saw lots of country and lots of fine sights, and met lots of nice people, and had a nice visit with the folks, but we were all glad to get back home again.

And when we piled out of the train at Shenandoah early in the morning and found Mr. Lemon waiting for us with the big auto and the little truck to haul the luggage, and we climbed into the auto and beat it out to Manti—well, it was worth going all the way to California to get back home. H.F.

[3] Henry's sister, Sue Conrad

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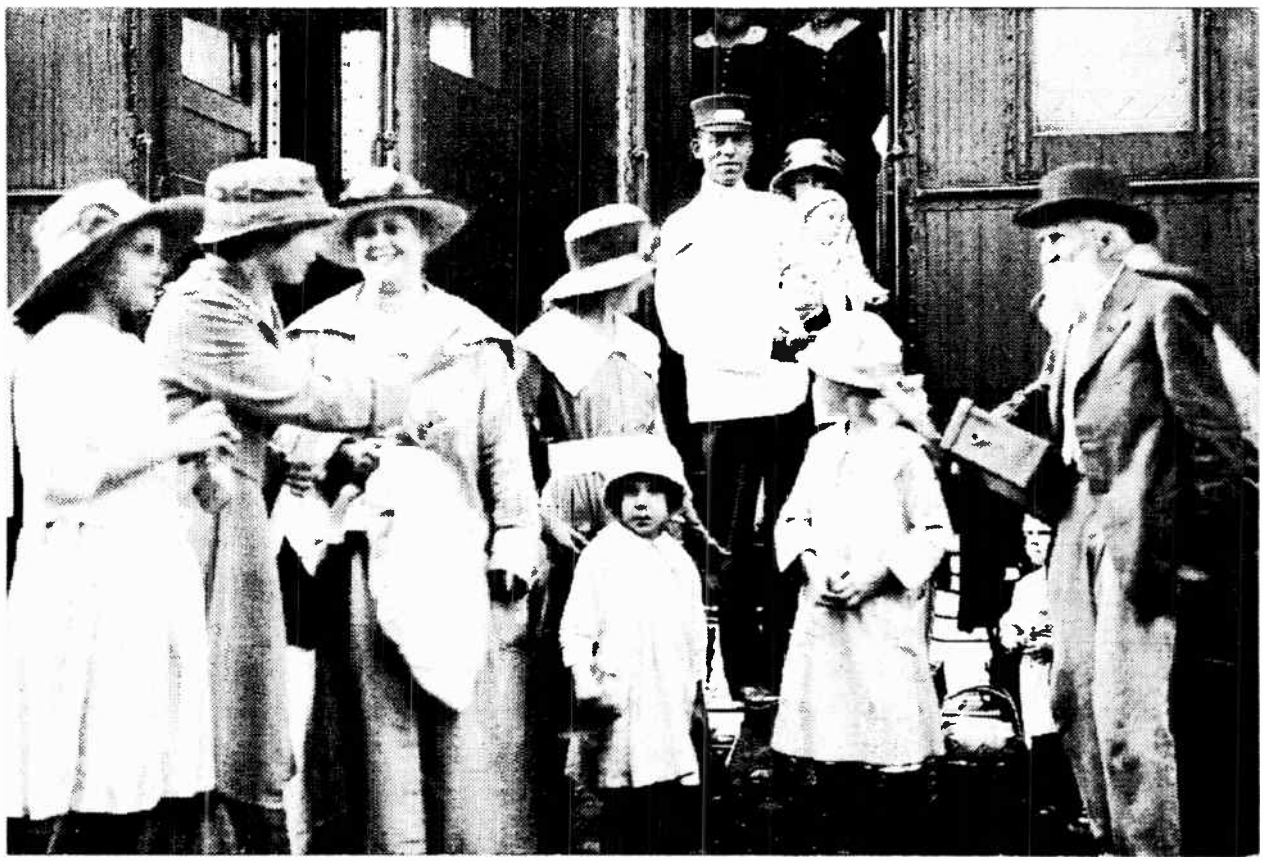

1917 Visit to S.E. Field in Redlands, California
Josephine, Aunt Sue Conrad, Mrs Henry Field, Hope, Ruth, John Henry, Jessie, and S.E. Field

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S.E. Field in Redlands, California during 1917 visit.

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In Front of S.E.Field's Home in Redlands, California, 1917
BACK ROW. Faith, Philip, Hope; Stanley and Sue Field Conrad;
Mrs Henry Field, Josephine, and Henry Field
SITTING: Mrs S.E. Field, S.E. Field with John Henry on His Lap
CHILDREN: Jean Field Johnson; Jessie (behind), Ruth, Georgia; Marjorie,
Mary and Frances Conrad; and Mary

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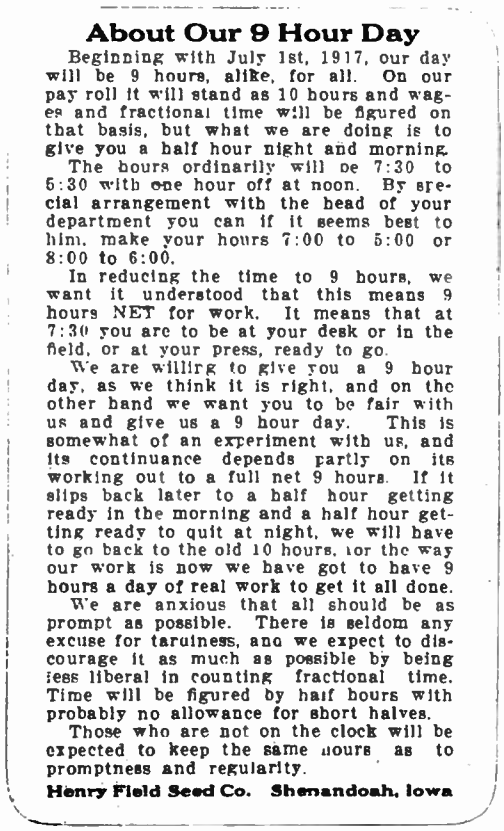
Chapter 23: Labor Relations

"Henry will never get rich," the bankers said. "He will give it all away. If he makes a hundred dollars he will give $90 of it back to his customers."

Still, business doubled and tripled. After the 1918 season, the records showed a million dollar business. It was wartime, and there were heavier government taxes, but the labor dividend was paid to the employees as usual.



About Our 9 Hour Day

Beginning with July 1st, 1917, our day will be 9 hours, alike, for all. On our pay roll it will stand as 10 hours and wages and fractional time will be figured on that basis, but what we are doing is to give you a half hour night and morning.

The hours ordinarily will be 7:30 to 5:30 with one hour off at noon. By special arrangement with the head of your department you can if it seems best to him, make your hours 7:00 to 5:00 or 8:00 to 6:00.

In reducing the time to 9 hours, we want it understood that this means 9 hours NET for work. It means that at 7:30 you are to be at your desk or in the field, or at your press, ready to go.

We are willing to give you a 9 hour day, as we think it is right, and on the other hand we want you to be fair with us and give us a 9 hour day. This is somewhat of an experiment with us, and its continuance depends partly on its working out to a full net 9 hours. If it slips back later to a half hour getting ready in the morning and a half hour getting ready to quit at night, we will have to go back to the old 10 hours, for the way our work is now we have got to have 9 hours a day of real work to get it all done.

We are anxious that all should be as prompt as possible. There is seldom any excuse for tardiness, and we expect to discourage it as much as possible by being less liberal in counting fractional time. Time will be figured by half hours with probably no allowance for short halves.

Those who are not on the clock will be expected to keep the same hours as to promptness and regularity.

Henry Field Seed Co. Shenandoah, Iowa

Other benefits had been established. One radical change was reducing the working day to nine hours, effective July 1, 1917. The new working hours for six days a week were from 7:30 A.M. to 5:30 P.M. with an hour off at noon. The employees were asked to "give a full nine hours a day of real work to get it all done."

The employees were given free life and accident insurance and higher wages.

Another new idea, original with Henry Field, was the three-thirty recess. The employees were given a break at 3:30 every afternoon. Free coffee, sugar and cream was available to them and to any visitor in the building. Anyone who wished could walk into the dining room on the first floor and be served coffee and cream. This innovation became almost a trademark of the company. Henry loved coffee brewed strong and flavorful. He drank coffee morning, noon, recess-time, and unfailingly, a cup at bedtime which he claimed made him sleep better! A teetotaler, coffee was the hospitality he offered to one and all.

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Chapter 24: Growth of the Seedhouse

Oh, we have come to honor them
Our sturdy pioneers,
To praise their dauntless fortitude
Through hardship, toil and fears,

To read once more the tale they wrote,
In laughter, or in tears,
To voice a city's gratitude
For fifty golden years.

By Helen Field Fischer

The first twenty years of the century were gone. Shenandoah celebrated fifty golden years with a gigantic pageant enacted on the lawn of the Christian Church by six hundred citizens. The pioneer Field family was prominent in its production; Helen Field Fischer helped to write the pageant. Jessie Field Shambaugh impersonated her mother, Mrs. S.E. Field, as the town's first school teacher. S.E. Field and Henry Field were cast as pioneer business men. Industries, education and the Christianity of thirteen churches were featured as producing an ideal place for home life. Shenandoah was depicted from the time of the first settlers, more than fifty years before to October of 1921. It was now a beautiful tree-shaded city of six thousand people. It was a modern city in a modern world—very different from the bare, blizzard-swept prairie that their father, Sol Field, chose as his home many years before.

After Lettie died in California in 1918, Sol had come back to Shenandoah to live. He died there in March, 1923, at the age of eighty nine.

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This was Henry's tribute:

> *Whatever I have achieved has been due to the principles taught me by my father.*

World War I was over, and the ground work laid for the sweeping changes of the nineteen twenties. It was a time of expansion—of trying new ideas. There was a fast tempo—a quickening of the pace in private lives and in business.

Though approaching fifty, Henry Field was the same dynamic, tireless worker. His business activities had accelerated with the fast-moving times. It was not his nature to do else than build ever higher and at the same time to broaden his scope of operations, encompassing more and more diverging interests.

At Manti, Henry had been experimenting with hog raising. He used Durocs at first, but finally became convinced that the Spotted Poland China breed was the best. The March 1919 *Seed Sense* announced the new sideline.

> Yes, we've gone and did it—bought a herd of Spotted Polands. You know I asked about them in the last SEED SENSE. The reports that came in were so good that I went to a sale of them at Weston, Mo., and bought eight head of brood sows, and I have bought two more since, so we now have ten in all and if we have any sort of luck we will soon have a good start of them.
>
> We bought eight head of sows, weighing all the way from 350 to 550 pounds each, and they cost us an average of about $160 apiece, and they are plumb good ones. They are colored about like a Holstein cow and almost as big. A big herd of them is the prettiest sight you ever saw. We haven't gone back on the Durocs yet. We have a mighty nice herd of Durocs, part registered and part without papers, and I think that for another year anyway we will carry both breeds till we find out for sure which one we want.

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> We will not have any purebred stock of either breed for sale till this fall, but we can probably fix you out with either or both by then. Meanwhile I will try and keep you posted as to what we are doing. H.F.

He used Sleepy Hollow Farm as headquarters for the hog raising activities. Sleepy Hollow was one of six buildings and grounds owned and operated by the seed company in addition to the main building on Sycamore Street. It was also used for another project in which Henry was interested. As he explained in the October, 1919, *Seed Sense*:

> We have been talking for some time about our sorghum mill business. This is at Sleepy Hollow at the southeast edge of town, the twenty acre place where I started in the truck patch business when I first married. Later I built the first seedhouse there, which stood very near where the sorghum mill does now. I lived there till 1907 when I built the big new seedhouse in town and moved into town itself. The house I lived in is still there.
>
> We had one hundred thirty acres of cane of our own growing this year and about one hundred acres of contract cane. Next year we expect to have three hundred acres of our own. The yield in a good season is about two hundred gallons of sorghum per acre.
>
> The cane is pressed in the ordinary type of heavy horizontal mill driven by a 30 h.p. electric motor located in the big building. The juice flows by gravity through a pipe into a tank in the basement of the smaller building, where it is pumped into another tank on the top floor, then works down through three evaporator pans worked by intense steam heat. Steam is ideal for cooking as it does not scorch the molasses.
>
> Of course there is lots of filtering and skimming and such, all along the line, and we get a very nice color and quality when it finally goes into the cans on the lower floor. We have ready sale for all we can make and more, direct to the consumer. The price this year is $1.32 per gallon, plus the cost of the container.
>
> The cane is chopped after pressing, and delivered into two big silos which we have on other farms. We will have about one thousand tons of silage this year and twice as much next year.

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> This will all be fed to fattening cattle, along with alfalfa hay and cottonseed meal or oil meal. We expect to fatten cattle this way without grain.

Downtown in Shenandoah, there was another development—the first downtown store. Henry said of it:

> We finally had to come to it and put in a retail downtown store for the counter trade. You see our main business is mostly mail order, and we are located in five or six different sets of buildings scattered around over town, outside the business district. This made it awkward for the customers who wanted to buy a little of this and a little of that to take with them.
>
> So we bought one of the best business blocks on Main Street and put in a department store. One room is seeds and plants and garden tools and all kinds of garden supplies, where you can buy any kind of seed or plants all in one place. The poultry department is in the same room with eggs and chicken feed and poultry supplies of all kinds.
>
> Next is the phonograph department where we keep at least a carload of beautiful Shenandoah[1] phonographs on hand all the time and thousands of records. We do a big local retail business on them and also ship them all over the country.
>
> We are gradually growing into a big business in all kinds of merchandise and show samples of all of them here, and sell locally besides shipping all over the country. It includes flags, jewelry, chinaware, cut glass, silverware, dolls, cameras, books, and everything else you can think of.

In 1922, the seed catalog offered cross-bred "Mule Corn". Since 1911, when he had first offered it for sale, Henry Field had been experimenting with different varieties.

Professor Hughes, after hundreds of tests at Iowa State College, was getting remarkable results by crossing Argentine native flint corn on a pure Reid's Yellow Dent. Henry used the same varieties in alternate rows, detasseling the Reid's Yellow Dent. The resulting seed corn on Reid's Yellow Dent stalks was a straight hybrid which gave astonishing yields.

---

[1] A house brand

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This seed was offered for sale at $1.25 for seven pounds (enough for one acre). Henry asked his customers to plant an acre and let him know the results. Henry's closing remark on the status of hybrid seed corn in 1922 was the classic understatement of the seed corn world: "Personally, I believe it may possibly revolutionize the seed corn business."

Henry Field, by this time, was probably the best known man in Iowa. Many people perhaps were unfamiliar with their governor's name, but it is safe to say that every farm family in Iowa knew Henry Field. In neighboring states the proportion was almost as large. Farmers all over the country displayed *Field's Seed Catalog* and *Field's Seed Sense* on the front room stand.

When showing visitors through his building, Henry delighted to stop at the card files lining all one wall of the big office on the second floor, where Bertha Mitchell was still in charge of all women workers. "Bertha," he would say, "show this man how many customers we have in his home town." There was always at least one card in the file, no matter how small the town.

The most astonishing fact was not that so many people in the United States and foreign countries, too, knew Henry Field, but they knew him so well. They knew all about his family—he told them in *Seed Sense*; they knew his opinions on widely different subjects—he voiced them very freely. Most important, they knew him as a highly-respected, trusted, and well-loved friend.

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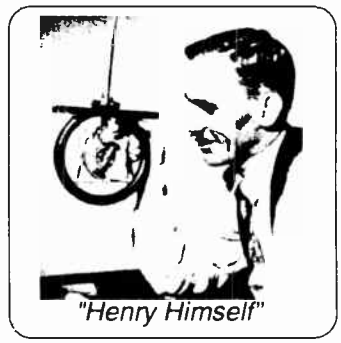
Chapter 25: The Radio Years.


"Henry Himself"

The man who was responsible for my first acquaintance with the radio microphone was Henry Field. We knew and worked with Henry in the good days of the late 20's. We knew and worked with him in the slim days of the middle 30's.

Over the years, Henry may have been concerned over the way things were going in the world, the nation and his own affairs. But he never lost the drive, the energy, the enthusiasm and interest in life and people. Each morning brought something new to Henry Field. And those of us who worked with him learned to share that same feeling, that feeling of excitement and enthusiasm for the new.

Henry was interested in people. He liked to talk to them. And he wanted people around him. His office at the Seed House was right out in the open. Anyone and everyone could stop for a word with "the boss" at any time of day, yes, and even part of the night. He was a hard worker. He believed in work, partly as an outlet for his own tremendous supply of energy, and also as a tonic, good for body and soul. He believed in work as an opportunity. And he took full advantage of it. Henry was never a rich man in the sense of personal worldly goods. His wealth was in his friends and accomplishments. And he had lots of both. To the people who worked with him, he was fatherly but not paternalistic.

In these words, Bill MacDonald summarized his impressions of Henry Field during the "Radio Years."

Radio broadcasting began on Election Day, November 2, 1920. On that day, for the first time, people gathered around radio sets and listened to a radio announcer giving election returns from the new Westinghouse station KDKA in the Pittsburgh, Pa. area. Some thousand listeners heard the news that Warren G. Harding had been elected president. Henry Field took notice of this historic occasion

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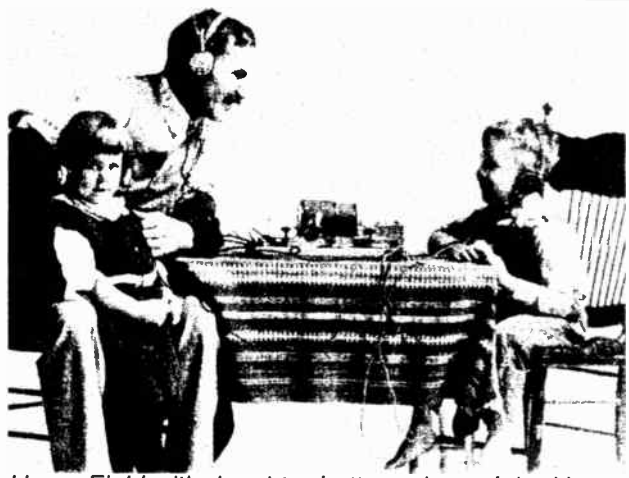
and of the increasing number of stations during 1921. Among the first to recognize the tremendous potentialities of this new medium of communication, Henry could see that talking directly to people by radio would be a natural development for him and his seed business.

Radio was sweeping the country, and, by the end of 1922, there were 600 licensed stations. Every large city was scrambling for licenses to build transmitters, for manufacturers to supply equipment and for the few trained technicians capable of operating the new stations. Most discouraging of all was the prohibitive cost of a commercially made transmitter.



Henry Field with daughter Letty and son John Henry

But Henry kept in mind the idea of building a radio station, and he was accustomed to carrying out his ideas. In the meantime, he had an opportunity to test his unorthodox ideas concerning the programs radio audiences would like. He had a strong conviction that there were thousands of people who still enjoyed the music familiar to his boyhood.

Fifty miles north of Shenandoah at Omaha, Nebraska was the new radio station WOAW. At the invitation of WOAW, Henry Field brought a group of "Seed House folks" up to Omaha on November 6, 1923 and broadcast a program of old-fashioned music.

He said his idea was to bring back the memories of the simple tuneful music of other days—an evening free of jazz or grand opera. He wanted to show the world that there were still young people who could sing the good old songs, and fiddlers who could really fiddle. As he said, "showed 'em mixed gospel hymns with square dance music and got away with it!" Wilbur Smith played *Arkansas Traveler*, while Lester Smith called the sets for square dancing. Then Luetta Minnick sang *Beautiful Isle of Somewhere* and Fred Tunnicliff, *Let the Lower Lights Be Burning.*

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Henry told the listeners,

> If you people really like to hear the good old music once again, write and tell me so, for I don't want to be traipsing up to Omaha thru the snow drifts in zero weather and staying up all night to make music for you folks, unless you really like it.

He got 5,000 letters in the next four days, from every state in the Union, from all over Canada and from Cuba. Radio listeners liked Henry Field and his old-fashioned music.

WOAW hastened to invite them back for two more programs, on January 1st and February 14th. Henry and his group repeated their first success.

On February 19, 1924, however, Henry's own station took to the air. KFNF, Henry Field's Friendly Farmer Station, a class A, 500 watt station, began broadcasting on a wave length of 266 meters.

The broadcasting unit was an inexpensive homemade rig built by his own workers. Harley Bartles, the Seed House handyman, chose the parts from different manufacturers, then, with the help of other Seed House employees, put them together. Power for broadcasting was supplied by Willard Storage Batteries, 2000 volts in one block. The station was powerful enough to be heard easily all over the central part of the United States and, at times, over the entire country.

Broadcast hours at first were limited to noonday programs from 12:30 to 12:55 and evening programs on Wednesday, Saturday, and Sunday. As Henry explained, they "were very busy with the seed business ten hours a day, and radio work must be done in off time."

> Our aim will be to entertain and rest our friends. There will be no heavy lectures, no heavy classic music, and no jazz. We will have no axe to grind and no propaganda to put over. We believe that you folks are tired of being lectured at and fussed at and uplifted and bored with highbrow stuff, and that what you want is wholesome restful clean entertainment, and that is what we Seed House folks try to give you.
>
> We will have no hobby to push, unless you call old-fashioned music a hobby. We will go

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strong on that. Our friends will help us, and we will try to show you that Shenandoah is what I have always claimed—the brightest, cleanest, best natured, and jolliest town in the world. A little old-fashioned, maybe, but not ashamed of it.

Soon he was broadcasting farmer dinner concerts every noon for an hour and music every night from 6:30 to 9 P.M. On clear winter nights, when radio reception was good, Henry poured on the kilowatts, and as he phrased it, "we really tore a hole across the Midwest!" Those night broadcasts from KFNF were devoted to old-fashioned tunes played and sung in the simple rollicking way of earlier days.

The station was a small burlap-lined wallboard enclosure on the fourth floor of the Seed House. Audience and performers crowded the tiny room and mingled informally. Henry Field, in shirt sleeves and wide suspenders, sat at a table before the round microphone which hung from the ceiling. A performer contorted his face over a fast-sliding harmonica, weaving his body from side to side as he played. Excitement and interest thrilled through the stuffy little room. Telegrams were coming—the station was getting out. Henry Field, his voice vibrant with excitement and wonder, said into the microphone:

All right, Bill, that will be all for now. Have some messages here. Al Parsons of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania says we're coming in perfectly. Another one from Kiowa, Colorado says, "Reception couldn't be better." Well, we sure are getting out. Bill, play Faith of Our Fathers. That was my father's favorite hymn, and I know he must be hearing us tonight.

Within a year after Henry started broadcasting he had added two million names to his mailing list, all gathered from letters and telegrams sent in by radio listeners.

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The daily program from KFNF which drew the most listeners was Henry Field's Noontime Letter Basket Hour. This was Henry broadcasting in his cheerful, kindly manner on a day in February:

> Yes, this is Henry, himself. It is pretty chilly today. Thermometer was down to 13 this morning and that's pretty cold, but it is going to warm up fast, and it won't be long 'til garden makin' time. You know we gen'ly figure that St. Patrick's, March 17th is the official date for garden makin' and that is less than four weeks away.
>
> I hope you have your garden spot all plowed. Mine is fall plowed, and I hope yours is, too. Anyway, you want to be gettin' your garden seeds ordered and get all ready for your garden. Before you can do that, you have to make your plans about what you are going to plant. Some people like some things better than others. I know some little boys would like to plant the whole garden to watermelons, and it might not be a bad idea, either. Anyway, make a sketch and decide where you are going to land.

Then details followed for planting an early garden, delivered in the same vernacular:

> Everybody plants radishes too thick. Planting thick is all right if you thin them out afterwards. But you forget to thin them and first thing you know, you have all tops and no radishes. Then you write and say, 'Henry Field's radish seed is no good!' Well, it is all right if it is thinned. I thin them out when they are half-a-finger high. They look awful lonesome in the row, but they soon fill up the space, and every plant makes a good radish.

Henry made radish planting fascinating. And the potential radish planters rushed to thumb through the seed catalog and order their radish seed.

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Henry Field said on another day,

> Folks, we got in another carload of those sugar-cured picnic hams. They are just like the others that we sold out in two days—lean, tender, and the best eatin' hams you ever tasted. Had some for dinner this noon, and I never ate better ham. Just good sweet country ham smoked just right.
>
> Got some more of that wonderful lawn grass mixture, too. It makes the quickest growing, thickest lawn you ever saw. Very hardy. Stands drought. Wonderful stuff. Sure makes a beautiful lawn.
>
> Well, it isn't going to rain in Iowa today. Kansas may have showers—Nebraska probably not. I'm going to take a ride in my new Studebaker this afternoon. That hill-hold on it is sure a dandy. This is KFNF, the Friendly Farmer Station, Henry Field, speaking.

Henry had spoken. The woman listener in the second floor apartment in Des Moines, Iowa put some ham on to fry even though she had just had her dinner, then mused at the window wondering if she had some place to plant lawn grass seed. And the Sigurney, Nebraska farmer decided, "I'll go to town after all—Henry said it wouldn't rain—and guess I'll take a look at them new Studeys while I'm in town!"

The general merchandise business mushroomed into competition with the Chicago mail-order houses; they felt the effects of Henry's broadcasting. Anything he offered for sale, from women's shoes to barn paint, was sold by the carload. A tire factory in Omaha worked overtime supplying Henry Field with its entire output of automobile tires.

He had a carload of oranges shipped in from California, advertised them over the radio and told people to come and buy them by the bushel. The small town grocers declared he could never get rid of them; a carload of oranges had never been sold in the whole country before. But as the *Des Moines Register* said, "Henry

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could sell almost anything to almost anyone—he has a manner!" That carload of oranges was sold at once and another shipped in—until Henry Field had disposed of fifty two carloads of oranges.

Why did so many people listen to Henry Field and feel such strong desire to buy his seeds and merchandise? It was more than his genuine friendliness and intimate personal touch. His honesty and integrity inspired trust always, but the most compelling factor was his complete belief in what he said. The hearer was compelled to believe, too. Every word he wrote and spoke, the command in his voice, the piercing intelligence in his deep-set brown eyes, all expressed his extraordinary personality.

Henry Field said he was an ordinary person, "just one of the folks"—a common man. But he had most uncommon virtues and did very uncommon things. He hankered after the old-fashioned ways of his youth but promoted the most modern and original methods in his business.

The characteristic that put Henry Field above the ordinary was strength —strength of mind and strength of personality. His honesty was such an outstanding trait that it could be sensed at once. With it went loyalty and trust in others. Other men might show a strong drive toward a desired goal, but no one could quite match the strength of Henry Field's persistency. On top of these qualities he displayed lively enthusiasm and warm, friendly, and generous interest in everyone and everything.

Dale Carnegie[2] wrote in his newspaper column *Philosophy Of Life:*

> Back in the 1890's a certain young man used to get up at 6 o'clock in the morning, harness a horse, fasten him between the shafts of a buggy, go back to the house and get a basket and put it into the seat. The basket contained something which has made him a millionaire—seeds—just plain, ordinary seeds.
>
> That man was Henry Field, and the town where he lived was Shenandoah, Iowa, about 40 miles from where I was born.
>
> But these seeds proved to be not plain, ordinary seeds after all; they were extra good seeds. He raised them in a garden and in a cornfield and, when he sold more than he produced, he bought seeds from his neighbors. He printed his name on the

[2] Author of best seller, *How to Win Friends and Influence People.*

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packets, he put the seeds in the packets , sold them himself.

In the spring, black loam rolled up on the wheels of his buggy till he had to get out and scrape it off with a stick. In the summer the thermometer hit 100. And if you know southwestern Iowa, you know that is furnace heat.

But Henry Field took to the farmers something more than seeds. He took instruction in seed planting, and news, and encouragement. He told them how to fight the grasshoppers, how to lick the cinchbug, and how to cure epizootic. When the farmers and their families saw his horse clear the brow of a hill, they ran shouting, "Here comes Henry." Hired men tied their horses to barbwire fences and came to hear the news. After he had passed out the news, and taken in the orders "Henry" would cluck to the horse and rattle off to the next neighbor.

But the thing Henry Field really sold was personality. People liked him. His company prospered, boomed. He no longer went out on calls, but he infused his company with his personality. He wrote letters to the farmers, chatted with them. He bought a run down at the heel radio company station in Shenandoah, and talked over it. He told the condition of the roads, who was sick, what his grandchildren were doing. The people in this section would turn off the biggest star on the air to listen to Henry Field.

He is now selling three million dollars' worth of seeds and supplies a year, for the most part on his personality. Naturally, he backs up his personality with quality products. He has a million customers a year. He is "Henry" to them, one and all.

People were spellbound by his obvious sincerity, his self-confidence, and his deep belief in his own ideas. Such strong faith was infectious. What Henry Field believed in was accepted as right. He was teacher and counselor to those who came in contact with him.

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Chapter 26: Edna Is Taken From Them

Henry Field attributed his business success and good health to the "luck of the Fields." He firmly believed that all the Fields basked in the radiance of their own special star of destiny and that harm would not come to them. He said it so often that Edna and the children relied on the security of this belief.

Early in 1925, however, it was apparent that Edna was not as well as usual. She had great difficulty breathing and was forced to sit upright many nights. She thought it was the natural aftermath of being 46 years old and having borne ten children. She accepted illness with her usual lack of complaint. Henry was putting in long hours with the radio broadcasting and another huge spring rush of orders—the largest number ever received. The children, with the happy unconcern of youth, paid little heed to their mother's illness.

In March the doctor advised hospitalization, and Henry took his wife to Council Bluffs, Iowa, fifty miles from Shenandoah. There they said she had high blood pressure and kidney trouble. Henry telephoned her twice a day, and his radio listeners kept the hospital busy with inquiries about Mrs. Field. They told her she received more mail than all the rest of the patients. She had little strength and wrote only to Henry:

April 2, 1925

My Dear Henry,

This is sure a horrid day and so was last night. I can hardly breathe. I was sure mad this morning. After promising me I could sit in a chair today, the doctor wouldn't let me. I cried, because I know I would gain faster if I could sit up.

I have so many beautiful flowers, and I got a nice letter from Bertha Mitchell and lots of other letters, which I feel I just must answer. But this letter is taking me all day to write. It is so hard to breathe, and I am so nervous I can hardly hold a pencil.

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I make the nurse tell me the name of the medicines they give me—digitalis (awful tasting), iron, digestive tablets, Elefin tablets, and morphine hypodermic.

The special nurse said her father enjoyed your radio programs so much while he was sick. The day before he died, he heard Luetta sing, All is Well. Tears streamed down his face, and he said it was just right.

Wish the weather would clear up so I could breathe. I don't expect you to write me letters, your telephoning is so much more and don't ever put yourself out to come up because I'm doing fine, and you could do no good, and it would just put your own work back.

Hope I feel more like writing tomorrow. Well, goodby, Henry boy. Don't work too late and take care of yourself

Lovingly,
Edna.

The next day her overburdened heart was suddenly still. Henry heard the tragic news when they flagged him down while on his way to the hospital. He continued on his sad journey, and co-workers from the Seed House hastened to join him.

Back in Shenandoah, they were talking of funeral arrangements and trying to comfort the bewildered, wildly unbelieving Field children who couldn't accept the catastrophe. Death had been very remote—a terrible fact entirely foreign to their brightly favored existence. It could not be true, they said. Then Bertha Mitchell came from the hospital. She walked into the house and appalled, they knew it was true. For over her arm hung their mother's pretty coat, limp—empty—without life. The drooping, lifeless coat smote their horrified eyes. With an anguished pain which would never quite heal, they knew the dreadful truth—Mother would never come home.

Three thousand people thronged Shenandoah to pay last respects to Mrs. Henry Field. They packed the Methodist Church and overflowed to nearby churches, as at last, Henry yielded to the overriding demand and allowed the services to be broadcast on the radio. Thousands of people wished to share Henry Field's sorrow.

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Chapter 27: Fame Finds Henry

September 14, 1925, the magazine *Radio Digest* announced the final results of its "Most Popular Announcers" contest in this way: "Shenandoah, a little city of some 5,000 people out in the Iowa corn country, came within less than 40,000 votes of taking honors away from New York City, the metropolis of America in the recent Gold Cup Most Popular Announcer's Award, when Henry Field, director, owner, and announcer of Station KFNF, ran second to Graham McNamee of WEAF."

Henry Field could add this success to his already impressive list. He owned and managed the largest mail order seed business in the world and was known internationally for his reputation as a reliable seedsman. He was president of the National Spotted Poland China Association of Hog Growers. He was rapidly developing a large mail order merchandise business through direct selling by radio. And now Henry Field in a few short months had become a national radio celebrity. The next year, *Who's Who in America* listed two Shenandoahans, W. D. Jamieson now an attorney in Washington, D.C. and Henry Field.

KFNF's second birthday was celebrated on February 22, 1926 with a thirty hour continuous program—the first of that length ever to be broadcast. The 226,000 telegraphed messages of response which overwhelmed the little local office showed the wide and popular appeal of Henry Field's style of broadcasting.

The hymns and fiddling were obnoxious to some, however. The direct selling by radio was particularly disliked by others. In those early days Henry Field monopolized a good spot on the air. This was very agreeable to literally millions of people who wanted to hear Henry talk and buy his wares. But those who found his programs dull, and the small town merchants who suffered from his competition, were increasingly irritated.

Henry Field's radio station became an extremely controversial issue throughout the Middle West within two years of its installation. Few people were neutral about him. Everyone, it seemed, knew of Henry Field and was strongly for him or against him.

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Then the Federal Radio Commission relegated all of the "farm stations" to the most undesirable positions on the broadcasting band where they were almost drowned out by powerful chain stations. This change included KFNF and all its numerous imitators.

There was a storm of bitter protest from Henry's loyal listeners. The Federal Radio Commission was bombarded with letters of protest. They considered restoration of the former wavelength.

Interests wishing to eliminate Henry Field's competition hired a staff of clerks to keep a record of every word he broadcast hoping to influence the Commission against him. Henry got a big laugh out of it. He told his radio audience:

> To you girls up there in Council Bluffs who are taking this down—I must sound awful ridiculous. (I can't hear myself.) Now I don't want you to do anything you aren't supposed to do. You are hired to do that. But if you will send me a copy, I'll send you the best dress in the store!

The laugh reached as far as the Radio Commission.

Henry took himself and two million letters of support to Washington, D.C. The Clay Center, Nebraska paper prophesied that "the United States lawmakers will not put him out of business for he is head and shoulders above 90% of our congressmen in brains and popularity—he will outmaneuver the politicians!" And so it seemed, for Commissioner Bellows and the Radio Commission, perhaps conscious of the voting power represented in those two million letters, did restore KFNF's former favorable broadcasting spot for daytime use.

Meanwhile, the annual report to the stockholders in June 1926 showed a 53% increase in business. All officers and management were re-elected and two new members were added to the Board of Directors—Henry's sister, Helen Field Fischer and Bertha Mitchell. Shenandoah was proud of a "nationwide business of such importance which brings in so much outside money."

A great many publications gave publicity to the seedsman from Iowa. Feature articles about Henry Field appeared at intervals in every newspaper in his area.

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R.V. Lucas, editor of the Oelwein, Iowa, *Daily Register*, said on February 23, 1926.

> Henry Field was one of the most remarkable men we ever knew...a wonderful man in a good many ways. He was a man who never failed to speak his mind regardless of where he was or who happened to be present. He never seemed to care whether the other fellow liked him and his ideas or not. Anything he thought was right was right, and everyone should see that it was. He developed the idea that if he wanted to get a lot of free newspaper space the newspapers would be glad to give it to him, and the fact that we are devoting a column to him right now shows that he is about right!

In the years that followed, great bundles of newspapers and magazines were accumulated, all containing articles about Henry Field. Such were the things written about him:

The Beatrice, Nebraska, *Sun* referred to "Henry Field, the famous radio man" in an editorial.

The Atchison, Kansas, *Globe* of E. W. Howe fame, devoted an editorial Nov. 30, 1926, to convincing readers that they "loved Henry Field."

The Kellogg, Iowa, *Enterprise* stated editorially that Henry Field was "worshipped" by most of the farmers in the state.

The *St. Louis Post Dispatch* devoted a whole page to the "Philosopher of the Corn Belt."

The Tulsa, Oklahoma, *Tribune* printed a picture of "Henry Field, famous owner of radio KFNF and his children."

The Atlantic, Iowa, *Telegraph* even as all other Iowa's newspapers, featured the birthday celebration in front page headlines.

The *New York Sun* radio section said he was known from one end of the country to the other.

The New York Times in August, 1927, said editorially, "It is easy to believe that Henry is one of the most famous of Americans—he properly takes his place with the other Henry of Detroit, with Rockefeller and Woolworth."

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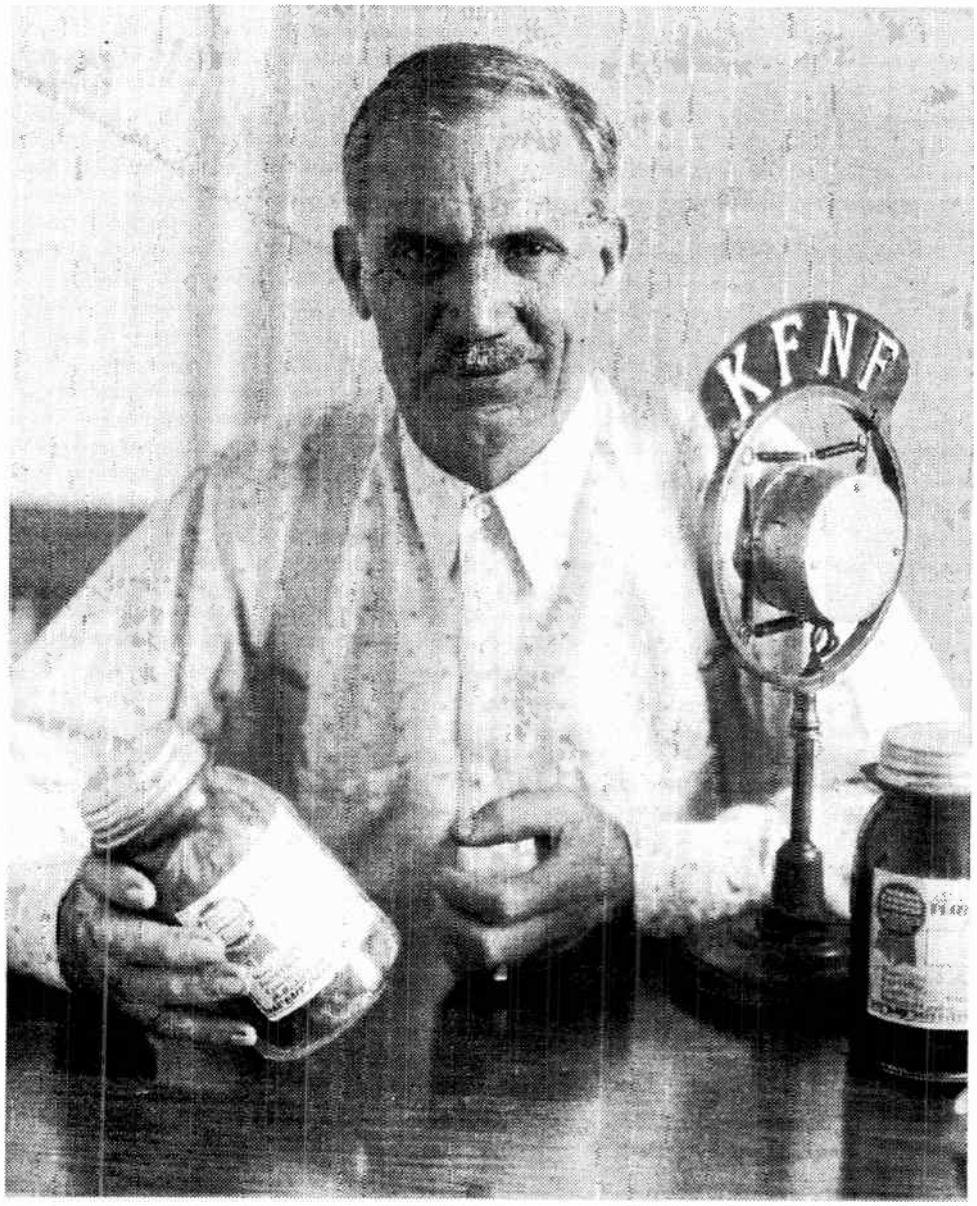

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Another paper commented under the heading:

New York Wants the Air

> These fancy Easterners may not care so much about Henry Field's devotionals, farm talks, and old fiddlers—however the fact of the matter is that the Field station at Shenandoah is easily the most popular among those now operating anywhere in the country.

Plain Talk said,

> Henry of Iowa is as famous on the prairies as Henry of Detroit. He has two million listeners who buy seeds, overalls, auto tires, and party dresses, sight unseen and who visit him in droves over the dirtroad to the otherwise sleepy town of Shenandoah.

Shenandoah was accustomed to the thousands of visitors who drove in on Sundays, or over the Fourth of July, or for Peony Day in June. They came to see acres of flowers in bloom on the Henry Field Trial Grounds. Tulips and gladioli grown for the bulbs, peonies and roses for the plants, acres of other species for the seed with the extra bonus of fragrant, exotic, gloriously beautiful blooms attracted sightseers from miles away. By actual count, more people visited Shenandoah every year than attended the Iowa State Fair.

Henry would broadcast on his Noonday Letter Basket Hour:

> Folks, the gladiolas this year are the most perfect I've ever seen. Tall spikes just solid with flowers. Every color you can imagine. We have the new crinkly, white varieties this year, too. Sure makes a grand show, well worth a trip to Shenandoah. Come and see us.

And the radio listeners from surrounding towns packed picnic lunches and headed for Shenandoah.

They swarmed into Shenandoah (as many as 10,000 on a holiday) to see the flowers, and the radio station, and to shake hands with Henry. If it was a weekday they stopped by his desk just inside the front door of the seedhouse to say, "Howdy!" and extend a

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deferential hand. "Just want to shake hands with you, Mr. Field. Listen to you on the radio every noon and to the morning worship. Came down to get some of the new alfalfa seed you been talkin' about."

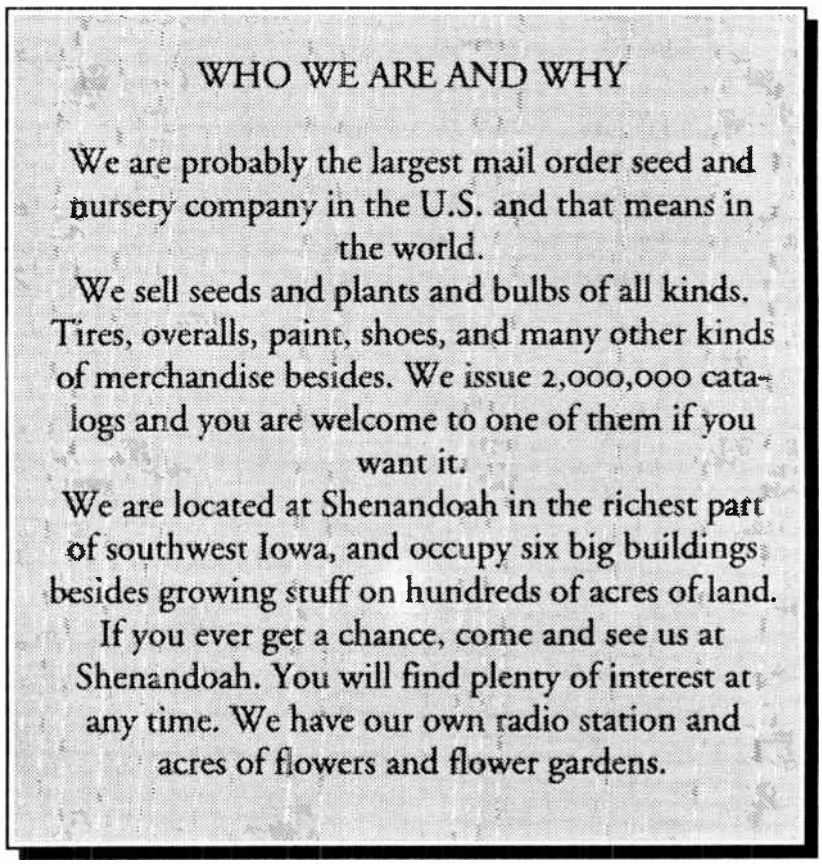
Henry shook hands and answered questions.

"No, you don't need to pick the blossoms off your strawberry plants. Just let 'em bloom...

"Yes, we have some seed corn you can plant now and get a crop."

Then he turned to his work again until he was interrupted by other visitors from the groups passing by his desk.

Every visitor was given a scratch pad printed with an informative cover:



WHO WE ARE AND WHY

We are probably the largest mail order seed and nursery company in the U.S. and that means in the world.

We sell seeds and plants and bulbs of all kinds. Tires, overalls, paint, shoes, and many other kinds of merchandise besides. We issue 2,000,000 catalogs and you are welcome to one of them if you want it.

We are located at Shenandoah in the richest part of southwest Iowa, and occupy six big buildings besides growing stuff on hundreds of acres of land.

If you ever get a chance, come and see us at Shenandoah. You will find plenty of interest at any time. We have our own radio station and acres of flowers and flower gardens.

Visitors milled around the flower gardens, writing down the varietal names printed on the stakes, or sat in the radio auditorium and watched the broadcasting through the plate glass of the studio front.

At 12:30 every weekday, Henry Field broadcast from a desk in the studio, in full view of the audience. Watching the visitors come and go in the auditorium one day, Henry stopped in the middle of a sentence. He said over the loudspeaker,

Carl, come up in the studio and tell us about your peaches.

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As the audience craned their necks to watch, a man in overalls and blue work shirt, grinning in embarrassment, went through the side entrance into the broadcasting studio. Henry said to him,

> Come here and tell the listeners about your trip from Hamburg.

> Well, Henry, you told me to bring over a truck load of them early peaches I raise. Yesterday, I was goin' down those hills this side of Sidney and the universal went out. I didn't have no brake, and all I could do was just sit there goin' 70 miles an hour and guide the truck. I shore didn't want to go into them deep ditches. Finally got the truck stopped, but they couldn't fix it until this morning, so I slept last night on the load of peaches. And I'll tell you there are lots easier beds than a load of lumpy peaches!

Henry led the laughter.

> Well, folks, we're selling Carl's peaches a dollar a bushel. Come and get 'em. Bring your own baskets and take 'em away.

Before evening, Carl's peaches were sold, and he was on his way back to Hamburg, Iowa.

There were visitors in the fall, too, come for the Fall Festival at the Seedhouse, to see the dahlias in bloom or to see Henry Field, now nearing 60, distinguished looking and resplendent in his big muskrat fur coat as he judged a cornhusking contest. The former homely, awkward farm boy was now "Iowa's best known citizen," the *Evening Sentinel* said, and was deferred to as highest authority on everything pertaining to seeds and farming.

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Chapter 28: Crisis For the Seedhouse

"It never was my ambition to have a big business. I got started at this seed business partly because I wanted something to do in the winter time when I couldn't be working in the garden, partly because I enjoyed breeding improved strains of vegetables, and partly because the neighbors kept pestering me for seed like I used myself. And when I did get started I never intended to make a big business out of it. I just wanted to have a nice little handmade, personally conducted business that me and my wife and the children and the hired man could manage by ourselves, and that would just keep us busy two or three months during the slack time of the year.

"Of course when I once got started, the business ran away with me. Now I want to quit the responsibilities and worries of business life and do the things I have always wanted to do."

Henry Field made this announcement to his stunned employees in January, 1928. He wanted no more of it—the glaring publicity, the heavy responsibilities and the nerve wracking necessity to make right decisions.

"For forty long years," he said, "I have put the business ahead of everything else—home, family, personal comfort, and a lot of other things which men desire. As my brother Sol expresses it, 'I am 25 years behind with my fishing.'

"I am getting old and tired and beginning to lose faith in my own judgment. I am by nature a 'smalltime' man. I have never been happy as a big man and have always had the feeling that I was parading in borrowed finery which someone would come and claim. I want to beat them to it by retiring in plenty of time."

The department heads at the seed house had helped build the business, but they knew there wasn't much to it except the Henry Field they were about to lose. Their standing in trade circles was no more or less than his personality. It wasn't the seed company—it was Henry Field. They saw everything slipping away from them and felt that their hope of future attainment was not possible without

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him. They suggested that, better than leaving a life's work, Henry Field should unload his work on them. They stated:

> *We will take over a big load of detail. You are without peer at so many things we cannot do. Instead of chucking the whole business, as you have mentioned doing, we want you to chuck that part of it we can and ought to do. We are here to help you, and we will. Each of us will do our best to settle our own problems—the problems that needlessly steal your time, energy, and disposition. We want to do something big and resultful. Give us your confidence and trust.*

(See last page of a letter dated, Jan. 13, 1928, on facing page.)

Deeply moved by this expression of love and loyalty, Henry Field cherished the document among his treasured mementos. He answered in part, with this declaration on January 14, 1928:

> *Possibly unwisely, I have built the business around myself. I think the business will go on and on when I drop out. Probably it is too soon for me to think of dropping out... I realize the sincere and real feeling which prompted your plan and your offer. So I am ready to do my part by turning over to you all I possibly can of my work and worries and responsibilities. I will stay with you and do the best I can, and in time, I may forget my dream of getting away from the business and getting back to the soil where I began and where I belong.*

The annual financial report that year showed another big year for the company—the largest one they had had. And Henry said in the September 1928 *Seed Sense*,

> We haven't changed in twenty years. Just folks, the same folks that had a two room seed house a great many years ago. Still old-fashioned. There is something about the old-fashioned way of doing business which I think the modern experts sometimes leave out. There is no limit for a business that sticks to quality, sells reasonably and deals fair and square with big and little alike.

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We have what we call a Foreman's Cabinet, of the following people:

Walt Pitzef	Fred Tunnicliff	Lou Hunter
Mrs. Mitchell	Harley Bartles	Frank Field
Dick Dearmont	Pate Simmons	Verner Mauk
Asa Holman	Joe Lindell	

Each of us are doing our best towards settling our own problems, the problms that needlessly steal your time, energy and disposition.

Should any problem bee too big for any of us to settle, we will first take it to our Advisory Council--composed of the following three of us:-

W. W. Pitzer
F E Tunnicliff
L L Hunter

They will call in any expert advice and will then settle the thing, if at all possible. If they cannot settle it or if they think it big enough to warrant it, they will take it on to you--in writing, with their recommendation of the action to be taken.

As a further effort to keep grief out of your daily work, we all want you, too, to use our Advisory Council just as we are using it.

Instead of chucking the whole business, as you have mentioned doing, we want you to chuck that part of it we can and ought to do. We are here to help and we will.

The details about meeting and officers and the like are very simple. You probably don't care about it, but if you would like to look them over, we'd certainly like to have you look them over.

F E Tunnicliff
Pate Simmons
Bertha Mitchell
Dick Dearmont
Verner Mauk
Harley Bartles

Joe Lindell
Asa Holman
L L Hunter
Frank Field
W. W. Pitzer

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PART III: 1929-1947

The Later Years

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Chapter 29: Bertha Mitchell

Henry Field declared he had been given three lifetimes to live. According to him, the third began on April 10, 1929, when he married Bertha Mitchell, his business associate of more than twenty years. She was a tiny woman with bright brown eyes, quick decisive ways, and laughter bubbling on her lips. Still a sort of dean of

women to the four hundred seed house girls, she was beloved by them and all her co-workers.

So they were married, and in Henry's enthusiastic words printed in *Seed Sense*:

> Never saw things looking bigger and doing better. Orders are running way ahead of last year. There is more to our business than just size. We wouldn't have any fun at all without feeling that we were doing you folks some good—live and let live—enjoy life as you go along.

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And in August he reported that business was good and the company still growing. The spring catalog had contained the usual varieties of seed and hundreds of merchandise offerings. Another merchandise catalog had been sent out in July. *Seed Sense* appeared regularly, thick with listed merchandise.

Henry's sister, Leanna Field Driftmier wrote and edited her *Kitchen Klatter News*, a monthly publication subscribed to by the thousands of people who listened eagerly to her daily program broadcast from KFNF.

Helen Field Fischer, the eldest of Henry's sisters was just as successful as a flower expert and made regularly scheduled radio talks. Jessie Field Shambaugh added her knowledge of flowers and commented about her long-time work with 4H and the national Y.W.C.A. organizations. Sue taught ceramics and pottery making all over Iowa, while Martha lived in Des Moines with her husband, who owned a chain of drug stores. Henry's sisters became almost as well-known as he, as a result of his help and their own natural talents.

Henry was, more than ever, beloved eldest brother and autocratic leader of the Field clan. He did not promote in the same way, any of his eleven sons and daughters. They were growing up and leaving home—some to marry, some going to college by their own efforts, or to work for other employers

On the whole, they were above average in intelligence and natural abilities. Possibly because his brothers and sisters were first in his regard, he never attempted to lead his children to participate in his business, although, all had jobs at the Seed House when they needed it.

It was the boom year of 1929 and Henry's business boomed too. Huge, perhaps clumsily overgrown, it sprawled all over Shenandoah in so many different places that one man could not possibly keep it under surveillance.

Busy workers—changes and new developments—always and continuously, the visitors who thronged the buildings and the town. They stopped to have a free cup of Field's Famous Coffee, visit the zoo, and watch the flagpole sitter sitting out his 79 days on top of a 200 foot high pole. Excitement, feverish twenty four hour activity and optimism prevailed.

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Henry with his sisters: Susan, Leanna, Jessie, Martha, and Helen

Henry with those of his children still at home:
Josephine (sitting), Georgia, Ruth, Letty, and John Henry

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The stock market debacle of late 1929 seemed to have little effect in Iowa and particularly in Shenandoah at the seed house. Agricultural products dipped in price—the farmers weren't buying quite as much, but good times would come again—they always had.

But after the 1930 fiscal year ended in June, the seed company announced a reorganization. The original stockholders who founded the company in 1907 had realized a steady 8% income, and their investment had appreciated 40%. Outside money, Henry announced:

> Made tempting offers for control of the company. It was saved to Shenandoah only by the loyalty of the old stockholders and other local people who had faith in the institution. The new company is a going concern with all home control and management. Henry Field is, as he always has been, the largest owner of all classes of stock and head of the business. It is a Shenandoah institution here to stay, and will be, as it has been for the past forty years, a big factor in the prosperity and life of Shenandoah.

The reorganized company began an expansion program in neighboring states, where branch stores were opened with much fanfare and acclaim.

The York, Nebraska store was immediately successful, so in February, 1931, construction was begun in Norfolk, Nebraska for another branch store.

Hiawatha, Kansas gave a "rousing welcome" to the new Henry Field Trading Post in August of that year. *The Brown County World* said,

> 15,000 people came from fifty and one hundred miles for the opening. Hiawatha people have seldom seen anything like it. Henry Field really knows how to bring the people to town.

The Savannah, Missouri, *Reporter* headlined the opening of the Henry Field Store in that town mentioning the 1,080 pounds of wieners, thirty thousand buns, twenty barrels of cider, and coffee and cream served free to all comers.

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Other stores were opened at Sioux Falls and Mitchell, South Dakota and other places. All were immediately successful and business continued fairly good at the seed company in spite of the general hard times in agricultural areas.

From Washington, D.C. *Evening Star*, February 11, 1931.

THIS AND THAT

by Charles E. Tracewell

Out of the wilds of Iowa comes Henry Field with his annual cheer-up message. If you don't know Henry, you ought to.

He runs a seed house and radio station back in Shenandoah, "out where the tall corn grows."

What makes him interesting is that he is a natural-born optimist who can deliver a "pep message" without making the reader feel sick.

Because what he says he means...

Listen to this Fieldian chatter:

"The business has been good to us again this year and I haven't changed my mind a bit about good measure, fair prices, fine quality and friendly treatment.

They are about the only rules worth knowing when it comes to running a business and no one can grow and progress as we have without practicing them every day the year around.

At a time when business men have been complaining and crying around, our customers have gone right on increasing..."

Thinks right well of himself, eh?

Of course. What successful man doesn't. But let him continue.

"We are not fussy sort of folks, haven't got anything very fancy in the way of either buildings or manners.

But we do have acres of beautiful flowers and our hospitality is known all over the country. If you get a chance come right along and see us.

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If you are looking for just common folks with a full measure of common sense and the friendliest lot you've ever seen, you are sure to have a good time and sure to come again later..."

Well, folks (as Henry would say—you see, he gets you to doing it, too) it seems to us as if there is a lot of meat in the above.

Good measure, fair prices, fine quality, friendly treatment...

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Chapter 30: The Amateur Politician

Henry Field said his father taught him to revere the Ten Commandments, Abe Lincoln, and the Republican Party. But he also vowed he "was no joiner." So, though he was a rock-ribbed Republican like several hundred thousand other Iowans, he had never actively participated in politics.

March, 1932 was almost the lowest point in the Great Depression of the Thirties. The farmers of the Middle West were resentful. Political cross currents were blowing up a hurricane of changed opinions.

Henry knew things weren't going right with the country. He thought something should be done about it, and it wasn't hard to convince him that he was the man to do it.

He attended the Republican convention in Des Moines, Iowa in March of 1932 and was persuaded to run against five other Republican candidates for Senator in the primary election. Winning the nomination in the primary in June was considered tantamount to victory in the November senatorial-presidential election.

Henry Field said he was doubtful about going into politics, but his backers told him he had quite a following—two million people who called him "Henry," several hundred thousand of them right in Iowa. They were the garden variety of voter whom he had been cultivating over his radio station KFNF for eight years. And they were all for him. They understood his "Missouri English" as he called it, and the city people, it turned out, understood him just as well as the farmers.

Henry Field entered the primary campaign ten weeks before the date of the election, and, in that ten weeks, he sold himself to 200,000 Iowa Republican voters. His ability as a master salesman was never more apparent. He crossed the state of Iowa six times in four weeks. He didn't expend much money on his campaign, but he dramatized it with his picturesque showmanship. He had no political organization,

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and he said he was an amateur politician, but things began to happen in Iowa politics.

He organized old-fashioned torchlight parades reminiscent of the 90's and entertained the crowds with old-time fiddling and harmonica music

He invited the other candidates to come to Shenandoah to speak over his radio station and "eat chicken stew with me."

The incumbent candidate Smith W. Brookhart then insulted Henry publicly in a 3,000 word tirade and ridiculed him as the "chicken stew candidate." Henry instantly accepted the appellation. "All right," said Mr. Field, "The people can choose between chicken stew and the same old baloney. Maybe they would like a change from Brookhart's baloney!"

Henry Field proved, with his usual thoroughness, five cases of Brookhart's nepotism and likened Brookhart to the currently popular flagpole sitters who "put on a good show, but never accomplish anything."

The campaign speedily developed into a knockdown, drag out fight between Field and Brookhart with the other candidates rapidly fading into the background.

Henry Field was no orator, but the people liked him. His homely logic and friendly personality caught on. He drew crowds in every small town he visited—even at 8 o'clock in the morning. They closed up shop and went to hear Henry speak.

Brookhart became alarmed and imported Fiorello LaGuardia from New York to help him. LaGuardia took Henry Field apart and called him a "political cockroach." Henry thought that was a little strong from an outsider.

Field said,

> Mr. Brookhart got LaGuardia out here to take me for a political ride. I understand that's the custom in the East when you interfere with anyone's rackets. It would never do to let me horn in, because the payroll racket would not be as good or as safe with Henry Field in the Senate. I guess I'm supposed to be squelched, but I don't feel that way at all.

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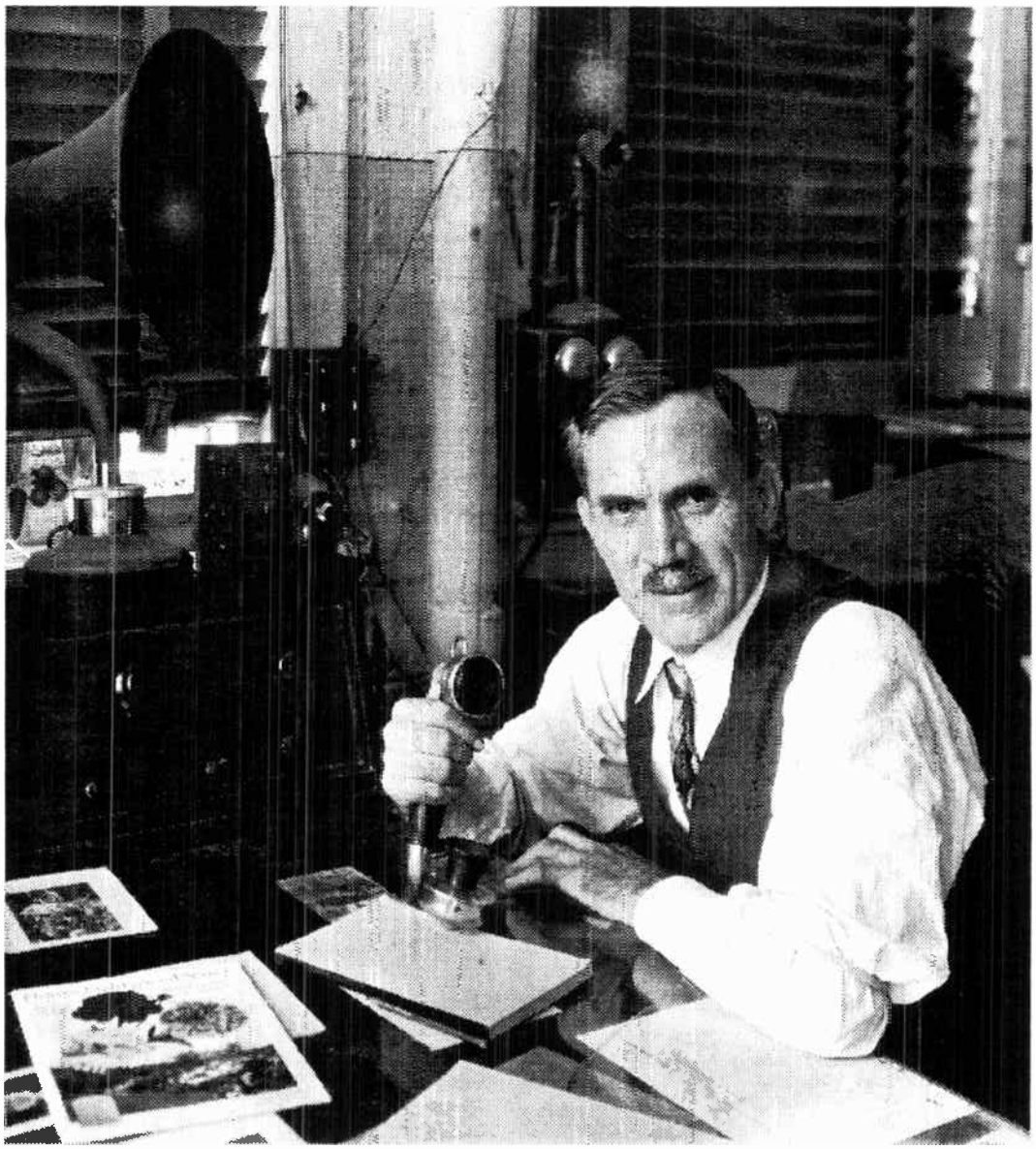

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Brookhart was endorsed by Senator W. E. Borah of Idaho, and Senator Robert M. LaFollette Jr. of Wisconsin made speeches in Iowa for him. Despite this heavy artillery from Washington, Henry Field's popularity grew. Talking day after day over his microphone to farmers and small town folks and meeting daily with hundreds of farmers who came to trade with him, the quiet-spoken Henry Field was talking a language which the voters liked to hear.

Henry Field's 1932 views on big business in government are amazingly applicable years later. Listen:

> According to my opponent, all this deflation he talks so much about was planned out long in advance by the big business interests. They planned deliberately to destroy the farmer, the little businessman and the little banks. According to him, big business "laughed all the time" and "looked on with scorn and contempt" when a million and a half farmers lost their homes and six million workers were discharged. And if it's true, big business certainly ought to be lined up and shot—if it's true. But is it true? Does anyone really believe it! I just can't imagine Mr. Morgan enjoying it while his United States Steel stock dropped from $261.60 a share at the peak to $26 today. Or Raskob when he saw his General Motors stock drop from $91 to $10. Or Andy Mellon when his Aluminum shares fell accordingly.
>
> Now goodness knows, I wouldn't attempt to defend big business. It ought to be able to take care of itself. But does that sound like good common sense that any business man would deliberately try to kill off the buying power of 90 percent of his customers? Would you deliberately kick the bottom out of the livestock market when you had a lot full of cattle and hogs? Here is the fallacy, as every business man knows.

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Our great industries—automobiles, for example—are built on Fords and Chevrolets—not on Cadillacs and Lincolns. Name me one great business that sells its products only to the rich and I'll name you a hundred whose sales have been built on the great distributed buying power of the people. So is it reasonable that they would plan deliberately to destroy their markets?

But anyway, according to my opponent, after big business built up all this, they fell down on the job of keeping the machine running. And I'll grant him he's right about that. But now he says it is up to the Government to guarantee prosperity. And since the Government is to do it, he must mean Government jobs for everyone.

Anyway, it must be Government jobs for everyone in some way or another, because the Government is going to be in charge. Big business has failed, so the Government is to take things over—or, in other words, he wants more Government in business.

Henry went on to explain his position:

And right there is where I emphatically disagree with him. We want less Government in business—a whole lot less. Brookhart says this program of more Government in business is to be the great issue before the next Congress—and I say, if it is, we had better get some men in Congress who can keep a level head and work things out sanely. Business men, little and big, have had to face these problems, and each man put his own house in order. The Government has not had to face them, because its borrowing power is unlimited and its taxing power uncurbed. And if we are facing the kind of government my opponent advocates, we certainly need business men with the courage to face the fire and say, "No."

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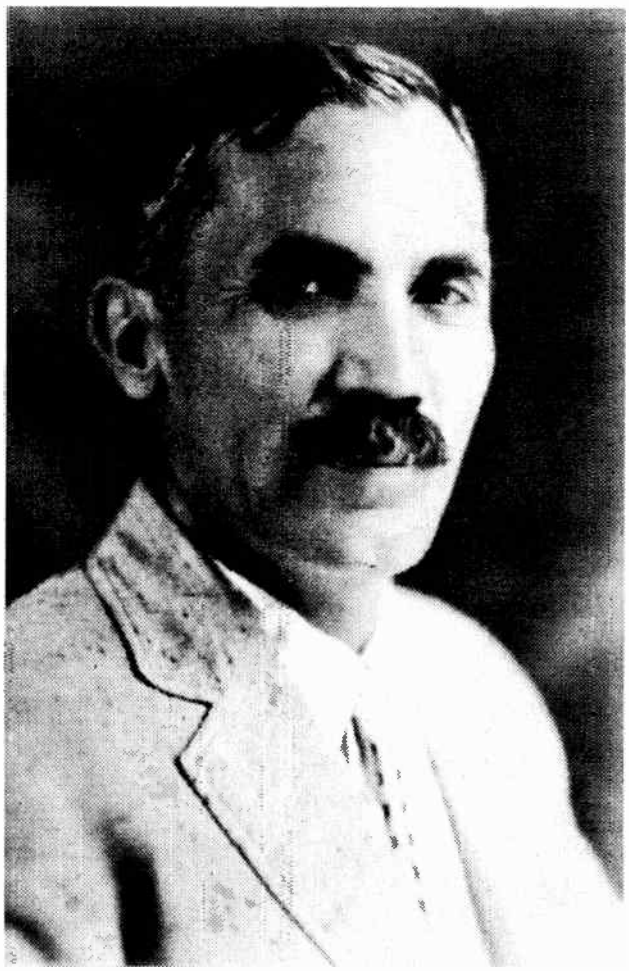

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We can whip this depression, like every one we have had in the past, not by appropriating billions in taxes in some vague hope of results, but by courage and common sense, and by economy. There is an old rule that still holds mighty good: "If you want to get ahead in this world you have got to spend less than you make." And it holds just as good in government as it does for business.

My opponent says we are going to see what the Government really can do in business, when they get their steam up in the next Congress, by throwing a few billion dollars more in the boiler. But I want to say—and I think most of you will agree—that Government never got into business of any kind without messing it up. There are some things of a type that can only be done by the Government, but so far as most private business is concerned, putting it in the hands of the politicians is the surest way I know to run it into the ground.

And on issues closer to home, Henry laid it on the line:

And on the farm question: I would like to see some move made toward farm relief without Congress having so much hand in it. I was much impressed a few months ago by the way the railroads settled their labor problem. The presidents of the different railroad unions and the presidents of the railroads themselves, all got together in Chicago. They didn't start calling anyone names; they just went to work. They said, "We have got a big job, but it's our job, and we are going to settle it ourselves. And we are going to stay here until we get it settled." And that's exactly what they did. And that's just what we do in every business. When

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you and I buy merchandise from a manufacturer, we don't call Congress in to settle the question.

And finally, my opponent says that people from Davenport, Cedar Rapids, Mason City, Council Bluffs, and the other big towns got after me to run—and that's exactly what they did—the big towns as well as the small towns and farmers over the state. I heard from all sections—and they weren't politicians either—but people I have been dealing with for the past forty years. They said: "Henry, we want a housecleaning at Washington, we want a little less oratory, less politics and a little more business. We are turning to you as a business man and asking if you will help get it." I got thousands of letters asking me to make this race, and that's why I got into the campaign, and that's why I am in it to stay.

When the votes were counted, Henry Field led in 76 of the 99 counties of Iowa. Brookhart led in 22 and one other candidate was higher in a single county. Henry Field got 200,000 votes, Brookhart 50,000 fewer and the four other candidates about 90,000 among them. Pretty good for the amateur politician who had never run for office before. It began to dawn on some Iowa politicians that Henry Field was about the smartest thing that had crossed their political horizon for many years.

Louis H. Cook in an article printed July 23, 1932 in *The Saturday Evening Post* had this to say of Field:

> He outmaneuvered his opponents in a way that nobody else was able to do. He had much of the canny judgment of human nature that made Calvin Coolidge formidable, but he also had a fine sense of humor and a personal magnetism and friendliness that were an even greater political asset than they had been a business asset.

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To those who congratulated him, Henry said:

> My campaign was just based on the idea of Christian citizenship. I belong to the Methodist church. I have never been an officer, but we have morning prayer over the station every morning, and I lead it. We need God to help us out.
>
> We must keep our ideals. The farmer must have prices which will enable him to live reasonable well. What I call the quarter-section farmer is the backbone of Iowa and the Middle West. The country rises and falls with him. I don't believe in class prejudices. What is good for the farmer is good for the laborer and the business man.
>
> I got into this campaign all by myself. I did go up to Des Moines to the convention to find out whether I was going to get any backing, but I was going in anyway. I went in to win, and I did win. I said when I started I would get 140,000 votes and after a couple of weeks I raised that to 200,000.

That summer of 1932, after Henry Field won the primary election, the strong current of rebellious feeling gathered force as the time drew nearer to the November elections. Iowa goes Democratic the year Hell freezes over, so it is said, but the forces behind Herbert Hoover, Republican nominee for re-election to the presidency, were more than worried. Realizing the great popular strength Henry Field had shown in the primary, they convinced him to campaign with Hoover all across the country. Always an individualist, and certainly not a "party-man", he preferred to wage his fight alone. But Hoover needed help, and Field had committed himself as a Republican. He rode the campaign train with Mr. Hoover and followed the strategy mapped out by the Republican bigwigs.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt was the Democratic nominee. And on election day it was a Democratic landslide. The old

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rule, that in times of depression the "in" party goes out, had operated again. The people wanted a change.

In Iowa, the thousands of people who put an "X" on the Democratic side of the ballot automatically elected the Democratic nominee for Senator.

Henry Field lost the election; his political career was over.

He wrote to his married daughter, Hope, living in California:

November 9, 1932

Dear Hope:

Well, I am back at my desk again getting it cleaned up and getting caught up with my back work and I wanted to take time to write a little to you.

The campaign and the election are all over now...

I got a world of interesting experience out of it and made lots of new and loyal friends, and have the satisfaction of having had a dandy fight.

As I look back on it now I don't know of anything that I could have done or that I could have left undone that would have changed the results materially. I simply was up against a landslide or stampede which nobody could stop.

I came through the whole campaign in splendid health, and while I lost 10 lbs. in weight that is easily got back again.

I am back on the job at the Seed House now for keeps. Started in today taking my regular time on the air.

I had hoped that whether I won or lost, I would be able to get away from the Seed House work a little more but it don't look possible now, as business is poor and times are hard and business hard to get here at the Seed House and I have got to jump in and put in every pound of strength I have to help out the situation here.

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I would like very much to get out to California sometime this winter but I don't think it is at all possible.

Bertha is still on crutches and is not showing as much improvement as we had hoped. She did go over to the Studio with me today noon when I went to broadcast; the first time she has been over there for a long time.

The Seed House folks and the rest of the town folks, of course, are very sorry to see me lose out, but on the other hand, they are glad to have me back permanently here at the Seed House and on the radio.

Of course, one thing that cut down my vote very materially, and in fact may have been the actual cause of my being defeated, was the terrible rain and snow storm which we had election day and the night before. It was all over the state and totally ruined the country roads, so that a lot of the country people couldn't get out to vote at all and especially the women. And these country women were my strongest hope.

I am afraid that about 100,000 of them were kept at home which would just about make up the number I was shy.

Yours truly,
Dad.

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Chapter 31: Weathering the Great Depression

Henry wrote the following letter to Bertha:

Shenandoah, Iowa
March 30, 1933

Dearest Sweetheart:

Got your good letter this morning. Hope you are feeling better...

Business just fair. Not enough though. Money awful close. We are just scraping bottom all the time. The treasurer says that he has been scraping bottom so long that his bottom is about worn out. That's about the way we all feel.

Guess we'll manage to wiggle through some way though—we always have. I am feeling quite well, but awful lonesome for you. Get well quick. Lots of love.

Bye bye, Daddy.

The 1933 seed catalog came out in plain black and white with no colored pages. On the cover was the explanation, "Back to calico, again!"

Yes, Henry was cutting corners like every other business man. Not enough orders were coming in to cover expenses. New buildings had been constructed to house the radio and merchandise centers. The branch stores complicated the situation.

President Roosevelt's Bank Holiday early in March, 1933 hurt business, but as Henry said, "We are managing to keep the doors open." Later that year he announced that his plant would join the NRA (National Recovery Administration) code agreements. The papers said that Henry Field had jumped from prunes to politics—and back to prunes again.

The 1934 catalog resumed the traditional colored cover. Henry wrote his message to the customers on the first page.

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Back to Calico Again!

Most years my catalog is all dressed up in pretty colored pictures and I suppose some of you are going to be disappointed not to find the usual colorful illustrations. Well, in these times we have had to cut all the frills and fancies.

I have been chopping off expenses in my business the same as you have had to cut corners in your home and one of the big items is the pretty cover for my catalog. So I fixed up this one instead.

It is kind of hard on all of us to get back to calico after having had so much silk. But, I know you will all be glad I have done this and been able to have my prices lower for you this year.

The truth is we have all got to get back to earth again and now is the time to get started. Begin at home. In the garden. Begin by "raising your own groceries". In the old days a family raised everything they needed to eat all summer and fall and then put up hundreds of jars of fruit and vegetables and berries to boot. We need to do it that way again. The sooner we do the better off we will all be.

I want your orders, large and small. I've got the quality to deserve your business and my prices are bed-rock reasonable. I guarantee to treat you right, give you prompt service and good generous measure. Sure, "your money's worth or your money back." That's been my way of doing it for many, many years and will be for years yet to come.

HENRY FIELD

Some of My Favorites

Be sure to include these in your order. I know you will like them all.

BEET, Dark Red Ball Round as a ball, deep crimson free from white. Tender, crisp and sweet. Packet 15c; Ounce 25c.

RADISH, Earliest Red Ball A beautiful deep red, smooth, ripens evenly, medium size and bears heavy. Very early. Packet 15c; ounce 25c.

TOMATO, Red Bird A beautiful deep red, smooth, ripens evenly, medium size and bears heavy. Very early. Packet 15c; ounce 75c.

MOONFLOWER, Early Heavenly Blue A pretty sky blue, shading to white in the throat. Flowers quite large and almost cover the vines at times. Packet 10c.

EARLY ORDERS

I always rustle for Early Orders and this year is no exception. By getting a big share of the orders in early I can make things run smoother and with less expense. I like Early Orders, you bet, and I always manage to give the early bird something extra when the package is wrapped up. So order early if you can. It will help me and I'll see that you get something for your trouble.

H. F.

HENRY FIELD CO.

··Shenandoah, Iowa··

The Friendly Farmers Station

K-F-N-F

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He said fervently in large type.

THANK YOU

The first thing I want to say is **thank you** for the business you sent us during the last year. It wasn't a record breaking year, not by a long ways. We had our worries and troubles like most of the world was having. But, we had a fair business when business was mighty scarce.

What a year this one has been. Believe me, it was the kind that makes gray hairs and puts wrinkles in a fellow's face. We Seed House Folks had our usual share of work and some of the time I was pretty sure we had more than our share of the worry.

But, it is past now and looking back over these trying months I can see it might have been a lot worse. The rough going brought back to all of us some things we should have never forgotten. It is hard going that brings out the mettle in a man. Depressions may shake off all the "fair weather" friends but it leaves the true friends standing up straighter and stronger than ever.

Yes, the last year has kept most of us in hot water but we are well on our way out of the dumps now and can look forward to breathing easier, laughing more often, and being both better friends and better neighbors.

The United States Business Service, November 5, 1934, featured Henry's methods of handling a dissatisfied customer.

Suppose that the customer got himself all stirred up about receiving the wrong shipment, then he received this letter:

"Friend Smith:

Yes, we made a mistake in sending you those Jonathan Apple trees. Just as soon as I got your letter, the Delicious trees you ordered were sent out of here in a hurry. You will get them almost as soon as you get

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this letter. I am sorry it happened and want to thank you for getting after me right away.

Mistakes are bad enough when we get a chance to correct them. They are a whole lot worse if we don't. We try hard not to make them, but some slip by in the rush of thousands of orders every day. The important thing is to make them good right away and we sure try to do that. I hope you will come again soon with an order. That way we will know we are forgiven."

Are you still mad? You just can't be, and you like Mr. Field better than ever.

Through the depression years Henry Field and his business appeared to function just about the same as always. However, it was a greater struggle than most people realized. Henry was putting up a good front—his usual enthusiasm undiminished. So it came as a shock when the *Shenandoah Evening Sentinel* on Nov. 12, 1935 headlined a "friendly" foreclosure suit asking receivership for the seed company. It stated,

> After the company reorganization in 1930 it had operated under increasing difficulties because of the depression.

On the second page was a statement by Henry Field.

> Of course everyone is asking "What does it mean?" What effect will it have on the business that has meant so much to the life and prosperity of Shenandoah? What effect will it have on the workers who depend on it for a living? What effect will it have on Henry?
>
> The answer to all these questions is, I hope, that everything will go along much as usual and will finally work out without serious permanent harm. The Henry Field industries are a vital part of Shenandoah, and none of us can afford to lose them.
>
> We have for several years been fighting a slowly losing battle against depression conditions and have been especially hampered by lack of working capital and lack of bank credits. None of us had outside private

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resources to draw on as we all of us had put all our capital into the company. We had hoped that revival of buying power among the farmers who are our main customers would finally enable us to weather the storm, but the pressure of creditors finally came to a point where it threatened immediate and complete collapse and shutdown of the institution.

So in order to preserve the assets and to keep the business a going concern and to insure orderly handling of the assets, the Court appointed a trustee for the bond holders as receiver in charge of the business, and the business will be continued under his direction and under the orders of the Court. It is what you might call a "friendly receivership."

It is simply the same thing that has happened to hundreds of thousands of Iowa farmers the last few years. The mortgage and the interest and the hard times and poor crops were more than we could surmount.

We hope to keep on and to "come back." We think we can. We did in 1907 and in 1921 and we think we can again. I am still on the job myself, with the bulk of the loyal hard working fellow workers who have made the business what it is, and we will all work as we never have before. All departments of the business are going ahead the same as usual. We hope you will all work with us in the future as you have in the past.

Henry Field

And the editor added:

The complications of the various incorporations of the Henry Field Company are confusing to the ordinary layman. But out of all the conversations, there has been one united and continuous song of praise for Henry Field himself.

To Shenandoah, to Iowa, and to the Middle West, Henry Field is an institution. He has done much for our city and for Page County. He has been a leader, a man of ideas, a man of action that understood the thinking of

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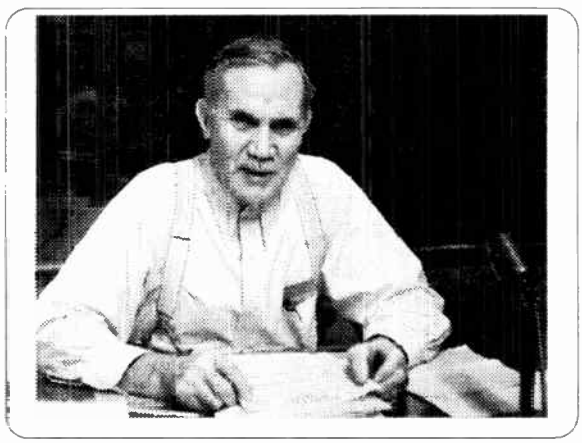
those living in the Middle West and how to sell them merchandise.

Better times for the farmer are here and their needs will be great within the next few years. Financial problems are easier to solve today, than any time in the past three years. With Henry Field back in the harness with all his old enthusiasm, there can be no stopping his eventual success."

The business went on after this momentary disruption, seemingly, just the same. Henry Field sat at his desk beside the front door; he broadcast all his regular radio programs and wrote in his usual cheerful vein in *Seed Sense* and the catalog. Though Shenandoah townspeople and the visiting customers did not sense it, the situation was not quite the same. For the first time in his life, Henry Field, now 64, was no longer boss of his own business.



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Chapter 32: Ozark Retreat

Several years before the change in management, Henry Field had acquired a new interest... Among the miscellaneous contracts accepted for radio advertising in 1929 was one from a man in Omaha wanting to sell some virgin timber and farmland in southeast Missouri, barely fifty miles above the Arkansas line—120 miles south of St. Louis. He claimed he had some mighty fine land near the little town of Centerville, Missouri and offered it for sale, cheap.

The undeveloped Ozarks—a new frontier of opportunity! But the tract didn't sell and the Omaha man paid his advertising bill in land. Henry Field became the owner of four hundred acres of wild, wooded, unimproved, rocky-ridged hill country in a section of Missouri where many people dislike wearing shoes and (it is said) one must wear a skirt to milk the cows.

Wild dogwood, ten feet high, flaunted large white blooms all through the hills, which were heavily timbered with southern pine, sugar maple and white oak. Wild flowers and sword fern grew in profusion, and a cave, complete with underground springs and stalactites, burrowed under one hill.

A narrow gravel road led up to and forded the twenty foot wide, shallow creek with its hard, sandy bottom, then past the uneven hand-made picket fence, and reached a small log cabin. Rough-hewn logs were chinked with mud, and native stone was used for the big fireplace with its cooking irons and

Bertha in front of the Ozark cabin kitchen

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stone chimney.

Henry Field went down to see the place, driving five hundred miles on excellent Missouri highways, due south to St. Joseph, then east to Macon and south again to Columbia, Salem, and Centerville. He made the trip again and again, his interest growing with each stay. He followed his usual habit of unrestrained enthusiasm for every new interest. "When he learned of something new—his interest was unbounded. And he wanted to tell everyone about it."

So he wrote:

A GENERAL SUMMING UP OF THE OZARK PROPOSITION

1. *A pleasant place to live. No need of argument on that. Self evident.*
2. *Certainty of plenty of garden and fruit for home use. Easily grown and practically certain. Practically all living can be grown, for both winter and summer.*
3. *Other eats. Milk, meat, eggs, chickens, corn meal, all easily produced on the place. Laramore could butcher and cure pork now for summer use. Cow and chickens already on the place and we have right to all milk and eggs we want. Pigs easily bought.*
4. *Fuel abundant, and already cut and piled.*
5. *Money crops. Hogs, poultry, stock cattle, fruit, truck. Land will soon be all fenced and ideal for stock. Pasture, shade, water, winter shelter, all there in abundance, and roughage for winter easily grown on the cleared portion of land. Also some grain can be grown.*
6. *Future possibilities. Fruit: peaches, apples, grapes, strawberries, and asparagus. 20 acres upland, now being cleared. More available. Great possibilities. Good city market at St. Louis 120 miles away on good road. Also Jefferson City 170 miles. Local people also buyers of fruit and will come and get it*

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and pick it. Also will buy the throw-outs at packing time. Also trucks from north will come after fruit with a little advertising. Also possibilities in mail order business along many lines. Plants—fish—seeds—nuts—bulks—Ozark novelties. All easily produced. Great future for growing nuts of improved varieties commercially. Cabins for resorters, easily built and big profit.

7. *Immediate money possibility. Selling off 10 acre tracts of nearby land at $100 or 10% off for cash. Wonderful chance, ready right now and big profit.*

In a general way I believe there are great possibilities in that country. More so than any other part of the country for the next 10 to 20 years. People are just finding it. They will come in increasing numbers when times get better.And if they don't get better it is always a safe refuge where one can live comfortably and laugh at the troubles of the rest of the world.

I have jotted down a few points as I thought of them. Many more could be named. Some drawbacks—yes. But few and mild. For instance no telephone, electricity, or plumbing. But they can all be had at small cost as time goes on. Water power can easily be had there. Or wire can be run from town.

Living conditions there are better than our parents had when they first came to Iowa. Lonesomeness is simply an acquired state of mind and easily overcome by all the new interests to be found there.

Very little money would be required. $100 would furnish the house. Money can be made out of selling that land. Hogs soon grow into money. Chickens. Calves.

But no use to go into it unless you are enthusiastic, joyous, willing to work hard, willing to give and take, and put up with whatever comes and grin as you go along. Life is an interesting game, especially if you play the game fairly and energetically, and get all the good out of it you can as you go along.

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If I were young I wouldn't want any better chance for either present or future than there is right there. And at sixty-one it looks just as good to me. Old or young it looks like a wonderful adventure, a wonderful start in a business of your own, and a wonderful home life.

If times get better the opportunities for money making are great. If times get worse and everything blows up—it is a safe home and a comfortable living.

H.F.

Henry and Bertha began a series of treks to the Ozarks which continued for the next seventeen years. They shuttled back and forth, driving the 500 miles between Shenandoah and "Hoot Owl Hollow", building a house, garage, summer kitchen, gardens and orchards—and hauling back fruit, vegetables, meat and wild flowers.

Since 1935 and the change in management at the seed company, Henry tried to arrange for more and more time in the Ozarks. He longed to stay in Missouri, but was never able to break away from Shenandoah and the business. His associates were loath to have him gone from the microphone and insisted upon partial continuance of his work. It verged on the hectic—Henry's almost frantic escapes to the wooded hills and the reluctant return to radio and business.

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Chapter 33: The Family 'Yellow Letter'

Bill MacDonald mentioned another activity which Henry Field pursued as he grew older.

> Letters were his means of keeping in touch with his large family of sons and daughters scattered as they grew up—to many corners of the nation and world. The last years he adopted what he called "the yellow letter." It was mimeographed on yellow paper and written just as he talked—a "visiting" kind of letter. Guess we were considered as adopted members of his family because we received the letter, too. There was always the story of what he and Mrs. Field had been doing—either in Shenandoah or down at their Missouri farm.
>
> And there was usually a picture. He liked to take pictures. When I asked him one day why he went in so heavily for pictures—sending out so many, he said, "Bill, a man has to have a little sin. I spend my drinking money on pictures."

The "Yellow Letter" began toward the end of 1943.

Nov. 1, 1943
Shenandoah, Iowa

Dear Folks All:

Faith has suggested that being as the Field clan doesn't hear from each other often that I should get out a general letter occasionally because I do hear from them.

I have hesitated a little about this as really you folks ought to write to each other, but of course, that's a pretty big job for all of you, and takes a lot of time and attention, and being as I do hear from most of you fairly often and have a machine here to mimeograph my letters, it might be a pretty good idea for me to pass the news on to all of you occasionally, I will try it once and if I am not too busy, or too lazy, or too tired, I may try it again some other time...

World Radio History

There's no special news about Bertha and I. We are coming along about the same as usual. Both working hard, but still able to work, able to eat, and able to sleep.

We probably will not get back to the cabin any more this fall or winter. We had a nice garden here besides the one down at the cabin. Dug the last of the carrots and turnips out of the garden just two or three days ago.

Yours truly,
Dad.

Three months later:

Feb. 3, 1944

It doesn't seem possible that it has been three months since I wrote the other family letter, but that's what it is, and I really should not have waited so long to get out another one. My only excuse is that I have been very busy. We have had more to do this winter than ever, and less help to do it with. Also, as I get older, I get less inclined to work. I don't know whether you would call it lazy, or tired, or indifferent, or just what it is, but anyway I lack the ambition to do things, and get them done and out of the way.

I come over the the Seed House and find a stack of work to do, and I get that done, then I am tired and want to go home, and the family is kicked back for another day.

I have managed to keep in surprisingly good health this winter, although as I mentioned before, I do get tired pretty easily, but otherwise I have been remarkably fortunate. Have had no grippe and only a slight cold a time or two. Bertha has, also, been pretty well most of the time. Bertha is 59 *now and I am* 72 *and we begin to realize that we are not as young as we once were.*

We have not been anywhere this winter. Hardly off the place since we came back from the Ozarks the middle of October... We expect to get back down to the cabin probably about the middle of March, for a two to four weeks stay to get the garden planted and get things straightened out for the summer.

World Radio History

Lots of the seedhouse folks are in the army now, but not many of them that you would know...

My sisters, Helen, Martha, Susan, Jessie, and Leanna are all getting along about as usual...

I am enclosing a return envelope so that you can write to me. I hope to hear from you, and not only once, but often. The older we get the more anxious we are to hear from all of you quite often, and we feel lonesome when we don't hear, so all of you please write.

The big house looks pretty empty and pretty lonesome nowadays, just the two old folks of us alone in that ten room house.

It's one of the little ironies of life that while lots of people have no home at all, we have three complete homes, which is rather an embarrassment of plenty. Everything considered, Bertha and I are very fortunate, and we are happy, as we have every reason to be. While we are not wealthy nor embarrassed with riches, we have enough to live on, have plenty to do, and are able to do it, have plenty to eat and are able to eat it, and have a good place to rest and sleep and able to do plenty of both, so I guess we have nothing whatever to complain of. Also, another thing we have, which we are very thankful for, is that we have good health and we have all you children and grandchildren and all of you have good health, and that certainly is a whole lot.

After this war is over, and we can use our cars again I hope that you all can come to see us, and that we can go and see you, but that's a long ways ahead yet. Meanwhile, write us occasionally, and write to each other, and try to keep cheerful and try to get enough to eat and plenty of sleep.

Yours, Dad.

Four months later, from Centerville, Missouri.

Fri. noon, June 15, 1945

Had peas out of the freeze box for dinner... They were very good. We have 22 pints of them put away so far and some more to come.

World Radio History

Jim had quite a time milking last night. He was into the dark with it waiting for the rain to stop. Then, when he did get started, the mules who were out in the cow pasture smelt the cows' feed and made a dash for it and got things all tangled up. About the time Jim got things under control again, the two tom cats who were hanging around waiting for some milk started a riot. Apparently, Tommy made some remark that Ivan didn't like and he lit on him all spraddled out and they both rolled right under the cows, spitting and yowling and tumbling and rolling. The cow jumped and ran, and left Jim holding the bucket. He was so disgusted by that time he just came on to the house and let the outfit fight it out, but this morning everything was peaceful and lovely and everybody on good behavior.

Day before yesterday being as it was too wet to work in the garden, Bertha and I went for a ramble in the woods. It was damp but we were all damp already so it didn't matter. We went up through the peach orchard and along the foot of the bluff next to the creek. Part of the way we couldn't get through and had to go farther up on the bluff. When we got to where the brook comes in from the left we couldn't get any farther on the low level. So we climbed right over the next bluff, about a 200 foot climb, and came down on the other side. We had baskets and trowels along, of course, and dug a nice lot of wild flowers and ferns as we went along and got back loaded down as usual. Got back just ahead of a big rain but didn't get caught in it. Bertha got wet though staying out too long setting the wild flowers in her rock garden.

Been puttering around the garden this forenoon, or rather around the edges of it. Really nothing I could do. Too wet.

Have not had the mail today yet. The mailman only gets as far as Gastineau's now as he can't get across the river so we go over there on horseback after it.

Well, such is life in the Ozarks.

H.F.

World Radio History

In July, from Shenandoah:

Yes, we have been back from the cabin over a week now. We have been so busy after seven weeks absence that I haven't settled down to get out another letter to you folks. After that long an absence there are always lots of loose ends to be be picked up, so we have been kept pretty busy. Seems that as time goes on we have to work harder and harder at both ends of the line.

We are both feeling quite well, however, and enjoying life as usual. My garden here looks the finest I think I have ever seen it. I got it planted and cultivated once or twice before we left for Missouri, and then folks here attended to it while I was gone.

There doesn't seem to be a whole lot of family news...

We had lots of trouble this last time down at the cabin with floods, and then just a day later, a cyclone. I am enclosing herewith a couple of photographs, one taken after the flood, and the other one of the cyclone.

I hope you will all write to me, and tell me all the news from your end of the line. I won't promise to write long letters to all of you, but hope you will take these yellow letters as personal letters to you, which they really are.

Yours truly,
H. F.

Henry, the insatiable plant peddler, was developing a mail order business in wild flower plants, digging and mailing them from Missouri.

Shenandoah, Iowa.
Fri. July 20, 1945

Dear Folks All:

We are leaving for the cabin tomorrow morning. We expect to do quite a bit of digging of wild flowers along the way, so it will be the middle of the afternoon before we get to the cabin probably.

Bertha and I are both feeling quite well except that as usual we have been working hard, and are rather tired, but that's a chronic condition with us...

World Radio History

We have quite a lot of food in the freeze box. Whenever we are hungry for fried chicken we just go down, and get a box of it out of the freeze box and we are ready to go. We have also put in quite a bit of things while we have been home, especially peas, raspberries, and a few more strawberries, quite a lot of diced carrots, and just a little of everything. We put in 14 pints of ice cream, and quite a bit more another time, but we have eaten that all out again. The freeze box is working fine, and we are getting a lot of satisfaction out of it. You know, we have one at each end of the line now. We are talking of trading this one in for a bigger one...

Everything going along about as usual at the seed house. Not overly busy at this time of year, but still enough to keep everybody busy. The new Seed Sense is due about August 1st, and I expect all of you will get a copy of it...

No, I don't have any pictures to send you this time. Maybe we will have something next time. *H. F.*

Later in the month he wrote from Missouri

Centerville, Mo.
July 27, 1945

Dear Folks All:

Yes, I know I should have written sooner, but we have as usual been too busy to get everything done, and the letter writing has been put off. We did get to go fishing for a little while one afternoon, as I know you folks are all horrified when I come home and say we never went fishing—with the best fishing stream in the state of Missouri right below the garden. You think it's awful, and I guess it is, but we are generally too busy with our gardens to take time for fishing.

So, to keep you quiet, we did go down across the garden to the cut off, and got 21 nice pan fish, mostly perch of two or three kinds. We ate all we could for supper and put the rest in the freeze box for future reference. Besides we got some that were too small, and those we put in the lily pool.

World Radio History

We have had plenty of good eats from the garden. The Missouri Giant Blackberries are ripe now. Also, the everbearing strawberries, and the tomatoes are just starting to come in, and plenty of sweet corn, beans, cabbage, beets, carrots, onions, potatoes, and all the rest of the regular garden stuff. Had Spanish corn for supper, all from our own garden (including the pork in it.)

Been trying to get some stuff eaten out of the freeze box so as to make room for frying chickens and other stuff still to come. But we have so much from the garden all the time that we can't seem to gain any. Put 20 pints of sweet corn in the box one day, and 10 pints of extra nice blackberries, some fish, some fruit salad, and some everbearing strawberries. It's fuller than ever. We really got to get busy and eat out some of the stuff and make room for the chickens. And then there's that veal calf. I really don't see where we are going to put him.

The wild flowers are all looking fine. We will have a better supply than ever this fall. That White Penstemon is one thing I want everyone to try. It's a beautiful thing and absolutely hardy. Will grow anywhere. I have plenty of Hardy Moon Flower, plenty of the Hardy Petunia, all kinds of violets and ferns, and in fact, the whole list of wild flowers. I hope people will plant heavily of them this fall.

Henry and Bertha at Ozark cabin

Well, I must go and pick some strawberries or blackberries, or maybe both. Only trouble is that we have to be saving on sugar and use mostly corn syrup on them. I suppose it's all right—but I'd rather have sugar. When you have as perfect strawberries and blackberries as we have it's a pity to insult them with corn syrup, but I suppose some day we will have sugar again, and meanwhile we should be thankful we have berries and syrup.

H.F.

World Radio History

And again in August.

Still at Centerville, Mo.
Fri. Eve. August 10, 1945.

Dear Folks All:

It has been nearly a week since I wrote you, but we have been terribly busy and not much time to write.

Wednesday we butchered the fatted calf. Or rather we butchered him the night before, hung him up in the barn to cool out that night, and then Wednesday we worked all day cutting him up and packing him away in the freeze box. We have a six month's supply of the best baby beef you ever saw. We fried some of the sliced loin for dinner yesterday and it was sure fine.

We are both feeling well except that we get tired and sleepy sometimes, and Bertha's fingers are sore on the ends. Don't know whether she wore them thin or what. We are still eating good and getting plenty to eat.

I saw a big frog down at the pond and went back to the house after the gun, but when I got back he had skipped out. I found and shot two smaller ones, and got 7 fish, not very big, so we had meat for supper after all.

The cats heard me shooting and came running to get in on the game. I didn't want to give them my frogs so I shot a small one for them but they stuck up their noses and wouldn't have it. Wanted one of my bigger ones. They finally settled for the fish heads...

The end of August brought:

August 30, 1945

Dear Folks All:

Yes, we are back at Shenandoah again.

Here at the seed house everything is jogging along about the same old way. Of course, this is not a particularly rushing time at the seed house, and still everybody seems to be busy, and finding plenty to do.The fall business is coming in very heavily.

World Radio History

Bertha is still canning. She canned tomatoes Monday as we found a lot of beautiful tomatoes dead ripe in our garden and it looked like the logical thing to do was to can them. Then on Tuesday she canned 33 jars of peaches we brought with us from Missouri.

No special news from any of the family so far as I can remember now. Of course, all of the ones in the service are beginning to figure up their points and see if they can get home...

Sol writes that the big Missouri frogs I tell about can't hold a candle to the ones they have in California. Of course, everything in California is bigger, really colossal. He says out there when they go frog hunting they don't dare go with just a spear—they have to use a heavy rifle to fight them with...

I just happened to think that we are having T-bone steaks for dinner out of the freeze box from the baby beef we killed in Missouri.

Be sure to write to me occasionally.

H.F.

After three weeks at Shenandoah:

September 20, 1945

We are getting ready to start to the cabin again.

We always plan to be there all of October each year, as it is beautiful at that time.

We will be down there this time about five weeks, or till say the first of November. We have lots to do down there. All the usual fall work, and we will fill the wild flower plant orders and mail from there. About 1,000 orders on hand already and more coming in every day. Bertha will be busy with her flowers, and with helping on the orders as she has most of the paper work to do...

No special news from any of the family... No casualties and no marriages. The folks in the armed services are still all in service. No discharges yet, but hoping for some now that the war is over...

So long for now. H. F.

World Radio History

Still in Missouri:

Thurs. Evening 10/1/45

Dear Folks All:

Had some fun hunting frogs today, It was a beautiful day—almost too nice a day to work. So I took down the trusty old rifle, gathered a pocketful of shells and started out. Frogs are very shy and always sit right at the edge of the bank, facing deep water so if they see anything suspicious they can give one kick and down they go to the bottom.

The trick is to slip up quietly on the other side of the pond, and if you succeed in getting a shot at them before they take alarm, aim about an inch under them, instead of right at them. The bullet hits in the mud right under them, the mud explodes and throws them up in the air about six feet, and back on the bank, stunned, but generally not a mark on them.

The two yellow cats, Ivan and Tommy, generally go along when we go hunting but this time I slipped away from them. Bertha says Tommy was worried when he heard the shots and all excited because he had been left behind. He climbed up on a post to see if he could see me. He couldn't, but finally followed the noise of the shots and joined me.

Bertha at the Ozark cabin

He came up on the other side of the pond just as I was trying to get a shot at a big frog, but the frog was behind some weeds and I couldn't be sure just where he was. But Tommy could see the frog from his side so he jumped and nailed him, and when I went around, there was the frog stretched out dead, Tommy guarding him, and very proud. He gave me the frog and I promised him three heads and six livers at dressing time. He got them and more too, and was very happy.

World Radio History

Yes, we had frog legs for supper and have enough in the refrigerator for dinner tomorrow. It's the finest meat in the world. *H. F.*

Another Yellow Letter.

Shenandoah, Iowa
December 18, 1945

Yes, I know I haven't sent you a yellow letter since we came back from Missouri. I don't have any real excuse for not attending to it except that I have been terribly busy, and most of the time pretty tired. Or maybe it was just plain laziness, but anyway I never seem to get caught up with my work or get time to get everything done up as it should be...

Lots of those in service are getting back now.

Everything going along about as usual here at the seed house. We hope to begin mailing the new catalogs sometime in January. Will send you one when they are out.The fall business has been very heavy, and we are looking for a very big spring business. All departments busy, and short of help.

We will not be back to the cabin until the middle of March, but time goes very fast nowadays...

Yours truly,
H. F.

Feb. 15, 1946
Shenandoah, Iowa.

Dear Folks All:

It will probably surprise you to know that I have been a shut-in since last Saturday.

No, I am not sick, but I did get some skin poisoning on my ankles a month ago which spread in both directions until I am pretty well tied up. My ankles and feet especially, are mighty sore and lame.

It has been going on about a month now. The first doctor called it erysipelas. I got discouraged with him and went to another doctor. He says it isn't erysipelas

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and never was.

He is treating it with a liquid dressing which Bertha has to put on with hot gauze every 3 hours. She is doing a fine job of nursing me and taking care of me. She is doing her best to keep me lined up and obeying orders.

One trouble has been the telephone which rings constantly, and so the telephone man is down now running an extension and hanging the telephone beside the microphone on the book shelf.

My health otherwise is perfectly good. We are due to go down to the cabin in about two weeks, and I don't want to lose out on that.

Business is very heavy at the seed house now; heavier even than last year. The boys hate to have me talk about going away soon, but they'll have to learn to get along without me sometimes, and they might just as well get into the habit.

No special news from any of the family.

Most of the boys and girls who were in service are getting home now. All of them are well and husky, and fortunately not a single one of the Field clan have been casualties in this war. Don't believe there was one that got even a scratch.

Write me whenever you can. *H. F.*

From Centerville, Mo.:

March 11, 1946

We had a very nice trip down here, both feeling pretty good... My ankles are still pretty sore. I think they are improving. If not, it is just their bad luck, for I'm tired of babying and fooling with them. I have been wheel-hoeing and pruning and such work, since I have been here, and still going strong.

March 15, 1946

...I have been putting in most of my time this week digging and shipping plants of various kinds to the seed

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house. Blackberries, strawberries, Hardy Moonflower, Cinnamon Vine, Red Violet and all the rest of the things we grow and ship up there for folks to order from the catalog...

March 19, 1946

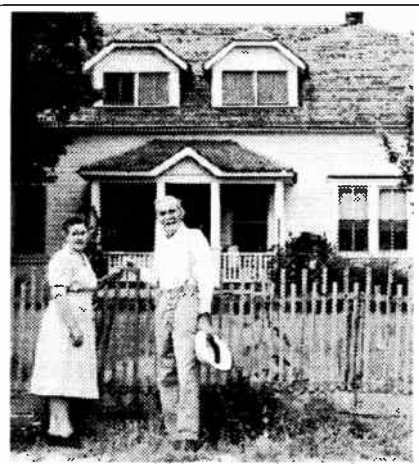
...I'm still hobbling a little, but manage to do about a day-and-a-half of work every day.

I understand you let the weather go all to pieces there the minute my back was turned—rain, snow and blizzard. You should be more careful and keep things under control. The customers are kicking about it!

March 26, 1946

...I have been rushed to death with work. Good weather to work, plenty to do, and not enough people to do it... We are getting the orders filled for wild flowers, strawberries and Dogwood. Next week we want to set out four acres of strawberries and raspberries. They should be in the ground.

On top of all of our other work, we have bought the Gastineau place just across the river from us on the road to town. It is one of the best farms in the country and a beautiful place... We will keep and operate both places. The two farms almost join, but the houses are about a mile apart... Will of course raise some farm crops but will specialize on the fruit and plants.



Bertha and Henry in front of the Gastineau farm

Well, you can see we have our work cut out for us this summer. Better come down and help us.

H.F.

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Shenandoah, Iowa
April 23, 1946

... Plenty of work piled up at the seed house. Business has been heavy this spring and help short as it is everywhere. My desk was piled high with stuff that needed attention, and I have been working desperately since I got back trying to get my desk cleaned up, and my letters answered, and get back in touch with the trend of business throughout the house...

I hope you are all raising a good garden this year, as we are liable to need it before the year is over. The food outlook the country over is not good, and I think you will find it a pretty wise plan to grow as much of your own food as you can...

May 1, 1946

Dear Folks All:

We are heading back to the cabin again tomorrow morning but I am waiting for some new pictures I want to put in. One of them is the four generation picture showing Bobby Field and his son William who is now a year old, his father Frank 52, and myself at 74. Frank and I set up my big old camera and Bertha did the picture taking...

Centerville, Missouri
June 12, 1946.

Dear Folks All:

The garden is doing wonderful...

Oh yes, I suppose you are wondering when we will be back in Shenandoah. Well, we are figuring now on starting home Saturday morning June 22. You folks will probably hear me on the radio Monday June 24...

We are all well, but pretty tired sometimes. Get up at 5:00 and go pretty steady till 9:00 P.M....

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No, we are not selling the old place. We like it and will keep it. It is only about a mile away and we go over there often....

This is a beautiful farm but, the folks who owned it didn't have time for flowers and fruit. I guess you have seen that kind—fine farm and a fine farmer but too busy to fool with fruit and flowers. We are going to see to it that that is remedied but it will take time and work...

After another round of trips to Shenandoah, the cabin and back to Shenandoah:

October 3, 1946

Yes, we are still here at Shenandoah, but we are trying to get ready to take off for Missouri tomorrow morning.

Write us there for all of October...

Plenty to do there and we will be busy as usual. Have about 1,000 orders of wild flowers to dig and fill and mail, besides the wholesale orders.

We are both feeling fairly well, about as usual. At least we are able to work and able to eat. I am busy at my desk trying to get all the odds and ends of work cleaned up and at the same time I am being run ragged by visitors who want to talk to me and shake hands. Some day I am liable to go mad and bite some of them. And that would be awful.

Visitors bothering me, so better close now...

H. F.

Centerville
Oct. 14, 1946

... We have been down here for 10 days now.

Yesterday was a really prefect day, so Bertha fixed up a basket of picnic dinner and we went over to the cabin and stayed all day. Being it was Sunday of course we had fried chicken and peaches. The peaches were a box of sliced peaches in syrup out of the freeze box. Then we

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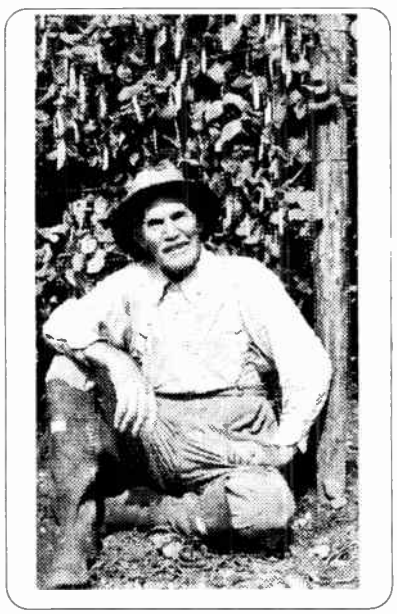
had cream style sweet corn taken out of the freeze box and cooked, bread and butter, and a thermos bottle of cold milk and a thermos of hot coffee, and a small thermos of cream for the coffee and peaches.

We are feeling fine. Getting plenty to eat, and keeping busy. Yes, we have meat in the freeze box, and besides the dogs bring in a rabbit occasionally. And quails will soon be ripe...

H. F.



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PART IV: 1947-1948
The Closing Years

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Chapter 34: The Mayo Clinic

A year later, Henry was still shuttling between Shenandoah and Missouri. On Sept. 6, 1947, he wrote from Centerville:

> *I am afraid that, as usual, I have neglected writing to you. But it's the same old excuse—too busy. Seems like we can never get really caught up on the work.*
>
> *We are both reasonably well, at least able to work hard and to eat, and sleep, keep going fairly well, so I suppose we should not complain.*
>
> *We expect to start home a week from today, arriving there Sunday forenoon, but we will only be there a day or two, as we have to make another trip elsewhere after a day or two at home. Will write you more about it later.*
>
> *All the rest of the folks here are getting along about as usual except that the pigs are fussing about no corn. We can't buy any for them and they are threatening to strike...* *H. F.*

And from Shenandoah:

Monday, Sept. 15, 1947

> *Yes, we are back at Shenandoah again, but only for today. We are leaving early tomorrow morning to drive to Rochester, Minnesota where I have a date Wednesday for a checkup at the Mayo Clinic.*
>
> *I don't know how long we will be there, maybe a week, maybe longer. I think it takes about a week to go through the whole routine, but if they find anything that needs special attention, or if they decide I should go to the back shop for a general overhaul, of course, that would take longer. But if we get through quickly and are feeling good we may go on to Ruth's for a short visit and then possibly on the way back stop to see Jessie, Letty, and Josephine. That is only a maybe.*

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Maybe by the time I get through the mill at the clinic I may not feel like visiting but will be interested only in getting home again. Never can tell. Will let you know later. Don't expect any long letters though as I will not have my machine with me, and will have to write by hand—and that is a hard slow job.

Well, I must close and get to work. Write to us in the yellow envelope. Will try and keep you all posted.

From the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota:

Rochester, Minnesota
Sept. 16, 1947

Well, I got thru my first day here but didn't get anywhere. Went up to the clinic office at 6:30 this morning to get an early start ahead of the crowd, but found 19 ahead of me. I got registered and got a date with the first Dr. for 2:15. Was on hand at 2:00 and sat there till 5:00 but they didn't get to me and told me to come back at 7:45 tomorrow morning, so that's that for the first day.

Estimated 10,000 patients here all the time and about 1,000 new ones every day. It is sure a big business.

The clinic is an enormous business and occupies a half block for offices alone. Most of it is 12 to 15 stories high and regular mass production, belt line system. About the best managed, best organized job I ever saw.

There are people here from everywhere...

Rochester, Minn.
Sept. 18, 1947

Have just finished a busy day at the clinic. Been kept on the jump all day. Just one test after another. It will be the same way tomorrow. Two of the main doctors, they always work in pairs, gave me a long interview and a general inspection early this morning, then after all the technical tests and the laboratory work is done, they will get all the dope together and see me again Sat. and decide whether or not I should have an operation. So far

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they have given me very high grades on all but one department. If I fail to pass on that, then it may mean an operation...

Sept. 20, 1947

Well I got the answer today noon—and it is an operation, Monday at the Colonial Hospital here, and that means I will be tied up here for about two weeks yet. Not all that time in bed but some checking up after I am able to be up. They gave me a remarkably high grade on all but that one point. It is my old chronic trouble, and on that they said if I wanted to live to be 90 I had better be fixed up. So that is that...

Sept. 22, 1947
Colonial Hospital
Room 340

Well the big event is over. I went upstairs at about ten o'clock, came out at 12:15. I went in under my own power but came out trundled on the meat wagon with three male attendants and a flock of nurses as convoy. The Doctor warned me to lay perfectly still and not even raise my head before this time tomorrow, but so far as I know, there is no rule against talking, so I am dictating this to Bertha. I am really not feeling too bad.

I had a letter today from Letty, and she wrote, "Dad, this is all a surprise, have you been holding out something on us?" Yes, I guess I have and I might just as well confess. An old chronic trouble in the prostrate gland which I never said anything about has been getting gradually but slowly worse for the last several years.

A check up at the Council Bluffs clinic three years ago verified my suspicions, and he advised an operation then, but as I was still "sound to work", and it didn't seem urgent I passed it up. This summer, however, there were some rather strong danger signals so I wrote to the Mayo Clinic for a date for a checkup and a possible operation and was told at first there was nothing open

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before October or November, but later I got word of an opening Sept. 17 due to a cancellation of an appointment.

This was the reason of our hurried return from the cabin Sept. 15 and up here Sept. 17. I had a special appointment with one of the head doctors...

Believe me, by the time they get through all of the examinations there is not much left to find out about you. They know you better than your own mother ever did...

The head surgeon of the department of where I had expected trouble said that he could fix me up to live to be a hundred if I didn't work too hard. I told him I had some pensions I wanted to beat the game on by outliving the age tables...

My room at the Colonial Hospital is one of their very finest and priced accordingly, eleven dollars a day... I don't know how long we will be here. The hospital collected seven days rent in advance... They are nice people but they are not taking any chances...

If a body has to be sick, you couldn't pick a nicer place to be sick in. I didn't have any special nurse, didn't think it was needed as there are plenty of regular floor nurses, darn good ones too, best I ever saw. The gem of the lot is about forty, and I accused her just now of being either English or Irish. She told me I was right, both times, as she was born in England of Irish parents. She speaks Cockney English with an Irish accent and sharp tongued as a razor but like all the rest, efficient, friendly and jolly...

Oh yes, I forgot to tell you anything about the operation... gave me what they called spinal block... One of the surgical nurses, a nice gray haired old lady, stood right behind me and held my head... Apparently, they talk to the patients during operations and get them to talk back, so as to take their minds off their troubles. It turned out that this lady was an enthusiastic flower

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grower, and when she found I was a flower grower we had a real lively visit and I was afraid some of the doctors might stop work to listen for we were going strong. She wants to set some violets and ferns and trilliums and a lot of other wild flowers in her timber. She also wanted to set some raspberries and strawberries, and, of course, I advised Sodus and Field's Giant. I wanted to take down her name and address, but I didn't have a pencil, and they wouldn't let me use my hands anyway.

One of the doctors said his wife was born and raised in Tennessee and had been pining away for some Birdsfoot Violets like she used to pick when she was a little girl. I told him we had acres of them down at the cabin, so he wrote down his name and address and gave it to me...

It is now five-thirty, and I have been dictating this to Bertha between the attentions and visits of 15 or 20 assorted doctors, interns, nurses, technicians, and even the housekeeper. I managed to talk the nurse into making a big pitcher of lemonade and grape juice, mixed and well sweetened. She had never heard about it before but Bertha told her how to make it. She said there was nothing in her rule book about it, but there was no rule against it that she could find so she guessed she would take a chance. She did a wonderful job on it, and it sure tasted good... The nurses here are very nice, but, of course, nobody can quite do things for me like Bertha. I have got so used to her taking care of me the last 15 or 20 years that nobody can fill her place.

Colonial Hospital
Sept. 23, 1947

I am dictating to Bertha again as I don't feel able to write a letter yet. They all tell me the second day is the worst, and I am pretty near thru the second day now, and while it is no picnic I really got through it better than I expected...

World Radio History

Bertha had baked some cup custards at the apartment and brought me one of them. This looked better than any of their stuff, and I ate all of it.

Lots of gossip around a place like this and about the most interesting piece of news today is that the Queen of Egypt is here on this floor...a case of gall stones. There are certainly all kinds of people here from everywhere. Yesterday when I was waiting for my turn, the other two men in the room were a log cutter from Idaho and a man from Columbia, South America who could speak scarcely a word of English...

I had quite a long talk just a few minutes ago with the ass't to the Big Surgeon who operated on me. He assures me that I can be out of bed in 4 days from day of operation and can be dismissed as cured in two weeks providing, of course, nothing breaks loose in the meantime. I asked him it it would be all right for me to drive home when the two weeks is up, and he said it was extremely doubtful that I could... This is something I hadn't really thought of before, and it upsets my plans pretty much...

Thurs., Sept. 25, 1947

We got the beautiful roses today noon and also a beautiful bouquet of glads, roses and asters wired from Philip. My room is getting to be quite a flowery place. Very few of the rooms here seem to have any flowers at all so our beautiful flowers and flood of mail are quite a curiosity and excitement to the hospital folks. We are getting a lot of mail, and it keeps Bertha busy taking care of it...

It looks as if I am stuck here for about four days more and here is why. I had a bad spell yesterday afternoon which in my personal opinion was simply an attack of acute indigestion from their feeding me too heavy for an old man with no exercise.... It started with a very hard chill. I shook the bed till it rattled... When the chill ended my temperature shot up and I pretty much passed out... Anyway I was as sick as a dog all afternoon and evening...

World Radio History

I told the head nurse she was to blame for feeding me so heavy and she said, "But you didn't have to eat everything set before you did you?", and I told her that I supposed that if it was put on my plate I was supposed to eat it, and I was used to obeying orders.

You would laugh to see the amazement of the nurses and clerks here at the amount of mail we are getting... They say, "We never did see anybody get as much mail as you do." They were especially taken with that big bunch of beautiful roses that the Seed House folks sent and nurses from other departments I think make excuses to come in here and see it. They are fully bloomed out now and are just at their best and are keeping perfectly.

I got a beautiful bunch of roses too from John Henry and wife...

3:30, Monday, 9-29-47

... I had quite a visit with the nurse today about trying to get more cooked fruit and vegetables into the menu, but I doubt if it does any good. They seem to go to plenty of trouble with the cooking to try to make it good... Of course, they have their established ways of doing things and can't be expected to suit everybody, but I still think the patients would be better off with more vegetables and canned fruit instead of so much heavy stuff.

Bertha finally did get them to make some more pink lemonade for me and I notice in the weekly bill which I got today a charge item reading "special diet 15 cents".

Rochester, Minnesota
209 17th Ave. S.W.
Wed., 3:00 P.M., Oct. 1, 1947

The doctors finally released me from the hospital this morning about nine o'clock. I hustled around and got my clearance papers and paid my hospital bill and bade goodbye to the nurses. I told them they were nice folks, but I hoped I never had an occasion to visit them again, at least professionally...

World Radio History

Thurs., 4 P.M., Oct. 2

It looks like the best I can do will be to get away from here this coming Monday. The big doctor will have a look-see for himself and make the final decision as to whether I am in shape to ship out. They sure don't take any chances here. The job has to be right before it can leave the shop...

Oct. 9, 1947
Shenandoah, Iowa

Well, we are home again safe and sound. In fact, we have been home since Tuesday noon, but I have been so busy trying to get caught up with my work and get my desk cleaned up that I haven't had time till now to write to you folks.

Yes, I am feeling fine, never felt better in my life. Drove home myself (with permission of the doctors) and have been hard at work ever since I got home

The doctors and surgeons assured me that I was in good shape now to run for a long, long time. I asked them if I should come back for a checkup any time and they said, well, it might be a good idea... and I asked them how long or when it should be. Oh, they said, seven or eight years maybe. So you see they don't seem to be very much worried about it.

So far as I can see the operation has been a decided success. Much better than I had an idea it could be and with less suffering and inconvenience than I would imagine possible. Of course, it is no fun being in the hospital, and I was in the hospital ten days, but at that it was so much better than I had expected that I feel very happy about it all, and I really do feel better than I have for years...

We expect to be here about a week and then down to the cabin for about a month. Harley is overhauling the car and getting it in perfect shape for the trip. He thinks when he gets it fixed up it will be like me, good to run for at least 7 or 8 years yet without any further attention...

World Radio History

Shenandoah,
Wed. afternoon, October 15, 1947

By the time you get this we will be on our way to Missouri...

I guess this is the first time for ten years that we have missed being in the Ozarks for the whole month of October...

I got a flood of letters and cards while I was in hospital and appreciated them very much. I think I got a letter or a card, and maybe several, from everyone of you folks who get this letter. People in the hospital were amazed at the amount of mail I got, and they couldn't understand it. For awhile there I think I got more mail than all the rest of the hospital put together...

Centerville, Mo.
Wed. morning, Oct. 22, 1947

... Told the folks who have orders in for wildflowers that we hope to get to filling them some time today. Have been busy digging them and getting them single-wrapped...

You see, each plant is wrapped individually in moss, with paper around it, and then later after we get a lot of kinds ready they are assembled into orders.
Fortunately we are feeling well and able to work...

Sat. forenoon
Oct. 25, 1947

... When we sowed the new alfalfa field this fall, along early in August, I put in about an ounce of turnip seed right with the bushel of alfalfa seed, and we've got the greatest lot of turnips you ever saw. I'll bet there is a wagon load, and on account of being spread so thin on the ground, they are very big ones and perfect. Try it next year.
Well, dinner is about ready, and I wouldn't want to miss that so will have to close for now...

World Radio History

Shenandoah, Iowa
November 21, 1947

Yes, we are back home at Shenandoah again. I doubt if you realize what a job it is to make a complete change in all your habits and work and surroundings quickly and completely as we do in going from here to the Ozarks or in coming back from there to here. Old people are supposed to get more or less fixed in their habits, but we don't have any chance for that as we have to make a complete change about once a month.

I have been busy getting my broadcasting program organized for the winter. You know I have two half-hour daily programs, one at 12:30 and one at 7:30 P.M. I have had a microphone run into the dining room over home and will make the evening broadcast from there. Makes it handier for me...

Bertha and I both feeling fine and going strong. I seem to have recovered entirely and favorably from my operation and don't look for any trouble along that line for some time to come anyway...

Much as we would like to visit a lot of you, I doubt if we will try it this winter...

Wish I could peek in on all of you at Thanksgiving time. Why not each one of you write us a good long letter Thanksgiving evening and tell us all about it?...

Shenandoah, Iowa
January 20, 1948

Everything is going along about as usual here.

Business is heavy at the Seed House as it always is at this time of the year, and everybody working hard trying to keep on top of the work.

I hope you all have catalogs by now. If not, please let me know at once, and I will see that you get one. The March Seed Sense we hope will be out about March 1st...

World Radio History

February 12, 1948

No, we are not entirely froze up, but it is pretty cold—too cold to suit me. We have been fortunate in having enough fuel oil to go around here, and we manage to keep quite comfortable in spite of the weather. And if worst comes to worst and we should run clear out of oil, Bertha and I can always move to the Ozarks. We've got 50 cords of dry wood piled up down there...

Business is rushing at the Seed House. Plenty for everybody to do. I am doing 8 to 10 cylinders a day of dictation (The girls sort out the hard ones and the long ones and the interesting ones for me to answer). Then, of course, I have my usual run of miscellaneous office work and two half-hours a day of broadcasting and the preparing of stuff ahead for that—so you see I don't get to do much loafing. Besides, the visitors always want to meet me and sit and visit and have me show them around the place.

Well, as Josh Billings used to say: "A reasonable amount of fleas is good for a dog. It keeps him scratching."

Centerville, Missouri
Easter Sunday, Mar. 28, 1948

This morning it is clear and calm and warming up fast. A beautiful Easter. We had eggs for breakfast and will have ham for dinner and a beautiful day with it all. And by tomorrow I hope we can be working in the garden again...

I am still broadcasting from here—or rather making transcriptions which are mailed in and put on the air there. The tape method works fine...

Shenandoah, Iowa
Tues. morning, June 15, 1948

Yes, we are back at Shenandoah again...

World Radio History

Be sure and write me about your vacation plans so I can figure on when we will be able to get to see you. Josephine writes that they are going to stop here June 27 on their way to Yellowstone but will probably be here just overnight. Letty and also John Henry write that they have a vacation in the last half of August and may get to Shenandoah at that time...

Shenandoah, Iowa
July 16, 1948

By the time you get this, we will be in Missouri again...

We are both feeling fairly well—not 100 percent, but able to work and able to eat. I was under the weather for a couple of weeks lately—not really sick, but just deadly tired and lacking steam pressure and energy. I managed to keep up the broadcasting, but not much else. I am feeling better now...

John Henry and Ethel are talking of driving over here to visit us the latter part of August. Jessie and Letty and their husbands are talking of being here at about that time and also Hope and family, possibly...

Centerville, Mo.
Mon. evening, July 19, 1948

We found things in somewhat of a mess and with lots of work to do. The weather had been warm and wet practically all of the four weeks we had been gone. They had nine inches of rain in all... Great growing weather, but a wonderful time for weeds to grow and a poor time to kill them. The result was a fair imitation of a jungle.

I have had two men helping me in the private garden all day getting it whipped into shape. We made a good showing, and it looks a lot better. We just cleaned up in general and sprayed weeds right and left, but we have another day of it to do tomorrow. Jim and two men have been working in the raspberries and blackberries cultivating and straightening them out. Another man has

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been running the tractor with the mowing machine attachment cutting the alfalfa. Will swing the tractor into cultivating strawberries tomorrow. We must dig the potatoes too. We pulled the onions today...

It is nearly 10:00 now and time to have a cup of coffee and get to bed. We have been up since 5 a.m....

Shenandoah, Iowa
Friday, August 27, 1948

Well, the company is all gone now, and we are settling down to our steady job of work again.

John Henry and Ethel were here the longest of any and left this morning. Jessie was the first one to go, and she left Thursday evening of last week after having come in by train Sunday morning. Letty and Ray came here from Missouri just a little ahead of us and left for their home in Marseilles Friday morning of last week.

Hope came in by airplane to Omaha a week Sunday and then phoned to Leo and the boys who were up in Minnesota and had them drive down... after a few more days back in Minnesota they expected to drive on home to California.

Sol and Louise drove in Tuesday afternoon of last week, and they were here until yesterday when they started for home. Mary and Mary Jane were down here quite a bit, and also some of Frank's folks were over, so we had quite a crowd. We had 14 at the table a good deal of the time.

One evening we were all at supper over at Frank's place. We had supper out in the yard.

Sol and Louise stayed up to Leanna's part of the time and then after the crowd thinned out a little, they came down and stayed at our place. I enclose a picture of Sol and Louise, and Bertha and myself.

I also enclose a picture of some of the children who were here including some of the husbands and wives...

My sister Martha's husband, Harry Eaton, died early last week. We were unable to get away to go to the

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funeral, but Jessie and Helen and Leanna were there. They came back after the funeral and Martha came back with them and visited with us all. We all got together Sunday afternoon and had our pictures taken. It was the first time in about fifty years that the seven children of us had all been together at once.

Tuesday, Sol and I took Martha back to Des Moines, or rather, John Henry and Ethel took all of us there in their new car. We had a nice visit around there, and while we were there we went down and visited Maggie Bickel.[1]

I guess everybody had a good time, and we all enjoyed ourselves very much. I am sorry that more of the folks couldn't have been here. All of the folks that were here seemed to be well and happy and busy and prosperous. You can see by the picture how well they all look... H.F.

Susan, Leanna (sitting), Sol Jr, Jessie, Martha, Helen, and Henry.

[1] Henry's father and mother took in Maggie to raise when she was a girl.

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Chapter 35: Last Months

Another winter went by, and in the spring of *1949*, Henry Field wrote:

We are back at Shenandoah again. Found plenty of work piled up waiting for us, both in the house and at the office— and in Bertha's flower garden and my vegetable garden too.

Looks like I am going to have a lovely crop of strawberries in my garden here, but will be leaving for Missouri again probably about May 14, so will not get to eat any of the berries here. We will have a half acre of strawberries fruiting down at the farm. Better come down and help eat some of them...

Roughly this schedule is what we have in mind for 1949.

At Shenandoah	*April 24 to May 14*
At Farm	*May 15 to June 15*
At Shenandoah	*June 16 to July 20*
At Farm	*July 21 to Aug. 20*
At Shenandoah	*Aug. 21 to Sept. 24*
At Farm	*Sept. 25 to Nov. 5*

Now file this away where you can keep track of it.

Bertha and I are both in fair health. Not best in the world, but better than we were. We tire pretty easily. Guess we must be getting old. Too much work. Some of these days we are liable to take a sudden notion and sell the Missouri farm. It's a nice place for a vacation, but the trouble is we don't get to take much vacation but simply turn into a lot more work. I suppose that will be the way wherever we are though.

Have had letters from most of the family fairly recently, and they all seem to be getting along fine. Write me sure—and often. Always anxious to hear from you. No new pictures this time.

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Shenandoah, Iowa
August 15, 1949

Dear Folks All:

We are back home again safe and sound. We got through at Rochester Tuesday evening and left early Wednesday morning to go and visit Ruth and family at Appleton, Wisconsin.

We, of course, have been very busy getting everything straightened up at the house and at the office, and trying to get rested up a little. We had a nice trip but are pretty tired and worn out.

We got verbal answers from the clinic. They gave me what you might call a suspended sentence or bench parole. In effect they said they had considerable evidence against me but would give me the benefit of the doubt and put me on probation and under further observation. They said I was not a hospital case this time but if I got worse I might be and if I got worse I would have to come back. Meanwhile they gave me some pink pills and some good advice, and that's all for the present.

The combined fall catalog and Seed Sense is being mailed this week...

Henry prepared his family for the events to come:

Saturday
September 3, 1949

Dear Hope:

I am sending this letter, or a similar one, to my children, to my brother and sisters, and two or three others who have been like brothers or sons to me.

I wanted to tell you that I have not been telling you the full truth about my illness—and I thought you just as well know.

The real truth of my trouble is Cancer—internal cancer, probably incurable, but possibly may be held in check and stalled along. Started with prostatic cancer but gradually took root in other parts of the body. First in

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the bones of the pelvic region (that's the backaches I have been suffering from)— and then it invaded the lungs and chest (that's the bad throat and cough I have been having lately, only it is not in the throat really, but in the right lung, as shown by X-rays.)

Yes, I have known of this situation for over a year and have been taking treatments for it for over a year. Mayo's warned me of the possibilities when I was there two years ago and outlined treatment to use if it showed, which it did a year later in 1948. Along in June this year, it got sharply worse and the treatment was heavily increased (by the local doctor on advice from Mayo's). That will explain to you my apparent grouchiness when the folks were here in July. I was in so much pain all the time that it was hard to be good natured. It is also the reason for that hurried trip to Rochester.

Mayo's gave me a thorough going over and decided that the hormone pills (the pink pills I mentioned in the yellow letter) were the only hope, with the dose increased to all my system could tolerate. This hormone might hold the cancer in check, neutralize it, make it so I can live with it maybe for years. No guarantee as to time. It might be five or six years, or even more. Or, I might not last even a year. This is the bench parole I mentioned. Mayo's say the only last resort would be another operation or some X-ray treatments, and they are not enthusiastic about either one doing any good.

So there you have the whole story. As you look back it will explain things that may have puzzled you.

I am doing everything I can. Cutting down on everything possible. Remember though that it would be no help to quit and go to bed. For one thing, my back pains me so much that I can't get much satisfaction out of lying down. It rests me sometimes to sit up or to walk around. I don't get a whole lot of restful sleep. I might get a little more with some sleeping pills but am afraid to depend too much on them.

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Also auto driving never did tire me except when taken in excess and the new car is so comfortable and so easy to drive that it is more restful than lying in bed would be. (That's why I bought it when I did and the one I did.)

When I bought the trailer I had hopes that we could take one last swing around the circle and see all of you (but I begin to have my doubts about that).

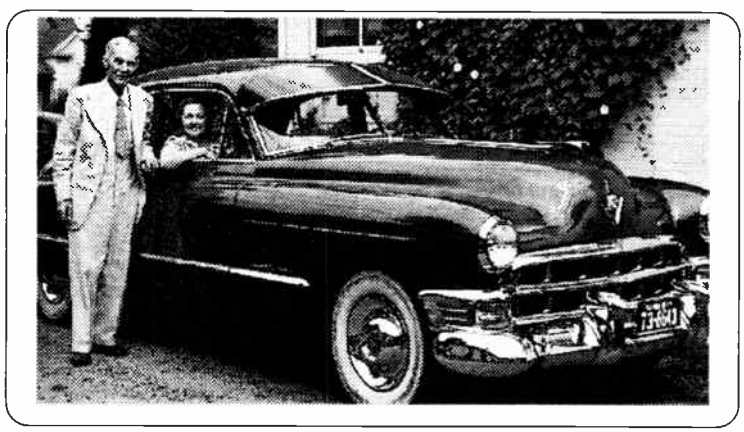
One big comfort is that Bertha takes such wonderful care of me. She always has, for that matter, but she redoubles her efforts now, and very few old men are as well taken care of. I doubt if you realize what she has meant to me, especially the last few years, with this trouble coming on.

I will try to keep you fully and frankly posted as to how I am coming along. I don't look for much real change either way, for a while at least. I will keep up my broadcasting as long as I can.

I will carry on much as usual, as long as I can, doing each day all the work I can, all the good I can—and tomorrow's another day. That's the best way I can do, I believe.

I have had a long and busy life and have had my full share of everything so I have no kick coming.

Yours truly,
Henry Field



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Rochester, Minn.
Colonial Hospital
Sept. 11, 1949

Dear Folks All:

We got in here Saturday noon and are nicely settled now and likely to be here quite some time. You remember when I came back from here a month ago I reported that their verdict was a sort of bench parole. Well about a week ago they revoked the parole as they have some new sort of treatment they thought would be good so they called me back.

As you know, we went around by the farm first and were there till Friday noon, then drove direct on up here... No, I'm not doing all the driving myself as Harley Barties came along with us and did most of the driving. After he got us settled he left us and went back to Shenandoah.

I had orders to come direct to the Colonial Hospital, and we got a nice room for Bertha at the hotel right across the street.

Everybody is nice to us, and we got settled promptly and comfortably.

The Seed House folks sent a box of gladioli blooms, and they got here exactly on time, coming to the hotel just as I was registering. There was such a beautiful lot of them that Bertha divided them with the nurses on our floor, and they were, of course, greatly pleased with them.

Bertha, as usual, is friends with everybody here, and the nurses promptly made her a sort of honorary member of their crowd. The rules on visiting hours have been very much tightened up since we were here before, but they gave Bertha an official pass entitling her to visit and stay at practically all hours without question.

The head surgeon of this department and his first assistant were in to see me this forenoon and will start special treatments tomorrow. Meanwhile the house physician and his head boss have been in and out ever

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since I came—apparently under orders to take very good care of me.

The nurses have been bringing me all sorts of good things to eat and are disappointed I don't have more of an appetite.

Bertha is here with me, of course, most of the time, so amongst them all I am pretty well taken care of.

We will try and keep you posted how we get along.

H.F.

Sept. 24, 1949
Rm. 655, Colonial Hospital

Dear Folks All:

It's been some little time since you have had a yellow letter...

Bertha is here all day with me and does the little things that one hesitates calling a nurse to do. They are all so wonderful here in caring for me. Both medical and surgical doctors, 4 or 5 of each, are taking care of me in great shape and along with them 3 or 4 nurses. Then all out of a clear sky came a sore throat, taking in my whole mouth, which knocked a week's progress and set me back—then came an upset stomach which I am battling with now. When these are all over, I can tell more how the treatments serve me...

My worst trouble now is eating—no appetite, and the food they pile on a tray is enough for a harvest hand. I am getting my pink lemonade. Bertha told them how, and when everyone was busy this morning she made it.

A big box of gladioli came again this morning. There were so many we divided them up... The nurses took some to a lady on the second floor who had been here 7 weeks and hadn't received any. They said she was so thankful for them.

We are getting floods of mail, more than we can answer and don't be too disappointed if someone don't get answered...

Can't tell how long we are likely to be here— anywhere from two to four weeks yet. *H. F.*

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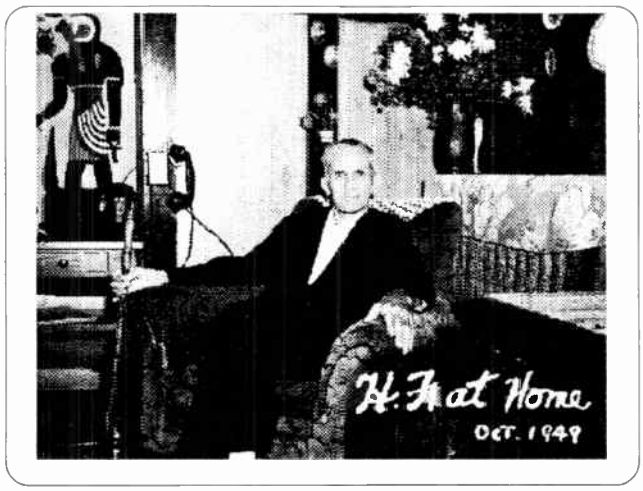

Henry bids farewell in the last "broadcast" from Henry himself:

Shenandoah, Iowa
October 7, 1949

Dear Folks All:

Yes, this is Henry himself broadcasting from the front room—not from the farm house down in Missouri nor from the Mayo Clinic, but the front room in our home in Shenandoah, Iowa. I am back from my ramblings and travels for awhile... I have been keeping you posted some—the best I could by having Mrs. Field write out the letters, but this one I am broadcasting myself. I am on the old daybed, and Bertha and Harley are in the background to watch to see how things are going to work. Bertha cut in just then and said, "Henry, don't try to talk too loud and too long." (My throat is very sensitive.)

Guess I told you this is the Yellow Letter and is the first one since I got back from Rochester. It turned out we were up there at the clinic right at 4 weeks this time, and I think it did a lot of good. The doctors gave me all they knew, or all they could hear about on what they call the heavy stuff... I don't know as I can tell you much in detail about my situation, but it could be better, and it could be a lot worse. The head surgeon seems to take a very special interest in my case, and he is passing along

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all the help he can to the doctor here in Shenandoah. Of course, the local doctor is doing everything he can for me.

Well, anyway we left there Tuesday morning, about 7:00 o'clock in the morning. I was in the back seat—lying down, and our Cadillac car is very, very comfortable—Harley and Bertha in the front seat—and here we go. We stopped occasionally for lunch. We had the thermos bottle with us, coffee and milk, and got home about 5 o'clock in the afternoon in fine shape. I am enclosing a picture of the Wanderer's Return taken that evening.

I haven't been working since, but I have been kept pretty busy after all—two telephones and the footpath between here and the Seed House were kept pretty hot most of the time... In fact, Mrs. Field had to turn away quite a lot of visitors yesterday...

Don't expect too much letter writing and answering from me. I am dictating this from the old daybed, and it is pretty hard work, so I don't know how much I will be able to do. Mary is answering a lot of letters, along with the other Seed House girls. They know pretty much how I would answer them, and probably can say it better than I can, so it is all right.

I am not talking any business in this letter whatever... It is all I can do to take care of my personal affairs for awhile, so don't be offended if you write me about something and I turn it over to my daughter Mary, or somebody else to answer. Mrs. Field said to tell you that I am doing nothing right now but taking care of Henry, himself...

So, good-bye until you hear from me again. No, I am not staying at the hospital. Hospitals are all right and fine—nice people and all that, but there is really no place like home when you have a wife and a bunch of friends as capable as I have. We have the house fixed up as comfortable as a hospital would be. While it is plain and simple—nothing fancy—it tends to be very comfortable and it suits me. So, good-bye for now.

H. F.

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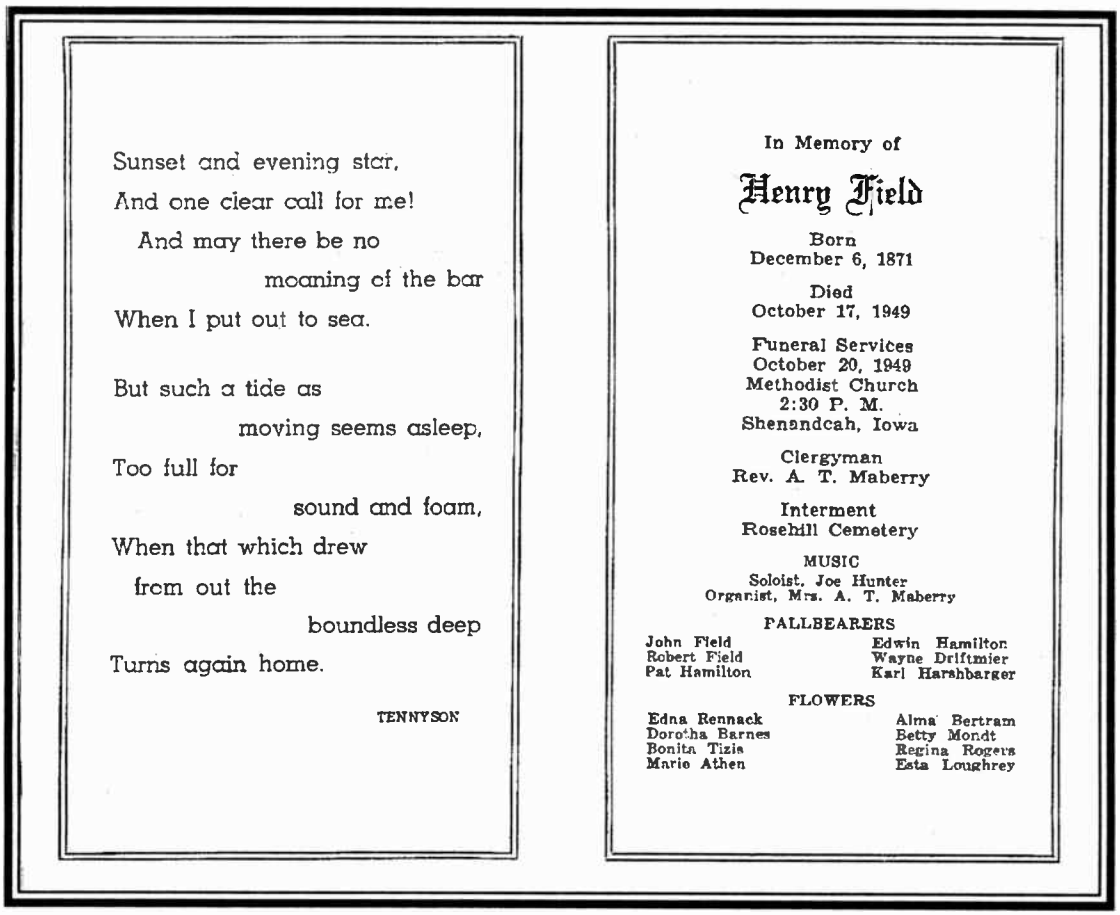
Chapter 36: The Passing of a Legend



Sunset and evening star,
And one clear call for me!
And may there be no
moaning of the bar
When I put out to sea.

But such a tide as
moving seems asleep,
Too full for
sound and foam,
When that which drew
from out the
boundless deep
Turns again home.

TENNYSON

In Memory of

Henry Field

Born
December 6, 1871

Died
October 17, 1949

Funeral Services
October 20, 1949
Methodist Church
2:30 P. M.
Shenandcah, Iowa

Clergyman
Rev. A. T. Maberry

Interment
Rosehill Cemetery

MUSIC
Soloist, Joe Hunter
Organist, Mrs. A. T. Maberry

PALLBEARERS

John Field
Robert Field
Pat Hamilton
Edwin Hamilton
Wayne Driftmier
Karl Harshbarger

FLOWERS

Edna Rennack
Dorotha Barnes
Bonita Tizis
Marie Athen
Alma Bertram
Betty Mondt
Regina Rogers
Esta Loughrey

MAYOR W. R. DAY, ANNOUNCED:

In memory of Henry Field, members of the Chamber of Commerce will close their places of business during his funeral, 2:30 to 3:30 p.m., Thursday, October 20, 1949.

The city clerk's office at the city hall will close from 1 to 4 o'clock, so that all city employees can attend the services.

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HERBERT HOOVER SENDS SYMPATHY

A telegram arrived to Mrs. Henry Field, wife of the late seed and radio pioneer, Friday from Herbert Hoover, former president of the United States.

Mr. Hoover's personal telegram read:

> I was deeply grieved to hear of the passing of your husband. He had been a good and loyal friend over these many years. But more, he was a fine American and it is a great loss to all of us. I do hope you will have strength and courage to bear this, your greatest loss.
>
> Herbert Hoover
> New York, N. Y.

WALTER WILSON'S EULOGY:

Red Oak, Iowa
October 21, 1949

Dear Classmates of the class of 1889: to the four left out of fourteen.

We buried Henry Field yesterday—the greatest man Iowa ever produced. The day was very fitting: "Dark and gloomy. It rained and the wind was never weary." We had an invitation to lunch in Shenandoah with the Elbert A. Reads. We left home a little before twelve. As we approached Shenandoah the sky darkened and when we sat down to lunch the heavens could not restrain their grief longer and showers began falling. We were told to go to the church early as there might be a big crowd. The showers quit about two o'clock and we walked to the Methodist Church. The streets were so full of parked cars we could get no closer. At two-fifteen when the crowds were going to the church the rains commenced again. More heavy showers during the services. The church was beautifully decorated with the most flowers I have ever seen at a funeral. The casket was completely covered with a blanket of red roses and ferns, in memory of Henry's saying, "I don't care what kind of a rose you give, just so it is a red rose."

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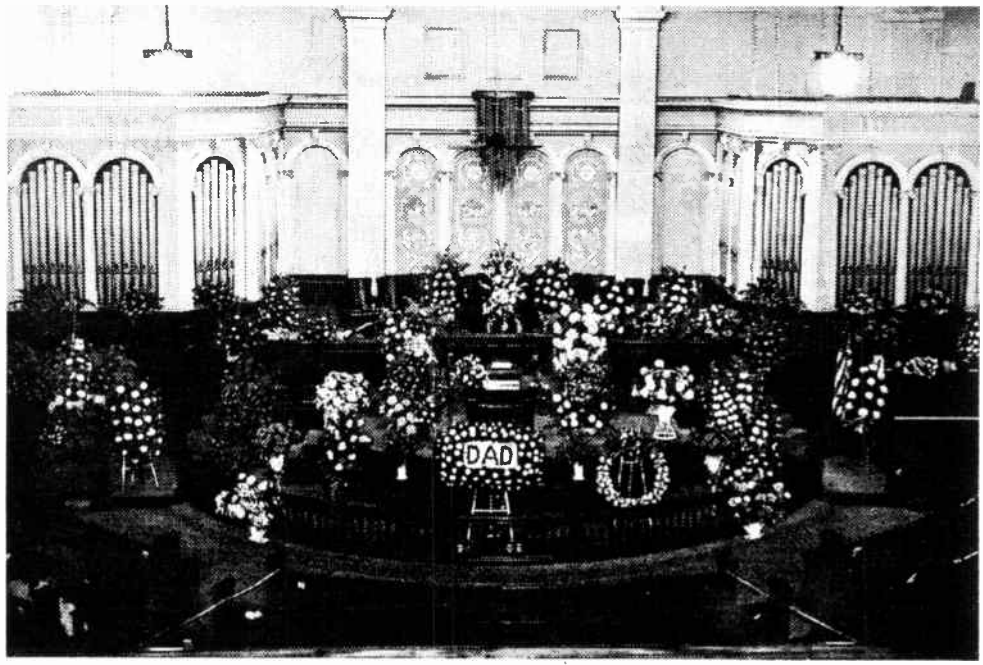

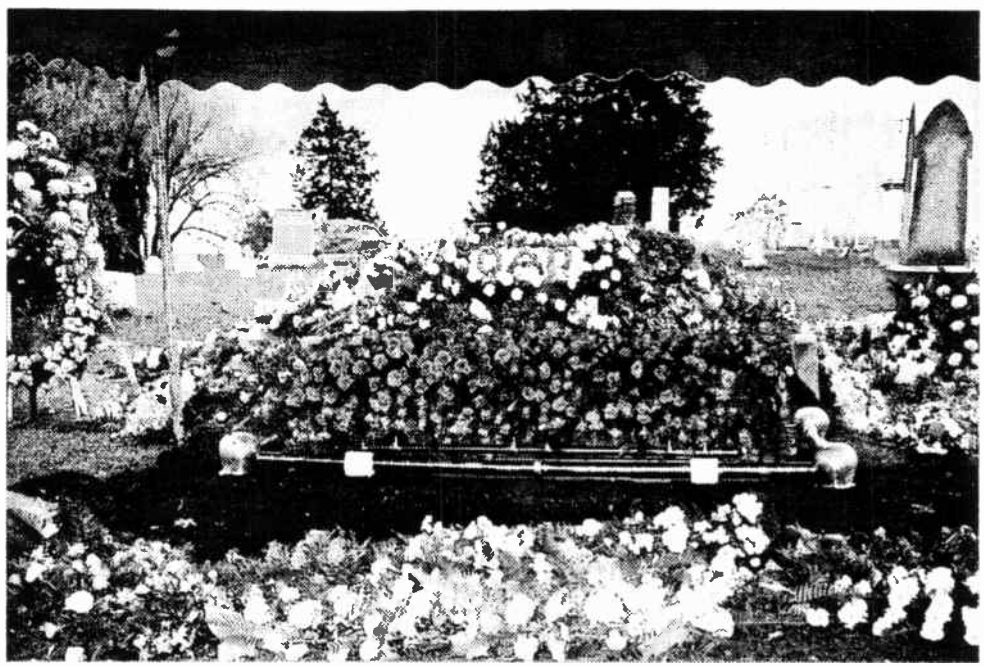

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A beautiful floral piece of white roses with the words "Dad" in red roses stood behind the casket. The entire front of the church was decorated with beautiful flowers, and there was a stack of them in the northwest corner. The center section of the church was reserved for the Seed House folks. Nature could not restrain her grief at the passing of this great man, and the rain continued during most of the sermon.

Joe Hunter sang a solo. The Old German Minister that worked with Henry in the early days gave his talk. The Methodist Minister preached a wonderful sermon. Hunter sang another solo, and the services were over. The church was well filled. A few vacant seats in the rear, but a big crowd attended the services in spite of the weather. The rains quit to let them get ready for the procession to the grave. As soon as the services at the grave were finished, the rains came down in torrents. The streets ran curb full with water. We spent the evening in Shenandoah. Nature could not restrain her grief and keep weeping all evening. We drove home about ten o'clock in the rain.

It is a sad sight to sit on the side lines and watch the passing of a great man. Henry had always had good health. Ate what he wished, worked hard and slept well. He had never been sick in his life, except the childhood diseases until about two years ago. He went to Rochester for an operation. We all remember his account of that trip. The operation was successful. He came home to his work and took his place on the radio. About eight months ago he commenced to lose weight, had severe pains, etc. He returned to Rochester for an examination, and the report was "Cancer—Nothing we can do." This was a severe shock to Henry. He enjoyed life and wanted to live, but he submitted to the inevitable, came home and wrote his farewell letters to his children.

He resumed his place in the business world on his broadcasts that he had started so many years ago. I believe I heard his last broadcast, cheerful as usual. Not a word about his trouble. His voice had been a little husky at times, but he was getting along very well. He had a letter from "Alfalfa John", who is in Europe at the present time, that he had promised to read. Henry's voice grew more husky and he

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announced, "I will have to quit. My throat is tired. Bertha will take over". Mrs. Field resumed the reading of the letter and finished the broadcast.

Henry retired to his home, commenced packing to go to his cabin in the Ozarks that he loved so well...to spend his last days in rest and quiet. Word came from Rochester of encouragement; they wanted to see him again, immediately. His old friend Harley Bartles went to Missouri and drove him to Rochester. They did all they could, but to no avail. He suffered considerable, and finally had to give up. He returned home Friday October 5th. Mr. Elbert A. Read called on him Saturday. Henry felt much better and talked freely. He said, "Elbert, I am going to lick this thing yet." Sunday was about the last day he was himself. His son Philip arrived from Honolulu and Henry recognized him, but he kept gradually failing until he passed away early Monday morning, October 17th.

Henry was a great man; I think the greatest Iowa ever produced. I think he has done the farmer more good and his influence will last longer in the community than any other man in Iowa. It was Henry Field who introduced Alfalfa to the farmer. Henry Field took Sweet Clover, that pest that bloomed along the highways and even into the fields, civilized it, made it into a good forage crop and one of the best legumes for soil building we have. He, with Henry Wallace, was one of the pioneers of "Hybrid Seed corn." We bought Henry's "Mule Corn Seed" long before "Hybrid Seed corn." was ever heard of.

I well remember the first [railroad] car of oranges he sold. His directors were wild, called a special meeting and informed Henry that there had never been a car load of oranges sold in Shenandoah in a year. "Maybe not", says Henry, "but I am going to sell them." Shenandoah never had such a selling campaign. When spring arrived Henry had sold fifty two car loads of oranges, good juicy oranges direct from the grower.

Henry was just as successful selling nursery stock. Remember his campaign of evergreen trees? "Fifty evergreen trees for a dollar."

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Henry lived in the good old Republican Days, before the Democrats got control of the government. When a man owned his business and could run it to suit himself, before the government commenced prosecuting merchants for selling goods too cheap.

The birthday celebration of his radio station was one of the great events in the history of the West; probably the greatest of its kind ever held. I could go on for pages telling about his successes, but Henry is gone.

Henry was buried Thursday. Page County received over 2.16 inches of much needed rain in the 24 hours during the funeral. Friday was dark and gloomy, but Saturday broke bright and sunny. Nature had recovered her equilibrium. The day was a beautiful day; one of the finest in the fall. The Shenandoah radio stations flashed their messages out over the air, "Bulbs, hybrid seed corn, evergreen trees!", but Henry has gone and there will never be another Henry Field.

Sincerely yours,
Walter Wilson

Frank, Faith, Hope, Philip, Josephine, Jessie, Bertha, Mary, Ruth, Georgia, John Henry, and Lettie on October 20, 1949

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Epilogue

Remembering his endless seeking of new things
and his boundless interest in everything about him,
will be an inspiration.
Even though they say Henry Field is dead now—
the man may be,
but the personality—the spirit—
will never die nor be forgotten.

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Yours truly,

World Radio History

World Radio History