(The Modena-Pioche Story will be taken up again on page 20.We will need this page + 16,17,18, & 19 to show pictures and talk about Threshing Machines.)

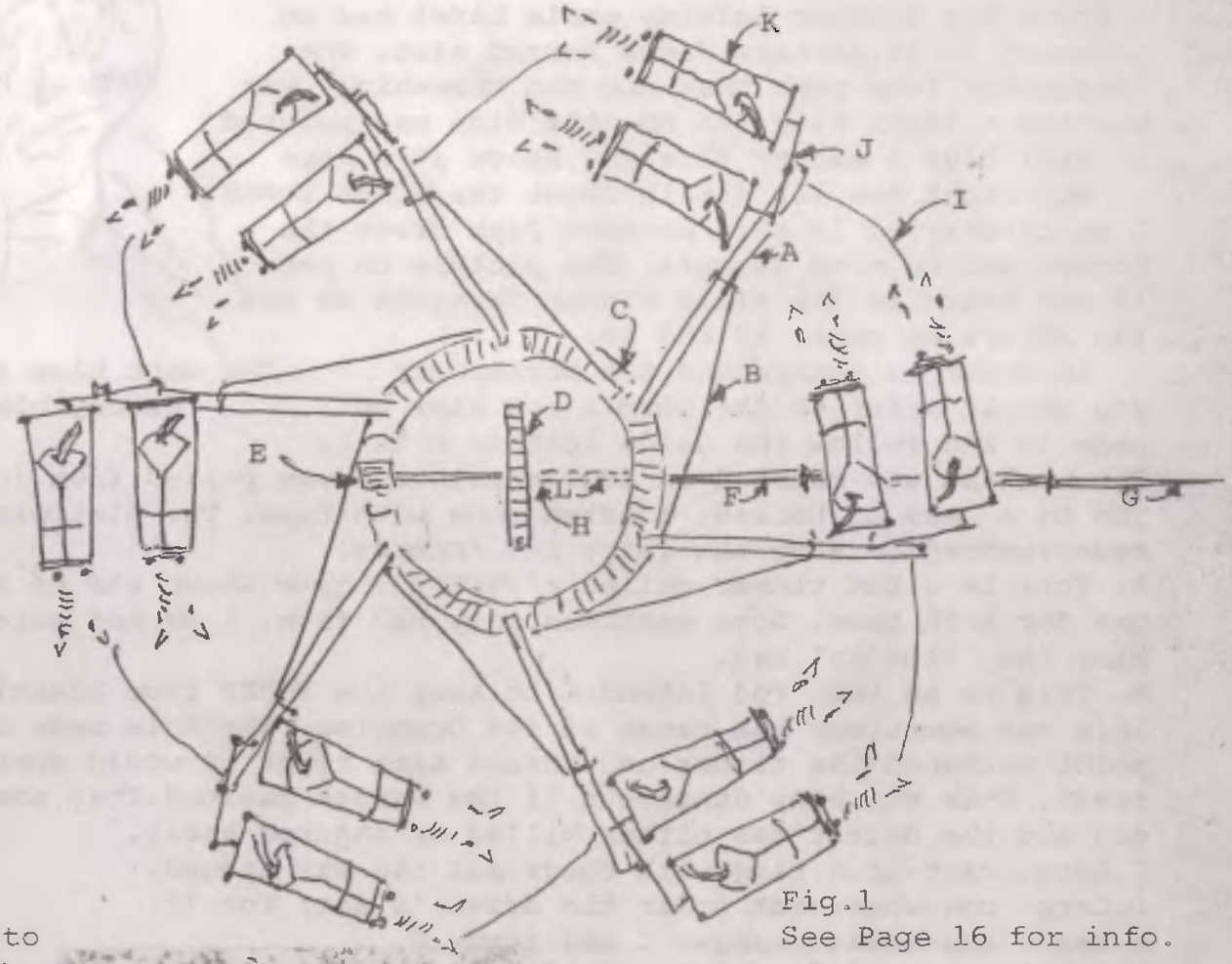


Fig.1
See Page 16 for info.

The photo at ~~right~~ is Papa on Horse Power. Boy on spring ~~seat~~ is ME. Other boy is Lafe Barron Fore-ground is old willow fence. Much used in my home town.

One of the big events of my boyhood days was the coming of the BLUEJAY THRESHING MACHINE. I do not know just how old I was or where it came from. When I first remember it Rube Jolley owned it and I think his brother Lafe(my uncle Lafe) had an interest in it,perhaps James Turner also. The "Separator"(the part that did the threshing) was painted a light blue and on it's side was painted in dark blue a saucey Blue Jay,hence it's name .

"in dark blue a saucey blue jay"

But right now let's talk about the HORSE POWER. I am interested in this because Papa drove the horses one or more summers. The picture on page 15 was taken in the Niels Nisson farmyard as was the others on pages 17 and 19.

In order to understand the Horsepower you should refer to the bird's eye view on page 15 and follow the guide letters A to L. The machine was mounted on four wheels and was pulled from job to job by a team of horses. I often rode with Papa. The platform has been removed to show the gears and innards.

A. This is a 6x6 timber called a SWEEP. I have shown six of these, one for each team. Some machines only had five. I am not sure how many the "Bluejay" had.

B. This is an iron rod intended to keep the SWEEP from breaking,but this was sometimes the cause of its breaking. The hole made at this point weakened the timber and unless kept tight it would sometimes break. This was very dangerous if the horses paniced.They sometimes did and the driver was either killed or injured badly.

C.Large cast-iron ring with coggs all the way around.

D.Large cog-wheel bok under the driver's seat for it.

E.Small cog-wheel engages C and turns D

F.Tumbling rod connects to small gear H must reach the ground so horses can step over it. Some new teams sometimes shied at it until used to it.

G. Rod runns on ground until it nears the SEPARATOR Then it rises.

I.Outside horse is tied to the SWEEP in front of him.

J.Double tree hitched to end of each SWEEP.

K.This is a horse. There are 12 of them. Each hand on the crew owner of one team.

L The slanting rod that connects gear H to the tumbling rod.

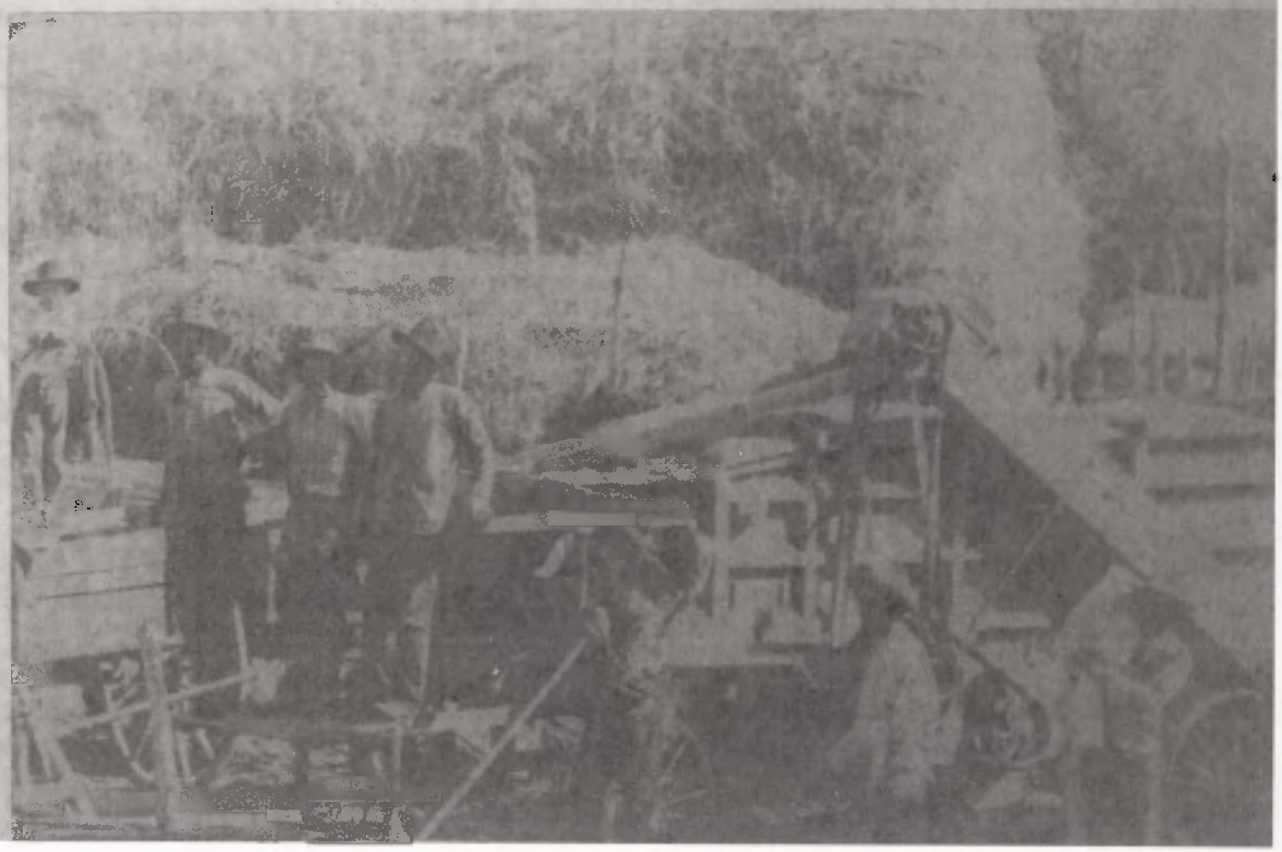
A word about the hats that Lafe Barron and I are wearing. They are felt and when new had a stiff brim like a straw sailor hat that some girls wore. But to us the hats were just no good until the stiffness went out of them and they "flopped" over our ears. Then and then only were they considered first class as a hat. Sometimes we would "tuck" them under the crown and make a new style. Some of the kids got real fancy and cut notches in the brim. Some even cut holes in the crown.

On the next page we will show a picture of the SEPARATOR and have something to say about the FEEDERS and the BANDCUTTER.

P.S. Papa is standing on the platform in the center of the ring of horses. I was not allowed to be with him when they were threshing.

The farmers of Washington had a procedure that was hard to understand. The farms were all across the river from three to five miles from town. They would cut the wheat and bind it into bundles then haul it to town where it was stacked in large circular stacks. The wheat kernels were thrashed out and the straw piled in a stack. The straw was feed to the "dry" stock. What they did not eat they trampled under foot. Some of the straw was used as "bedding under the horses feet. By early spring most of the straw,mixed with dung was quite rotten. It was now called "manure" and was hauled back to the fields from whence it came. This went on for years until a few got smart and started making their home in the fields.

Here is where the BLUEJAY separator came in. It was called a separator I suppose,because it separated the wheat from the straw and chaff. When the picture below was taken the large circular stacks had all been fed through the separator. The three men on the platform at the front of the machine are (left to right): Rube Jolley,feeder,James Turner,feeder and Roy Pectrol,band-cutter. The man seated,is the Tallyman. He measures the wheat and takes the toll for the use of the separator,Uncle Lafe Jolley was on this job for a long time but I cannot tell if this is him or not. The man with the sack,is called a carrier there were two or more of these depending how far the wheat bin was from the machine.Sometimes a boy could get a job holding sacks for the tallyman.This was a dirty job at times and the chaff would get down your back clear to the waist. The man leaning on the fork is one of the men who has just finished pitching the bundles of the vanished stack onto the table above his head near the bandcutter. I think he is Willard Nisson oldest son of the owner of the farmyard.



It was hard dirty work feeding the bundles into the separator The two men would change often so as to make the work bearable. The bandcutter worked all the time.All he had to do was cut the string that held the bundle together.

I suppose one of the reasons for doing the threshing in town for so many years was for the convenience of the women. Perhaps they demanded it. I cannot prove that so do not quote me. Cooking for the treshers was a big event of the year. Lucky was the man who had a place in the required regular crew. He was sure well-fed for the entire season. Farmer's wife was always on trial for her skill in cooking whenever the BLUEJAY perched in her husband's yard. Every meal was a wedding feast. The meals at each setting were compared with the last stop,or the feeling went around that the next place would put on a better meal. It took quantity as well as quality. The expression was quite common in any kitchen if a large batch was under preparation,"My goodness you have cooked enough for the Threshers!" or its companion,"Expecting the Threshers?"

Some of the farmers started doing their threshing in the fields without moving out there to live. This put the housewife at a very great disadvantage. How can you compete with the "Jones's" if you have to serve your meals three miles across the river and you competitor can serve direct from her kitchen?

Many things happened at threshing time. There were fights and hot arguments. You could not very well have a cold argument in Washington during July and August. There were wrestling matches and pranks of all kinds. Some of them funny and some of them just a bit grim.

I remember Papa was in one fight. It really was not a fight just the start of one. I did not see it and Papa did not talk about it. I was told about it and the person who told me did not know what started it. He thought it had something to do with a team that was on the Horsepower. Perhaps the owner a big burly bully,had said something about Papa using the whip on his team. He saw Papa climb off the Horsepower and the other man climb off the wheatstack. They made for each other. Papa put up his arm to fend off the blow aimed at his head and then almost fainted. Men intervened and pulled off the bully. Father had a large boil on his arm. The blow landed on it. The pain must have been something to remember.

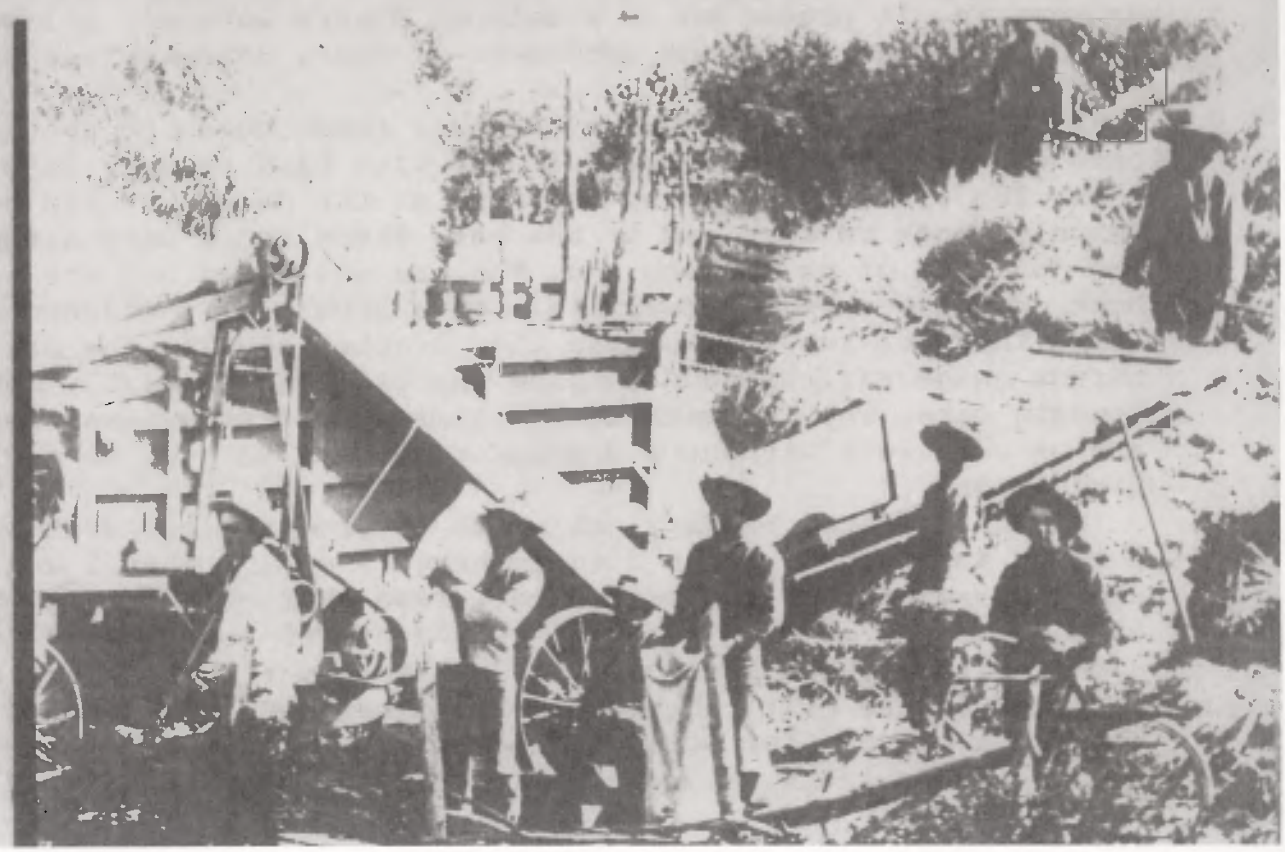
Then there was the time a man was kidded about being shot with a shotgun loaded with salt when he was caught stealing melons one moonlight night. "Salt my eye",he said,"Come take a look at this". He pulled down his pants and exposed his bare bottom. "Does that look like salt?" he demanded of his tormentors. His bottom was well pepered with small black stains that could have been made only with the standard lead pellets used in shotguns. "What did you do?" someone asked. "Do".? he shouted."I cut a path four feet wide right through the middle of the owner's bean patch,poles and all!"

One grim incident I recall.This time the threshing was done in the field but the farmer hauled the crew to town so as not to put his wife at a disadvantage in preparing the meals. One of the pitchers was what we called "goosey". If suddenly poked or spoken to from behind he would jump. It made no difference where he was. He would jump off a cliff,into the river or a fire. Going back to work he sat in the spring-seat with the farmer. As we crossed the "sandplot" the other pitcher,who was standing up behind the seat,poked him in the back and shouted. He jumped clear off the wagon onto the ground. The

soft sand broke the fall and he was not hurt. He kindly smiled at his partner, they would have to work together and there was no sense in starting a fight. When we reached the farmyard he climbed up the ladder to the top of the tall stack ahead of his burly partner. When he saw the big man start up the ladder to join him, he sat quietly until the big fellow reached the top and then he stood up, pitchfork in hand. The prankster of the sand-plot faced the sharp tines of the pitchfork in the hands of calm but determined man who said, "Now jump and don't look, just jump and light wherever you are lucky enough to land!" He jumped and fortunately landed on a pile of loose wheat from broken bundles. He was not hurt and the rest of the day they worked together in silence.

The picture below is the "tail-end" of the BLUEJAY. Here is where the straw robbed of its wheat comes out to be stacked. The "tail-end" is equipped with a "straw-carrier" consisting of a flat chute that can be raised as the stack gets higher. A belt of wood slats moves along it to carry the straw up. (More modern machines have a blower) I think the man at the "tail-end" is Niels Nisson, the owner of the farmyard. You wonder why he would take a dirty job like that. Well some owners did that so they could watch to see that the BLUEJAY was not letting wheat go over into the straw. This it did at times.

The man most seen at the "tail-end" was a man who had never talked from birth. Some said he was "tongue-tied." This was his favorite station. Sometimes the strawcarrier would get clogged and throw off the belt. Then the machine had to be stopped. The same thing would happen if the tines of a pitch-fork were stuck between the slats. If the carrier stopped the dumb man would be accused of sticking his fork into it to obtain a rest. He would let out a roar of wild sounds in protest.



You get a better look at the Tally-man in this picture. You can also see the sack-holder. I cannot tell who any of these are as their faces are in the shadow of their hats

(The Modena-Pioche Story continued from page 14)
that we should move the bed to a new location he had always objected before when I had proposed it. He did not think that he travelled sideways in his sleep.

Sherm had known Mr Lund for some time before,so he took an interest in us and gave us every little job that came along. He would tell Sherm about it and he was always kind enough to include me in it with him. Our first job was to take Mr Lund's team and wagon to town with a load of canned goods and other merchandise to a store up town. Our first visit to the "wicked city." Sherm stayed to help unload the wagon and I brought the team back to the station for another load. Mr Lund had two wagons and thus we kept the operation going until the box-car was unloaded. On the way back I had a close call to a "bad nasty." It was all due to my stupid curiosity.

About half-way from town just off the road were a group of small houses surrounded by a picket fence. Two negro women were standing by the gate as I passed along the road riding one of the horses and leading the other.They called to me to come over. I had never seen a real negro male or female and I was curious to get a closer look. I rode over and they invited me to get off my horse and come in. I was now real scared and I guess they could tell that I was. I kicked my horse in the ribs,but he was slow to move.One of them opened the gate and took hold of the horses bridle. I gave the horse a sharp slap with the end of the lines and he jerked his head away from her and we beat it for the station. The two black women roared with wild laughter. They thought it was very funny. I did not and I told no one of my experience. I was too much ashamed of my stupid ignorance.

Sherm and I went up town on several occasions looking for work.We had noticed occasional signs in the windows asking for help. One I remember read."WANTED AT ONCE ONE THOUSAND MEN TO UNLOAD SCHOONERS." We went in. It proved to be a saloon. Minors were not allowed. The men were wanted to unload schooners of beer. Schooner was the name for a mug.

Now the men who had gone with their teams began to return with loads of ore. This had to be unloaded with hand shovels into box-cars. The ore soon piled up in front of the doors and had to be shoveled back to each end of the car. Sherm and I were hired for the job. One of us in each end. The ore was heavy and the heat in the back of those cars was terrible. Not a breeze ever reached back there.This job run out because they started hauling the ore on a narrow guage railroad and dumping the rail cars directly into open gondola cars. The men with their teams went farther away for work and we were left without a chance to go home in case we could not find a job.

Mr Lund offered Sherm a job which he promptly turned down. He told me about it in great disgust,never dreaming that I would take it. The engineer of the branch rail road that came up from Caliente lived near the station. It was a daylight run so he was home every night. His wife had been using a Japense boy to help with the housework,but he had quit. She told Mr Lund her need. He thought of Sherm. She would pay 50¢ for scrubbing her kitchen floor and would give him his dinner,or lunch. Mid-day meal call it by either name. I went to