GREENE COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA, 1890-1918

IRA D. GARARD

Dr. Ira Garard was born and raised in Greene County and until his death on March 1, 1980, lived in Lakeland, Florida. The reminiscences presented here and in a succeeding article on growing up in Greene County illustrate rural life in southwestern Pennsylvania at the turn of the century. Greene County missed the rapid industrialization which overtook other areas of the state in the 1880s and 1890s. Mining lagged, and the transportation network was crude (U.S. 40 completely bypassed the county, as did the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad). Sheep-raising persisted as a major industry up to World War I. Dr. Garard captures much of that peculiarly rural flavor of Greene County in these remembrances of a largely forgotten life style.

By the year 1900, Greene County with its 28,000 people consisted of Waynesburg, Jefferson, Carmichaels, Greensboro, Mount Morris, several tiny villages, and a host of farms. The purpose here is to describe the rural scene.

The country houses were of three types. Some of the original log houses were still in use. Then there were those that had been built in the first half of the nineteenth century of brick or stone. Finally there were the modern houses built after the Civil War. All the log houses and some of the second group were roofed with split shingles. Most of the modern houses were built of wooden frames and sawed and planed boards. Brick and stone houses were no longer built in the country. The new roofs were of slate, sawed shingles, or tin. The tin roofs were of sheet steel, which may have been plated with tin in the early days, but any that I ever saw were just sheet steel painted red.

There was not a bathroom in any house outside of Waynesburg, which had the only water system in the county. All the houses were lighted with oil lamps, and no outbuildings had any light at all. A lantern supplied light there if it were needed.

Our house was of logs, stood with the end to the road, and fronted on a large yard. Beyond the yard was a small brook with a wet weather spring from which we obtained soft water. Beyond the
brook was the orchard fence. The backyard extended some thirty feet to a paling fence around the garden. A board fence separated the yard from the road. In fact, everything in the county was fenced in except such farm buildings as barns, stables, and wagon sheds which often opened directly into the roadside area.

Living on a farm and operating it requires several outbuildings. These were of two kinds: those near the house and related to it and those for the animals and general farm purposes. The two groups were usually well separated. The winters were not cold enough to require the buildings to be attached to each other as they were in more northern states.

Somewhere near the house was a woodpile without any cover over it, but nearby was a woodshed to store wood in the winter when the woodpile might be covered with snow. Some cooking stoves burned wood, and there was generally a large fireplace in the kitchen where large kettles were hung from a crane. These kettles were used to heat water for the weekly laundry and also to make maple syrup in the spring and render lard in the fall. They were always heated with wood.

The houses were heated with soft coal, which also did the cooking in most cases. The wood house and coal house were often one structure partitioned for its two functions.

A well was essential for most houses since few of them were near a spring that supplied the right amount of water. The old wells were dug with a mattock and shovel and walled up with fieldstone. Ours was about three feet in diameter and thirty feet deep; it never failed to furnish a copious supply of clear, cold, hard water, in fact, most of the well water in the county was hard so that water for the laundry was supplied by a spring or a rain barrel.

Few wells were dug after 1890; the drilled well supplied all the newer houses. These wells were a few inches in diameter and were cased with a four-inch pipe. They were 50 to 100 feet deep depending on the depth of an adequate water supply. The water was raised by a pump that had replaced the bucket and windlass of the dug wells. The pumps were operated by hand; there was no electricity outside of Waynesburg. In the old wells the water was drawn by the famous old oaken bucket, which held two gallons and was operated by a chain or a 3/4-inch rope wound on a windlass. The well was usually covered by a shed, which might be an extension of the roof of a milk house. A milk house was a necessity, for none of the older houses had cellars. It was the predecessor of the cellar and the refrigerator. If a spring
Wagon sheds often had a corncrib attached.

The far end of the garden was a common location for the privy.
Some farmers in the county had a matched team of driving horses.
A sleigh was a luxury vehicle.
of water could be included inside it, fine; if not, it was cooled by water from the well.

Every farm had a smokehouse; all the farmers butchered hogs for the year’s meat supply and smoked hams, shoulders, and some bacon. The smokehouse was a small building, eight or ten feet square with no floor and only one small window or none at all.

Most important of the outbuildings, I suppose, was the privy, which was located at some distance from the house and especially distant from the well, consequently, it was ten to fifty yards away according to the judgment of the owner. In any event it was a long trip in zero weather.

In many of the newer houses there was no large fireplace in the kitchen. This required building a washhouse. Some of them were two stories high and well finished. They served for laundry work and as a general utility room.

The older places usually had a cave for the storage of fruits and vegetables in the winter. The cave in our backyard had been made by digging a rectangular hole three feet deep and walling up the sides with stone to two feet above ground level. The roof was made of slabs sloping up from the sidewalls to a central beam at the peak of the roof. A door was left at one end and the other walled up to the roof. The entire structure, except the door, was covered with about a foot of earth, and grass was planted to keep the dirt from washing off. Bins lined the sides and back.

The fence that separated the yard from the road continued along the orchard to the south and along the garden and beyond to the north. Between the garden and the road was a wagon shed with a corncrib built into the side of it. Wagon sheds were always open at both ends. Across the road was a barn of which one end was the horse stable. The other end was similar and held horses or cows as the occasion demanded. Each stable contained four stalls, and the animals faced a center area used as a working area and for the storage of farm machinery. The second story was the haymow. There was room under the barn for a stable for cows or sheep. Both the barn and the wagon shed were built of rough sawed boards and hewed beams. The sidings were attached with handmade nails. Wherever possible, barns, like ours, were built on sloping land to allow room beneath for a stable.

Next to our barn was a hog pen made of logs. It had a second story reached by a stairway from the area of the road. The loft was used by the chickens as sleeping quarters.

The farmers raised cattle, sheep, hogs, turkeys, and chickens and
produced hay and grain to feed them. Every farmer had two horses for the farm work and they usually doubled as riding and driving horses although some of the most prosperous farmers had other horses for these lighter functions. Horses eat a lot of feed; therefore, the number a farmer had was determined by his need for transportation as well as by his prosperity. However wealthy, no farmer kept more horses than he needed, for a horse soon "eats its head off," that is, it eats more than it is worth.

Each farm required from two to eight cows to produce milk and butter for the family. One cow was never enough, because a cow is out of production (dry) for about three months of the year. Since the dry period comes at different times, two cows could supply a small family. Cows, like horses, eat a lot, and milking and making butter is hard work. Therefore, the number of cows depended on the need of the family. Excess milk was fed to the cats, dogs, hogs, and chickens. Excess butter could be sold, but the cows gave more milk in summer, which meant that the price of butter was very low when there was any to sell. The price was as low as ten cents a pound in summer and as high as twenty-five cents when it was scarce.

Hogs and chickens were raised mainly for family food. Either of them will eat anything; the hogs were fed skim milk, potato peelings, windfalls from the orchard, and even weeds from the garden, but they were fattened on grain for a few weeks before butchering in November.

Chickens were allowed to run free, and in the summer they supported themselves on grass, weeds, and insects. They got little grain until fall. They did get skim milk and table scraps, however. Even when they were fed grain they were an economical source of food; they ate little, soon grew to maturity, and then produced eggs. The pullets were allowed to grow up, but the roosters were sold as soon as they were big enough.

Not all farmers raised turkeys for they are far more bother than chickens and were not in as great demand. But they were a cash crop and were in great demand for Thanksgiving and Christmas, and buyers always came around in October or November.

Cattle and sheep were also cash crops. By 1890 many cattle were still to be seen on the hillsides but the emphasis was shifting to sheep, which required less pasture and less feed. Lambs could be sold or added to the flock if the farm could support more. Another advantage of sheep was the value of the wool. Individual sheep varied in the amount of wool they produced, but fleeces of six to eight pounds were
common. A farmer with a small farm could realize as much as $100 a year from a small flock of sheep by selling the wool and the male lambs.

The sheep were sheared in May, and the wool buyers came along soon after. The county papers published the prices of the various grades of wool so the farmer knew about how much he should get for his crop. After the price was agreed upon the buyer returned with a wagon and a pair of scales. The wool was weighed, put into large burlap bags, and hauled away to be shipped to mills in New England or elsewhere. In the early days there had been a few woolen mills in the county that made yarn, wove blankets, and even made some cloth for clothing, but they were all out of business before 1900.

Hucksters had regular trade routes through the county. They had canvas-covered wagons pulled by two horses when the roads were good and by four when they were not. These men were sources of cash, especially for the housewife, for they bought butter, eggs, and chickens, but rarely anything else except turkeys in the fall. Their headquarters were in towns along the river and they had their regular customers, grocers, butchers, and others in the industrial towns down the river. Some of their routes took two or three days, and they spent the night at the home of some farmer or at a village inn. The huckster passed each farm along the route on a given day and at about the same hour, which enabled the housewife to have her basket of eggs or rolls of butter ready when he arrived. There was little or no bargaining over the price, so the huckster lost very little time making his purchases. He had a steelyard hanging on the rear of his wagon to weigh the butter and chickens, and the seller could see what the weight was. Eggs were sold by the dozen and counted. Occasionally, he had to tell a patron a bit of gossip he had picked up along the route.

Oil, Gas, and Coal

There were two other sources of income in the county: one of them was localized, the other was not developed until near the end of our historical period. After Colonel Edwin L. Drake made his famous discovery of oil near Titusville in the northern part of the state, there was considerable wildcatting all over Western Pennsylvania, and Greene County got its share. A small field was developed on five farms around the old Willow Tree Tavern. The wells were less than 1,000 feet deep and the best of them produced only seventy-five barrels a day when they were new, but then production gradually fell off to
a barrel or less a day. But the oil had a paraffin base and was of the highest quality and brought a premium price so that a well of little production was still profitable. There was no scientific method of locating oil, so the promoter might spend all his money drilling dry holes, but the farmer got one-eighth of the selling price so he was not affected. The oil sold for around a dollar a barrel and was pumped over the mountains to refineries in the East.

Here and there over the county there was a well with commercial quantities of gas that was piped to the nearest village. The farmer collected a royalty on the gas and free gas to heat and light his house including an outside light, which was of the torch type and which could be seen for miles. But the companies soon saw that they were losing a lot of gas and specified that the outside light had to have a mantle and globe like an inside light.

Of course, only a few farmers received money from oil or gas, but what they did receive was generally more than they made from farming.

The county is heavily underlaid with coal; in places there are five veins. The top vein is very thin and was seldom mined. The second vein was five feet thick and cropped out at places along the creeks. At Garards Fort on Whiteley Creek the bottom of the vein is about level with the creek and there were several small drift mines in the area. These mines were called "coal banks" and were usually operated by one man with a pick and shovel. He also had a car on a wooden track to haul the coal out of the mine. These mines brought no wealth into the community for the coal was sold locally.

Down the creek five miles there was a better vein but it was mined in the same way.

The fourth vein was on a level with the river and was called the Pittsburgh vein. The Freeport vein was still deeper. These two veins were not mined in the county before 1900, and, in fact, the Freeport vein is not mined today.

About 1900 a period of speculation in Pittsburgh coal lands began. A farmer could sell his coal together with mining rights for $10 or $15 an acre. This seemed like a fortune to many farmers and they sold. As speculation continued the price increased and finally got above $500 an acre. The idea of the speculators was to sell the coal finally to a mining company to which $500 an acre for Pittsburgh coal would be cheap. This flurry brought the first real money into the county. The high prices, however, were usually received by speculators on resales. Most of the sales were property near the river.
where mines could be located and the coal shipped by water. The mining companies still had mines in Fayette and Westmoreland counties and were slow to buy Greene County coal land, and so the bubble burst and carried one bank to bankruptcy.

After 1900 some mining companies did buy coal land and began to mine it. The mines were mostly along the river at Rices Landing, Crucible, Nemacolin, and Grey's Landing but there was also one at Jefferson on Ten Mile Creek and one at Bobtown on Dunkard Creek. The payrolls of these mines improved the economy of the townships near the river but did little for the county in general.

Rural Life

The general store was a miniature department store. It carried some food such as salt, sugar, coffee, cheese, and a few other items; some had soft drinks that we called "pop" because of the sound made when a bottle was opened. In winter a few stores had salt fish from Lake Erie and oysters from New Jersey. All the food was in bulk except the coffee, which came in one-pound paper bags. All the stores carried smoking and chewing tobacco and had a special knife to cut the plugs of the latter.

The stores had men's shirts with detachable collars, handkerchiefs, including red and blue bandannas. Footwear for men and women included high button shoes, rubber overshoes, and galoshes with rubber bottoms, cloth tops, and steel buckles to hold the tops close around the ankles. Also there were hats, caps, and overalls for the men and a few dresses, petticoats, corsets, and bustles for the women. Hoop skirts had gone out of style a generation earlier.

Household equipment included oil lamps and extra globes or chimneys and wicks, pots, pans, jars, and other miscellany.

They also catered to the farmers with hand tools such as axes, hatchets, augers, saws, mattocks, hoes, rakes, and shovels. Among the heavier farm equipment were plows, harrows, harnesses, saddles, wheelbarrows, and cultivators.

No store was without a few tonics, cough medicines, liniments, and a few other nostrums.

Many of the stores had the post office and some had a porch, but all of them — both village and crossroads — had a potbellied stove in the center of the room surrounded by chairs for the customers or the loafers. Nearby was the store cat that policed the rat and mouse population, spending her leisure time on the counter or the top of a
cracker barrel. If the store did not have your requirement the proprietor would order it for you.

There were still several craftsmen around. Shoemakers made boots and work shoes for the men and boys. Most of the farmers wore boots for there were plenty of snakes around, and the copperheads were dangerous. Furthermore, boots were better than shoes in snow or recently plowed ground. Blacksmiths shod horses and made tires for wagon or buggy wheels and any special metal tool the farmer might need, such as a crowbar, a posthole digger, or the broken part of a mowing machine. Here and there was a carpenter, a wagonmaker, or a harness maker. For the ladies, dressmakers or milliners were to be found in the larger villages.

Around home, women wore sunbonnets and in winter a fascinator or a shawl over the head. The sunbonnet was made to protect the face, neck, and eyes from the sun and the hair from the wind. It consisted of a saddlelike center made of two or more thicknesses of quilted gingham so as to hold an adequate amount of starch. The back was a single thickness of the same cloth and ended in a sort of skirt to protect the neck. The front was supplied with ruffles in the fancier ones. Two strings made of narrow strips of cloth to be tied under the chin completed the garment. I never did learn the origin of the word "fascinator." It was a hood of knitted wool. It also tied under the chin and was anything but fascinating, but it did furnish more protection from the cold than any hat ever did, for it covered the sides and back of the head as well as the top.

Pack peddlers came along the roads with huge packs on their backs. The most common merchandise was women's and children's clothing, although I recall one that carried spectacles — mother bought a pair. The peddlers were usually Armenians who spoke very broken English; the children were afraid of them.

In summer there were door-to-door agents who sold enlarged pictures from tintypes or other small pictures. They did good work and returned with an enlarged picture nicely framed and ready to hang on the wall. There were also book agents, lightning rod agents, patent medicine men, and other specialists. These were high-pressure salesmen after the farmer's hard-earned money, and they collected many a dollar that could scarcely be spared. For them the farmer was a soft touch.

All this floating population had to have places to eat and sleep, consequently, there was a hotel in nearly every village. Some of them became famous for their food, and local families often had Sunday
dinner there when they could afford it. The price varied from twenty-five cents to a dollar for a meal or a night's lodging.

Besides the itinerant salesmen there were other drains of money from the county, especially the catalogues of Sears Roebuck and Montgomery Ward. These catalogues were veritable department stores, and the farmers bought items that the local stores did not carry and some that they did, because they were cheaper. Such a catalogue was a great boon to country people as reading matter for it provided them with the shopping advantages of the city dweller even though they might not have the money to buy anything.

The county had a population of 25,000 in 1870 and did not reach 30,000 until 1920. The eighteen townships and five boroughs each had several political officers, consequently there were local, county, and state taxes. All these taxes required cash except the road tax that could be paid by labor on the roads.

Much of the scant money supply drifted into the hands of the local merchants and then out of the county to purchase stock for the stores. Here and there a farmer might accumulate an account of a thousand dollars or so in a Waynesburg bank; there were no other banks in the county.

**Transportation**

Walking was the cheapest and most useful means of transportation; children walked to school except in the most inclement weather. My brother-in-law, who lived twenty miles from Waynesburg, was called for jury duty and summoned to appear at 9:00 A.M. He expected to be there for several days and rather than pay to keep a horse in a livery stable, he decided to walk; jury duty paid only a dollar a day. He arrived on time, but for some reason, he was excused from duty. He took the opportunity to do some shopping, bought an eight-day pendulum clock, and carried it back the twenty miles home that afternoon. With his farm chores and his shopping he walked well over forty-five miles that day.

More common than walking, however, was riding on horseback, especially in winter or when only one person was going. It was easier for a horse to carry one person than to pull a vehicle with one person on it. A woman rode on a sidesaddle with both legs on the near (left) side of the horse. The saddle had a stirrup for the left foot and a "horn" high on the left side of the saddle over which she hooked her right leg. She sat upright and was secured from falling off on the left
side by the stirrup but had only her sense of balance to keep her from falling off on the right side.

A woman usually wore a riding skirt, which was a long, black cotton skirt to protect her clothes from horsehairs, dust, and mud. In muddy weather men wore leggings that came to their knees; splashing mud was a nuisance when riding side by side or when passing someone.

The saddle was placed well forward on the horse and held in place by a girth that was a heavy canvas band three or four inches wide. One end of it was fastened to the right side of the saddle, and the other ended in a buckle to attach it to a strap on the left side of the saddle. The girth ran under the horse's belly and was pulled up tight to keep the saddle from slipping. This was very important, especially for the sidesaddle. One always saddled, harnessed, or mounted a horse from the near side. Very few horses would tolerate such activity on the right.

Of the vehicles, the simplest one was the dogcart, which had nothing to do with dogs, but was a light, two-wheeled vehicle with shafts for one horse. The seat was barely wide enough for two persons, and the floor for the support of the feet was of narrow slats placed about an inch apart. The wheels were five feet in diameter so the cart pulled easily — a man could pull it in or out of a shed with little effort. It was used as a sort of substitute for riding horseback, especially if two people were going.

The light, four-wheeled vehicle with a seat for two persons came in three styles: the buckboard, the slat wagon, and the buggy. The buckboard was the simplest of the three. The floor was of boards that extended from axle to axle. It had a vertical dashboard in front to protect the driver from mud splashed by the horse's feet. There were no top or sides to protect the driver from the weather. The seat, which was wide enough for two persons, was midway between the axles. There was plenty of room under or behind the seat for bags of grain, luggage, or whatever one cared to haul.

The buggy was the most elegant and the most expensive of the three types. The body was partly closed in by thin boards of highly polished wood, usually painted black. There were springs under the body, and behind the seat was a trunk-like compartment with a lid similar to, but much smaller than the trunk of an automobile. In front of the driver was a dashboard, and the area between it and the seat was closed in to a height of about six inches. In case of rain, there were side curtains that could be snapped on to the supports that held the
The seat was of leather and was wide enough for two or sometimes three: father, mother, and junior. Of all the vehicles, the buggy offered the best protection from the weather, although the occupants were not protected in front except by the dashboard. A heavy robe helped out but there was no protection for the chest and face.

The slat wagon was intermediate between the buckboard and the buggy, had an adjustable top, side curtains, springs under the body, and a leather cushion, but the floor was of wooden slats placed about an inch apart and, like the buckboard, the space under and behind the seat was not closed in.

Although some of the more prosperous and sporting families had a team of driving horses, matched in size and color, most of these passenger vehicles were drawn by one horse.

For the larger families there were vehicles with two seats. One was called a “carriage” and resembled a buggy. It had a permanent top and removable side curtains. A similar vehicle was called a “surrey” and had open sides and a flat top with a fringe around it.

The spring wagon was a light wagon with springs under the seat and also under the bed. It was used mainly for light loads and short distances. The road wagon was the workhorse of the lot. It was a heavily constructed wagon that could carry a load of a ton or more. It was drawn by two, four, or six horses according to the load and the condition of the roads. It hauled fertilizer, machinery, or other heavy items from the railhead or the boat landing. On the farm it was used to haul coal, wood, crops, or anything else that needed to be moved. It was the predecessor of the truck.

In winter snow was not removed from the roads, which brought the sled and the sleigh into use for they pulled easier than wheeled vehicles.

The sleigh was purely a passenger vehicle with a highly polished body and an upholstered seat just wide enough for two. It had no top and no space for luggage. It had wooden runners that curved from the dashboard to the ground and then ran straight back; there was a steel strip on the surface of the runner like the tire on a wheel.

Sleds were of more sturdy construction than the sleighs and were used mostly for freight transportation. The runners were wooden beams two inches wide and four inches deep. The bed of the sled was like that of the wagon. Sleigh bells were often hung on the horses. A sleigh bell was a globe of bronze containing a steel ball. They were one to three inches in diameter. There was a slot and small hole in each bell to regulate the amount of bronze in the bell
for that determined the pitch; the smaller the bell the higher the pitch and the tones of the several bells were in harmony. There were several of these bells on a strap long enough to go around the horse's body. The bells did not make much music when the horses walked, but rang merrily when they trotted. Horses were usually indifferent to them. We once owned two mares, one was a lethargic type with no ear for music. While she walked, the other would break into a dog trot to hear the bells ring.

Nobody owned all these vehicles at once; the number varied with the composition of the family and its prosperity. Our family owned a buggy, a dogcart, a wagon, and a sled.

Communications

News was distributed throughout the county by three weekly newspapers published in Waynesburg: the Democrat, the Republican, and the Messenger. Each cost a dollar a year, and anybody in the county who was anybody subscribed to one of them. Most of us were descendants of Virginians who had settled the area, so the Democrat was the most prosperous of the three. Each paper had representatives in the villages over the county who sent in "Locals." For example,

Garards Fort

Rev. Vannoy preached in the Goshen Baptist Church last Sunday. There was a good turnout to hear him.

The farmers have almost finished their hay harvest.

Neut Christopher thrashed up the creek last week and is anxiously waited for here for some of the wheat ricks are beginning to sprout because of the recent wet weather.

W. C. Flenniken, our local store keeper, received a large shipment of goods recently. Aps Huggins hauled the merchandise from the boat landing at Greensboro.

The Greene Township schools will open August 27. Will Garard will teach the Garards Fort school this year.

General news consisted mostly of small items probably condensed from a Pittsburgh daily paper. There was also county and local news such as the editor could pick up. On Saturday nights the streets of Waynesburg were full of county people for the stores and banks were open. An editor could pick up plenty of news by circulation through the crowd. He could also pick up some new subscribers by
talking to people he knew who would introduce him to others. Being able to call a subscriber by name was a sure way of retaining him. The news items that the editor picked up in the streets were similar to the locals, but there was one item that never failed to appear. It was, “Joe Doakes from Newtown was in town Thursday and called at the Democrat office to renew his subscription.”

The courthouse was a fountain of news: reports of cases on trial, jury lists, sheriff’s sales, marriage licenses, deeds, wills, and other bits of news of interest. Births, deaths, funerals, weddings, wedding anniversaries, and even birthdays were given full treatment.

The papers also contained short stories, recipes, advice columns, astrology, and patent medicine advertisements that pretended to be news items. The headlines were just the same, and one might start to read about some catastrophe and end up by learning that it could have been avoided by taking some nostrum that was then mentioned for the first time.

A few of the more affluent and enterprising citizens subscribed to a Pittsburgh daily, which they received through the mail a day late.

Before 1900 telephone lines radiated out along the roads from Waynesburg. They seldom had more than one wire which was attached to a green glass insulator on a pole about every 100 feet. The telephones were in the general stores — there were few home phones in the county. These lines were branches of the Bell Telephone System.

Around the turn of the century farmers began to organize local telephone companies. How many there were in the county, I never knew. I knew of five personally but there were many more. They spread through every community, and every farmer who could afford one had a telephone. The “Central” was in an office in a village or in someone’s home, usually that of the president of the company. A company would have one to six lines with ten to twenty phones to the line.

The phones were fastened to the wall and we stood up to talk; children stood on a chair. To call anyone on your line you pressed a button and turned a crank that rang every bell on the line including your own. The system of calls was patterned after the Morse code. One long ring called Central, the others were combinations of long and short rings, such as two shorts, one short and one long, two longs and so on. The calls were kept as simple as possible with twenty phones on a line. Each subscriber had a list of the calls on his line but soon came to know them. If he heard the Browns’ ring he could take down the receiver and learn who was calling the Brown family and what they were talking about. Thus, the telephone was a news medium
for all the subscribers on a line. Listening in was a common practice but it was not all idle curiosity. Mr. Brown might be ill, and all the neighbors were interested in how he was getting along, or he might have had an accident and they could help him with his work. Again threshers might be in the neighborhood and the farmer wished to know about when they would reach his place. In the farm country anything that happened to a family was of interest to everyone else.

While teaching my first school, I lived at the home of a farmer who was president of a local telephone company. His living room was the Central for the two lines of his company and another one that had connecting arrangements. The bells rang like fire alarms all day and late into the evening. One evening a call came for me from my brother-in-law twenty-five miles away. The call came over the lines of four companies and there was a perfect din of voices, mostly female, but my brother-in-law had a strong, sharp voice that dominated all the others, and so we managed a short conversation. The telephoner today can hardly imagine the horrors and delights of the rural telephones of the early decades of the twentieth century.

If I seem to treat the country telephone lightly, I have no such intention. It is hard to overestimate its importance not only because of its usefulness in calling a doctor, arranging for cooperative farm work, planning picnics, and learning whether the local store carried a certain item, but also as a relief from the dreary loneliness inherent in farm life; just hearing the bell ring was a relief. For example, my sister lived on a farm from which only two houses could be seen. One of them was just across the creek but one had to travel three miles to get to it. Only the top of the other one was visible. When I was overseas in December 1918 my sister wrote me that she had not seen anyone outside the family (husband and daughter) but the mailman for two weeks. Many a farmhouse was not in sight of any other human habitation and had no mailman passing by.

In winter the roads did not encourage getting about; one traveled mostly on foot or on horseback, occasionally in a vehicle. After 1900 there was a sprinkling of automobiles that served to raise dust and scare the horses. At one time there was a law that required the driver of an automobile to stop, get out, and lead a horse past the machine. In winter the cars were jacked up and supported on wooden blocks. Nobody attempted to use a car in winter.

Such was Greene County, Pennsylvania, as the twentieth century crept in.

[To be concluded]