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Hugh Amick, District Supervisor
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Questionnaire categories incomplete or missing: list below with reasons for omission, i.e. whether material is still to be covered or whether the questions are not applicable to your territory.

Signed Arthur T. Foster.
Area Supervisor

THE AMERICAN GUIDE- Folklore.
Harper, Kansas.

WICHITA District, R.
Harper County.

THE WHEAT HARVEST.

by : Arthur F. Foster, Research Asst., Sr.

Supplement #9
1650 words.

What does it feel like to be a harvester? The writer decided to find out by actual experience and so, early in the spring of 1937, he asked for harvest work of Mr. Arthur A. Wilson, a farmer living two miles northwest of Harper. The weather had been dry, very little moisture having fallen during the winter, and the wheat had not made a very good growth. As a consequence, I was told that I might have work if there would be a harvest.

The weather continued dry until the second week of May, at which time showers began to fall. Altogether between seven and eight inches of rain fell during the month of May, and the wheat crop began to improve. Normally harvest is likely to begin about the tenth of June, but this year the crop was slower in reaching maturity. Until after the rains the wheat crop had been spotted, good in some places and poor in others, but now the poor spots in the fields began to grow. The consequence was that the fields ripened unevenly.

Meanwhile transient harvest hands began coming to town. One man, Lester Adams, came to our door and asked for food. He readily agreed to stay and work a few days for his board as he had harvest work promised him by a farmer near Milan, Kansas, as soon as harvest should begin. So he stayed and worked in the yard, cutting down some ^{dead} trees and sawing up the wood. Meanwhile Mrs. Foster washed his clothes and we gave him a new pair of overalls. At the end of a week his feet began to itch for the open road and he told us goodbye. Another man, Charley Bankson, stopped for a few meals. He reported that he had been offered work at \$2.50 per day, but he was asking \$3.50 per day.

By the first of the week beginning June 13th, harvest was reported to be under headway in Oklahoma and in the south part of

Harper County, but almost every night some rain would fall. This was delaying the wheat harvest. In the meantime some binding of wheat and oats got under way in the Harper vicinity, but the rain stopped it.

On the morning of Thursday, June 17th, a dark cloud hung in the southwest for several hours. The thunder could be plainly heard at Harper, but no rain fell. That afternoon we heard that Attica, a community thirteen miles southwest of Harper, had four inches of rain during the forenoon, and the next morning the radio announced that at Hazelton, about thirty miles in the same direction, there had been at the same time a terrible hailstorm, which had destroyed thousands of acres of growing grain and had caused a total damage estimated at fifty thousand dollars.

On the morning of Monday, June 21st, I arose early, as I had made arrangements for Paul Myers to stop for me on his way to the Wilson farm. Paul, who is a high school boy, was to haul and scoop wheat, while his father was to work at night running the tractor for plowing. The wheat farmers often plow their ground in this way in order to conserve the moisture. In this case the same tractor was used for pulling the combine for cutting the grain in the day time and for pulling the plows at night. Of course, the man who worked at night slept in the day time. The tractor man in the day time was Lester Hanna, a middle-aged man who lived in Harper.

On arriving at the Wilson home, we had breakfast and then started on our day's work. Mr. Wilson put me to cleaning up some wheat bins while Paul milked the cows and took them to the pasture. Meanwhile the two men took the combine to the wheat field just east of the house. As soon as possible Paul and I hitched up our teams and went to the field to haul the wheat to the house. But the machine had not yet gotten started and so we had to wait. The day was hot and we soon felt the

effects of the sun. Finally the combine got started and then ran a little distance but soon stopped. A little after eleven, Mr. Wilson said that we might as well take the teams to the house, as we would not get anything done before noon. So we returned to the house, hot and dusty.

After a good dinner, including plenty of ice tea, we felt much refreshed. Then we went back to the wheat field and found that the combine was all ready to go. Soon I had a my wagon load of wheat and took it to the house to unload into the wooden granary. This was hard, hot work, as I was on the south side of the building and the sun was shining directly upon me. When I went back to the field, I found that the combine was broken down again. Soon Paul had his wagon unloaded and returned to the field. Mr. Wilson then said that it would be some time before we could get started, and that Paul and I might as well unhitch our teams, tie them to the wagons, and go to shocking oats in the south field.

Accordingly, about three o'clock, we started working on the oats. The oats were heavy, having been cut pretty green. The day was hot and clear, and soon we felt very thirsty. But we had filled our water jug and so had provided for this need. As there was no breeze, and the thermometer was standing at 105, we kept getting hotter and hotter. We got out our red handkerchiefs and wiped the perspiration from our faces. Between six and seven we noticed that the combine had started again. This was the signal for us to quit shocking the oats and get ready to haul wheat, and we were truly glad for the change. The combine ran a short distance and then stopped, but soon started again, and in a few minutes I had my wagon loaded and ready to take to the house. But it was now so late that I decided not to unload the wagon until the next morning.

A good supper encouraged us and cooled us off. Then at the close Mrs. Wilson gave each person a large dish of ice cream, and after eating that we felt cool enough. I needed to shave, but I was so tired that I decided to wait until the next night. After supper I bathed at the tank and then went to my bed room up stairs. The windows of the room opened toward the south and there was no breeze. I was sore, tired, and hot, and I felt like --" The slave scourged at night to his dungeon." But I had decided to be a harvester and I would not give up and quit. During the night I was so hot that I had to get up and wipe my face with a towel in order to get rid of the sweat. Finally I fell asleep and, when I awoke next morning, I was feeling a little better. Soon Mr. Wilson called me and I went down stairs. It was just daylight as I left the house and started to the pasture to get the horses.

The morning was cooler and, after a good breakfast, I felt able to take the team to the field to haul more wheat. But after running a little while, the combine again broke down and we had to wait. In fact, we got no wheat hauled before noon. But after dinner, when we got started again, there were no more interruptions. As a result we were kept busy at hauling and scooping the wheat. However, the weather was cooler and we did not suffer from the heat as much as on the day before. That night I felt well enough to shave. So it was evident that I was getting used to the harvest work.

On the next day we had a good run with plenty of hard work at scooping. Not long before noon I met on the road a high school boy from Ellsworth, Kansas, who was looking for work. He said that he had found only one day's work in harvest thus far and was now on his way to Kingman to look for work. He told me that a young man from Nashville,

Tennessee, who had been at work near Danville, the first station on the Santa Fe east of Harper, had been overcome by the heat the day before and had just died. Later I found by reading the Harper Advocate that the name of the unfortunate young man was Sam Kirkpatrick, and that he and another college friend, also from Nashville, had come to the county on a motorcycle and had worked for Mr. Kenneth Peden on the latter's farm four miles northeast of Danville. After leaving me, my informant walked on down the road and was picked up by a tourist traveling toward Kingman.

On Thursday morning I put on the clean work clothes that my wife had sent and I felt prepared for another day's work. On this day we had a good run. The wheat was scooped into the steel bins, which reflected the sun's rays. There was a good breeze on this day, but in spite of it the weather was hot. We all got very hot and tired and were truly glad when night came.

Friday was another day of hard, hot work. After dinner the machine broke down again and, as some time would be required to fix it, Mr. Wilson said that I should finish shocking the oats. This required an hour or two of steady, hard work, and after this was completed there was more wheat to haul. Again I helped to milk the cows at night and again bathed at the tank.

Saturday

On ~~Friday~~ morning I awoke to find that there was a good breeze from the north and that the weather was much cooler. When I came down stairs that morning, Mr. Wilson said to me: "Well, are you glad that tomorrow is Sunday?" I assured him that I was. Again we had a good run and put the wheat into the steel bins, which were now nearly full. We had already closed the door and window and were shoveling the wheat through an opening in the roof. This meant that we had to shovel some distance above our heads, especially when the load was partly gone.

About six o'clock it became necessary to make some repairs on the machine, and this laid us off for the remainder of the evening. We got the milking done a little earlier than usual, but in spite of this, we were eating supper at nine o'clock. After that, Mr. Wilson said that he would take us to town, but the ^{women}~~women~~ did not want to be left alone. As a consequence, we had to wait for them to finish washing the dishes and it was ten thirty when we arrived at home, willing to call it a week's work.

After getting some good rest on Sunday, I returned to the Wilson farm on Monday morning. We put one load of wheat into the top of the steel bins and then we were very glad to learn that Mr. Wilson had decided to ~~to~~ have us haul the remainder of the wheat to the Harper Mills. We made several ^{loads} trips to town with loads of wheat this day, the being dumped at the Harper Mills. This method of unloading was much easier than scooping the wheat into the bins.

We had a good run that day and practically completed our harvest work. Mr. Wilson had another field of wheat to harvest about six miles further ~~west~~ west, but on account of the distance from town, he had made arrangements to have it hauled in trucks, thus making it unnecessary to use the wagons. And so that night the writer returned to his home in Harper. We had harvested about ^{two}~~seven~~ hundred acres in the seven days. For our work we were paid \$2.50 per day. The wheat was estimated to have averaged between fifteen and sixteen bushels per acre, and the price paid at the Harper Mills on the last day of the harvest was \$1.04 per bushel.