

CCOT – INTRODUCTION

Farms

Directions: Examine the photos and read about each of the farms below. Then, fill out the CCOT tool.

Farm of 1700: loway Native American Farm



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“The farming techniques practiced by the loway Indians in 1700 pre-dated written history and varied somewhat from European methods. loway farmers raised corn, beans, and squash. Women did the farming in the loway culture while men were responsible for hunting and making tools. loway families were subsistence farmers, raising just enough for their family to survive throughout the year and having a little put away in case of a bad year.

loway Indians had separate summer, winter, and traveling lodges. Bark houses called náhachi kept the loway cool during hot summer months, while winter mat-houses called chákirutha, made from layers of sewn cattail leaves, protected the loway from harsh winters and stayed around 50 degrees inside. While traveling on hunting expeditions, the loway lived in a chibóthraje, or tipi made from buffalo hides. Their villages also contained sweat lodges, food-drying racks, cooking areas, work areas, hide-scraping racks, pottery pits, and gardens.”

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Farm of 1850: Iowan Pioneer Farm



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“The split rail fence, wheat field, rooting pigs, and log house represent a four-year-old farm, established when Iowa became a state in 1846. The farm site is in transition between subsistence agriculture (producing enough for the family to survive) and becoming a profit-making farm. Most farms in 1850 averaged 160 acres in size, with farmers cultivating anywhere from 25 to 40 acres. Corn, wheat, and potatoes were the three major crops in 1850. Most farmers used their corn crop to feed the pigs that were then sold for profit. Wheat and hogs were cash crops for farmers, and potatoes were a staple with nearly every meal and lasted throughout the winter.

Until pioneer families earned enough money to purchase modern 1850 technology, they relied on older farming methods. For example, women prepared food over an open fire even though wood-burning cookstoves were available. The majority of people who settled in Iowa in the 1840s and 1850s came from the Eastern United States, and were eager to build a multi-room dwelling like they had lived in before coming west. Log houses were temporary structures that the pioneers improved or replaced once the farm was established.

Pioneer families relied on poultry for three major purposes: meat, eggs, and money. Most pioneers who raised pigs built a smokehouse to help preserve the pork. In 1850, barns were of less significance to the farm than in later years. Pioneers used barns to store tools and some crops, rather than to house animals. The big barns that are associated with modern farms were not built in Iowa until the 1870s.”

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Farm of 1900: Iowan Horse-powered Farm



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“Dramatic changes in farming occurred between 1850 and 1900. The end of the Civil War led into the [Second] Industrial Revolution, and changes resulted throughout the barnyard. Instead of performing field work by hand, farmers used modern machinery to cut hay, plant corn, and bind oats. Inside the farm kitchen, the wood-burning cook stove and the Mason jar made food preparation and preservation much easier.

The large barns were the center of daily activity on turn-of-the-century farms. Most farmers used the barn for multiple purposes, like storing hay and oats, stabling animals, milking cattle, and storing tools and equipment. Farmers harvested hay in June, July, and August, and then stored it in the barn to feed the animals during the winter months. The hayrack, in the center of the barn, held more than 30 tons of loose hay.

By 1900, most farmers used draft horses for hard labor. The 1,800 pound animals plowed the fields for corn and oats, planted the crops, cultivated the fields, brought in the hay crop, pulled wagons of field corn, hauled manure. Farms would not have been as successful without the aid of the horses.

Technology had reached Iowa farms in 1900, by way of the hand-crank telephone, Acorn cook stove, and updated farm equipment, such the horse-drawn plow, planter, hay press, and more. Corn, oats, and hay were the most common crops on turn-of-the century Iowa farms. Commonly raised farm animals included sheep, chickens, hogs, milk-cows, beef cattle, ducks, geese, and turkeys.”

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2014: Modern Farm in the American Midwest



Near Wyoming, Iowa, by davidwilson1949, CC BY 2.0.

Today, most of Iowa's land, about 85 percent, is farmland. The state includes 35.7 million acres of land and over 30 million acres are farmed in Iowa. Most of this, about 26 million acres, is cropland and the other 1.2 million acres is used as pastureland. There are about 88,000 farms in Iowa and the average farm size is 345 acres.

Production on farms has increased dramatically due to technological advancements. Most farms in the American Midwest use tractors and synthetic pesticides and fertilizers to increase production. About 99 percent of farms in America are family owned but only about two percent of the labor force works in farming. While mostly men are farm operators, women's participation as farm operators and owners has increased substantially in the last 25 years, from 5 to 12 percent of the total.

Corn is the crop grown the most throughout the American Midwest, and Iowa ranks first in the United States for producing corn along with soybeans, pork, and eggs. Corn is mainly used in the production of animal feed and in ethanol, which is used to manufacture gasoline. Soybeans and pork are two of America's largest exports, with the bulk of these products purchased by China. There are also a large number of dairy and cattle farms in the Midwest.

The number of farms has decreased from 1900 to today but farms have also become more productive as technology has advanced. There are both positive and negative impacts of farm production including environmental concerns such as the release of greenhouse gases and runoff of chemicals into waterways.

Source: Living History Farms, Economic Research Service of the United States Department of Agriculture, and the American Farm Bureau Federation.