

Dateline July 29, 1929 Des Moines Register

Photo and cut-line of C.J. Miller and his 4-horse hitch cutting his 1929 oats crop. First, Zoom the picture and cutline to get a closer look at the binder and be able to read the description under the photo. After getting that background on the binder, then read the following description about cutting the oats, as the first step in the harvest process.

The binder cuts the oats and with canvasses, moves oats up and to the right of Clarence where a “knotter” wraps twine around them and ties them into a “bundle”. Notice there are two bundles on the platform to the far right of the binder.

When there are 3 or 4 bundles on the platform, using a foot paddle, Clarence would release the bundles forming lateral rows of bundles across the field. When the cutting is done, the field would have these rows of bundles ready for the next step.

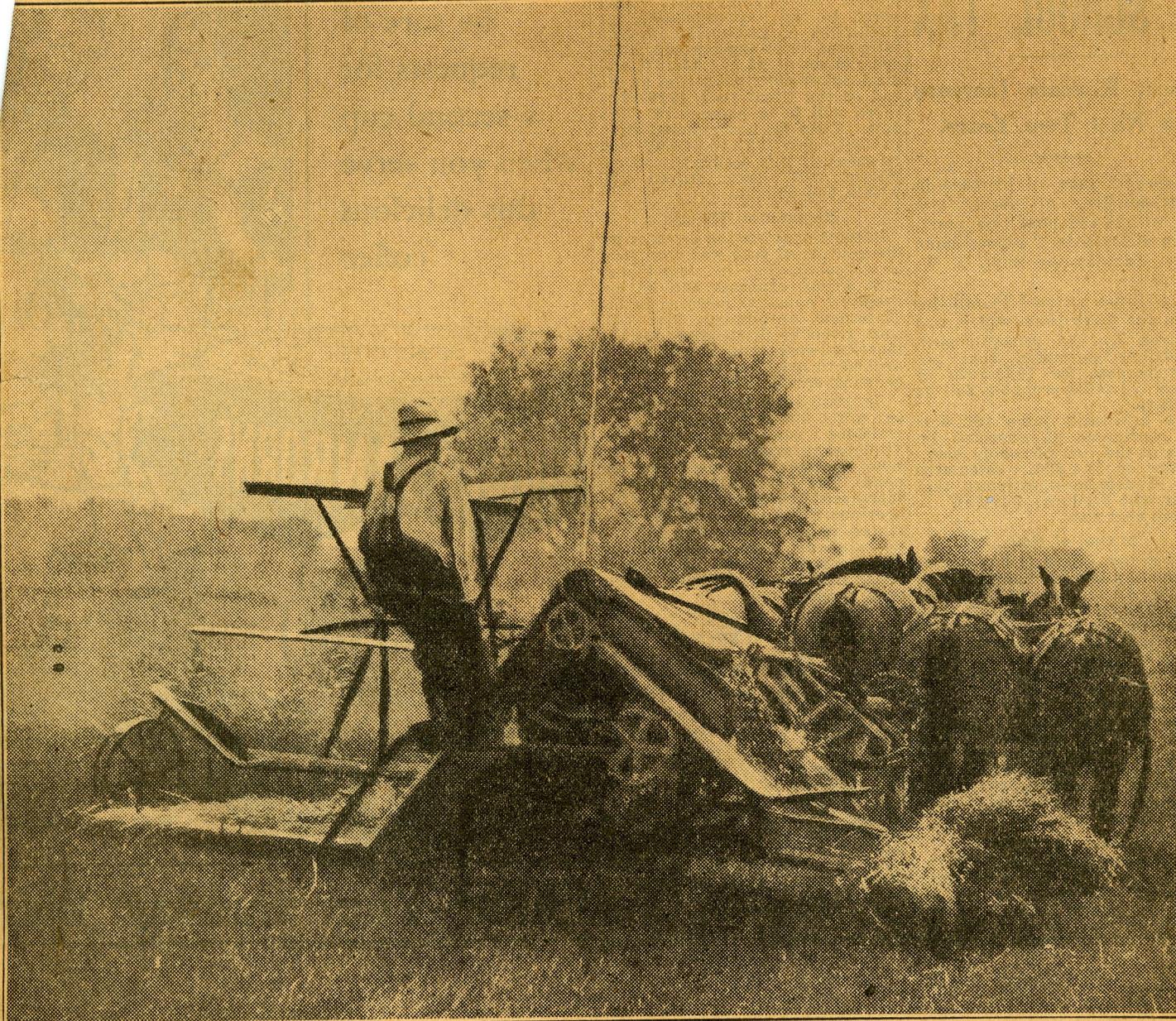
The next step is called “shocking” the oats. On a hot humid day in late July or early August, shocking oats is hard, sweaty work. Walking along the rows of bundles, Clarence would gather up as many as 6 to 8 bundles and stand them together forming a “shock”. The shock allows the oats to dry and cure ready for the next step in the harvest. Finally on top of each shock he would “cap” the shock with one bundle to act as a cover to protect the shock from the rain.

The shocked oats in a week or two will be ready for threshing, the next step in the harvest. Harvesting oats today would either be done in one step or two. One step would be a direct cut using a combine which would separate the oats into a grain tank and spread the straw behind on the ground. In some cases the oats would be “windrowed” with a cutter to later be picked up by a combine.

I was thrilled to find this photo of Clarence in the 1929 Des Moines Register. It prompted me to write this story and share it with you on how farming in those days was labor intensive while today is machine intensive. In a week or two, I will show some more pictures and stories of the next steps of the oats harvest. I hope you will stay tuned and save these stories of things that used to be done on what is now the C.J. and June Miller Farm, Inc.

Uncle Ray

Binder Bought in 1889 Received Good Care for 40 Years and Still Does Good Work



(Register's Special Iowa News Service.)
EMMETSBURG—C. J. Miller, who lives northeast of Emmetsburg, is cutting his harvest this year with a McCormick binder forty years old, probably the oldest binder in the state in actual service.

The machine was purchased by his father, J. C. Miller, from Beckman & Schroeder in 1889. It hasn't missed a harvest one year since then, but it has always been kept in a machine shed and the paint on it is in good condition. It puts out a good bundle today and harvests the crop as well as any of the new machines.

When Mr. Miller bought the machine it was equipped with a three horse hitch, but he changed it to a four horse which he has always used. It is a six foot cut and two sets of canvases have been worn out, and the platform canvas will have to be replaced before next season.

The machine differs somewhat

from the machine on the market today. The most noticeable features are the wooden wheels and the levers that raise and lower the platform, the reason that it does not have to be pulled by trucks. Some of the parts of the binder proper and knots are not like the ones used on the machines manufactured now.