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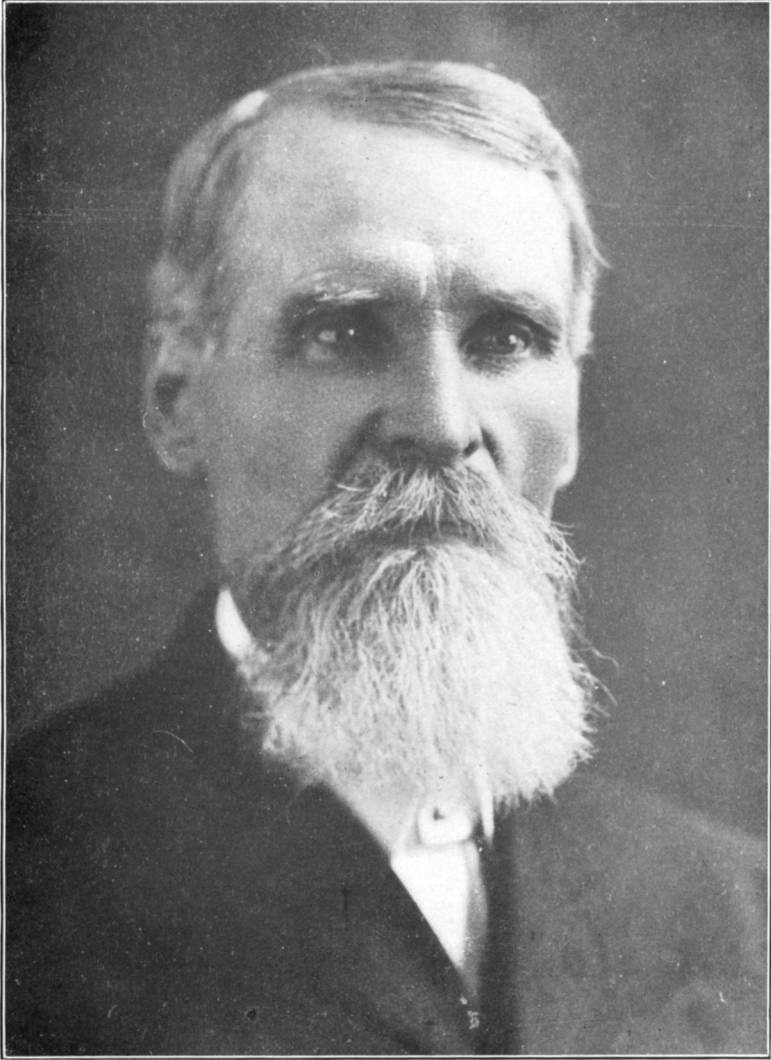
INDIAN CORN.

Genesis of Reid's Yellow Dent.

By WILLIAM REID CURRAN.

The Corn, product of the earth; ark of the secret of vegetable life, the staff and sustenance of that life. The mystery of creation and chief illustration of the truth of the resurrection and future life. Chief product of creation. The Creator's most complete blessing to His creatures and of all created material things, the crowning act. It has within itself the element of the earth that we call death; by it Life is perpetuated, it must needs go into the earth and die. If it die, it will live again. It has within its golden casket the most vivid picture of the destiny of man. When it dies, it yields again that generation within its narrow house and comes forth to newness of life; comes bounding out into the sunshine, to live anew and continue to bless the world.

Look at the glorious field, as it stands waving its prophetic arms in the July sun, full of life and song, its very breath fragrant with the promise of harvest and blessing to the world! See it—glorious vision of waving emerald sea. As the summer grows older, it produces the most marvelous flower spikes of any known plant and fertilizes the shooting ears that come forth, with tropical luxury, almost in a day. The flowering of the corn and the shooting of the ears is one of the marvels of nature. As we gaze, we see the hand of the Creator performing anew the miracle of feeding thousands with less than five loaves and two fishes. We see the abode of the clods of the valley made into the House of Bread; abundance comes to take the place of want; wealth and opulence fill the room of pinching poverty. We should marvel not then, that the red man danced for joy when the green corn was fit for food. That the corn dance was expressive of his thankfulness to the great Spirit for his bounteous blessings. We should marvel indeed if civilized man did not thank God also



James L. Reid.

for his bounty for the same cause. Look on the waving, ripening field, when the maple and oak leaves are turning red. Its tasseled plumes are waving jauntily the ensign of victory. Watch the bended caskets, bursting with golden fatness. The fulfilment of promise, the reward of faith and intelligent effort.

This vision adds a new meaning to the majestic words of the ancient Hebrew prophet and poet, when he says: "There shall be a handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountain; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon; and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth."

* * *

The Genesis of the corn plant is shrouded in the mystery of creation. It was called Indian corn probably by common consent and usage by the first white man who came in contact with it for the same reason that the Aborigines of this country were called Indians. Columbus started on his great western voyage with the purpose of sailing to India and having sailed till he reached the shore, he naturally imagined he had found India and called the wondering natives that he met, Indians and as they were the primitive farmers who were then raising corn, he naturally named it Indian corn.

While the origin of the plant is surrounded by mystery, its actual existence as a food plant, is well authenticated by the records of the world, extending over many centuries. At the time of the discovery of America, its cultivation as a domestic cereal, was extensive over the whole western continent. It was among the first objects that attracted the attention of those who landed upon our shores. In A. D. 1002, it is recorded that Thorwald, brother of Lief, saw wooden cribs for corn upon the Mingen Islands, and Karlsefn in 1006 and Thorwald also saw and brought aboard their ship, ears of corn from the portion of land that is now called Massachusetts. Columbus found it cultivated extensively in Hayti on his first western voyage in 1492. In 1498 reported his brother having passed through eighteen miles of cornfields on the Isthmus. Magellan was able to supply his ships with corn from Rio Janeiro in 1520 and after that American explorers mentioned this corn from Columbus' time to that of the arrival of the French at Montreal in 1535. De Soto landed in Florida in

1539 and speaks of fields of corn, beans and pumpkins that they found there in great abundance. In 1605, Champlain found fields of corn at the mouth of the Kennebec river and Hudson in 1609 saw a great quantity of maize along the river now known as the Hudson.

Captain Miles Standish relates that when the Puritans landed at Plymouth Rock in 1620, they found about five hundred acres of ground that showed the evidence of a former corn crop and that later they discovered a cache where the crop was stored. It was this maize that carried the colony safely through the first long and dreary winter and when spring came, they began to plant the new plant themselves. "We set the last spring some twenty acres of Indian corne and sowed some six acres of barley and peas; our corne would prove well and God be praised, we had a good increase." We will note that Miles did not send the good John Alden, to plant this field or deputize him to write the report of it. All of which proves that Miles Standish was a better and more efficient officer in the commissary department than he was a lover. The Indians at that time knew the value of applying fertilizers to their fields. In Mexico, they used ashes for this purpose; the Peruvians used bird guano, gathered from the small islands off the coast and went so far as to protect the bird and assure the supply, by putting to death anyone who disturbed them during their nesting season. The North American Indian, used dead fish as a fertilizer; the Plymouth colonist were taught by the Indians: "Both ye manner how to set your corne and after how to dress and tend it, and were also told, except they gather fish and set with ye corne in old grounds, it would come to nothing." This makes plain to us how hard it is now to raise a corn crop in classic old New England, compared with the fat fields of Illinois.

The point of origin of this plant is left practically to an unaided guess by the botanists based upon the characteristics of it and its apparent development. There is no doubt that Indian corn originated in America. At the discovery of the western hemisphere; it had been in cultivation so long, that many of its forms, had reached nearly the perfection they have today. There is the same difficulty in positively identifying its progenitor as in the case of many prehistoric vegetables now



West End of Reid House on Homestead Farm.

cultivated for food by men. It probably originated in Paraguay, or on the upper plateau of Mexico and subsequently developed into its present form and productive usefulness.

Corn is so essential to the life and welfare of the native tribes of North America, that it has formed the basis of their religion; the subject of their songs, and the object of their prayers to deity. Corn has now become the greatest crop raised on the western hemisphere and we may say with confidence, in the world. It employes more acres and more industry than any other crop, amounting in the aggregate to nearly if not quite, as much as they devote to wheat, oats, rye, barley, buckwheat and cotton, combined. In its culture, harvesting and feeding it provides more employment for men than all other agricultural staples, yet in my study of this subject, I have been profoundly impressed by the remarkable fact that I find in the books, in examining a standard encyclopedia, I made the startling discovery that the subject of Corn occupied ten lines, while the subject of Cotton in the same volume occupied five pages and a colored chart. Whereupon I concluded that cotton as king of vegetable life, was a matter of much emphasis and proclamation, but that corn as king, was a matter of sturdy presistent, practical fact.

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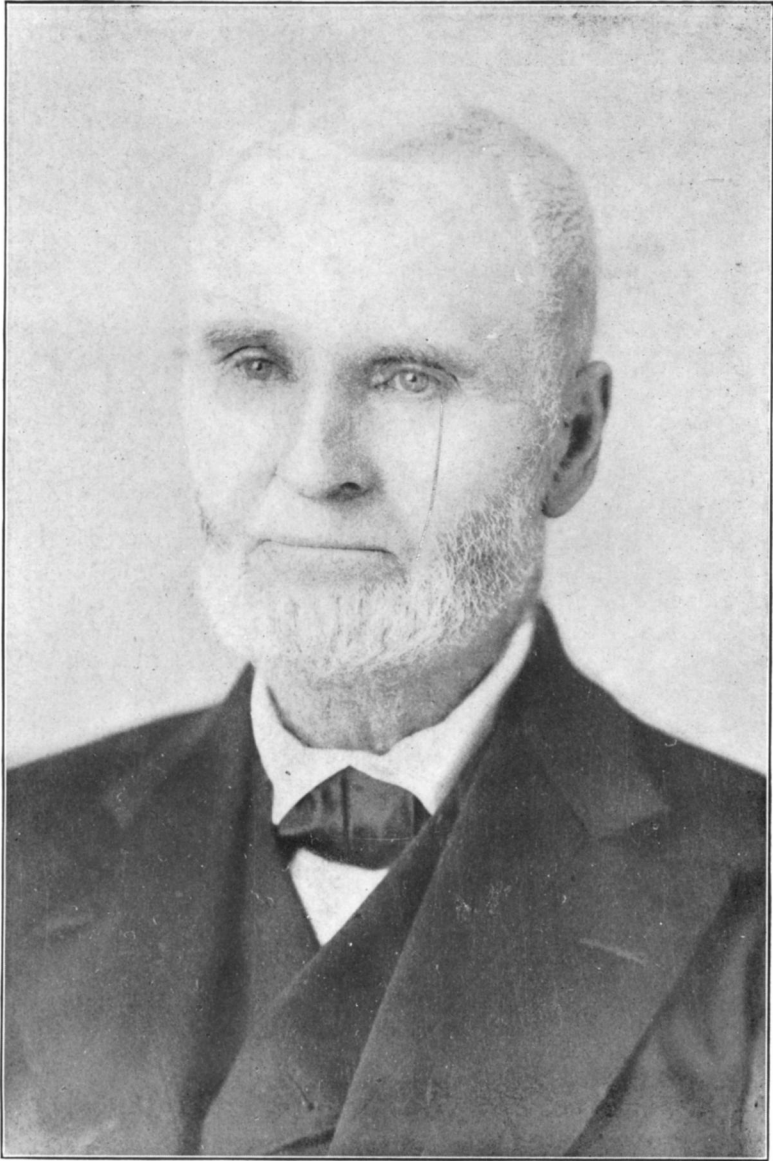
James L. Reid, was a citizen of Tazewell County and performed a noble and unselfish work in the development of a strain of corn which has given him and the county, world wide fame. He was a son of Robert and Anna Moore Reid. He was born near Russelville, Brown County, Ohio, December 26, 1844.

His parents with their family, consisting of their son, James L. Reid, and their daughter, Mary Reid, came to Tazewell County in the State of Illinois in the spring of 1846, and commenced farming on Delavan Prairie in that year. With their party, was a cousin William Reid and his family, who settled in Mercer County. Robert Reid the father was the last of a family of five sons, who left Ohio in response to the call of "The West." His older brother Daniel had preceded him to Delavan Prairie, his sister Eleanor Reid Glaze with her family had previously settled near Tremont in Tazewell County and two brothers, Davis and James Reid had previously located near La Fayette, in the State of Indiana.

Daniel Reid had previously sent word to his brother Robert to bring with him seed corn, as Illinois had no corn to compare with the Ohio variety which the family had before that grown. Robert therefore made space in his covered wagon for a few bushel of yellow corn, known as the Gordon Hopkins in the State of Ohio, their former home. This was a yellow corn having a peculiar copperish red tint below the surface of the kernels, but not red corn as many people, not acquainted with the facts have thought. The ears were small and very tapering. The kernels were small and inclined to be flinty. This variety was rather late in maturing.

Robert Reid, the father with his family located on a rented farm about four miles northeast of Delavan and there the seed corn he had brought with him was planted in the year 1846 on ground already prepared by his brother Daniel. Owing to the lateness of the date of planting crop, that year it made only a fairly good development with many immatured ears. The best of the matured corn was selected for the next year's planting and the result was a poor stand of corn in the spring of 1847. The field was replanted with a small yellow corn found in the neighborhood, the missing hills being put in with a hoe. From the spring of 1847 until the present date, this corn has not been purposely mixed with any other variety by the Reid family, although grown by them and their descendants annually up to the season of 1918, a consecutive period of seventy-two years.

In the year 1850, Robert Reid bought a farm two and a half miles northeast of Delavan, described as the northwest quarter of Section 2, Town. 22, range 4 west of the 3rd P. M. It was upon this farm that the seed of the Ohio variety received special care for fifty-one consecutive years, the father Robert Reid, keeping it pure, preventing it being mixed with other varieties and the son James devoting his especial attention to developing the strain in order to meet the needs of the commercial world. He was assisted by his brother John and his sister Mary, all of whom grew to manhood and womanhood on this place. James L. Reid, when a mere lad, learned to follow the plow, select seed corn and developed a knowledge of farm management. He was the product of the soil, the guidance and example of his father Robert and not of the



Robert Reid—1887.

schools or universities. He early grasped the vision of how much could be accomplished for his fellow-countrymen by the development of the character of crops raised to feed the world. By the example of his father, he was impressed that diligence and excellence were the essentials of farm work. His father taught him to read when he was four years old. He had his early schooling in the district school and from there, he attended the academy at Tremont conducted by James Kellogg. It was one of the early means of education established in the new country. Early in life, he became a student of the Bible and of the spiritual lessons they taught. He learned the wonderful truth that it is possible for man, the creature to put his hand in the hand of the Father and be led in the secrets of Nature to make it more abundantly productive. During the winter and spring of the year 1865, James L. Reid became a teacher in Tazewell County. During that time, he taught the Heaten School in the neighboring township of Boynton. Following this teaching engagement, he began farming on his own account near Boynton Center.

In April 1870, he was married to Marietta Jenks, daughter of George and Henrietta Jenks of Tremont. It is apparent that while attending the Academy at Tremont, his attention was not exclusively devoted to the pursuit of letters.

From 1865 to 1880, James L. Reid gave special attention to the development of Reid's Yellow Dent Corn, raising that variety himself exclusively and endeavoring to induce his neighbors to cultivate the same variety. In 1880, he yielded to the siren voice calling him to Kansas and moved with his family to a farm in Osage County in that State. There he endeavored to grow Reid's Yellow Dent Corn by the Illinois method. He continued the struggle until 1888. The hot winds of August and September of that year, proved fatal to the crop and he returned to Illinois and took up his residence on the home farm of his father and there continued his work of developing yellow dent corn. His father, Robert Reid removed from the home farm to Delavan in the fall of 1880, where he resided until the time of his death, which occurred in December, 1888. When Robert Reid removed to Delavan, he rented his farm to Mr. John Withrow, who occupied it for seven years and continued to raise Reid's Yellow Dent on the home farm

during that time. During the tenancy of Mr. Withrow, the loss of the strain of Yellow Dent Corn being developed, was seriously threatened, in the neighborhood of Reid's farm on account of an early freeze many farmers lost their seed and Mr. Withrow with others, purchased corn shipped from the State of Missouri. When the corn was received and they compared it with the corn in his own crib, the landlord and tenant, decided to discard the imported seed, and planted yellow dent corn selected from the open crib, producing a good crop. Mr. Withrow was no exception to the general rule among tenant farmers. He continued to grow corn consecutively on the Reid farm, until it was almost "corned to death", when James Reid came back to his father's farm in 1888, he had before him the problem of re-vitalizing and reclaiming the old place. He at once established a system of crop rotations, procured a herd of jersey cattle and fed much of his crop on the land. After he had brought his father's farm back to corn producing life and possibilities, he began a systematic development of yellow dent corn from the home-grown strain.

The type of corn chosen was an ear of medium size, more cylindrical in form than the early type, with rather a smooth surface, deep indented grain, bright red cob and clear yellow kernels. Considerable attention was given to development of well filled butts, and tips, with deep kernels, later the ears were roughened more and care was given to the characteristics of corn stalks producing the crop. Much stress was laid upon the thorough maturity of the crop and absolute freedom from all appearance of mixture. While he maintained a single type of kernel characteristic for show ears, as demanded by exhibitors. When it come to seed selection for the corn crop, he chose the ears of corn that showed a high per cent of corn to the ear, regardless of kernel, shape and type of dent. These are facts that have been controverted by various amateur corn breeders. In the development of the characteristics which James L. Reid considered to be of the greatest importance to farmers, he worked consistently and untiringly. Gradually, under improved soil conditions, the type of corn responded to the efforts made for its development, and within a few years the yield in bushels per acre in some fields, reached the one hundred mark.

JAMES L. REID

EAST LYNN, VERMILION COUNTY, ILLINOIS
FORMERLY DELAVAN, ILLINOIS

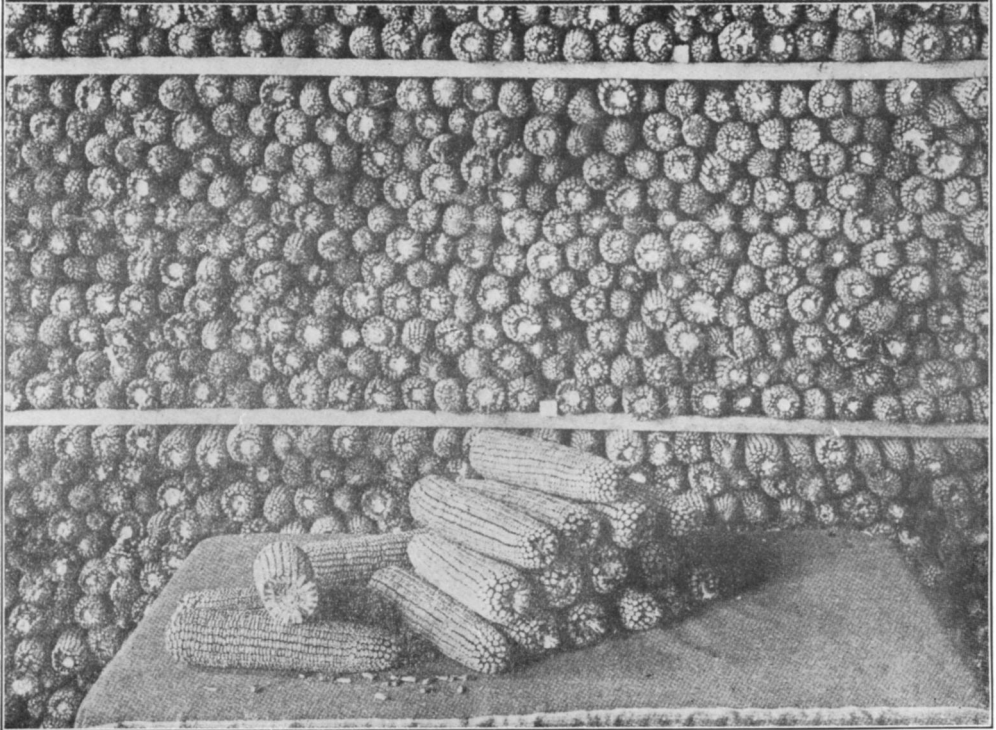
BREEDER OF

REID'S YELLOW DENT CORN

AND

MEMBER ILLINOIS CORN BREEDERS' ASSOCIATION

1902



Reid's Yellow Dent Corn.

It became the custom to gather several bushels of splendid ears from the fields early in the fall. The best looking ones were used for exhibition purposes and the rest kept for a part of home stock.

In 1891 James L. Reid made a corn exhibition consisting of twelve ears at the Illinois State Fair in Peoria and then and there, received the highest award. This was his first introduction outside of his home county, and brought James L. Reid the first recognition of the work he had performed. Mr. Orange Judd, editor of the Orange Judd Farmer, and former editor of the American Agriculturist, was present and was one of the judges, passed on that corn exhibit. Mr. Judd measured and weighed each ear examined them all carefully, and shelled a part of them in order to determine the percentage of corn to the bulk of the cob in the ear. Two years later in the famous World's Fair year 1893, James L. Reid made an exhibition of Reid's Yellow Dent Corn at that exposition. Which won for him the highest score a medal and a diploma. A brief history of the corn, its genesis and development under the name of Reid's Yellow Dent, accompanied that exhibit.

In 1893, Mr. Reid established a retail mail order seed corn trade. The corn was sent to many growers in Illinois, and neighboring States; State colleges of agriculture carried on experiments covering several years. Shipments were sent North, East South and West, also to South America. Reports of yields in different parts of the country proved the corn to be adaptable to varying conditions of soil, temperature, and length of growing season. The business of the production of this seed corn promises to increase a larger farm on which to grow corn, seemed necessary. Only a comparative small portion of crop on the home farm, was put on the seed market. This, however, required a great deal of labor, time and capital. A larger farm would mean more seed corn, better facilities for handling the crop and possibly a better price for seed. In 1902 the larger farm purchased the year previously, was made the home for the family of James L. Reid and the scene of his developing business. It was located in Vermilion County, Illinois, near East Lynn. In time a large seed house and corn crib were built, including an ele-

vator run by gasoline power and geared to run slowly, so that seed ears might be selected from the crop at corn husking time, was installed. All corn intended for seed was again hand-selected and stored where it would thoroughly dry. Under his management, early in the spring a great portion of his seed was given a germination test.

High protein and high oil strains of corn was developed in cooperation with the State Experiment Station at the University of Illinois. Mr. Reid developed ears showing under test, as high as 16.85 per cent protein.

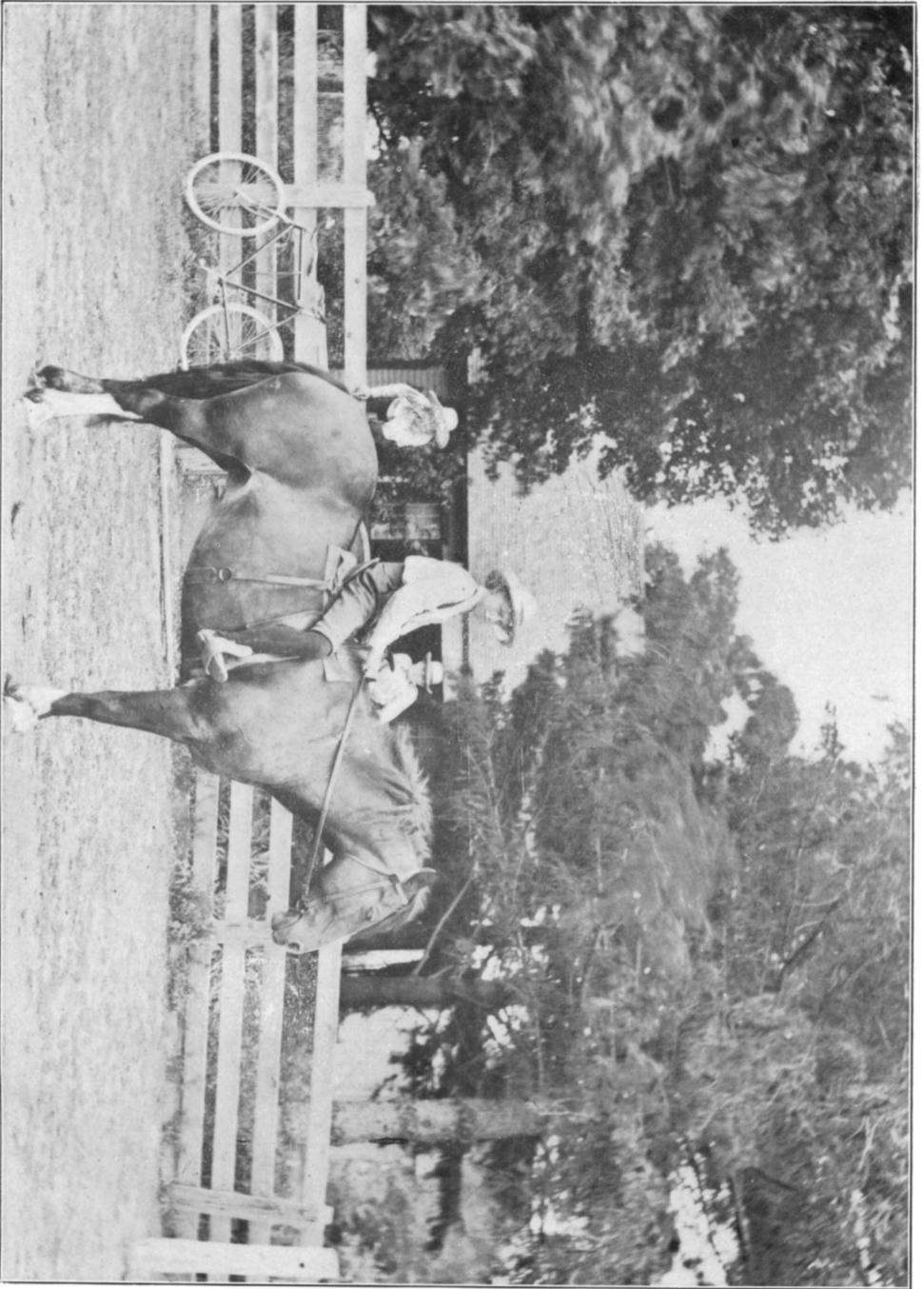
His high tension program of growing corn eight months of the year and caring for the seed crop during the remaining four months, was exceedingly trying to the health of a strong man. In January, 1910, Mr. Reid took his first rest. He spent a few weeks in Florida with beneficial results. In January, 1910, his health being considerably impaired, he again sought the benefits of a Florida climate, but the winter was cold and conditions unfavorable. He returned to his home at East Lynn in May and on the first day of June, 1910, he passed to his reward. His life work finished.

In the fall of 1910, Doctor L. H. Smith, Professor of Plant Breeding in the University of Illinois, and Mr. W. G. Griffith of McNall, Illinois, selected seed from the last corn crop grown from James L. Reid's seed corn selection. This crop had been produced by his son Bruce Reid.

It was their plan and purpose to keep up as near as possible, the strain of Reid's Yellow Dent. Up to the present date their purpose has been realized. The widow, Marietta Reid, has continued to grow corn from the 1910 crop, in order to keep it for the future needs of the grand-children of James L. Reid, Harry and Virgil, who seem to be developing agricultural tastes.

In his lifetime, James L. Reid was director of the Illinois Seed Corn Breeders Association; a member of the Illinois Corn Growers Association, was also a member of the Top Notch Farmers' Club.

In 1908 he accepted an invitation from J. Wilkes Jones of Lincoln, Illinois and manager of the National Corn Exposition at Omaha, Nebraska, to attend the big corn show. Mr. Jones gave him most generous public recognition of his



Trees on South of House on the Homestead Farm. Taken from Lane on South Side of House.

achievements in developing and distributing "Reid's Yellow Dent." He introduced him as the man who had put more millions into the pockets of the corn belt farmers, than any other living man.

While corn was the special medium through which his life found expression, yet all lines of farm work, home life, and community betterment, received an impetus for good through his work and influence.

He was quiet and reserved in his manner; a generous, faithful friend; a public spirited citizen and a man of big faith in eternal truths.

"No life can be pure in its purpose and strong in its strife and all life not be purer and stronger thereby."