

exit farm and farmer

Upon occasion there emerges a story worthy of telling even though it is not fully seasonable. This story has to do with a couple in the Midwest. They acquired their quarter section soon after the turn of the twentieth century. Their farm was several miles from the nearest town. The land was good and the family prospered. In 1918, a railroad spur reduced the size of their farm, but worse than this the roaring trains shattered the tranquility of the countryside. For a while the chickens refused to lay, the livestock became nervous and distraught, and the farmer's sleep habits were badly disturbed.

No sooner had man and animal adjusted to the railroad when a state highway sliced off a corner of the farm and the developing motor car became an added nuisance. By now, the farmer had only 140 acres and it was divided into three tracts. In the meantime, the nearest town had begun to take on the attributes of a city. It spread itself over

the countryside and especially down the new highways. A portion of the farmer's main tract was condemned for a school plant. His acreage was reduced to 115 acres at a time when technological and economic conditions required larger, not smaller farms.

Within a short time the state highway was widened. More land and more privacy were lost. The crowning blow came in the late 1950's. An expressway was built, criss-crossing the farm at right angles with the railroad and the state highway. The quarter section had by now melted to barely 80 acres and it was fragmented into several parcels. The farm house had all but been overrun by suburbia and its trappings. The old couple no longer found it tenable. Reluctantly they moved away, a woe-begone pair with only a million dollars in the bank to console them.

This was called to our attention by Bruno Eichert who found it in the Memphis State Business Review of July, 1965.

Is water land? Ask the Father of Waters, the mighty, muddy, Mississippi, as it flows along the old St. Louis levee now undergoing a dazzling change. To get to the heart of the matter go to the Henry George School Conference at the center of our country, St. Louis, on July 20th.

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