

Amanuensis Monday: The 1880 Agriculture Schedule for Aaron and Ann Elisy (Murrell) Brown

OF THE PERSON WHO CONDUCTS THIS FARM.				ACRES OF LAND.				FARM VALUES.		
THE NAME.	IMPROVEMENTS.			ACRES OF LAND.				OF FARM, including land, barns, and buildings.	OF FARMING IMPLEMENTS AND MACHINERY.	OF LIVE STOCK.
	Drain.	Buildings for stock raising.	Buildings for other uses of production.	Tilled, including fallow and grain in rotation. (Whether pasture or meadow.)	Permanent meadows, pastures, orchards, vineyards.	Woodland and forest.	Other unimproved, including "old fields" not growing wood.			
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1	/			80				2200	75	755
2	/			180				4800	150	550
3	/			80				2000	200	980
4	/			80				2500	100	600
5	/	X		100				1800	200	600
6	/			240				6000	300	2200
7	/			120				2400	100	300

1880 US Federal Census Non-Population Schedule for Mound Prairie Township, Jasper County, Iowa for Aaron Brown, page 9, Line 5. (Click to enlarge.)

[Roberts Family, Murrell Family](#) (Click for Family Tree)

The year 1880 found Ann Elisy Murrell and her husband Aaron Brown, along with their children, in Mound Prairie Township, Jasper County, Iowa. In addition to being on the population schedule (the regular census list), the family was included on the 1880 Agriculture Schedule (AKA 'Non-Population Schedule') that listed the details of their farm. They were included in this census just before Wiley Anderson Murrell, Eliza's father, and her sister's husband, John Roberts.

In 1880 Aaron Brown owned the land he was farming (probably had a mortgage on it though), however Wiley and John were renting their land. (They were farming on shares- they worked someone else's land but provided a portion of their crops to

the owner in lieu of paying a cash rent.)

An 'amanuensis' is one who copies manuscripts, or, in this case, we are using it to mean one who puts into a narrative what is basically a chart (the Ag census)- sort of writing it out to make a bit more sense.

Aaron and Eliza owned 100 acres, a farm slightly smaller than John Roberts' rented land of 120 acres, and much smaller than Wiley Murrell's 240 acres of leased land. (But they *owned* those 100 acres!) The value of Aaron and Eliza's farm, including land, fences, and buildings, was \$1800, and they had \$200 worth of implements and machinery to work it. The family had spent \$20 on building and repairing the farm during 1879.

The estimated value of all farm production, either sold, consumed by the family, or still on hand, for the previous year was \$1300.

The farm had 3 acres of grasslands that were mown to produce 4 tons of hay. This hay would be important fuel for the 'engines' of the day- horses and mules. The family owned 5 horses (not all would be the larger work horses) and 2 mules/asses. They did not have any working oxen.

The family had 4 "milch" cows on hand on 1 June 1880. The census lists 3 other "Neat Cattle"- probably beef cows for the family, and maybe including a bull for increasing the herd. Three calves were 'dropped' (born) during 1879, and 2 of their cattle were sold living; 1 died, stayed, or was stolen and not recovered. The total value of their livestock was \$600.

The 'milch' cows were important for making butter as well as the milk that would have been used for drinking and cooking. During 1879, 325 pounds of butter were made on the farm, most likely by Eliza and her daughters. (Only 2 of the 9 farms on that census page had higher butter production.)

The family did not own any sheep, but did have 23 swine (pigs)

and 40 poultry birds, with the value of eggs produced in 1879 listed as \$160. The pigs were often women's work, and the poultry would have definitely been taken care of by the women and children- it was a busy life for all on the farm.

Aaron and Eliza's livestock was worth \$600 in total.

The family did not grow barley or buckwheat, but did plant 60 acres in Indian corn, the multi-colored corn that we now see as decorations in fall. This corn is usually preserved by drying (or making hominy in the south). The family farm produced 3,000 bushels of this corn, and 500 bushels of oats on the 20 acres planted; both were probably fed to animals. Four acres planted in rye produced 60 bushels, and 20 acres of wheat yielded 200 bushels. At least some of the wheat would have been milled into flour for the family's use, if not all. To finish off the family's needs for baking, 3 acres were planted in sorghum, yielding 500 gallons when pressed of a nutritious and somewhat sweet syrup that would have been used sometimes instead of sugar. They likely sold much of that or traded for other goods at the local general store.

The Ag Schedule also lists 2 acres planted in Irish potatoes (white), yielding 150 bushels to bake, mash, put in good midwestern potato salad, etc.

The Ag Schedule also tells us what they did not grow on the farm: hops, tobacco, sweet potatoes, pulse (beans like soybeans), flax and hemp (both used for fibers and ropes), no broom corn, nor maple sugar/molasses. They also did not have any orchards, grapes/vinyards, nor a 'market garden' where they grew produce to sell. (They most assuredly had their own family vegetable garden, however.) They also did not have beehives for honey or wax, and did not sell any forest products.

Obviously, life on a farm was a very full day of work in the field, barn, chicken coop, pigsty, and home.

American farm life may seem easier today with big combines and computerized planting, but a farmer's life is still a tough one. We need to respect and appreciate our farmers and their families throughout all our history, as they built and fed America, and still do today. Having a secure food supply, by it being produced right here in America, is so important to our county's safety and security.

Notes, Sources, and References:

1. 1880 US Federal Census Non-Population Schedule for Mound Prairie Township, Jasper County, Iowa for Aaron Brown, page 9, Line 5. Available on Ancestry.com and FamilySearch.

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