

GETTING A BONUS FROM THE LAND

THE STORY OF DISABLED VETERANS WHO ARE REHABILITATING THEMSELVES

BY EARL CHRISTMAS



THE FODDER IS IN THE SHOCK AT VETERANSVILLE, AND IT GREW ON LAND CLEARED THIS LAST YEAR. HOW'S THAT FOR QUICK RESULTS?

WHERE do we go from here?" The familiar question of war time popped up in a discussion among some disabled soldiers at the Minnesota School of Agriculture last winter. They were being trained in agricultural pursuits there at the expense of the Government, just as thousands of other young men throughout the country who were disabled in the war are being prepared for new places of usefulness in society.

But one day, not far away, they would finish their allotted period of training and be graduated. What could they do then? That was the burning question.

True, they would have had three years of training in a good agricultural school, but these former doughboys wanted

some more practical results. Unless they got something else, they reasoned, they would be only educated farm-hands when their training was over. Now the prospect of being farm-hands, even educated farm-hands, did not appeal to these former soldiers.

Then some one sprang the big idea. They would become landowners and take the rest of their training farming their own land. It sounded fine. Most of the men in the group had come from the farms at the call of war, and the suggestion that each go back to the land as the owner of a farm of his own had a genuine appeal.

Buy a farm, yes; but how? Purchasing farms in these days of \$200 and \$300 an acre land requires money, and dis-

abled soldiers certainly are not capitalists.

But there were pioneering spirits in that little group. One of them thought of the cut-over lands.

In northern Minnesota, as in northern Wisconsin and Michigan, there are millions of acres of these lands. Once they were covered by great forests, but the ax of the lumberman and the red tongue of fire have exacted a heavy toll. Amid the stumps and wasted timber new trees are growing up in many places. Often there is a tangled mass of brush, old timber, and new vegetation.

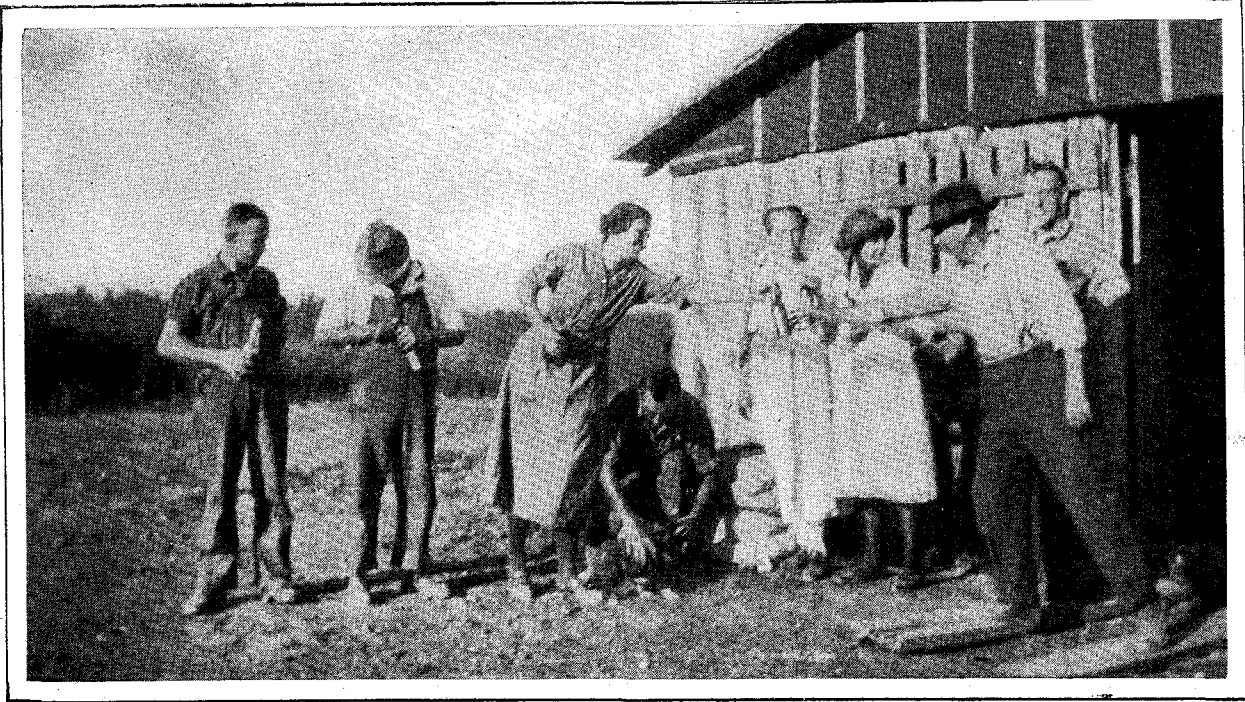
In other sections no young trees have come up, as if to leave the cemetery of the forest inviolate. Here one finds acres and acres of stumps or great charred wastes with the blackened trunks of trees still standing like shadowy ghosts of the forest that was.

To the settler the cut-over country offers a fight. In it one finds perhaps the last frontier. Far up in these cut-over lands men are struggling against great odds to clear farms in the wilderness, just as men of another generation wrested from the forest now prosperous farming communities farther south. But men have a way of persevering, and the brush line is constantly being pushed farther north.

The disabled soldiers at the Minnesota school decided to make the fight. They would settle on adjoining tracts of land. That would prevent the isolation which too often is the lot of the settler in the north country, and they could help each other in the land clearing. Soon a committee was on the hunt for a location.

After many disappointments, a suitable tract was found near McGrath, Minnesota. Representatives of the Veterans' Bureau and the College of Agriculture looked it over, and the purchases followed. Some thirty veterans bought farms in the community, ranging in size from forty to eighty acres. Most of them had little or no money except their monthly checks from the Government, running from \$80 to \$150 a month, but easy payments were arranged with the owner of the land. In some cases the initial payment was only \$1. Earnestness of purpose was a greater consideration. The monthly payments ranged from \$20 to \$50 a month. The cost of the land varied from \$20 to \$25 an acre.

Thus Veteransville, Minnesota, came into being. The former soldiers gave that name to the little settlement about which they are developing their farms. Formerly it bore the name of White Pine, but a petition has been forwarded



VETERANSVILLE TOLERATES NOTHING STRONGER THAN SODA POP, AS ONE MAN FOUND OUT TO HIS SORROW

to the Post Office Department asking that the name be changed.

Veteransville is a town of veterans. All the men who live in and around it were wounded, gassed, or otherwise incapacitated in service.

On April 7, just five years after the beginning of the war, the former doughboys arrived at Veteransville, and, armed with the grubbing hoe and the ax, began a new and perhaps greater fight in their careers. Soon warlike explosives designed for blowing up the strongholds of the Germans were set to work blowing up the deeply intrenched stumps.

Reveille would sound at 5:30 A.M., and soon after the veterans would be on the firing line. All summer they kept it up. No retreats, no replacements, no rest camp. At times it looked discouraging, but nobody quit voluntarily.

When fall came, each man had five acres of his farm cleared and ready for the plow. Old settlers in the community were amazed. Many of them had spent five years in the cut-over country without getting as much done.

Moreover, most of the veterans had raised all the potatoes, vegetables, and garden stuff they needed. Knute Loth-

berg had a good crop of corn, part of it planted on land cleared this year. Incidentally, that is getting results pretty fast. No wonder old settlers in the community were amazed at the way those soldiers did things!

When I visited it this fall, Veteransville was a humming center of industry. The clearing work was going on full blast. Log houses were being erected in little clearings in the woods.

A former soldier led the way down a narrow path. He said it would be a walk of a mile or two. We walked on along the winding footpath, and at



THE MEN WORK TOGETHER IN BUILDING, AND HOMES GO UP IN SHORT ORDER



THIS MAN IS BUILDING A HOME FROM MATERIAL CUT FROM HIS OWN FARM. NEXT YEAR HE WILL BUILD A BIGGER HOME AND USE THIS BUILDING FOR A HEN-HOUSE

length came to a brand-new log house in a clearing. Inside a young woman was preparing the evening meal.

"That is one of the soldiers' homes," said my companion. "Kinda homelike, don't you think?"

He led the way on down the path. You see, these pioneers at Veteransville have gone even beyond the roads. But the roads will follow in short order. The township had an election not long ago to vote bonds for the building of roads. Some of the old settlers opposed the procedure, but the soldiers carried the election.

Presently we came to another clearing, where a log house was in the process of construction.

"This man will live in this log house this winter," said my companion. "Next year he will build a bigger and better house, and use this building for a hen-house. The plan is for every man to start out as simply as possible, and never go in debt."

On our walk we passed many clearings. Altogether, thirty-six veterans have bought land in the community. This particular walk happened to be on a Sunday, and no work was being done. Yet at nearly every place we found men looking over their farms.

"I like to just sit here and dream it all out," one big fellow explained. "I am going to have my house there on that hill. It is going to be a log house, with a fireplace. Yes, and shelves around the fireplace for books."

At length we came back to the barracks where the unmarried men at Veteransville have their living quarters. About one-third of the men are married and have their own houses. The others live in a barracks not so much different from those of war time.

In the barracks a lively discussion was on. It concerned plans for the coming school, which, I learned, was to be held at Veteransville. Instead of leaving their farms and going back to St.

Paul to complete their training in the School of Agriculture there, they would take the rest of their training on their own farms. The school would come out to them—dairy experts, poultry experts, and all.

The men themselves asked for this kind of training, and the Veterans' Bureau set about to arrange for it. None of the expensive living, none of the distractions of the city! Most of the men at Veteransville took their first year of training at the School of Agriculture in St. Paul. Few were able to save any money out of the funds provided by the Government for their maintenance during the training period.

Now these same men not only are making regular payments on their lands, but are laying away money to buy live stock and equipment. Some were in debt when they came to Veteransville,

but since have got out of debt and started saving. In three years most of them will have their land and buildings paid for and some live stock. The Government payments just about enabled the men to support themselves in the cities, as intended, but with the lower living costs at Veteransville they find it possible to meet the payments on their farms and equip them.

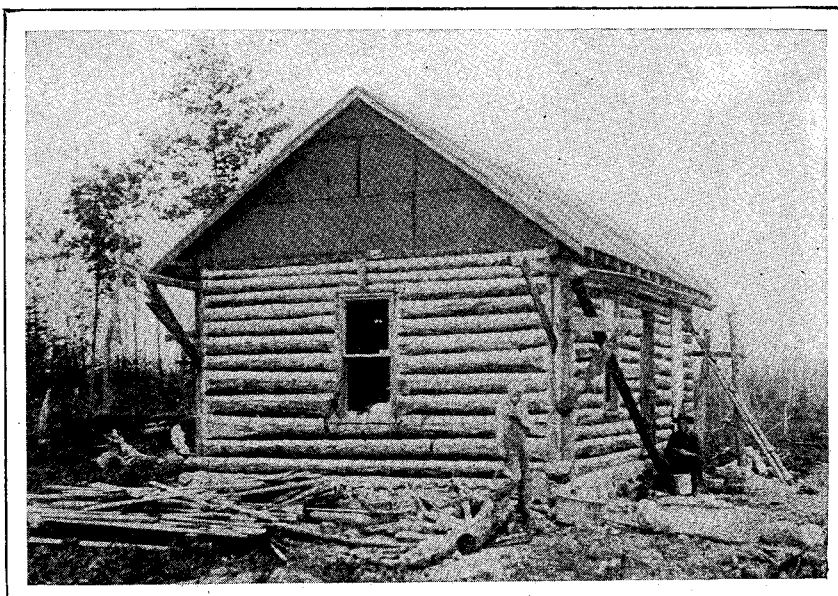
Then there's the matter of health. A man at McGrath who has followed the progress of the venture said:

"When they came up here, many were pale and thin. After they had been working outdoors a while, away from the smoke and dirt of the city, they became healthy and robust. One fellow when he came up here two months ago couldn't walk two blocks without playing out. Now he is just as husky as any of them."

Indeed, one would have to go far to find a hardier group of settlers. Some of the men came to Veteransville as tuberculosis cases. Two were machinists who had to give up this work for an outdoor occupation because of tuberculosis. Certainly, none of them look like it now.

Disabled? Yes, they were disabled. There's Joe Sandkamp. Joe had part of his spine shot away and wears a brace, but he wields an ax with the best of them at Veteransville. Otto Ellig got a shrapnel wound in the thigh, and limps a bit, but he certainly is an active casualty. A German bullet went through T. A. Olson's lung. Many of the boys were gassed. All the fighting divisions are represented among those thirty-six men—but war stories are taboo at Veteransville. Casualties once, perhaps, but you'd never know it now from watching the way these men are making the stumps fly.

The men work in squads while doing their clearing. Perhaps the army got them in the habit. The squad works a



LOG HOUSES LIKE THIS ARE GOING UP IN LITTLE CLEARINGS IN THE WOODS AROUND VETERANSVILLE TO FURNISH HOMES FOR FORMER SOLDIERS WHO ARE GOING BACK TO THE LAND

while on one man's farm, and then goes to another, and so on around.

Some of the veterans are going into dairying. Others are going to specialize in poultry and bees. Moreover, they are going to standardize their products. All will have the same breed of cows and the same kind of chickens. Eggs sent to market will bear the Veteransville stamp and the number of the farmer shipping them. So will the butter and honey be marked. Products of the Veteransville farms in time will command premiums in the cities.

The men will sell their products together. Purchases also are pooled. On a car-load of picric acid the former soldiers pooled their orders and saved \$2,000. Ownership as well as operation of a man's farm is an individual matter.

But all is not work at Veteransville. A baseball team offers outlet for athletic energies. Every two weeks a dance is held, and the settlers come from miles around. An old barn was converted into a fine dance-hall.

Once an outsider brought in some moonshine expecting generous profits at the veterans' dance. Instead, he got thrown out rather roughly. The soldiers had one of their number appointed a deputy sheriff, and no vender of liquor has had the temerity to come near Veteransville since.

The former soldiers held a Memorial Day celebration, the first ever seen in that section of the country. Settlers came from fifteen and twenty miles to attend the services. A hundred automobiles were counted at Veteransville that day. More and more Veteransville is becoming the center of activities for a wide territory.

Questions affecting the settlement as a whole are handled through the Veteransville Association.

The soldiers first took up quarters in an old logging camp. White Pine was the headquarters for James E. McGrath, who year after year floated down the Snake River millions of feet of timber which he cut along its upper reaches.

But the last logs have gone down the Snake River. Small sawmills now are grinding up the final bits of timber into lath. Soon this will be done.

Hardly does the lumberman finish his work when a new pioneer comes in, the disabled soldier seeking to rehabilitate himself. The veterans even took over some of the buildings of the old logging camp. An old barn was cleaned up, floored, and whitewashed to make a barracks for the single men.

Several log buildings in the camp house the families of the married men while their homes are building. Veteransville also has a store, a post office, and several other buildings. It has a schoolhouse, where the children are taught by the wife of one of the former soldiers. In time it will have a creamery, a blacksmith shop, a community center, and all the adjuncts of a first-class town. At least such is the vision of its founders, who expect it to become the nucleus of a large community of former soldiers.

BOLSHEVISM, THE CHURCH, AND THE HOME

AN AMERICAN RELIEF OFFICIAL DESCRIBES CONDITIONS AS HE FOUND THEM IN RUSSIA

The following statement has been obtained from a former American Relief official who lately returned from Russia, and who is entirely reliable. His name is withheld because to reveal it would lead to the discovery by the Soviet Gov-

ernment of the people with whom he has been in contact, and that Government would certainly take summary vengeance on them for making him acquainted with the true facts.—THE EDITORS.

DURING the war Tchicherin is said to have remarked, in the course of conversation, "There are two great obstacles to the spread of the Social Revolution—the church and the home—and both must be swept aside."

There is sound psychology in this so far as the home is concerned. The Soviet Government is purely Communist. The greatest incentive with most men to the acquisition of property is the desire to provide for those whom they love. If the home, which fosters family affection, can be broken up, this incentive will disappear, and the strongest objection to Communism, which seems now to be ingrained in most people, will disappear with it.

But the statement has especial importance because it affords the true explanation of certain facts which have recently been brought to the attention of the public through the newspapers. Despatches have told of the arrest of Russian bishops and their condemnation to death. Tihon, Patriarch of Moscow and head of the Russian Church, is said to be in prison, and the Church as a whole has been charged with failing in its duty to the Russian people during the famine. What has really happened is this.

The fight against the Church began in 1917, as soon as the Bolsheviks came

into power. The Reds took possession of church property wherever possible—monasteries, convents, schools, the houses of priests and bishops. The Soviet abolished the theological seminaries, so that the supply of priests might be cut off, it closed the parish schools and passed a law forbidding any religious instruction to be given outside of the home to youth under eighteen years of age. Priests were arrested and shot for teaching their young people the basic elements of their religion. According to figures given by the Reds and recently published in the Soviet newspapers, twenty-eight bishops and over twelve hundred priests have been executed by them since 1917.

But the most insidious attack has been made within the last year, since the great famine came. This was the charge that the Church had refused to help the starving millions of Russia, and that their deaths have been due to its neglect. Of course the object of this was to discredit the Church with the people and to prepare the way for the spoliation which was purposed. The Soviet took care to make out an apparent case against the ecclesiastical authorities, though in doing so it has deliberately suppressed the truth, a course which prominent Bolsheviks have boasted that they never hesitated to pur-

sue. At Genoa one of them gloried publicly in the fact that they never kept their word about anything when it suited them to break it.

In truth, the Church had been anxious to help its people from the outset. The first account which gave an adequate idea of the extent of the famine was contained in a despatch from the Patriarch to the Archbishop of Canterbury, asking for help. This despatch was not permitted to be delivered to the Archbishop, but found its way into the press, both on the Continent and in England. In addition to this, the Patriarch requested to be permitted to take a full share in the relief work of the Gorki Committee in 1921, with the understanding, however, that the representatives of the Church should know how the money which they raised was spent. He thought, not unreasonably, that he ought to be in a position to assure people who responded to his appeals that their money had gone where it was meant to go. This request was absolutely refused. Public notices with the Patriarch's name on them were not allowed to be published, and no document was permitted to appear under his authority or the authority of the Church.

Next, the Patriarch offered to collect food in kind, and have it distributed among the people in the famine districts