Madison County,
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Community Lunch.

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The picnic, or out-door community lunch, sponsered by Fairweather Pioneer Society several times during the summer is greatly enjoyed by members and their relatives and friends. Each person attending prepares his lunch box including fork, spoon, cup and paper plate, and hies himself off with the crowd to enjoy the day.

Arriving at the chosen spot, the men usually begin at once to gather fuel for a fire needed to make the coffee for the lunch. Others begin to investigate the surroundings and to try to find whatever may be of interest. All are dressed suitable for the occasion of out-door life for the day, and whatever may happen in connection with it, from sitting or rolling upon the grass to climbing a tree to get away from a bear.

The women usually set about choosing a place to serve the lunch and the men have their say in this, too. After a fire is started and water is brought from a near-by stream, some one man usually volunteers to make the coffee, which he thinks he can do over an open fire and with a camp-fire coffee pot, just a little bit better than any woman present.

The women are usually content to let him keep the fire going and to make the coffee as his heart desires, while they take the food from the various baskets and boxes. The picnic grounds are nearly always provided with tables of good size and before the food is placed upon them the good women cover them with newspapers or with red and blue checkered tablecloths if anyone had thought to bring them. Some thoughtful dame, who is in on the know, has brought a second large coffee pot in which to cook the roasting ears and they are thrown into the boiling water as soon as the aroma of coffee begins to fill the air and distend the nostrils. It is not long until the cookers of coffee and corn announce that those two articles of diet are ready and out goes the cry that "Soup's On!" Men emerge from cars, trees and grass and make their way to the tables each of which will seat about twenty persons. One bashful bachelor hangs in the background until noticed by a persuasive female who marches to him, takes his arm, brings him to the front and tells him to "dive in". The roasting ears are served first - piping hot. One is placed on each plate, the reserve being kept on the fire. Several plates of butter are on the table and it is not long until everybody is busy. There is no conversation during the first round and all that one hears is the music played upon those ears of corn. At the beginning of the second round the smacking is even louder but finally

(round two)

there is a gradual diminuendo and conversation begins. Due respect is paid to the different kinds of sandwiches, the salad, potato chips, stuffed eggs, pickles, cottage cheese, American cheese, fruit salad, cookies and cakes, interspersed with many cups of coffee. Laughter and joking add to the enjoyment of the meal and help make it one long to be remembered.

With heaving of sighs and loosening of belts, the men retire to the running-boards of the cars or sit on their haunches on the grass, and smoke their pipes, while the women clear away the remnants of the meal, see that each one has her own cup and silverware and make things in readiness to be placed in the cars. After this is done, some follow near-by paths to return later with bouquets of wild flowers, while others, rejoined by the men of the party, sit and talk over olden times, relating tales and telling jokes, recalling instances in their younger days not a great deal unlike the happenings of this day except in the age, looks and dress of those participating.

The day passes quickly and a descending sun reminds the Pioneers that it is time to depart for their different homes several miles away.