

UNIVERSITY TEACHING AND FARMING (1919-1922)

In January 1919 I began teaching Dr. Nels Bengston's Geography classes at the University of Nebraska. Since I had been his assistant from 1911 to 1914, the takeover was rather painless. For the next 18 months I combined my teaching with conducting soil surveys in Sioux County, Nebraska (Fig. 27). One of my fellow workers on the soil surveys was Clyde Deardorff, whom I had worked with in Georgia in 1917 (Publication 8).

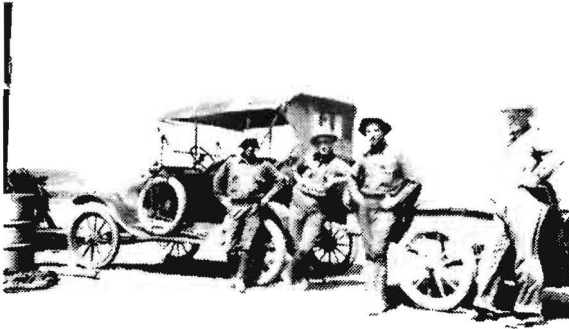


Fig. 27. Conducting Soil Survey, Sioux County, Nebraska, summer of 1919. Rockie on left, Clyde Deardorff on right.

Teaching was enjoyable, but I found myself becoming increasingly discontented with the Nebraska climate (in which I had grown up, but which I had managed to avoid for much of the previous eight years). Because of this discontentment, and on the strength of a job offer in Sandpoint, Idaho, at the end of the school year in May of 1920 I advised Dr. Condra that I was planning to resign and return to the West. He tried to dissuade me, but to no avail. I can still remember as a boy in Fremont, Nebraska, sleeping on the grass in the yard at night, and when the grass got really hot under me, I'd roll over to some cooler grass. When that grass got hot, I'd roll to yet another spot with cooler grass. The nights just did not cool off, and that, and some of the winter northerners were what helped convince me to move.

By the time we arrived in Sandpoint the job offer had fizzled, so I spent the next two years doing a variety of things. I tried my hand at raising seed potatoes, but after a successful harvest, a packrat in our cellar virtually put me out of the seed potato business.

I spent some time logging cottonwood trees to make excelsior, the standard packing material of the day, and later worked for the lumber company that had marketed the cottonwood trees for me. When that job ended, the prospects of returning to government service with the U.S. Department of Agriculture became increasingly attractive.

I contacted several people in the USDA, and in the spring of 1922 had an interview for a job. Nothing materialized until summer, when I received an appointment to the U.S. Bureau of Plant Industry. I started on the new job in June, the same month that our second son, John, was born.