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It Costs But It Saves the Family

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ONCE upon a time there was a homemaker who pulled her favorite rocking chair out of a corner and in the middle of the forenoon sat down to read the morning paper the mailman had just left in the box at the end of the drive-way.

She rocked and read, and not once did she think about carrying the pudding down to the cellar pantry to cool on the floor, because the pudding was cooling in a refrigerator. She didn't worry, every other sentence, about putting more cobs on the fire to cook the beans, because an electric range kept a constant heat. She wasn't due to rush out after a pail of water, because it was on tap, motor-pumped. She didn't...

That's a page from every farm homemaker's mental book of favorite fairy tales—every homemaker who doesn't have an electrified, emancipated-from-drudgery home.

A sample of 108 Iowa farm women for whom the dream-spun story has come true are quite agreed that electricity in their homes is "the grandest thing that ever happened." Even the reading-in-the-middle-of-the-morning is no myth—100 of the 108 said that electricity saved both time and energy.

More than half said they used some of this "saved" time for reading, some for resting, some for recreation with their families and some for sewing. Half of them said electrical equipment made it unnecessary to keep hired help in the home, and many reported that they spent more time caring for the children.

Other activities mentioned and enjoyed by these homemakers because of time saved were: Home demonstration groups, church work, women's clubs, 4-H clubs, community work, garden and yard improvement, health projects, Red Cross, school activities and trips.

First on the List

The electric iron seems to be a "must" in electrical equipment—all families had an iron. Practically all had a washing machine, too. These two pieces help with the hardest tasks.

Radios came near the top of the list of equipment owned. Many homemakers say that after they have purchased the iron and washing machine, which help with the hardest tasks, they feel that the family should have the radio because every member can enjoy it. The radio provides recreation, ed-
The facts in this interesting story are based on a thesis written by Mrs. McCordic for her master's degree in Home Management, which she received from Iowa State College in June. Her thesis included a survey of use of electrical equipment by Wisconsin and Iowa farm families. Upon receiving her degree, Mrs. McCordic returned to her position as home management specialist in the University of Wisconsin Extension Service.

Equipment was purchased in the following order: Iron, washing machine, motor for washing machine, refrigerator, motor for pump, radio, toaster, vacuum cleaner, range, milking machine, waffle iron and food mixer. With the exception of the radio, and perhaps the toaster and waffle iron, these appliances would save time and energy for the homemaker.

The Iowa rural families reported owning a total of 897 pieces of electrical equipment, or 8.5 pieces per family. Most of these were large appliances, of which 423 were used daily and 343 weekly.

The equipment reported as being used most frequently daily was, in order of use: Radio, refrigerator, motor for pump, clock, toaster, vacuum cleaner and food mixer.

Table, page 8, lists the number of families owning various pieces of equipment. It must be remembered, in judging these numbers, that no doubt many families still have non-electrical equipment in good condition which will do the work for them at present and which probably will be replaced later by electrical equipment. For example, some may still have a washing machine run by a gasoline motor, a good ice refrigerator, some other type of water system, a good non-electrical clock, a wood range or a foot-treadle sewing machine.

It was found that some families owning washing machines run by a gasoline motor had exchanged the motor for an electric one. This can be done for a small sum, and if the washing machine is in good condition the exchange is an economical way of owning an electrically-operated machine. This, too, releases money which may be used for other equipment.

A very small amount of electrical equipment was purchased on the installment plan. This plan of financing, when used, was for larger, more expensive pieces. Only 34 families purchased any equipment on time. The total amount still owed by these 34 families is remarkably small, only $309.

Selection of equipment isn't the only problem electricity brings. It is important, when purchasing electrical equipment, not only to know what to look for from a standpoint of saving time and energy and getting service and efficiency, but also...
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to know something of the operating costs. Electrical equipment which furnishes heat requires more electricity than equipment operated by a motor. Refrigerators are an exception; although they are operated by a motor, they use more current than other motor-driven equipment because they operate from a quarter to one-third of the time.

The approximate cost of operation of any piece of equipment can be figured by estimating the amount of time it will be used, looking at the name plate to find the number of watts it uses, examining the rates to find out the cost per kilowatt-hour and using the following formula:

\[ \text{cost per kilowatt-hour} = \frac{\text{watts} \times \text{time in hours} \times \text{cost per kilowatt-hour}}{1000} \]

Sixty-five families said that if electric rates were about one-fourth lower, they would buy such equipment as range, water heater, ironer, motor for pumps, refrigerator, hot plate, roaster and brooder. These families evidently have been doing some thinking and figuring on cost of operating.

Only six families reported any electrical equipment which they had as unsatisfactory, and that was because of too cheap construction. A homemaker in Marshall County said: "All electrical equipment should be of the best; cheaply made pieces soon short or burn out, and there is seldom any way to fix them. Get a good trade name, from a dependable dealer, and use your appliance—that would be my advice to anyone buying new electrical equipment."

Besides efficiency and cost of operation of electrical equipment, its storage is to be considered. Eight families said they did not buy a food mixer, roaster, hot plate or ironing machine because they had no place to put it.

You've been in a kitchen where it has been awkward to use the refrigerator because the door seemed to open in the wrong direction? Since a refrigerator can be obtained with the door opening either way, its location in the kitchen should be studied carefully in advance in relation to the work surface near which it is to be used. And you've been in your neighbor's kitchen when she was preparing a meal and heard her say, "I guess I'll mix this with the hand beater; it's too much trouble to get my electric mixer down?" This homemaker did not get the benefit from her mixer because she had no convenient place to use and leave it.

The Home Economics Extension Service and Household Equipment Department of Iowa State College are always glad to help plan wiring, to suggest the best arrangement of equipment in the kitchen and to give advice on the purchase of electrical equipment. How to wire farm buildings is explained in a bulletin which may be had for the asking.