

Life on the farm in the early 1870's was dangerous, laborious and difficult. Mattie Regenberg, in an interview in 1948, talked about the "prairie grass". "Sometimes the blades were an inch wide. When the children were sent out to get the cows that had strayed from the house, they always kept on the path the cows had made, for the sharp edges of the prairie grass cut their bare feet."

Mattie also told of using this slough hay for fuel. She described preparing the prairie grass for fuel this way: "take the bunch in both hands, twisting it one way with one hand and the other way with the other hand and then quickly shaping the long twist into a figure eight." It made quite a satisfactory substitute for the coal and wood they couldn't get in those years. It had one drawback. It burned fast, and it kept them busy getting enough of it ready to keep warm on very cold days.

Prairie fires were one of the most frightening dangers the early pioneer families had to face. "They were not uncommon during the first years" reported Mattie (Regenberg) Uden in her interview. "The fire", she said, "spread through the prairie grass rapidly, burning everything in its path." To save themselves and their belongings, the settlers plowed wide strips of ground around their buildings, but often their crops were lost. The plowed fields stopped the fires but it was years before enough prairie was broken to remove completely the danger of prairie fires.

