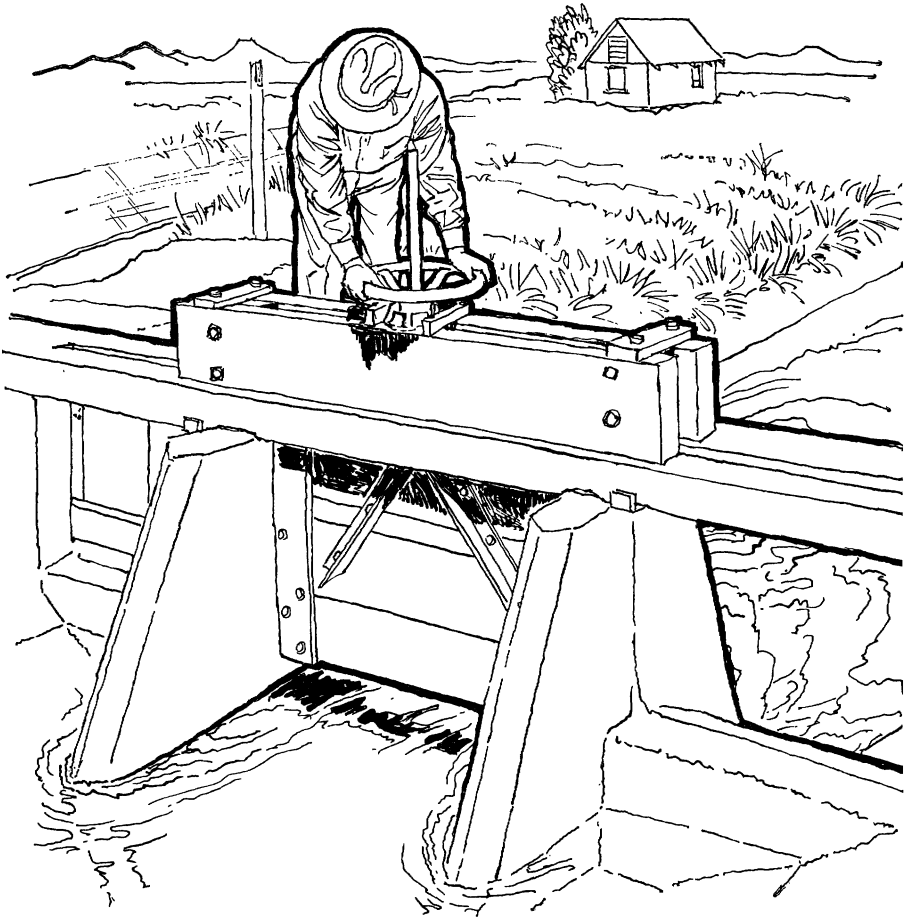

Planning for a better use

—Planning and zoning for the future—Planning for stability in a great area—Safe, efficient, and attractive highways—Public development of resources—Arrangements for our public lands—Tenure and the use of farm resources—Planning for the new land frontier—Balanced development of resources

Planning and zoning for the future.

Most people plan for the future—for the education of their children, for their own progress and security, for their old age. Communities, too, have learned—sometimes too late—the wisdom of making blueprints for future growth. A tool is the zoning ordinance. By *Erling D. Solberg*, agricultural economist, Farm Economics Research Division.

LONG BEFORE the United States was formed, the tiny settlements along the Atlantic coast were adopting measures to restrain people from using their land in ways that would cause injury to others or to the community.

The earliest measures grew out of unhappy experiences with explosions and fires and were simple regulations to keep gunpowder mills and storehouses outside a settlement.

Market towns, like Boston, were authorized to assign locations for slaughterhouses, stillhouses, and buildings in which tallow was tried and leather was tanned.

The early laws were passed in the interest of people's health, comfort, and safety. No more restraint was placed on the use of private property than was deemed necessary to protect the rights of others.

As the country grew, cities and problems grew. The way people used their land sometimes hurt others. Areas with mixtures of homes, stores, and factories sometimes ended as slums. Slums sometimes became hazards to health, safety, morals, and the general welfare.

As was the case many years before, vexing land-use problems resulted in the shaping of corrective measures. Separate zoning districts were created for homes, for business, and for industry. Conflicting land uses were thus set apart. Other zoning regulations were shaped to prevent overcrowding. This was done by limiting the height and size of buildings. The same objective was attained by regulating the size of building tracts and yards. Larger lots with ample yards allow for fewer houses and fewer persons on an acre.

A bursting of city boundaries in the booming 1920's brought unguided growth to the fringes of cities, but it was gentle compared to what was to come later.

Urban expansion became an explosion after the Second World War. All over the country new forces transformed rural communities. Good roads and automobiles permitted city people to spread over the countryside. Farm people in great numbers found employment and new homes in and near urban centers.

Trade areas and daily commuting distances came to be measured in terms of travel time rather than in miles. Millions of people began to make hour-long morning and evening trips between home and work. Expressways and higher permissible speeds brought outlying areas within commuting zones. New suburbs burgeoned beyond suburbs, and beyond were scattered subdivisions.

New communities took shape in forms that could not be foreseen, as pups of unknown ancestry may become dogs of unexpected size and shape. Urban expansion meant the building of many well-planned business and industrial districts and attractive residential suburbs, but it also brought

ugly areas of haphazard growth and mixed uses—ribbon districts of roadside blight, dreary miles of honky-tonks, billboards, gas stations, junkyards, shops, and homes. Yesterday's good residential areas came to look like untended orphan tracts.

In places there was a helter-skelter peppering of nonfarm dwellings on small rural tracts, premature subdivisions that were not sold, and scattered housing strung out along country roads.

Mushrooming communities developed fiscal ailments. Many improvements—roads, streets, schools, libraries, water and sewage facilities, and so on—were needed at once. Many citizens encountered an unexpected increase in assessments and taxes to pay for the necessary public services. Crowded highways and road hazards presented dangers.

Some farmers faced new problems as subdivisions engulfed their farms. A few moved away with windfall profits from the sale of their land at high prices. Those who remained had higher taxes for public improvements and services that they did not need or want. Their farm plants were damaged, and their operating costs increased.

As in colonial days, the problems stem from unwise relationships in the uses of neighboring tracts of land. In colonial days, however, the problems were obvious, and the corrective restraints were simple. Today's problems are a complex mixture of fiscal matters, public services, the use and changing values of land, health, safety, and attitudes.

Measures adopted in efforts to solve such problems should be preventive, rather than curative: They should prevent problems from arising. They require a community plan, a general blueprint that will suggest how present and future public and private improvements and land uses should be related to each other.

Has urban expansion swept through your community and left a host of problems? Is it only beginning or still ahead—and have preparations been made for the expected guest? Must room be found for urban growth—new homes, stores, factories, schools?

A community can choose the pattern of its growth. It can sit idly by and allow the development of a haphazard mixture of conflicting land uses, or it can guide growth in such a way as to prevent uses that will be harmful to other landowners and to the community.

It can forestall a mixture of factories, stores, junkyards, and homes. It can allow the development of desirable residential districts and protect them with zoning regulations. It can regulate the size of lots to assure a safe separation of wells and septic tanks. It can enclose productive agricultural areas on the urban fringe in districts from which unwanted business and industry are excluded. All these it can do for its safety, comfort, and its prosperity by planning and zoning.

EVERYONE PLANS. You hear it every day: "I plan to build a new barn." "We plan to save our money for a vacation." "We plan to build a new school." Each time, the speaker has examined what he possesses and has considered ways for obtaining what he or the group wants. Each plan embraces problems, needs, and goals.

A community plan is only a large-scale version of a family or group plan.

The basic steps in preparing a community plan are the same as in preparing one for a family.

First, the community makes a careful study of what it has now.

Second, it gives thought to its current and future problems and needs and to its potential. It decides what it wants in the future. This step involves the preparation of a master plan.

The final step is for the community to develop practical ways to put the master plan into effect.

WHAT DOES THE COMMUNITY have now? It has land, improvements, an economic base, local government, and people. Essential information about

each of these may be presented on maps or in reports.

Maps will be useful that show topography, mineral resources, soil types and land-use capabilities, streams and other sources of water, and present land uses. Areas used for industry, business, homes, farms, forests, and recreation are indicated.

Other maps will be needed to show the location of transportation facilities, public utilities, services, schools, parks, and other public buildings and improvements.

It will be well to have data on the economic base of present industries, trade and market areas, employment, wages and income, and the contribution to the community's economic base from agriculture and related processing industries and supply firms.

Information should be available about public activities in the community—the location of publicly owned lands; copies of plans of local, State, and Federal agencies to develop those lands; data on taxation and bonded debt; current public construction; and the cost of providing public services in various parts of the community.

Copies will be needed of subdivision and zoning ordinances, if any exist.

Highly important will be information about the people in the community; trends in the growth of population; the age distribution; educational levels and technical and trade skills; private and public housing and the rate of construction; and provisions and future requirements as to public welfare, health, and cultural life.

Such matters will determine the amount and location of facilities that make a community worth living in—schools, churches, health clinics, theaters, libraries, community centers, ballparks, swimming pools, townhalls, and many more.

ASSEMBLING INFORMATION about what the community has is like taking inventory. It permits the community to base its plans on facts rather than guesswork. This second step in the planning process involves preparation of a master plan to guide growth.

Planning for a community, like planning for a family, is using foresight about its own needs and objectives. Growth brings changes, for better or worse, and problems that become harder to solve as time goes by.

Each master plan therefore should have maps that show a desirable scheme of land use, including areas for new industry, business, homes, and agriculture, if it is a rural community. More people will need more jobs, safe and convenient places to shop, attractive homes, land for farming and gardening, and areas for rest and play. Determining the areas in a community that are most suitable for each of these land uses requires study.

A GROWING COMMUNITY also needs new roads and streets, schools, public buildings, water mains, sewers, and other public facilities. Estimates of how many of these improvements a community will need and when are based on population trends and on realistic, careful studies of expected industrial, business, and residential growth: An overinvestment in public improvements may become burdensome.

Where should the proposed public improvements be located? Locations might be selected with a view to making the fullest use of present and proposed facilities.

The location of public buildings, roads, and other facilities will influence the use made of land. Because their absence tends to discourage most kinds of nonfarm development, the community's control over the location of facilities can foster its orderly growth.

Most plans suggest ways for obtaining new development but try not to sacrifice what is valuable in the old. They reserve productive areas for agriculture, but look far enough ahead to a time when it may be necessary to let them be turned to nonfarm uses.

Thought should be given to guiding growth, where practical and feasible, toward the less productive land so

that the better lands are reserved for farming.

A realistic safeguarding of the community's agricultural base will benefit many persons besides those already on the land—those who own, operate, or work in plants that process farm products and dealers, truckers, banks, merchants, and others who provide the goods and services that farmers buy.

Planners should be aware of possible conflicts between urban and agricultural interests. Townspeople may object to smoke from smudge pots, dust from farming operations, noises and smells from farm animals, noise of tractors at unusual hours, and the spraying and dusting of crops. Water tables may drop because of pumping for subdivisions in some farming areas. Pollution of streams may affect water for irrigation. Drinking water from wells may be contaminated with septic tank effluents. Farmlands may be flooded because of runoff from roofs and streets of subdivisions. Trespass increases, particularly at harvesttime.

THE THIRD STEP is to put the master plan into effect.

That is done by the government of the county or community and by private persons and concerns. The master plan is their guide in making public improvements—roads, schools, water mains, sewers—and the private homes, stores, factories.

The success of the plan depends a great deal on the cooperation of private builders and developers—as well as on the interest, understanding, and support of the citizens.

A way to gain that support is to let people know the purposes of the plan and to give them ample opportunity to express their views. Public hearings on the proposals give them this opportunity; besides, they are necessary in a democracy.

A good plan may be expected to receive support from all groups, but a community will need to provide direction and guidance through subdivision regulations, a sanitary code, a building code, and a sound zoning ordinance.

The adoption of a plan or ordinance is in itself not the whole goal. It must be administered; that means it must be properly drawn up and subject to revision to keep step with developments and the wishes and needs of the community.

A GOOD ZONING ORDINANCE is a useful tool for assuring development according to the master plan.

The ordinance sets forth the zoning districts in the community or county and specifies the uses permitted in each. Many agricultural counties and townships have three to five kinds of districts. Most county ordinances establish agricultural, residential, business, and industrial zones. Counties in the midst of rapid urban expansion may need two or more districts of each major type, as, for example, a zone for light industry and another for heavy industry.

Zoning districts and their related regulations are legal instruments for doing certain tasks for the community.

Many factors need to be kept in mind in selecting suitable areas to zone for residences, business, industry, and farming.

Places that are especially well suited to certain kinds of uses ordinarily should not be diverted to other uses that might conveniently be located elsewhere: If the best locations for factories are zoned for houses, industry may go elsewhere. If the better soils are to be devoted to factories or homes, agriculture may be forced out, and a valuable agricultural base may be lost unnecessarily.

The principles of zoning are based on commonsense and experience. Land zoned for residential areas should be well drained. To be avoided are lowlands that flood; low, wet areas; and places where soil is tight, unless sewers are provided. Such tracts might well be reserved for other uses, such as for recreation. Residential areas should have open spaces. They should be attractive and free of soot and grime. They should be convenient to parks,

playgrounds, schools, churches, shopping centers, and places of work. Owners of homes on them should have assurance that conflicting land uses will never be permitted to encroach and lower property values. Roads and streets and water and sewer mains and other service facilities must be considered. Often many tax dollars can be saved by guiding residential development to areas in which public services can be provided most efficiently.

Proper zoning of residential areas will enhance the prosperity and well-being of any community. Most persons who move to the country prefer to live in one-family dwellings. Zoning should protect them by preventing invasion of conflicting land uses, overcrowding, and the depreciation of property values and the tax base.

Regulations for residential districts ordinarily permit harmonious uses of land and buildings and exclude all others. In one-family residential districts, for example, these uses usually are permitted: One-family dwellings; accessory buildings, activities, and uses not conducted as businesses; occupations customarily conducted in the home by doctors and other professional people; buildings and facilities such as schools, playgrounds, parks, churches, libraries, and museums; and customary farming operations. Other uses may be permitted, depending on the wishes of the community.

Uses ordinarily excluded from one-family residential zones include factories, taverns, junkyards, billboards, roominghouses, trailers, stores, filling stations, and theaters. Industries may produce noise, smoke, fumes, and traffic. Stores may cause an increase in noise, litter, fire hazard, and traffic congestion. Areas of mixed uses—to repeat—require more costly roads and streets, water and sanitary facilities, and public services than do areas set aside for homes only.

During the time it takes to change from a farming to a residential district, questions may arise about the keeping of animals. Some zoning ordinances contain no regulations. Others prohibit the keeping of some kinds of farm animals and farming operations; limit the numbers of animals that may be kept on small tracts; relate permissible numbers to tract sizes; or regulate the condition and location on the tract of animal shelters and roaming yards.

It seems fair to exclude such enterprises as commercial hog ranches, goat farms, and mink farms from areas that are zoned for residential use.

No public purpose is fulfilled by applying regulations concerning the keeping of animals on farms, which have ample room.

SEVERAL POINTS should be considered in prescribing the minimum permitted sizes of building lots in residential areas. If public water and sewer mains are available, building tracts may be small, although overcrowding should be avoided. If wells and septic tanks are used, lots must be larger to assure safe water supplies and sanitary fields for the septic tanks. Still larger tracts are required if farm animals are kept.

The shape and the size of yards need to be specified. Wide, rather than long and narrow, tracts allow for adequate open spaces around the houses. Dwellings set far enough back from roads get less dust, noise, and fumes from traffic. Uniform front yards or setbacks add to the appearance of a district. Adequate backyards reduce the fire hazard from houses to the rear, afford a measure of privacy, allow more light and air, are a place for rest and recreation, and provide a safe place for play.

Zoning ordinances often limit the height of residential buildings. One-family dwellings usually are limited to two and one-half stories, not more than 35 feet in height. Church spires, barns, silos, poles, and so on may be higher. Restricting the height of buildings assures a fair sharing of view, light, and air; prevents the pocketing of dwellings, with gloomy, airless siderooms, between taller buildings; keeps one owner from taking advantage of the

open spaces provided by others; and controls the density of population. Tall buildings house more people and attract more traffic. Fires are more readily suppressed when houses are low. Homeowners may move away and values may decline when attractive residential areas are invaded by buildings that do not harmonize.

WHERE ARE THE BEST AREAS in a community for expected business growth and for new industry? Recent trends suggest some answers.

Neighborhood shopping centers with ample off-the-road parking space for customers are springing up over the country. These centers, which consist of about a dozen stores, cater to the shopper's everyday needs. Even larger are the community shopping centers and regional shopping centers, which, like the neighborhood centers, are located near traffic arteries. Off-street parking space and proper access lanes are necessary for all of them. The stores should not be close to the roadside.

Industries have special needs. Modern factory buildings of one or two stories are spread over a large acreage. Landscaping and off-street parking areas are provided. Land for industry should be fairly level, well drained, free from floods, and near transportation and utilities. Land fronting on navigable waters, areas near freeways (particularly near important crossings), sites near major airports, and areas up to 2 thousand feet wide between a main highway and railroad tracks are favored.

A community that contains areas with these physical and locational qualities should not permit their use for residences. It will zone enough of this land for industry to take care of present and foreseeable needs. Until they are needed for industry, the reserved areas can be held in large tracts and used for farming.

In many changing rural communities, industry may well become an important base of a new economic life. If suitable industrial sites are not available, industry will look elsewhere.

IS THERE ROOM in your county for both urban growth and farming?—or must farming eventually go to make room for residential development and for new business and industry?

In either instance, is the expected transition likely to be orderly and to make the best use of all land resources? Or, is the community's fertile soil likely to be sacrificed?

Among factors other than fertility to be considered in zoning land for farming are location, topography, and weather, including air drainage. Important also are soil type and water, and the presence of irrigation, drainage, and soil-conservation improvements.

Fertile soils are not irreplaceable in the sense that their crop yields cannot be replaced by farming elsewhere, but the fertile soil in a community is irreplaceable. Once converted to nonfarm uses and covered with streets and houses, it is not likely to be reconverted to farm use.

Farmers should realize that zoning in their community protects them. Without zoning, their neighborhoods can easily become a dumping ground for activities that are excluded elsewhere.

Farm-zoned districts may be grouped into three main classes. Those of the first class enclose agricultural areas that are closed to objectionable business and industrial uses. In the second group, nonfarm homes are also discouraged, but not barred. In districts of the third class, the zoning ordinances forbid the construction of nonfarm homes in agricultural areas.

In districts zoned for farming, as in other kinds of districts, certain land uses are permitted and other uses are excluded. The specifications vary with localities.

Regulations for general-farming districts in the first group usually permit all kinds of agricultural land uses, buildings, and activities, except farms for disposal of garbage and offal. Also permitted are residences, both farm and nonfarm, plus home occupations,

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schools, churches, and the many other uses and facilities that are allowed in residential districts. Other uses that sometimes are permitted are roadside stands that are owned and operated by farmers, plants for processing and storing agricultural products, mining, quarrying, and earth-extraction industries. Additional uses often allowed are noncommercial recreation, public utility buildings and facilities, and airports.

Other uses and activities are excluded from these farming districts and invited to other zones. Among them are most kinds of business and industry, except agricultural industries. Business activities that sometimes are expressly prohibited in farming districts are wrecking yards, taverns, public dancehalls, auto courts, and trailer camps.

IN THE FIRST GROUP of districts, nonfarm residences are permitted on building lots of suitable size. Usually subdivisions are made for nonfarm homes. They usually require more public services, including new schools, and so bring an increase in local assessments and taxes. In an effort to avoid these consequences and to retard premature parceling, another zoning tool—the large minimum building lot or tract regulation—has been used in the second group of districts. Sizable minimums that range up to 5 acres have been required at times. (In a district near an airport in Colorado, a minimum of 20 acres was set.) Large building tracts discourage residential development in agricultural districts.

A more direct approach is used in a third group of zoned farming districts. Only agriculture, a few related activities that further the use of land for farming, and certain public and semipublic uses are permitted. All other uses, including nonfarm residences, are excluded. To be doubly sure, large minimum tracts ranging by districts up to 10 acres also are required. The designation of such districts is new in agricultural zoning, but—almost since the beginning of zoning—suitable areas have been set aside for homes and related uses only. In Wisconsin and adjacent States, large areas of cutover lands that are of poor quality for farming have been set apart for forestry and recreational uses only. In recent years, a growing number of exclusive zoning districts for business only and for industry only have been created. Now agriculture is catching up.

The primary land uses in all exclusive-type farm zoning districts are agricultural. Other permitted land uses are secondary and accessory to farming. Residences are permitted only as accessory uses to the permitted agricultural uses. Usually the need for farmhousing varies with the intensity of farming and with its type. It includes housing for owners, tenants, and others who work on the land.

The various types of farming call for farm sites of appropriate but differing sizes. Intensive types of farming often are conducted on small tracts—for example, nurseries and greenhouses on 1-acre tracts, poultry farms on tracts of 3 to 5 acres, and feedlot dairies of 5 or 10 acres. Zoning regulations reflect these differing needs.

Districts zoned for farming and related uses only have been created to protect general farming areas as well as areas of specialized farming, such as orchards, truck crops, dairying, and poultry farming. Districts range in size from a 35-acre zone used for growing field and greenhouse flowers to a district that contains 175 square miles and is devoted to several types of farming. Whatever the prevailing agriculture or the size of the district, the zoning regulations need to be shaped to serve local needs.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION on planning and zoning may be obtained from a number of sources. Nearest to home are the planning and zoning agencies in most cities and in many towns, villages, counties, and townships. Some States have State planning boards, development organizations, and similar agencies that may be helpful. Colleges

and universities in some States may be sources of information and aid.

A professional organization in the planning and zoning field is the American Society of Planning Officials, 1313 East 60th Street, Chicago 37, Ill.

Among publications that may be helpful are Rural Zoning in the United States, Agricultural Information Bulletin No. 59, January 1952, United States Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C.; The Ins and Outs of Planning, 1952, State Planning Section, New Jersey Department of Conservation and Economic Development, 520 East State Street, Trenton, N. J.; Your Community and Township Zoning, Circular Bulletin 184, February 1945, Agricultural Experiment Station, Michigan State College, East Lansing, Mich.; How To Make Rural Zoning Ordinances More Effective, Circular 546, April 1957, Extension Service, College of Agriculture, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wis.; Farm Land Disappears, September 1953, and Agricultural Zoning Makes Sense, September 1954, Agricultural Extension Service, University of California, Berkeley, Calif.; County Zoning in Illinois, Publication 109, April 1952, Illinois Legislative Council, Springfield, Ill.; Zoning in New York State, a Guide to the Preparation of Zoning Ordinances, 1952, Department of Commerce, State of New York, 112 State Street, Albany 7, N. Y.; Principles of Industrial Zoning, August 1951, National Industrial Zoning Committee, 820 Huntington Bank Building, Columbus 15, Ohio; Zoning and Civic Development, January 1950, Chamber of Commerce of the United States, Washington 6, D. C.

Since the last issue of the Democrat, a great excitement has prevailed throughout our town. At 6 o'clock, Saturday evening, many of our prominent citizens seated themselves at the door of the Land Office, that they might secure, in season, the door for the Monday morning following. Before break of day on Sunday morning, some fifty had gathered upon the steps and registered their names in a book. This little band continued to hold its own till afternoon, when many more were added. Evening came, and still larger numbers gathered. During the day, however, the speculators had been laboring to enforce the number system, which gave each man (settlers excepted) an opportunity of registering his chance to enter the Land Office and enter two quarter-sections of land.

Outsiders, finding themselves thwarted on every hand, resolved to make one general rally, and if possible, crowd those at the door up so hard that they would yield their positions. At one time scores would rush up against them in front, then on the sides, then upon the front and side at the same time.

These operations were continued, and were for the most part unsuccessful, from about five till nearly eight A. M., when more harsh means were used. We passed the office at about seven, and saw many who were nearly exhausted from fatigue, having stood upon their feet thirty-six hours. A constant agitation and clamor was kept up by the crowd on the outside, until many were so crushed that they fainted . . . .

Window panes were broken out from a tier of lights above the door, and several buckets of water thrown upon the fainting ones below. The Register, seeing many were likely to be killed, and others badly injured, went upon the roof of the building, and declared that none who pushed or crowded should be served that day. This served to produce the desired effect upon many; others were so much wrought up that they almost felt desperate.

At 9 o'clock the door opened, and many fell prostrate and nearly helpless upon the floor. To sum the matter in brief, we have never seen a more distracted and desperate set of men than were about that office. All were armed, and resolved to defend themselves to the last. Mr. E. M. Downs of this place had a leg broken; a gentleman from Ohio had some two or three of his ribs broken, besides a large number of persons who were badly injured, but were fortunate enough to have no limbs broken.—Dubuque [Iowa] DAILY REPUBLICAN, June 19, 1857.