

# Some Suggestions for Economical Fencing

Article No. 42 on "Diversification and Independence in 1915!"

By L. A. MARKHAM

**I**N SEEKING to determine the real economy of any kind of fencing there are a number of factors which ought to be taken into consideration. That fencing which is accomplished at the lowest first cost may often be the most expensive in the end. The questions which underlie real economy are such as these: How long will the fence last without expensive repairing? What kind of service will it give while it does last? What kind of fencing will best meet my farm requirements? The most economical fence is the least expensive one which will satisfy the requirements indicated in these questions. Let us see what kind that is.

## Fencing to Meet the Farm Requirements

**T**AKING the last of these questions first, the farm ought to be fenced, for one thing, so as to enable a man

prove the cheapest fence in the long run. But, if a man desires to avoid the building of so much hog-proof fencing, it is entirely possible for him to construct a movable fence which he can set up anywhere it may be required. This can be done by covering panels of the desired length with hog wire and constructing upright supports, answering for posts, for them to fit into at the ends.

## The Best Wire to Use

**O**NE of the biggest economic factors to be taken into consideration in buying fencing wire is its lasting qualities, and the lasting quality of wire is determined mainly by its ability to resist corrosion. Ordinary painted wire soon loses its protective covering and begins to corrode and wear out; but good galvanized wire, on the other hand, will resist these destructive changes almost indefinitely. For this reason, while the cost of galvanized

posts of ordinary timber that have been given some sort of preservative treatment. There are sections of country, without especially durable woods, which have such an abundance of ordinary timber that it may not pay a man with but little fencing to do to bother about durable posts; but in all other sections durability is a very important consideration, even to the small farmer, and a man will find it the part of economy to use one of these three classes of posts in his fencing.

## Posts of Durable Timber

**W**HAT we shall have to say in this article as to the advisability of using concrete or treated wooden posts applies, of course, only where a sufficient supply of good, durable timber is not to be found in the woods. A man who has plenty of bois d'arc, black locust, walnut, cedar, or even mulberry or good post oak need not go to the expense of buying artificial or treated posts. It is not usually economical, either, to treat these posts with preservatives, for the treatment does not add enough to the life of the post to justify the expense. The best plan is to simply season them thoroughly, or slightly char them, and avoid preservatives.

## Concrete Posts

**I**T APPEARS from investigations recorded in Farmers' Bulletin No. 403, of the United States Department of Agriculture, that, with rock or gravel at \$1 per yard, sand at \$1, cement at \$1.50 per barrel, wire cable for reinforcing at 1½ per pound, and labor at about 20 cents per hour, the cost of "heavy triangular" concrete posts would be about 29 cents apiece. At this price, if the posts stand 12 feet apart, the posts for fencing a square farm of 40 acres will cost \$127.50. Here, again, the cost looks a little high; but there are many sections where concrete posts, even at this price, would be less expensive than good durable wooden posts. In some sections locust posts sell as high as 35 cents apiece, willow 25 cents, and bois d'arc 40 cents.

A man ought, if practicable, to make his own posts. The home manufacture of concrete fence posts is by no means a complicated or formidable undertaking. Bulletin No. 403 of the United States Department of Agriculture gives full instructions for doing the work. The molds can be made of wood at very small expense; or several neighbors can go in together and buy a set of steel molds to be used among them time about. The best plan, in fact, is to buy both molds and materials—cement, sand and gravel—together, coöperatively, so as to get the benefit of lowest prices.

## Wooden Posts, Treated

**I**N MANY sections there is little or no timber that will make a durable post; and, at the same time, materials for the manufacture of concrete are far away and very expensive. Here the best and least expensive solution of the problem is the making of ordinary posts durable by giving them some sort of good preservative treatment. Pine, cottonwood, gum, elm, hickory, ash, maple, willow, etc., can be made, by different methods of treatment, to last as long as the durable woods or longer. This is an experimentally established fact.

One of these methods is the charring of the post over an open fire, thus giving it a coat which is resistant to a considerable degree to the entrance of the organisms which bring about decay. It is best to char the

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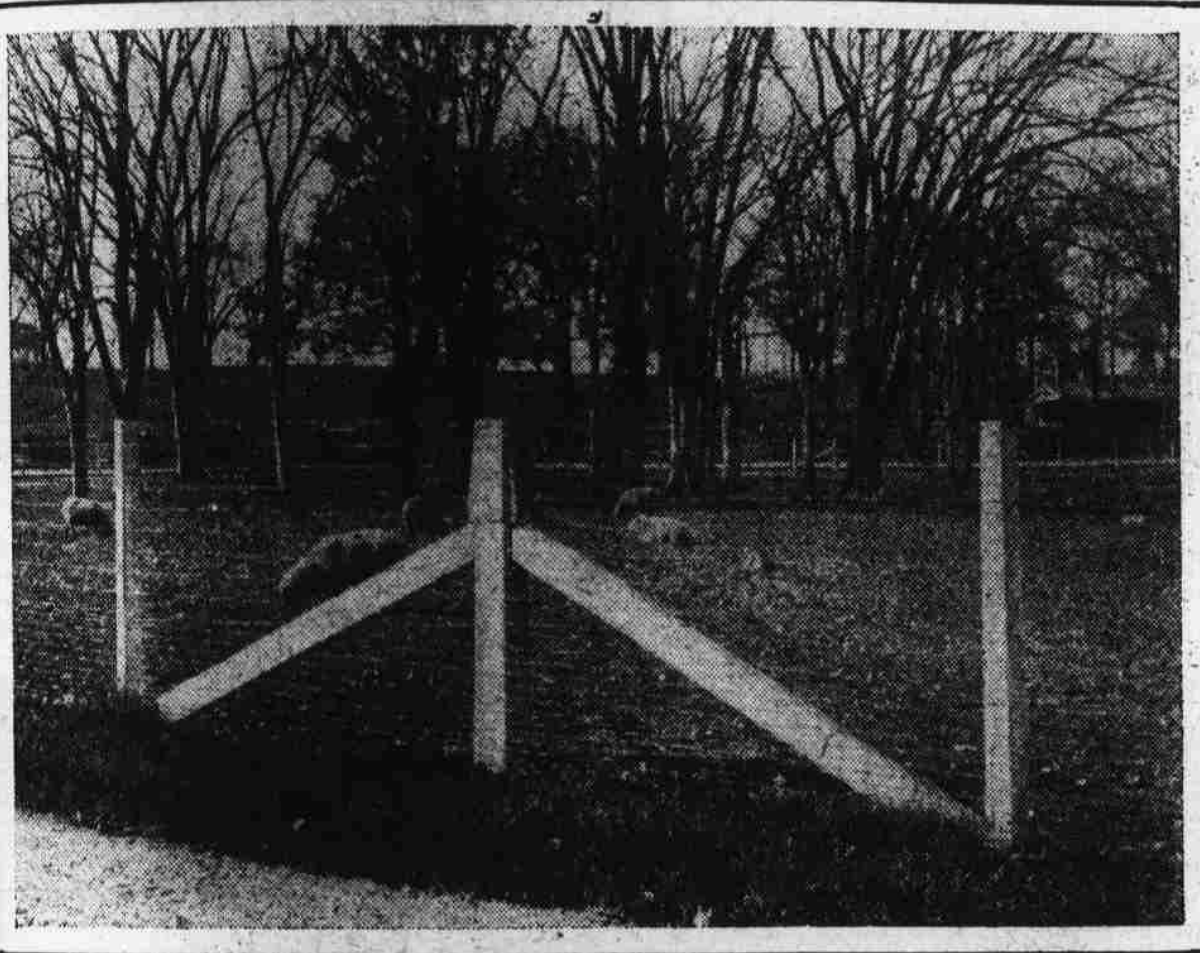
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CONCRETE FENCE POSTS, SHOWING ANCHOR POST AND BRACES MADE OF CONCRETE

to get the greatest possible benefit from his pastures. As a great many farms are now fenced the hogs cannot be turned on the peanuts or the pea field because there are no hog-proof fences to keep them inside or to keep them from depredating on other crops. Even the cattle and horses cannot be turned on the cornfield sometimes on account of there being no cross fences to restrain their rambling about the place. Indeed, there can hardly be any systematic farming without systematic fencing to make it possible and practicable.

From these reflections we arrive at the conclusion that a large part of every general farm, producing general crops and livestock, ought to be enclosed by a hog-proof fence; and that, if a systematic crop rotation including pasture crops is to be maintained, the cultivated portion of the farm ought to be divided into at least three or four sections by hog-proof cross fences. Permanent pastures, also, ought to be fenced hog-proof.

Hog-proof fencing is, of course, a little expensive at the first—at \$5.75 per 20 rods for 30-inch hog wire and \$2.75 per 80-rod spool for enough barbed wire to put two strands above the hog wire, the wire to fence a square farm of 40 acres would cost \$114, and proportionately more for smaller or longer fields, though less for larger ones; but, considering the value of the pasturage which can be utilized by hog-proof fencing and the systematizing of the cropping operations which it renders possible, we see that the hog-proof fence may easily

be a little higher than painted wire, it is more economical in the long run to buy it.

However, in buying even galvanized wire a man cannot be entirely certain as to its lasting qualities, unless he makes an actual test of its plating; for only a carefully conducted test can determine accurately the thickness of the protecting coat of zinc. Where a man is buying only a small amount of wire the testing may not be sufficiently important to justify the small trouble and expense; but in the case of a man who is buying a large quantity of galvanized wire, especially that guaranteed to carry a high percentage of zinc, the test should always be made, and it may prove a very profitable piece of work. It will show whether or not the wire carries the percentage of zinc it is supposed to carry—whether or not it will have the durability it ought to have. The test is easy to make, since it consists simply in immersion of a piece of the wire in a solution of copper sulphate. A description of the process is given in Farmers' Bulletin No. 239, of the United States Department of Agriculture.

## The Fence Post Problem

**A**N IMPORTANT element of economy in a fence post is its durability. While the original cost of the more durable post may be considerably higher than that of the ordinary quick-rotting kind, it is always found in the end to be a good deal less expensive. There are three classes of posts which have the quality of durability in a large degree, viz: posts of naturally durable wood, like bois d'arc and black locust; concrete posts; and

This series of articles will run throughout the year, the next articles in the series being: November 20—How to Learn More About Farming.