

## A Mysterious Midland



In 1870, nearly 75% of Americans lived in a rural household. But in Midland County, less than 40% lived outside Midland City. Why? It's hard to imagine today, but this area was still largely

forest or clear-cut stump fields and swamps in 1870. Farming the land wasn't easy. After trees were logged, farmers had to cut and burn or pull the huge stumps left behind. In the first season or two, it was common for crops to be planted by hand among stumps before they were removed. In all, less than 6% of Midland County's land, or just over 5,200 acres were considered "improved" for farming in 1870. By 1890, over 42,000 acres had been improved, consisting of 1,456 farms.

As of the 2012 Agricultural Census, 555 farms were working 25% of Midland's 337,920 acres. That's 89,000 acres devoted to agricultural production. Top crops include corn, soybeans, wheat, and grass for silage.



## The Thresher

Advances in technology meant 10 minutes of labor instead of 3 hours to produce a bushel of wheat.



Yet fancy machinery was often not in the average farmer's budget. Large equipment such as a stump remover or threshing machine was rented, or shared amongst the community. Pictured above, this threshing crew traveled Hope, Mills and Larkin Township in the early 1900s. Before, farmers used flails to separate the seeds from the chaff.

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