Corn Picking Long Ago
Today corn is picked by a machine called a combine. This machine does it all.

It cuts the corn stalks, picks the ears of corn, husks the ears, and removes the corn from the cob.
Long ago, bringing in the corn harvest was very different.
When this photo was taken only a few people used complicated farm machinery.
Most farmers husked their corn by hand and threw the ears into a horse drawn wagon. Husking is the process of taking the leaves off an ear of corn.
As you look at this picture of tall Kansas corn think about these questions:
• Which way would you like to pick a field of corn?
• Which way would take more work?
• Which way would take longer?
Farmers remove the husks from an ear of corn as they picked it. There is a tall tale about husking corn in Kansas:
When the men in Kansas are husking, they place step ladders near the corn stalk. Two men climb up, cut off the ears with a crosscut saw, and let the ears fall to the ground. Four horses are then hitched to each ear to drag it away.
James LeDuke first husked corn when he was sixteen. He would probably say that corn was never husked like the tall tale says.

In the following pictures he shows us how corn was really husked!
Each farmer had a husking peg. This tool was made of metal or wood. The leather strap on the husking peg held it on the farmer’s hand.
The farmer had to husk his corn before it was picked. They husked the corn on the stalk, and then threw the husked ear into a wagon.
The husking peg slid down the length of the ear of corn. It split the husk as it slid along.

This made the husk easier to pull away from the ear.
The process is a quick one.

In fact, Mr. LeDuke said he had never husked corn so slowly in his whole life as when these pictures were taken.
He said he could husk 100 bushels of corn a day.

It takes about 25 to 30 acres of farm land to grow 100 bushels of corn!
This is one kind of husking peg. Look at the one in the Farm Family in Kansas trunk. Does it look different? Try using it.
• Do you think the husking peg would help you husk corn faster than you could with just your hand?

• Would it make the job easier?

• Do you think practice would make a husking peg easier to use?