

Carolina Farm Women Find Cash In Gardens, Poultry

(BY JANE S. McKIMMON)
With an average net income of \$230.00 from farm crops of all classes on North Carolina farms in 1936 and later, there was too little money to permit many comforts or conveniences to be added

to the farm home and before a home agent could talk about raising the standard of living, she saw something must be done to provide some money with which to do it. There were no government farm credit associations, or subsidies to farmers to assist country families in their farm operations in those early days and the Division of Home Demonstration work did not have one penny to give or loan to people who sorely needed many of the necessities of life. In fact, it has never had any. The small appropriations made by State or Federal government are all strictly apportioned for the salary of the agent and expenses of her travel and it was used for that purpose.

What the home agent did in the situation was to demonstrate to women and girls how to turn the garden, poultry, and skills in cookery into cash for their needs. Already many canning club girls had been able to earn from \$25.00 to \$300.00 on their canned vegetables each year and mothers joining with daughters found as time went on they were building up a trade substantial enough to warrant opening an organized woman's market for surplus farm products and for the cakes, breads, dressings, and other cooked products they had learned to make in their Home Demonstration work.

Starting Women's Markets
The first organized women's markets were in Anson and Pasquotank counties in 1921, Anson's on the Courthouse green and Pasquotank's on a vacant lot near the center of town, and they both did business on Saturday mornings only, with an interested and growing group of town housewives. These small beginnings were successful enough to point the way to other counties and 1924 saw fifteen women's markets serving women in Nash, Anson, Cumberland, Robeson, Mecklenburg, Wake, Pasquotank, Vance, Durham, Guilford, Richmond, and what was called the Cape Fear Home Demonstration market at Wilmington including women sellers from New Hanover, Brunswick, and Pender.

The Market Place
Women's markets at first were for the greater part curb markets and marketers sold from their automobiles, but from the beginning, cold, bad days furnished a problem and tobacco warehouses offered their space, County commissioners opened the basement of court houses and other interested people loaned rooms and the venture was launched to operate winter and summer.

Rocky Mount Home Demonstration Market, organized in 1923, and serving Edgecombe as well as Nash, took the lead from the first. Housed in a big tobacco warehouse and drawing its products from farm homes in a section of the state which produces a varied agriculture, it had a sound foundation.

Its greatest asset was its Home Agent, Effie Vines Gordon, who inspired her club members, interested the town buyers, got the good will of the county commissioners, and with her personality and genius for marketing, brought her sellers through the venture with a fine profit.

Rocky Mount market, therefore, furnished a good demonstration and its plans were copied by other counties who visited and saw what and how things were displayed, type of salesmanship, and what was set in operation to improve standards.

What They Sold
In the first markets women carried just what they could find on the farm to the market place, and vegetables, poultry, butter, eggs, hams, sausage, and flowers all began to increase on the farm. One seller carried a clothes basket full of headed lettuce on her first effort at selling and in a short time after she arrived at the market found her basket empty. She went home puzzled as to what she would add the next week and decided to try the cakes she had been taught to make at her Home Demonstration Club. She sold her cakes quickly and received orders for more, and incidentally she built up a cake trade that brought in gross returns of \$18,666 in the ten years she sold on the market.

And so it went. Marketing was built from simple beginnings. Sellers were not debarred because they brought ungraded products to the market. It did not take them long to see that eggs all of one color or size packed in a carton would bring five cents more per dozen than a job lot carelessly displayed in an old board box; and that Irish potatoes freed from dirt, rubbed and graded brought more than an ill assortment with the dirt from the field clinging to them. In a word, a woman learned through an appeal to her pocketbook because she had found that some more enterprising saleswoman would capture the trade if she continued to practice slovenly methods.

Market Committee
Almost from the beginning a market committee composed of farm women and consumers was elected in each market by those selling and it does much to settle problems, help define policies, and assist in determining prices.
Sanitary Regulations
Sanitary regulations are being observed in many markets and do much to impress the public with what is done to protect the

food it buys. They are usually displayed in the market space of the cellars. In Cumberland county these regulations read:
This home is screened, and has approved water supply, has approved toilet facilities, has health certificate for all sellers; all members have been vaccinated against typhoid fever within past three years.

Housing
Today the farm women would not think of wasting time peddling what she has from door to door as she formerly did, but to pack the Ford with the things she can easily spare from the garden or dairy, and drive up to a building that has been specially set aside for her at the county seat or some other town in the county is quite another matter. And, today, 34 home demonstration markets are in buildings which house them comfortably and 13 of these buildings were planned and constructed especially for markets.

Growth
The farm women's market has grown and, given satisfaction through honest weights and measures, reliable products, constantly advancing standards, and a friendly, wholesome personnel which has created a buying public that likes what it buys and sells its neighbors about it. Today, 1938, there are 42 farm women's markets in North Carolina with 1697 producers selling regularly and they did a business in 1938 of \$309,149.99.

Other types of farm women's marketing and as shipping to institutions, merchants, etc., brought in returns of \$311,269.74 making a grand total of \$620,419.73 for farm marketing in 1938. The largest individual sales or 1938 were made by Mrs. Gordon Gainey, of Cumberland county who received \$1,915.74 for products of her farm. Mrs. Cornelia Morris, the efficient home demonstration Market Specialist, says Mrs. Gainey's total sales from the time she began selling, October 1931 to November 1938 amounted to \$9,453.16, which was an average of \$1,350.45 per year. Telling of the hard work necessary to accomplish so great an undertaking, Mrs. Gainey says: "I fear it has shortened my life several years, but marketing has made it possible for me to spend what is left of life in a good comfortable home which we

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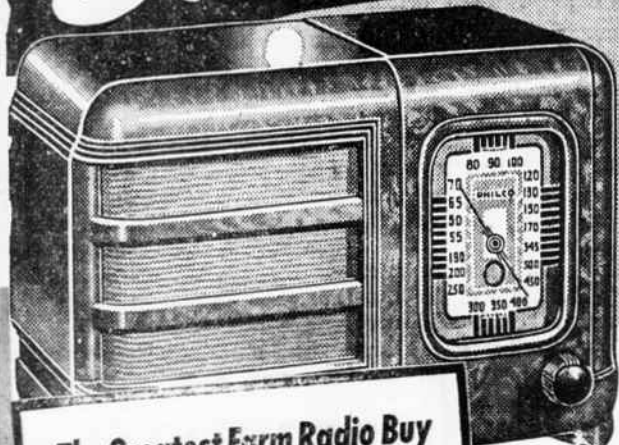
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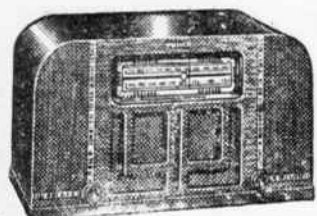
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