

Coöperation the Keynote in Successful Marketing

This Week's Prize-winning Letters

A SUCCESSFUL NEIGHBORHOOD MARKETING CLUB

Read How These Mississippi Farmers Through Community Coöperation Are Turning Losses Into Profits—First Prize Letter

I WILL give you a little experience we are having in coöperative marketing, and if it is worth passing on you may do so.

To begin with, we have a natural cotton country here, and there is no place where it has been more abused than here. But the coming of the boll weevil demoralized everything, and we began to wonder what we could do to make a living for our families and get some money to pay the taxes with. So in reading *The Progressive Farmer* I have taken particular notice of all the letters on coöperation. I made up my mind if it was good for one county it was equally good for another.

Fortunately we had a good many cows in this neighborhood, and I began talking cream separators. I put in one myself and got some of my neighbors interested and got them to get separators on trial, with the understanding that if they were not satisfied after trying them out they were to return the machines without cost to them. All that tried the machines were well pleased.

The next thing that seemed to be in the way was getting the cream to market, so I asked all that had anything to sell to meet me at a certain place for the purpose of discussing some plans to get our stuff to market. We had seven to meet there, all of whom had something to sell, and all were impressed with the coöperative idea. After discussing several plans it was decided that we would not pay out any money, but each man would take his turn and carry the produce and bring back anything that any of our club members wanted without cost to them. We not only had a chance to send our goods to market, but we could get any little things we wanted brought back.

The next thing we had to do was to decide how often we could send our stuff to market. We decided it best to market three times a week, on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. That being decided, then we agreed on a certain place to meet and the hour our horse and wagon was to leave that place going to market. The first month the people generally did not seem to think much about what we were doing, but those that belonged to our club were so well pleased with how we were getting along that they began talking about what we were doing, and now we have ten that belong to our market club.

This is our second month, and we will sell at our present rate over \$150 worth of stuff that would have been practically lost without our market route. Very often you will have \$2 or \$3 worth of produce, and if you have to stop your team out of the field you lose the time, and very often your time would be worth more than what you have to sell. But with us we can now send anything that we have to sell as often as three times a week and our turn to carry the stuff only comes once about every three weeks now, and we have several more that want to join us as soon as they can get something to sell.

I have my eggs sold at 25 cents per dozen the year round. Every egg I sell is guaranteed to be good, and every egg bears a stamp with my number on it, so if an egg proves bad that stamp number will show whether it is my egg or not.

Our people talk about no market for their stuff. My experience is that you can always find a market if you will coöperate with your neighbors, put up a good article, get behind it

with your guarantee, and deliver the goods promptly. E. L. HUGHES.
Why Not, Miss.

Editorial Comment:—We are awarding first prize to Mr. Hughes' letter because it outlines, from actual experience, our conception of the way in which true coöperative marketing must begin. This Mississippi market club, with its market route, affords us an example from which greater things are almost sure to grow, for it is beginning with little things and working up, rather than with big schemes that nearly always mean failure.

WORK OF THE BALDWIN COUNTY, ALABAMA, PRODUCERS' ASSOCIATION

How a Live Farmers' Organization Is Saving Thousands of Dollars Annually to Its Members—Second Prize Letter

BALDWIN County, Alabama, has been placed on the agricultural map of the United States principally through the Baldwin County Producers' Association, behind whose charter stands a special act of the Alabama Legislature. The headquarters of this organization is at Foley, a name known today on every commission row of the country. This organization is non-dividend, purely coöperative association of farmers which has succeeded in making farm produce of this county to be considered merchandise, thus fixing cash on track prices practically throughout the county. It has been in existence some eight years; has handled in its brief life in excess of 1,000 cars of produce in addition to less than ear lots; is today putting more than \$100,000 annually into the pockets of its members in any number of ways. It has had its ups and downs, and just now, owing to unfortunate conditions in the recent early cucumber market and interferences from the outside, is being acid-tested again, but every indication seems to point to another triumph for sanity and fairness.

When Baldwin County cut-over lands were thrown upon the market by land companies that had secured options on them for a mere song, the crooked commission dealer followed fast on the heels of the real estate promoter, and between the two the poor settler had a hard time of it. Many were sued "for freight and other charges" and the judgments slapped on their installment-bought lands without the land companies doing anything to aid the people out of their troubles.

A newspaper man at that time was attracted to this section. He was not a practical farmer, but the fortunes of his typewriter had brought him in close contact with similar conditions in earlier years, and at a glance he saw the solution and applied it. He gained the confidence of the people, but when he came to starting the organization he found that an act of the Legislature was necessary to allow such a proceeding as he had in mind. He has been the guide and aid of the Association ever since.

For a business manager the Association has always gone among its own members, and these in turn have always insisted upon absolute honesty in pack and condition of produce. The reputation thus gained has been of material assistance in bringing buyers down to this neck of the woods. The success of the Producers' Association has been such that its principles have been adopted by other similar organizations in this county. Today no question can be raised that will stand debate as to the condition of produce like sweet potatoes, beans, cucumbers, cabbage,

Irish potatoes, etc., vouched for by the Association.

Here is a little instance that speaks volumes. This spring a glib commission man came around among the growers offering them half cash for their cucumbers, the other half to be paid on his receiving returns from the consignment. He finally amended this nebulous offer to 50 cents cash instead of half cash, holding out as high as \$1.30 a hamper, which he said he could get the first week for the goods he handled owing to his many years' connection with the trade. Organized growers held out for spot cash on delivery, and with these he finally traded on such a basis. These he paid practically more than other houses were offering. Everybody had miscalculated the market, however, with the result that after two weeks dealers refused to stand by their implied contracts. Those who went in on the "50-cent and balance later" deal have still to wait for the "later," while the organized forces, though hit as well by the market, have no claims whatever on the dealers except such as may be included in a breach of confidence.

Another organization that promises to do much for local growers is that embracing the citrus fruit and nut growers of this section. Baldwin County has a large acreage in bearing Satsuma orange and pecan nut groves. Two years ago the growers organized and last season saved on an average \$12 a ton on fertilizers for its members, due to coöperative buying. Think of paying but \$46 for nitrate of soda when dealers were asking \$63, or \$10 for 16 per cent acid phosphate when dealers were loath to sell below \$14.

CARL BOSECK,

Robertsdale, Ala.

WHAT COÖPERATIVE MARKETING DID FOR THESE TENNESSEE BERRY GROWERS

(Third Prize Letter)

THE farmers around Dyer, Tennessee, have been growing strawberries for about 30 years, with varying success. At first each grower consigned to whichever commission merchant he thought best and did fine for awhile. But that finally became unsatisfactory, and then buyers came here and bought directly off the wagons. The growers liked that for awhile for, as they said, that was "money down." But the buyers in a few years "worked the prices down until it would hardly pay to grow them.

Then the first forward step was taken. Local brokers would take over the growers' berries and sell them by the carload, thereby securing the market price. They would charge 10 cents a case for handling them. The growers were satisfied for a good long while, but there was one big defect in this way, and that was that there was no way of grading. All berries, good and bad, went alike, and brought the same price, sometimes we would lose a shipment at the end of the season.

In 1908 a number of the growers met and organized an association known as the Dyer Fruit Growers' Association, with President, Vice-President, Secretary and Board of Directors. The Board of Directors elected an inspector and a sales agent or manager, whom we still have. The Association has about 185 members, and shipped 86 cars in 1914 and about 50 cars in 1915.

We adopted a set of rules for grading and furnished each member a copy of the rules, and required all berries to be hauled on springs. All berries were inspected and put in two grades, A and B.

Where we once paid 10 cents a

case for handling we now pay all expenses with five cents a case, and we think we are getting nearer the top price for our berries. Through the efforts of the Association, the railroad was induced to build a roomy and substantial fruit shed to obviate the difficulty of unloading directly into the cars. We are now working to get a refrigerated express service, which will greatly benefit the growers.

There is one step further we ought to take, and that is for every association in west Tennessee to organize into one central exchange, so as to better distribute the carlots and not put too many on one market.

E. M. JONES,

Dyer, Tenn.

Individual Farmers Cannot Market Successfully

ONLY through organization can uniform grades and breeds be developed. The individual farmer left to himself follows his own taste. An organization can learn the demands of a market and the requirements for shipping and reduce these demands to rules and enforce the rules upon its members. The Eastern Shore of Virginia Produce Exchange finds it necessary to pay out \$30,000 a year for the purpose of insuring the proper grading on the part of the farmer. This would be a cost of about one per cent on gross sales for the expense of maintaining a systematic inspection of grades. As a result the Eastern Shore of Virginia have a brand of potatoes, the Red Star Brand, which is known from the Atlantic to the Pacific. On the basis of known grades the organization can sell its potatoes by wire in the leading markets of the United States. Buyers know what they are buying. The management states that if their system of inspection was withdrawn the growers would go back to their old methods of leaving their potatoes ungraded.

It is a great mistake to think that the problem of grading can be settled by the individual farmer. Grading clubs or societies should be formed all over the South for the purpose of growing a common variety of product in a whole community and for giving a section a reputation for putting out a uniform brand of products. Why do not farmers advertise? Because unorganized they do not have a sufficient amount of a standard product to bear the expense to make advertising pay, as in other lines of business.—Prof. W. R. Camp.

Farmers Should Market Corn and Oats in Two-bushel Sacks

I HAVE been reading with interest your articles on crop marketing and hope that good will result from them, for there is certainly a need for better marketing by farmers. Corn brought to market here by the farmers is on the ear, and as there are only one or two sealed barrel measures in town, the farmers have difficulty in finding ready buyers for their corn. The corn the merchants buy is shipped from the West in even two-bushel sacks, and the merchants prefer to handle it this way. The farmer finds only one or two merchants who are willing to handle corn on the ear on account of the trouble in measuring it, while he would find a dozen who would be glad to buy it in two-bushel sacks. The farmer has plenty of empty guano sacks and with a little trouble he could shell the corn and sack it and thereby find a much readier sale for it and at a better price.

Seed oats would also find a much readier sale if the farmers brought them to the market in sacks containing two or three or five bushels each instead of having bushels and fractions of bushels in the sacks.

JAMES W. HORNER,
Manager Horner Bros. Co.

Oxford, N. C.

The men who lead are the men who read.