CHAPTER VII
HOW THE RAILROADS HELPED
War Garden Activities of Management and Employees

As soon as America became a belligerent the railroads of the country sought to help relieve the food shortage and the traffic situation by encouraging the cultivation of all vacant lands along their rights-of-way. They called on their employés to plant this unused acreage wherever it might be found. To railroad managers the double value to be gained was quickly manifest. The movement would not only add to the nation’s food supply but be an important and direct factor in relieving the demands on the carriers for the hauling of freight. The result was that nearly all the railroad lines ran through gardens of growing vegetables which were soon seen flourishing everywhere, along the tracks, around the cozy little watch-boxes of the crossing flagmen and even alongside station platforms.

The railroads furnished the land to their men free of charge or at nominal rental, and in many cases further assisted them by supplying quantities of seed and by aiding in the preparation of the soil. They placed posters in their stations calling attention to this opportunity for patriotic service, and distributed tens of thousands of copies of gardening and canning manuals furnished them by the National War Garden Commis-

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ON PENNSYLVANIA RAILROAD GROUND

This is a fine example of what was done by many of the employees of railroads in raising vegetables on ground which formerly had been lying idle. The companies aided by distributing garden books among the men, by placing war-garden posters on bulletin-boards directing attention to the value of this work, urging the workers to apply for land, and in various other ways. This scene is at Pitcairn, Pennsylvania.
The Pennsylvania Railroad alone, on its lines east of Pittsburgh, gave out during the season of 1918 more than 20,000 copies of these instruction booklets. The division superintendents and their assistants acted as the distributing agents. In addition they frequently assisted in other ways in helping to arouse the entire local and community interest in this work. Through the posters, displayed conspicuously on bulletin boards, the attention of hundreds of thousands of other persons besides railroad employés was called to the urgent need of war gardens and of conserving food. Local station agents were also a powerful factor in the work. Not only did they encourage the company employés to engage in gardening but they assisted in other ways to arouse interest.

As a sample of what the railroads did in this direction, here is an extract from a general notice, signed by R. L. O'Donnel, assistant general manager of the Pennsylvania Railroad, which was posted along all the lines of that road. This was addressed "To all employés of the Pennsylvania Railroad." It said:

Owing to the interest shown, and the substantial results obtained by employés of the Pennsylvania Railroad in the cultivation of war gardens last year, the Management will renew for the present season the arrangement by which vacant land belonging to the Company may be available to employés for garden purposes, at a nominal rental. . . . All employés who are able to do so, are urged to take advantage of these opportunities by cultivating war gardens this spring and summer, thus assisting our country in the production
of food, and also aiding in a very essential manner to win the war. Employéés taking this action will, in addition, be helping themselves in one of the best possible ways. It is for just such purposes as these that the Daylight Saving plan was initiated. Last year the employéés of the Pennsylvania Railroad lines east of Pittsburgh raised crops of an estimated value of one quarter of a million dollars. Let us endeavor to surpass this good record in 1918.

Many other railroads deserve special mention for their activity in this line. Among them are the New York Central, the Union Pacific, the Northern Pacific, the Missouri, Kansas & Texas, the Illinois Central, the Atlantic Coast Line, the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific, the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy, the Long Island, the New York, New Haven & Hartford, the Missouri Pacific, the Erie, the Boston & Albany, the Delaware & Hudson, the Chicago & Northwestern, the Pere Marquette, the Louisville & Nashville, the Norfolk & Western, the Seaboard Air Line, the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul and the Cleveland, Cincinnati, Chicago & St. Louis. The New York, Chicago & St. Louis Railroad Company reported that a number of gardens were planted along its right of way in 1917 and that in 1918 all available land was applied for and assigned for this purpose.

A report from the Buffalo, Rochester & Pittsburgh Railway showed that more than 2,100 bushels of seed potatoes were furnished to the prospective gardeners, and that the men not only planted these but bought more for themselves, besides buying seed for other
SOME RAILROAD "SOLDIERS OF THE SOIL"

These are Pennsylvania Railroad employees planting potatoes. No class of workers in the country better realized the value of saving transportation by producing "Food F. O. B. the Kitchen Door" than did these men; and thousands of them availed themselves of the opportunity to plant land offered them along the right of way.
vegetables. The resultant yield was 28,000 bushels of potatoes and other garden products to a value of $15,400. The Chicago, Burlington & Quincy reported among other products 3,000 carloads of beans from lands which hitherto had been considered of little value except for grazing purposes.

Plans for the continuation and extension of this work in 1919 have been put into effect by the United States Railroad Administration on all the lines over which it has supervision; and in urging the call of Victory Gardens it coöperates closely with the National War Garden Commission. In response to an appeal sent out by J. L. Edwards, director of the agricultural section of the Railroad Administration, replies have been received from virtually all the regional directors and other officials stating that they would promote the movement to the fullest extent possible. A notable example was the reply from B. F. Bush, regional director of the southwestern region. He said: “I wish to state that the railroads in the southwestern region will again do everything they possibly can in permitting their rights-of-way and station grounds to be used for farming and gardening purposes. During the last season this work was handled on practically every railroad in this region with much success and it will be repeated.” Alexander Jackson, agricultural agent of the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific, answered as follows: “We feel that the War Garden is a permanent fixture in practically all parts of our territory where gardening is possible.” C. L. Hoffman, agricultural agent of the New York, Ontario
& Western, sent this message: "I assure you that I shall do all in my power to have the cooperation of all the officials of our roads in an endeavor to increase the victory gardens of 1919 over the war gardens of 1918." Similar evidences of activity were received from many others.

New posters were furnished the officials by the Commission to help carry to the railroad men and the public all over the United States the call for continuing and increasing home food production. These posters were placed in stations throughout the country, in the great city terminals and in the stations in small towns, under a general order issued by W. G. McAdoo, Director General of Railroads. The posters thus officially displayed are regarded as one of the most potent factors in reaching the American public with the message of the world's food needs which followed the signing of the armistice.