CHAPTER XV
COMMUNITY CONSERVATION

How American Cities Backed up the Cannon with the Canner

ENORMOUS as was the quantity of food packed away in cans by American housewives in the summer of 1918, the quantity so conserved represented only a fraction of the surplus of American war gardens. Home canning could not begin to take care of the excess, and therefore, in order that the Scriptural injunction be followed and "nothing be lost," it was necessary to establish conservation on a community basis, just as it had been found helpful to stimulate production through community gardening. These organized forms of conservation took the shape of community markets for the distribution, and community canneries for the preservation, of the garden surplus.

Though the Commission limited its efforts along these lines to the furnishing of instructions for conserving food, the work of the community centers for the sale of garden surplus proved most helpful and is worthy of mention. The usual custom was for the community club or other organization conducting the market to charge ten per cent. for selling the products. Many war gardeners found the community markets an excellent medium for disposing of surplus vegetables not needed for home consumption. Purchasers, too, were
GIRL SCOUTS CAN CAN, TOO

Girl Scouts of the Radnor High School, Wayne, Pennsylvania, under the direction of Miss Ethel Henderson, receiving instruction in the cold-pack method of canning. This campaign, conducted through the schools of the country, has resulted in a wonderful amount of food saving in this way.
glad of the opportunity afforded by the community market to secure vegetables that were fresh and choice.

One of the most prosperous and successful of these community markets was at Oakland, California, under the direction of Mrs. James Hamilton, the city director of food production, who showed courage and energy in pushing her project to success. It will be well to let her tell something of her own story. Here is part of what she has to say:

So far this market has been the means of saving hundreds of tons of vegetables and fruits, together with quantities of berries, eggs, chickens, pigeons, rabbits and honey. The greater part, if not all, of the perishables otherwise would have been wasted. This market has taken care of the war-garden supplies of our city since it was opened, together with the supplies of several of our big growers of both fruits and vegetables. It will be a very great means of stimulating production for next year because the grower knows he will be given a place where he can market his supplies advantageously.

In Brookline, Massachusetts, a community market was established in an unused church, placed at the disposal of the market committee by the trustees. Here, on two days of each week, surplus garden products could be brought for sale. As gardening had been stimulated to the maximum there was much to be sold. Those who wished to sell their own products were provided, at nominal rental, with individual tables. Sales were made by the market committee for those not wishing to sell in person. For this service a small per-
centage of the selling-price was charged. To this mar-
et were brought products from the school-gardens, the
surplus from back-yard gardens, and the excess from
community garden-patches on great estates, where
ground had been lent by the owners for the use of per-
sons who had no garden space. Vast as was the amount
of produce that poured into the market from all these
sources, every particle of it was sold; and ordinarily the
market was sold out long before the established hour
of closing. Thus, at practically no expense, and merely
by utilizing facilities at hand, the people of Brookline
saved an enormous quantity of food that otherwise
would almost surely have gone to waste.

The women of Roselle, New Jersey, wished to es-
establish a community market, but lacked what would
ordinarily be considered adequate facilities, until they
secured the use of a vacant lot in the town, and then
induced the town council to keep the lot clean. Here,
on given days of each week, were brought all the sur-
plus products of home gardens and even the excess of
neighboring farms which were sold to those who had
no gardens or who wished to buy products that they
could not raise in their own yards. Thus the excess of the
entire neighborhood was brought together and utilized.

At first glance Roselle, like many another small town,
had no place which seemed fitted for a community
cannery. It had a schoolhouse, however, and that
schoolhouse had a kitchen. Presto! It became a com-
munity cannery. At the community market the con-
servation committee bought from day to day such
We Can

CAN
Vegetables
FRUITS AND
the Kaiser too

National War Garden
Commission
WASHINGTON, D.C.

SERVICE FLAG OF THE HOME CANNER
Window hangers like this went broadcast throughout the United States and Canada. Displayed in front windows they carried to all passers-by the message of canning activities within the homes. The eager demand for these hangers showed the pride of the home canners in their work.
vegetables as it was desired to can, and the transportation committee conveyed these products, in motor-cars lent for the purpose, to the schoolhouse cannery, where the women of the town did the canning. Thus Roselle did with its might what its hands found to do—and did it with what was available.

In similar spirit of determination the women of Williamsport, Pennsylvania, secured the use of a church kitchen for the summer of 1917 and there began the conservation of community surplus. Under the leadership of Mrs. John G. Reading and Mrs. H. C. McCormick, and with the assistance of Mrs. R. F. Allen and many other able women, this task so humbly begun grew in size and importance until the canning system embraced the entire county. In 1918 adequate quarters were secured in the business district. Here canning outfits were installed, and the women of the city came day after day to put up the surplus from the market and the excess products brought in by farmers. A substantial fund had been voted by the local Committee of Safety to finance this work. Thus the women were able to buy whatever products were brought in. In seven other districts in the county similar work was going on. All the canning centers were run on identical lines and all were affiliated with the central cannery at Williamsport. In this way scores of women throughout the entire county were drawn into the work. Beyond any question this conservation movement had much to do with the remarkable community spirit exhibited throughout the county.
Another interesting example of a community cannery was to be found in Salt Lake City. Recognizing the need for food conservation, the city's women first brought about the creation of a community market and later established a community canning kitchen that was run in connection with that market. The work was carried on under the chairmanship of Mrs. C. H. McMahon.

The cannery itself consisted of one of the large market stalls, temporarily enclosed for the purpose and equipped with a complete canning outfit. Mrs. W. F. Adams, president of the city's federated women's clubs, was executive head of the organization. She was on duty daily, arriving at the cannery by 7:30 o'clock in the morning. Each morning the market-master purchased in the market such products as Mrs. Adams desired. Sometimes he secured these products direct from the neighboring farms. Occasionally fruit or vegetables were offered to the cannery free on condition that they be picked and taken away. In such cases troops of Boy Scouts were utilized to do the harvesting and motor-cars, offered for the purpose, were used to bring the food to the cannery. In order that there might be a constant force of women at work, that the labor should not become irksome to any, and that the interest be as widespread as possible, Mrs. Adams appointed six lieutenants to look after the labor supply. Each lieutenant was responsible for supplying a given number of hands on one day of each week and each lieutenant procured a certain number of women to pledge them-
ACHIEVEMENT CLUB GIRLS

These three young St. Louis girls are members of one of the Achievement Clubs which took an active part in many cities in teaching and spreading the doctrine of proper food preparation and conservation. Canning of surplus vegetables and fruits was one of their most important accomplishments.
selves to work for her at the cannery on a given day each week. In this way the supply of labor was assured. Usually there was additional help, for all volunteers were welcomed.

In order that the work might be done scientifically, and the pack be uniform from day to day, everything was done under the direction of a paid expert. Visitors were free to come and watch operations, which were thus a continuous demonstration of scientific canning, and thousands of women who had come to market only to buy products also dropped into the cannery and learned the up-to-date methods. The educational value of this effort was beyond computation. The women of the entire city were reached.

One of the most interesting conservation efforts reported to the National War Garden Commission was that of the employés in the shop of the Carolina & Northwestern Railway Company at Hickory, North Carolina. So great was their enthusiasm that they took the cylinder from an old engine and turned it into a canning plant. They coupled up this cylinder with the shop steam-boiler, put on a steam-gauge and drain-cock, and inside the cylinder placed three shelves of heavy wire to hold the jars of vegetables and fruits. Their community canning plant was then ready for operation.

Reports to the Commission from all parts of the country indicated that in a great number of places arrangements were made to preserve surplus garden products through community canneries, and also
showed the success that attended this effort. Typical of the spirit that animated many of these reports is a statement in a communication from J. D. Parnell, secretary of the Chamber of Commerce, Vernon, Texas. Mr. Parnell wrote:

We have a community canner and are preserving everything that we grow. We are also going outside of our county into the communities where they are not equipped to preserve perishable stuff and buying surplus. We can it and sell it to those who have no gardens.

Home demonstration agents of the United States Department of Agriculture, women's clubs, representatives of manufacturing concerns, gas and electric companies, and numerous individuals coöperated in this community canning. "The Federation of Women's Clubs and myself coöperating will supervise the marketing and the canning of the surplus products of the gardens," was the report to the Commission from Miss Anna Allen, emergency home demonstration agent at Independence, Kansas. Similar work was performed in hundreds of places.

The success of these community canneries is indicated by many reports such as one from Dallas, Texas, which boasted of 20,000 war gardens in 1918, with 17,500 cans of vegetables preserved after the plant had been in operation only a few weeks. This same Texas report told of community canneries at Austin, Beaumont, Marshall, and Corsicana. The last named was in the Odd Fellows Hall and was operated by the children. During the first week of its existence the community
cannery at Temple, where there were 5,000 war gardens, took care of one ton of black-eyed peas. The cannery at Beaumont had a capacity of 500 cans daily.

Thus, in hundreds of community canneries the country over, thousands of women were saving the excess food upon which the fate of democracy rested, and practicing, as they canned, democracy itself.