TILLERS OF THE SOIL

By J. F. Magnus

The history of modern agriculture in Outagamie County had its first beginnings during the early days of Wisconsin settlement. However, county agriculture has felt the impact of many important influences. They include the pre-historic agriculture carried on by the native Indians, the extensive fur trade and the early development of Wisconsin lumber industry. All of these have played a part in the evolution of agriculture as we know it today.

INDIANS, FIRST FARMERS

The first crude farming had been developed by the Indians long before the coming of the white man. Father Claude Allouez, who visited the Indians in interior Wisconsin in 1670, describes early agriculture among the Fox Indians in the Jesuit Relations.

"These savages are settled in an excellent country—the soil which is black there, yielding them Indian corn in abundance. They live by hunting during the winter, returning to their cabins toward its close, and living there on Indian corn that they had hidden away the previous autumn; they season it with fish."

Another early explorer, Jonathan Carver, who traveled through Wisconsin in 1766, has also left records of agriculture among the Indians. He wrote, "The land adjacent to the Lake (Winnebago) is very fertile, abounding with grapes, plums, and other fruits which grow spontaneously. The Winnebagoes raise in it a great quantity of Indian corn, beans, pumpkins, squashes, watermelons, with some tobacco."

These first records of early Wisconsin explorers are substantiated by records of later traders. Robert Dixon, a leading trader of the British period, wrote in 1793 that the Indians at the falls of the Fox River raised Indian corn, squash, potatoes, melons and cucumbers in great abundance and good tobacco. He found large quantities of wild oats growing on the low lands near the river.

During the fur trade era great and even revolutionary changes took place in Indian life and customs. These, on the whole, were not always advantageous to the Indians. The trade supplied the natives
with guns and other implements which greatly increased their power over wild game and some of the elements of civilized life. But there is little evidence that these developed in the Indians an urge toward a settled and civilized life.

On the contrary, the fur trade tended to perpetuate the hunter stage by making it more profitable. It also made the Indian more dependent upon the European as a market for the products of the hunt. It can probably be said that the fur trade retarded agricultural progress among the Indians. Among other things the trade broke up the economic, social and political habits of the Indians. It brought about a widespread shifting in the location of village sites, redistribution of hunting grounds and a general change in tribal geography.

The Indian village, however, did have definite influences in the settlement of Wisconsin and its early development, both in agriculture and in industry.

"The Indian village," wrote Frederick Jackson Turner, "became the trading post, the trading post became the city—in a word, the fur trade closed its mission by becoming the pathfinder for agriculture and manufacturing civilization."

Hunting, trapping and the fur trade continued to provide a good share of the living for the earliest settlers of Outagamie County. Farming as an occupation or business developed slowly during the early years.

ARRIVAL OF LUMBERMEN

The second factor which influenced settlement of Outagamie County and brought about the first real expansion of its agriculture was lumbering. Here, as in other parts of Wisconsin, the location of first settlements was determined by the location of lumber mills and camps.

Lumber provided the incentive for the county’s first agriculture. Work in the pineries was carried on most actively during the winter. Many of the men who came into the logging camps for employ-

ment purchased land and became farmers. The lumber camps also provided a ready and stable market for many farm products. This combination enabled many of the early settlers to establish themselves on their farms. Wheat fields, the first symbol of a permanent agriculture, began to appear soon after lumber camps and mills had been established. The mutually advantageous combination of lumbering and farming continued in the county for a number of years—even after the pinery camps had moved north and west of the county’s northern boundary.

After farming had been extensively established lumber continued to provide an important supplement to a farmer’s income. When the stands of pine had been cut, factories using both hard and soft wood sprang up in large numbers.

Another forest product, maple sugar, was also important to the early Outagamie County farmers. It meant hard labor in old fashioned bark-covered log camps, but during the years when sugar was
scarce and high in price it was an important source of income for many. Early records state that frequently from 25 to 100 pounds of sugar were made in a single day by some of the early settlers. It was also recorded that in the Town of Grand Chute alone over five tons of maple sugar were made during the season of 1853. The 1860 census records a production of 175,000 pounds of maple sugar and 6,000 gallons of syrup.

In the speed of settlement Outagamie County paralleled the record made for Wisconsin as a whole. Beginning about 1850 settlers poured into the county in large numbers every season—winter as well as summer.

In 1855 both Center and Freedom townships were filling up with newcomers, large clearings were being made, homes built and farms opened. Settlements farther west in the Town of Dale were also growing rapidly. "Land seekers throughout our county," said the Crescent, "were never more plentiful at this season of the year (April) than now." And these people both tilled soil and in the proper season worked in the pineries.

OUTAGAMIE COUNTY SOILS

Before considering the developments of Outagamie County agriculture it might be well to review briefly the soils to be found in the county. After all, the type of agriculture which was to develop would depend in considerable measure upon the kind of soil with which the farmers would work.

The soils of Outagamie County are largely derived from glacial materials, some from alluvial or stream-deposited materials, some from glacial lake-deposited materials and the peat soils which are the result of large accumulations of organic matter. A good share of the soils are underlaid with sandstone and limestone formations.

The government survey of Outagamie County soils in 1921 recorded 21 different soil types which can be divided into four classes. They are as follows: heavy soil consisting of a Superior red clay and Superior silt and loam; loams and fine sandy loams consisting of Superior, Miami, and Antigo loams and fine sandy loams; sandy soils consisting of Coloma and Plainfield loams and sands; poorly drained soils made up of Poygan, Whitman, Clyde and Genesee loams and sandy loams.

The heavier types of soil comprise 23.7 per cent of the total area of the county. Superior silt loam accounts for 12 per cent of the total, and Superior clay loam, 11.3 per cent. This type of soil is particularly predominant in the southeastern part of the county.

Eighty per cent of the soils in the towns of Buchanan and Kaukauna are made up of the above two types of soil. It also accounts for 50 to 80 per cent of the soil in Vanden Broek, Grand Chute and Greenville. Most of this area is level, or very gently undulating, and because of the heavy subsoil remains somewhat cold and wet in the spring although it is very productive.

Loams and fine sandy loams account for 44.1 per cent of the total area of the county. They predominate in 12 of the 20 towns where they have anywhere from 42 to 85 per cent of the total area in each town.

Fine sandy loams cover but 5.1 per cent of the county's area and it is found mostly in the northwestern part of the county and it is particularly predominating in the towns of Bovina, Liberty and Maine.

A good deal of our soil is underlaid with limestone that has contributed to the fact that a rather small percentage of our soil is acid. Out of several thousand soil samples tested only 31 per cent have shown an acid reaction; 60 per cent were low in phosphorus and 44 per cent were low in available potassium.

FARMS—NUMBER AND SIZE

Development of the county is also shown by the increase in the number of farms, while other changes in farming
methods and practices are suggested by changes which have taken place in the size of individual farms.

The farm census of 1860 reported 1,131 farms established within the county. By 1890 this number had increased to 3,254; the 1925 census reported 3,829 farms. In 1930 the number of farms had decreased to 3,460 but the census of 1935 reported an all-time high of 3,903 farms in the county. Following 1935, the number of farms decreased. The census report of 1940 shows 3,558 farms; the 1945 census shows 3,443 farms. The recent decline in the number of farms has probably been caused by some of the older farmers selling out at the prevailing good prices. In many cases these farms have been purchased by neighbors who have been able to operate larger farms due to the mechanization of farm equipment. Compared with other counties in the state, Outagamie County ranked fourteenth in the total number of farms as reported in the 1945 census.

The 1935 census reported the average farm to consist of 91.7 acres. In 1940 this average was 100.3 acres; in 1945 it had risen to an all-time high of 107.2 acres.

The townships reporting the largest number of farms were Grand Chute with 268, Oneida with 266 and Freedom with 239. Only two towns in the county reported less than 100 farms; namely, Liberty with 92 and Vanden Broek 97.

Tenancy has never been a serious problem in Outagamie County. In 1880, 7.3 per cent of the farms were operated by tenants. This percentage has increased gradually and during World War II reached an all-time high of 15 per cent. This is considerably below the state average.
Census reports reveal an interesting picture of the manner in which land in the county was brought under cultivation. In 1860 it shows a total of 29,529 acres of "improved land in farms." By 1870 this had increased to 74,886 acres. The Crescent estimated early in 1870 that "from 7,000 to 10,000 more acres of land" would be plowed than the year before. Improved land increased to 142,434 acres in 1880—nearly doubling during the decade. This was the most rapid improvement of farm land in the county's history. During each of the following decades about 25,000 acres of new land were brought under cultivation. In 1910 improved land totaled 223,665 acres or two-thirds of all the land in farms at that time. The census of 1945 shows 367,962 acres of land in farms. Cropland harvested totaled 206,387 acres; idle cropland, 1,025 acres; pastures, 121,184 acres; unpastured woodland, 14,915 acres, and all other land, including waste land, farmyards and roads, 24,128 acres.

Parallel to the improvement of land there is a rapid and steady rise in the amount and cash value of farm machinery used on the farms. In 1860 the value of all farm machinery was listed as $51,338. By 1880 it had increased to $332,642, and by 1910 to $1,269,099. In 1945 the value of farm machinery and implements totaled $6,720,874.

**KING WHEAT**

One of the marvels of Wisconsin history is the state's rapid rise as a major producer of wheat—as well as the speed with which the production of this crop fell. In this drama Outagamie County played an important part.

Extensive wheat growing was one of the characteristics of all new areas. Its basis was economic need.

Most of the pioneer settlers were families of limited means. Their first consideration was to produce enough food for their own need. Then came the pressing necessity for obtaining the cash needed to meet obligations incurred in the purchase of their undeveloped land. Wheat was the answer to these needs. It was the one great cash crop of the pioneer era and promised the quickest and surest return for the labor expended.

Newspapers during early years printed frequent reports of large yields of wheat. One report stated that Albert Cook of the Town of Freedom raised 10 acres of wheat in 1853—an average of 33 bushels to the acre. This was a little better than the county average, but the crop that season was described as being generally excellent. The same year wheat grown in the Town of Center was reported to be yielding from 35 to 42 bushels of plump seed to the acre on new land. In 1855 the crop was reported to average 30 bushels per acre and was worth 90 cents a bushel.

Wheat production had become general by 1860. The 1859 harvest totaled 81,473 bushels. In 1860, the peak year of Wisconsin wheat production, it was reported that "thousands of acres" averaged between 20 and 30 bushels to the acre. The county reached the peak of its specialization in wheat between 1869 and 1879. The largest production *per capita* came in 1879 when better than 19 bushels *per capita* were harvested—a total of 550,000 bushels grown on nearly 41,000 acres. Another large crop was harvested in 1877 when 24,419 acres of wheat produced a crop estimated at more than 439,000 bushels—an average of 18 bushels to the acre. With the price quoted at $1.06 a bushel, the value of this year's crop was estimated at more than $565,000.

But wheat growing was already past its zenith. Declining yields due to soil depletion and trouble with insect pests and plant diseases were causing farmers to turn from wheat to other crops which promised a more stable income. During the first World War there was a temporary increase in wheat production due to war demands.

**LIVESTOCK**

Some livestock was brought into the county by the first settlers, mainly for use as work animals and to supply meat.
for their own needs. The census of 1860 shows a total of nearly 8,000 head cattle in the county but these included about 1,800 "working oxen." The report shows 2,352 milk cows, about two for each farm and 3,783 head of "other cattle."

As of January 1, 1946, the total number of cattle on farms in the county had increased to 84,100. The county ranked thirteenth among the 71 counties in the number of cattle on farms.

Some small-scale dairying evidently was begun almost as soon as farm settlement began. It was all carried on in the homes of the farmers and consisted in the manufacture of cheese and butter. The limited output found a ready market at home or in the lumber camps. Much of the surplus, says one historian, found a market across the counter of the nearest general store, through a "swap for calico and chewing tobacco."

One interesting feature of the gradually increasing importance of livestock came during the days of the Civil War when a great many farmers turned to the production of sheep and wool. This resulted from an abnormal demand for wool to replace the cotton shut off by the war blockade.

In 1860 the census reported only 1,426 sheep in the entire county. By 1870 this had increased to nearly 11,000 and ten years later to about 20,000 head. In 1860 the county produced about 3,000 pounds of wool. In the next decade this jumped to over 35,000 pounds and by 1880 to 115,000 pounds. Toward the close of the Civil War newspapers reported that wool "paid double the profit of wheat growing and the labor was nothing in comparison." A woolen factory was one of Appleton's early industries and in 1863 the mill was reported to be doing an enormous business. Scores of farmers were raising large flocks of sheep and large quantities of wool were being brought to the mill. Sheep, however, declined rapidly as a major feature of the county's agriculture. In 1946 the county reported only 2,400 head.

During early days comparatively little interest was shown in hogs. The census of 1860 reported 5,641 head and the total did not reach 20,000 until after 1890. Early in the twentieth century an increased interest in hog production was shown—the number increasing to 36,000 head by 1900. The peak production of over 52,000 head was reached in 1944. Two years later the county ranked twelfth in the state in hog production.

During the first years of Outagamie County history horses were outnumbered by working oxen. The 1860 census showed only 610 head. During the next 10 years the horses increased to more than double the number of oxen and by 1890 the county had more than 8,000 horses and only 222 working oxen. The horse population reached its peak in 1916 with 14,890 head. It has declined steadily since then as mechanical power has come to do more and more of the heavy farm labor. In 1946 the number of horses had dropped to about the 1880 figure—something over 6,000 head.

Early reports did not take the trouble to record the number of chickens but in 1890 a total of about 94,000 birds produced nearly 584,000 dozens of eggs. The importance of the farm laying flock had increased steadily and in 1946 Outagamie County reported about 334,000 chickens. An egg production of nearly 48,000,000 eggs was reported in 1944.

Another interesting illustration of the expansion of the county's livestock industry is shown by the value of its livestock. The census of 1860 showed a total value of $185,642 for all livestock. By 1870 this had increased to $592,315, and by 1890 to $1,143,205. The 1910 valuation was $3,148,236. By the time of the 1945 census this value had climbed to a total of $10,720,401.

**CHANGES IN CROP PRODUCTION**

Beginning with an overwhelming emphasis upon wheat during the early years, the county's crop production schedule has
undergone a complete transformation. Today the county's three major crops are hay, oats and corn—all of them required to feed the large livestock population from which three-fourths of the farm income is derived.

In 1860 less than 7,000 tons of hay, practically all of it wild hay, were put up in the county. This had increased to 34,000 tons by 1900. Wild hay has been almost entirely supplanted by tame grasses. The county's bumper crop was harvested in 1940—a total of about 164,000 tons of having 58,290 acres of clover and timothy to 11,300 acres of alfalfa.

Production of oats began early. It passed the million bushel mark in 1890 and was over 2,000,000 bushels in 1910. The county's biggest crop was harvested in 1944—nearly 3,500,000 bushels. Oats today ranks second in crop acreage in the county.

Corn is third in rank from the standpoint of the number of acres devoted to its production. The crop has been important from the first—nearly 45,000 bush-

tame hay. More crop acres, 88,500, are used for hay than any other crop.

During the years there has also been an interesting shift in the types of tame hay. In the early years clover and timothy predominated. During the thirties alfalfa production increased rapidly, reaching a total of over 42,000 acres in 1938. During the same time clover and timothy dropped from 60,000 acres to 24,000 acres. In 1944 the situation is again reversed, the county levels being harvested in 1860. By 1910 corn production had climbed to more than 1,000,000 bushels.

Increasing use of the silo for preserving the corn crop has reduced the amount of corn harvested as grain. The total acreage of corn in 1945 was above 51,000 acres, which is almost as large as the peak acreage in 1934. About 73 per cent of all corn grown in the county is now used for silage. A survey made in 1942 shows 3,277
silos on the farms of Outagamie County.

During the early years production of potatoes was another major farm crop. The census of 1860 reports a total yield of more than 70,000 bushels. Any surplus not needed for home consumption probably found ready market in the flourishing lumber camps. By 1890 production of potatoes had climbed to 268,864 bushels and in 1910 to nearly 600,000 bushels harvested from 4,276 acres.

In recent years potato production has shown a considerable decrease, the 1944 production totaling about 100,000 bushels as compared to an average annual production of 179,000 bushels for the ten-year period.

Another crop which at one time ranked fairly high in production is barley. From a total of nearly 500,000 bushels harvested in 1910 the production dropped to less than 62,000 bushels in 1944.

A similar trend is shown in rye. The 1944 production of 2,850 bushels is smaller than the crop of 4,842 bushels harvested in 1860.

Attempts at growing other crops like hops and tobacco, were also made during the early years. Better than 1,000 pounds of tobacco were grown in 1860 but this crop was soon abandoned. Outagamie County also experienced a part of the hop craze which swept the state after the Civil War. The peak production recorded by the census came in 1869 when 12,800 pounds were harvested.

Two cash crops are grown quite extensively in Outagamie County—peas and cabbage. According to 1944 reports, farmers of the county obtained 1.8 per cent of their gross farm income from the sale of peas for canning and 4.3 per cent from cabbage.

Cabbage production began early in this century, following the construction of a kraut factory in 1902. The 1910 census reports that 1,000 acres of cabbage was grown in 1909. By 1944 the acreage had increased to 4,900 acres with a production of 39,200 tons. The county ranks second in the state in cabbage production.

Peas for canning were introduced much later. Reports show that 123 acres were grown in 1918. By 1947 the acreage had increased to 3,490 acres with a production of 8,027,000 pounds.

GROWTH OF DAIRYING

Perhaps the most spectacular as well as the most fascinating chapter of Outagamie County’s agricultural history is the growth of its dairy industry. Getting under way slowly at first, it boomed during the decade of the eighties and has come to occupy the dominant place in the county’s agricultural economy.

How far the farmers of the county have gone in the development of dairying as a sound and permanent basis for their industry is shown by reports of sources of farm income. According to reports for 1944 farmers of the county derive over one-half of their total income from milk alone. Dairying is a part of the county’s livestock industry, and when receipts from livestock and other livestock products are added to milk, it shows that over three-fourths of the county’s farm income comes from this source.

The increase in the number of milk cows was slow at first. In 1860 there were 2,352. This doubled by 1870 to a total of 4,819. By 1880 the number had increased to nearly 9,000; in 1890 to 16,000; and by 1910 to nearly 31,000 head. On January 1, 1946, Outagamie County had 58,600 cows and heifers, two years old and over, to give it tenth place in the state. In 1945 it held ninth place in the state in milk production, with a total of nearly 360,000,000 pounds. In 1947 it produced 696,000 pounds of creamery butter, 15,361,000 pounds of cheese and 28,820,000 pounds of condensed and powdered milk products. It is interesting to note that in 1947 Outagamie County produced about 14 times as much cheese as was made in the entire state of Wisconsin in 1860!

Just who first made butter or cheese in the county probably will never be
known. It is certain, however, that both 
products were made in the farm homes 
from the earliest days. Home dairying was 
the universal practice everywhere and 
creameries and cheese factories as we now 
know them did not come into general 
use until during the sixties. With a few 
exceptions, most farmers made only 
enough cheese and butter for their own 
use. Local demand usually absorbed all 
available surplus.

When the first load of cheese was 
brought to Appleton, it proved sufficiently 
noteworthy to warrant a newspaper ac-
count of the event. "We saw in town last 
Saturday a fine load of cheese from the 
farm of Mr. Barnes near this village," 
the Crescent reported on June 10, 1854. 
"Mr. Barnes is from Ohio and the product 
of his dairy bore the superior mark of the 
rich cheese of which large quantities are 
imported from that state. Mr. Barnes has 
already manufactured over 1,000 pounds 
this season which readily sell for 10 cents 
a pound. He has a farm of 100 acres under 
cultivation and a fine stock of cattle and 
we wish him every success as a pioneer 
dairyman of our county."

From the census of 1860 we learn that 
in 1859 there was manufactured 4,660 
pounds of farm dairy cheese in Outa-
gamie County as well as 189,874 pounds 
of dairy butter. This follows the general 
pioneer pattern. Buttermaking could be 
carried on with small amounts of milk 
and developed more rapidly than did 
cheesemaking which required a larger 
volume. This was true even of home 
cheesemaking.

That cheesemaking was becoming a 
recognized activity is indicated by re-
ports published in 1865, in which it was 
"urged that the cheesemakers of the 
county should organize for the purpose 
of improving their products." It was 
argued that more factories should be es-
ablished in order to utilize the large 
amount of milk and cream being wasted 
throughout the county.

Louis Perrot, who has been called the 
"father of the dairy industry" in Outa-
gamie County, became active in dairy 
promotion work very soon after he came 
to the county in 1855. Cheesemaking was 
not a new art to the Perrot family, which 
came from Switzerland and moved to this 
county after a short stay in New York.

One of the earliest accounts of Louis 
Perrot came in 1867 when it was reported 
that a group of farmers had assembled 
at Greenville and prepared to build and 
conduct a cheese factory in that town. 
Both Louis and Frank Perrot were among 
those interested in the venture. Milk 
from 160 cows, it was said, would be 
available. In March of that same year, 
at Foreman's Hall in Appleton, a group of 
persons formed a cheese association for 
the village of Little Chute. H. Jones was 
chairman and R. K. Randall recorded the 
minutes.

Earliest reports of Louis Perrot's fac-
tory are found in the dairy statistics 
gathered by the Wisconsin Dairymen's 
Association. In the second annual report, 
published in 1874, Perrot is listed as one 
of the honorary vice-presidents of the 
anorganization. His dairy at Greenville, 
during 1873, had manufactured 9,397 
pounds of cheese and 529 pounds of butter 
from the milk of 33 cows. The following 
year the report credits his factory with 
making 80,633 pounds of cheese and 345 
pounds of butter from the milk of 230 
cows. There was no report for 1875, but in 
1876 he was shown to have made 9,450 
pounds of cheese from the milk of 27 
cows. His factory was listed as a "private 
dairy."

In 1885 Perrot brought glory to him-
self and the county when he exhibited 
900 pounds of cheese at the World's Fair 
in New Orleans and won the first premium 
of $125 in gold.

In 1876 the Dairymen's Association re-
port lists five dairies in Outagamie County 
—L. Perrot, Greenville; E. M. Gowell, 
Greenville; H. Brockway, Appleton; H. 
M. Armstrong, Freedom; and Edward 
Nye, Freedom. These five dairy plants 
were listed in reports through 1880. The 
report was described as "incomplete"
but it represented all the information that could be obtained by the association.

During the eighties creameries and cheese factories evidently sprang up in great numbers throughout the county. During Governor Hoard's administration, 1889, the state Dairy and Food Commission was set up. Outagamie County had six creameries and 63 cheese factories in 1891 and 1892.

Another early cheese factory report is published in Ryan's history. It covers the activities of the Appleton Cheese Factory for the season of 1875. According to this report the factory operated 131 days, receiving a total of 254,822 pounds of milk, or an average of 1,945 pounds per day. During the season it manufactured 27,120 pounds of cheese, an average of one pound of cheese for nine and two-fifths pounds of milk.

In 1877 the Wisconsin Dairymen's Association held an annual meeting at Appleton and a number of interesting statements about the dairy industry of Outagamie County have been preserved in its report. In his annual address the president, Hiram Smith of Sheboygan Falls, made a prediction regarding the dairy possibilities of the county which the passing years have more than brought into fulfillment.

"There is no good reason," he said, "why the farming country, in this vicinity, should not be dotted with cheese or butter factories, every four miles, in all directions, and this city become the shipping point and center of a large dairy district."

Another corollary of dairying, improved livestock, early began to make itself manifest in Outagamie County. Again the Dairymen's Association report brings an interesting illustration. One of the topics presented during the convention was a talk on "Dairy Stock" by D. Huntley of Appleton. Mr. Huntley declared that in the spring of 1871, the Farmers' Club, consisting of some thirty members, purchased three full blood Ayrshire bulls. He then described the results obtained from their daughters, including both one-half and three-fourths blood heifers, and quoted L. L. Randall as saying that, while the Ayrshires in his herd were young, they were producing more milk than the native cattle, the sales of the year amounting to $50 per cow.

W. D. Hoard, in a talk on dairying in Wisconsin, declared that "Outagamie County...is one of the finest grass counties in the entire northwest, abundantly supplied with excellent water, and yet there is really but little dairying done."

FARM ORGANIZATIONS

In the evolution of Outagamie County organizations of dairy farmers and livestock breeders have played an important part. As early as 1853 the Crescent advocated the formation of an agricultural society and a stock fair. In the spring of 1854 there were reports of such an organization which was making plans for an exhibit in the fall. R. A. Lawe was secretary and Samuel Dunn, president.

The first fair, however, was not held until the fall of 1860. Newspapers published the premium list in full, listing 15 classes: cattle, horses, sheep, hogs, poultry, grain, vegetables, fruit, farm products, agricultural implements, harness and leather, domestic manufactures, flowers and house plants, needlework and art work. The fair was held October 18, 1860 at the park of the Rev. Reeder Smith near Appleton. In 1861 grounds were leased from David Kimball in the second ward. Plans were made to have the grounds cleared and fenced and buildings ready for the fair. At this fair, held October 1 and 2, 1861, the society awarded 124 premiums to 65 persons, the awards totaling $183.25. Later county fairs were scheduled at Hortonville and Seymour. At the latter city, nearly 40,000 attended the 1948 fair.

During the early years the Agriculture Society gave great encouragement to agriculture, horticulture and stock raising. Newspapers took up the matter and carried departments devoted to these sub-
jects. Farmers responded to their message and a gradual improvement in livestock began. Greater crop diversification also was urged.

Widespread interest in better agriculture is also shown by the number of other organizations which were formed during the sixties and early seventies. In March 1864 a Fruit Growers’ Association was formed with R. Pearson as president, L. L. Knox as secretary and George Knowles as treasurer. In 1866 the Appleton Stock Growers Association was incorporated. It was authorized to buy land and hold fairs, stock exhibitions and trials of speed. For a time monthly stock fairs were held and cattle and horses offered for sale.

Another strong and active organization in the early seventies was the Farmers’ Club of Grand Chute. Regular meetings were held for the discussion of many subjects such as fruits, seeds, milk cows and draft horses.

In 1871 a Beekeepers’ Association was formed at Appleton. R. Z. Mason was president; Z. C. Fairbanks, secretary; and A. H. Hart, treasurer. The following year the first agricultural convention was held in Appleton. In 1873 the Grangers began organizing lodges, “nearly all farmers becoming members.” A county council of the Patrons of Husbandry was formed by the Grange organizations before the end of the year. In the eighties the cooperative movement took root. Such a farmers organization at Greenville, with John Dey as secretary, prospered greatly. At the same time Farmers’ Institutes originated. Two decades later farm youth regularly began going to the state university for “short courses” and general education in agriculture. All of these activities and many others which came later contributed to the great forward march of agriculture in the county during these years of rapid growth and expansion.

COOPERATIVES

According to information furnished the writer, the first farmers purchasing co-operative association still in existence is the Seymour Cooperative Exchange, organized at Seymour about 1910. This may be the same group mentioned in Ryan’s History of Outagamie County, taken from newspaper files. The item states that “the American Co-operative Society of Equity was held at Stephensville in January, 1909. Delegates came from Little Chute, Seymour, Black Creek, Shiocton, Ellington, Kaukauna and Grand Chute. The session was held in the Kroeger opera house.”

Since that time nine similar cooperatives have been organized. They have a total membership of over 7,000 and are doing an annual business of better than $3,000,000 in such commodities as farm hardware, farm machinery, gasoline, oils, feed, seeds, and fertilizers. In 1936 the Fox River Valley Cooperative Wholesale was organized and now sells farm supplies to approximately 100 local cooperative associations across the state. This organization recently moved into one of the most modern warehouse and office buildings to be found in Wisconsin.

At the present time there are two large modern cooperative dairy plants in the county serving several hundred dairy farmers—the Outagamie Milk Producers’ Cooperative at Black Creek, and the Consolidated Badger Cooperative at Appleton. The Outagamie Milk Producers have specialized in the manufacturing and sale of mindless American cheese. The Consolidated Badger Cooperative recently moved into one of the most modern and up-to-date convertible milk plants to be found anywhere. They also have just completed an outstanding milk drying plant. Outagamie County can also boast of several smaller cooperative cheese factories.

Other types of cooperatives operating in the county include: seven livestock shipping associations marketing livestock; a purebred seed growers’ association; a vegetable growers association; 10 orchard spray rings, an artificial insemination cooperative for breeding dairy cattle; a modern funeral home; at least two frigid
locker plants and three dairy herd improvement associations for the testing of dairy cattle.

VEGETABLES FOR CANNING

At the present time there are three canning companies and four kraut companies located in the county, which have added considerable to the diversification of county agriculture. They have also increased farm income considerably besides providing much employment. These seven plants process most of the vegetables grown commercially, although some are processed by other factories in neighboring counties.

Built in 1902, the Seymour Canning Company plant was the first in the county, being known originally as the Seymour Canning and Cold Storage Company. It was organized by a group of farmers and businessmen. Kraut and corn were canned the first year. The following year beans and beets were added. It now contracts about 2,500 acres of vegetables each year. During the peak of the canning season it employs about 300 persons.

The Fox Valley Canning Company at Hortonville was founded in 1922, packing peas the first year. During its 25 years of operation it has processed beans, sauerkraut, beets, carrots, corn and soybeans.

In 1929 the Fuhremann Canning Company was started in Appleton. The first pack put up in 1930 took 1,000 acres of peas, 75 of beets, and 20 of carrots. Extensive improvements have been made since the first plant was built. At the present time it contracts about 3,000 acres of vegetables.

Pea Sorting at Canning Factory
In the northwestern part of the county, on the flat, level soils of that area, cabbage has been one of the important crops for many years. In this section are located four kraut factories. The Shiocton Kraut Factory is one of the largest kraut plants in the United States, with a cutting capacity of 125 to 200 tons of cabbage a day. From 150,000 to 300,000 cases of kraut are sold each year.

Hamilton and Sons Canning Company at New London is located just over the Waupaca County line but a large volume of the cabbage used for kraut comes from Outagamie County. They also pack a considerable volume of pickles each year. Located at Bear Creek is the Flannagan Kraut Company. Outagamie's newest vegetable packer is the C. C. Lang and Company at Black Creek. Their plant was built in 1946 and the first sauerkraut was cut the same fall.

SOURCES OF FARM INCOME

Since the end of World War I livestock and dairying have increased steadily in volume and importance and have become the principal source of farm income in the county.

In the year 1944 farmers of the county received 86 per cent of their total gross farm income from livestock and livestock products, including milk. Milk alone was the source of 51.1 per cent of the total income. Other sources were as follows: hogs, 13.8 per cent; cattle and calves, 11 per cent; chickens and eggs, 9.6 per cent; cabbage, 4.3 per cent; grains, 2 per cent; and others, 8.2 per cent. The last group includes peas for canning, hay, turkeys, sheep, wool, potatoes, fruits, seeds and miscellaneous products.

Gross farm income has also shown a remarkable increase during recent years. In 1927 it totalled $8,715,800. During the depression years it dropped to slightly more than half, the total in 1933 being $4,729,578. By 1936 it had climbed to $8,193,628. World War II brought a marked upsurge in farm income, the total for the county being $13,915,618 in 1942. In 1944, the last year for which figures are available, it had reached an all-time high of $16,202,982.

Records further show that in comparison with other counties of the state, Outagamie County has made good progress during the past 20 years. In 1927 the county ranked seventeenth among the counties of the state in gross farm income, while in 1944 it had climbed to eleventh place.

The county also ranks well up among the state's counties in a number of other classifications. Although Outagamie County is forty-fifth in land area, it is second in cabbage production, twenty-fourth in income per farm, sixteenth in income from livestock and twelfth in income from crops. It also ranks tenth in the number of cows and heifers, ninth in milk production, thirteenth in cheese production, twelfth in corn for silage, ninth in oat production, ninth in tame hay and tenth in peas for processing.

CHANGES IN FARM LIFE

Over the century there has been drastic changes in farm life. The first settlers lived in log cabins or rude lumber shacks, some of them not even completely roofed. Some of the first buildings had roofs over the sleeping quarters but not over the general living quarters. Today most farm homes will compare favorably with any home in the city. Livestock is housed in buildings much better than the early homes, both in comfort and conveniences. Today approximately 93 per cent of the farmers have electricity, 94.5 per cent have radios, 55 per cent have telephones and 41 per cent have running water in the home.

Great changes have also taken place in the amount of physical labor necessary to produce crops, modern machinery having eliminated a great deal of the back-breaking toil which was the day-by-day lot of the pioneer farmer. The first grass and hay was cut with a sickle or a scythe.
Then it was raked with a hand rake and carried to the stack by means of poles. If the farmer was fortunate enough to have oxen or horses, it was pitched on the wagon, and then pitched on the stack. Today the modern forage harvester goes into the field, chops the windrowed hay and blows it into the truck or wagon. It is then blown into the haymow with little physical labor anywhere along the line.

Small grains were cut with a cradle, raked in small bundles with a hand rake, bound by hand, loaded, unloaded and stacked all by hand. It was then either threshed with a flail or trampled out by driving cattle across the bundles.

Cattle in the early days were milked by hand, the milk poured into shallow crocks where the cream was skimmed with a ladle, churned at home, and the butter taken to the store where it was bartered for groceries and other supplies.

COUNTY AGENTS

In March, 1922 a rural planning committee was appointed by the County Board to look into the matter of hiring a County Agricultural Agent. As a result of their investigation and recommendation, the Agricultural Committee of the County Board chose Robert Amundsen to serve as County Agricultural Agent. He began his work in March, 1923. Mr. Amundsen served very capably in this position until January 21, 1929, when he resigned to take a position as County Agent Supervisor at the College of Agriculture, University of Wisconsin.

Gustave A. Sell succeeded him in March, 1929. He served as County Agricultural Agent until 1933.
In 1934 R. C. Swanson came to the county as Federal Adjustment Agent to help administer the Federal Corn-Hog Aid Program. In 1935, he became County Agricultural Agent. He served three years.

On January 1, 1939, J. F. Magnus, the present County Agricultural Agent, took over the work. Since 1943 Gale L. Vande Berg has served as Assistant County Agent. Harriet Thompson became the first Home Demonstration Agent in Outagamie County in July, 1929. The county has had three others since that time, Irene Skutley, Anna Oleston and Myrtle Baumann.

COUNTY HOMEMAKERS

Homemakers' work started about 1924 when a group of interested and forward looking homemakers appealed to the County Agent for training in cooking and sewing. One club organized at the Cedar Grove Homemakers Club near Greenville and a second in the Town of Cicero. Some of the first members of these groups include Mrs. Edward Cummings, Mrs. Merle Culpertson, a Mrs. or Miss Jamison, Mrs. Ervin Tellock, Mrs. C. W. Hahn, Mrs. Art Genske, Mrs. William Marcks, Mrs. Guy Daniels and Mrs. Herbert Wittuhn.

In 1925 four other clubs, located at Mackville, Hortonville, Shiocton and Black Creek, organized the first Home-
YOUTH ACTIVITIES

Rural youth activities in the county date back to about the beginning of agriculture extension work here. Records show that the youth work started with pig raising clubs in 1923. These clubs were composed largely of rural school boys and girls with the program centered in the schools. Later calf clubs were organized. These clubs promoted the selection and raising of better stock and taught up-to-date methods. The first record of clubs called 4-H Clubs was in 1927. Mrs. John Schoettler was the first 4-H club leader in Outagamie County. The purposes of 4-H clubs are (1) to promote the latest and best practices in agriculture and home economics and (2) the development of better citizens.

The calf-clubs and pig clubs were combined in the 4-H program with other phases of farming and homemaking such as clothing, foods, gardening and other projects. Now rural boys and girls may select any project in which they are interested. They plan their own programs, conduct monthly and semi-monthly meetings, take tours and trips and promote community activities. In short, they are developing into future leaders in agriculture, home economics and community affairs. In 1947 the program had 615 members with 85 adult leaders and over 40 older boys and girls acting as leaders. These youths also sponsor their own organizations and leadership councils.

High school youngsters received instruction in agriculture as early as 1916 or 1917 according to the records. Shiocton High School taught agriculture first, and Seymour High School followed in 1920. At the present time four high schools in the county have agricultural departments, New London, Hortonville, Shiocton and Seymour.

Thus, it can be seen that both youth and adults make a cooperative project of agriculture in this county.