C & D Duck Farm

COOPER DIXON DUCK FARM as it was in the 1940's and C & D DUCK COMPANY as it is today.
Eighty acres of land at Route 2 Box 585, Franksville were purchased in 1878 by William R. Cooper for $2300. That 80-acre tract today is the heart of the nation's largest duckling growing complex, C & D Duck Co.

William Cooper was a farmer, but son Archie had other ideas. He and his friend Clayton Dixon decided to grow and sell ducks. From that partnership formed in 1923, determined and innovative effort by Cooper and Dixon and by their successors in ownership, Alfred "Bud" Ruud and Eugene Walrath, expanded that original 80 acres into 1,000 and increased annual production of fancy ducklings from the first year's 7,000 birds to last year's 3.5 million. Marketing of the C & D product, originally restricted to Milwaukee, now stretches from coast to coast.

Located on Racine County U, just north of Hwy. 20, C & D grows, processes and markets over 20 percent of the nation's production of fancy Pekin ducks. An immigrant from China over 100 years ago, the Pekin grown out in the C & D pens bears little resemblance to his ancient and honorable ancestor. He is a duck and he is white, but there resemblance ends.

Years of careful selection and meticulous attention to genetic principles have given C & D a duck which reaches the desirable seven-pound market weight in seven weeks, a duck which has more meat and less fat than his ancestor, a duck which feathers better and uses feed more efficiently than his ancestor.

Today's C & D operation bears little more resemblance to the original Cooper and Dixon partnership than does today's C & D Pekin to that early immigrant. A management staff of professionals with broad experience in all aspects of the hatching, growing, processing and marketing complex directs the work of nearly 200 employees.

Then, it was a two-man operation with a few seasonal employees. The talents and interests of Cooper and Dixon did very naturally complement each other. Cooper's function was the selling of the birds and every morning he loaded his truck with fresh-killed, ice-packed birds and set off to Milwaukee to sell the load as best he could. Dixon stayed at home and worried with the hatching and growing of the ducklings.

It was a hand labor operation from beginning to end in those days. Human fingers instead of mechanical fingers stripped away the feathers. A good man could pick 125 birds in a 12-hour day.

The birds did not grow out as quickly. The feeds in use were not as efficient as today's carefully researched and nutritionally balanced diets. Months were needed, not weeks, to reach market weight.

Winter ice was cut from Eagle Lake and Brown's Lake. Chipped and crushed by hand, that ice preserved fresh-killed quality. Today, gigantic compressors chill and freeze the carcasses in minutes. Hard frozen and in their colorful C & D plastic jackets, C & D fancy ducklings move out under refrigeration to the nation's restaurants and supermarkets from coast to coast.

To provide a dependable flow of birds into the C & D growing pens, C & D owns and operates a breeding farm and hatchery at Holland, Mich. Tulip City Hatchery's 65,000 breeding hens produce the eggs that feed the incubators. An environment-controlled truck makes four round trips weekly between Holland and Yorkville to deliver the 60,000 ducklings needed weekly in the Yorkville growing pens.

Today's carefully supervised and tightly scheduled operation did, in fact, grow from the Cooper-Dixon partnership of 53 years ago, but the only really enduring tie to the past is the 80 acres of land Bill Cooper brought in '78.

The C & D management team is headed up by corporation president Alfred Ruud. Walrath, as vice president-operations, carries responsibility for the operation of the new, million-dollar processing plant placed in operation in early 1975. Willard L. Lynn, DVM, as vice president-farms & hatchery operations, directs the vast breeding, hatching and growing complex and James E. Christopher, vice president-marketing, plans the promotion and sale of the firm's annual production of ducklings.
JAKE JACOBSEN’S BLACKSMITH SHOP
at Thompsonville. Picture was taken from U.S. 41 looking east on what is now known as Highway K. The late Mr. Jacobsen and his shop are pictured on the right, now the home of Rasmussen & Hanson Implement Company.

RACINE COUNTY GOES TO THE WISCONSIN STATE FAIR

Several hundred persons, including the Racine Boy Scout Drum and Bugle Corp, assemble at the intersection of U.S. 41 and K for the trip to West Allis and Racine County’s day at the fair. Picture was taken from Piskula’s Garage, J. C. Ellis home on the left and Jake Jacobsen’s Blacksmith shop on the right.
Paul Smerchek (Pavel Smrck) is the century ancestor of many present residents of Racine County.

Paul was born December 31, 1810 in Veseli, Moravia where he was educated in the public schools and spent his early years on a farm. On August 9, 1836 at the age of 25 he was united in marriage to Anna Gregor. In the autumn of 1856 Paul and Anna left Moravia with their six children, aged 2 to 16 years, to make a new home in America. Anna died on the way and was buried at sea. The rest of the family and their maid landed in New York and then made their way to Racine, Wisconsin. Paul purchased 40 acres of wild land in Caledonia township soon after their arrival. The whole family shared the hardships of pioneer life, clearing the land and living a life of self-sufficiency.

About a year after establishing himself in Caledonia, Paul married Antonia Sutera, a native of Moravia, who had been in the service of the family and accompanied them to this country.

The children’s education was limited to the winter months when the farm work was finished. As each child attained adulthood they were assisted in establishing a farm and (or) home of their own. Of the six children, Joseph, Frank, Vincent and Josephine who married Joseph Lorence, established homes in Caledonia. Paul Jr., and Anna who married Joseph Stritesky a resident of Kansas, moved to Irving, Kansas after their marriages.

The Smerchek name is well known in Racine County, for many descendants have been active members in community affairs, politics, and businesses. The wonderful life of farming has been followed through the years by many descendants with some of the fourth and fifth generations still operating farms in Racine County. The original homesite on the Six Mile Road has remained in the family.

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**Centennial Salute (1975)**

A salute to our heritage, and ancestors
Which came so many years before.
   It’s time to think, when great grand-parents were young.
   Thats when it all begun;
   The history of our cities, towns and country dear
It has weathered many a storm, strife, sun and rain.
   And now and then a cyclone tore.

   With confidence, faith and love, the only great reward.
They tilled the lands to feed the world.
   And built a church to praise the Lord.
With industry of many kinds, to keep us all secure
   So let us celebrate this Centennial year,
Shout it loud and make it clear
   We’ve come a long way - so they say,
So Happy Birthday on our day. Cheer; cheer.
CHARLES J. CHADEK - HUSHER

Part of this building still stands today at the corner of Highway 38 and Nicholson Road. Chadek was first a Wallis tractor dealer but switched to Case in about 1927.

THRESHING CREW TAKEN IN 1880

Picture was taken on the William Walter farm on Nielsen Road. The Nicholson & Shepherd rig was owned by Henry Meissner and Ernst Erbe. Walter later sold the farm to Fred Mahn and is now owned by Mrs. Irene Proeber.