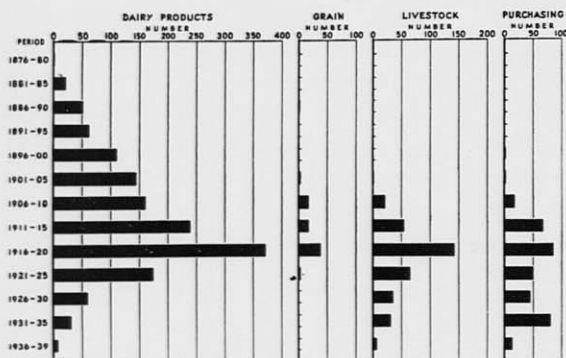


Farmers' Marketing and Purchasing Associations Organized in Wisconsin, by Periods and Selected Commodity Groups, 1876-1939.



The 5 years from 1916 to 1920 was the period of greatest farmer activity in organizing marketing and purchasing co-operatives. A total of 697 associations were launched. Of this number 371 were for making and for marketing dairy products; 142 were local organizations for assembling and shipping live stock; 85 were for purchasing supplies; and 38 for marketing grain.

however, only about 10 cows, which were not enough to produce a sufficient quantity of milk for the profitable manufacture of cheese. Anne solved the problem by getting the neighbors to pool their milk with the Pickett supply, and she made it all into cheese in the kitchen of her log cabin. Thus a cooperative business venture began at Lake Mills, Wis., where the Picketts made cheese for many years.

An experiment to form an idealistic society for cooperative living and working was made at Ripon, Wis., in 1844 by a group of American-born farmers. They named it the Wisconsin Phalanx. Although the society was financially successful—it had assets of \$30,000 3 years after organization—some of the members became dissatisfied and brought about the peaceful dissolution of the organization in 1850.

The Wisconsin State Agricultural Society, organized in 1851, became one of the most active in the United States. It helped to spread agricultural knowledge by inaugurating the holding of

fairs, and by publishing its transactions in large volumes. The Wisconsin Legislature passed an act in 1897 creating a State board of agriculture, which superseded the State agricultural society.

Number of Cooperatives Has Greatly Increased

From the humble beginning in 1840 agricultural cooperative enterprises began to develop in much greater numbers in Wisconsin during the last third of the nineteenth century and have continued to develop up to the present time. During all of this period the main reason for their organization has been the desire on the part of farmers to improve their economic welfare by working together. Their desires have been emphasized and crystallized into action at various times by the pressure of low prices, by changes taking place in the agriculture of the State, and by the activities of general farm organizations and various governmental agencies.

One of the conditions which vitally affected the development of Wisconsin cooperatives was the shift from wheat farming to dairy farming which took place during approximately the third quarter of the nineteenth century. This change brought with it the need for the rapid development of market outlets for milk and cream, and an opportunity for cooperatives to render a real service to member-dairymen.

The change from wheat to dairying was made easier by the work of several outstanding leaders in the State during this period. In 1872, William Dempster Hoard, a former Governor, was the moving force behind the organization of the Wisconsin Dairymen's Association. He was one of a group of leaders who had become convinced that Wisconsin's financial future lay in dairying rather than in wheat. This idea met with increasing response from farmers after the depression in the early 70's and the plagues of chinch bugs in 1874, '75, and '76, which seriously damaged the wheat fields. Extensive contributions to the dairy program were made by William Aaron Henry of the university, who was instrumental in establishing the Agricultural Experiment Station at Madison. He made pioneer investigations in the feeding of livestock, inaugurated in 1886 the first agricultural short course, and 4 years later organized the first dairy school. Dairying was practically revolutionized by another member of the university faculty, Stephen Moulton Babcock, who in 1890 invented the "Babcock test" to determine accurately and quickly the amount of butterfat in milk. Under the leadership of these

notable men, and many others, Wisconsin became the leading dairy State in the Nation, and a fertile field for the development of dairy cooperatives.

Grange Fostered Cooperation

The Grange played a very important part in the early development of agricultural cooperatives in Wisconsin as in many other sections of the United States. The grange movement reached Wisconsin in 1871, when the first local unit and the Wisconsin State Grange were organized. By October 1, 1875, the number of subordinate granges was not far from 450 with a membership of more than 17,000.

The farmer-members of many of the subordinate granges put into effect plans for buying farm supplies cooperatively, and some stores were or-



In the feed warehouse of the Larsen Cooperative Co., Larsen, Wis. This company, which was established more than 20 years ago, has expanded and increased its services several times. It sells for cash, and the management says that while this has made temporary enemies out of a few members, they have nearly always returned as patrons and endorse the cash policy. There are over 700 stockholders. The company grinds feed, and merchandises standard farm supplies, such as tools, oils, paints, harness, etc.