

Sell Milk Together

How Oklahoma Dairy Men Solve Their Problems

THE town of Moore, Oklahoma, located some nine miles south of Oklahoma City, is similar in outward appearance to many other small towns of the Southwest. Really, however, it has something in addition of which few towns can boast—that is one of the most successful co-operative organizations in the selling of milk and cream to be found in the United States.

Take the Interurban from Oklahoma City to Moore some morning and all along the line at the different stops you will notice loading platforms, each holding from five to twenty-five cans of milk. The same thing can be seen the next morning, and so on throughout the entire year. In fact, the same thing has been happening every morning now for several years past.

It was some six years ago, to be exact, that the farmers living in the vicinity of Moore came to the conclusion that they were not getting enough for their dairy products. The present effective organization is the result of that conclusion.

There were not so many members in the association when it was first organized as there are at the present time, for many of the farmers in the locality still to the belief that they could do better by individual effort. But those who did join were earnest, conscientious and open minded. Success came with the first effort and has been coming since that time.

Does the fact that this organization, composed entirely of farmers, has made a go of it mean anything to other communities similarly located in the same or other states? It does. And that is the excuse for the story that follows:

The town of Moore and the country surrounding have no special advantage over many other sections in Oklahoma and other states; in several ways, this locality would seem to be at some disadvantage. The percentage of tenantry is high, cotton has always been one of the principal crops, the land is of less than average fertility, and there has always been more or less prejudice against the production of dairy products. It is but fair to say, however, that this condition has been changing for the better during the past few years and that the present time cotton has been relegated to a more or less minor position, while many of the tenant farmers have good dairy herds and give promise of soon being in a position to own the land they farm.

Price Regulations

At the present time there are approximately 130 stockholders in the Moore Cooperative Cheese and Creamery Company, the official name of the organization. Practically all of them are farmers living within a radius of twelve miles from Oklahoma City and within a comparatively short distance of the Interurban line, which runs from Oklahoma City to Norman, nineteen miles south. About 900 cows are milked, on the average, throughout the year.

The officers consist of a board of directors, three in number, and a manager. The manager is elected by the directors, but he must be approved by the majority of the stockholders. It is the duty of the manager to look after all details of the business during the year and to make such reports as are deemed necessary by the board of directors. The directors are chosen from the stockholders and are empowered to meet as often as they think it necessary in order to keep a thorough check on the business of the association. They receive two dollars a day each for such time. The manager is paid seventy dollars a month and his traveling expenses to and from Oklahoma City.

The principal product sold is sweet milk, all of which is taken by one of the large ice cream factories in Oklahoma City. This milk is sold on a butterfat basis and under a contract that brings the members of the organization forty cents a pound of butterfat in the summer and fifty cents a pound in the winter. Each price given extends over a period of six months. At the present time, on account of the extremely high price of feedstuffs, an additional five cents a pound is being paid for butterfat.

Computed on a basis of four per cent. fat—a large number of tests showing this to

be about the average—the price received is equivalent to \$2.20 for each hundred pounds of sweet whole milk. Farmers do pounds of sweet whole milk. Farmers who do not belong to the organization receive about thirty-five cents less per hundred pounds, their market is more or less irregular, and the cost of transportation to market is a great deal more. The price received by this association compares favorably with that received by similar associations in other sections of the country.

The ice cream companies want only fresh sweet milk, and when sour milk is brought in—a thing that may happen once in a while in the summer even with the best of management—the member receives the same price as that being paid at the time by local creameries for butterfat. This price is usually about half that called for under the contract for sweet milk. This arrangement has brought about a very satisfactory method of marketing and one that insured practically all of the milk's reaching market in first-class condition.

They Don't Let Troubles Grow

The milk is delivered at the different stations on the Interurban every morning at approximately the same time, and a single car picks it up and carries it into the city. Members of the association who live near the same station co-operate in this daily delivery, each member taking his turn in making the delivery for all. Thus each member gets his milk delivered fresh every morning and at the minimum of time and expense. The manager is always a passenger on the pick-up car and personally sees to the loading of the cans at the various stations and the unloading at the terminal point in town.

The milk supply for the day had just come in when I found the manager, P. D. Ver Trees, at the ice cream plant busily checking up the day's business and giving each member credit for his share in the receipts.

"Pretty busy this morning, are you?" I inquired.

"Yes, always that," he replied, looking up from the big ledger and punching a number in the adding machine at his side. "You see, there is quite a lot of work to be done in connection with each shipment."

Mr. Ver Trees not only accompanies the daily shipments of milk to the city, but he personally sees to the unloading at the terminal station, transportation to the ice cream factory, weighing and sampling of each can of milk, testing for butterfat twice each month from a composite sample, keeping of a complete record of weights keeping of a complete record of weights and tests for each member of the association, deduction for transportation charges, and the mailing out of the checks at the beginning and middle of each month.

It is considerable of a job for one man to perform, but as the present manager has been with the association since it first began business six years ago, he is evidently up to the requirements.

"Is there any particular reason why other organizations such as the one you represent should not be successful?" was one of the questions I asked Mr. Ver Trees after he had checked up the day's business.

"None whatever, so far as I can see," he replied. "It appears to me to be largely a question of sticking together. When a bunch of farmers will do that they can get most anything they go after. We have had some trouble, and expect more occasionally, but it has never been a serious matter from the standpoint of impairing the efficiency of the organization. We don't let such things grow, however, and when any member thinks he has a kick coming we are always willing to listen to it and satisfy him if possible."

The Moore Co-operative Cheese and Creamery Company also handles coal and feed for the benefit of members of the association. Purchases are made in carload lots and the retail price is just enough above the purchase price to pay the actual cost of handling. In fact, no attempt is made to earn a profit for the association on any of the business handled. During the year ending October 15, 1916, the coal and feed business alone amounted to more than \$5000.

The financial statement for the year ending October 15, 1916, follows:

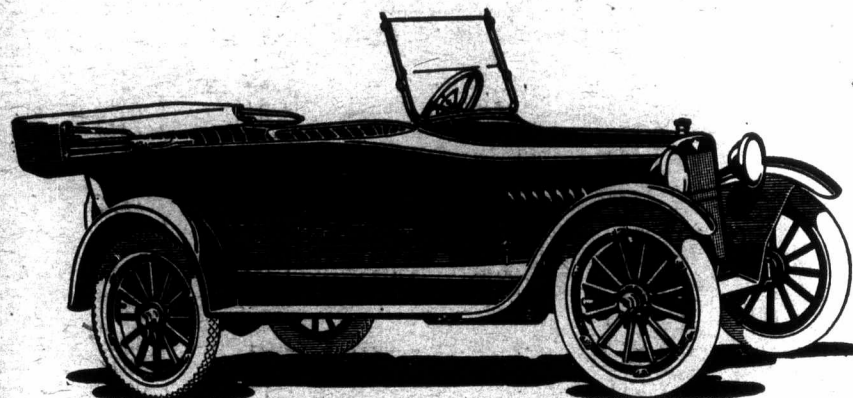
Receipts

Received for butterfat.....\$52,313.76

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Received from other sources—
feed, coal, etc..... 2,457.96
Balance in bank, Oct. 16, 1915 87.05

Expenses

Paid to patrons for butterfat. \$41,968.92
Paid out for other purposes—
coal, feed, freight, etc..... 12,809.80
Amount in bank, Oct. 15, 1916. 1.40
Outstanding checks, Oct. 15, 1916 78.65

Total\$54,858.77

Important Miscellaneous Expenses

Directors' salaries\$ 200.32
Manager's salary 840.00
Supplies 173.40
Freight on milk 3,947.39
Washing cans 215.46
Manager's car fare 45.62
Feed 3,602.89
Coal 1,483.57
New Milk Cans 307.50

The items of supplies, listed above, covers acid for testing the milk, preservative tablets, stationery, and so on. To cover the annual expense of the association, in so far as the handling of the milk is concerned each member is charged two cents a pound of butterfat, this amount being deducted from the total receipts of each pay day. During the past year this two-cent deduction provided a fund large enough to pay the salaries of manager, directors, freight on milk, car fare, acid for testing, washing cans, and so forth, and left a balance of \$1.40 in the bank at the close of the year's business. This might be said to be pretty close figuring on a business that amounted to more than \$50,000 in total receipts during twelve months.

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