

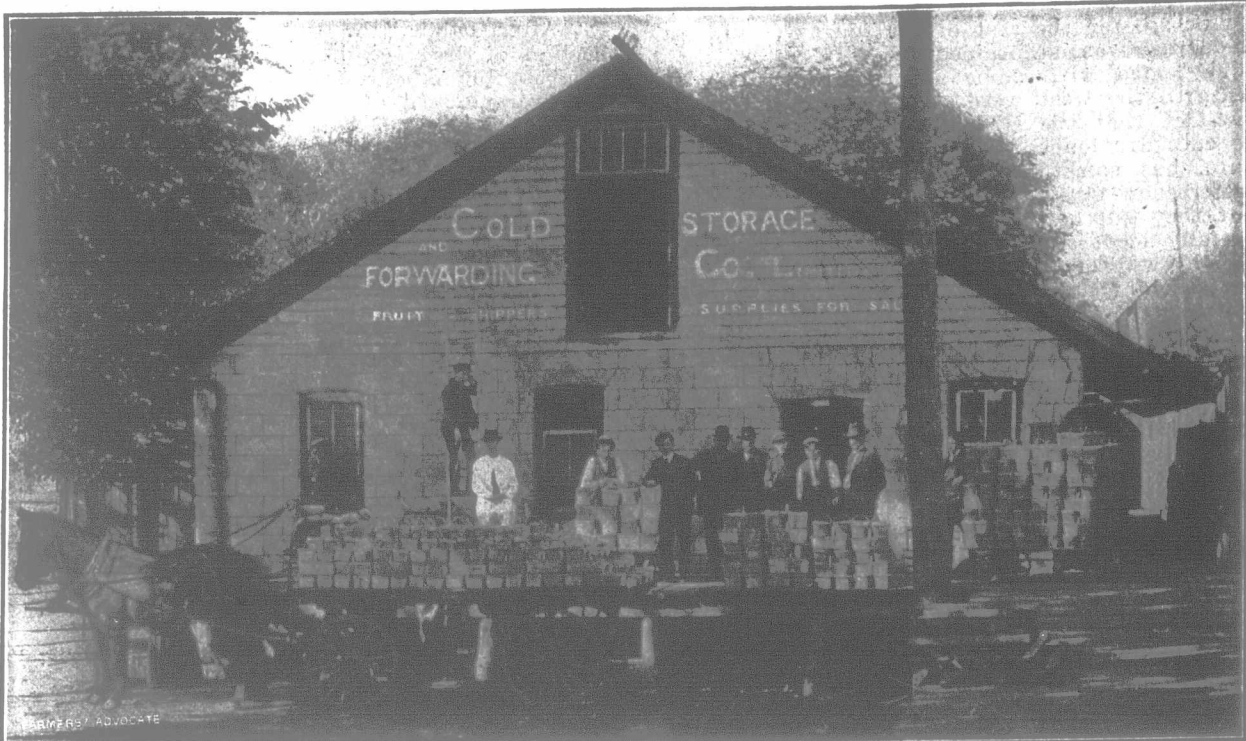
GARDEN 24 ORCHARD.

Fruit Shipping at St. Catharines.

A report reached "The Farmer's Advocate" office that a fruit-shipping concern at St. Catharines, Ont., was making a success of sending the finer fruits to Calgary, and selling them there in competition with similar fruits sent in from the Pacific coast. "The Farmer's Advocate," delighted to hear of such enterprise, decided, through a representative, to investigate. There may be an idea in some minds, owing to a good deal having been said in the last year or two about fruit co-operative associations being formed at Walkerton, Forest, Chatham, and other places, that the long-famed Niagara district was lagging behind just a little, being outdistanced by younger and more vigorous competitors. Not so. A trip from Hamilton to St. Catharines, and a stop-off at any of the stations during the fruit season, would quickly correct such a false impression. The area devoted to fruit is constantly increasing, and the growers are adepts in the marketing of their products.

Nine years ago, when there were possibly more peaches grown than now, though nothing like the same amount of grapes, some five or six fruit-growers living near St. Catharines banded together so as to get their own fruit more economically sent to market, and sold to better advantage when it arrived. They did all the work themselves, loading their own cars and conducting the correspondence. They also, for a charge of one cent per basket, held themselves ready to load and forward fruit for any one who would bring it to the siding. Thus, a car could be loaded, consigned to six or seven men in Montreal, and sent by fifty or sixty growers. The advantages of such a system were readily seen, and they got lots of business; so much, indeed, that the following season they organized into a joint-stock company, under the name of "The St. Catharines Cold Storage and Forwarding Co., Limited," and proceeded to erect a cold-storage building. The building is of cement, and, though not very imposing, is well suited for its purpose, and conveniently situated on a branch of the Grand Trunk Railway. After careful consideration, it was decided to instal the system known as the Linde-British. Cooling by means of ice was seen to be inefficient when large quantities of fruit would be put in to be cooled in a night. Under some mechanical systems, in which the cooling pipes are in the same chamber as the fruit and there is no movement of air, a hurtful dampness prevails. In the Linde-British system, the cooling pipes are in an adjoining chamber, and, by means of a fan, a current of cool, dry air is kept in circulation about the product to be chilled. The building alone cost \$5,500; the cold-storage plant, which is operated by a 20-horsepower electric motor, cost \$3,500. The company, besides doing forwarding business, keeps on hand fruit-growers' supplies, such as spray pumps, spraying material, ladders, boxes, baskets, etc. Dividends have never been the aim of those forming the company, rather the development of the fruit business. When it was found that one cent per basket for forwarding left a considerable sum over expenses, the rate was lowered to half a cent, at which rate it still stands. For fruit sent in refrigerator cars, however, one cent per basket is charged. Until two years ago, the members of the company enjoyed no direct advantage over any one shipping through them, but now, in the matter of supplies, they are charged wholesale rates only. Mr. Robert Thompson, a practical fruit-grower himself and a well-known Institute speaker, is manager. Under him there is a band of employees, the number varying with the season, one man being employed the year round. It was the intention at first to place in cold storage all fruit to be shipped, at least twenty-four hours, so that it would be thoroughly cooled before going on the car. In practice, this was found to be almost impossible, and in the hurried season is not attempted, except for carloads going a long distance. Even with these a part, especially of basket fruit, which involves much handling, is generally loaded direct from the wagons. When a glut occurs, however, the fruit is run into storage and held until a more favorable time.

The company has this season, to Oct. 1st, sold f. o. b., twenty-four cars of fruit, besides their regular forwarding business, besides a greater number sent on commission. Each car contains 2,400 baskets. These are placed to a depth of nine tiers—never over. Mr. Thompson reports that sales f. o. b. are made more easily this year than ever before. Two cars of mixed fruit go each week to Winnipeg—20 in all to Oct. 1st, besides those sent to Brandon and Calgary. It was in regard to the Northwest trade that particular enquiry was made. For that trade, it has been found best to send fruit of all kinds in



Fruit Going into Cold Storage, St. Catharines Cold Storage and Forwarding Co.

season in each car. Most cars have contained apples, pears, peaches, crabs, plums, grapes and tomatoes.

A sample car, shipped on September 11th, contained the following:

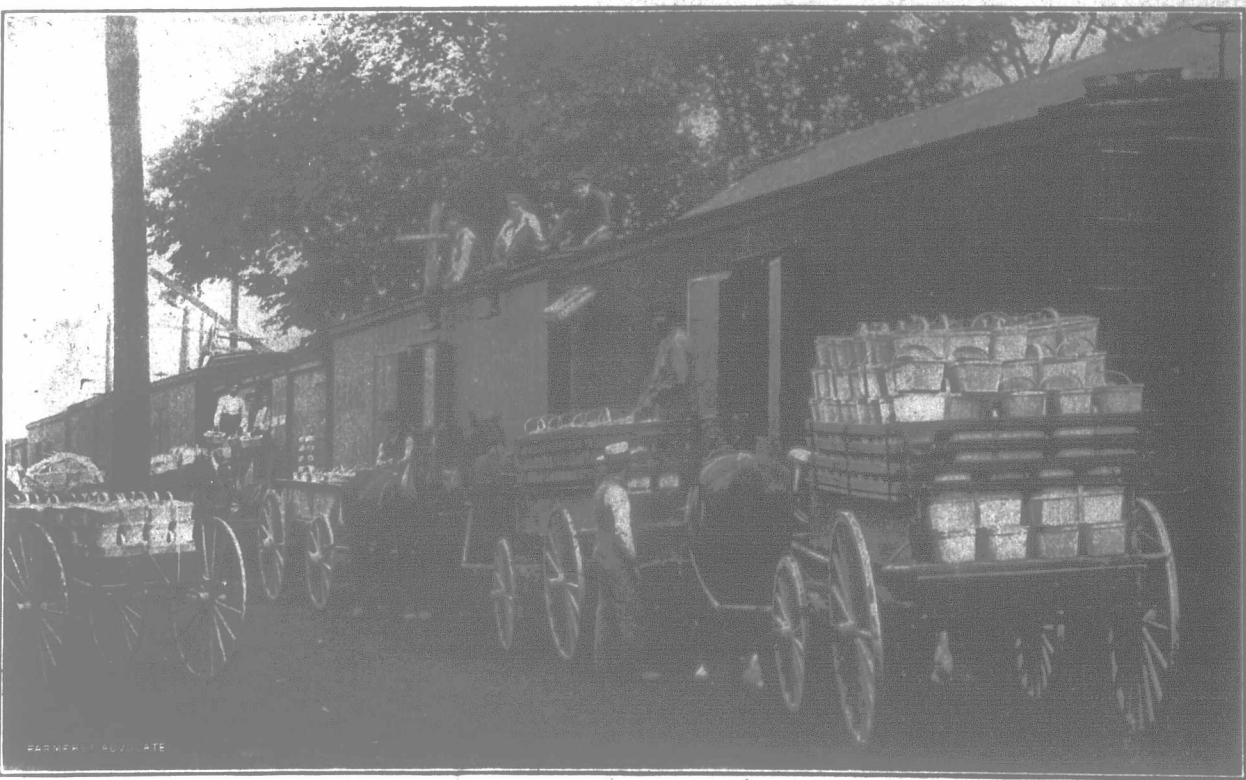
- 6 Crates musk melons.
- 37 Boxes apples.
- 30 Boxes pears, wrapped.
- 100 Baskets pears.
- 250 Baskets apples.
- 27 Baskets crabs.
- 6 Trays peaches, wrapped.
- 24 Boxes peaches, wrapped.
- 2 Boxes plums.
- 46 Baskets peppers.
- 17 Baskets egg-plant.
- 120 Baskets tomatoes.
- 196 Boxes tomatoes.
- 50 Trays tomatoes.
- 490 Baskets grapes.

The above is a fair sample. Some have more boxes of apples and pears; others more boxes of peaches, etc. Later on, the cars contained more grapes.

The dealer in Calgary, acknowledging receipt of advice telegram of the first car sent, expressed pleasure at the prospect of handling the different kinds of fruit with which the car was filled, with the exception of the peaches and tomatoes. These, he said, we cannot sell at the prices you name, as we are now receiving fine peaches from Washington and tomatoes from British Columbia. We want no more peaches and tomatoes sent. Strange to say, the next order for a car of fruit asked for more peaches and tomatoes, and these have formed part of the assortment in every car sent since, and have brought good prices. The floor of a refrigerator car is slatted, to allow of air circulation, but it was found that the slats, being

but two inches wide, were hard on fruit baskets, and caused loss, so now Mr. Thompson has another floor of boards placed over slats, and the load carries much better. To this and to the cooling of at least a part of the carload before being loaded, he attributes the success they have achieved in long-distance shipments. The No. 1 apples, pears and peaches are carefully layered-packed in boxes, the pears and peaches being also wrapped in paper, while No. 2 fruit of these kinds and all the grapes are sent in baskets. The box fruit is packed by only a few of the principal growers, and at home, but it is the intention to have a central packing-house added to their plant, where all apples and pears, except what are sent in baskets, shall be packed. Peaches, being tender and perishable, must continue, it is thought, to be packed at the orchard.

All cars for the West are iced the day before they are loaded, and after being loaded are again filled up. The railway company sees to the icing on the way, at a cost of from seven to ten dollars per car. The temperature maintained during the journey has been very satisfactory. This is recorded by a thermograph, a little instrument or machine which is set going and locked before being placed in the car, and which traces on a chart a line showing exactly the temperature, hour by hour, during the whole journey. It records more than temperature. When the car is in motion the little pointer vibrates and makes a wide line; when the car stops, the line drawn is fine. Detention of the car on any certain day is thus made plain, and rather confounds the railway men. We saw copies of several thermograph records, and the following is what one, which was a fair sample, showed: When car started temperature was 74 degrees; in twenty-four hours it had swept down to 55 degrees, two days later it had lowered to 46 degrees, and after another



Loading Fruit Direct into Cars, St. Catharines Cold Storage and Forwarding Co.