

Teaching Father to Farm

What Boys' and Girls' Clubs are doing to revive interest in the Farms of Manitoba

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"Daddy! Come and look over here. I've won a prize!" shouted a highly delighted and enthusiastic little eight year old boy at one of the Boys' and Girls' Club Fairs recently.

"Wait a minute, son, while I have a look at these hogs."

"Oh no, come on over and see my prize," and nothing would quiet the excited youngster until he, with beaming face, had tugged and pulled his parent thru the crowd to see his prize box of potatoes. Sure enough there was a prize card in his box and it didn't make the slightest difference to him that it happened to be the sixteenth one. All that mattered was that he had won. Probably it was the first prize he had ever gained and the encouragement which a far sighted policy of spreading out the prizes in these children's contests had given this youngster may well be the starting point from which a completely successful farmer will develop. The above just illustrates one of the many hopeful incidents which are constantly met with by those who are connected with Boys' and Girls' Farm Club work in Manitoba.

Boys and girls like to do things; things that are worth while; that mean something. A boy likes to do a man's job, and a girl is happy when doing things like grown-up people, and there are many of the grown-up duties of life that the boys and girls can do and enjoy doing.

During the past summer 5,500 boys and girls in rural Manitoba were engaged in raising chickens, potatoes and corn. They canned peas and beans and tomatoes and made poultry crates, farm gates, work benches and bird houses, and in so doing caught a new idea in agriculture and rural life. They have experienced the pleasure of having something that was their "very own," created as a result of their own effort and care and perseverance and as a result have a greater interest in and respect for the business of farming.

Everybody Helps

Possibly no other movement has had the active support of so many interests. The club leader or organizer seems always to have been big enough to welcome the assistance and suggestion of all organized influences in the district. Municipal councils, school boards and private individuals have generously contributed to the prize list, and as a result prizes were offered which were well worth striving for, but apart from the prizes the children found pleasure and happiness in the work itself, for had not their teacher and parents impressed on them the fact that their failure or success depended on their own efforts and that a failure was the last thing that was looked for?

During the past twenty-five years numerous plans have been devised for promoting vocational work in the rural districts, but none has proved nearly as practical as Boys' and Girls' Club contests. The first clubs were organized less than six years ago and already there are

over two million members in the United States and several thousand in Canada. The first clubs in Manitoba were organized three years ago with a membership of 728, last year there were 1,847, and during the present year 5,500 boys and girls took part in the various contests.

Plan of Organization

The plan of organization takes the town as the community centre and includes the surrounding schools within a radius of eight or ten miles. The public schools offer the best medium for boys' and girls' work, but every other organization and interest in the community has been found supporting the movement and representatives from each have been

seed purchased from Seager Wheeler (part of the famous world's prize winning stock) to sow half an acre. The first crop has been harvested and threshed, and from reports received the average yield from the half acre was between 18 and 20 bushels. So successful have these boys been, and so deep has been their interest, that fifty boys will be chosen from this year's winners for quarter acre demonstration plots next year.

Careful directions are being prepared by the field husbandry department of the college as to methods to follow in cultivating, selecting and harvesting the plots, and arrangements are being made for inspecting them two or three times during the year when personal directions will

any particular breed. At practically every fair the potatoes exhibited were reported to be considerably better than those grown generally in the neighborhood, thus proving the benefit of extra cultivation.

In the fodder corn growing contest it was hoped to interest the farmers thru the boys in the benefit of including fodder corn in their system of crop rotation. Unfortunately the early frosts and the particularly wet June made corn a failure all over the continent, and the boys and girls received one set back in their work, but generally they were optimistic enough to be eager to try corn again next year.

The farm mechanics' contest was introduced with the idea of giving the boys training and experience in using carpenters' tools, as every farmer must be able to make his own repairs. Instead of taking the ordinary manual training model made in a city school and carving it, projects intimately related to farm life and bringing into operation the tools which a farmer would actually use were chosen, such as poultry fattening crates, chicken coops, work benches, farm gates, hog cots, milking stools, etc., and in the majority of cases very creditable work was done. So encouraging was the work done in this contest that a bulletin will be prepared on this subject, giving in detail the steps to be followed so that the boys can get most of their instruction from the bulletin.

Introducing Business Methods

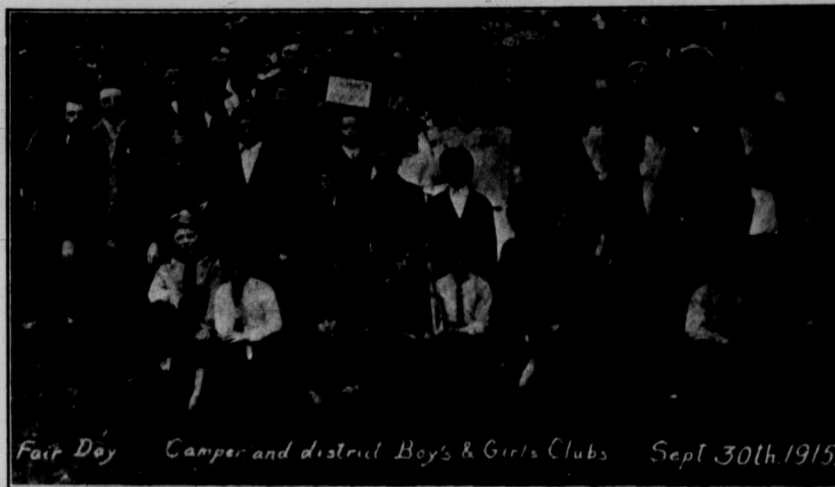
In the pig raising contests the agricultural societies have in some cases loaned the boys money with which to buy pigs, this money being paid back when the pigs were disposed of in the fall. Next year it is planned to make this phase of the work still more business like by having the boy borrow money from the bank in the spring, giving his note payable, say November 30. It has been found that wherever this plan has been tried the boys have met their notes promptly and in many cases it has led to them opening a bank account of their own.

Most of the girls took part in the poultry and potato contests, but special contests in bread baking, sewing and in canning and preserving were arranged especially for the girls, and the work done would have been a credit to girls much older than those taking part in the contests.

The canning and preserving contest was arranged as much with the idea of leading the producers in Manitoba to see the benefit of canning many things which they now grow on the farm and permit to go to waste, more on account of lack of thought than lack of knowledge. In the winter these same kind of products are bought, although they have really been grown and put up under much less favorable conditions.

From returns already received a conservative estimate of the number of prizes won in the province is as follows:—Poultry, \$450; corn, \$110; farm mechanics,

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Boys and girls who are raising the standard of agriculture in the West

willing to act on the central advisory committee in directing the energies of the boys and girls.

Owing to the fact that up to the present neither the public nor the high school program has offered the teacher much opportunity to become familiar even with the most elementary phases of farm life, the extension service section of the college has felt that it could render the most assistance by outlining the best practices to follow in carrying out any of the lines of work undertaken. Advantage has been taken of the natural inclination of individuals to collect in groups or clubs under the leadership of the strongest personality in the community and farm boys' and girls' clubs have been organized.

A number of the most representative farm operations have been chosen and arranged in contests as a means of arousing interest and insisting on directions being carefully followed. In the city expensive buildings, tools and machines are needed, but in the country the tools and machinery are the land and the things grown on the land, and this year the department of agriculture supplied the following material free to each member of the Boys' and Girls' Clubs:—One dozen pure bred eggs, ten pounds Early Carman potatoes, one-third pound each of corn and beans, one-third of each of three varieties of fodder corn and sets of plans for a farm mechanics' contest.

Pure Seed Grown

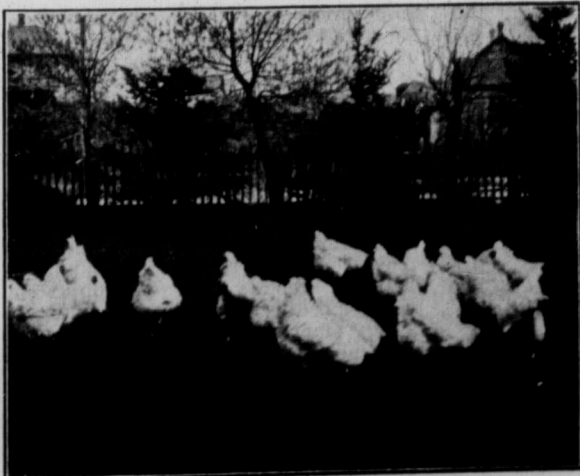
This year a new line was tried out on a small scale which bids fair to be one of the leading lines of work for the older members. Seven of the most progressive boys in last year's clubs were chosen as a nucleus of a Junior Manitoba Seed Growers' Association. Each boy was supplied with sufficient registered

be given. As soon as these boys have demonstrated their ability to produce pure bred seed they will be accepted as members of the Canadian Seed Growers' Association. The men today who are active in the work of the C.S.G.A. are for the most part boys who took part in a seed growing contest inaugurated by Professor Robertson fifteen years ago.

These boys are expected to be leaders in their district in the production of pure seed as well as in other things that make for the development of the community. Club work develops initiative. When a member is thrown on his own resources and achieves success he begins to realize his own capabilities. His efficiency is increased in those daily affairs that improve conditions in the home and on the farm.

Many Prizes Given

Local municipal councils, school boards and many citizens have contributed liberally toward making an attractive prize list for the Boys' and Girls' Fair, and the department of agriculture gives a grant of 50 per cent. of the amount of money actually paid out in prizes in the agricultural sections of the fair, which usually represents one-half of the exhibits, the remainder being the regular school work. During the past few weeks over sixty school fairs were held, ranging in importance from three adjoining rural schools combining for a fair and sports day to a whole inspectorate where thirty-five or forty schools took part and hundreds of exhibits were in evidence. At some of the larger fairs as many as 400 chickens were exhibited, and there were very few of the children who were engaged in this contest but could identify each of the five breeds of poultry used in the contest and explain the advantage in raising



White Wyandottes raised by a club member from eggs supplied by the Department of Agriculture



A Stonewall club exhibit. Very creditable work was done in the farm mechanics contest.