

## OLDCASTLE CO-OPERATIVE

Oldcastle Farmers Co-Operative Association was granted its first charter to open business by the Ontario Provincial Government in February, 1920. Business actually commenced on May 11th of the same year. Buying and selling products to farmers, who at that time would have had to make long trips over rough unpaved roads to either the city of Windsor or the town of Essex. *It had a membership of 75 and the total sales for the year about \$7,500.00.*

The first <sup>five</sup> years business was approximately \$150,000.00 which consisted mainly of shipping hogs, grain and a thriving grocery business. Grain at that time was handled by the back breaking method of shovelling into box-cars or by dumping bags from threshing machines. No modern elevator or combine at that time was used in the district of Oldcastle.

Walter Jessop and John McCauliffe became the first president and secretary of the company. The original slate of officers included five directors, Walter Jessop, John McCauliffe, Loftus Lepain, G.B. Collins and Robt. Halford. A. D. Kavanagh became the first manager of the company. *The Oldcastle Farmers expanded by adding two new buildings, one a warehouse 60' x 24' and an enlarged office 22' x 24', in summer of 1938.*

Starting the first building that was but 20' x 40' and frame, originally intended to be just a grocery with some 80 members, has now grown to some 250 members and that did a business of \$700,000.00 in the year 1952. At the present time the co-operative includes one of the most modern electrically controlled feed mills and elevator in Western Ontario, that is valued at over \$150,000.00. Hundreds of products are at the disposal of not only the farmer but the small lot owner who gains his living in the business and factory district of the city of Windsor. It is the busy whistle-stop of the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad, running from the Walkerville Junction to St. Thomas. A car of grain can be loaded in ninety minutes, and the feed mill contains all modern machinery, oat roller, corn cracker, plate grinder and hammer mill that will handle any kind of feed to be made. The Co-Op. handles grain, coal, feed, groceries, building supplies, fertilizer, seed, hardware, wire fencing, cedar posts and many other articles. It handles the largest stock of seed potatoes in this area and many of the early potato growers in the LaSalle area come here each Spring to purchase their seed.

The idea of the travelling grocery store on wheels that went from farm to farm and house to house was first invented by the local <sup>operated</sup> company. *starting in early 1930's*

This came every Friday and was first driven by Marshall Jessop, followed by *Alton Thompson and Edwin Humphries* and *Howard Craig* and discontinued about 1942 when *rationing came*. *4 Manders*



The small fry in the area watched with eager eyes each week for this vehicle to arrive, for you see it carried such treats as candy, gum, popcorn etc. and many could be observed sitting near the roadside watching anxiously long before its appointed time for arrival.

Trucks for the hauling of farm products was unknown in this vicinity and the Co-Operative not only bought the first truck but also later bought the first automatic dump-truck for the unloading of grain and coal. This Co-Operative was the depot for the supplying of groceries to the many men employed on the first paving of No. 3 Highway in 1921 from Windsor and also the paving of the Walker Road 1929.

Original shareholders in the Co-Operative invested \$50.00 and received 5% interest on the money invested but as years went by it was seen that a change would soon be made. Many of the old members passed away and a new type of business would have to be carried on to encourage new business members.

In 1949 the old charter of the company was surrendered and a new one issued naming the new company Oldcastle Co-Operative and affiliating with the United Co-Operatives of Ontario which includes 160 branches throughout the province. It was another link that strengthened the Co-Operative movement that is spreading across Canada. Old members received a two for one value in the new company, as many farmers and people from other walks of life joined to reap the benefits of share the profits on the amount of business that was done.

In 1925, the first president of the company became its manager and was still at the head of the company when it re-organized in 1949. Walter Jessop, who helped organize the co-operative was one of the original executives still with the company after thirty three years of business and had seen many changes. Men who brought about the re-organization of the co-operative were Henry Hartley, president, Ernest Holden, secretary, and directors, Steve Esping and Newton Holden.

The first gasoline and coal oil to be sold by the co-operative was teamed by horses from the city of Windsor. Eleven drums containing forty five gallons became fast with the team and wagon in a mud hole south of Windsor, where at one time the old slaughter house stood on Howard Avenue. It took two hours to free this load from the quagmire and then when arriving at Oldcastle, had to be measured out in gallon measures to be sold to the customers. Many changes have taken place in the transportation of products-- the horses have gone along with the Model -T Ford.



Clarice Lepain, Co-Op. book-keeper, also has been with the company since its organization, and deserves a great deal of credit for her time and energy in looking after the hospitalization and medical coverage for the members in connection with the Essex County Medical Co-Operative, which has been formed in the last year or so to further medical and hospitalization for the rural populace.

The present board of directors includes, Henry Hartley, president, Carson Jessop, Acting Secretary, directors: James Weston, Newton Holden, John Bart, Steve Esping.

This local Co-Operative business has been in the writers opinion an asset to the community in another capacity too; it being the place where so many of our youngsters during their high school days seek their first bit of employment and that first pay cheque which means so much to their later security. Many of our youth receive their first experience in dealing with the outside world right here in their own district and go on to many varied occupations, and to many places.