

50th Anniversary of Oldcastle Co-op

June, 1970 K of C Hall in McGregor

Handwritten notes of Myrtle Crowder transcribed by Kevin Durocher

On Feb 25th, 1955, the 34th annual directors and shareholder's meeting of the Oldcastle Co-Op was held in the Sandwich South town hall in the afternoon. Some 30 shareholders to hear the financial and business reports. Sickness led to the absence of three of the company's directors – President Henry Hartley, and directors Steve Esping and John Bart. James Weston presided in the chair. Mr. V.W. Jones re-appointed auditor for 1955-1956, after he commented on report and progress of the company. Bruce Banwell was elected to take the place of Newton Holden, who had just died.

James Cordery of the Imperial Bank of Essex said the company had shown wonderful advances.

Harry Perrypiece, a member of the Essex County medical Co-Op explained some of the benefits of hospitalization through their plan and they were able to, at time, lend money to the county co-ops.

Millard Warner, local plant inspector, pointed out that the seed cleaner would be a great accommodation to farmers in this district.

Walter Jessop, manager, spoke with praise for Mr. Newt Holden and auditor V.W. Jones spoke as well as some members of the staff.

The Oldcastle Women's Institute served refreshments of sandwiches, cookie plate, and coffee.

March 2nd, 1956

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The company lost its manager on Friday, March 1956 when Walter Jessop, age 71 years, passed away at Hotel Dieu hospital. He was born in Sandwich West township but lived in Sandwich South most of his life.

.... Missing page? ...

And four directors – Lloyd Fairbairn, Jim Weston, John Shuel, and Leo Dufour.

Oldcastle Co-Op reorganized as a full co-operative company in 1949 and since had shown rapid growth in its sales and members. The present company was considered the most improved and up to date co-operative in Ontario.

Facilities include a new feed mill, grain elevator, seed cleaner, and the new petroleum business. With diminishing coal sales the company entered the fuel business and had tripled its sales in just one year's time.

At the annual meeting in March 1958, the co-op recorded it's most profitable year to date since formation. A profit of \$16,077.00 was reported and 2% dividends issued on sales and purchases. An expansion program valued at \$8,000 when the company built a new warehouse for storage of company fertilizer and building products. The dividend was \$4,000 more than the previous high in 1956 when 1.5% was declared. The whole slate of 1967 officers and directors were returned to office.

In this year the co-op offered a \$50 bursary to a boy from Essex high school who would be attending the Agricultural college at Guelph. If there were no boy going to Guelph then it would be awarded to one going to Ridgetown experimental college.

In 1960, Oldcastle became a junction for the refueling of long distance diesel trucks. Trucks hauling salt for Ontario highways during the winter months were re-fueling here at the co-op night and day. Large tank trucks carrying as high as 20 tons or more re-fuel here on their going and coming to the salt plant in South Windsor.

The Oldcastle Co-Operative by this time serves the needs of farmers in a radius of over 20 miles from the elevator and feed mill. Sales at the feed mill had totaled \$1,000,000 annually for the past 4 or 5 years. Estimated value of the co-op is \$200,000. It stores and ships grains and feeds during the period of July to October. An average yearly shipment totals 100,000 bushels and the grain is shipped by the Chesapeake and Ohio railroad to such points as Toronto, Dutton, and Strathroy.

Membership had climbed to 400 with members joining continually. The plant expanded with 2 new cement silos and a new grain dryer. The main elevator will store 25,000 bushels of grain and the new silos will each hold an additional 8,000 bushels. By now, the co-op was selling fertilizer, building supplies, cement, and lime. On a year round basis, it handles corn, wheat, oats, soybeans and barley. It had a staff of 16, 2 fuel oil trucks and some hired trucks to do the kind of job the farmers in the area expect from it. It has become a kind of one-stop shopping centre for farmers, selling petroleum, gas, and furnace oil and fuels of all kinds.

In October 1961, two days of Co-Operative Week across Canada was held at the local co-op. Free pop and doughnuts were handed out and specials on goods and a chance on free hardware was all in the celebration.

The Co-Op spent \$55,000 in the fall of 1966 to double its grain drying capacity. It installed a new gas-fired blower equipment which increased the grain drying rate by 500 bushels an hour.

In 1968, the No. 1 grain elevator was remodeled. There is a new grain pit, cob crusher, elevator legs, and larger and faster grain cleaning spouts.

Additions are designed to speed up the processing of crops to meet the demands of increased mechanization in farm production. The company is predicting record sales this year. Spring volume was excellent and indications the trend will continue through the summer and fall. The wheat crop looks excellent and all other grain crops appeared to be coming on well.

The company set up a depot for anhydrous ammonia this year, 1968. It has more than 50 tanks available for farm usage. There were 450 members now.

In March 1967, centennial year, Oldcastle Co-Op held its annual shareholder's and directors meeting at 7pm in the township hall with approximately 40 in attendance of a possible 400. Reports showed 1966-

1967 profits were down some \$8,000 and a little over \$12,000 was realized from the 1966 trading year presented by auditor James Robertson.

President Lloyd Fairbairn and manager Manson Jessop explained that due to the recent expansion and a very high competition in the grain field caused some of the drop in profits. Weather conditions and wheat sprouting was also a factor.

The co-op did not pay any dividends in 1966 as the profits were channeled back into the company. The overall picture showed, regardless of the year's problems, of the best financial statements in the county and their members were complimented on their loyalty by the co-op board.

Stanley A. Drouillard of Malden road was elected to the presidency, Lloyd Fairbairn retiring from same, and Giles Pajot elected secretary of the board to replace John Bart, a veteran member who retired. Directors: Lloyd Fairbairn, John Shuel, and Clifford O'Neil. Manager: Manson Jessop. Oldcastle Women's Institute served refreshments.

More than 100,000 bushels of wheat were handled up to August 1968. Most of the crop having to be dried before shipment and dryers ran 24 hours steady for most of the crop. Much of the yield was down due to the weather. 50 bushels to the acre was considered excellent.

In the Free Press picture release of Apr 4th, 1969 Manson Jessop manager and treasurer, and his son Gary who is a field sales representative for Canadian Industries Ltd discussing a report. Oldcastle Co-Op received their franchise as a C.I.L. "Agrimart" for the Oldcastle area. Installation of a bulk fertilizer blender had been completed so that growers could take advantage of the economics realized in bulk fertilizer application.

Raw materials for use in the bulk blender come from Courtright Hamilton works and from the potash fields in Saskatchewan.

In addition to mixed turf and garden fertilizer, Oldcastle Co-Op is a major supplier of anhydrous ammonia and nitrogen solutions and has available a large fleet of nurse tanks and other equipment for the direct application of these products.

An on-site general store still keeps a limited stock of hardware items, garden implements, work clothes, footwear, animal pharmaceuticals and groceries for the farm kitchen.

The co-op was formed 49 years ago by Manson's father Walter Jessop and from a small country store has grown into a thriving farm supply business grossing approximately \$2,000,000 a year.

Officers of the firm for 1969 are, besides Manson Jessop - Manager and treasurer, are Stanley Drouillard - president, Lloyd Fairbairn - vice-president, Giles Pajot - secretary. Directors: John Shuel, Norman O'Neil, Gerald Herdman, and Clifford O'Neil. In the picture release are the elevators and the fleet of burse trucks for the newly franchised CIL Agromart with a cousin Albert Jessop supervisor of the outdoor operations on hand.

Some 30 members were on hand for the annual meeting on March 25th, 1968. This year was not one of their better years of profit regardless of the large amount of business this busy company did in the past year. The small attendance perhaps was an indication of the unrest and dissatisfaction of Ontario farmers as to the present legislation at both Toronto and Ottawa that is not protecting the farmers with

regards to US dumping of grain into Canada. Henry Hartley former, president and Ontario representative of the Federation of Agriculture, claimed it was too large a cost for farm organizations to lobby in Ottawa. With members of parliament and cabinet minister and as a result farmers were not receiving the legislation that should protect the Ontario and Canadian farmer. He claimed with the two organizations, the Farmer's Union and Federation, it was not a unified front that would be presented to both governments. He believed these two would compromise and a stronger position would be held.

Mr. Drouillard, president, claimed the co-op would be tougher on accounts in 1968.

George Elliott represented the Can. Imp. Bank of Commerce and James Robertson represent G.H. Ward and Partners – accountants and auditors.

The 1969 picture was a fine year showing sales of \$1,963,237 – only \$30,000 less than the record year of 1967.

During this year the co-op lost two of its valuable employees. On June 12th, eldest son of the founder, Carson, died after several months of illness. He was employed in the office. He was 54 years of age, married Mary Austin, son of Mr. and Mrs. Fred Austin of Walker road in Sandwich South and lived on North Talbot road close to the farm settlement of his parents. He was buried at Heavenly Rest cemetery.

Then on December 17th, Miss Clarice Lepain passed away at Hotel Dieu hospital at the age of 77. She was the co-op book keeper and one of its founders. Born on highway 3 in Sandwich South, daughter of the late Joseph Lepain and Amelia Esther McLean. Funeral from Janisse brothers to Assumption church with burial in Assumption cemetery. She belonged here in the township for many years at St. Mary's, Maidstone. The Oldcastle Co-Op planned to honour her with a banquet in June as it would have been 50 years of faithful, dedicated service to the company.

Industry and new enterprises are presently creeping into our township by leaps and bounds but our very best wishes go out to a 50 year enterprise – still active and thriving among us for continued success in out midst.

June 1970
K. J. Hall
Oldcastle Co-Operative 50th Anniversary

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8.
Essex Free Press, July 2, 1954 under the Oldcastle
Co-Op name when Walter Jessop was manager.
"Dear Farmer Customers:
"Don't Quit"

Mrs. W. A. Crowder
Curator for the Tweedsmuir
History of Sand. South Lwp.
Oldcastle Women Institute