

Pavučina Corner – By Tony Kadlec
THE SILVER LAKE CREAMERY PART 2 OF 3

This article includes photos taken inside the old Silver Lake Creamery and a discussion of the issues that involved early 20th century co-operative creameries, like the one in Silver Lake.

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CO-OPERATIVE CREAMERIES

By E. A. CROMAN, Grass Lake, Mich.

“In this short paper I am in hopes that I have brought out some points that will provoke a good discussion.

DISCUSSION.

Mr. Goodrich—Under your plan, would you limit the amount of capital stock that each one can have so as not to get it all into the control of one or two individuals?

Mr. Croman—Yes, I would. I think that \$100.00 is about the limit. If a man has invested only twenty-five or fifty dollars, he hasn't got very much to lose. If he has \$100.00 in it, It is worth looking after, probably ten shares at \$10.00 each.

Mr. Goodrich—Would you want the business men in the town who were not patrons of the creamery to have stock in it?

Mr. Croman—Oftentimes in starting a new creamery, it is necessary to get in business men, but as soon as the creamery is started, so you can get rid of them, have them step out.

Question—Would you have in your articles of incorporation a clause preventing one man from buying stock of another?

Mr. Croman—We have that in our articles of association. No man can change his stock without the vote of the directors; in other words, no man can become a stockholder in that creamery until he is voted on, and of course those who patronize the creamery who have no stock, have no share in the profits.

Mr. Goodrich—I know of a good many creameries where they are anxious to get in all the milk they can, they do let those who have no stock share equally with those who have stock. That certainly is unjust.

Mr. Croman—I found one such in this state, and the creamery was going down very fast. I advised them to reorganize, keep their stock in their own hands, and charge one or two cents per pound, on the plan that I have outlined in this paper.

Mr. Imrie—I have had some experience in co-operative creameries. We organized in western Wisconsin a good deal on the same plan as Mr. Croman has outlined, except that instead of taking one cent a pound on the butter as a sinking fund, we took the first year five cents on a hundred pounds of milk. We found we had taken a little too much; the next year we took four cents, and after that three cents on a hundred pounds of milk, which was set aside as a sinking fund, and out of this sinking fund were paid

taxes, insurance, permanent improvements, and repairs on the creamery, and in limiting the amount of stock to stockholders, we fixed it at \$250.00—I we had to do that, because it was hard to get the stock subscribed, but no, man can hold more than twenty-five shares, and no stock can be transferred without the consent of a majority of the board of directors. I think in all cases you should keep that stock right among the patrons. After we had been running two or three years, we bought a skimming station two or three miles distance, we had to issue new stock at that time, and had no difficulty because we were paying good interest on our capital stock.



East (Outside) Office Door, Silver Lake Creamery, June 2010.

Mr. Goodrich—I like Mr. Croman's idea of inducing the farmers to have farm separators. The most successful operators of creameries in this state are where the milk is all separated on the farm. There is the West Salem Creamery that last year made 948,000 pounds of butter, and paid to the patrons \$199,000.00. The cost of gathering the cream, making the butter and delivering it at the station was just two cents a pound, and that is what it has averaged for the past ten years and the butter netted to the patrons, on an average, twenty-one cents a pound. Mr. H. D. Griswold, one of the patrons who produces more milk in the winter than in the summer, is averaging twenty-two cents a pound. There are 350 patrons, and they all have farm separators; there is no separator in the creamery at all. One hundred patrons who have a small number of cows raise their cream by the gravity process, but they are fast getting the farm separators, and the gravity process will soon be a thing of the past.

Mr. Imrie—Do they keep the cream from the hand separators and the gravity process cream to be churned separately in the creamery?

Mr. Goodrich—They do not. The cream is graded according to quality, so that no matter how a man gets his cream, if he can deliver good cream that is all they ask of him. I know it is sometimes claimed that they do not make as good butter where the cream is separated on the farm, but that is not necessarily so. At this creamery at West Salem, the cream gatherers must examine the cream, and if they think Mr. A's cream is not as good as it ought to be, they keep it separate from the rest; then when he takes it to the factory the butter maker decides what shall be done with it. They have two vats; one of which holds the better quality of cream; the other is what they call the "stink" vat. They are worked up separately and bring from three to four cents a pound difference. The cream in the other vat brings as good a price as any creamery butter in the state of Wisconsin. I have been in creameries where they were making three kinds of butter, one from separator-gathered cream, one from whole milk, and one from gravity-gathered cream, and the best cream and the best butter was from the separator-gathered cream, and it all was taken care of properly, of course.

Mrs. Howie—When they market that butter, Mr. Goodrich, do they stamp upon it the name of the vat that it comes from, so the consumer may know?

Mr. Goodrich—It will advertise itself all right.



West (Inside) Office Door, Silver Lake Creamery, June 2010.

Question—Was that price that you named for butter or butter fat?

Mr. Goodrich—That was the net price for the butter. The butter fat was twenty-four and five-eighths cents per pound and the butter was twenty-two.

Mr. Croman—After our creamery had run awhile, we began to get ten and fifteen thousand pounds and we began to have a little more off butter. You know that there will some poor milk come to the creamery, frozen milk; there will be new patrons who will drop in and you have, got to watch those things. We would go out into the country and try to educate those men, but some of them wouldn't listen, they would bring the milk sour, oftentimes off flavor, so we devised a plan to fix those fellows. We said, "This is a co-operative creamery and we can't afford to mix your poor milk with our good milk. We will do this, the milk that comes there frozen and sour, off flavor, we will churn by itself, without even separating." So we put it into the churn and churned it, and that butter went onto the market, not as Lakeside-Elgin butter, but butter without any stamp on it at all, and it sold for what it would bring, and it didn't take those people long, when | good creamery butter was selling for twenty-five to thirty cents a pound, and they had to take eighteen to twenty cents, to find out that they were losing money. The way to fix those fellows is to give them a taste of their own butter.

Mr. Stiles—In any community where the farmers are going to organize, is it best for them to organize first, elect officers, then have those officers go and visit a number of creameries through the state, and see how they are built, and visit supply houses and then go home and build the creameries themselves and buy their own supplies; or is it best to let some creamery man come up and organize the farmers?

Mr. Croman—If you will organize and build it yourselves, you will build it from one to two thousand dollars less than the creamery man will build it for you."

Next Week: the last part of a 1903 discussion on what it takes to set up an effective local creamery...

If you have any contributions or suggestions for topics for future columns, please contact me by email: tkadlec@gmail.com or call me: (651) 271-0422 or send your letters to my attention: 1408 Fairmount Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55105. See this article online at: www.kadlecovi.com Děkuji! Tony Kadlec