

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

DISCUSSION, Continued.

“Mr. Thorp—And that brings up to mind the kind of a co-operative creamery that I am opposed to. Last fall, up near where I live, thirty miles north of here, there were a lot of sharpers came around to organize a creamery. I happened to be up there, and questioned them about it, asked them what their plans were, and they told me, and I told them I was glad I happened to be there, I was going to try to fight that creamery to the finish. They had their meeting, they made their nice talk, telling the farmers how, many thousands of dollars they could make out of the dairy business in a short time and got the farmers all worked up ready to take stock, and I got up and told them before they subscribed for any of that stock that they had better find out whether these men knew anything about a creamery or not, I meant the men in the meeting who were talking about taking stock. I took a vote on it, and I found there were only three men in that audience who had ever patronized a creamery. These men were going to organize a co-operative creamery there among that class of men and were going off to leave them to run it. In the specifications that they exhibited there for a creamery, they were going to board their building one thickness on the outside, and there wasn't a farmer in that room that knew that would not do for a creamery. After I got through talking, the gentleman got up again and he tried to laugh off what I had told them, and he began working them over on his side again, and I had another set-to and came pretty near being put out of the hall before I got through, because those men were larger than I was, but anyhow he could not get the subscriptions that night to his list. However, he got a German friend to come up and help him, and they did put in a creamery in that locality, and it isn't worth much; there is nobody there that knows how to run it and it has cost those people \$5,000.00 to build it. There have been three of them built this winter in that locality, and those men are making money going around among the farmers and organizing them. So I advise any farmers who are thinking of organizing a co-operative creamery to look into the matter carefully, don't let these swindlers come around and swindle you out of \$1,500.00, as this man did, and as they are doing right along in this state, although we have talked to and warned the farmers in the Institutes all over the state. The result is this, those people have got the creamery, the man has got his money, he has left the country, gone to build other creameries, and those farmers are there with nobody to run their creamery and nobody at the head of it that knows anything about it, and the dairy industry has been set back at least ten years in that locality just because those farmers were so foolish that they would let that man come in there and humbug them in that way. The first thing to do in a co-operative creamery is to elect the officers and select a good committee to go out among the co-operative creameries and go to the dealers of creamery supplies and see what prices they can get, and try not to build a \$5,000.00 creamery that isn't worth \$2,000.00 after it is built.



Old Milk Cart, Cans, and Steps, Silver Lake Creamery, June 2010.

Mr. Croman—That is what I say, find out what you want and build it yourselves, you can save from \$1,500.00 to \$2,000.00.

Mr. Simmons—Do you think we can make more money out of our butter by patronizing a creamery that by making it at home?

Mr. Croman—That depends on your surroundings. If you have private customers for your butter and you live near a large town where you can make as much money as at the creamery— you have really got to get more, of course, because it costs you something to manufacture that butter, but if you can get enough more to pay you for the manufacture, that is all right.

Mr. Simmons—Can't we make better butter on the farm?

Mr. Croman—If you have the same facilities on the farm as the creamery has, you ought to make better butter, because you have the full handling of the milk from the time it comes from the cow until it is in the tub.

Mr. Scott—You are making these remarks, however, to Mr. Simmons, not to the average farmer.

Mr. Croman—Yes. For the average farmer, it is certainly better for them to send their milk or cream to the creamery.

A Member—We manage things a little differently from what Mr. Stiles said, although we bought the machinery ourselves. But I think it is desirable, if you can get a good butter maker, to hire him first, get one from the Dairy School if you can, and let him see the farmers and get acquainted and also have him help build your creamery. Then go ahead, get carpenters, put up your creamery, secure bids from the creamery supply houses, and put up your plant yourself.

Mr. Croman—I think I should object to that, because you do not always keep the same butter maker. The first butter maker we had wanted continual changes, there wasn't anything right; the next one we educated ourselves. If I was going to have things just as I wanted them, I would put the young man who was to be our butter maker into the factory. The officers should be elected first, and they should visit these creameries and put up a plant according to their ideas. As soon as you turn your business over to somebody else, that business is going to pieces. Men who organize a creamery company must understand that they have got to give a certain portion of their time to this business, and if they don't intend to, let them stay off. I have got off my binder and gone down to that creamery a good many times. I have gone out of the harvest field, the cornfield, to go down there, just because of some little difficulty. When we organized, I went down there and learned how to make butter the first thing. I knew how to make butter at home, but I learned how to run that machinery, and then we educated other men who were interested in this creamery, so that if anything went wrong, we had it right in our own hands, and you cannot have a successful creamery in any other way. How would you run a bank, or any other business, if the directors did not understand the business? You have got to know the business from start to finish.



Silver Lake Creamery Photo, June 2010.

Mr. Utter—Isn't it possible to obtain such a knowledge in a state where there are so many fine creameries as have been built here?

Mr. Croman—Yes, you have all got creameries within six or eight miles where you can learn a lot, you can get the most improved machinery and see how it works. It is not so in our state. I was in a factory the other day where they are getting about 15,000 pounds of milk a day, and they are compelling the butter maker to ripen his cream with a rake. That is all wrong. What are we after in all this? We are after more butter from our product; we are after a saving in time and labor. Where it took three men to run a creamery ten years ago, two men will do it with ease today.

Prof. Carlyle—I do like the sentiment expressed by Mr. Goodrich in favor of farm separators. Naturally, I look at the stock end of the business more than I do the creamery end of it. Now, it seems to me we have been carrying milk to the creamery, pooling it all in one lot, and carrying the skim milk back from three to eight miles, long enough. You never know whose milk you are taking back; you are never getting it back in the same condition. As far as I can estimate from the skim milk we get back, I do not believe that skim milk is worth within ten cents as much per hundred as the skim milk we get from our own barns to feed sweet to our calves and pigs. That is a point which should be taken into consideration in operating creameries.

What is the use of hauling 15,000 pounds of milk through the roads we have in this country, and hauling it all back again to the farm, when anybody can separate it on the farm and one man could carry in the cream where it takes fifteen men to carry the milk to the factory? If we look at this matter from an economical standpoint, taking all the conditions into consideration, gentlemen, I believe that point is one of the most valuable that can be made in connection with our co-operative creameries. There is no comparison at all in the value of the skim milk for feeding to calves between that separated on the farm and that brought back from the creamery. We get back the wash water from the vats and everything that goes into it to make up the amount which the farmers demand as their dues. Calves raised on that kind of stuff don't amount to much, as compared with calves raised on their own milk at home.

Prof. Shaw—Is it an easy matter to keep calves healthy that are fed on the milk that comes back from creameries?

Prof. Carlyle—Two years ago Professor Farrington carried on some experiments for pasteurizing or sterilizing skim milk. He had many complaints that the digestive organs of small pigs were suffering from the effects of feeding such milk and he came to the barn and asked us to start a short, simple experiment, just a little practical experiment as between some of our own milk sterilized and some which was brought back from the creamery. We found all sorts of troubles, the calves were scouring, the hair was rough, and they were off feed for a long time, while those that we were giving the sweet milk from our farm went right along all right in every way.

Question—How much skim milk do you feed a calf?

Prof. Carlyle—Never more than two quarts of milk at a time to a young calf. Of course we increase that. I think one cause of digestive troubles in calves is feeding too much.

Mr. Goodrich—In regard to the difference between making butter on the farm and patronizing a creamery. We hear that question thrown in quite often to the disparagement of the creamery. For a great many years I made butter on the farm, and I made several hundred dollars more than I would have made if I had patronized a creamery, but that does not prove that the creameries have not been of

immense value to this state. Where a creamery is started in a community, it benefits every man, woman and child in that community, and it also benefits the man who is making butter on the farm. When we all made butter on the farm, do you remember what we used to get for the butter? My books show that I sold it for eight cents a pound, and paid ten cents a pound for the brown sugar that I was obliged to trade it off for, but when the creameries went to making up milk into a good quality of butter, then the private dairyman could share in the benefit just the same as the creamery, so I beg of you do not say anything in disparagement of the creameries.

Mr. Thorp—I want to disabuse anyone who may have received the idea from what I said that I am opposed to the co-operative creamery. I certainly am not. I am opposed to these sharpers going around and humbugging the farmers, starting creameries where they are not ready for them, where they haven't got cows enough to supply milk enough to run a creamery. I live right in a creamery locality, I can see two or three of them from the top of my barn, and I know that the farmers have all made money down in that locality, but I know that there are localities in northern Wisconsin where they are going to lose money, and be humbugged by those sharpers that I speak of.

Prof. Carlyle—I heard the remark awhile ago that the reason Mr. Thorp was so sore on this creamery question was because that \$2,000.00 was put into a creamery instead of into real estate.

Mr. Thorp—That isn't the reason. I had two good farms right near that creamery, and I don't like to see the dairy interest damaged for eight or ten years.

A Member—That very same plan that Mr. Thorp speaks of was tried on us in the town of Oakfield, twelve or thirteen years ago, but we were sharp enough to stop them.”

Reader Feedback on the Silver Lake Creamery

Leonard Kaminsky, age 86, son of Joseph and Sophie (Kielas) Kaminsky, resident of Hutchinson, recalls that it was the Glendenning Transport Company out of West St. Paul, which was involved with the transport of creamery products from Glencoe to West St. Paul, where it was sold through the Zenith & Godley Brokerage Firm. In 1929, Leonard's father Joseph hauled forty-eight, ten (10) gallon cans of heavy cream per day to the Kemps Ice cream company in Minneapolis...

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