

THE COLLEGE FARM

BRIEF REPORT BY THE FARM MANAGER

For three years, 1942-44, grounds of the College and the Jennings Estate have been utilized for food production. This venture was undertaken to produce food during the period of wartime scarcity and to give the students the opportunity to be effective in contributing to the war effort in a way which would not conflict with their beliefs and loyalties. The production goals have been set for products which would be used in our own kitchens and for our own animals, not for market. It was agreed at the start that it would be unwise and impractical and probably impossible to find a farmer who would attempt to operate such a large truck farm, the labor for which would consist of 300 unskilled youngsters each of whom would work less than an hour a day. It was perfectly clear to those who thought about it that such a venture would not be efficient in any sense, but it was still considered worthy.

Student personnel for farm work was under the direction the first year of Miss Mary Jo Shelley, Assistant to the President; the second year, of Mr. John Lydenberg of the faculty in Social Science; and the third year, of the Farm Council, a group of five students and two faculty members elected by the student body. The problems and results encountered by the personnel directors are dealt with in a separate report by the Farm Council.

The planning and operating of the farm has been directed and much of it executed by Mr. R. H. Woodworth of the Science faculty. The amounts of food produced in this venture, which are listed on a separate page, could never have been realized without the effective and constant cooperation of Mr. Frank Tschorn, Director of Buildings and Grounds, and the able and faithful work of three men in his department, Mr. J. Zagata, Machinery maintenance man and operator, all three years, Mr. William Moon, herdsman, second and third years, and Mr. J. Nadeau, field man, third year.

Probably the most unexpected outcome of the farm program was the unprecedented amount of criticism, almost entirely unfavorable, which was voiced by everyone toward everyone else; varying from reproof of the college administration for failure to insist that all students do their stint of farm work to disdain for the farm manager for not knowing the "right" way to plant peas.

By far the most successful part of the vegetable production program was potato raising. We have consistently had good yields of excellent quality. With the exception of cutting the seed pieces, picking the tubers up after digging, and sorting them, all operations were handled by machinery. Although every farm job was condemned by at least a few members of almost every squad, the jobs which were most unpleasant were hand weeding among seedling carrots, onions, and beets, picking green beans, peas, and lima beans, and hand plucking chickens. Work which appeared to be more pleasant was picking and husking sweet corn and picking tomatoes and apples.

Yields from College Farm
1942-1944

Fruit	Apples	1942 460bu.	1943 500 bu.	1944 100 bu.
Vegetables	Beets	50 "	150 "	25 "
	Broccoli	100 "	100 "	10 "
	Cabbage	50 "	100 "	25 "
	Carrots	30 "	250 "	40 "
	Cauliflower	30 "	50 "	--
	Chard	50 "	100 "	70 "
	Corn, Sweet	200 "	400 "	300 "
	Dried Beans	60 "	50 "	--
	Endive	30 "	20 "	--
	Green Beans	300 "	300 "	150 "
	Lettuce	150 "	150 "	20 "
	Lima Beans	--	100 "	50 "
	Onions	80 "	50 "	30 "
	Parsnips	10 "	10 "	--
	Peas	60 "	120 "	105 "
	Potatoes	1500 "	1500 "	1500 "
	Shell Beans	50 "	100 "	--
	Spinach	10 "	80 "	105 "
	Summer Squash	20 "	50 "	--
	Winter Squash	50 "	100 "	50 "
Sweet Peppers	10 "	20 "	10 "	
Tomatoes	300 "	250 "	200 "	
Meat	Beef	--	--	8411 lbs.
	Pork	--	4131 lbs.	--
	Poultry	--	6200 "	3037 "
Field Crops	Buckwheat	--	--	2400 "
	Corn (grain)	11	1200 bu.	1600 bu.
	Hay	--	30 tons	20 tons
	Oats	--	50 bu.	250 bu.
	Mangles	--	--	200 "
	Soy Beans	--	30 bu.	--

We raised poultry in 1943 and 1944. In 1943 2000 cockerels (1 day old) were started and brooded in the shop and greenhouse at the northwest corner of the Barn. The plan was to have them all in other quarters before college opened but a cold and very wet spring prevented that. Through February to mid-April those who worked in the Barn were inconvenienced by the unpleasant odor of the brooder house. Except for this disturbing factor the shop and greenhouse were admirably suited to brooding chicks. They are dry, free from drafts, and the room temperature never went below 50°, which made it easy to maintain a uniform temperature under the hovers. We lost very few chicks. From mid-April to July they were yarded in the brick and hemlock gardens. The hand plucking of this flock was probably the most disliked job of the whole farm experience. Over three tons of chicken was put into the quick freeze plant. In 1944 because of the objectionable odor we brooded the chicks in the dairy barn. The cats which had been controlling the rat and mouse population had to be removed lest they destroy the chicks. We later found that over half of the chicks had been killed and eaten by rats. It was then doubly clear what an admirable brooder place the shop and greenhouse had been because they were free from rats. About one and one-half tons of chicken was put into the quick freeze in 1944, but the plucking was done by a machine with a minimum of hand work.

In 1943 we raised pigs and put over two tons of pork into the quick freeze. Ten sows were selected for breeding and one sow was exchanged for a boar. In 1944 we raised the litters from these sows. In the summer the sows and boar were sold because there was no room in the quick freeze plant for them and the price of pork did not warrant feeding them until winter. In the fall when student interest in farm work dropped almost to zero the College Trustees, Faculty, and Farm Council judged that the time had come to liquidate the whole enterprise. Consequently, all the pigs were sold and the corn which was to fatten them in the coming cold months was sold. Incidentally, although pork is scarce, the ceiling price is such that it was a better financial move to sell the pigs and corn separately than to feed the corn to the pigs, although this is not the reason for our selling them.

In 1943 we undertook beef production. Our intention was to purchase a carload of feeders from the southwest, but they were not available. We bought bull calves from the Fillmore Farms herds. These were raised for a year and a half, then they were butchered and put into the quick freeze plant. This project may prove to be one of our costliest because of the high cost of concentrated feed and because we lost a number of young calves from respiratory troubles. The bright side of this endeavor is that most of the four tons of beef put into the freezer is still there and will be available at a time when beef is very scarce indeed.

The production of field crops (buckwheat, corn, oats, mangles, hay) was to provide feed for our own poultry and stock. All surplus and cull vegetables were fed to the stock.

The farm plan for 1945 involves growing our own potatoes and sweet corn, both of which require a minimum of hand work, and the seeding down of the remaining fields for the production of fine quality hay. There will be no attempt to make farm work available for every student but at times when help is needed anyone interested may feel free to join in this much simpler food production program.

Not until all of the hay, corn (grain), and potatoes are sold will it be possible for Miss Jones to draw up a report on the financial aspects of the enterprise. It was realized from the beginning that we would do well if we met our expenses. If it happens that any money is made, it is to be put into the scholarship fund. Some items will not appear in the balance sheets which nevertheless represent tangible improvement. The fields which have been cropped have been thoroughly worked and heavily fertilized and limed and when they are converted to meadow land with new seeding will be in much better condition than heretofore. The farm machinery, almost all of which was in very bad condition three years ago, has been repaired and adjusted and consistently oiled so that it is now in good condition. We have a 3000 bushel capacity root cellar, built almost without cost, which will probably be useful for many years. If we do not continue to raise our own potatoes we can buy our year's supply at harvest time and effect real economy. The quick freeze plant will make it possible to purchase meat and vegetables in large lots at lowest prices and to preserve it for use in excellent condition with an additional very significant saving in labor. The practice of crediting the farm for produce delivered to the kitchen on the basis of Albany wholesale market prices was unquestionably the simplest procedure but there were instances when the farm would have realized much better prices by selling to the local market. For instance, last summer the farm delivered over 100 bushels of fresh green peas to the kitchen and was credited at \$1.75 a bushel at a time when they could have been sold for three times that amount in the local market. There were many other similar instances. The point under discussion is that the farm could have shown better earnings if it were being operated on a profit basis, but because our main objective was food production for college consumption no attempt was made to show profits.

Each year the farm gave produce to the North Bennington High School for canning and the hot lunch program: 1942 (10 bushels tomatoes), 1943 (12 bushels sweet corn, 2 bushels dried red kidney beans), 1944 (20 gallons cider for the Hallowe'en party).

The objectives of this enterprise were to produce food and to provide an opportunity for the students to contribute to the war effort. Far more food was produced than was thought likely at the beginning and the students had ample opportunity for farm work.