

Rediscovering ILLINOIS

Ninety years ago a group of men and women, grown restive, organized a Congregational church in Geneseo county, New York. Then in a body they took the western road. Scouts had gone before and had mapped out their future.

This Congregational group, organized, moved bodily their chattels and their goods into the Illinois prairies, built log cabins and took up life anew. And so came into being a settlement which was called Geneseo. It has grown, somewhat, in these ninety years.

Black soil, slightly rolling, fine farming land, and people of the soil. Geneseo today is a community of about 3,300 people. It is in Henry county, a little more than twenty miles directly east of Rock Island and Moline.

Clung to Agriculture
They have clung to agriculture. They have never turned to manufacturing. Everything that comes from Geneseo comes from the soil. Corn-fields are rich and productive, yet the people export no corn. Instead they buy corn and bring it in.

Geneseo's only railroad, tell me that it is the largest shipping point of corned cattle on the system east of the Mississippi river. That is a worthwhile distinction. Stock feeders around Geneseo go west and buy cattle as well as corn. Here they finish their cattle.

Life in Geneseo and the country 'round has traveled on even tenor all these years. There never has been a notable boom; never any noteworthy depression. When land values got jumpy and hectic after the World war there was no great excitement here; hence the deflation which came as a scourge to many communities never worked any painful anti-climax.

Perhaps some of the conservatism of the Yankee forbears who settled here has had something to do with it, cattle and hogs, sheep and poultry—these are the byproducts of these post-New Englanders for the stopping-off in New York for generations was only an interlude in the march of the pioneers.

I asked them in Geneseo what they had learned of life and living in their ninety quiet and rather uneventful years. They said to me:

Learn Co-operation
"We have learned, more than most communities, that we can work in co-operative ways. We have hereabouts a telephone organization which is unique. Any subscriber on our locally owned lines can reach, without toll charges, forty small villages.

"We have a co-operative cream association through which the dairy-men market their produce. They have found that they can get a little more for it by selling as a unit. Our wool growers have learned to pool their clip. More money comes back as a result. The farmers have a method of co-operative seed buying. They believe they get better seed and get it cheaper.

"If you talk to our farmers about this you will not find them radical. They merely believe that it is good business."

I was interested in knowing what some of the farm items amount to, as sold through this community of 3,300 people. We went into the books for it. In round numbers, according to our check, the butter fat sold in Geneseo last year came to about \$200,000;

poultry, about \$275,000; eggs, approximately \$100,000. The salary list for men to handle these goods, about \$27,000 a year.

Local Telephones
The Geneseo Co-operative Telephone company, which has toll connection with the Bell system, is owned by 529 local stockholders. It is doing considerable rebuilding and appears to be prosperous. Citizens assured me that it was. Lines into town are in cables and are buried.

There is little of the spectacular in Geneseo. The people are not built that way. They mostly own good homes. A dollar does Trojan work here, as compared with the larger cities and so modest income may mean a pleasant abiding place.

When Father Hennepin, the good French priest, with his voyageurs traveled the streams of the upper Mississippi valley way back in the latter 1600's, he saw many things. He was an enthusiastic story-teller and he took some remarkable yarns back to France.

People suspected that the daring priest dealt in fiction and that he had never seen many of the things he told about and that others of them, perhaps, did not exist. So Father Hennepin comes down in history as a gifted liar.

What stories might this saintly Jesuit tell without romancing at all if he returned today? Just north of Geneseo flows the Hennepin Canal, named in his honor. The main canal runs between Rock Island and LaSalle. And it flows both ways from the center.

Hennepin Canal
It is fed from a man-made stream which gathers its waters from the Rock river just above a dam which stands between Sterling and Rock Falls, in Whiteside county. The water comes into the main channel of the Hennepin canal at its highest point. From here the canal is "stepped down" through locks to the Rock river on the west and the Illinois on the east. Traffic on this canal? Very little today. Between Sheffield and Geneseo considerable gravel is moving in barges. But all in all the canal is a great investment in disuse.

Near the little town of Geneseo the canal widens. Here is a sort of bay. On its southern bank—the people of Geneseo have built a country club. Produce man, doctor, telephone man and lumber-man get out and play their foursomes on the green grass.

Places are set aside for volley ball, indoor baseball played outdoors, croquet and roque. In these latter years some of the oldtimers have retired to Geneseo. A sprinkling of Belgium farmers, expert agriculturists, have come in upon the land. They have brought with them one of their games. They pronounce it rally-bolly. It is played with heavy wooden disks which are rolled toward stakes, a sort of second-cousin to "horse shoes," alias quoits.

"Just Grow Up"
As I search towns and villages for industries I gradually come to believe that some of the best of them "just grow up" as Topsy did. I found in Geneseo a little industry that has just grown up there; developed by

natural evolution. It is a house specializing in seed corn.

This modest institution, known as the H. H. Withrow company, has this year sold enough seed corn to plant 47,000 acres. The business is fourteen years old. It grew out of a fixed belief that better corn could be grown by scientific selection.

Great caution is used to get disease-free, laboratory tested seed. It is grown by specially selected farmers under strict observation. It is sown and hung on wire hangers in rooms where artificial heat is used. It is dried out in a drying-vault. Air flows about every ear, due to the arrangement of the hangers, motor fans keeping the air in circulation. It is never permitted to freeze.

When the time comes to "work" the corn it is examined and tested, each ear by itself. The kernels at tip and butt are removed. After it is shelled it is mechanically graded, a rather delicate machine taking out all off-sized kernels.

Science in Agriculture
Each year the company imports "new blood" which is seed bought at a premium from other expert growers in other communities specializing in this "pure bred" corn. And the net result is—more bushels of better corn to the acre. Science is coming more and more into agriculture. It may surprise you but this Geneseo seed corn has been shipped to places as far away as China!

Geneseo, they told me when I got there, was just an orderly little Illinois community with "no story." But there are some points of interest and some lessons that can be learned.

NUTRITION PROGRAM FOR WOMAN'S CLUBS

At the request of the General Federation of Women's Clubs, Dr. Louise Stanley, of the bureau of home economics of the U. S. department of agriculture, has drawn up a program on nutrition. This suggested plan will be distributed to the state chairmen of the department of the American home of the federation, and by them passed on to the leaders of the local clubs. These local chairmen will in turn shape it to meet conditions in their communities and present it to the other members. Three million women will thus be enlisted in carrying out a program for better nutrition based on better food selection and better food habits.

As one means of "getting over" this nutrition program, brief outlines are given for talks on such topics as "The undernourished person carries a heavy handicap thru life" and "Feeding our families for efficiency." Sources of reference material, much of which is obtainable free, are cited, and co-operation with public agencies in local and national demonstrations is urged. For instance, child health week, home garden week, better homes week, can all be turned to good account in pointing out the definite relations between food and health and in furnishing the ways and means for better nutrition of all members of the family—beginning with the children.

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