

Morrow County Grain Growers - a story of growth

From its inception fifty years ago in the gymnasium of a local high school, the Morrow County Grain Growers, Inc., has been a story of growth and expansion in services to the wheat growers of Morrow County.

Formed to give the local farmer more leverage and higher prices in the market place, the grain selling co-op has, over the years, expanded into many other areas of service to the farmer.

Although selling wheat is still its primary function, the MCGG now offers a range of services, from chemical and fertilizer supplies and application to machinery sales and service.

Organized on a Tuesday night, March 18, 1930, in the lone High School gymnasium when 100 farmers pledged 183,000 bushels of wheat to cooperative selling, the Grain Growers this year handled six million bushels of wheat from nine elevators at seven locations throughout the county.

The original capital stock in the corporation was \$25,000, of which nearly all was sold at \$30 per share. This year the co-op is a \$2,700,000 operation with over 400 members. Paid in capital in 1980 was the amount of \$42,000. Shares are

still sold for \$30.

Created through the Agricultural Marketing act passed by Congress during President Herbert Hoover's term, the Morrow County Grain Growers original officers were: H. V. Smouse, president; R. W. Turner, secretary; R. B. Rice, George Peck, Ernest Heliker, Bert Johnson and Floyd Adams, directors and trustees.

The MCGG offers farmers storage space for 3.1 million bushels of wheat, an amount officers plan to increase with additional elevators in the future. Additionally, the corporation offers farmers the services of a fertilizer and chemical plant in lone, a bulk petroleum plant in Lexington, farm equipment, sales and parts service at its main office in Lexington, a hardware store, sales and service of domestic water pumps, and sales and service of small irrigation systems.

The corporation has also grown over the years in payroll and employees. It now employs 35 people on a permanent basis, and 45 to 50 during the harvest season. This represents a payroll of \$610,000 per year into the community. Present general manager of the Grain Growers is Larry Mills.

Up until thirteen years ago the Grain Growers had been most exclusively engaged in storage and marketing of grain, however, in 1967 it began to move into other areas.

About the same time the Grain Growers was formed in 1930, there was also another co-op coming into being, this one dealing in oil.

Formed on April 13, 1931, the Lexington Oil Co-op began purchasing gas and lubricat-

ing oils in bulk quantity from Portland, thus passing on savings to many of the farmers in the area who began shifting their farming methods from mule teams to tractors in the 1920's.

The farmers found that just as with wheat, oil prices were more to their advantage through cooperatives.

In 1967 the MCGG purchased the Lexington Oil company and merged their operations. A move into larger quarters was made not long after.

The MCGG had been headquartered at what is now the Kingdom Hall for the Jehovah Witness Church in Lexington. In 1971 the co-op moved its operation down the street to large new quarters located near the junction of highways 74 and 207, where it is today.

The move gave the Grain Growers more room to display the farming equipment it had for sale after purchasing Lexington Implement Co. in 1967.



Head offices in Lexington

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