

CO-OPERATION IN COLORADO BRINGING SPLENDID RESULTS

(By Will Payne, in the Saturday Evening Post.)

In the valley in the Grand River, in Colorado, about mid-way between Denver and Salt Lake, there is now a fine deciduous fruit region some twenty-five miles long and from three to ten miles wide with a planted area of about twenty thousand acres—a blossoming handbreadth on the slopes of the Rockies.

As late as the eighties the Indians occupied the valley and there seemed no particular reason for begrudging them possession of it. "There was nothing here," says a fruit grower, "but a desolate waste of light-colored, insignificant looking soil that many a prospective settler passed up at fifteen and twenty dollars an acre." Water was there however—Grand Junction, the metropolis of the valley standing at the confluence of the Grand and Gunnison rivers.

In the eighties a few fruit trees were planted, and, as those trees began to bear, men with an eye for such matters could see plainly enough that the bare valley with its light-colored soil, contained the making of a remarkable fruit district. Indeed, fifty dollars has been picked from a single tree there, and a thousand dollars from one acre; and last year the valley shipped out more than two million dollars worth of fruit.

The Grand Valley orchardists, however had an unusual proposition to deal with. Directly east of him lay the formidable and sparsely barren of the Rockies. To the west was a great stretch of scantily peopled and more or less barren plains. Moreover, the sort of fruit that he could raise most successfully required no special conditions of climate.

Apples, for example, are decidedly the most important product of the valley, and, broadly speaking they grow apples everywhere. The problem was how to induce an Eastern or Southern man to buy an apple in Western Colorado and pay the freight when he could buy them the next door. Obviously, as a rule, this could hardly be done by selling him apples cheaper than he could get them next door. Freight charges alone would often prevent that; but it might be done by selling him a better apple. About the only way the Grand Valley growers could hope to succeed on a large scale, in short, was by making himself a sort of orchardist "de luxe".

Success in Spite of Mistakes.

That he has succeeded on a large scale is due partly, of course to soil and climate, but it is also due to the Grand Junction Fruit Growers' Association. At first, as usual the marketing problem, was simple, for when the output of the valley was small, points comparatively near took the fruit readily at fair prices. As soon as the output exceeded the most obvious demand, trouble began. In 1891, a handful of growers met and organized the Grand Junction association for cooperative marketing.

For several years the success of the association was very small. The greatest of its mistakes is described as follows: "At first we elected a new manager every year—in other words sort of passed the honors around. This gave us a green man for each year's business, and the result was rather disastrous. In 1897 we elected John F. Moore, and he has been managing ever since, growing up with the business. From that time our real success dated. Under Mr. Moore's able continuous management the association has expanded steadily and fruitgrowing in the valley has expanded with it."

The association now handles about seventy-five per cent of all the fruit grown in the valley and has over eight hundred members. Its capital stock is over one hundred and thirty thousand dollars. Only fruit growers of the valley may subscribe to the stock, and no one may hold over five hundred shares. Each member sorts and packs his fruit in the orchard according to the instructions laid down by the association; then hauls it to the association's loading platform at the nearest shipping point. There an inspector opens several of the packages and examines the fruit, giving the grower a receipt that shows the number of boxes of each grade and variety. The grower's number, grade and variety are stamped on each box. The boxed fruit is then sorted on the platform and each variety is loaded separately. This has been found a great advantage, made possible by co-operation, because certain markets have preference for certain fruits. Some varieties of pears, for example, will often bring a higher price in New York than in other markets the same pear will hardly bring enough to cover freight charges. Still other points have a decided fancy for red

apples. If several varieties of fruit were packed in the same car, some of the fruit owing to these market preferences, would be sold at a loss.

California Method in Colorado

It is only in the last five years that the association has gone after the trans-Missouri market in a big way. Indeed, several years of experimenting and education were necessary before growers learned how to pick and pack fruit for long-distance shipment. It was Manager Moore's idea that Grand Valley apples, pears and peaches should be sold substantially in the same way that oranges and lemons are sold by the California Fruit Grower's Exchange. To accomplish that result, careful packing and grading and rigid inspection were necessary. One of the association's first moves was to discard barrels. For one thing it is very difficult to inspect a barrel of apples, while the contents of a box can be easily inspected by opening the side. Again boxes give the grower a small unit to handle, and experience has shown that a great many f. millers will take a whole box of apples where they will not take a whole barrel of them. The association introduced boxes into the Eastern and Southern markets—meeting, of course, a vast deal of opposition from conservatives who wanted their apples in barrels simply because their fathers' apples had always been in barrels.

For handling trans-Missouri business the association opened an office in Omaha. The reputation of its fruit is now so well established that practically all apples are sold before they are put on the cars, by forward contracts specifying that so many cars of a given variety and grade are to be delivered at a stipulated price. In the case of peaches and pears the association, or its agent at Omaha, endeavors to find a buyer at a satisfactory price before the car reaches the latter point. If a sale is not made the car is sent on to some eastern auction market where conditions seem to be more favorable. In each of the large markets the association has its representative to look after every car, disposing of it by private sale or, if put up at auction seeing that it receives proper treatment.

The association averages or prorates the price received of each different grade and variety of fruit that it has shipped within a given number of days and pays the individual grower accordingly. Thus each member who has shipped produce within the time covered by the prorate receives the same price for fruit of the same variety and grade.

In addition to marketing fruit, the association furnishes its members with supplies needed in the fruit business, such as boxes and nursery stock. Also, in order to give steady employment to its twenty-five or thirty men, it carries a line of merchandise. Last year, for example it shipped in three hundred and twenty-four cars of growers' supplies, merchandise, seed and so on. As it buys in car-lots, its members gets their supplies at lower prices. All supplies are charged to the member and deducted from his account from the proceeds of his fruit in the fall.

To improve the quality and pack of the fruit has been the foremost object of the association ever since it was formed. Early in the spring it sends out circular letters to the growers urging the necessity of pruning the orchard, and it employs an expert to instruct new members in the best method of pruning. A little later the association sends out a letter advising orchardists to spray for certain kind of insects, and telling them the best way to do it. An expert employed by the association, will visit any members orchard and give instruction in spraying. Again, after fruit has formed, the association send out letters instructing growers to thin their fruit, so that the trees will develop nothing but large size specimens.

The Best Pay Fruit.

"Always remember," said Assistant Manager Davis, at the last meeting "that a peach tree will produce more boxes of extra peaches than it will of pie-peaches, and the tree loaded with extra peaches will bring more than three times as much as the same tree full of pie peaches."

There is no danger of over-production of fine fruit Mr. Davis insisted. "Whenever there is an overloaded market," he said "it is always the poor, medium or fairly good fruit that suffers. Eastern markets will take almost any number of Elberta peaches, running sixty or seventy to a box, if in good condition, and pay large prices for them; but small, over-ripe, wormy or poorly packed peaches will go begging at the same time."

The annual meeting held at Grand Junction, January 15th, last, was attended by about six hundred members



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BASE BALL

SUNDAY JULY. 31

Medford vs. Glendale

Game Called at 3 p.m. Admission 25 & 35

many coming on a special train. The report showed that average prices realized on the crop were: \$1.96 for fancy Jonathan apples; \$1.30 for choice Jonathans; \$1.75 for fancy Grimes' Golden, \$1.21 for choice; \$1.21 for Ben Davis, fancy, 79 cents for choice; 76 cents for Elberta peaches, extra, 61 cents for choice; \$2.9 for fancy Bartlett pears, \$1.60 for choice, and so on. As the price for each grade and of each variety was stated, the grower had a powerful object lesson in the advantage of

raising the best fruit.

"This association," said one of the members, "has increased growers returns more than one hundred per cent." That seems to be a very conservative statement. Indeed it is difficult to imagine what the condition of Grand Junction growers would be if each of them attempted to market his own fruit individually, consigning it to glutted markets, shipping by express or in mixed car-lots, and so on. The association charges a commission of five per cent on the net re-

turns after deducting freight and refrigeration charges. It does not ask a member to pledge themselves to ship his fruit through it. Any member who is not satisfied is at liberty to market his fruit through any other channel, but as a matter of fact, few of them try to do so, and of the few that do try to do so they soon return to the association.

Since the cooperative concern became thoroughly organized and overcame its early mistakes, the planting of fruit trees in the valley has pro-

gressed pretty steadily at the rate of at from five to eight hundred thousand per year, which speaks for itself as to the general state of the industry.

The classified ads furnish classified facts—and a very small ad may contain a very big fact. Big, that is, in its bearing on your affairs.

Work on I. O. O. F. Temple.

KLAMATH FALLS, July 30.—Work has commenced on the foundations for the big three-story Odd Fellows' temple and the two-story brick being erected in this city by Banker L. F. Willis. Much of the material is now on the ground for these buildings, which are to be rushed to completion at once.

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