

The Development of the Woolen Mill Industry In Western Oregon

Owing to its abundant water powers, mild climate and fine soil for grazing sheep, Western Oregon is the ideal place for the development of the woolen mill industry. Here, it is literally true from the backs of the sheep to the backs of the wearers, our people are the best dressed and best clothed people in the world.

The first woolen mill was established in Salem in 1860. It was a two-set mill, erected in North Salem by public spirited men of those days, who are now nearly all dead. The mill then erected was destroyed by fire in the early '70s. The founder of the present woolen mill, Thomas Kay, Sr., came to Salem in 1863 via Panama. His family followed him over the same route by steamer to Portland, and then by team to Brownsville in 1863. That year is interesting to Salem people, because Thomas B. Kay, president and manager of the present woolen mills, was born in 1864.

This mill was built by Thomas Kay in 1889. He formed a stock company for the purpose, and the first board of directors were Thomas Kay, Squire Farrar, C. P. Bishop, T. B. Kay and O. P. Coshov. By the death of Mr. Kay one vacancy was created on the board and has been filled by A. N. Bush, of Salem.

How the Business Has Grown.

The original Kay Mill was what is known as a two-set mill with 14 looms, and it was operated as such until 1895, when a disastrous fire overtook this industry and the mill was rebuilt as a three-set mill, with 20 looms. The mill has been gradually enlarged until today it is operating 32 looms, and is one of the largest mills on the Pacific Coast.

The plant has been operated continuously for 20 years, except for six months required to rebuild it after the fire. It is the only mill on the Pacific Coast that has been operated continuously through two panics and the only mill west of the Rocky Mountains that did not shut down in 1893.

Equipment of Manager

As has been indicated above, the woolen mill business is of a complicated nature, and the successful manager must understand the business from the purchasing of the raw material to the details of the retail trade. He must be a good judge of both wool and the finished products. To obtain just such an equipment has been the life work of Hon. T. B. Kay. He was practically raised in a woolen mill, working at it from his boyhood.

He was educated in the public schools at Brownsville, and for a short time attended McMinnville College.

He had a practical training of ten years in the mercantile business in McMinnville and Portland, where he got hold of the details of the

woolen trade and learned the business from the retail end, serving both as a seller and a buyer, dealing with shoppers and manufacturers. He was instrumental in establishing several large retail houses that make a specialty of handling the clothing made from the products of the Salem Woolen Mills.

In Mr. Kay's opinion, there is the greatest opening on the Pacific Coast for the manufacture of clothing. At present the products of the Salem Woolen Mills are shipped to the large cities in the East, made up into clothing and then sent back to the retailer in Oregon.

Something About the Output.

The principal lines of manufacture at the Salem Woolen Mills are blankets, flannels, robes, and tweeds and cassimeres. The principal market for blankets is on the Pacific Coast, though it is not an uncommon sight to see "Oregon made blankets" advertised in the large cities of the East. The flannels are retailed both East and West. Oregon made flannels are the standard in the markets of the United States, and by many are considered the finest materials of this kind in the country.

The robes are made in great varieties, but are sold mostly in the West and very largely to the Indian trade.

The suiting cloths made at the Salem Woolen Mills are among the best in the country, and find a ready market. They are made up into the most stylish and dressy suits for men. The products of the Salem Woolen Mills are all handled through jobbing houses, and are ordered months and sometimes years in advance, and are literally made up to order, of certain weights and qualities.

Pay Rolls and Market.

The Salem Woolen Mills have a pay roll of about 120 persons, distributing about \$60,000 a year in wages. They virtually support a town of 1000 or 1200 people, and the product is the second largest in the state.

Nearly all the wool used is grown in Oregon, five-sixths of it. It is a well-known fact in the markets of the world that for both coarse and fine wools Oregon has few equals. Both grades are as good as any raised in the United States. The mills at Salem consume about 600,000 pounds a year, and the past year distributed about \$150,000 among the wool growers of the state. Mr. Kay goes over the state in June and July and buys the wool from the growers.

The Salem Woolen Mills afford a fine local market for the wool growers of the Willamette Valley. Mr. Kay organized a company and took over the Eugene Woolen Mills in 1906, of which he is also manager. His success in this industry enabled him to gain the confidence of the Eugene people, and for the time that it has been in operation it has been doing fairly well.

Willamette Valley Prune Association

This mutual organization of prune growers was formed in the year 1900 and handled the first year about 400,000 pounds of dried fruit. The pack for 1909 will amount to between 4,000,000 and 5,000,000 pounds. At first the Oregon prunes were forced upon the market with difficulty, but are now recognized as a standard product and sold under their true label in this country and are gradually taking the markets of the world upon their merits. The first packs of Willamette Valley Prune Association were sold almost entirely for domestic consumption. But under the enterprising and tireless policy of H. S. Gile of this city as secretary and manager, the Oregon Prune is now shipped to nearly all foreign countries. It is marketed direct to the world's greatest trading centers. The Association uses the "Pheasant" and "Hunter" brands, put up in boxes of ten, twenty-five and fifty pounds weight. The Association pays its members handsome dividends and Mr. Gile is a recognized authority on prunes in the jobbing trade of the United States. The fruits handled by the association are "processed" at the plant on Trade street, where cars are loaded on its own sidings. All profits from packing and marketing go to the growers and stockholders, and most of the stockholders are the fruit growers themselves.

Manufacture of Spray Material at Salem

A very attractive exhibit of Willamette Valley apples can be seen in the show windows of D. A. White & Son this week. These apples were brought from the Portland Apple Show by the Gideon Stolz Co. as a souvenir from that exhibition. They were grown in Marion and surrounding counties and are a strong advertisement for what this section of the Willamette valley can do in raising peerless apples.

The Gideon Stolz Company are manufacturing their Dependable Lime-Sulphur Solution and the trees from which these apples were taken were sprayed with this favorite material. The increase in the use of spray material as stated in this paper some days ago, is very materially on the increase and it means more for the uplifting and upbuilding of the fruit industry than any other one indication. Whereas the output of the Salem factory was 10,000 gallons last year, the demand was so great that during 1909 over 60,000 gallons were manufactured and sold. This is a home product of which Salem is proud and the fruit growers from all sections of the state are demanding it in larger quantities from year to year.

Go and look at those luscious apples and remember that the Willamette valley stands first in growing this kind of fruits.

Tillson Company's Prune Packing Establishment

Tillson and Company got into the prune business in 1897 in a small way and the magnificent growth of this business is shown by the fact that in 1909 their pack will amount to about 6,000,000 lbs., all put up in eight, ten, twenty-five and fifty pound boxes. The packages are beautifully labeled and prepared for the markets of the world. Most of the Tillson pack is shipped to Europe, fifty per cent going to Canada and England. The Tillson Company have their packing houses at Salem and Roseburg, employing about one hundred persons for six months in the year, and distributing a large amount of money in the shape of pay rolls at both of these cities, each of which is in the center of a large prune growing district. Processing prunes and preparing them for the market has become a highly specialized industry.

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The Salem Fruit Union

Entered the Field in the Interest of the Producer

The latest organization of fruit growers, a corporation formed strictly in the interests of the producer, was organized February 1, 1909, and at the end of the first year has two hundred and twenty-five active members. Under the practical management of Mr. C. L. Dick, for many years a traveling salesman for the Mason Ebrman Company of Portland, the largest business on record for a new organization was transacted. Altogether seventy-five carloads of green fruit were handled, sixty cars being prunes, which were distributed to the fruit markets of nearly all the big cities in the United States, as far East as Philadelphia and New York. At the height of the season one hundred and fifty people were employed in packing strawberries, blackberries, loganberries, cherries, prunes, pears, peaches and apples. A very choice lot of fruit giving Salem a fine name and reputation in the markets of the world was sent out bearing the label "Salem Fruit Union." It is the first time that a large shipment of green fruit was sent out of the Willamette Valley successfully and profitably. The fruit was packed at Salem, Roseburg, Turner and Gilbert Station. Six cents a crate more was realized for the prunes sent out of Salem than for prunes from any other part of the state. A great deal of this fruit would have gone to waste for lack of drying facilities had it not been for the enterprise of the Salem Fruit Union. Negotiations for a Pre-cooling station to be established at Salem are being conducted by the Fruit Union. There is only one such government enterprise on the Pacific Coast, located in California, and it successful Salem will have the second. The Union bought a quarter block for \$4,000 at the corner of High and Trade streets. Their property, with the improvements which cost about \$3,500, could easily be sold today for \$12,000 to \$15,000. The Union expects next year to distribute one hundred cars of prunes from Salem and there is a strong movement among the growers to add a dried fruit packing plant to their present facilities.

The Officers of the Union are as follows:

C. L. McNary, President.	C. A. Park.
C. O. Constable, Vice-President.	W. J. Ball.
E. C. Armstrong, Secretary.	C. J. Kurtz.
C. L. Dick, Manager.	A. Vercler, Trustees.

Thousand Bushels of Potatoes Taken off Three Acres

The river bottom lands are very fine for potatoes and yield large crops on the slightest provocation. As an example of this we cite the crop produced this year by Jacob Moyer on the island across from this city. On three acres he dug one thousand bushels. The largest in the lot weighed six and a half pounds, and six potatoes shown at the Derby and Willson real estate parlors weighed 18 1/2 pounds. These potatoes were of the Oregon Burbank variety, a staple article in the markets of the world, and are selling for fifty cents a bushel this year. Oregon potatoes are shipped from here to Texas and as far north as British Columbia.