

## **Extension Annual Reports and local growers.**

The names above can be found in the reports of the Agriculture Agent of the MSU Extension Service. Barb has included other facts dealing with the Agriculture of this area.

There has been an Ag Agent in Ho. Co. since 1913. They were in the Houghton Community Bldg in a 2-room office on 2nd floor with a budget of \$2520 and research to share in county came from Michigan State College.

In 1975 when Barb Koski, author of this document, came to work as Home Economist we were in the Ho. Co. Courthouse and the Land Grant College was named Michigan State University with Wally Kestitalo as Extension Director. Barb was the Extension Home Economist in Houghton, Baraga, Keweenaw and Ontonagon Co counties for 20 years. Barb Koski read some of the Extension Annual Reports and types these notes extracted from them pertaining to farming history and farmers in Oskar Area, and some in Liminga.

### **1913.**

Houghton County Potato Growers Association was in the process of organization with 78 members enrolling. 15 farms were managed with Agriculture Agents suggestions. 55 farms grew potatoes. 69 farms in 74 Acres had crops grown to Ag Agents suggestions.

### **1930**

Directions were translated into Finnish for treating seed potatoes. 1839 farms in the county. Cattle pop is 1500-1600 head for dairy. Guernsey leads with Jersey 2nd and Holstein 3rd. Herds are small with 6-8 milk cows on most farms. A few farms have over 15 head.

Problems: too few well bred registered sired used, heifers bred too young, not enough legume feed for greatest net return. Ag Agent worked to overcome problems. 4% of time in soils, 26% of time in crops, 25% in dairy and 9 % in poultry.

A 1991 Gazette photo (attached) shows 60 years ago the dock at the Dee Stadium and local potato growers were emptying burlap bags of potatoes in the ship's hold. Farmers would bring the burlap bags to the Dee. The sacks were piled 9 foot high in temporary storage. When the ship arrived the bags were dumped into the ship's hold. Going to Cleveland, the weather turned bitter and those potatoes above water line froze in transit and rotted. Shipping potatoes that way soon stopped.

### **1932**

Earl Roberts is Ag Agent. Agriculture is in extreme stress with low prices (depression times) on farm and livestock products. Outside employment is practically absent.... but provide as never before a larger part of necessities to the farm family for food and fuel. 20% of pop are farmers and receive less help from public relief agencies than any other class in comparable circumstances.

Dairy is mainstay of most farms in Ho. co. Our best cash crop is potatoes. Dairy farmers need to grow own rations for their cows. Sadly in need of well-bred sires but must wait better times.

**1932 continued:**

Selling prices of cattle is poor. So herd size grows waiting for better prices. This makes for short feed supply. Ag Agent suggested poorest be sold at whatever price, calves be sold for veal or even killed at birth in order to keep down herd size.

Goals for crops - raise in proper proportion the crops needed to properly feed the livestock on farm and to grow a cash crop of potatoes. Raise more oats and barley and less hay and clover for hay instead of timothy. Hay fields grown for 10+ years yield less each year. But old habits are hard to break and customs hard to break. Will take several years to get new system working.

**Potatoes -Quality market for U.P..** Green Mountain potatoes. First shipments on Duluth, South Shore and Atlantic Railway by agent to Detroit were sold at a premium. (40 cents/bushel). In the past potatoes were for home /family use. About 1 acre. This year 19 carloads went to Detroit.

4H work was used to further the work in potato production. 9 children had 1 acre. A partnership was formed with Houghton Hancock Rotary Clubs. Children had to give 2.5 bushels of certified seed to pay for the seed received. Child learned to treat seed before planting and follow practices of project.

Up to present no certified Green Mtn. seed had been produced locally. A local source of seed would be cheaper to buy. Last Spring 25 farmers and 83 4H-club members used 286.5 bu. (100 bu over previous year). 2 farmers applied for seed certifications. Each put in 2 Acres and were successful in obtaining certification.

Federal Land Bank took over in foreclosures and sold to new owners. Typical of so called run down hay farms.

Ag Agent made 378 farm visits this year. 1395 office telephone calls, 182 days in the field, 123 days in office, 95 radio shows, 137 educational meetings with 4879 in attendance, 495 4H club members and 73 days of state Extension Specialists assistance.

**1933**

Number of farms in County = 1840, of which 400 made changes due to Ag Agents advice. The farms were getting train carloads of lime 350 tons.

There was a better milk market with establishment of Italian Cheese Factory (Stella Cheese Co) built in abandoned mine building in Baltic.

A **1934** Gazette article states

“Want Potato Warehouse. Houghton. A farmers’ co-operative non-profit corporation for the erection and management of a potato warehouse in the Portage Lake District was organized last night at the Community Building. The following board of directors was elected: **Alex Olson of Oskar**, Armas Perskari of Pilgrim, **William Lahkala** of Liminga, **Johns Harma** of Onnela and William Johnson of Franklin”.

**1935**

Rutabaga was grown to supply succulent part of dairy ration since corn is not grown to advantage in county. The last few years it was grown for human market and several carloads were sent to market.

**1935 continued:**

3rd annual Potato Growers contest was for those farmers with 3+ acres in potatoes. They were judged on yield and quality. 3 warehouses were constructed for grading and shipping. Each held storage capacity of 16,00 bushels each. This year 40,000 were stored. This fall 18 carloads were shipped. Last Spring 20 carloads were shipped.

The UP Potato show was in the county for the first time. A red dot on a map showed one farmer out this way in the Houghton Co. 300-bushel potato club. (Growing not less than 5 acres in potatoes) Another dot shows a grower of Certified seed potatoes. There were 22 growers in the county. A grower did all Ag Agents recommendations and yield exceeded last year beating the state record by 48 bu/acre.

A row 458 feet long gave 18.4 bu or 1109# or 586.27 bu./acre. They were graded over a 1.75 grader and only 43.5 # of small potato graded out.

A Gazette article April 30, 1935 states: "Local spuds shipped to cities. More than 24 carloads of potatoes have been shipped from the Houghton potato warehouse since it was completed last February, according to Hjalmer Dorvinen, manager. Most of the shipments have gone to the Detroit and Chicago markets, although some seed potatoes are being shipped to eastern points, especially Pennsylvania.

The warehouse is owned and operated by the Houghton Co-operative Potato Growers association, which consists of about 100 active members. The warehouse was built by relief labor, and the federal government loaned the association money to buy the material. The loan will be repaid by a nominal rental fee, which is charged for the storage of potatoes.

The warehouse provides ideal facilities for storing, grading and loading potatoes. It is equipped with 2 grading machines and is located on a siding near the South Shore freight depot where the potatoes can be loaded from the warehouse into cars".

**Home Gardens** -Hundreds of unemployed in local towns. This created a record of home and farm gardens. Ag Agent assisted with educational meeting on how to grow for best productivity.

**Strawberry to Chicago and Milwaukee Markets** - Several farmers tried recommended practices. Getting a variety to ripen as late as possible, pick green with stems on, put in suitable ship crates, shipment arranged to reach markets early enough to be sold that day. They got the best prices. They found that a new/better crate to ship berries in is needed and berries need to be cooled before shipping. Still need to find a better variety.

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A Gazette article carried a picture: **Haymaking time.** Horse and manpower.

There were times on the farm when haymaking was a family chore. Mothers and daughters had to give a hand to fathers and sons, because the operation taxed all power that was possible. Hay had to be cut by scythe or hay cutter, raked by wooden rake, pitched by three pronged forks to wagon and hauled to storage barns where a fork on rail

and pulley lifted it from the wagon by means of horsepower into the barn. Haying was started late in June and continued to mid July, generally, during the hottest days of summer for the best quality hay. Hay drenched by several rains lost its quality and cost farmers a greater supply of milk.

### 1936

Copper Country Strawberry Growers Association formed.

### 1937

**Potatoes.** 26 potato farm yields were checked by Ag agent. Most getting 426 bushels per acre. 4 farms had over 500 bu./acre. 4 potato farms in Northern Stanton Township grew over 300 bushels / acre.

191.5 Acres were approved for in certified seed production. This was an increase over the previous year. Ho. Co. was 3rd in the state in seed production. 6 years ago 3-4 acres in certified seed grown... of which 1 was in Northern Stanton Township.

This is the 5th year of the County Potato Show. The 3 warehouses are owned by separate co-ops last fall.

**Strawberries.** The Cooperative Strawberry Shippers Association is in 2nd year. There are 5 grading stations (2 in previous year). Membership in Ho Co was increased from 74 to 108. The railway built a loading platform long enough so that 2 cars may be loaded at one time. 25 growers in Ho. Co. They found out that selling berries for use locally and distant markets are two entirely different things. Those varieties that market well at home do not travel well. And rain in berry fields without mulch become sandy and are discounted by the outside markets.

**Dairy -** Ho. Co. excels in a grass county as land is still in "cutover" state where commercial timber is harvested but stumps are still in field. This is good pastureland and still return a profit.

Grass hay, oats, barley are grown on farm for dairy ration. Farmers only need to purchase protein grain to balance diet.

Depression saw low prices for dairy. Then the drought in 36-37 created a short grain crop in nation.

Recommendations by Ag Agent:

- 1- certain payment be allowed for summer fallow (plow under) to control weeds.
- 2- certain payment to build soil by having livestock and not hay every year to deplete soil (not more than 50% of Acres in hay)

40% of farmers receiving public aid due to land cleared for farming is not enough to make a living from. Former times had mines and lumber camps providing a place for supplemental income for farmers. This is no longer available for farmers.

Recommendations: payment for clearing more acres and payment for soil building by plowing under a green crop like legumes, buckwheat or rye.

First time farm accounting project was started with 4 farmers.

Grasshoppers increased creating considerable crop damage in 2 communities. Poison bait materials were obtained in 1 week. Survey in 10 stations showed we are in

**1937 continued:**

high phase of grasshopper cycle and expect considerable trouble next year.

88 farm radio shows were given over WHDF in Calumet at noon.

First year for Soil Conservation program to offer benefits payments for proper care of farm woodlots. This is a change from clearing lots for crops. Woodlots are an asset to farm and manage for best timber production.

Bounty payments were obtained for trapping coyotes and wolves as predatory animal control. Local boys were taught how to trap.

**1937 - 1985.**

A September 1985 Gazette article states: **C.C. Dairy** throws in the towel, **closes**. Dollar Bay. The Copper Country Dairy carved its own headstone last night bearing the dates 1937- 1985. The Co-ops board of directors, meeting in emergency session, decided to give in to mounting financial pressures (of 10 years) and close the dairy in Dollar Bay, according to board Chairman Leon Kallungi.

While declining to lay total blame on the state, which failed to deliver a \$155,000 loan last week to the dairy under reported pressure from the Departments of Natural Resources and Agriculture,.. contributed to the demise.

The dairy, which had 27 employees and 26 member producers - down from all time high of more than 800 in the 1950's- was to have received the loan through a Community Development Block Grant to Houghton County.

The grant was lay-wayed by objections from state departments that cited the dairy's lack of a license and failure to comply with environmental standards, according to Dr. Jack McEowen, head of the Emergency Management Assistance Teams for the Agri-Business of the Cooperative Extension Service.

McEowen's team was called in to manage the dairy in July after 50-60 producers left the co-op business because they weren't being paid, which is why the dairy lost its license and bonding last year McEowen has said.

Kallungi said the board decided to begin shipping its members' products to the Frigo Dairy in Carney in Menominee".

**1938**

An American Cheese factory (CC Cheese Cooperative) was established in Dollar Bay.

**1944**

Wartime. Wm. Cargo is the Ag Agent.

Extension, along with Agriculture Adjustment Adm., Farm Security Adm., Rural Electrification Adm., Farm Credit Adm. and Forest Service helping families thru the war times.

2498 Office Calls - many were for farmer's income tax help.

1946 phone calls

3358 letters

735 farm visits - 1940 census said there are 1784 farms, but AAA office has 2041 with average size of 80 acres with 34 acres in cropland.

Assistance was given in 456 War Loan and United War Fund drives.

**1944 continued:**

Manderfield Victory **Community Gardens** were sponsored by the Houghton Lions Club. 60 families cultivated 8 Acres. Many soil tests were done for Victory Gardens.

**Fruit.** There was an increase interest in having fruit due to the scarcity of fruit, so the Ag Agent had a pruning fruit trees class on the **Henry Eilola** farm/Oskar. Pruned trees yield more fruit.

Strawberry acres were not being maintained by replacement plantings, as there was no labor available for the slow job of hand planting. Ag Agent had demonstrations on mechanical planter in 1945 to help increase acres.

**Chickens.** In February the chick brooders stoves had lessening hard coal to keep chicks warm for rest of winter. There was no more hard coal available. Ag Agent made arrangements with Hamar Quant to handle a carload of hard coal for poultry men only. Thru the release of Solid Fuels Administration a car arrived in time.

Ag Agent suggested sources of credit to 14 farmers - local banks, PCA and FSA.

‘Wartime Point Saving Meals‘ lesson was given to Study Groups. New ideas were to utilize soy flour and bean sprouts. Local leaders in Home Economics Study Group were: **Mrs. Henry Eilola/Oskar, Mrs. Art Oinas/Oskar, Mrs. Eli Hurley/Liminga, and Mrs. Guy Smith/Liminga.** Local 4H leaders were: **Mrs. Oscar Romppainen/Oskar, Mrs. Herbert Usitalo/Oskar, and Mrs. A R Peterson/Liminga.**

Earle Holman, County Commissioner of Schools, served on the Ho. Co. Farm Labor Council. (EB Holman School named after him).

**Dairy.** 21 new purebred bulls were in the county. An increase.

Cooperative shipment of livestock started by a local co-op.

Dairy production was 10% greater from 2 cheese factory reports.

Plymouth Cheese Corp in Hancock had the highest increase of net return than other cheese buyers.

**Potatoes.** Emergency Farm Labor Program recruits helpers to bring in the potato harvest. They place 3129 workers of which 1875 are youth and 445 members of the Women's Land Army. Barb Koski talked with Helen Nyberg of Hancock now and she said when she lived in Painesdale as a child she was asked if she wanted to help and she said yes. She went to a farm in Chassell. She had a bucket and a row of dug up potatoes to put in the bucket. She took the full bucket to a location to dump and went out for more. She did this for a few days. Dolores Trolin (Little) shares that she used to pick as well.

War Food Administration requested more acreage and production of potatoes. The past 10 years demonstrated special qualifications for quality potato production. Ho. Co. produced increased yield to 850,000 bushels in 5900 Acres. This was with in 100 Acres of the War Food Adm. goal. Potato growers desired to do everything possible to increase nations food supply. Ag Agent held educational meetings on best practices for potato production and a few new commercial farmers came on board. There were 432 growers with over 3+ Acres with 290 growers with five or more acres in potatoes. Gaspardo Brothers were the largest growers. L. Best, Townsend, and Vitton Brothers had

**1944 continued:**

100-200 acres.

47 growers in the 300 bushel Potato Club with 850,00 bu.

A new potato warehouse was built near Boston on Railway. With the exception of cement, roof and insulation materials the other materials needed were obtained from wrecking the old recreation building at Electric Park.

Houghton County Agriculture Society was organized and they put on the Potato Show. Potatoes were shipped for stock food and alcohol plants.

Local growers: **John Puuri, Wm. Lahnala and Matt Puuri** of Atlantic Mine raised Green Mountain certified seed potatoes. 14, 22, and 13 Acres respectively. New farmer, **Jacob Heikkila** of Atlantic Mine grew 15 acres of Green Mtn potatoes.

Due to increased need for higher yields all warehouses were full so vacant buildings and garages were temporary storage for 100,000 bushels. Those locations were the first to be graded and shipped before severe cold set in.

For the Potato Show local growers were: **John Puuri** (Atlantic Mine?) with yield of 479(bushels?.. it is not noted in report), **Alex Olson**/ 416.1, **Jacob Heikkila** 407.1, **Art Lindstrom** (father to Clara Swaggart, principal of EB Holman) 403, **Wm. Johnson** 374.5, **Matt Puuri** (Atlantic Mine?) 348, **Art Oinas** 340, **Waino Lahti** (Bob Lahti's father) 333, and **Henry Eilola**/Oskar with yield of 315.

**Oats** The UP Experiment Station (also under Michigan State College) in Chatham gave Iowa 444 and Vicland Oats in 2-bushel lots to 6 cooperators for trial in Ho. Co. **Alex Olson**/Oskar was one grower. The idea was to try growing in various soil types for best yield. All cooperators got satisfactory yields. But Bond Cross was rated the best. All seed oats produced by the cooperators were purchased by neighbors.

**Poultry.** U. S. Accredited Manderfield Hatchery of Ho. Co. Eggs were shipped to drying plants in Wisconsin.

AAA taking care of electrical connection applications. There was an increase in electrical wiring jobs in the farming districts.

Motion pictures were the method of teaching to groups at education meetings.

Tapiola Farm Machinery Repair School graduate, Reino Tarvas, built a manure loader for his John Deer Tractor from plans given to him by the Ag. Agent.

There was an increase in care and repair of household equipment reported. So Home Demonstration Agent gave lessons on sharpening of knives, repairing screens, repair of electric cords and plugs, and reshaping Aluminum pans.

In 1944 1445 farms had 55,213 Acres in cropland.

In 1949 1228 farms had 45,314 Acres in cropland.

In 1949 741 farms had running water.

In 1944 299 farms had phones.

In 1949 had 527 phones in Ho. Co

In 1940 1644 farms with 85 Acres

In 1945 1567 farms with 101.2 Acres

In 1950 1228 farms with 117.5 Acres Roads were well surfaced and open year round for milk trucks.

Private Power Companies and REA have extended electric power services to rural areas wherever economically possible to do so. In 1944 910 farms had power. In 1949 1081 farms had power.

Richard Garnell shared a photo of him on a tractor at his farm in 1950. It was an Extension Demonstration of a Rotobeter that chopped potato stalks to bits.

## 1951

736 farm visits. Federal Land Bank owned farms are rare. Farm mortgages returned. Tractors and power machinery replace horse drawn machinery on larger potato farms. Successful farmers are young (35-45 years old). They are able to adjust themselves to mechanical age and changing conditions. They are usually single, operating on parent's land. Power machinery means more land is needed to make return so farmers buy neighboring land.

3 Weekly newspapers that had Finnish language entering farm homes with Extension programs. Ag Agent did 176 radio shows.

R Suojanen, WHDF radio in Calumet spoke in Finnish about Soil Conservation district forming. Polling places for organizing the Ho Co Soil Conservation District were operated by Extension Study Group women and 4H leaders. One polling place was Oskar, another in Liminga. (More in other locations). Total of 275 ballots were cast. Wesley Johnson was named one of the Directors. The District started practices with 15 farms.

4H clubs were in Obenoff, Liminga, and Oskar.

Home Economics Extension Study Groups were in Oskar, Onnela and Liminga.

On Ho. Co. Extension Advisory Board was **Wesley Johnson**, dairy farmer and President of ABA, Chairman of Soil Conservation Bd. of Directors. He was elected to be the delegate to the UP Extension Advisory Board. Wesley was also on the 4H UP State Fair Association as was **Hannah Romppainen** of Oskar.

**Ethel Johnson** is delegate to 4H and Home Ec district meeting in Marquette in 1952. The first 4H council was organized May 9, 1950.

**Potatoes.** Farmers find band seeding of legumes successful. Potato growers adapt grain drills to band seedlings. **Charles Lahnala** w/ 6 others grew 227 Acres of certified Bonham potatoes in 1951. This was less due to wet conditions. Acres of potatoes planted was reduced from 4100 to 3000 Acres due to lack of price structure and several years of blight wiping out small growers. Planting had a wet summer so 10% drown and 10-15% drown in fall. Est. crop was 500,000 bu. Charles Lahnala had 16 A of Green Mtn potatoes.

Lawrence Best of Lake Linden places a washing plant into operation in late 1951.



**1951 continued:**

80 carloads of washed potatoes left Ho. Co. in spring of 51 and 43 in fall. In 51-52 225 carloads left Ho. County.

Potato growing comparison:

in 1949 in Ho. co. There were 350 farms on 5400 acres yielding 1,350,00 bu.

in 1950 “ “ 250 farms on 3000A yield 750,000 bu.

**Strawberries** - 120,000 #'s of berries processed by 2 freezing plants in Ho. Co. 16,000 strawberry crates shipped by Copper Country Strawberry Growers Association in 51. 18,890 in 1950. They went to Chicago in trucks by 4 PM to reach market early. There are 2 strawberry processing plants now. Northern Coop. Processing Plant in 1950 and in 1951 Ristell Fishing Co. bought equipment for berries.

**Dairy** - 980 cows bred by ABA cooperative in 1951.

Winner of dairy contests this year was **Wesley Johnson**.

Master Pioneer Farmer Award went to **Alex Garnell** (potatoes).

5 farmers sell 1600 bu. certified oats to Iowa.

**Alice Johnson** (4H dairy club member) wins County Showmanship contest and Holstein showmanship at UP Fair. This was her first year in showmanship.

There were 965 dairy farms making 60% of Ag income.

A Dairy Barn Tour was held with one stop at **Wesley Johnson's** farm. Mr. J built and filled a temporary silo with grass silage this year with good success. The speaker talked of winter feeding problems with emphasis on calf raising and use of grass silage, calf hood diseases and control. Participants toured his barns that were well constructed and well maintained.

1500 Dairy Cows were bred artificially.

Wally Kestitalo promotes 4H dairy work by having an organization of businesses sponsor a dairy heifer to a 4H member willing to buy on a 2-year contract or return the heifer.

These were the Dairy Plants in Ho. county in 1951: CC Cheese Cooperative in Dollar Bay, Bridgemen Russell Co., Stella Cheese in Baltic, Lake Valley Dairy Co., and Gilberts. (Humm meaning Jilbert's in Marquette or was there one here?)

There was a milk bottle shortage, as bottles were not being returned so started a deposit and exchange and bottles were returned.

**Wesley Johnson** was advanced class winner in green pastures contest.

**4H Gardens** - vegetables valued at \$1471 @ cost of \$288 were grown by 42 boys and 50 girls in 4H.

Poultry - 4 Ho Co. pens at UP Fair got blue ribbons.

Rabbits - 5 members raised rabbits valued at \$48 @ cost of \$22.

Dairy - 30 boys and 12 girls in dairy project an increase of 4. Value of \$5,225 @ cost of \$3629. Clubs locally were in Liminga, Oskar, and Obenhoff. 31 animals were exhibited at County Livestock Show Aug. 10th. This was the first County wide exhibit of 4H in 20 years. 11 blue ribbons. 12 red, 8 white were awarded.

14 animals went to UP Fair. There 4 blue, 9 red, and 1 white ribbons given. **Alice**

**1951 continued.**

**Johnson** (Wesley/Ethel's daughter) won Co. Showmanship and UP Holstein Showmanship. Her first year to show. She competed with others in her Oskar Hustlers club: **Judy Lantto** (Art/Helen Lantto's daughter), **Dorothy Solmonson and Rose Knuuttila**. All had 6-7 years experience showing.

This is the 10 anniversary of the Oskar Hustlers 4H club. 200+ attended their Fall Achievement Program. **Mrs. Romppainen** was recognized as a leader for 10 years. Other leaders were: **Mrs. Onni Knuuttila, Mrs. Eino Kitti, Mrs. Herbert Usitalo, and Waino Lepisto**.

At the 4H achievement Banquet recognition was given to local 4H members: **Rose Knuuttila/Dairy, James Romppainen/Strawberries, Dorothy Kitti/food preparation, Gerald Marshall/vegetable garden, Norma Ylitalo/Baking.**

Tractor care/maintenance was held in fall.

Food Preservation 39 gals and 1 boy canned 3003 qts of produce valued at \$842 @ costs of \$340. One food preservation club was in Liminga.

One knitting club in Oskar. Co. total was 57 gals and 1 boys knit 140 articles valued @281 @ cost of \$155. There were 46 members in 1950.

**Dorothy Kitti** of Oskar completed Jr. Leadership meaning she had definite responsibilities in her club teaching one project, training officers, keeping records of activities, providing Ext. bulletins.

Earl Holman (E B Holman Elementary School named after) was Co. Supt. of Schools was invited to the 4H leaders Banquet.

This was first year for a Ho. Co. 4H camp. One counselor was **Dorothy Kitti** from Oskar.

This was 3rd year of taking Christmas kit of craft ideas to Copper Country Sanitarium for T B.

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