

THE APPLE INDUSTRY OF CALHOUN COUNTY

BY

ALFRED W. KASEL

Moline High School, Moline, Illinois

Calhoun County, located in western Illinois, has achieved an outstanding position among the counties of the state in the production of apples. The county at present (1933) produces approximately a third of the commercial apple crop of the state. The average annual commercial apple crop in the county for the past eleven years has been approximately 422,000 barrels. In 1930 it exceeded 600,000 barrels.¹

Significant changes in the marketing of Calhoun County's immense crop of apples have come about within the past decade. Chief among these changes are the improvement of facilities for transporting the apples to market, the rise of Chicago as a major market comparable with St. Louis, the advent of the itinerant trucker, and the improvement of facilities for the wholesaling of apples by commission firms in St. Louis.

Nearly all of the county's apples prior to 1925 were carried to the St. Louis market or to railway loading points by river craft. Since 1931 none have been carried by this method. Improvement of railway facilities and highways, the construction of a vehicle bridge across the Illinois River at Hardin in 1931, and the increased use of the motor truck have been the major adjustments which eliminated river craft as a means for transporting the apples.

The need for better facilities than river craft afforded became acute with the ever increasing volume of apples shipped from the county after 1910 and also by a demand on the part of apple buyers for a better quality of produce. The improvement of rail facilities in 1924 accomplished by the extension of a branch of the Atton Railroad from Titus to East Hardin ushered in a new era for the apple shippers of Calhoun County. The building of this railroad was the principal factor in making Chicago a major market for Calhoun County apples comparable with St. Louis.

The motor truck has become a major means of transporting the apple crop to the market centers within the past several years, mainly because of the improvement of Illinois highways. The use of the motor truck is a distinct advantage to the industry.

In the summer of 1932 the facilities for the wholesaling of apples by St. Louis commission firms were greatly improved through the establishment of the St. Louis Apple Exchange. The exchange was organized for the purpose of combining the receipts of apples in one central location in order to serve the interests of the grower, shipper, and buyer.

Although the previously described changes have meant an improvement in the former inefficient methods of marketing the apples, there are a number of problems remaining to be solved before Calhoun County can be said to have a really efficient system of marketing. The problems are concerned with an expected large increase in production within the next decade, standardization of pack, successful advertising, development of the by-product industry, improvement of roads within the county, and the development of a successful cooperative marketing organization to help solve the problems connected with the before mentioned factors.

¹Data from Illinois State Department of Agriculture.