

**Consider the Sources for Researching
1930s MILK STRIKES in CENTRAL NEW YORK
&
Role of Eastern-European Immigrant Dairy Farmers
in the Strikes**

By

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For

“Consider the Source NY”

**Workshop for Social Studies Educators,
Broome-Tioga BOCES**

Tuesday, November 22, 2022

Johnson City, NY

Consider My Sources (1995-1998)

Secondary Sources for Context

Broad Histories: 1930s Depression/New Deal in Nation and New York State. Monographs, Articles.

Primary Sources

PERSONAL CONNECTIONS: Family, Friends, Students

CONSIDER THE ENVIRONMENT in 1920s/1930s, Maps.

- Newspapers, local & regional, 1930s.
- Oral Histories
- Historical Society Archives: local, county; caveats
- Cornell Cooperative Extension, 1930s Newsletters
- Cornell University, Ithaca. Milkshed Archives

1930's Milk Strikes: New York Counties

- Albany
- Broome
- Chemung
- Chenango
- Clinton
- Cortland
- Columbia
- Delaware
- Dutchess
- Franklin
- Fulton
- Herkimer
- Livingston
- Lewis
- Madison
- Monroe
- Montgomery
- Onondaga
- Oneida
- Ontario
- Oswego
- Otsego
- Schenectady
- Schoharie
- Seneca
- Tioga
- Wayne

Strike Begins in Boonville, Oneida County, New York, Boonville Herald, Aug. 1, 1933.

EIGHTY-SECOND YEAR BOONVILLE HERALD, BOONVILLE

NEARLY SCORE INJURED

Three Farmers Seriously Hurt As Troopers Charge Crowd with Clubs And Tear Gas--Situation is Tense

FARMERS & SPECTATORS BRUTALLY BEATEN
Two Men in Serious Condition at Hospital—17 Men and Boys on Injured List—Boonville Citizens Incensed at Troopers' Action—Governor Asked to Recall Troopers

Boonville's role in the milk strike, which got under way early Tuesday morning, developed into an alarming state of affairs shortly before noon when a crowd of more than 300 striking farmers and spectators received a taste of state police methods that has incited the entire citizenry to righteous wrath and indignation.

Nearly a score of men were brutally clubbed and beaten by a force of about fifty troopers who with apparently little warning rushed the defenseless gathering. Three men were seriously hurt. Blood ran freely from the bodies of many innocent victims. Young men and old men alike were unconsciously in a quivering state of terror.

Throughout its life to be fair-minded, broadness of opinion by lavishly used its column. It has always to those dairymen who in this section, that a regret.

As a result of the display of armed troops on the state Herald is with the far in taking this station:

1. That the farmer withholding their milk
2. That farmers h to the various milk st
3. That in picket truck bearing milk fo farmer and through a to the side of the strik
4. That they are strike-breaker or in fo
5. That it is unli they are armed with
6. That the use c

MANY PLEAS FOR TROOPERS' RECALL
Organizations and Business Men Shower Governor with Protests

MAYOR DOUGLASS ASKS AID OF GOVERNOR
Boonville, N. Y., Aug. 1, 1933.
Governor, State of New York, Albany, N. Y.

Citizens of Boonville protest the unwarranted brutality of State Police here during milk holiday. Without provocation they have clubbed

BOONVILLE MILK WAR

MANY EYE-WITNESSES OF ATROCITY TELL THEIR STORIES TO HERALD

ELECTRICAL STORM AT WHITE LAKE
Two Cottages Struck by Lightning—Stetson Cottage Burned

White Lake — The two story frame cottage owned by Clarence Stetson, 32 Proctor Boulevard, White Lake, was gutted by fire here Tuesday afternoon about 3 when struck by lightning during a severe electrical storm. Damage was estimated at \$3,000 and is partially covered by insurance.

Neighbors headed by Dr. L. W. Palmer, whose cottage was next door formed a bucket brigade and with the aid of an electric pump owned by Dr. Platner, managed to save the outer walls but was damaged by water.

Prompt efforts of the neighbors prevented the fire from spreading to nearby camps.

Lightning also struck the cottage owned and occupied by E. G. Irwin, 415 Eagle street, which is on the state road a short distance above the Stetson cottage.

The bolt entered through the radio and started a fire within ten minutes. Damage was slight.

Don't miss a single issue. Subscribe to the Herald now.

LATE MILK NEWS FROM THE NORTH

What really happened during the young riot precipitated by the attitude of the troopers in Boonville can best be conveyed to the readers of the Herald through the story of three eyewitnesses of the unfortunate affair, the witnesses being reputable young ladies of Boonville who are willing to go on the stand and swear as to the veracity of the following statements. Their names are Jhalce Musser, Mary Jane Harholt and Mrs. Frederick Griffin.

Some time between 10 and 10:30 two of the young ladies drove to Boonville shopping district to make a few purchases. After making their purchases they drove to the bathing beach, and upon returning noticed a group of state troopers congregated at the foot of Second street, adjacent to the Boonville milk station. Learning of the milk strike and that there might be some excitement, they stopped their car at the curb on Main street and were joined by a third young lady. They overheard a farmer tell another group of farmers that were congregating on Main street just off Second street that a number of farmer pickets were guarding the road south of Boonville near the Hawkinsville road.

Shortly after the farmers left the location at the corner of Second and Main streets to join their comrades on the Hawkinsville road, the

State Troopers Not Wanted. Boonville Fair Will Be Operated This Year Without Them. "Although it has been the custom in past years to secure a detail of state police for the Boonville Fair, the association has announced trooper protection will not be sought for the coming exposition. Fair officials feel it unwise to have state police on hand in view of the present strong resentment against them in that section after the trouble in Boonville during the recent milk strike." *Journal & Republican*, Lewis County (August 31, 1933)

“MILK WAR STRIFE OVER WIDE AREA”

- “The amazing rapidity with which the milk strike has spread throughout Central New York was manifested in disorders between troopers and strikers which occurred at Oriskany and West Winfield over the weekend.” Boonville Herald, August 10, 1933.

B. Helle p. 10 Herald Aug 10, 1933

Turbulent Times at Waterville When State Troopers Rush Crowd--Acts Are Protested

Villagers Say Police Smashed Car Windshields—Resolution Sent to Governor—Community Aroused to High State of Indignation

Another turbulent episode in the milk strike, in many particulars similar to the trooper outrage in Boonville, occurred at Waterville Tuesday morning when state police rushed a crowd of 300 strikers. Car windows were smashed and persons hit by flying glass.

PROTEST SENT TO GOVERNOR

The village was aroused to a high state of indignation by the incident, resulting in a meeting of members of the village, town and school boards in Municipal Hall where they drafted a resolution, which was telegraphed to the Governor. It protests the “drastic tactics” of the troopers, and calls attention to the desperate plight of milk producers. Notices, disclaiming responsibility for calling the state police into the village or township and warning the people not to congregate in the village streets, were posted about the community.

Waterville—Rain early in the morning failed to quench the strikers’ enthusiasm as they gathered in Osborne Avenue, facing the Gorden plant, which is served by Dairymen’s League members. More than 200 strikers maintained a peaceable attitude although riled by statements that the milk plant had accepted milk brought in during the night.

Rush Through Mob

tender at the White Street crossing and said he had stock to prove he owned some of the railroad when he called the troopers. His actions were received with delight by the crowd.

Florlan Tepelt said that while pumping up a tire on his car, troopers smashed the glass in his machine.

MILK WAR STRIFE OVER WIDE AREA

Troopers and Strikers Hurt in Clashes at Oriskany and West Winfield

The amazing rapidity with which the milk strike has spread throughout Central New York was manifested in disorders between troopers and strikers which occurred at Oriskany and West Winfield over the weekend.

Twenty-four troopers under Captain Stephen McGrath and five deputies of Sheriff A. E. Ellinger’s department, under Criminal Deputy Charles Gaffney, were conveying a truckload of milk Saturday morning to the Borden plant in Utica, when they clashed with striking dairymen about a mile and a half from Oriskany village.

Capt. McGrath injured in the mix-up, Captain McGrath and five other state troopers were

“STRIKERS FIRE ON MILK CONVOY” — August 10, 1933



- “Herkimer -- A dozen shots fired from high-powered rifles by milk strikers concealed in a dense woodlot, on a convey of eight milk tank trucks.....
- The shooting occurred about 8 on the Mohawk Valley Turnpike....”

Class Issues: Opposition to 1933 Milk Strikes

Richfield Spring Mercury, 1933.

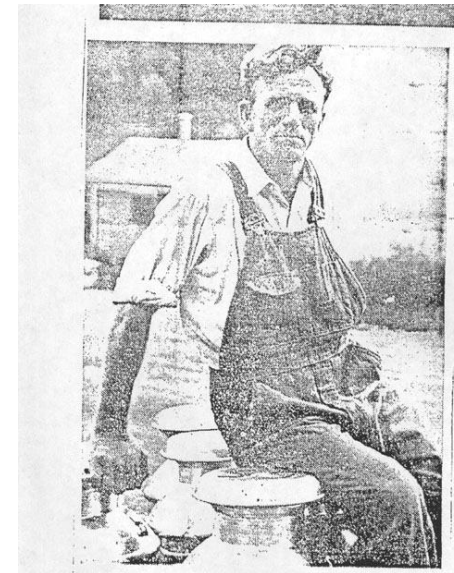
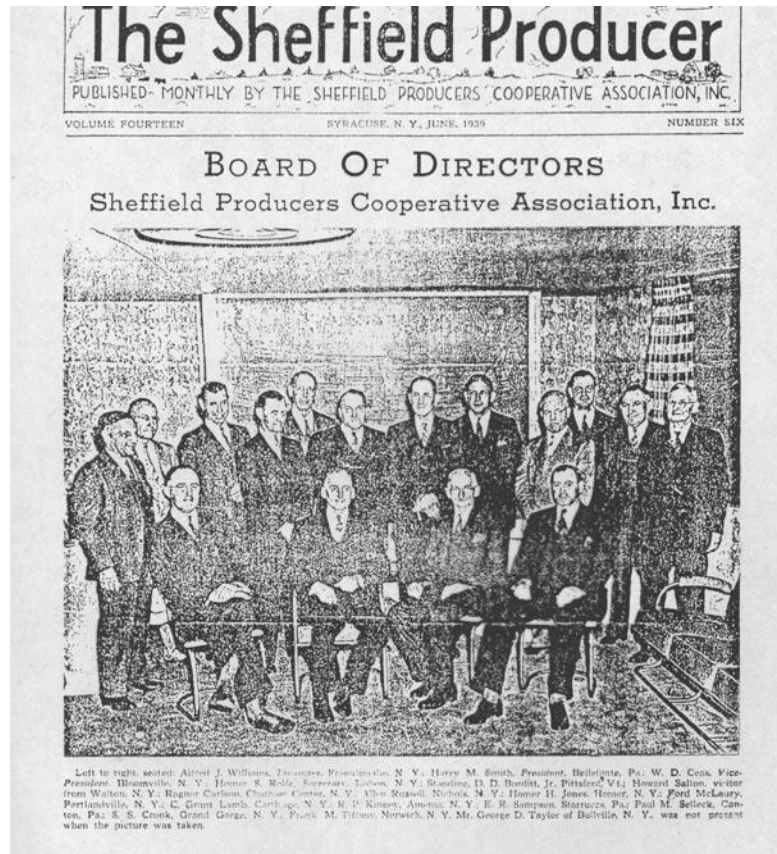
“MASS MEETING OF NON-STRIKING DAIRY FARMERS, representing 500 milk producers of county. Dairylea and Sheffield join forces at meeting. Assured Oneonta Police and D&H Railroad police & deputy sheriffs on guard.”

Myron G. Brenner, attorney of Ann Street, Little Falls, who is likewise a farmer owner and president of the Herkimer County Trust Company, has wired Governor H.H. Lehman, relative to the milk strike in that vicinity. He says: “Behalf of many conservative dairymen desiring to deliver milk at station. Ask protection. Raid, gangs number 4 to 40 dumping and polluting milk. Present returns for milk insufficient, but no justification for strike against State authority. Present condition menace life & property. Please recall strikes of Boston police.”

1939 MILK STRIKES



Sheffield Producers Cooperative Association vs. Dairy Farmers Union



“DIRECTING STRIKE activities of members of the Dairy Farmers’ Union in Chenango county, Sam Schou maps strike strategy at his farm home in Bainbridge.”

- Sam Schou immigrated from Denmark in 1927.

1939 MILK STRIKE

Watertown Daily Times. Courtesy of New York History.



Archie Wright.

DAIRYMEN of New York State

For seven long years we Dairymen have been taking it on the chin.

We have kept our machinery going with haywire.

Our barns are falling to pieces.

We have kept dealer profits at an all time high, and

Our families have been without comforts and conveniences.

For seven long years our industry and our lives have been the football of politics and gravy for the Dealers.

All we got from the politicians was promises and stalls.

All we got from The Dealer was the mercy of a mad bull.

The time has come to put the ring in the Dealer's nose and dehorn him besides

If we are going to make New York State a decent place for Dairymen to live

NOW IS THE TIME! - FOR YOUR FAMILY - YOURSELF
- YOUR INDUSTRY - YOUR FELLOW PRODUCERS
ORGANIZE! JOIN

The DAIRY FARMERS' UNION

OF THE STATE ON NEW YORK

TEMPORARY HEADQUARTERS • OGDENSBURG, N. Y.

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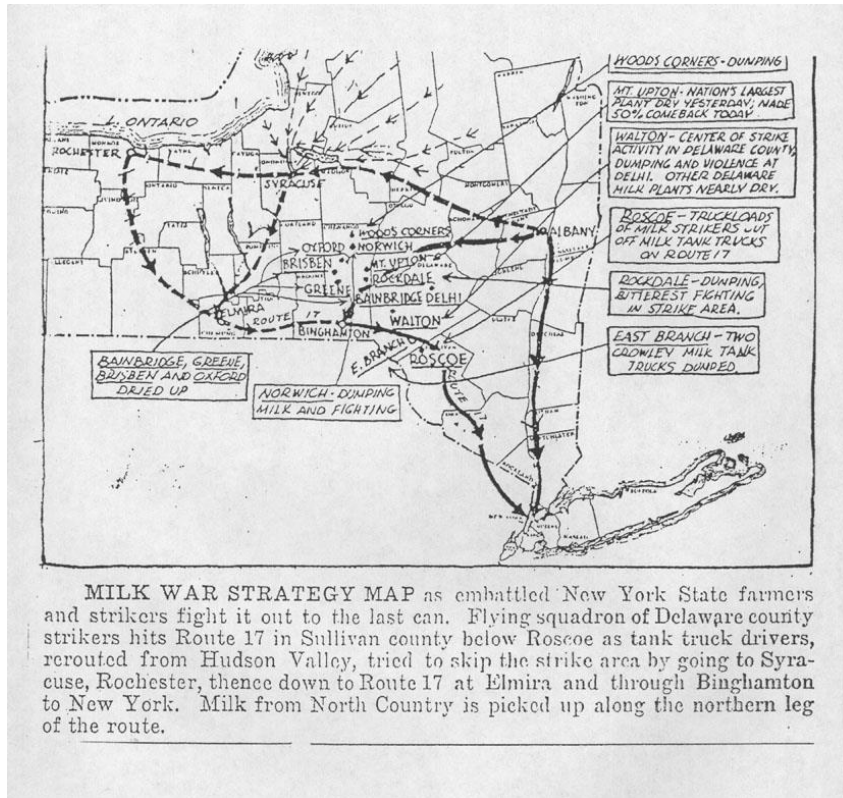
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MILK WAR STRATEGY MAP



- “Mt. Upton, nation’s largest plant, dry yesterday, made 50% come back today.
- Walton – Center of strike activity in Delaware County, Dumping and violence at Delhi. Other Delaware Milk Plants nearly dry.
- Bainbridge, Greene, Brisben and Oxford dried up.
- Norwich. Dumping milk and fighting.
- Roscoe – Truckloads of milk strikers cut off milk tank trucks on Route 17.”

“BOTTLES AND MILK CAN COVERS are hurled at defiant truck driver ... as striking farmers overtake and attack this truck on the Mt. Upton-Rockdale road.”



1—BOTTLES AND MILK CAN COVERS are hurled at defiant truck driver on rear gate of truck as striking farmers overtake and attack this truck on the Mt. Upton-Rockdale road. A few minutes after this picture was taken the truck driver and his two companions, armed with steel pinch bars, were overpowered and beaten up.

- “BULLETIN: Guns blazed for the first time today in the violent NY state milk strike as a Dairymen’s League truck was ambushed by strikers near Central Bridge on the Binghamton-Albany road....The tank truck was punctured.”

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Guns blazed for the first time today in the violent New York state milk strike as a Dairymen’s League truck was ambushed by strikers near Central Bridge on the Binghamton-Albany road, it was reported by one of the largest truck owners of this area. The tank truck was punctured.

Other truck owners immediately called their trucks off the highways as insurance companies started cancelling policies.

High Spots of Milk Strike

Flying squadron of 40 pickets sent from Walton to block Route 11. Pickets say Broome drive opens tomorrow.
One killed in Bradford county, Pa.
Two injured at Mt. Upton League plant, nation’s largest.
Toga drive opens at Smithboro today with no violence.
Sheffield receipts at Walton cut from \$5,000 to 4,000 pounds.
Horden dry milk plant at Bainbridge receives 1,500 pounds instead of 30,000.
Flow largely shut off in Chenango and Delaware county.
Four plants sign up with Dairy Farmers’ Union.
Extra deputies sworn in throughout Tier.
Two Crowley Milk Co. vans stopped in Delaware county. Full bottles in one smashed.
New York rejects much milk because of bacteria content.
Mayor LaGuardia to parley with big distributing companies on whether milk should be permitted to come in from Boston, Pittsburgh etc.
Archie Wright, Union head, wires N. Y. say extension of New York milkshed would “impoverish farmers, enrich the milk trust”

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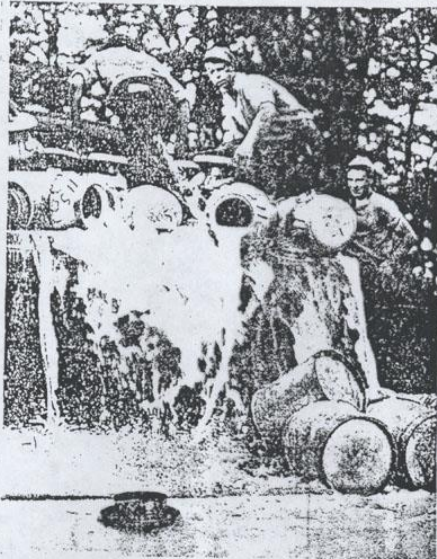
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“Tier Violence Spreads with Raiders Drying up More Plants”

THURSDAY EVENING, AUGUST 17, 1939. PRICE THREE CENTS

BLOCKADING ROUTE 17 Corridor and Border Areas



Tank Trucks to Be Stopped on N. Y. Runs

Tier Violence Spreads With Raiders Drying up More Plants

4 CONCERNS SIGN UP

Move Into Broome Friday Indicated; Many Hurt in Fights

Albany, Aug. 17 (AP)—Governor Lehman directed every available state trooper today to highway duty in the milk strike area to “prevent any interference with the lawful transportation of milk.”

At the same time, the Chief Executive wired district attorney of counties where there have been milk disturbances advising them to prosecute any further violations and if necessary summon a grand jury preparatory to prosecuting offenders.

“As Chief Executive,” Mr. Lehman said, “I will insist upon the sheriffs, local police and district attorneys and state police performing their duties so that law and order may be maintained and life and property pro-

AFTER THIS destruction of milk at Nere's creek highway in Delaware county, these rioting strikers joined a flying squadron of Delaware farmers in an attack on giant tank truck traffic to New York city, hitting first in Route 17, near East Branch.

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- Blockades of all main highways leading from the milk producing Southern Tier into New York city were established this afternoon. One hundred strikers guarded the Liberty highway at the crest of Hawk mountain near Hancock.”

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AFTER THIS destruction of milk at Kerr’s creek highway in Delaware county, three rioting strikers joined a flying squadron of Delaware farmers in an attack on giant tank truck traffic to New York city, hitting first in Route 17, near East Branch.

Caldwell, N. Y.—The Delaware League Cooperative association trucks held at milk receiving stations today.

Connecting strikers in the rocky passes of Route 17, set up a barrier for milk tank cars ported by Binghamton.

Prosser moved from the scene early this afternoon. They said the gallon trucks, slowed by down on the 2000.

striking strikers when drivers refused to open valves.

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of 40

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“With violence increasing across the Southern Tier milk strike front...”

Cobleskill, N. Y.—
The Dairymen's League
Cooperative association
ordered milk tank
trucks held at milk re-
ceiving stations today
“until further orders.”

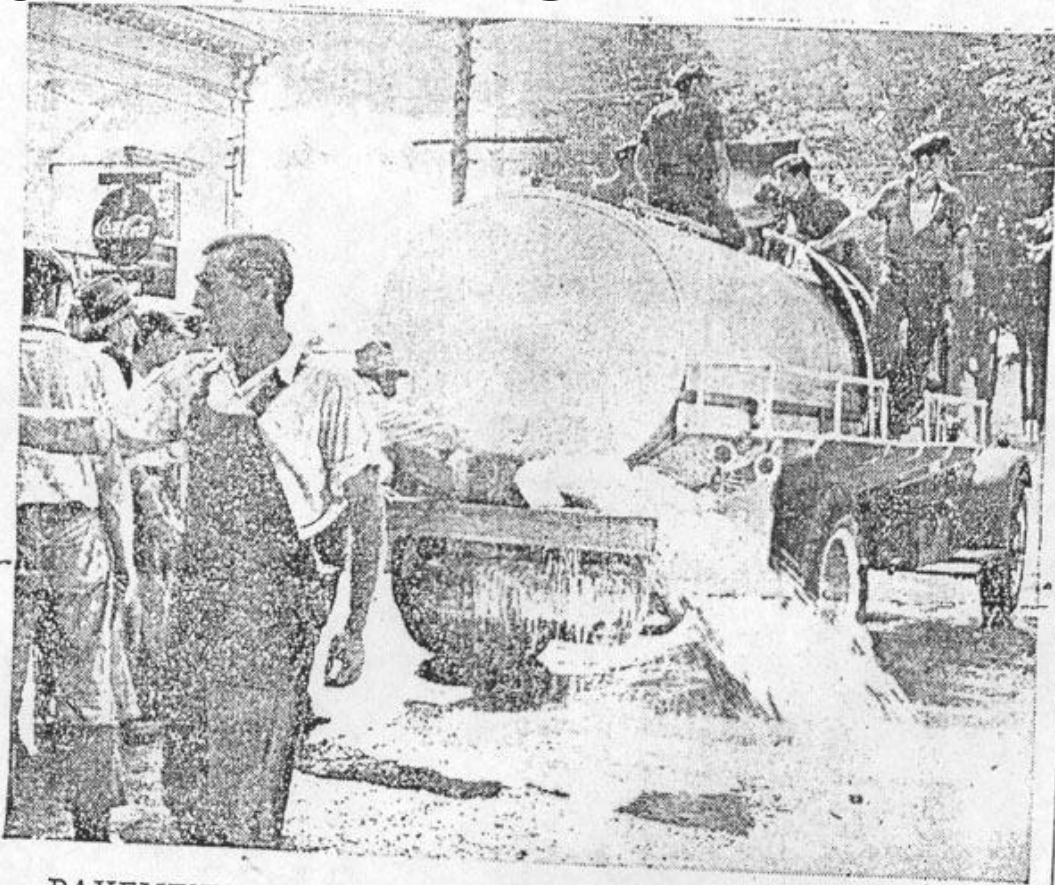
Concentrations of
club-swinging farmers
in the rocky passes of
the Catskills along
Route 17, set up as a de-
tour for milk tank cars
from upstate, were re-
ported by Binghamton
Press field men from the
vicinity of Hancock and
Roscoe early this after-
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(Continued on Page Three)

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“PAVEMENT TURNS WHITE as 2,000 gallons of milk are dumped from tank truck by pickets on guard at Mt. Upton.”



PAVEMENT TURNS WHITE as 2,060 gallons of milk are dumped from tank truck by pickets on guard at Mt. Upton. The truck is owned by the William Evans Dairy Co. of Brooklyn.

—Photo by C. H. Whitlock.

**Part II:
Eastern-European Immigrant Dairy Farmers
in the 1939 Milk Strikes in Central New York.**

Thesis: Previous experiences of Eastern European immigrants in the “old country” and here, especially in labor strikes in coal fields, lumber camps and factories, influenced their choices as dairy farmers in Central New York, during the 1930s Milk Strikes, e.g., joining the milk strikes, the Dairy Farmers Union, and forming milk cooperatives

Couto, Richard. *Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Round: The Pursuit of Racial Justice in the Rural South*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991.

According to Couto,

“human beings acquire and impart truth by stories. The people ... are presented as narrators of stories about the truth of their conditions and their efforts. ... These stories, traditions, and values are the history of a group that holds them together and separates them from others. The more marginal and powerless a group is, the more important is its own history as self-definition.

The group's stories, its history, preserves its self-esteem and worth, and refutes the interpretations of their subordinate status as promulgated by the dominant, privileged class.” (Couto,9)

Couto's research revealed that the remembered experiences, i.e., the stories of past struggles and activism, became the bedrock, the motivation for activism when faced with new challenges.

Geography & Ethnicity of Research

- **Otsego County:** Fly Creek Valley, Roseboom, Worcester: Slovenians.
- Richfield Springs: mixed Eastern European (EE).
- **Herkimer County:** Little Falls & Stark area: Mixed EE, especially Slovaks.
- **Montgomery County;** Fort Plain & St. Johnsville: mixed EE, especially Ukrainians.
- **Oneida County;** Boonville, Potato Hill area: Polish.
- **Lewis County:** Constableville & Tug Hills area:
 - Mixed EE, especially Hungarian and Polish. Greig, Turin, Glenfield area: Hungarian.
- **Delaware County,** Margaretville, Hubbell Hill area: mixed Eastern European ethnicity, especially Ukrainians.

WORCESTER AREA SLOVENIANS

- 2nd Generation, Slovenian Dairy Farmer
- Father left “old Country, due to constant wars; sick of the Turks and the Italians and Germans, one war after another.
- Worked in Mazola Corn Oil factory in Illinois; labored in unhealthy conditions, working in cold water, suffering pneumonia.
- Witnessed labor activism, as workers organized for better pay.
- Moved to Worcester to farm and to save his health; remembered need to be well organized.
- At a dairy strike meeting, he advised: “Let’s get really organized, like out west in the factories; let’s get really organized, get really tight and then strike.” Believed they struck too soon.
- Grandson is an activist dairy farmer.
- (Interview, Quinn, mid 1990s)

Social Clubs & Mutual Benefit Societies Aided Ethnic Communities in Achieving Social, Economic, and Political Solidarity

MASS MEETING

By the
**American-Polish
Citizens' Club**

At
FRANK MARCY PICNIC GROUNDS
POTATO HILL
at 3-P. M.
SUNDAY, SEPT. 14

Speaker:
WILLARD R. PRATT
of Utica
Republican Candidate for State Senator.
ALL ARE INVITED

PICNIC
By Polish-American
Citizens' Club
HAWKINSVILLE GROVE
SUNDAY, JUNE 19
From 1 p. m. to Midnight
Bernie's Orchestra of Rome
Refreshments Served
Everybody Welcome

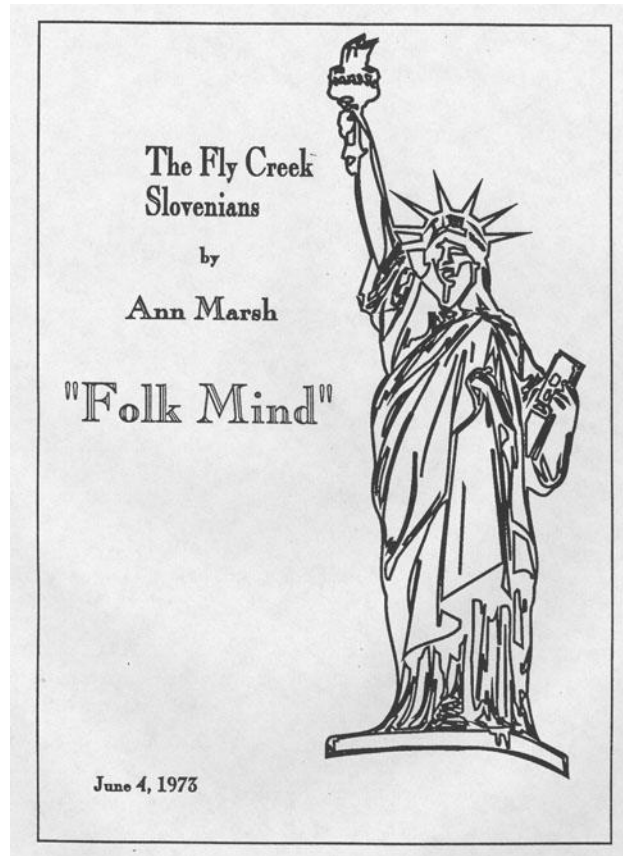
Ukrainian Progressive Club of St. Johnsville area.

- Michael Rapacz, formerly of Little Falls, had moved to St. Johnsville when he was fired for suspected union organizing in Little Falls in 1912, following textile mill strike.
- He opened a general store that served the dairy farmers, including many Eastern European immigrants, especially Ukrainians.
- Rapacz constructed a building near his general store that served as the meeting place for the Ukrainian Progressive Club.
- Dairy Farmers Union held its Montgomery County meetings in the Ukrainian Hall in St. Johnsville, with George Matis as Chairman. (*Farmers Defender*, DFU publication, 1939)

“Farmers’ Independent Benevolent Society” of Fly Creek

- 1926: Slovenians from Fly Creek Valley, Christian Hill, the village of Fly Creek, Snowdon Hill, and Phoenix Mills formed a lodge, a mutual benefit society.
- Lodge provided insurance: “dues were a dollar a month; sick pay a dollar a day, and a death benefit of \$200.”
- Early business records were written in Slovenian.
- 1929: Members built a lodge hall, on edge of a member’s cornfield. Gathering place for social events, e.g., dances, has come to be called “The Cornfield Hall.”

The Fly Creek Slovenians & Chain Migration



“These friends of Dad and Mother’s wrote to my parents about coming to buy a farm, how nice it was here. In the meantime, my dad got killed [in a coal mine in Wyoming]. Mother remarried, and my stepfather was interested in farming, he worked in the coal mines too. So we came down here. The same way with other Slovenians around here. One of them came here first, and they’d have friends, and they’d write to them, and that’s how they settled in here.” (Marsh p. 8)

Excerpts from Marsh and Quinn Interviews with Slovenian-Americans

After labor and union experience in coal fields of Pennsylvania and lumber camps of West Virginia, Frank Trinkaus moved his family to Fly Creek to farm. Frank was one of the founding directors of the Fly Creek Valley Co-operative.

In August 1939, his wife, Gertrude Trinkaus, along with their sons, was arrested for dumping milk in Worcester area, as part of a “flying squadron.” (Quinn, 1996 interview, Trinkaus Family Member)

“Practically all our people came from coal mines, some from Alabama, some from Wisconsin, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Wyoming, a lot from West Virginia. And almost everyone of them had large families.” (Informant A, 2/7/73, Marsh p. 7)

In western states’ copper and iron mines: ***“Those little companies, they didn’t give a darn about a human life, as long as they could make a fast dollar and get out.”*** (Informant C, 2/19/73, Marsh, p. 5)

**“A loyal Member of the Dairy Farmers Union,
Kalan looks to unions and cooperatives
for better living.”**



A loyal member of the Dairy Farmers Union, Kalan looks to unions and cooperatives for better living.

Why Michael Kalan of Fly Creek Valley Joined the Dairy Farmers Union

ONE of the founders of the Fly Creek Co-operative was Michael Kalan. To the farmers, he is known as "one man who never gets scared." To his family, he is known as the man who has spent many years struggling to keep the roof over their heads.

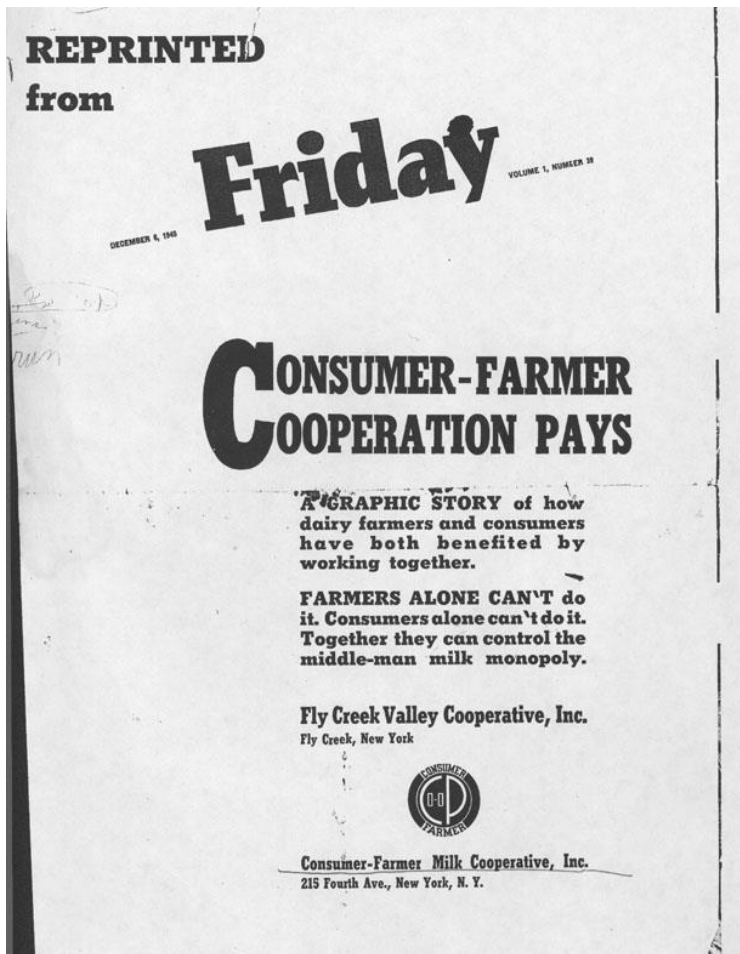
Kalan has six children. One of his daughters is married to a neighboring farmer. His wife and his other children share the work of his 200-acre farm with him. They have thirty cows, and they grow their own feed. The returns on the Kalan farm, as on most other New York dairy farms, were always small. New York is only a dairy farming state by accident. Actually, the rocky hills of the Empire State are far less suitable for dairy farming than the rolling fertile plains of the midwest.

30 cows

In addition to the handicaps imposed by nature, New York's dairy farmers have had to wage a long and bitter battle against a virtual milk monopoly controlled by two large companies. At the turn of the century, the farmers were organized into the Dairymen's Cooperative League. After a few years, the Dairymen's League became a virtual subsidiary of one of the two big companies it was organized to fight.

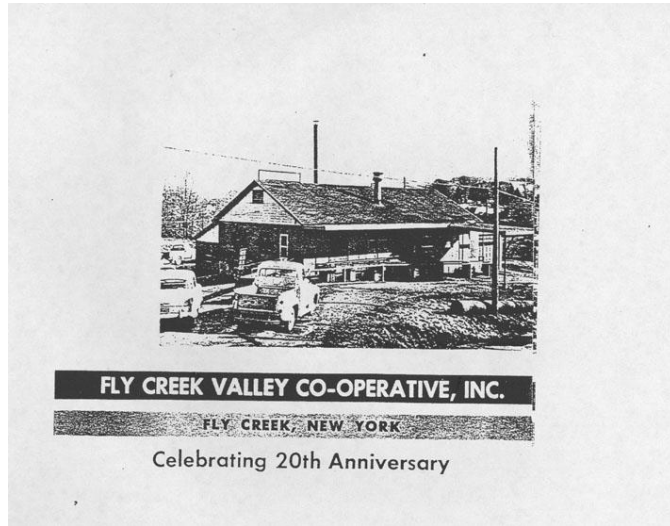
The real hope for the future of the Michael Kalans was born when men like John J. Dillon, publisher of the *Rural New Yorker*, started to blast the monopoly. Following on Dillon's heels came the Dairy Farmers Union—which in turn became the backbone of cooperatives like that at Fly Creek.

Dairy Farmers Union – DFU & Fly Creek Valley Cooperative



- DFU joined Dairy Farmers in Upstate New York Milkshed with Workers in NYC.
- Goal: Steady Market & Fair Price for both.
- Eliminate milk dealer/ middleman.
- Meyer Parodneck, NYC lawyer/organizer, worked with Fly Creek Cooperative & Worcester Cooperative. Flyer: 9/18/39: Delhi, NY speech.
- Otsego DFU representatives at DFU meeting in Utica:
- Dann Wickham, Fly Creek Valley, chairman,
- William Kodrich, Christian Hill, secretary-treasurer,
- Albert Kern of Hartwick.
- (*The Freeman's Journal*, August 30, 1939)

Fly Creek Valley Co-Operative's 20th Anniversary brochure,
remembering "Burning the 1938 Co-Op Mortgage" in 1940 Celebration



**“Consumer-Farmer
Cooperation Pays: Fly Creek
Valley Cooperative, Inc., Fly
Creek, New York.” brochure,
Friday, December 6, 1940, vol.
1, no. 39. Copy from the late
Mrs. Mary Stucin, West
Oneonta, NY., circa 1997**



**At the celebration, little
girls received cloth dolls.
Mary Stucin is the mother
here with her daughter,
Maryann.**

FCVVC's 1938 Mortgage Burning Celebration, Nov. 9, 1940



The November sun was shining over Fly Creek as the celebrating farmers filed into their Grange.



The old Grange Hall was soon burned to the rafters. Farmers from all over the state were there.



Smiling, unrepentant Arthur Wright, who is Chairman of the Dairy Farmers Union, celebrated by making one of the few speeches of the occasion.



Mayor Fitz is pictured in the center of the picture, which is the scene of the mortgage burning.



They listened to speeches by officials of their cooperative and by city-consumer and farm-union leaders.

MORTGAGE BURNING

While a Thousand Cheering Farm Folk Celebrate, the Fly Creek Valley Milk Cooperative Opens An Era

FLY CREEK, N. Y., has no mayor, no sidewalks, about twenty houses, two general stores, and no village officials. It has one hotel, one bar and no movie house. To date, Fly Creek's greatest claim to fame has rested on the fact that it is three miles from Cooperstown, the ancestral birthplace of baseball. On November 9, 1940, however, Fly Creek found a bright star for itself in American history. On that date, the one hundred and sixty farmers of the Fly Creek Valley Cooperative held a public festival at which they burned the \$48,000 mortgage the Hurvick National Bank held on their milk plant.

Of course, farmers have burned mortgages in public before. They have also come close to burning mortgage-holders in public. But—and herein lies history—this marked the first time that farmers have burned a \$48,000 mortgage publicly after retiring it legally. That is, after paying the bank back in full.

(Until June, 1938, the farmer members of the

Fly Creek Cooperative were selling their milk to the New York milk monopoly interests. They generally wound up selling their milk for less than it had cost them to produce. Then they formed their own cooperative, borrowed the \$48,000 to build their own plant, and became their own handlers. In January, 1939, they signed a contract to sell all of their milk to the Consumer Farmer Milk Cooperative of New York City. The Fly Creek farmers produced, the New York organized consumers used, some 500,000 quarts of milk a month. After 18 months of farmer-consumer cooperation, the farmers had enough profits in the fall to pay off their mortgage. The city cooperative, on its part, had its own reasons to be happy about the arrangement. For them, it meant, and means, lower prices for good milk.

To the milk monopoly, which was formed by the consumer-farmer combination to lower milk prices to the world's largest city, the festival was memorable for other, obvious reasons.



Everyone present cheered themselves hoarse as Mayor Fitz burned the \$48,000 mortgage in June, 1940.



This is the modern Fly Creek Valley Cooperative milk receiving plant, built at a cost of \$45,000 in June, 1938. Here the milk is tested, weighed, cooled, and tanked for shipment to the pasteurizing plant in N. Y.



Michael Kalon described the ceremony to all the many as a grand damn come true.



Back, president of Consumer Milk Cooperative, to Fly Creek farmers self-retired the mortgage.



Typical of those who watched Fly Creek's President Louis Kalkenberg receive the mortgage, was grinning Peter Pederson of Delaware County.



Behind the paid-up mortgage was the bonfire built by the farmers in 18 months had enough profits to pay off their debt.



Mary Napar, New York Consumer leader, is present on celebration with children.



As at all festive occasions, boy met girl when the Fly Creek Valley Cooperative farmers threw their shindig.



The Ladies Auxiliary of the Fly Creek Valley Grange served two huge meals to three hundred at a time.

Second and third helping of roast beef and roast pork were the rule. To make things better for all concerned, these were no speeches at the dinner. Food and impromptu group singing satisfied everyone.



Dairy Farmers' Chance to Celebrate

Michael Kalan described the ceremony as a grand dream come true.



Archie Wright, Chairman of the Dairy Farmers Union, was happy to attend the celebration.



CONTINUITY: "30 Otsego Farmers Dump Milk" Summer 1986

30 Otsego farmers dump milk ¹⁹⁸⁶



By LINDA JUMP
Otsego Correspondent ¹⁹⁸⁶

COOPERSTOWN — About 30 Otsego County farmers yesterday got together to cheer each other on in the start of a milk strike to protest low prices.

Frank Nowicki of Christian Hill near Cooperstown, a local strike organizer, got the protest going when he turned the valve at the base of the steel storage tank in his milk barn and released about \$250 worth of milk into a field. The milk represented two days of milking 28 cows on his farm, he said.

Down the road, Cliff P. Brunner flipped the switch to release milk down a drain and into a cornfield. Both men said they wanted to give the milk to the needy, but couldn't find anyone to transport it. Farmers can't simply refuse to milk their cows because the animals require daily milkings.

Otsego County farmers yesterday joined dairymen in other parts of New York, Maine and Wisconsin in starting what they hope will become an effective nationwide strike for higher milk prices. The farmers said they want a payment standard of \$23.10 per 100 pounds of milk — 12.5 gallons — because they say that's what it costs them to produce that amount.

Nowicki said dairymen are paid \$11.86 per hundredweight. "After deductions, I get \$10 per hundredweight. (Consumers) are still paying the same price for milk, but the farmers are receiving less," he said. "As long as progress is being made (with the strike), I will continue to dump."

"We're staging this dumping to show other farmers we're willing to take drastic actions. I would urge all farmers to join us. The more that join in, the sooner we'll get the job done," Brunner said.

Organizers said it was hard to estimate the number of farmers participating in the strike from Otsego, Delaware, Chenango, Broome and Tioga counties yesterday.

"How do we know?" Nowicki asked, adding that no organizational meetings were held for farmers outside of Otsego and Herkimer counties.

Stanley Konchar, 75, a dairy farmer on Christian Hill, said the strike will be effective. It marks the third strike in which Konchar has participated in 52 years as a dairy farmer. After a milk strike in 1937, Konchar said the hundredweight price went from 80 cents to \$2.80 and in 1965 farmers went on strike

See MILK/Page 3A

Cliff P. Brunner dumps milk down the drain.

Milk strike begins

Continued from Page 1A
for \$10 per hundredweight and got it.

A member of Eastern Milk Producers, Konchar said he'll dump about 1,500 pounds of milk every other day "for as long as it takes."

Farmers joining the strike yesterday said they're anxious to see how much support they'll get.

"Government policy is eliminating farmers," said Ben Eckman of Milford Center, who yesterday said he dumped 1,200 pounds of milk.

"We simply let the government and consumers price our product."

Linda M. Fortin of Wales, Maine, said her husband yesterday dumped 4,000 pounds of milk.

"For every dollar we make on the farm, we receive only 52 cents worth of services. What we are asking for is one dollar's worth of

service for one dollar's worth of milk," she said.

Fortin said her husband plans to dump his milk "until he can get what it costs to produce the milk or until he goes out of business."

She said 490 farmers near Ellibian, Maine, have dumped milk in support of higher prices and about 10 percent to 15 percent of the dairy farmers in Maine have joined the strike.

Russell O. Likeness of Cofax, Wisc., said he plans to dump milk later this week in support of New York dairy farmers. Likeness said

some of his neighbors dumped milk yesterday.

"I love the people back East for getting the ball rolling. We've got to be organized. My biggest fear is not that we won't get the support we need, but that we won't be properly organized," he said.

Next week, farmers plan to ask the dairy committee of the Farm Congress, meeting in St. Louis, to support the strike, Likeness said. If the committee supports the strike, farmers in 30 dairy states would be pledged to withhold milk from market. "Then we're looking at a true nationwide strike," Likeness said.

- Frank Nowicki and Cliff P. Brunner [photo], both of Christian Hill near Fly Creek, joined Stanley Konchar, and Ben Eckman of Milford Center, and others in dumping milk.
- Milk dumping also occurred in other parts of NY, Maine and Wisconsin. Linda Jump, Otsego Correspondent, summer 1986.

CONTINUITY in Stanley Konchar's Heritage and 52 Years as a Dairy Farmer

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- Stanley Konchar, Slovenian dairy farmer on Christian Hill.
- His father had been a coal miner, first in Pennsylvania, then in Kansas, before coming to Fly Creek area. In 1986, age 75, he participated in his third strike in his 52 years as a dairy farmer. Said he'd dump milk every day "for as long as it takes." (Quinn Interview and Binghamton Press & Sun Bulletin, 1986.)

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Thank you !

Questions

Comments

Your Stories