

Holland Marsh Garden Development And Associated Industry Greatly Exceeds Most Optimistic Visions

(Copied from Memorial Unveiling Programme)

7 THE HOLLAND MARSH gardens, which presently boast under cultivation some seven thousand acres of Canada's finest garden land, with cultivated acreage being increased each year, and which produce the superior quality vegetables which have made these gardens famous the breadth of the continent, and even in more distant parts of the world, together with the industries which have resulted from this production, developed from dreams which are to-day's realities.

The late Professor W. H. Day, who was a gold medalist graduate from Toronto University in Physics in 1903, and who joined the staff of the Ontario Agricultural College that year and by 1906 was head of the Physics Department of that college, became interested in the wilderness of swamp, known as the Holland Marsh, as early as 1910. But war years postponed action and it was not until 1923 that Professor Day, having resigned his position at the College, moved to Bradford and began an energetic campaign to interest municipal councils in a drainage reclamation scheme for the Holland Marsh.

He was not alone in his enthusiasm. The late W. D. Watson was also a promoter of his ideas, and he found men of vision on West Gwillimbury township council where the late J. F. Hambly was reeve and council members were L. A. Neilly, Percy Selby, W. J. Dales and the late Herman Lennox, with the late T. W. W. Evans, Q.C., township solicitor, lending his guidance through all legal problems. The late Denis Nolan, reeve of Bradford, was equally enthusiastic, and, though the township of King council did not at first apparently vision the possibilities, it was a united effort when the contract was let for the drainage in 1925, with Alexander Baird as engineer in charge of the scheme. The small marshland area within the municipality of Bradford was drained the following year.

The first crop on the drained marsh land was grown in 1927 and by 1930 a triumphant Professor Day reported to the councils that a crop which grossed \$26,000 had been sold off 37 acres of marsh garden land.

But the '30's were years of experimentation, and of learning the business of gardening the hard way. Costs were proportionately high compared to sales' returns. The need for systematic harvesting and marketing was learned on glutted markets and loss records on ledgers. Professor Day died while at work on his gardens on July 5, 1938, still confident that the fertile marsh land could grow vegetables unrivalled in quality, but with the marketing problems still unsolved. Excellent storage facilities and the systematic buying of produce from the growers by packers, dealers and wholesalers have done much in more recent years to stabilize markets through orderly marketing.

An article written by Professor W. H. Day and published in Canadian Engineer, February 15, 1927, entitled "Reclamation of Holland Marsh, Bradford," predicted thousands of fertile acres, increased in value from \$1 to \$50 an acre, and of canning factories in Bradford to preserve the crops grown on those acres.

Visions! How modestly dwarf those visions were when compared to the picture today!

Land values on the marsh are about twenty times the price of his dreams, and canning factories, with their short season business, have in their stead the wonderful modern, year-round business of pre-packaging plants, from where the vegetables are delivered garden fresh to the retailer during practically the entire year. The preservation of these vegetables for distribution is being accomplished by the most modern methods and equipment in the world through the use of the finest possible storage plants; by vegetable cooling and crisping in Canada's first vacuum cooling plants; by the freshening for market of stored vegetables by washing and icing systems peculiar to the trade; and by the packaging of these vegetables in the colorful and freshness-maintaining bags for retailer sale.

Garden vegetable sales, which were estimated in thousands of dollars twenty years ago, are now calculated by the millions. The several pre-packaging plants located between the C.N.R. tracks and Highway No. 11, have their loading platforms facing both ways, one to fill the refrigerated cars on their private railway sidings, the other for loading shipments into the huge refrigerated transport trucks. The plants not located adjacent to tracks ship largely by refrigerated trucks and, with the excellent highway service here, this is not a hardship. In addition to Highway 11 as our main street, Highway 88 gives direct connection with two other Toronto and northbound arteries, namely Highway 400, about a mile west, and Highway 27, which is connected with both No's 11 and 400 by No. 88. Highway 400 has given wonderful access to a central portion of the marsh, while Highway 27 serves the western section.

In addition to the several pre-packaging plants and the many modern storage plants, including the big Bradford Co-operative Storage, other industries now located here in connection with the vegetable growing include the Bradford Chemical and Fertilizer Company, wholesale buyer offices, crate and box factory, and other smaller concerns.

These rich garden lands have attracted an influx of fine, industrious people whose lush gardens and beautiful modern homes give evidence of the prosperity that is theirs. Their schools and churches are located on the marsh, as are a few small places of business, and the population of the area is practically equal to that of Bradford. But Bradford is their town, their shopping centre, and the place where they know the people and the people know them. It is home.

With the gardens of south-western Ontario being swallowed up by industry the Holland Marsh becomes Ontario's garden, and with the province's fast growing popu-

lation rapidly encircling that garden the market for its produce is being brought to its door, and whether the index is prosperity or depression, food is a necessity.

Men of vision, who authorized the reclamation of the Holland Marsh, performed a wonderful service to their country by converting waste lands into the country's largest and finest gardens, producing both prosperity and food supplies for a population where gardens are becoming too few.

To the leader of these men of vision, Professor W. H. Day, this memorial has been erected, with the Tourist and Industrial Committee of Simcoe County Council presenting the plaque and the municipalities represented on the marsh area contributing the cairn, and today, May 27, 1956, is being unveiled.