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## **Wisconsin State Cranberry Growers' Association. Fourteenth annual convention, 1900. Held at Gaynor Brothers' Marsh, Tuesday, August 14. 1900**

Wisconsin State Cranberry Growers Association  
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# Wisconsin State Cranberry Growers' Association.



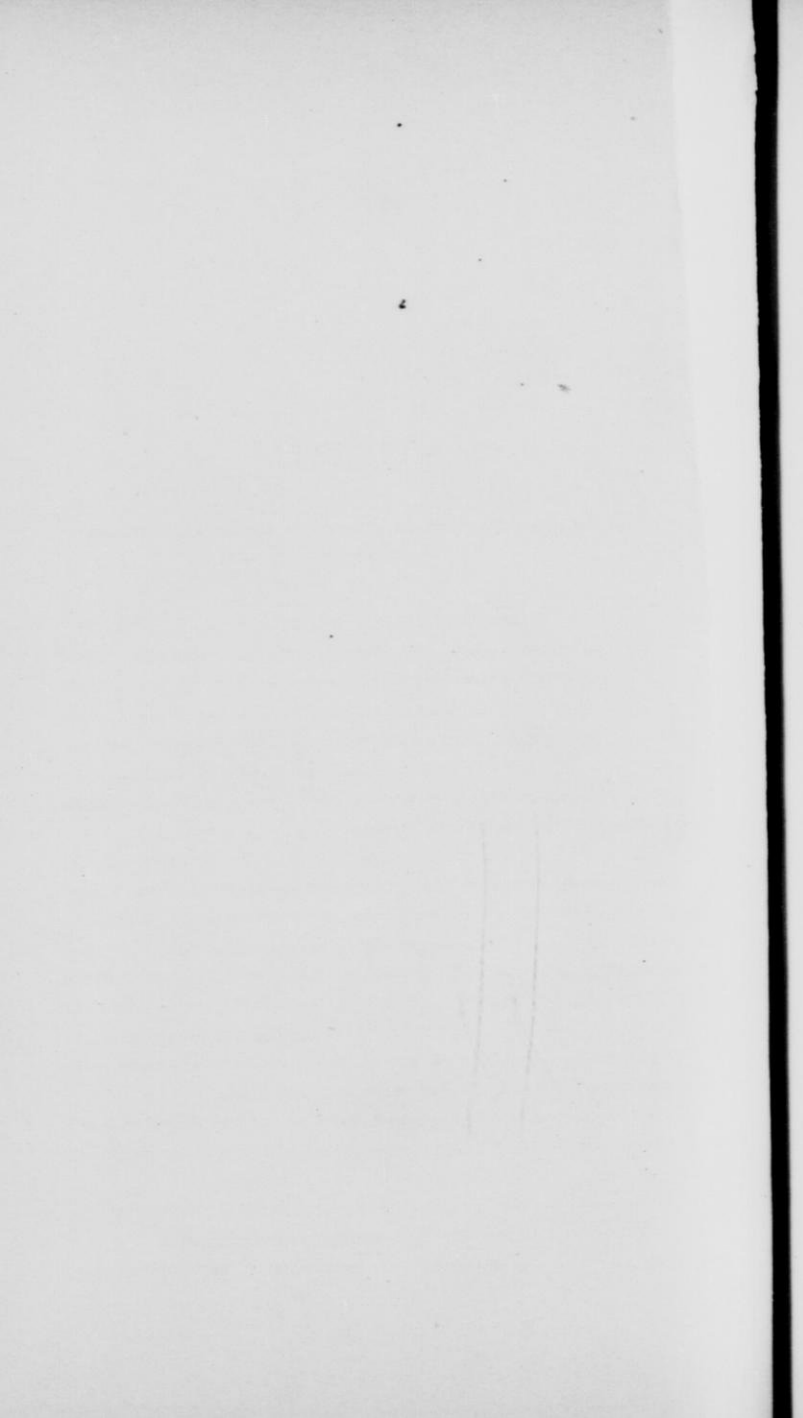
FOURTEENTH ANNUAL CONVENTION,

1900

Held at Gaynor Brothers' Marsh, Tuesday, August 14.

Extra copies of this report can be had by addressing the Secretary's office. Cranmoor, Wood County, Wisconsin.

Price 10 cents.



## PROCEEDINGS

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**Of the Annual Convention Held at Gaynors' Marsh  
in August.**

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GAYNOR BROTHERS' MARSH, Aug. 14, 1900.

The fourteenth annual gathering of the members of the Wisconsin State Cranberry Growers' association and their friends took place Tuesday, August 14, at Gaynor Brothers' marsh. Threatening weather reduced attendance slightly below that of last year, but the earnestness of those present and importance of the topics considered gave the meeting increased interest and value.

The morning was spent in inspecting the improvements of the Gaynor Blackstone Co., which seemed to have been more fortunate than the majority of marshes here in regard to winter-killing. The experimental stations were objects of more than ordinary attention as the experimental stage is giving place to establishment of facts of great value to the industry, and in view of what is being accomplished it is hoped every grower will feel it to his interest to co-operate in making still further advancement possible.

At noon a sumptuous repast was provided and evoked deserved praise for those who had the arrangements in charge.

In the afternoon President Briere called the meeting to order and delivered the following address:

Ladies and Gentlemen: I am very glad to meet you

again this year on the same picnic ground that we enjoyed so much a year ago.

At that time everyone of us had the prospect of a good crop of berries on our bogs, I think larger than the average crop and we congratulated ourselves on the good prospect. We are not quite so fortunate this season. I think we all lost more or less from the 30th day of June frost. Berlin lost about the same as we did. Some small marshes were all lost, and others one-fourth and one-half, etc. But after all it is not worse than other crops. Hay is only a half crop this year.

The difference in raising cranberries and other crops is this: If a man raise only cranberries and his crop fails he has no other support from the farm. While if a man is on another kind of farm he may lose one kind of produce but the other may be a good crop.

I am satisfied that the cranberry cultivation is already overdone and the acreage of vines is increasing faster than the population of the United States is in proportion. One thing I am sure of, that there is more offering of berries than there is demand for, which naturally makes low prices. Mr. John Gaynor has a table of figures from Mr. Rider of Trenton, N. J., which shows that 90 per cent. of the eastern growers sold their berries last fall at less than actual cost—sold at a loss.

They have a good selling organization east, but it seems that there is so much offering outside at lower prices that they are unable to hold prices up, except for some very choice and fancy varieties which do not have much competition.

All the new bogs should be planted with selected vines. The experimental station will soon have some good varieties for distribution. We are now propagating some of the most desirable varieties, uniform size, good color and good keepers. We should not plant any small size berries except for their early coloring for early market, for we now come in direct competition with eastern berries and the margin on freight is nothing.

The report of statistician was next presented and from the information collected it was the concensus of opinion that, as compared with last season, the crop of New England would be one-third less, that of New Jersey about the same and the western crop less than one-half with prospect of further reduction from these estimates, several large growers placing the yield at 40 per cent. of last year.

The secretary's report was as follows:

In contrast with a year ago we find this season a promised bountiful crop reduced materially by winter-killing, spring frosts, blight, etc., but there are still cranberries left, and in the words of a New Jersey correspondent, "If everything was just right each year, with proper heat and water, the granaries and storehouses would never be able to hold the crops."

From the general tone and tenor of the communications received the acreage is ample for current demands at remunerative prices, and time and thought should be turned to stimulating consumption. Whether this can best be done by individual or associated action is worthy of consideration and discussion. Improved quality of fruit, greater care in harvesting and handling the crop, better grading and packing, and making known the wholesome and economic virtue and value of the cranberry would all tend to the end desired.

The progress from ignorance to certitude is through the field of approximate knowledge, and if everyone would contribute information according to his ability, each should receive according to his need. With this in view, humble effort has been made to enlist the interest of as many and extend the field of inquiry as broadly as possible, and the material collected is laid before you and subject to your command. I am aware that a little learning is a dangerous thing and that half truths sometimes do as much if not more mischief than absolute falsehood, but when we look around at what is being done in other avocations and spheres of activity should we not, in the spirit and sentiment of the motto of our state, with loyal zeal, go FORWARD doing all in our power for the betterment of the industry in which we are more or less concerned.

Mr. A. C. Bennett read some late letters from the east in regard to crop prospects and written after meeting of Cape Cod association at which the outlook was reported as uniformly less, one-fourth to one-half in some districts and indicating two-thirds of last year.

Mr. Bennett also exhibited a simple and inexpensive device for preventing the bruising of berries as they are being put in barrels, and explained its use and merits as follows:

To the Wisconsin State Cranberry Growers' Association.—Mr. President: For several seasons I have asked members of this association to suggest some device for preventing the bruising of berries while they are being

sorted into the barrels. The ordinary barbarous practice of allowing the berries to drop from the sorting boards to the bottom of the barrel, twenty-five inches or more upon the bottom head or upon each other, should be stopped. I could get no practical suggestion from our members here, but while in California something I saw there in the orange packing houses suggested to my mind a simple device which I hope all will put in use. It consists of a barrel head a little smaller than the regular size of barrel heads, on this head tack a good soft cushion for the berries to fall on. To the opposite sides of this cushioned head tack strips of cloth four inches wide, or cords, and thirty inches long, at the other end of these strips fasten small weights to balance the weight of the head. Now place this device in the barrel, a few inches from the bottom, and let the strips of cloth or cords hang over the top edges of the barrel and it is ready for use. As the barrel is being filled pull up on the side strips which will continue to hold the cushion at any height desired. This is cheap, it is quickly applied and removed, it does not prevent the shaking of the barrel while being filled. If any one present can suggest anything better let them speak now. We are here to learn not only how to grow cranberries and how to sell them, but, equally or more important, how to put them up so that they will be more satisfactory to the dealer and consumer, thereby creating a greater demand for the article.

Yours respectfully,

A. C. BENNETT.

The matter of marketing was then brought up and the subject was discussed by an introductory address by Judge Gaynor, who favored more advanced methods. He had great confidence in organization, but to be effective there must be behind it brains and confidence. As fine a bit of mechanism as was the human hand it would not be as appropriate for the needs of the hog as the present hoof, and so unless the members would trust each other attempts at co-operative action would be of slight avail and the old plan of everyone for himself and the devil take the hindmost would continue to prevail, but he felt that the trend was in the direction of closer organization and called upon Mr. A. C. Bennett to address the convention, which he did as follows:

To the Wisconsin State Cranberry Growers' Association.—Mr. President: The question of selling the crop of

cranberries is one of vital importance to all growers east and west and has presented itself every year for over fifty years. To say that it is no nearer solution now than fifty years ago would be too discouraging to be so stated today. If the cranberry growers themselves had made no progress in this direction in the past fifty years, the progress made by the fruit growers of California in the last ten years should open their sleepy eyes to some more perfect methods of disposing of their crops. But the cranberry growers themselves have made a big advance in the past few years. The channels through which the crop finds its way to market have been greatly lessened. If there were but one channel through which the crop went to market and each grower received the average price for the season for the like *quality* of berries, then there would be no rush to get rid of unsaleable berries; such as were best matured could be first placed on the market. Others who are eternally holding their berries for higher prices, hoping to put the extra profits all in their own pockets, would be willing to let their berries go on the market while there is a market open to receive them, knowing that someone's berries would be sold later and a share of such extra price, if it really came, would be divided with him. The public would be much better served through one channel, as an order could be promptly filled with certainty as to quality and quantity so long as any remained anywhere of the quality ordered. Then sales could be made for spot cash and no more berries allowed to go out than the public are willing to pay for in cash. Now while this is the ideal toward which we should ever aim it may never be realized in practice, but the tendency of the age in which we live is strongly in that direction. The jobbers in every large city in the United States in the last few years have learned that the only reliable source from which they can get cranberries at all times is of C. W. Wilkinson of Philadelphia. They may order of fifty other parties and solicit consignments of a hundred others and get no reply. Wilkinson holds his trade because of his ability to keep them supplied with the best quality. Suppose the growers of New Jersey should refuse to let their berries go when he had a chance to sell and there was an active demand, it would ruin Mr. Wilkinson's reputation. Every man who pretends to sell cranberries must have the berries to sell and keep his trade supplied or he better quit the business.

The association in New Jersey, with Mr. Wilkinson as leader, and the association in Cape Cod, with Mr. Mayo as leader, are doing much good in lessening the number of channels through which berries go to market, but they are handicapped by there being no definite standard of size,



color and quality of berries or brands to distinguish them, and great injustice and dissatisfaction must always exist until cranberries are properly graded and branded. This is the first step. In California this grading and packing is done by associations which make that their business. The individual grower cannot be trusted to do such work, there would be some that would cheat, but associations, having no interest in the material that they pack and brand, produce a reliable, uniform article.

I understand that the H. P. Stanley Co. of Chicago is anxious to handle the Wisconsin cranberries the present year. I know of no better party anywhere to handle all the berries grown in Wisconsin.

In the first place they are growers themselves.

Second. They are men of long experience.

Third. They are men of abundant means.

Fourth. They have the confidence of a larger proportion of the cranberry growers in Wisconsin than any other one party.

Fifth. They are not disposed to cut prices.

Sixth. They are disposed to build up a trade by handling honest goods and would advance the best interests of the Wisconsin cranberry growers by securing the packing of berries of more uniform grades.

Seventh. If they could have the exclusive sale of 80 per cent. of the crop they could afford to keep a man here to see to the putting up of the berries during the entire season. This alone would educate the growers in the care of their berries in more ways than one.

I have always urged the cranberry growers to make positive sales of their berries at some fixed price. Mr. Stanley cannot buy these berries for the simple reason that you will not sell them at a price that they can afford to take the chances of the season's market. If Mr. Stanley makes the grower a definite price, the grower wants more or is not ready to sell and Mr. Stanley is obliged to look elsewhere for berries to supply his trade. Mr. Stanley told me that at the time when they could have handled the Wisconsin crop to advantage that they could not buy it, that to keep a man up here for two weeks trying to buy berries and have the growers turning a cold shoulder on them, or, as he expressed it, turning cold water on them, was rather expensive and unsatisfactory. Now, Mr. Stanley has been in the business a long time and does business in a very careful and business-like manner and on the same general plan as Mr. Wilkinson who handles the bulk of the eastern crop. If the growers in Wisconsin, or 80 per cent of them, would make Stanley their agent, the same as Mr. Wilkin-

son and Mr. Mayo are the agents in the eastern states, in my opinion they could not make a better selection and that they would realize on the season's average more money out of their crop than in any other way. Is it possible for a local agent without experience to do as well as an old established house? If they handled only cranberries and secured the entire crop to handle they might in time do better, but if our local organization will use its influence to secure a perfect grading of the berries and an honest packing and curing of the same so that greater satisfaction on the market is secured for the Wisconsin cranberry than other berries have had then they will almost sell themselves.

A. C. BENNETT.

At the close of his address Mr. Bennett said that at the time he had prepared his communication he did not know that there would be a representative of the firm of The H. P. Stanley Co. present, but that he understood Mr. Mitchell was here and suggested that he address the convention. Mr. Mitchell thanked the members for the courteous treatment accorded him, and proceeded to say that the company he represented had long been identified with the cranberry industry, that one great mistake growers made was in not recognizing the changes that had taken place and of the different customs that prevailed from those of ten or twenty years ago. Wisconsin berries were peddled around in small amounts without knowledge of markets or an acquaintance with demands of trade. He did not claim any personal superiority on the part of his firm, but they had had experience thumped into them at a great cost and they had learned some points. They knew the financial responsibility of dealers and thought their facilities would enable them to do more and get more than would be realized under the present unsatisfactory system.

Mr. Briere asked Mr. Mitchell how Wisconsin packing compared with eastern stock. Mr. Mitchell replied not uniformly as good, many barrels were slack. As to grading he said too many grades made difficulty in quoting prices as it was largely a matter of opinion as to what was choice or fancy. His firm had but two grades.

The remarks of Mr. Mitchell were well received and as a result a committee of five, composed of President Chas. Briere, Judge Gaynor, Nelson P. Johnson, Andrew Searls and Arthur E. Bennett, was appointed to confer with Mr. Mitchell and formulate some plan of action.

The usual custom of naming a market price for coming season was passed, there not being sufficient data to act upon. Price for picking was recommended at 40 cents, with bonus of 5 cents extra per box for those who remained to end of season.

A report on the berries selected at the January meeting showed that all, with the exception of two or three, exhibited fine keeping qualities as late as March 23rd, also that berries picked on 11th of September kept better than those gathered the last day of August, and with the exception of the early varieties, those picked on September 23rd looked best of all, demonstrating berries color up better on vines than in the barrel, so that with a water supply to guard against frost late picking was recommended as, in addition to other advantages, there was a marked increase in bulk.

After a discussion as to the policy to be pursued by the association, the secretary was directed to obtain as much accurate information bearing on the industry as possible and furnish same for the use of members or others entitled to it and balance of correspondence on important matters will be incorporated in January report.

Meeting then adjourned.

W. H. FITCH, Secretary.

