

THE EGG AUCTION

Chicken farmers, in addition to the natural hazards of drought, storms and plant and animal disease, have had to face further difficulties in the marketing of their produce. Small producers in particular have been forced to sell their goods at prices set more or less arbitrarily by dealers who rode up and down the country bargaining independently with each farmer.

In 1930 a group of nine men from Flemington decided that the poultry farmer should be enabled to deal directly with the retailer and thus get a fair price for eggs. They formed an organization called the Flemington Auction Market Cooperative Association, Inc. The idea appealed so strongly to the citizens of Flemington that the Chamber of Commerce offered the free use of a cellar for the first meetings, and a local printer offered to print the necessary announcements without charge. The organizers of the auction were prepared to invest \$500 to launch the new scheme; but from the first it met with such great success that not one cent was called for. At first the auctions were confined entirely to eggs, but in the second year poultry was added and in 1935 livestock was offered for sale.

Farmers are invited to bring their eggs to the auction, held twice a week, where they are graded for color, size and quality by an inspector from the New Jersey Department of Agriculture. Retail dealers bid for the eggs as they are put up by the auctioneer. The farmer receives about 95 percent of the proceeds immediately; the rest is retained to meet the expenses of the auction. At the end of the year, after all expenses are deducted and a certain amount set aside for improvements, profits are divided among the farmers in proportion to the amount of goods they have brought for sale.

The first year's business left a profit of \$1,818.02 to be divided among the members of the association. So rapidly have the profits grown that at the end of two years the auction felt justified in investing in land and a building.

Today it has exchanged its small cellar quarters for a large, two-story brick building, close to the Flemington Railroad station, with lofts, salesrooms, offices and shipping platform. It takes an office force of from 30 to 35 to conduct the business of the auction and keep the accounts of the members. There is a membership of more than 1,000.

The report of the fiscal year July 31, 1936 shows a net profit of \$7,882.85 on \$1,244,000 worth of business. The only requirements for membership are that one shall be a producer and live in New Jersey.