

Plan of the Nebraska Postmasters' Association

AS HAS been said before, on many occasions, by many authorities, the trend of the times is toward consolidation, and in most cases, as has been said before on many occasions, the consolidation results in benefit to the few to the detriment of the many. In nearly every instance consolidations or organizations are formed that many who individually are weak may by a concentration of strength put forth a bold front to the enemy—the people.

Nebraska, always full of surprises, and first always in springing them, has come to the front recently with an organization which has for its object that which its people have long since desired—better mail service. In the confines of this great state doubtless there is not a postmaster but who during his term of office has not been, figuratively speaking, consigned to the regions below times without number because John Smith didn't get the mail he expected or because there was too much red tape around the postoffice to suit Mary Jones.

It is to remove the cause of the ill nature of John Smith and Mary Jones et al that the postmasters of the state and the postmistresses of the state formed an organization. It is not the intention of these officials to remove the cause by removing those who are compelled to go to the offices for their mail or money orders, but by removing every little tangle of the red tape and every little hindrance to the public and instead of receiving the "cussin'" of the public the postoffice officials expect to receive the laudation of every one. Consequently, even though a suspicious people will charge there is politics behind the organization, if it brings about the results said to be desired by those who compose it, it will have filled a long felt want.

The organization, which has been named the Nebraska Association of Postmasters, has every reason to believe that it will grow and grow as time goes on, until it becomes one of the most compact and one of the largest of all state associations, for the reason that one person at least in every city, town, village and hamlet in the state is eligible to membership. Such an organization had its inception in the fertile brain of Edward R. Sizer, who represents Uncle Sam's Postoffice department in Lincoln, and who, bearing the scars of many successful political battles, has the ability to make this organization a success. Patrons in Lincoln have little complaint to make of the service he has given them in his conduct of the postoffice, and it is because of his success there that they believe the Postmasters' association will result in a betterment of conditions in every mail distributing point in the state. The association was organized last Oc-



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W. J. COOK OF BLAIR, SECRETARY AND TREASURER OF THE NEBRASKA ASSOCIATION OF POSTMASTERS.

tober with only a handful of the officials answering the call, and at this time, after only its first annual convention has been held, the membership has reached 262.

The constitution of the organization recites that the association has for its object the betterment of the mail service and to those who have looked into the mail matter there are many reasons why such an association should be a good thing for the patrons of the different offices. At regular intervals meetings of the association will be held and have been held at which are discussed the rules and regulations issued by the department at Washington and ideas are exchanged that undoubtedly will assist the official in discharging his duties intelligently. Of course, the department issues rules that cover every point that may be raised by the most fractious patron of the office, but with postmasters of many minds it is an easy matter for there to be many different interpretations of these rules, necessitating a lot of needless correspondence with Washington or other postmasters.

When all the postmasters of the state get together in convention and the department at Washington sends out a representative as was done at the last meeting held at Lincoln for the sole purpose of answering questions that may have vexed the less experienced officer, a uniformity of

interpretation is bound to be the result. The delays and the extra correspondence and worry of the minor official is then not necessary.

Men high in the confidence of the department were sent to Lincoln several weeks ago on the occasion of the first annual banquet of the association, and they were there merely to assist the postmasters in learning their business, to the end that the patrons might be better served.

Among these officials who delivered addresses were: Edwin Sands, superintendent of the registry division of Washington, who remained throughout the two days' session; S. B. Rathbone, superintendent of the western rural free delivery division, of Omaha; John M. Butler, chief clerk of the railway mail service, of Lincoln; D. J. Sinclair, postoffice inspector, of Omaha, and a number of prominent Nebraskans, including Congressman Hitchcock and Congressman Kinkaid.

An interesting feature of this meeting was the question box at which each official present had a chance to learn things without displaying ignorance. The questions were dropped in the box unsigned, and consequently many little things that had vexed the postmaster because he was too modest to ask questions were explained. They do say that among the questions propounded was whether the precedent set by

the Texas postmistress in compelling men to remove their hats at the door before asking for their mail should be followed, and others wanted to know whether it was right for the postmaster to refuse credit to "Colonel Foote" or some other colonel, and each got his answer. This question box will be a permanent feature of the meetings.

But President Sizer saw to it that all was not drudgery for the visitors. Every mailman and every mailwoman in Lancaster county composed a reception committee, and everywhere in Lincoln where there was a chance for one of Uncle Sam's minions to stray there was a ribbon-bedecked member of the committee to steer him right. They were taken on jaunts to the hospital for the insane, not that they were headed that way, but just to look around; to the penitentiary and to other points of interest, including the state farm. Here was where the real fun was had, to say nothing of the sure enough luncheon that was served by this end of the State university. The feature of this event was the guessing contest over the weight of a big, fat male cow, the pride of the farm, at which Karl Kramer of Columbus lost out so terribly after trying to run a hoodoo on his competitors. He was further humiliated by seeing a woman, a mere deputy, Mrs. Mattie L. Libby of Elk Creek, win the prize, guessing the weight of the bovine to the pound. On the road to the state farm Kramer ran into an old-time friend who is considered an authority on stock. To this friend Kramer told of the notable contest that was to occur and invited him to be present and quietly give him (Kramer) a hunch as to the weight of the animal. The friend promised and was there. After each of the contestants had examined the pride of the farm to his or her heart's content, the stockman whispered his guess to Kramer and Kramer registered the guess. Kramer missed the mark just a thousand pounds and as soon as the result was announced he missed his stockman friend, and doubtless thereby saved himself a life term in the penitentiary.

The officers of the association are E. R. Sizer of Lincoln, president; H. E. Palmer of Omaha, first vice president; H. G. Miller of Grand Island, second vice president; Mrs. C. E. McDougal of Friend, third vice president; J. W. Fouts of Diller, fourth vice president; W. J. Cook of Blair, secretary and treasurer; W. S. Baker of Gretna, secretary of the executive committee. This committee is composed of one member from each congressional district, as follows: O. L. Vance of Humboldt, First district; W. S. Baker of Gretna, Second district; Donald McLeod of Schuyler, Third district; John A. Anderson of Wahoo, Fourth district; J. H. Tower of Sutton, Fifth district; J. M. Erikson of Dannebrog, Sixth district.

Return of the Girl Feminine

THE girl feminine has come into her own again. The girl athletic no longer monopolizes the center of the stage. It is the fad of the hour to possess at least one dainty, feminine, household accomplishment, from butter-making to embroidery. The new girl feminine is like a figure stepping from an old-time picture of domesticity and adjusting herself to modern conditions. She is a delicious combination of the old-fashioned girl and the new. She is just about right; and happy is that family of which she is a member.

This is the season of the year when the girl feminine who has a taste for cookery executes her annual triumphs in the preserving line. She is not necessarily the eldest daughter, nor yet the most staid member of the household. She may be young and fond of sport, but she will break an engagement to play tennis any morning when she reads that berries have dropped 3 cents per box.

Ma'mselle Dainty's great-grandmother preserved over a huge cook stove, fed with coals and wood. It was one child's duty to feed the stove and another's to swish back and forth the ladle, not unlike a perforated hoe, which kept the "jam" from burning. "Three-quarters of a pound of sugar to one of fruit, and boil slowly until it is like thick mush." And to the children, called from play, it seemed an interminable task to bring the fruity mixture down to the thick mush stage.

But behold Ma'mselle Dainty in spotless percale and cambric, adjusting the flame of her gas stove, secure in the thought that the temperature beneath the preserving kettle cannot vary save at her touch. She further protects her handiwork by a thick asbestos mat reinforced by a square of sheet iron.

Great-grandmother's preserving kettle was of iron, big and heavy as a small washtub, and blackened on the outside with coal and wood soot. Ma'mselle Dainty uses Austrian enamel, speckled blue without and pure white within, four ply thick, yet light enough for her to lift with ease. To match this kettle she has measuring cups, colander and ladles in Austrian ware, cherry pitters and apple parers and fruit

knives with china handles. No patent has ever improved on the old-fashioned screw-top and rubber-band glass jar, but there is a pretty novelty in jelly glasses, a small cone-shaped glass to hold a portion of jelly for the invalid.

The term preserving in the average household includes the making of jellies, jams, preserves, sweet pickles, relishes and butter and the canning of fruits, but it is upon her canning that Ma'mselle Dainty particularly prides herself. This is the most healthful and natural way to preserve fruit.

To be a successful canner, she must be as cleanly as a surgeon, for canning is merely sterilizing fruit by heat. To can small fruits she picks them over carefully and washes them. Then she packs them in absolutely clean jars, and fills the jars to the very top with cold water, after which she adjusts the rubber bands and lays over each jar its screw top, immaculately clean within and without.

She has ready a large, new wash boiler fitted in the bottom with a wooden rack or tray not unlike that used in the ice compartment of a refrigerator. She sets the filled jars on this rack, pours cold water into the boiler until it rises to half the height of the jars, and lights the gas flame beneath the boiler. She claps on the boiler lid, allows the water to boil briskly for five minutes, uncovers the boiler, lifts each jar separately, being very careful not to let its lid slip off, and, directly she sets the jar down, she screws the lid tight. Her fruit is sterilized and canned.

If she wants her canned fruit sweetened, she sprinkles sugar over the fruit as she packed it in the jars. Large fruits must be peeled and boiled in a sugar syrup, allowing a quarter pound of sugar to each pound of fruit. When tender, the fruit is skimmed and packed into the jars, the syrup is poured over it and the canning process is completed as described.

Jellies, Ma'mselle Dainty regards as especially desirable in case of illness, and in her preference runs to crabapple, quince, grape, blackberry, currant and a mixture of raspberry and currant.

She selects fruit that is barely ripe rather than over ripe to secure firm, clear

jelly. In the cool of the evening, she cooks her fruit for the first time, allowing one quart of water to each pound of fruit and twenty minutes for the boiling process. The juice is poured into the jelly bag, Ma'mselle Dainty using double cheese cloth instead of the flannel bag her great-grandmother considered essential for clearing jelly. It is left to drip over night into a large agate bowl.

The next morning Ma'mselle Dainty measures off fruit juice and sugar, half a pound of best granulated sugar to each pint of juice. She brings the juice to a boil, and spreads the sugar on tins, setting them in the oven to heat. When the juice has boiled ten minutes, she drops in the hot sugar, "tries" the jelly on a cold sauce plate set on the ice, and quite generally finds that, thanks to the hot sugar it already "forms." Then she pours it into the sparkling glasses and leaving it to cool, she is away on her game of tennis. On her return, she covers the glasses with white paper, fastened down with white of an egg, cleanest of all mucilages.

When country relatives, with gaze critically fixed on city ways, visit Ma'mselle Dainty's home she surprises them with preserves equal to any country-made sweets.

In preserving, her primary object is to retain the shape of the fruit, so she handles it with infinite care. Strawberries, raspberries and blackberries are washed by plunging the colander into cold water before stemming the fruit. If they are stemmed first, they soak up water. Only the largest and firmest fruit is selected for preserving.

Allow one pound of best granulated sugar for each pound of fruit. Arrange in the preserving kettle a layer of sugar on the bottom, next one of berries, and so on until all are used. Stand the kettle over the gas stove, with the fire turned low and heat gradually until the boiling point is reached, or until the fruit is thoroughly scalded.

With a perforated ladle, lift the fruit out of the syrup in small quantities, so that it will not be bruised, and fill the jars half full or more. Boil down the

syrup, pour it over the fruit in the jars, and leave the jars open until the preserves are cold. Then cover as directed for jelly.

There lives not a man who does not recall some friend of his mother, famous for her branded peaches, and it is to please "Father" that Ma'mselle Dainty perfects herself in the art of brandying peaches.

For this she selects the firmest and finest peaches on the market, the best French brandy, and the purest granulated cane sugar. To every four pounds of peaches, pared, she allows an equal weight of sugar and a pint of brandy. The peaches are laid in the enamel kettle, covered with the sugar and allowed to stand over night.

The next morning the peaches are swimming in a syrup formed of the sugar and their own juice. Each peach is lifted out carefully with a skimmer and laid on a platter, after which the syrup is brought to a boiling point, skimmed carefully, and allowed to boil until quite thick. Then the peaches are returned to the boiling syrup and cooked until clear, when they are skimmed from the syrup and dropped skillfully into glass jars. The syrup is again boiled down until thick, the brandy is added, and the mixture poured over the peaches until the jar is full, when it is sealed just as for preserved fruit.

On her list of meat relishes, Ma'mselle Dainty prides herself justly upon Chili sauce, the like of which no canning factory ever produced. It is made when tomatoes are plentiful and cheap.

A peck of ripe tomatoes are plunged into boiling water and peeled, then chopped and boiled until thick and mushy. To this, she adds one pint of chopped onions, one half-dozen large, green peppers, chopped fine, and boils them gently for half an hour; after which she adds one-half cup of salt, one pint of vinegar, one tablespoon of cloves, one of cinnamon and two of whole mustard seeds. The savory mixture simmers gently for an hour more, after which it is bottled in jelly tumblers or clean, old pickle bottles, corked and sealed with the same old sealing wax her great-grandmother used.