INTRODUCTION

"Brooklyn College moves to Central New York Farms. Young consumers from the city help to harvest crops to be shipped to the metropolitan area. Students learn and earn."

The above headlines from an August issue of The Dairyman's League News presents in capsule form the Brooklyn College 1943 Farm Labor Project. Following a 1942 program when three farm labor camps totaling one hundred student volunteer workers were set up in the Hudson River region under Brooklyn College auspices, plans were gradually formulated during the ensuing academic year for a more ambitious program. This program finally took form as a special unit of the 1943 Summer Session. Those enrolled for farm work had headquarters at the New York Agricultural and Technical Institute at Morrisville, N.Y. The Institute provided dormitories and cafeterias, classrooms for academic work, rich opportunities for supplementary educational work, together with ample recreational facilities. The College set up an appropriate curriculum, provided library, music, athletic and other equipment, and appointed a teaching and administrative staff which also doubled in curricular supervision, field work foremanship, and in other capacities.

The students were enrolled, first, as volunteers who desired to serve on the food production front, and second, as registrants in some one of the regular college courses. From Morrisville they went forth daily for ten weeks to work on farms mostly within a ten mile radius. Two or three evenings per week each student attended sessions of the class for which he was registered. Other evenings were devoted to study, assemblies, informal educational trips and recreation. The Institute's staff contributed materially in the way of supplementary educational work in the fields of agronomy, dairying, agricultural processes and economics, as well as invasuably toward the assemblies and recreational programs.
This Brooklyn College Farm Labor Project was one of thirty camps in New York State, organized under very diverse auspices, and authorized as "Farm Cadet Victory Corps" units according to a statewide program worked out by the State Educational Department and the Farm Manpower Service. Student volunteers received free transportation to and from regions where they were to work, and additional expense allotments were made toward the supervisory work from special State appropriations. Through these same State agencies certain minimum standards for housing and living conditions were set for the farm camps, and, in cooperation with the United States Employment Service, arrangements were made for the farm placement of the student volunteers, and for the terms under which they were to be employed.

These Victory Corps units differed considerably according to the locality, the kind of agriculture prevalent, and the auspices under which each was installed and managed. Morrisville is near the center of a three-county area in which, during the past score or so of years, vegetable raising has developed on a large scale. While many farms are run as individual units, the introduction of tractors and trucks has made possible the successful cultivation and management of large acreages under single ownership. Some growers own dozens of farms, comprising thousands of acres. The harvesting of vegetable crops, such as onions and celery in the low mucklands of the northern part of this area, or peas and beans in the hillier central and southern portions, requires each summer the importation of thousands of transient harvest hands. There is no substitute for handwork in the harvesting of most of these vegetable crops. This is as true for the large grower, who may have a continuous succession of peas and beans ripening from June 15 until frost steps in about the middle of September, as it is for the small farmer with a single five-acre patch.

In years past the necessary extra harvest hands were obtained chiefly from two sources: daily importation from nearby urban centers, and by the enlistment of many hundreds of Florida Negroes, who were provided with summer living quarters.
Under the pressure of war conditions, the city sources of such emergency labor have practically dried up, and the supply of Florida workers has been reduced greatly. During the past year, to help the situation, the Federal Government arranged for the importation of thousands of workers from outside the country — of Mexicans for the needs of the Southwest and of Jamaicans and Bahamians for the eastern part of the country. A former C.O.D. Camp at Moscow Hill, near Hubbardsville, New York, was the center for nearly four hundred Bahamians who worked in the Madison County area. The Brooklyn College installation was a special type of "migrant worker" unit, sponsored under State auspices by the College and the State Institute at Morrisville. As testimony to its general success it may be recorded that while only one large grower was willing in March 1943 to take a chance on employing students as harvest workers, before the summer season a half dozen, including the original farmer, were ready to conclude arrangements for student employment in 1944.

Here may be cited letters of commendation from Comptroller F.C. Moore, Director T.W. Hurd of the Farm Manpower Service, and P.J. Weaver, Supervisor in charge of all the Farm Cadet Victory Corps projects in New York State. To these may be added special resolutions of approval passed by three Madison County bodies: the County Board of Supervisors, the County Defense Council, and the Board of Visitors of the Institute at Morrisville. From the last named an official invitation to use the Institute facilities in 1944 has been received.

Among the Farm Cadet Victory Corps camps of the State this Brooklyn College project was distinctive in the fact that it represented the acceptance on the part of an educational institution of responsibility for cooperation with the national food production effort, and particularly in the fact that the College undertook to make both the work experience and the group living as educationally valuable as possible. Toward this end the courses offered were, as far as possible, specially adapted for presentation under rural conditions.
Moreover, in addition to the regular courses, which included geology, rural sociology, English composition, political science and others, much supplementary correlation work was possible. Here the contributions of the staff of the Institute were of exceptional value. Not least in value for these day students of the New York City "subway college", where campus life is largely confined to the transitory minutes of class meetings, the continuous and intimate association of dormitory and field, together with many friendly contacts with local residents, In a living and learning situation in which everything was new, except perhaps the instructors and textbooks, the impact of all the daily events carried educational possibilities of incalculable value. Every minute of the summer's activities presented opportunities for vivid learning experiences for these young people. That these were effective is attested by the enthusiasm manifested during the summer and not in retrospect by the returned workers, for most of the phases of the summer program.

The preceding paragraphs offer merely the broadest outline of what was for students and staff a constantly stirring and provocative adventure. In the pages which follow the several phases into which the entire project naturally divides, will be appraised, and the possibilities of further extension will be outlined. The summer's experiences will be viewed under these headings:

1. Eight months of planning and preparation.
2. The formal educational program at Morrisville: "Old wine in new bottles".
3. What Arcadia can teach: urban in rural. The informal program.
4. Field work and food production as work experience.
5. Discussion and recommendations.