CHAPTER IX

AGRICULTURE IN WELD COUNTY.
1843-1938. 95 Years.

Agriculture in the region that is now Weld county undoubtedly began with the efforts of Lancaster Lupton to hold his own after the coming of other traders so divided the Indian trade that it was no longer dependable as a source of income. *Agriculture in Colorado,* published by the State Board of Agriculture, page 24, gives Lupton the credit of being Colorado's First Farmer. It states that his operations were on no small scale for that early day, and quotes the following extract from the Report of John C. Fremont who visited the Fort-farm in June of 1843. (p. 18)

> "His post was beginning to assume the appearance of a comfortable farm; stock, hogs and cattle were ranging about on the prairie; there were different kinds of poultry, and there was the wreck of a promising garden in which a considerable variety of vegetables had been in a flourishing condition but had been almost ruined by recent high waters."

This was on land that is now the farm of E. W. Ewing, adjoining the town of Fort Lupton on the north.

What the native American, the Indian, did in the way of agriculture is not definitely recorded for the reason that he, the Indian, kept no records, and the white man who brought his ideas of agriculture from advanced countries did not consider the Indian's primitive efforts worth recording. The tribes in this part of the country depended more upon the hunt for their subsistence than did tribes farther east, hence had fewer records to leave behind. So the distinction of Weld county's First Farmer clearly falls to Lancaster Lupton. And it antedates the political organization of either Weld county or Colorado by more than twenty years.

In 1858-9, as recorded in an earlier Chapter, a number of farmers found themselves in this locality with the desire and

necessity of establishing farms as a means of getting a living; but the big question that confronted them was how to get title to the land. As a race the white man had the land, but how the individual was to acquire it was the question. *Agriculture in Colorado*, (p. 39) tells how they did it.

The situation was met by staking out land claims and giving notice to the public as the following will illustrate: (Verbatim quotation)

> "I, H. Cochran, claims 160 a. of land Bounded and Described as follows: Commencing at a stake on the west Bank of the Platte river about 5 miles above Plum creek, running thence West 160 rods to a stake thence north 160 rods to a stake thence East to the Platte river thence up the river to the place of beginning. Said claim made this 5th of July, 1859 in the presence of Wm. Bambrick."

Such claims were recorded in the Book of Claims, and this, with the required fee for recording constituted the "Code" for acquiring the land. This done, the Indian's ancient title could wait until the white man's Congress could get around to "extinguish" it.

This was the period of agriculture that followed Lancaster Lupton. But since the book quoted above, *Agriculture in Colorado,* and others give so complete a history of that industry, this History need not give space to more than the beginning and the end; that is, to the earliest experiments and the accomplishments of the present time. For that purpose quotations from reliable sources will be given as near to 1938 as are available.

In that first period agriculture kept to the bottom lands where natural subirrigation from many streams furnished moisture for growing crops, but when colonization got well under way this was not enough; the streams, though numerous and abundant, were not equal to the demands that laterals made upon them, so rivers had to be tapped farther up and bigger ditches built. The Chapter on Irrigation takes up the story at this point, so here this Chapter will leave it.

One of the three industrial lines in which Weld county scores heavily as compared with other counties of the state is Agriculture. The figures here quoted are from the Year Book, issued yearly by the State Planning Commission. That is, it covers all the years, though its issues are oftener than otherwise for two or more years together; the last issue is for 1935-6; that for '37-8 is, of course, not yet compiled. At the time of the last publication agriculture had reached so high a development in the state as to merit a Volume all to itself. It is that Volume, bearing the title of No. II, (2) from which the following data is taken.

Weld has an acreage of 2,574,080, out of which is a farming area of 1,974,826 acres; this is divided into 5,546 farms, an average somewhat above 356 acres to the farm. (p. 11) The years covered by this issue of the Year Book were not bumper years, hence the figures are by no means an exaggeration of averages.

CORN. (p. 13)

Weld had 36,601 irrigated acres in corn; the average yield was 27 bushels to the acre and the full product 988,227 bushels. Non-irrigated land 85,404 acres, with a yield of 6 bushels to the acre and a total product of 512,424 bushels. Total acreage 122,005; total product 1,500,651 and total value $1,080,469.

DRY BEANS (p. 19)

From 32,977 irrigated acres Weld harvested 247,328 bags of 100 pounds each; the average yield per acre was 750 pounds. From 61,243 non-irrigated acres, 116,362 bags; an average of 190 pounds to the acre, a little short of one-fourth of the irrigated yield. The total cash value of the crop, both classes, was $1,018,332.

POTATOES (p. 18)

Of irrigated land, 22,040 acres; average yield, 190 bushels to the acre; total product, 4,187,600 bushels. Of non-irrigated land 1,160 acres, an average yield of 40 bushels to the acre; product 46,400 bushels. Total 32,200 acres; total product 4,234,-000 bushels and total value of $2,286,360.

WHEAT, Winter. (p. 14)

Irrigated acres were 23,720; average yield 20 bushels to the acre; product 474,400 bushels. Non-irrigated 35,580; average yield 4 bushels to the acre; product 142,320 bushels. Over 11,000 acres more were listed in non-irrigated acres, yet the yield of the irrigated crop was more than 332,000 bushels greater; one of the comparisons that helped to swell the majority for the Grand Lake-Big Thompson Water Diversion project. Totals on spring wheat, both classes were: acres harvested 59,300; All totals, winter and spring, irrigated and non-irrigated, harvested 82,950 acres; product 935,995 bushels; value $920,610, a faction over 99 cents per bushel.

OATS; (p. 16)

Irrigated acres 15,714; average yield, 36 bushels to the acre; product 565,704. Non-irrigated, 1,746; yield 8 bushels to the acre; product 13,968. Total acreage 17,460; product 579,672; value, $191,292.

BARLEY; (p. 17)

Irrigated acres 48,200; yield 31 bushels to the acre; product 1,494,200 bushels. Non-irrigated 12,050 acres; average yield 8 bushels to the acre; product 96,400 bushels. Totals; acreage, 60,250; product 1,590,600; value $668,052.

RYE; (p. 22)

A total of 2,840 acres in both irrigated and non-irrigated land was harvested with an average yield of 7 bushels to the acre; a product of 19,880 bushels and a value of $9,145; a fraction over 46 cents per bushel.

WILD HAY; (p. 22)

Without reference to irrigation Weld cut 13,170 acres of wild hay; the yield was less than one ton to the acre, the total production being 11,326 tons; value $7.00 per ton; total value $79,282.

TAME, OR CULTIVATED HAY; (p. 13)

Both irrigated and non-irrigated 119,180 acres; average

yield 1.7, almost 2 tons to the acre; production 202,606 tons; value $1,316,939, a fraction less than $6.50 per ton.

ALFALFA; (p. 23)

Irrigated and non-irrigated alfalfa, 74,530 acres; yield 2.1—two and a tenth—tons to the acre, practically half a ton more than other hay. Production 156,513 tons; Totals, all hay, acres cut 206,880; production 370,445 tons; value $2,523,121.

SUGAR BEETS; (p. 20)

Highest of High Lights in Production.

Weld had 57,212 acres in sugar beets, with an average yield of 13 and a half tons to the acre, a product of 771,101 tons and a value of $4,768,395. No table is given of non-irrigated beets. A review of totals of other crops will show that sugar beets are far in the lead as a money making crop in Weld. Corn has a value of $1,080,469, oats $191,292, barley $668,052, wheat, $920,610; beans, $1,018,332; potatoes $2,286,360 and Beets, $4,768,385. In all crops here listed Weld county leads the counties of the state by large margins.

FROM THE FEDERAL CENSUS, JANUARY, 1935. (p. 11)

The farmers of Weld responded satisfactorily to the request of the State Planning Commission for statistical data, 5,546 farms reporting. Of these 1,684 reported being farmed by owners, 740 by part owners, 21 by managers and 3,101 by tenant farmers. Number of acres in farms operated by owners, part owners and managers, 1,226,553; by tenant farmers 748,273. Value of farm lands, (p. 12) $47,938,431; average value per farm $8,644; per acre, $24.27.

LIVE STOCK; (p. 82)

Where Weld Again Tops The List.

Farms reporting on live stock, 4,729. Of cattle and calves these farms gave a total of 102,471. Dairy cows, (p. 83) 4,588 farms reported 25,590, with a production of milk of 13,206,806 gallons; an average per cow, counted in pounds of butterfat, 4,438 pounds. Of butter produced 2,822 farmers reported a

product of 354,852 pounds. Weld's nearest competitor in the state was Mesa county with 192,834 pounds; next nearest was Logan with 144,795 pounds.

CHICKENS, TURKEYS AND EGGS. (p. 86)

In chickens, turkeys and eggs Weld also leads. 4,898 farms reported; next nearest was Mesa with 2,148 farms reporting and next nearest was Larimer with 1,725. Weld's chickens numbered 324,781. Eggs, 2,002,081. The Year Book does not state whether the number quoted is eggs or dozens of eggs; but more likely the former. Farms raising chickens were reported as 4,409 and the number of chickens raised in the year 580,037. Turkeys were reported on 1,541 farms, with a brood of 15,288.

HORSES. (p. 87)

Here again Weld takes the lead, with 17,781 horses. Next nearest is Logan with 7,800, almost 10,000 less. But neither Weld nor Logan have as many horses as they had in 1929; then Logan had 10,231 and Weld 23,006. Thirteen counties reported an increase in the number of horses over 1929, but the state as a whole gave a decrease from 233,855 in 1929 to 187,972 in 1935. This falling off can be accounted for quite easily by the growing popularity of the tractor and the automobile.

FRUIT. (pp. 51, 52, 53)

Here Weld sildes far down the scale of production; as far below some other counties as above in the lines just quoted. But that is no more than fair; no county can lead in everything. In apples Delta is the top-notcher, having harvested in the year being considered, 1935, 661,045 bushels, while Weld gathered only 2,283 bushels. Fremont came next to Delta with 327,352 bushels. Of cherries Larimer had 86,702 bushels while Weld had but 2,282. In strawberries Jefferson lead the procession—and far in the lead at that—with 665,794 quarts, while Weld had but 2,520. But "taking one consideration with another," Weld county holds her own with all the rest.

And this is the mark in agriculture at the first century milestone.