

The Sovereigns of Industry

Or

The Riverside Cooperative Association

The Sovereigns of Industry in Maynard was organized Dec. 21, 1875 by a small group of English and Scottish Textile workers. It was a cooperative venture based on the Rochdale principles, quite popular in a few communities. The Maynard Group bought in Boston wholesale and delivered in town by wheelbarrow to its members. So much interest was created by this venture that in September 1878 - three years later - The Riverside Cooperative Association was incorporated with capital stock of \$1500. It opened in the basement of Darling's Block - corner of Nason and Summer Streets (The present abode of the Fraternal Order of Eagles. From there it moved to (A.H. Haynes) The Riverside Hall Block on Main Street beside the River. Possibly that is the origin of the name Riverside Cooperative Association. In 1882 it bought the land on the corner of Nason and Summer Streets where the Knights of Columbus Building is now and erected a three story building for \$15,000 with the store downstairs and rooms and halls upstairs. This became known as Cooperative Hall. Town meetings and other social functions were held here for many decades. The capital stock was increased to \$5000. \$12,000 was loaned by townspeople to build and stock the store. The 25th Anniversary program in 1903 divulged that this was the largest grocery business in town with 400 members - \$1,250,000 sales in that period - \$60,000 paid out in rebates. The officers at that time were President Albert Batley - Treasurer, Gavin Taylor - Clerk, F.W. Sims - Auditors, William Holt and T.A. Jones - Directors, Alex Pettigrew, James J. Morgan, John White, Fred Sims, Gavin Taylor. Rebates varied from year to year running from 2% to 8%. (July 26, '01 - July 18, '02 -

July 17, '03 - Nov. 20, '03).

Dec. 23, 1904 report gives membership as over 600.

Feb. 9, 1906 gives the Board of Directors as Alex Pettigrew, James J. Morgan, John White, Albert Batley, Fred Sims - Auditors William Holt and William Lord - Treasurer-Gavin Taylor. Meeting voted to purchase 100 rods of land from L.S. Brooks on Summer Street - to be used for stables - in which case Main Hall would be extended out over land now occupied by the barn. Remember in those days horses and wagons were used for home deliveries by the grocery stores.

Jan. 11, 1907 report advertised a 10% rebate - the high point for all the years of the Coops existence.

An interesting newsnote for May 13, 1910 tells us of a letter addressed to the Coop as Sovereigns of Modesty (Not industry) with a \$100 bill in a note saying, "add this to the conscience fund." Someone apparently couldn't sleep nights!

On June 16, 1911 the Directors by a majority vote of three to two called for the resignation of Manager James J. Hilfertyon sick leave at that time, who had been managing the store since 1894. The reasons are not clear in the newspaper accounts but possibly a clue might be gathered from the July 21, 1911 report indicating only a 2% rebate - George Morse was made manager.

Feb. 11, 1916 reports a 7% rebate with Gavin Taylor as Treasurer and the Board of Directors as James B. Lord, Albert Batley, George T. Murphy, William Scully and Charles Courtney.

July 30, 1920 report shows a 6% rebate - also that as in 1908 under similar economic conditions in the mill the only money paid out in town was this rebate.

Feb. 11, 1921 - a 2% rebate only - reasons being losses owing to price re-adjustments and continued depression and fire on August 12, 1920.

July 21, 1925 - semi-annual meeting skips rebates altogether.

July 22, 1927, meeting postponed action on dissolution of the coop. The store was cut to half its original size and the other half is ready to be rented. The last 6 months it was reported showed no loss. Officers were President William Naylor, Sec'y James C. Mahoney, Treas. Harold Cuttell, Trustees Edward Wooldridge and Charles Spence.

Feb. 8, 1929 meeting empowered the Directors to carry on or dispose of the store. It is reported that a chain store is endeavoring to purchase the business. Officers were elected with Pres. William Naylor, Treas. Harold Cuttell, Auditors Charles Spence and Edward Wooldridge, Trustees Mark Newton, P.J. Schnair, James J. Ledgard, John Maley.

Aug. 2, 1929 semi-annual meeting reported a 6 month profit of \$660.28. The directors urged the meeting to use this money to pain the building and sell the store.

Sept. 13, 1929. George Morse, Manager of the store for 18 years purchases the store. The Association will hold on to the business block.

Aug. 3, 1933. Semi-annual meeting reports a 3% dividend.

Feb. 8, 1935 meeting elects for officers Pres. Leslie Sims, Sec'y James Ledgard, Clerk Harold Cuttell, Directors John Maley, Joseph Schnair, Jeremiah Bradley.

In Jan. 1936 a fire destroyed the upper sections of the building. The Association voted to sell the property to the Knights of Columbus and disband the Association.

And so passed into Maynard history not only one of the oldest cooperative associations in the state (51 years as a store alone) but

also a center of social, cultural and municipal affairs since 1882.

I am indebted to the Maynard News for all dates and Ralph Sheridan for other additional information.

B.R. Koski - read at the 1969 meeting of The Maynard Historical Society.