

Pacific Coast Review

1944-45 scrapbook
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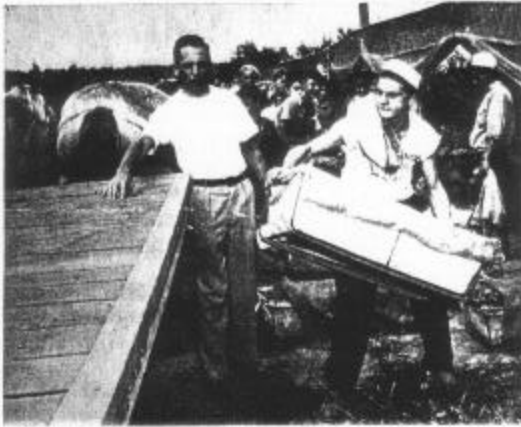
Tobacco Museum Archives, Long Rd. Northwest Park, Windsor



Tobacco Crop

SAVED BY EMERGENCY FARM "ARMY"

Connecticut's multi-million-dollar tobacco crop has been saved in its entirety. And the 1943 leaf ranks near the top of the vintages produced in that vitally important tobacco valley since the first teaspoonful of seed took root.



HIGH SCHOOL BOYS helped in harvest. Here one is sending a basket of wrapper leaf on its way to the drying sheds.

Harvesting was done under conditions which only a global war could create. The Japanese conquest of the Netherlands East Indies and the consequent loss of Sumatra as a source of cigar wrapper intensified the importance of Connecticut leaf, not only in world markets, but on every fighting front where U. S. cigars are smoked.

Tobacco, the army says, is almost as important to men in the service as bullets. Tobacco, the government says, is an essential crop.

Months ago, the Connecticut growers appealed for aid in solving the problems of farm and warehouse labor shortage. Washington's answer was to permit entrance of 3,000 negroes from Jamaica and other Caribbean islands for the sole purpose of performing the agricultural tasks once done by men and women now in the armed services or in vital war industries.

The visitors from the Caribbean have been industrious and conscientious, with their accustomed siestas relinquished, evidently, for the duration. Important to the success of harvesting was a beaming sun which enabled the new crew of harvesters to attend to their tasks under "home conditions."

Students Answer Call for Help

Even more significant, however, was the Connecticut Valley's own answer to the growers' plea for help.

Before school was dismissed for the summer, a well organized and widely popularized campaign was built around the slogan, "Keep the boys in smokes." The valley's youth responded readily to appeals made at public meetings, on the radio, and through hundreds of recruiting posters. A thousand fences and walls, over a 100-mile area which crossed the Massachusetts line, were decked out in colored posters attuned to the war.

As a result, more than 1,000 boys and girls accomplished the following: (1) they performed the delicate task of threading leaves on laths in the drying sheds; (2) they earned substantial wages, they contributed to the war effort by saving one of a large part of which went into war bonds; (3) the nation's most important crops from damage and waste.



NEGRO WORKERS from Jamaica enjoy fruit of their labors. They aided in saving Connecticut's important tobacco crop.

Albert H. Newfield of Hartford, veteran tobacco leaf expert and secretary-treasurer of the Shade Growers Agricultural Association, explains that the vintage distinction of the 1943 crop was due to nearly perfect weather conditions — hot days, frequent rains, no severe storms, a minimum of insect interference, and mild winds. Storms in other seasons have caused heavy damage.

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In the Connecticut Valley more than 1,000 of the 3,000 visiting Jamaicans were employed. This army of imported farm labor was housed in a former CCC camp. They constituted the field staff, removing the green leaves from seemingly endless rows of plants. The leaves were placed in baskets to be trucked to the sheds by regular employees of the companies. There the leaves attained their characteristic brown hue.

Glamor Enters Harvest Scene

This year colored lads from the south attended to the hanging of the tobacco. Juniors and seniors from negro colleges made more money than they could have in other farm service, they admit.

But the most striking alteration in the familiar, old-time scenes in this New England tobacco land was due to Connecticut's own boys and girls.

Glamor has taken its place in the already romantic tobacco trade. Hundreds of school girls strung the leaves in the sheds near Windsor, heart of the shade-grown region. When they responded to the plea for a victory crop brigade, they were ready to put in full time during six or seven intensive weeks when tobacco goes through its first processing. Their task was a delicate one, that of sewing the leaves to strips of wood. Broken leaves are taboo, and, as a result of careful handling, few were found among the millions that passed through the hands of these youthful needleworkers.

The pretty misses from Hartford and elsewhere did quite well for themselves financially. They earned, in frequent cases, from \$8 to \$10 a day under a piece-work scale, and some girls in their middle teens brought home as much as \$50 each week.

Other girls employed in East Hartford aircraft plants at night got extra pay and did another good deed for Uncle Sam by devoting afternoon hours to handling tobacco leaves. Special arrangements were made for transporting feminine workers from and to their homes.

Outlook for Next Year Is Good

William S. Fuller, president of the Shade Growers, has paid tribute to other emergency helpers. As members of the Victory Farm Volunteers of Connecticut, more than a hundred high school and preparatory school boys also participated in the tobacco harvest. A few of them were already veterans, because last year, too, they served a hitch in the agricultural army and earned "summer money" from the tobacco harvest.

Even more workers could have been used to hasten a comparatively late harvesting, but sufficient numbers were enlisted to protect the entire crop.

With the consent of the Farm Security Administration, some of the Jamaicans have volunteered to remain for other war work in Connecticut if their services are needed, but they view a cold winter with trepidation. Joe Vincent, their leader, said that the amount of homesickness was remarkably small during the tobacco harvest season, although a few were sent back to the Caribbean.

As a result of the successful experiment with the services of these West Indian negroes and the help of others from the Carolinas, Georgia, and Alabama, together with the enthusiastic and skilled efforts of the school girls and boys, the outlook for 1944 is regarded with optimism.



TO HELP DEALERS explain to customers why there is a shortage of some of the more popular brands of cigars, the Cigar Institute of America is currently releasing the above poster. It is produced in four colors, and points out that wherever Uncle Sam's fighting men go cigars go, too.

"We have many letters from soldiers, whose homes are here in the valley, saying how much they value cigars, and they make it clear that they want more of them," reported Ralph C. Lasbury, Jr., industrial relations committee chairman of the growers' group. He continued, "We know the ways and means have been found by the quartermasters to send millions of them overseas under perfected transportation conditions, and we are proud of this contribution toward keeping the men happy."

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Junior High School boys