

Corn from Seven Nations Flourishes On Hoffman Plots Near Landisville

By ERNEST J. NEILL

Editor, Lancaster Farming

Corn of Italian, Uruguayan, Mexican, Brazilian, Indian and Canadian origin is flourishing next to Yankee varieties in plots on the Hoffman Seed Co leased lands near Landisville, Lancaster County.

Last week, Lancaster Farming told of bamboo that grows prolifically on another farm not too far from Landisville. Here's a close cousin of bamboo that's doing equally well, perhaps serving agricultural industry and agricultural science more.

Midget corn, dwarf corn, corn from the tropics that will not be able to mature fully in Lancaster County climate this season, grows in rows adjoining more common relatives, U. S. hybrids.

There are ancient varieties that grow with tomorrow's breeds; the knee-high flour corn whose kernels never harden, the Italian corn which some time back passed maturity and is ready for shucking — on your knees, almost, unless you use a mechanical picker. Towering over all, stretching perhaps 20 feet in the air, is the Mexican corn, just now in tassel, just now silking, whose milk-stage kernels may never reach maturity in Lancaster County's comparatively chilly climate.

These oddities — or more properly 'round-the-world varieties — are in plots of varying height, a crazy stair-step pattern. The Italian corn is a 65-day variety that ranges from

knee to shoulder height, ready for cribbing right now. Corn from Uruguay is still soft. The sky-scraping Mexican variety is tasseling far behind the normal U. S. July 15-20 date, and its auxiliary roots spring out two feet above ground!

In the Mexican corn, the relationship to bamboo is more pronounced. Lester Hug, manager of the hybrid seed corn department of Hoffman Seed Co., explains that in its native land, the corn is cut, ears taken from the felled stalks, and when dry, stalks are converted into building materials, serving as a base for mud plaster on native huts.

Here grows some Indian corn, Calico corn as it has been known for years, with kernels on the same cob varying in color from yellow through red into purple. Grass corn, with leaves as fine as ribbon grass; pod corn, where each kernel is encased in its own husk; corn knee-high with normal leaves and ears, the dwarf varieties, and the midget varieties, also hip-high but bearing normal size ears, all grow in a wonderland of corn on Lancaster County soil, alongside European varieties.

Well acquainted with the program is M. T. (Pod) Kauffman, born and raised on an adjoining farm, who supervises the plots. Between him and Mr Hug, the conversation may range from Brachytic to cytoplasmic sterility. Both are most willing to explain the complicated process



Among the many varieties of corn grown in plots of the Hoffman Seed Co. near Landisville is an ancient variety where each kernel is encased in its own

husk. Here M. T. (Pod) Kauffman, hybrid corn department assistant, displays the ear, and an individual husk-encased kernel. (Lancaster Farming Staff Photo).

which has developed in corn the same crossbreeding processes that brought about the mule in the cross between the jack and horse

In fact, there is a mule corn.

Not only are varieties tested and retested here, but maximum planting is sought as well to produce the greatest amount of corn on the smallest acreage. Rates of

planting vary from 12,000 to 14,000 to 16,000 or 20,000 plants per acre. Rates of growth are carefully checked and yields figured by weight and moisture test to produce No. 2 grade.

"We are growing 200 varieties of corn here," Mr. Hug told in the Hoffman offices. "When I came to Pennsylvania in 1936, only one per cent of the corn grown was hybrid. In Illinois, 33 to 39 per cent was hybrid.

"Realizing there are several corn zones, we have plots in New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania at altitudes of 900, 1600 and 2300 feet. Much research has been done by State Agricultural Colleges, like the Morrow Plots at the University of Illinois and

the plots at Pennsylvania State, where ground has been continuously in corn 57 years

"Any experimental variety must go through at least three years of test and observation before seed is placed on the market," he continued.

There is a purpose in the dwarf varieties. It may be possible to lower the ear of corn six inches on a stalk within a year or so, just by crossing the normal 10 or 15-foot stalk with a dwarf variety. Yet the size of ear remains the same, and the number of ears per stalk the same.

Now that seed corn has been "sexed," divided into male and female, much of the earlier hand

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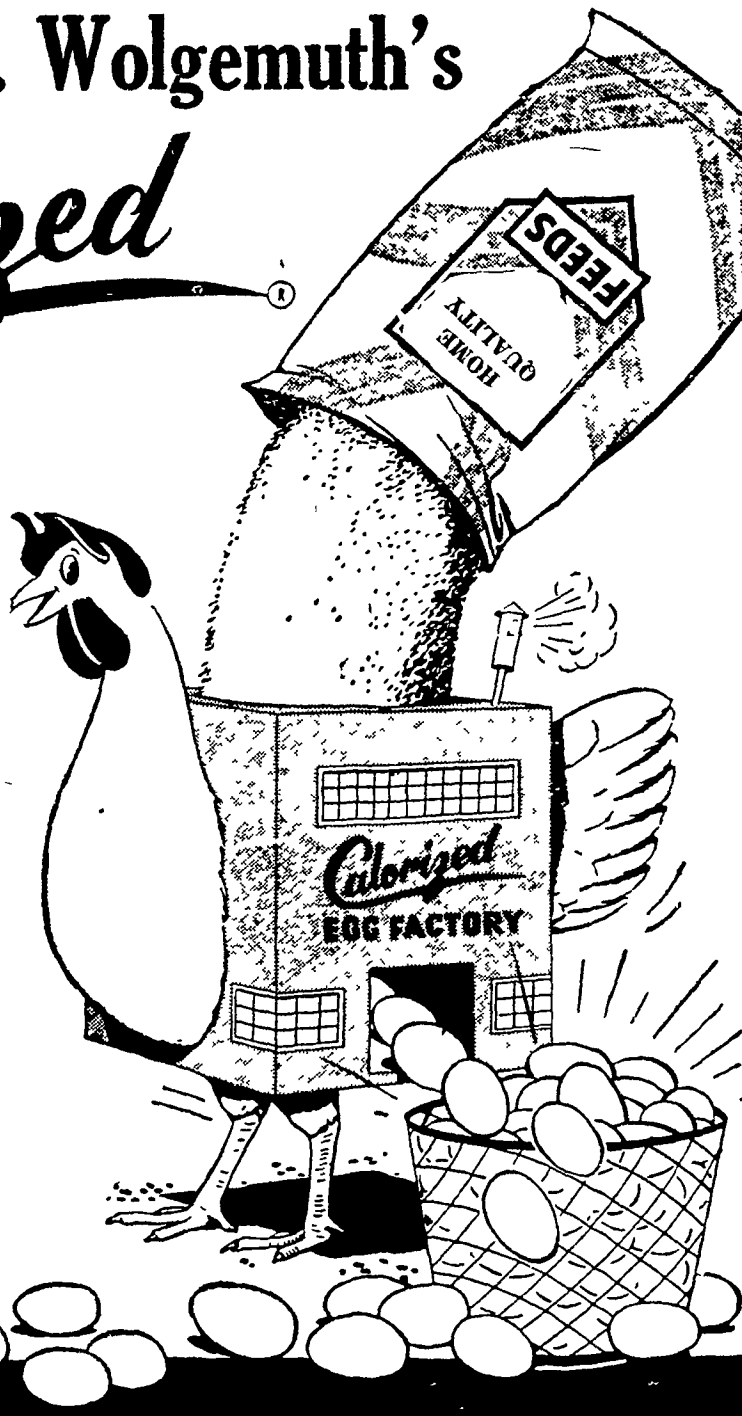
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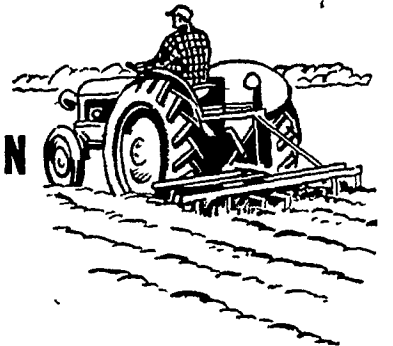
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