

[A Visit to a Farming Dairy at Churchula, Ala.]

Week ending October 27, 1938 SOCIOLOGICAL SERIES Hele S. Hartley

Identification No. 0149-5147

Federal Writers' Project Dist. 2

WPA Project #4454, Mobile, Ala.

Mr. Charles A. Sturtevant

Churchula, Alabama.

A VISIT TO A FARMING DAIRY AT CHUNCHULA; ALA.

Written by Helen S. Hartley.

As I parked my car in front of the delightfully comfortable cottage of the farming dairy of the Sturtevant brothers, at Churchula, in Mobile County, on the Citronelle Road (U. S. Highway 45) about twenty-one miles north of the city of Mobile. Mr. Charles Sturtevant, one of the two brothers who own the dairy, arose from his seat on the front porch where he was reading, and came down the steps to greet me. He did not ask me in, but took a seat in the car so that I could interview him, and where a wonderful view of the whole farm and dairy could be seen. This was my first visit to their farm and well equipped dairy, which is one of the largest in Mobile County. I found Mr. Charles Sturtevant to be a most delightful person to talk to and I soon saw why he was so popular with all his friends, some of which I had talked to previously about getting this interview. He is a tall, broad shouldered, healthy looking man, of the blonde type, with a broad but kindly smile, which assured me my visit was welcome.

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While dairying is Mr. Sturtevant's hobby, hunting fox is the sport he enjoys and indulges in most. Forty years ago fox were very numerous, he says, even to catching them two hundred yards from his front gate; but now, although not so numerous, they are still plentiful. Mr. Sturtevant said that he and his friends hunted 2 them on horse back on his lands first, then returned to the house and proceeded to get into their cars, and after turning the hounds loose, the hunt was on. Mr. Sturtevant owns eight hounds which together with his neighbors, make up a good size pack of between twenty to twenty-five hounds. He says that hunting in cars is very thrilling, for they all know the roads well enough that they easily follow the cry of the hounds and always arrive in time for the kill. When asked if the wolves and foxes were imported, his answer was no, there were plenty of them as it was. There was also plenty of "coon" (raccoon) and "possum" (opossum) to be had, but personally, he did not care for the sport of hunting the latter as he could never forget the last night he was out in the woods hunting "possum" and found they had trapped one in a carcass of a dead animal lying in a mud hole.

Mrs. Charles Sturtevant and daughter are not living on the farm with Mr. Sturtevant at present, but are living in their city residence in Mobile, on Old Government Street, as his daughter has a position in Mobile. His son finished at the Alabama Polytechnic Institute at Auburn, and after returning to the farm, decided that he did not like farming and dairying and could never find any interest in it, so one day while he and his father were working in the dairy, he told his father something about his ambition to go out West and obtain a job. Mr. Sturtevant at once gave his consent and his son left the farm, but as things have turned out as they have, the father is confident that his son has made no mistake in his decision, for his son finally located in Toledo, Ohio, and now has a very responsible position, and like that part of the country very much. So Mr. Charles lives on the old place with his brother and his family and says he also is very contented, as he spends his spare time in Mobile, but says that the noise of the neighbors radios and loud voices annoy him and make him feel lost, so his home in Mobile on Old Government Street seldom sees him.

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The dairy and farm consists of two hundred and sixty-four acres of land, one hundred of which is under cultivation, forty in pasture and the balance is covered with oak trees. To the right of the house stands two silos, next to which are the barns and the milk house, and around which are to be seen the most beautiful white Leghorn chickens. Mr. Sturtevant says that the Leghorns prove to be the best breed of chickens for his place, because they can fly into the trees at night, where they are safe from marauders, as there is no other shelter provided for them.

At the present time they are milking thirty-three head of milk cows, seventy-five percent of his dairy stock being Jerseys, because of the high butterfat test of the milk, and the other twenty-five percent being holsteins. The milk is sold in bulk wholesale now, as it is more convenient than the house to house delivery as they have been doing in the past. The price they receive is not high; the profit coming from the high production per cow, as each cow is kept up to an average of three gallons. The farm furnishes an abundance of roughage for the dairy herd. In the summer there is an abundance of pasture, and as our summers in Alabama are long, the feed bill is not so high, as it is necessary to give dairy cows a certain amount of grain feed also with the pasturage.

Mr. Sturtevant explained they had divided the land into two to three permanent pastures, which are planted in lespedeza and carpet grass and rotates the stock from one to the other, thereby having fresh pastures always at hand. He said that there was a waste place across the creek, which they planted in Kudzu, which is a very heavy vine that grows fast (it is reputed to grow eighteen inches a night in good weather). Mr. Sturtevant said he has found that if carefully pastured it makes a wonderful pasture, but on the particular piece of ground he has planted it in, he says, that it has smothered everything that was growing on it. One can easily understand why Kudzu stifles the life out of the smaller trees it enfolds, as the writer saw the trees completely covered with it, and the vine is so heavy that it bears them down with the weight of its heavy stems. 5 The two silos hold roughage enough for eight months feeding and is at present filled. He says that all good

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dairymen devote their attention to raising feed for their stock, and raise oats and vetch for hay, which is stored in two barns, one holding forty tons, the other twenty tons. Corn is the most important crop that is raised on the Sturtevant farm. The heifers from their best cows are kept and raised on the Purina method of feeding, or feeding milk to the calf sixty days, gradually increasing the amount of grain mixture.

Mr. Sturtevant also told the writer the stable manure is saved in a liquid form, by washing down the barn floors after the mornings milking, the water running into vats which are hauled out to the fields.

As twilight was falling and the air began to get cool, the writer took leave of his host bidding him goodbye after a most pleasant visit.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Interview with Mr. Charles A. Sturtevant personally by the writer. His address is given above.