

## DEVELOPING WISCONSIN'S HEMP INDUSTRY

A. H. Wright

Among the new crops brought into Wisconsin to provide an additional source of revenue for our farms is the fiber crop, hemp. Practically unknown to Wisconsin farmers fifteen years ago, hemp gradually established itself as an important cash crop until in 1922 Wisconsin became the leading hemp fiber producing state in the Union.

Hemp is the oldest cultivated fiber plant in the world. It was grown in China as early as 2800 B. C., and in more recent times it spread to Europe, Africa, and South America. It was introduced into North America soon after the colonial settlements were established, and has been grown at different times in several scattering states. The present producing areas are largely in Wisconsin, Illinois and Kentucky.

Hemp is an annual, woody, branching plant, growing from 6 to 9 feet tall on the average. The fiber is obtained from the inner bark of the stem. In early days the fiber was used for home spun clothing and other domestic purposes. Now it is used largely for the manufacture of commercial twines, and to some extent for rope and thread.

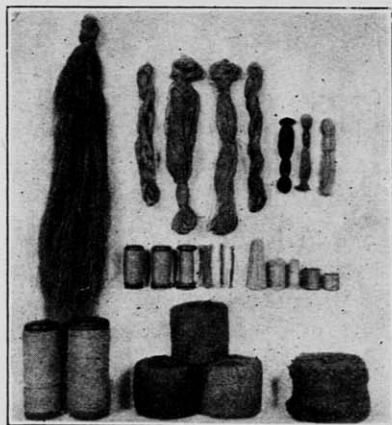
### Hemp Experiments Begun

In 1908 six acres of hemp were grown at Mendota and three acres at Waupun by the Agronomy Department in cooperation with the United States Department of Agriculture. The results were so promising that the investigational work was rapidly increased. At

Waupun in 1911 hemp was grown on land badly infested with quack grass, with the result that a good yield of fiber was obtained and the quack grass was practically destroyed. This and subsequent tests have established hemp as our best smother crop for weeds.

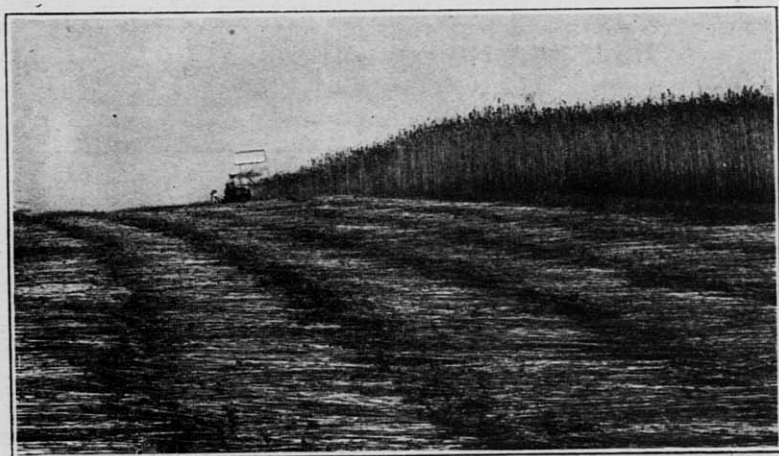
In 1912, 125 acres were grown near Waupun. From this center, the hemp area expanded over the rich prairie soils of Fond du Lac, Green Lake, and Dodge Counties, where during recent years 70% of the U. S. acreage has been produced.

With the expansion of this new industry in Wisconsin sev-



Hemp Fiber And Some Of Its  
Products

eral problems were encountered. There were no satisfactory machines for harvesting, spreading, binding or breaking, as these processes had always been performed by hand. As it was realized from the beginning that no permanent progress could be made so long as it was necessary to depend on hand labor, immediate attention was given to solving the problem of power machinery.



Hemp Field At Harvest Time

Community interest is essential to successful hemp production. One farmer, without the cooperation of his neighbors, will fail. Machinery for handling the crop is expensive, and without machinery little or nothing can be accomplished. To meet this situation the industry was organized into hemp centers, consisting of a hemp mill with enough hemp acreage surrounding to give sufficient volume of production.

#### The Wisconsin Hemp Order

To promote the general welfare of the hemp industry of the state, the Wisconsin Hemp Order was organized in 1917. This is a public association for advancing the industry, and its membership is composed largely of those in the hemp milling business.

The work done by the organization varies from year to year to meet the special needs of the time. At first much attention was given to the growing and field management of the crop. As farm problems were worked out more attention was given to milling and the uses of the fiber.

During the last few years marketing has been given major consideration. A monthly market report is regularly issued which gives detailed information on market prices of hemp and other prin-

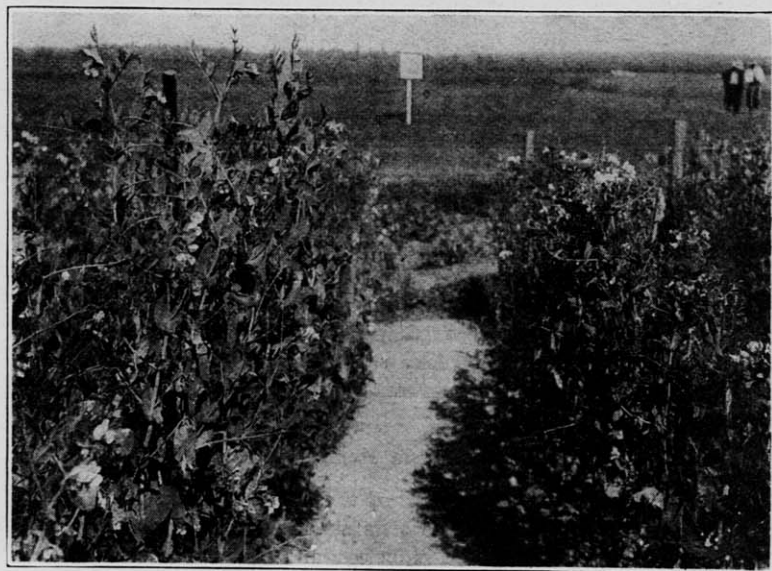
cial fibers, supplies, market trends, crop acreage and condition. In addition, special reports are issued at frequent intervals.

All of these activities have contributed to the welfare of both the growers and the mills. The association has functioned actively and has had a loyal membership since its organization. Its work is greatly appreciated by all those interested in the hemp industry.

### FIELD PEA IMPROVEMENT SAVED A VALUABLE CASH CROP

R. A. Moore

Over a quarter of a century ago Wisconsin became famous for its wonderful soup peas. These peas were largely what were known as the Scotch, the Green and the Canadian Yellow. These peas were grown extensively in all the counties bordering on the lakeshore and



Field Peas On Trial In The Breeding Plots

to some extent in the counties that were farther in the interior of the state. Wisconsin became famous far and near for these wonderful strains of peas, which commanded a much higher rate on the market than those grown in other states. However, there came a time, through the introduction of many varieties, good, bad and indifferent, that our peas got badly mixed and no longer had that uniform time of cooking nor the flavor that they had in previous years.