

The Jerry Dallas Delta Cooperative Farm Collection

Manuscript No.: M209

Inclusive Dates: 1936-1987

Bulk Dates: 1936 – 1987

Volume: .45 cu. Ft.

Biographical/Historical Sketch

Dr. Jerry Dallas, a professor of History at Delta State University, donated this collection to the Delta State Archives. The documents contained in this collection pertain to the establishment of the Delta Cooperative Farm in 1936.

The organization of the Delta Cooperative Farm was an attempt to provide a haven for the abused sharecroppers of Northeastern Arkansas who were being persecuted for their involvement with the Southern Tenant Farmers Union. The Southern Tenant Farmers Union was created in 1934 to promote a more organized form of agriculture. The union was an interracial group concerned with the rights of the black and white underclass in Northeast Arkansas. The nation's plantation system during this time had created a group of impoverished and underprivileged people. The union's goal at the time was to eradicate the social "underclass" so that all the farmers could benefit from the system. The sharecroppers who were a part of the union were eventually evicted. Some individuals that were suspected of having connections with the union were even murdered.

In 1936, Sherwood Eddy launched the Delta cooperative Farm in response to the chaos that was going on in Arkansas. The farm was located near Hillhouse in Bolivar County, Mississippi. Eddy's goal was to apply "Christian ethics to the struggle against social injustices." The farm blossomed during the early months of its existence. Approximately 19 black families and 12 white families resided on the farm when it opened in 1936. Vegetation on the farm was also very abundant during this time. A clinic was soon built on the farm to provide the families with medical attention. The success of the farm would soon come to an end. The "white power structure" was a continuous obstacle for the Delta farmers. Weather conditions were also unfavorable towards the end of the first year. In 1937, the Great Flood delayed cotton planting. In addition, the price of cotton dropped from \$.12 to \$.07 in 1937. The year ended in a huge

deficit. Twenty years later, the remaining two staff members of the farm, Gene Cox and Dr. Minter, were asked to leave the state because they were accused of promoting racial integration. This marked the end of cooperative farming.

Scope and Content:

This collection contains many sources that Dr. Dallas used for his research on cooperative farming in the Delta. There is a book entitled, *Roll the Union on: A Pictorial History of the Southern Tenant Farmers Union*, a booklet pertaining to the early years of the Delta Cooperative Farm, and a guestbook of the Delta Cooperative Farm from 1936-1942 included in this collection. There is also a copy of the Delta Co OP Call Newsletter and a draft of Dr. Dallas's article on cooperative farming in the Delta for the Mississippi Quarterly in 1987. In addition, there are some miscellaneous notes on cooperative farming and some correspondence included as well. There are also notes from Dr. Dallas's interview with Mr. and Mrs. Gene Cox.

Box Inventory

Roll the Union on: A Pictorial History of the Southern Tenant Farmers Union. This book is about the events leading to the formation of the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union.

"Early Years of the Delta Cooperative Farm and the Providence Farm." This booklet is about the establishment of the Delta Cooperative Farm. It lists some of the key individuals that worked on the farm at that time and some of their significant contributions to cooperative farming.

Folder 1: Meeting Minutes, Articles, & Misc. Correspondence

Folder 2: Articles and Correspondence concerning founding of the Delta Cooperative Farm

Folder 3: Guest book

Folder 4: Delta CO-OP Call Newsletter and other Misc. publications concerning the Delta Cooperative Farm

Folder 5: Dr. Dallas's Research and Mississippi Quarterly article