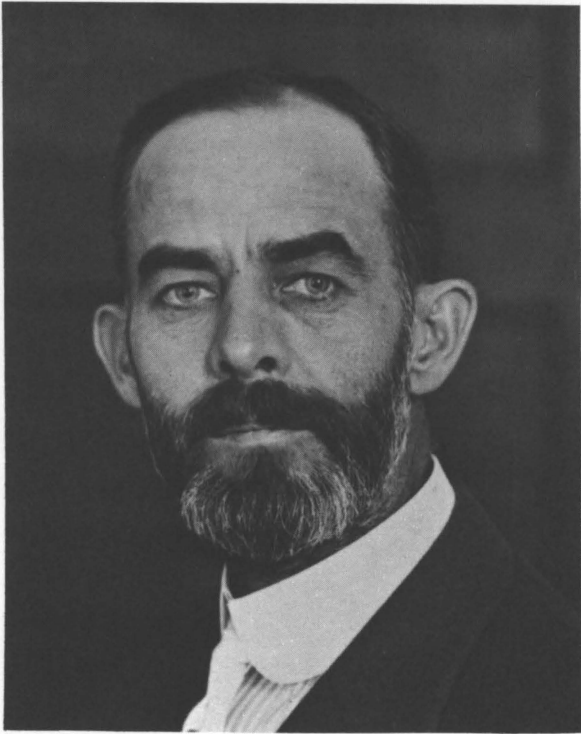


Early Iowa Corn Yield Tests and Related Later Programs



Perry G. Holden in about 1903, when he initiated the corn demonstration tests in Iowa counties as reported here. Credited with being among the first to inbreed corn, the first to be given the title Professor of Agronomy, and the first to organize a State Extension Service in Agriculture and Home Economics, Professor Holden was one of the most magnetic and inspirational leaders in promoting better methods in agricultural production and in community betterment.

Early Iowa Corn Yield Tests and Related Later Programs

Martin L. Mosher



Iowa State University Press, *Ames*, Iowa

The Author

Martin L. Mosher has received numerous awards and citations for his leadership in farm management and agricultural extension work. Notable among these were the USDA Superior Service Award in 1949 for "Especially meritorious service to agriculture through pioneering leadership in farm management extension work ..." and the 1950 annual award from the Illinois Society of Farm Managers and Rural Appraisers for "Keen understanding of farm people and leadership in farm management extension and research work."

Mr. Mosher is author and joint author of many bulletins and magazine articles on seed corn selection and related topics in agriculture. Following his work with early seed corn testing he was selected to serve as the first "county agricultural adviser" (later called "county agent") in Iowa. He served Clinton County in this capacity from 1912 to 1916 when he moved to Woodford County, Illinois, to continue in the same service. Mosher later joined the staff of the University of Illinois where for 25 years he did research and extension work in the farm management department until his retirement.

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Introduction by Henry A. Wallace

IN THE FALL of 1906 I was rooming in the same house at Ames, Iowa, with M. L. Mosher, who was running County Corn Yield Tests at the various County Farms for P. G. Holden, the famous corn evangelist and probably the first person in the world to cross inbred strains of corn. Holden had gotten me interested in corn in 1904, when I had an ear-row corn yield test.

When Mosher asked me to help him weigh up the Story County Yield Test at the County Farm near Nevada, Iowa, I was naturally much interested. I was amazed to find how differently the seed corn furnished by different farmers produced. So were the farmers. When Holden inspired Mosher to test in the field the yielding power of seed from hundreds of different farmers, county by county, he set in motion forces which have changed the yielding power of corn in at least 30 nations.

Mosher went on to become the first Iowa County Agent, in Clinton County in 1912. There he applied the technique he had first learned on the County Farms of Iowa. But not he did the work more carefully and continued it until he found which farmers had the corn with the greatest inborn potentiality to serve Clinton County farmers. Then he went to Woodford County, Illinois, and discovered after three years of trials the world-famous Krug corn. Out of the mental climate which Holden and Mosher developed, grew the Iowa Corn Yield Test, which has now continued for 40 years, and which

perhaps did as much as any single force to demonstrate to Iowa farmers the worthwhileness of hybrid corn.

This unique corn book by M. L. Mosher is vital history. For me it lives in a very personal way because it calls up memories of the wisdom absorbed from M. L. Mosher in the cornfield, as we worked together harvesting and weighing in the field some 50 years ago.

Farvue Farm,
South Salem, New York

Author's Introduction

THIS SUMMARY REPORT of the early corn demonstration work in Iowa initiated by Professor Perry G. Holden — and the later work that grew from it — is offered as a tribute to Professor Holden, in recognition of the great influence he had on all who were privileged to be associated with him.

The first urgent request that I prepare this summary came from M. L. Wilson, formerly Director of the United States Agricultural Extension Service. He and I each made about 180 of the more than 600 talks on the "Seed Corn Specials" run on Iowa railroads in 1905.

Professor Holden was delighted when he learned that the old corn demonstration records were being summarized for publication. All chapters were submitted to him as they were written and several very helpful suggestions came from him. (Professor Holden died in 1959, at the age of 94.)

Others who encouraged me were Henry A. Wallace, Dean Emeritus Ernest Anthony and others of the Michigan State University Corn Foundation, and R. K. Bliss, Murl McDonald, Paul C. Taff and others of my old-time colleagues of the Iowa State University Extension Service.

I was asked to do the job because I had worked more closely with Professor Holden on the seed corn program than had anyone else. Also, I had kept carbon copies of summaries of the County Farm Demonstrations, which I

had prepared in 1912. They were not published, and the originals and all data obtained before 1909 have disappeared.

I am greatly indebted to Professor H. D. Hughes who wrote Chapter 9 of this book, "The Iowa State Corn Yield Test," and who has been otherwise most helpful in the preparation and publication of the manuscript, as well as to R. K. Bliss, Murl McDonald, and Paul C. Taff who also read the manuscript and provided helpful suggestions. I appreciate also the cooperation of the Iowa State University Press in effecting publication.

I realize that work similar to that reported here was being done in several other corn growing states. I have purposely limited this report to the work which P. G. Holden initiated, and to projects that grew directly from this work, with which I am familiar.

Finally, I would acknowledge the help of my wife and children, especially for their patience with me during those years when, as they might well have said, I "worked with, and thought, and dreamed about nothing much but corn."

Martin L. Mosher

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Special Note: Copies of the detailed tables on which the graphs and charts presented here are based are on file in the libraries of Iowa State University, Michigan State University Corn Foundation, and University of Illinois. Also, carbon copies of four manuscripts prepared in 1912, which are referred to in Chapter 1, are on file in the library of Iowa State University. Copies of a diary of the Seed Corn Special Train described in Chapter 11 are also on file in the three libraries.

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