

# RECORDER

## *"If Only The Walls Could Talk"*

### **"The Empty Chair"**

By Denny Esch,  
Historical Society President

Monday, May 11, 2015: It was around 6:15 pm or so and the Historical Society members were starting to gather at the Woelke Center for our monthly meeting.

I sat in my office going over the evening's agenda as well as reading a couple of communications that were in the mail.

One was from the Chuck Leipprandt family, thanking us for the flowers we had sent to the funeral home in memory of Chuck Leipprandt who had passed away since our last meeting.

I couldn't help thinking about all the little things Chuck had done for the Historical Society over the years.

He not only served on our board for a number of years, but was also an active member of the Caseville Historical Society as well.

Chuck was always taking pictures of special events (and even got them developed for all to enjoy) or was telling a story about the planting and harvesting days of years ago.

If we needed a History 101 lesson at a meeting, I just had to turn to Chuck.

As the 6:30 pm meeting start time approached, I gathered up my papers and went to the meeting room. It was a great turn out of members and guests -- we needed to get a couple more chairs from the other room.

At 6:30 sharp, I called the meeting to order with the pledge to the flag followed by thanking all who came out to the meeting.



Chuck Leipprandt

After a couple of short communications I read the Thank You from the Leipprandt family. As I started to reflect my thoughts about Chuck and his love of history, storytelling and music, I looked to where he always sat -- usually the same seat or close (just about like church you know) and no one was in that chair.

I hadn't notice the empty chair before we started.

Others shared their thoughts about Chuck as a man with a smile and a soft heart. He will be truly missed.

At our next meeting, I'm sure someone will sit in that chair... someone who loves history and enjoys telling a story or two... and that is great.

But perhaps that chair -- Chuck's chair -- was not empty that night.

Maybe there was one more History Lesson 101 to be told.

I can't help to think, "If Only the Walls Could Talk."

## **Pigeon Depot Museum Opening May 28th**

A small group of Historical Society volunteers have been very busy this spring working in the depot museum giving our displays of artifacts a new look.

Many of these historical pieces, that have been in storage for too many years, are now on display for public viewing.

"The rooms have been totally changed up," says President Denny Esch.

"This is something the Society has wanted to do for a long time. It will be a continual working project throughout the summer, and into the future."

Special thanks to Society Members: Ardra, Lois, Joyce, Jean, Ken, Randy and Clayt for all the work they put into the museum this spring. Their efforts are appreciated and will make your visit much more interesting.

### **Pigeon Depot Museum and Woelke Research Center Hours**

Thursdays and Fridays, 10 am - 3 pm

Saturdays, 10 am - 1 pm

Special Open Request Call 989-453-2143

## **A Bird, A Village, and the Name They Share**

Most know how the Village of Pigeon got its name. But the real story showed a dark side to man's propensity for capital.

It was reported that when Passenger Pigeons were traveling through Michigan, their flocks were sometimes forty miles in length and often three to ten miles wide.

One of their last great nesting places was near Petoskey, Michigan somewhere around 1878.

There they were seen to feed and nest in an area that covered over 100,000 acres. It was thought that the extinction of such a huge number of birds was impossible.

How did it happen?

The Native Americans certainly killed these birds in huge numbers, but there was no market for the birds in those days. Their role in the slaughter was strictly for sustenance.

These Indians would dry and smoke the breasts and process out the fat which was used as butter and the flesh was then eaten.

Records show that in several Indian towns in the upper Midwest, over one hundred gallons of pigeon fat was preserved for each household.

It was not until the market demand for the birds that was created by the whites that the flocks were ever seriously affected. Once the market was established the whites armed themselves with guns, clubs, stones, poles and nets to capture and kill

the birds. The net was by far the most destructive implement.

Grain was used to bait the nets then fine shot was leveled at them with shotguns.

One historical recording stated that a hunter killed seventy-one birds with one shot.

Buyers in New York and Chicago accepted hundreds of barrels of birds per day for years.

And the decline in their numbers began.

With the expansion of the railroads and the invention of the telegraph, the netters could follow the flocks and their occupation became more stable.

In the off season, these hunters netted and shot millions of wild ducks and geese as well.

By 1881, the Michigan pigeon flock had flown north into Canada where it was thought that the extreme climate added to their demise.

The persecution of man had done its job and no legislation ever surfaced that would have given this creature a chance at survival.

So, is the Passenger Pigeon really extinct?

Some scientists at the University of California Berkley don't think so.

In fact, they believe the bird could make a comeback once cloning of that species is perfected.

We'll see what they develop. But it's almost a sure bet that a forty mile long flock of these birds will never be seen again.

**PIGEON HISTORICAL SOCIETY**  
P.O. Box 523 • Pigeon, Michigan 48755  
989-453-3242

Denny Esch, President  
Clayton Esch, Vice President  
Duane Wurst, Secretary  
David Eichler, Treasurer  
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Randy Ovcen • Ardra Schaaf  
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Regular Meetings:  
*Second Monday of the month at 6:30 p.m.*  
Board Meetings  
*Fourth Monday of the month at 6:30 p.m.*  
Meeting Location  
*Woelke Historical Research Center.*

# Coop Elevator Celebrates 100 Years of Service

If the organizers of the Cooperative Elevator Company could return today to see the result of the actions they took over 100 years ago, they wouldn't believe what has evolved.

In 1915, the original purpose of the Cooperative was to unify efforts of its' members in buying needed farm supplies and selling their grain and dry beans.

From this noble, unselfish purpose, the giant cooperative exists today.

Before we get ahead of our story, let's go back to the very beginning.

In 1897, six years before Pigeon was incorporated, three enterprising businessmen – J.W. Leipprandt, E.C. Leipprandt and Fred Reithel – built the Pigeon Milling Co. at a cost of \$10,000.00. They began selling "White Rose Flour."

Over the next 18 years, the business expanded to include navy bean processing.

In October of 1913, a committee began to solicit stock in the amount of \$50,000.00. On December 6, 1914, the announcement was made to purchase the facilities of the Pigeon Milling Co. for \$22,500.

The Cooperative was subsequently officially formed on November 26, 1915.



## Check out the special Coop Timeline insert in this issue!

The Cooperative was undercapitalized and struggled for a few years. Then, in 1918, Henry Clabuesch was appointed Manager, serving for the next 21 years. Under his leadership the Cooperative grew steadily, even during the depression years of 1930 to 1935.

In 1939, Alfred Roberts, Mr. Clabuesch's assistant, was appointed Manager.

In the transition from wood and coal to fuel oil

for heat and horsepower, the members of the Cooperative entered the fuel business. A service station was built in 1939, and delivery trucks were purchased to accommodate farm delivery. Tire and vehicle service became a necessity as well.

As members of the Cooperative began to produce more navy beans, facilities were added to process and ship them to canners and packagers throughout the U.S. and England.

Eventually, Pigeon became known as the "Navy Bean Capital of the World."

In the 1940s, supplemental fertilizer was becoming a necessary ingredient for maximum crop production. Originally handled in 120 lb. cloth sacks, cheaper 80 lb. paper bags gave way to bulk handling in the 1950s. Common analysis of early fertilizers might be 2-12-6 or 0-14-7.

A feed mill was part of the Cooperative from the earliest days to provide feed services to the patrons.

In 1954, a modern feed mill was constructed. That facility is still being utilized to manufacture feed for the area livestock producers.

In 1980, the first expansion beyond Pigeon occurred. That year farmers grew black beans under contract to ship to Mexico.

This expansion has seen the purchase of many local facilities and continues today.

As farms grew larger and the service area spread, the number of stockholders remained fairly constant at 1,000. The Board of Directors was increased from five to seven to include representation from the expansion areas.

Many dedicated farmers have served on the Board of Directors of the Cooperative throughout its existence. They gave unselfishly of their time in order to see their goals realized. The purpose of the cooperative has always been the same by working together and pooling resources they could accomplish much more than working individually. Hence the motto: "In Unity There is Strength."

The leadership and vision of many hundreds of employees has contributed to a very successful agribusiness.

None of us know what changes will come in the next decade or century.

Judging by the first 100 years, it is a good bet that it will continue to grow to meet the needs that the stockholders and members will require.

Congratulations Coop Elevator on a century of successful service. We're glad you're part of Pigeon unique history!

*Excerpts from the Pigeon Centennial Book*

## A kid growing up on Saginaw Bay

# Will the boy ever learn his lesson?

Part 5 in a series, by Jim Leinbach

Time passed for the boy who survived the storm on the Middle Grounds and one would think this kid would have been a bit gun-shy of the big water but that was not the case with him. In an era of comic books and little TV sets and no computers, the kid found his entertainment in hunting and fishing the bay and that included the winter season as well. He was sixteen now and owned a 1941 Ford complete with a broken front spring, no muffler and no heater. The old flathead would start on the coldest days and the bald tires were for spinning circles on the icy roads not for traction. Areas previously too distant to explore were now open to him and school and home were very low priorities. His buddies in Caseville shared the same attitudes and the "crew," as they called themselves, made Huron County their playground.

In those days, the north shore of Sand Point was not filled with regal homes and summer mansions. A few, small frame and block cottages were on the shore and in between those were many stretches of vacant lots with towering red oaks and blueberries galore. Public access to the beach was an accepted fact and many farm and town folks escaped there in the summer to have a cook-out, swim, and enjoy its beautiful, sandy shore and cool breeze. However, the coming of winter changed this paradise into an Arctic wasteland. Huge ice flows and snow drifts would pile up on the north side of the point and few people ventured down Crescent Beach Road which was often closed with deep drifts. But to this young

kid who knew the perch fishing was outstanding just off the shore, these natural occurrences were no obstacles.

About two hundred yards out from the beach and beyond the sand bars was a drop-off where the water went abruptly from two or three feet deep to almost ten feet. During most of the winter the ice in this area was safe and solid out to the drop-off, but beyond there the wind and currents created an almost constant movement of the ice. The thickness of the ice out there varied from day to day or sometimes from hour to hour depending on the direction of the wind. This wind factor also caused a huge ice mountain to form along the drop-off. This mountain ran parallel to the shore from the tip of Sand Point almost to Caseville and at times was ten or twelve feet high. On the north side of the mountain a large crack, sometimes two feet wide, was always at its base. This crack also ran parallel to the shore, and to get to the good fishing on the other side a fisherman would have to find a safe passage across it. On some days when the wind was down and the

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You can also find all editions of *The Recorder* on our website: [PigeonHistoricalSociety.com](http://PigeonHistoricalSociety.com).

Don't miss a single edition of your favorite newsletter!



## Looking for something to do?

Throughout the year (especially during summer months), the Pigeon Historical Society needs volunteers

**HELP  
WANTED**

to help with the projects of this rapidly growing organization.

Dedicated volunteers

are key to the success of any community group and you can help us keep up the momentum we've experienced in the past few years.

Do you have a few hours to attend to the museum so it can be open to the public or perhaps enter information into our archive database?

Maybe you could help distribute our newsletter around the commu-

nity or research historical information for our website and Facebook page.

Brainstorming ideas and sharing your comments or suggestions are important to the entire group.

Fund-raising is always a major need and assistance with ideas and workers for various events would be welcomed.

Don't think that you don't have anything to contribute, because you do -- We Need Your Help!

If you'd like to volunteer, just come to one of our meetings on the second or fourth Mondays of the month at the Woelke Historical Research Center (behind the Village Hall); or call Vice-President Clayton Esch at 989-453-2143.

## Paragon Cylinder Washer



**Times Have  
Changed**

Originally Published  
May 3, 1907  
Pigeon Progress

## We Guarantee that The 'Paragon' will Wash

Anything without previous soaking or any Boiling; there is no need of using chemicals, only SOAP and WATER With least amount of water.

Anything from the finest linen and lace curtains to the heaviest blankets and carpets, without the slightest injury so even the most delicate fabrics.

Up to 25 pieces within 8 to 12 minutes, better and cleaner than by the harsh, slow and tiresome rub-board method.

Call and let us show you  
"The Paragon."

**E. W. E. BUNDSCHO,**

(The Store with the Acorn Sign.)

**PIGEON.**

**MICH.**

## From the Artifact Collection



### Antique Cobbler's Sewing Machine

Years ago, before we lived in a world where everything was disposable, cobblers -- shoe repairmen -- would use a machine like this to replace the sole of shoes and boots. Often the cobbler would make repairs on horse harnesses and other leather goods in his spare time. This, and many other uniquely historical pieces can be seen at the Pigeon Historical Depot Museum.

### Weird Recipes: Crock Pot Coon

*This recipe will satisfy wild game aficionados.*

First, obtain a dead coon. Road kill is fine or shoot one yourself on your next evening pleasure drive. Remove all the skin and entrails from the coon taking care to remove the scent glands found under the forelegs and along the spine toward the small of its back. Be careful you don't puncture the glands.

Next, remove all the fat from the coon especially that which extends in layers between its muscles. Now wash the coon, place it in a large pot and parboil it for an hour and a half. Add a tablespoon of black pepper, one of baking soda and two bottles of beer to the boil.

Remove the coon, dry it, put it in a paper bag and refrigerate it overnight.

Next day, cut the coon into quarters and place it in a crock pot. Add one-half cup honey, one cup chicken broth, a cup of vinegar, a cup of Schnapps, a quarter cup of soy sauce and some garlic salt. Potatoes and vegetables may be added to the crock as well.

Cook for eight hours, serve with inexpensive red wine (Boones Farm will do) and enjoy!!



## Depot Museum opens with new summertime displays



NEW DISPLAYS include, far left, farm house kitchen with woodstove, and hand "washing machine;" above, train depot equipment and uniforms; left, antique radios, phonographs and a television.

KID, Continued from page 2

weather really cold the crack would freeze and one could walk right across it safely. But as we know the wind in our area seldom stays calm for long and this constant change sometimes caused the crack to open and close abruptly.

Our young fisherman was an outdoorsman, and being sixteen he was confident in his knowledge of the changing weather and ice behavior. In fact, he was confident to the point of arrogance. His reasoning was that the water was shallow in the area of the ice mountain and the crack that opened and closed with the wind required a minimal amount of caution. On most trips out to the drop-off the kid could toss his ice sled and gear over the crack if it was open and then take a running leap to the other side. Other days allowed him to walk across the crack which had developed an inch or two of ice on top overnight. The young man did on a couple of occasions drag some wooden planks behind his sled to be used as a bridge but seldom did he retrieve these planks on his return to the shore and blowing snow soon covered them out of sight.

Just on the northwest side of the ice mountain the water became significantly deeper and the current much stronger. This flow ice had to be carefully accessed for in one spot there might be twelve inches of ice underfoot and in a couple of steps only a half-inch of skin existed. Sadly, our boy's memory of disaster and his survivor's caution had eroded over the past few years and being sixteen his mind was often filled with issues other than ice conditions.

The Saturday of his adventure began with a hard southwest wind sustained at around fifteen

miles an hour. Snow was falling heavily and the ride down the Point's sandy road meant breaking drifts with the old Ford and at one point the kid had to get out and shovel open a particularly deep one to continue on. Weeks before the boy had dragged behind his car and out to his spot a large, wooden shanty he had built in his yard at home. Now, the shanty was sitting on the hard, smooth ice close to shore and only had to be wrestled the hundred yards or so past the ice mountain to be right where the perch were the thickest. Strong and agile the kid had no problem getting the big box out to the mountain then up and over to the flow ice on the other side. This day the crack at that spot appeared frozen solid and once over it

the shelter and the fisherman ventured out onto a different looking terrain. Boulder-like chunks of ice protruded up from the frozen bay every foot or so and walking and maneuvering the shanty became much more difficult. At one spot, water seeped up between the ice chunks and this area had to be avoided entirely. But on the kid went.

Finally, after venturing out only fifty or so feet past the mountain the kid chose his location and began the chore of creating a fishing hole with his heavy, iron spud. Yes, it was windy and cold with lots of blowing snow but this spot always yielded plenty of perch despite the weather conditions. He anticipated a great day on the bay.

NEXT: The Wind Shifts

## We'd love to see you on our Team!

An individual or business can become a member by contracting any active member or by sending your tax deductible cash or check to Pigeon Historical Society, 59 S. Main St. / P. O. Box 523, Pigeon, MI 48755. Dues are renewed at the annual meeting each year.

- Individual Membership: \$10.00 (active member with voting privileges)
- Life Membership: \$120.00 (active voting member with lifetime privileges)
- Supporting Membership: \$15.00 (non-active supporting member)
- Business Membership: \$20.00 or more (contributing member non-voting)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

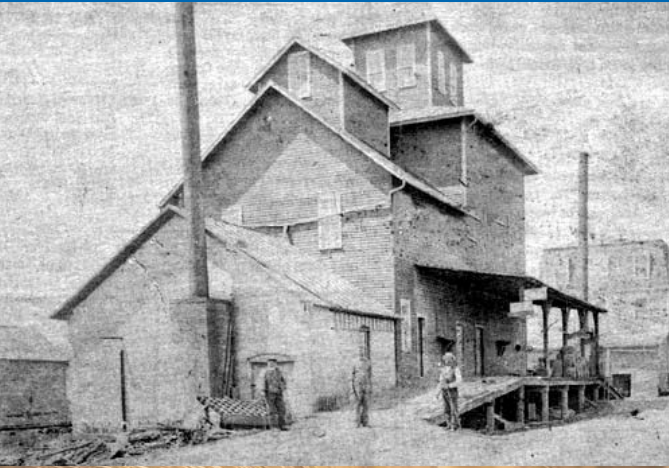
Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

*Everyone is welcome to attend our meetings. Be our guest and become a member!*

**THE PURPOSE OF THIS SOCIETY** shall be to discover, collect and preserve any material which may help to establish or illustrate the history of the Pigeon Community and surrounding region, as well as provide accessibility to the collected material for all who wish to examine or study it. The Society will also disseminate historical information to promote interest in the history of the Pigeon Community.



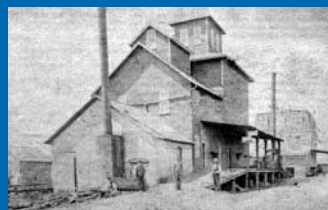
In Unity There Is Strength

# Cooperative Elevator Co.

# TIME LINE

**Cooperative Elevator Co.** has branches in:  
Akron, Bad Axe, Deckerville East, Deckerville  
West, Elkton, Fairgrove, Gagetown, Jeddo,  
North Branch, Pigeon, Ruth, Sebawaing, and  
Larimore, North Dakota





**1915**

An early photo



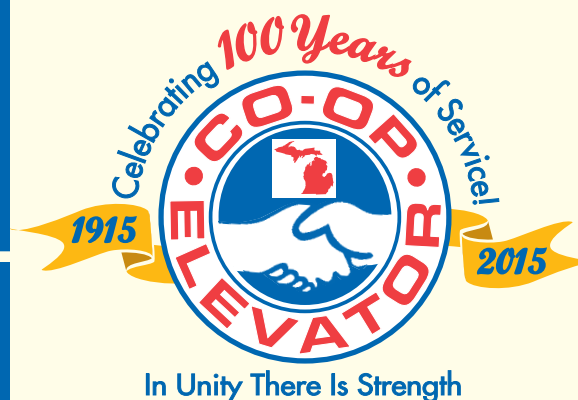
**1930**

Our two-pump  
gas station



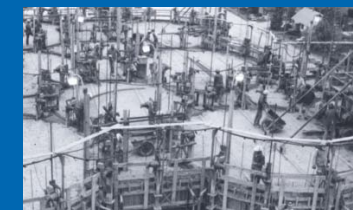
**1938**

The Coop ships  
11 railcars of grain



**1939**

Super Service Station  
in Pigeon



**1978**

Silo construction



**1995**

The Coop hosts a BBQ  
for our patrons

**1897** Six years before the village of Pigeon was incorporated three businessmen, J.W. Leipprandt, E.C. Leipprandt and Fred Reithel, formed the Pigeon Milling Co.

**1898** The Pigeon Milling Company constructed a flour mill spending \$10,000.00. The mill was next to the rail siding set back from East Michigan Ave. They began operations by selling their brand called "White Rose Flour". During the next 17 years they milled wheat and expanded into navy bean processing.

**1913** The Pigeon Milling Company employs 50 women to pick beans in their processing operations. They were paid \$5.00 to \$10.00 per week depending on time on the job.

**1913** A group of farmers formed a committee consisting of James Foster, George Zpfaff and Jacob Geiger to organize and solicit a stock offering amounting to \$50,000.00. The stock solicitation was accomplished over a two year period.

**1914** On December 6th an official announcement was made by the committee to purchase the Pigeon Milling Company for \$22,500.00.

**1915** November 26th the stockholders consisting of farmers in the area formed the Cooperative Association purchasing the buildings and land of the Pigeon Milling Company for \$25,000.00. The first board members were: John Ullrich, Fred Fisher, John Yackle, Chris Ropp and Harry Warren. Elevator storage capacity at the time was 30,000 bushels.

**1916** Difficult years for the Coop start up occurred during the years of 1916 to 1918 due to under capitalization. The milling operations was their main area of business plus providing feed services to its patrons. They also supplied coal and kerosene.

**1918** The appointment of Henry Clabuesch as the new General Manager brings new skills to the organization. He serves in this capacity for the next 21 years.

**1930** The Cooperative ventures into the fuel oil business and also opens a small two pump gas station as the internal combustion engine for automobiles and farm tractors were here to stay. Sales volume this year from oil and gas \$14,500.00.

**1930s** The beginning of the Great Depression, continuing through 1935. Mr. Alfred Roberts is an assistant to Mr. H. Clabuesch. The Cooperative has steady growth, even during the Depression.

**1936** Construction of a new elevator building begins in front of the milling operations. Dry beans are becoming a reliable crop and more acreage is in production.

**1937** Another addition is built onto the new elevator building.

**1938** On August 4th of this year, the Coop completes a shipment of grain filling eleven railcars.

**1939** Henry Clabuesch steps down as General Manager after 21 years of service. Alfred Roberts, who had been the bookkeeper for 13 years, is now appointed the new G.M. It is at this time the company

decides to build a Super Service Station providing gasoline, tires, fuel oil and repair services. Delivery trucks were also purchased to service the farmer's needs.

**1940** At this time supplemental fertilizer was becoming necessary to insure better crop yields. Fertilizer was original packaged in 120# cloth sacks.

#### **1940s THE WAR YEARS!**

During the war the navy bean was in great demand to provide food in the war effort. At the Pigeon Cooperative 40 women were active pickers of No. 1 grade beans for canning purposes. Beans from the Thumb region were canned and sent to our fighting men overseas and to our British and Russian allies. Bean pickers could each sort about 500 lbs. of beans per day shift. The quality of the best bean was determined by being large, firm and its shimmering whiteness.

**1950** The first concrete silos were built across the street from the original site of the milling operations. These were the first continuous poured concrete structure silos. The capacity of these silos is 160,000 bushels. Note: there will be many more silos of this design built over the coming years.

**1950s** 80# bags of fertilizers give way to bulk handling of fertilizer.

**1954** A new feed milling plant was constructed.

**1956** A new corn handling facility was constructed this year. Elevator capacity is now 260,000 bushels. At this time corn was the leading cash crop.

**1957** Bulk fertilizer operations are expanded adding anhydrous ammonia service.

**1958** Additional grain and dry bean handling facilities are added.

**1961** An addition to the corn plant increases elevator capacity to 300,000 bushels. Also more grain and dry bean handling facilities are added.

**1962** The Cooperative this year had gross sales of \$2,000,000.00 serving 1,200 patrons.

**1963** More concrete silos are added bringing elevator capacity to 430,000 bushels.

**1965** The Coop is now celebrating its 50 year anniversary. One of its achievements over the years to benefit patrons would be cash payments of over \$1,500,000.00 and more than \$865,000.00 in retained dividends to invest in facilities. Also, construction starts for a new bulk petroleum plant and tire warehouse. Sales volume from gas and petroleum products \$750,000.00. The company now has 40 employees.

**1966** Construction of a bean processing plant with storage on Berne Street. The company now ships over 500 railcars filled with beans, wheat and corn. The Coop has 27 silos with storage capacity of 700,000 bushels.

**1967** Al Roberts retires after 40 years of service, 28 years as General Manager. Norman Schulze becomes G.M. Additional bean storage at Berne Street location is added bringing capacity to 950,000 bushels.

**1972** New administration offices and farm store built on south side of East Michigan Ave. across from gas station.

**1974** Norman Schulze, G.M. retires and Ted Leipprandt becomes the new G.M.

**1975** Construction of a bulk fertilizer blending plant begins. Also the addition of a high capacity corn and wheat facility.

**1976** Building of a new grain plant plus improved loading facilities for the unit trains. Total elevator capacity is now at 1.6 million bushels.

**1977** Added more storage to grain plant. Coop can now receive 30,000 bushels of grain per hour. Also it can dry 100,000 bushels of high moisture corn per day. The Coop now ships more navy beans than any single processor in the State of Michigan. This year the Cooperative sales exceed \$17,000,000.00 having handled over 10% of all navy beans sold in Michigan. The Coop now has storage capacity of 2 million bushels.

**1978** This year the Coop has 52 employees and 1,500 stockholders. Coop Elevator Co. annual sales approach \$19 million dollars. \$12 million was paid to farmers for grain and beans. \$700,000.00 was paid in wages for employees. In July a 65 car unit train from Baltimore, MD came to Pigeon. During the week of July 12th 6,200 tons of corn were loaded in these cars equal to 215,000 bushels. When loaded the unit train returned to Baltimore for

grain export to other countries. Construction began on 3 steel storage tanks bringing capacity to 2.8 million bushels.

**1980** New construction of drying facilities and building more storage tanks. This year our patrons under contract grew black beans for shipments to Mexico. More bean storage and processing facilities in planning stage. The Coop now has 58 employees. Elevator capacity 3.4 million bushels.

**1981** At Pigeon, new plant construction for dry beans. The plant will handle several varieties of dry beans including black beans. New plant has additional receiving stations and storage. Coop storage capacity at 3.8 million bushels.

**1981** Acquisition and renovation of the Akron Elevator operations. Adding 100,000 bushels of capacity to the Cooperative.

**1982** Construction at Pigeon of 4 large steel storage tanks bringing capacity to 5.4 million bushels.

**1983** Acquisition of the Thumb Terminal east of Elkton offers new opportunities in addition receiving stations and storage capacity. This year capacity at 6.5 million bushels.

**1983** Construction of concrete silos at Elkton Plant brings storage to 7.5 million bushels.

**1985** The Sebewaing Farmers Coop and Coop Elevator Co. merge. Note: As farms became larger and the Coop services are expanded our stockholder base is now slightly over one thousand. The employee count is now 59. Storage capacity 8,200,000 bushels.





1975 – Elevator and Gas in Pigeon

**1986** Construction of 3 concrete domes at the Elkton site bringing over all capacity to 10,150,000 bushels. The Board of Directors now increased from 5 to 7 members due to the expansion of areas served.

**1987** Ted Leipprandt served as General Manager for 13 years and now retires. John Kohr now becomes CEO. John Kohr forms a Marketing Department and asks Ted Leipprandt to head up this operation. Ted stays on until 1995.

**1988** The acquisition of the Gagetown fertilizer plant.

**1988** At Elkton the construction of the Specialty Feed Plant.

**1990** Elkton Co-op Farm Produce Co. unifies with Coop Elevator Co. bringing storage capacity to 11,150,000 bushels.

**1994** At Akron plant 3 steel bins added to operations. New capacity 12.1 million bushels.

**1995** With our acquisitions we now have 98 employees.

**1996** The Coop merges with Ruth Farmers Elevator. The company adds 2 additional members to the board (9 members). The Coop now reaches the 100 employee level with the Ruth merger. Capacity now 13.6 million bushels.

**1998** At Elkton Navy Bean Plant constructed. Added capacity 14.1 million bushels.

**2000** Acquisitions of Bad Axe, Elkton and Fairgrove fertilizer plants. Also steel bins added to Color Bean Plant. The employee head count is now 199. Capacity now at 14.3 million bushels.

**2001** John Kohr served as CEO from 1987 and resigns this year.

## COOPERATIVE ELEVATOR CO.

### VISION

**We develop  
long-term relationships  
with customers and the community  
that exceed  
their business expectations.**

### MISSION

**We provide quality service,  
products, and markets  
to enhance the value of the  
Cooperative.**

Coop gross sales exceed \$110,000,000.00 this year. Burt Keefer is now CEO. The Coop has 1,200 stockholders and 210 employees. At Ruth, a steel bin is added. Capacity increases to 14.8 million bushels. Note: The customer base is the same number as served in 1962. The incredible difference is the farmers in the 1960s were working 300 to 500 acres. Today they are working 3,000 to 5,000 acre farms.

**2003** The Coop at this time is now the largest grain, feed and bean processing company in Michigan. It also ranks high throughout the United States. In September Pat Anderson becomes the interim CEO. She serves with a 9 member board, and continues on as CEO.

**2005** Coop Quality Feeds Inc. is formed. The Coop joins forces with Kalmbach Feeds Inc. The employee count is now 170.

**2007** At Akron a steel bin is added. Capacity now at 15,475,000 bushels.

**2008** At Ruth a steel bin is added. Capacity at 16 million bushels.



**In Unity There Is Strength**

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1995 – Domes in Elkton

**2009** Acquisition of North Branch plant. Also added a steel bin to Ruth operations. Total capacity 17,223,000 bushels.

**2011** At Akron site a steel bin is added. Elevator capacity now 17,953,000 bushels.

**2012** At Elkton a second scale, a 300,000 bu. concrete wet bin and a 1,000,000 bu. steel bin are added at the terminal bringing total capacity to 19,279,000.

**2013** The Coop serves 1,110 patrons this year. Cash payouts to patrons \$4.2 million. Receiving stations added at Birch Run and Deckerville-East. A second scale was added at Ruth also a 769,000 bushel bin and a dry pit plus a new rail load out system. Receiving speed increased at Deckerville West and a new 574,000 bushel steel bin added at North Branch. Storage capacity 19.9 million bushels.

**2014** The Coop has 153 employees. During the summer months at Elkton, a 9,000 ton fertilizer dome was added to the two existing fertilizer domes. Also an upgraded dust system was added at Ruth. At Elkton an additional dryer was installed. At the Elkton terminal we now have an additional 30,000 bushel per hour pit capacity. This positions us to be the fastest and most efficient state-of-the-art plant in the Thumb. At Akron, a new 40,000 bushel per hour rail load out system was added. Current grain storage capacity is 21,244,000 bushels. Our petroleum products division added a new 4,200 gallon, bulk fuel delivery truck. We now have 1,115 Michigan farm patrons being served.

**2015** The story continues... \$10,000,000.00 is approved for capital expenditures.