

FROM YOUR STATE REPRESENTATIVE

“FEUDIN’ FARMERS” IN BRUNSWICK DREW NATIONAL ATTENTION AND STATEWIDE REFORM

By: State Representative, STEVE HAMBLEY



—(AP Wirephoto,)
With a billboard advertising the county as “the home of the garbage-fed hog” and “a garbage dumping ground,” a Medina, Ohio, estate owner Thursday protested against the odors of a nearby pig farm. He posted the man with the shotgun to see no one molested the sign.



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correct the problem by other means, commenting, “It casts an improper reflection on the whole county of Medina. The wording on it has not added to your prestige.”

Within one month of nationwide press coverage, the Ohio Public Health Council conducted a hearing in Columbus on the matter. They ordered the Health District to decide one way or the other if the hog farm was operating as a public nuisance. Although R.E. Snedden, Medina County Prosecutor had advised the Medina board that they were not legally required to make a decision, the Council however, threatened state action. On March 31st, the Health Board with the support of health commissioner, Dr. Irvin B. Kievit ruled 3-2 that it was not a public nuisance. Kievit stated that the repulsive odor of the hog farm “could not be declared a health menace or factories, manufacturing rubber goods, chemicals, and other commodities would come under the same classification.” (Akron Beacon Journal, March 30, 1939)

In the first half of the 20th century the garbage coming out of our cities was almost entirely food waste. Most major cities since the 1910’s had

established relationships with country farms for the regular disposal of their garbage. The US Public Health Service so-called “G-Men of Science” started warning in the 1930’s that garbage feeding without controls constituted a major public health risk. Consequently, farmers, cities and public health officials started to battle over problems with garbage fed livestock and the “fuedin’ farmers” of Brunswick were part of a bigger battle.

A court injunction against continued dumping at the Brunswick pig farm also prompted further local action. With the entrance of new member Dr. R.L. Mansell from Wadsworth and a turnaround by Seville village representative Roy Chambers, the Medina County Health Board revisited the issue. On June 6th, the Health Board reversed itself by a vote of 4-1, declaring that the garbage-fed pig farm was a public nuisance and that Harper had 90 days to abate the problem. They also accepted the resignation of Commissioner Kievit, following a public request to tender one because of “gross neglect of duty.”

The future site of scenic Mapleside Farms is a notable and historic landmark to great

changes in public sanitation. Citizens like Elmer Eysen as well as local officials forced the issue. While it was upsetting to the civic and commercial community, Eysen’s tactics heralded changes in leadership and the rural mindset of the community. Meantime, the incident has been long forgotten and that part of the county has enjoyed a close relationship with commercial agritourism. Had the Eysen’s exercise of their constitutional rights not made such a public impact – embarrassing or not – maybe the garbage-fed hog and garbage disposal methods would have prevailed awhile longer. The sights, sounds and smells of the farm that is now Medina’s Number 1 tourist attraction is quite an improvement over that of 1939, thanks to public pressure and a little nationwide publicity.

Billboards welcoming people to Medina County have not typically included an overall-clad shotgun-toting sentry. Just as rare is a 32 ft by 8 ft illuminated sign warning visitors that they were entering the “home of the garbage-fed hog, the garbage dumping ground for Cuyahoga County.” The sign was erected on a 100-acre property along US 42 in Brunswick Township in January of 1939. It belonged to vice president of a Cleveland hardware firm and described by his rural neighbors as a “gentlemen” farmer, Elmer Eysen. Yes, the future site of the Number 1 tourist attraction of Medina County, Mapleside Farms.

The distinctive signage had the support of many residents neighboring the 250-acre hog farm. They were offended by the foul-smelling 1,500 hogs being supplied 30 tons of garbage daily from Cleveland and Cleveland Heights starting in 1938. The Medina Health Commissioner and majority of the Health District board had originally sided with the farmer. “Pigs is pigs and this country around here is strictly farm land,” explained farmer Frank H. Harper. Originally dismissing the complaints, the inaction prompted the billboard, armed guard, public embarrassment and nationwide attention. The Medina Gazette publicly counseled Eysen to



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