

William A. Sellers - Central Square

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**Based on the booklet written by Jim Hurley at
the G.L.F. Department of Public Relations and Information**

For 35 years, William "Bill" A. Sellers served area farmers as a Cooperative Grange League Federation Exchange, Inc., better known as "G.L.F.", a farmer's co-op that started in the 1920's. Bill Sellers was one of the original salesmen.

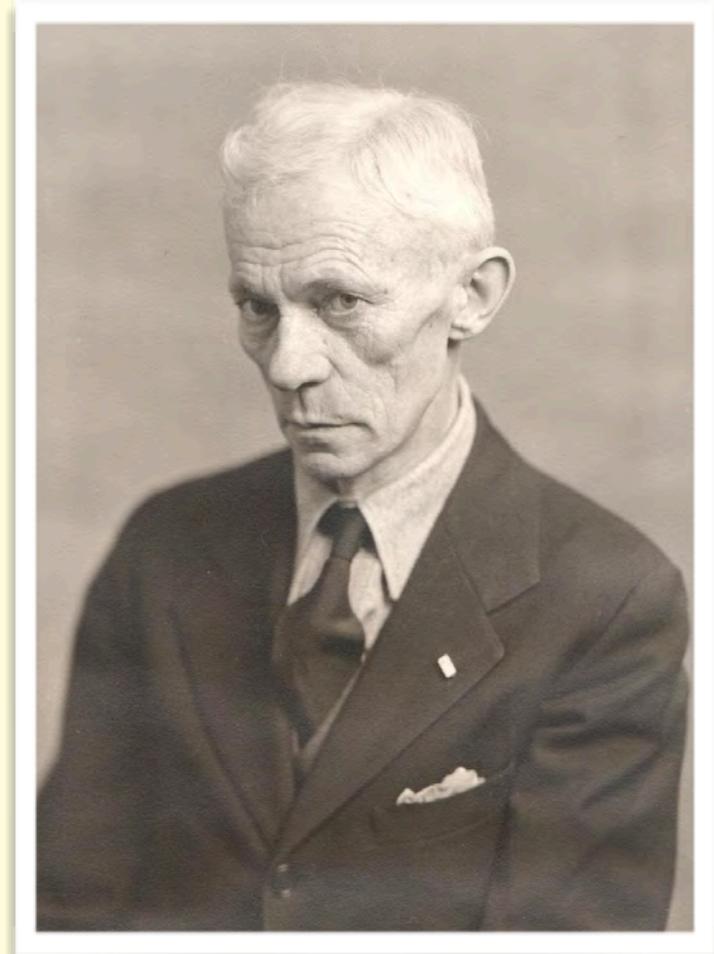
Bill was born on July 10, 1885, and raised Brooklyn and after leaving school, he made \$3 a week as an office boy in a company that made ice boxes. He eventually transferred into the shop and was made foreman's assistant which qualified him as a repairman, installing ice boxes.

Bill began to feel unsatisfied and decided to continue his education by enrolling in a secretarial course at the old Woods Business School in New York City. He knew he wanted to develop a business, but not in the city.

Encouraged by his friends, Bill became a teacher. He earned his teaching certificate by scoring an 87% on a two-day state regents examination...all that was needed to become a teacher in 1907!

Hearing that West Monroe, a rural community, was looking for a teacher, Bill applied and was accepted.

During his summer vacations, Bill worked ten hours a day as a farm hand, earning just \$1 a day. It was a wide awakening for him, for as a teacher, he was earning \$10 a week. But, he learned first hand many of the problems farmers faced.



Bill Sellers
July 10, 1885 - November 29, 1956

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Two years later, he got a job in Central Square, a rural community in Oswego County. After seven years at Central Square he was named principal. However, he was dismissed three years later because the school board feared he would soon be drafted into World War 1.

The war ended before Bill was drafted. While he loved Central Square and its people, he was out of a job.

Determined to stay in Central Square, he found a job selling off damaged railroad freight. Over two years, he was sold everything from raisins to bent bathtubs, \$34,000 worth of goods.

Local farmers were growing dissatisfied with the cost of feed for their dairy farms. Talk of creating a farmer-owned cooperative to purchase quality feed at better prices.

G.L.F. was in its infancy at this time and Bill went to an organizational meeting in Syracuse. Bill believed in the G.L.F. and that it was in the best interest for the farmers so he took a stock book. At the time, he was a secretary at the Dairyman's League. With his connections at the Dairyman's League, he sold \$3,000 worth of stock. Five people, including Bill, purchased G.L.F. stock for \$100. The other \$2,500 came from \$5, \$10, \$25 purchases of stock.

Bill went farm to farm selling feed and selling G.L.F. By 1925, the competing feed store told him, "Bill, you've got all the business around here, you might as well buy my place." So, Bill purchased business and the G.L.F. had a place of operations in Central Square and expanded into a farm supply store.

In addition to over 35 years of service with the G.L.F. in Central Square, Bill also served as the town supervisor, and fire chief



The Agway building on the right was the G.L.F. in Central Square owned by Bill Sellers. Photograph used with permission by Village of Central Square Historical Society.



The Agway building was the G.L.F. in Central Square owned by Bill Sellers. Photograph used with permission by Village of Central Square Historical Society.

from 1928 to 1943. He conducted the village band that played for church benefits and Saturday night concerts in the village square.

He was a well-liked member of Central Square. Charles Loren had a farm on Townline Road and was one of Bill's first customers. Loren said, "There's no better man to do business with than Bill Seller."

Carlton Spooner, with 82 milk cows on his 256 acre farm was one of Bill's biggest customers. Spooner said of Bill Sellers, "I've never had a man treat me nicer than Bill Seller. I've never had to worry about service with Bill Seller. The feed is always here when it's needed."

John Fuller was another of Bill's first customers. Fuller tells of the time Bill unloaded feed in his store even though Bill had an injured finger. Fuller jumped in to help Bill unload the feed and Bill wanted to pay him for his help. Fuller declined. About a week later, Fuller went in to the store to purchase pancake flour. Bill didn't charge him for the flour, it was his way of saying "thanks".

After World War II there was a 10% decline in farm acreage in the Central Square area. Yet, with Bill's dedication to salesmanship, his courteous treatment of his customers, and dependable service, his business continued to thrive.

Bill Seller's Tips on Service and Selling for G.L.F.

Endeavor to:

Sell Service, not just a bag of feed or fertilizer or a bushel of seed.

Be a Specialist. Be a specialist in all things agricultural, but don't talk over everyone's heads. Be down to earth when giving advice or information.

Be Courteous: Be warm and sincere when acknowledging your patrons. Don't let Mr. Big or Mr. Loudmouth or Mr. Elbowpusher precede Mr. Meek when it is his turn to be served. Don't let personal dislikes influence the service rendered.

Develop Personality: Only YOU can build personality. Take personal interest with your patrons.

Find Opportunity to develop faith in G.L.F. Know your stuff. Be able to render your fellowman a real service.



Bill Sellers at a G.L.F. Representative Exchange Gathering, 1956.

Bill is seated in the front.

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**Based on the booklet, This Is The True Story Of A Man...
written by Jim Hurley from the
G.L.F. Department of Public Relations and Information**

Questions to Research and Discuss:

1. How many farms were in a 10 mile radius of Central Square prior to World War I? How many were dairy farms? What other types of farms existed? Develop a code to identify the various types of farms and place each farm on a map.
2. How many of these farms exist today?
3. Contact a local farmer and ask:
 - How long have they been farming
 - From where do they get their feed and supplies
 - What types of problems do encounter today that may have been different 75 years ago
 - Develop other questions that will help you understand farming
4. What makes you want to go back to a business? What services do they provide? What qualities do they have that you admire.