

## 1997

During an initial fact-finding tour in Central America and Mexico, Bill Harris makes contact with many producer cooperatives and meets Monika Firt, then working with farmer coops in Chiapas, who five years later would take charge of Cooperative Coffee's Producer Relations and Purchasing.



## 1999

Inspired with the idea of creating a "First-of-its-Kind Fair Trade Coffee Roaster Coop" - Bill embarks upon another road-trip. This time in North America and identifies the seven original roaster members: Bongo Java, Gale Capesano, Dean's Beans, Heale Bros Coffee, Larry's Beans, Los Armadillos (now Third Coast Coffee) and Peace Coffee.

In November, an organizational meeting is held in Atlanta and shortly thereafter Cooperative Coffee is legally founded and registered in the state of Minnesota on December 21, 1999.



## 2000

Our first full container loads are imported from Guatemala, Mexico and Sumatra.

Since Bill's earliest visits to Guatemala, we are in contact with AFECAGOFIM - a long and trusted producer partner.

Mia Vitz, the first Zapatista coffee coop to export, becomes an inspiration and meeting place for many of our early roasters - who along with Kerry Appel of the "Human Bean Co" are the first to offer this coffee in the North American market.

Via our relationship with Forestrade, the pioneer export channel for Sumatran Fair Trade and organic coffee, we purchase our first containers of coffee from PPKGO in Aceh, Sumatra.

Cloudforest, Alternative Grounds and Bean North all join the coop, bringing total membership to 10.



## 2001

The 1st Annual General Meeting of members is held in Minneapolis and hosted by Peace Coffee.

Cafe Rico, Pura Vida, Fonseca Coffee and Coffee Exchange join the coop, and at 14 we reach our adolescence.



## 2002

We add new trading partners from Ethiopia, Nicaragua, Mexico and East Timor.

Bob Bernstein of Bongo Java, TJ Semanchin (then) of Peace Coffee and Dean Cylon of Dean's Beans participate in the first fact-finding trip to Chiapas Union. Cooperative Coffee purchases the first Fair Trade and Organic Sidamo and Yirgacheffe coffees available in the North American market.

At the recommendation of brothers Charlie and Bill Fishbein - we visit a "new union of coffee producer cooperatives" based in Matagalpa. We resonate with the spiritual leadership of Pedro Haslam, and begin a solid relationship with CECOCAFEN.

Cooperative Coffee supports the FLO registration and purchases the first container of organic coffee exported by Maya Vinic - a former coop rising up in the aftermath of the Acatul massacre suffered in their region.

Cooperativa Cafe Timor comes on to the Fair Trade scene and Cooperative Coffee is one of the first to begin importing this new source to North America.

Monika is hired as Cooperative Coffee's first employee, and a Producer Relations "office" is established in Canada; meanwhile, she has acquired a new side-kick and eager travel partner.

Dean's Beans hosts the 2nd AGM in at their new roaster installation in Orange, MA.

Mike Moon and Matt Barley start up a coffee roasting company in Madison to support Autonomous Committees in the coffee regions of Chiapas, Mexico. In October, just before becomes the 15th member of Cooperative Coffee.



## 2003

We import our first container from Peru, thanks to a prior relationship Dean's Beans had developed with the Cooperativa Agraria Casetleras Pangoa. We begin what has become another stable and rewarding relationship.

We hold our AGM in America, GA September 2003. Through serendipity and good luck, we end the meeting with an opportunity to lunch with former President Jimmy Carter and his wife Rosalynn, resulting in friendly communication for future encounters.

Chris and Jody Tether and Cooperative Coffee continue to cross paths in conferences and in the coffee fields. Higher Grounds Trading Company becomes our 16th member.



## 2004

We receive samples and contact information for Fondo Paez to us via Alternative Grounds and begin communicating directly to help them with FLO registration and import their first containers of organic coffee.

Thanks to a prior relationship with Just Coffee, we meet Santa Anita in Guatemala. We help them with FLO registration, import their first container of organic coffee, and several roasters begin projects to help producers improve production and family income.

Abby is hired as office support in Americus, and continues to date as the office manager. Somehow she manages to keep things flowing smoothly - come what may!

CoopCoffee's co-sponsors, together with Equal Exchange and the FTRN, the Forum For Trade Coffee: Strategies and Consumer Education, bringing together producers, importers, financiers and Fair Trade NGOs allies for the first time at the Carter Center in Atlanta. We are graced with an inspiring presentation by President Jimmy Carter.

Cooperative Coffee becomes a member of the International Federation of Alternative Traders (IFAT) - an international network of producers, traders and retailers with "Fair Trade at the Heart" of their businesses.

Our 4th AGM is held in Montreal in September 2004.

We meet Mark and Mel in the coffee fields of El Bosque, Chiapas in 2001. In 2004 Conscious Coffee - originally of Breckenridge - now located in Boulder, Colorado becomes our 17th member.



## 2005

Higher Grounds Trading leads the way in Ethiopia delegations and with support from OROMIA Union visits the Harar region; we add this unvisited coffee to our direct purchases.

Entering into an alliance with the CRS National Fair Trade Program, we meet CECOSEMAC in Nicaragua and begin direct import of their organic coffee.

CoopCoffee's co-sponsors, with our Fair Trade allies Equal Exchange, CRS, Lutheran World Relief and others, the first-ever Fair Trade Futures Conference, held in Chicago and designed to promote "Living a Fair Trade Life."

We hold our 5th AGM in Guatemala - our first in a producer country - with representatives from 7 producer partners, the majority of CC roasters and Fair Trade allies Kieran Dumen of FLO Centroamerica, Nore Rivera of Maya Cent and Guido Fernandez of the Bank Risk Management team. The Assembly results in the "Xela Accords" - an action statement about Fair Trade: raising minimum prices and building sustainable relationships.

Hurricane Katrina hits New Orleans August 31, 2005. In addition to the tragic loss of life and structures - CoopCoffee loses its entire inventory of green coffee. But shutting down the coop is never considered and within 2 months we are back in business (with special thanks to friends like Equal Exchange, who diverted contracts to us when our inventory was non-existent).



## 2006

During a 1,200 km tour across Bolivia's infamous treacherous roads, we discover Aipep, a community-based coop in Caranavi. We work with FECAFEB to import Aipep's first containers, which eventually helps them achieve FLO certification.

We meet Rufino Herrera, historical leader of FEDECARES, at Cafe Rico during a 2004 tour in Canada. By the 2006 harvest we are importing our first containers from Dominican Republic.

Demand for Fair Trade and organic coffees from Guatemala continue to grow; we add Association Chajulense and Rio Azul as two new sources of excellent quality coffees. Since then we have sent numerous delegations to visit the coops and learn about their development process.

We meet CEPICAFE Representative Jose Rojas at the Carter Center forum in 2004 and stay in contact. When we discover a need for additional Peruvian coffee, CEPICAFE recommends CENROCAFE, their sister-coop in Jaen to fill our contracts.

Coop Coffee, with support from Coffee Labs International, CRS and TransFair Canada, coordinates under the FECAFEB umbrella a "First-Ever" Fair Trade Quality Competition, in Caranavi, Bolivia.

We hold our 6th AGM in Raleigh, North Carolina, hosted by Larry's Beans. Simultaneously, we celebrate the founding of our sister-coop CoopSol (Cooperativa de Solidaridad del Cafe Equitativo) based in Montreal to manage communication and outreach, quality control and export facilitation, and the development of special projects.

AnaVida, Equator Coffee and Desert Sun join, increasing membership to 20 roasters.



## 2007

Montreal office begins staffing with its first interns Sylvie Trotter and Genevieve Paquette; we believe that is cause for celebration!

We participate in the IFAT International conference in Brussels, Belgium and in the culmination of the IFAT mark "Global Journey"; in 2008 we receive our IFAT "ratification".

CoopCoffee formalizes a friendly relationship with the Business Alliance for Local Living Economies (BALLE) and presents Fair Trade workshops at their 2007 and 2008 conferences in Burlington, VT and Boston, MA - respectively.

Through our Fair Trade friend, Dan Jaffe - we are introduced to MICHIZA, an indigenous coffee farmer coop working throughout Chiapas - soon to become one of our primary suppliers of organic Mexican coffee.

Following our participation at the SAFA conference, we visit Rwanda with Just Coffee. We begin purchasing and promoting MSOS and then COOPAC coffees from the Kagera River Basin and Kivu Lake regions, respectively.

Cooperative Coffee and CoopSol hold their Assembly meetings in Matagalpa - facilitated by our Nicaraguan partner CECOCAFEN. Some 70 participants in representation of roaster members, producer partners, and Fair Trade allies come together for a week of workshop, discussion and exchange.

Worker coop members from Cafe Cambio, Chicoutimi, QC, participate in the "2005 Xela Accords experience" and meet many CoopCoffee members for the first time; in 2007 they become the 21st member! Meanwhile, another roaster coop is getting set up in Viroqua, WI - and Kiskadee Coffee Roasters becomes the 22nd member.



## 2008

At the encouragement of Community Action Network (CAN) leader Ernesto Mendez, we visit their producer partner in Tacuba, El Salvador - ACDES. We discover a "perfect match" for CoopCoffee's roaster-producer partnerships and a delightful coffee in the cup.

Chelsea Carter joins the Americas team in charge of import logistics and compliance with Fair Trade and organic standards.

CoopSol moves into an independent office space; our technical team grows with Florent Gouit in charge of purchasing and logistics and Shannon Ripley assisting with communications.

Our 8th AGM is held in Traverse City, MI hosted by Higher Grounds Trading.

Vermont Artisan Roasters, Third Coast and Doma Coffee join the cooperative, bringing membership to 24 roasters.

## 2009

CoopCoffee 10th Anniversary year begins; CoopSol celebrates its 3rd AGM in America, GA.



Cooperative Coffee is exploring direct imports from Sidama Cooperative Farmers' Union, Ethiopia and Gumudoko, Uganda.

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