

SMITH- LEVER + fifty



North Carolina
Agricultural Extension Service



1914-1964

THE COVERS. The farm visit, then and now. The farm visit has always been a popular and effective Extension technique. But like all phases of Extension, the techniques have changed, reflecting the switch from service to educational activities as the Service has matured during its first 50 years.

Prepared by Extension 50th Anniversary committee

W. L. Carpenter, Head, Department of Agricultural Information
J. E. Foil, State Agent, County Operations
J. H. Harris, In Charge, Extension Horticulture
Nell Kennett, State Home Economics Leader

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The idea that all people, including those who till the soil, could benefit from education is a product of a free America. It is significant in the development of agricultural extension work, that there has been from the beginning a social, political, and economic climate in the United States that encourages men to learn, and to apply this knowledge to the problems of making a living.

Land-Grant Colleges

In 1862, President Lincoln signed the Morrill Land-Grant College Act providing grants of public land to each state. This was for the creation and support of institutions of higher learning, dedicated to providing educational opportunities for the industrial classes, particularly in agriculture and the mechanic arts.

As the land-grant colleges developed, their agricultural research programs were expanded and farmers looked to them for help on agricultural problems. To meet this demand, various types of extension work were undertaken. Of special significance was the organization of farmers' institutes. By 1900, there were over 2,000 such institutes held throughout the United States, with an estimated half million farmers participating.

Corn Trains

Also around the turn of the century, corn shows and corn schools played an important role in agricultural education.

About the same time college professors, in cooperation with the railroads, developed the idea for agricultural trains. Sometimes called "seed corn gospel trains," these trains were composed of baggage cars for preparing demonstrational material, day coaches in which to hold meetings, and dining and sleeping cars for the staff.

The train operated a special schedule, making a number of stops each day to which all farmers interested in corn were invited. The idea caught the fancy of farmers and people turned out by the thousands. The movement reached its peak by 1911 when 71 trains were running in 28 states with an attendance of around one million.

Boll Weevil Strikes

In 1892 the cotton boll weevil had crossed into Texas from Mexico, and 10 years later had covered a large part of that state. This insect brought about the almost complete destruction of the cotton crop in many areas, and the whole economy of the South was in jeopardy.

In 1903, at a mass meeting of businessmen and farmers at Tyrrell, Texas, Dr. Seaman A. Knapp submitted a proposition to establish a demonstration farm under the direction of the U. S. Department of Agriculture. The community selected a suitable place. They raised by subscription a sufficient amount to cover any losses that might be sustained by the owner of the farm by reason of following the directions of the department in planting and cultivating.

Knapp's proposal was accepted and a committee of eight was formed to provide \$1,000 as an insurance fund. Farmer Walter C. Porter volunteered his 70-acre farm. In spite of boll weevil damage, Porter estimated at the end of the year that he received a profit of \$700 more than he probably would have made if he had followed his old practices.

Start in North Carolina

With support from congressional appropriations and contributions from the General Education Board, farm demonstration work spread from Texas into the other southern states.

In the fall of 1907, C. R. Hudson, in demonstration work in Alabama, was sent to North Carolina to start the work in this state. He intended to locate in Raleigh, but neither the agricultural college nor the State Department of Agriculture would give him office space. He then set up an office in Statesville.

Mr. Hudson, known as the State Agent, arranged to begin work in eight counties in 1907 and 1908. These counties were Catawba, Lincoln, Gaston, Mecklenburg, Union, Cabarrus, Rowan and Iredell.

First County Agent

James A. Butler was appointed as the first county agent in North Carolina in 1907. He arranged with J. F. Eagles near Statesville to undertake a demonstration, under the supervision of the agent, on 2½ acres of corn and two acres of cotton. This demonstration, in 1908, was the first such activity in the state, although Hudson had discussed the demonstration idea and made recommendations for the farm of Mrs. W. W. Smith of Wake County when he passed through Raleigh in 1907.

In 1908 or 1909, Hudson organized some boys' corn clubs in Iredell County. In 1909 I. O. Schaub, new professor of agricultural extension at the College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts, organized a very successful corn club in Hertford County.

Girls' club work started in 1911. Miss Lucille Kennett, working during the summer months in Guilford County, established three tomato clubs to encourage the production, sale and canning of tomatoes.

The first Negro county agent in North Carolina was Neil Alexander Bailey. He was hired in 1910 and worked in Guilford, Randolph and Rockingham Counties.

Mr. Hudson's headquarters was moved to Raleigh in 1912 and the work carried on in cooperation with the College and the State Department of Agriculture.

Home Demonstration Work

The demonstration of approved farm practices by farmers on their own farms under the technical guidance of trained agriculturists proved to be such an effective method of getting people to adopt improved farming practices that it spread rapidly.

A similar technique was found equally effective in encouraging women to adopt improved practices in the home, thus inspiring the home demonstration programs which made great progress under the direction of Mrs. Jane S. McKimmon, beginning in 1912. During that first year agents were located in 14 counties. They concentrated on growing and canning tomatoes.

These were good beginnings. They occurred throughout the nation. But before agricultural extension work could really get underway, it was necessary that it be highly organized—with adequate financial support. This came from the federal government in 1914.

Smith-Lever Law

As early as 1909 a bill had been introduced into the federal congress to give financial support to farm extension work. This failed, and a similar bill was presented in 1910. This also failed. But in 1914 bills introduced in both houses by Senator Hoke Smith of Georgia and Representative A. F. Lever of South Carolina were passed and signed into law by President Woodrow Wilson on May 8, 1914.

B. W. Kilgore was named the first director. By 1915 work was being carried on in 69 counties.

Basically the Smith-Lever Law provided that extension agents would provide instruction and practical demonstrations in agriculture and home economics to persons not attending college. The system would be organized at county, state and federal levels.



Demonstrations have been a vital part of the 4-H Club program. Here the home agent and two 4-H'ers instruct the other members of the club in breadmaking.

One of the real tests for extension workers came during World War I, when an all-out food production campaign was necessary. But with Extension's help the farmers of the nation responded, and stepped up food production to aid a nation at war.

Programs of the Twenties

In 1921 the boll weevil struck the state, and for a number of years one of the high priority extension jobs was to keep him under control. As cotton was threatened, livestock expansion and feed production began to get more attention.

In 1924 I. O. Schaub became the second director of the North Carolina Extension Service, replacing B. W. Kilgore. In 1926 L. R. Harrill was named boys' 4-H Club specialist. One year later he became the first State 4-H Club Agent, responsible for the entire state 4-H program.

Farmers were the first group to feel the pinch of the great depression. As production outran markets, extension's role switched somewhat, with more emphasis on efficiency of production and marketing. County agents arranged for products such as chickens and hogs to be loaded on trains and sent to markets in carload lots. Cooperative marketing received more attention.

Four-H Club enrollment was increasing rapidly, and home demonstration club women participated in a multitude of activities as extension work reached a degree of maturity in the 20's.

The Depression Years

During the depression years every North Carolina governor, from Morrison to Gardner, called for the production of food for the family as an anti-poverty program. Thus, much of extension's effort was concentrated on the family food supply.

As new agricultural agencies came on the scene in the early 1930's, many of them were under the direction of the Extension Service. A news release in June, 1933 announced that "the entire organization of the Agricultural Extension Service in this state was drafted Sunday, June 18, by the administrators of the Farm Adjustment Act to conduct a cotton reduction campaign during the week of June 26. North Carolina is expected to reduce its cotton production this season by 363,000 acres."

It was found almost impossible to administer these programs without an agent in each county. This led to an increase in the number of county agents, and on January 1, 1937, for the first time, there was a farm agent in each county. Seventy-six counties had home demonstration agents at that time.

In that same year Jane S. McKimmon retired as head of home demonstration work and was replaced by Miss Ruth Current. Mrs. McKimmon remained for several more years as assistant extension director.

On May 8, 1939 the 25th anniversary of the passage of the Smith-Lever Act was observed. At that time it was noted that "farm and home demonstrations are the keynote of the extension program." Also, "Food for the family, feed for the livestock, and fertility for the soil are some of the fundamentals of the educational program, which has as its aim the conservation and restoration of human and natural resources."

World War II

With World War II came a switch from reducing agricultural output to all-out production. In early 1941 the Extension Service was given key positions in the "Food and Feed for Family Living" campaign as a part of the National Defense Program. Emphasis was on producing food and feed for home use, as well as commercial production for a nation at war.

Victory gardens sprung up in the country and town, 4-H'ers handled scrap metal drives, and home economics personnel talked food conservation as they had never done before. In 1943 a new 4-H contest was announced; contest winners would be every girl and boy who produced enough food to feed a soldier for one year. Later that year it was the "Food Fights for Freedom" campaign.

After the end of the war several campaigns that were to later add tremendously to the state's farm income were started: increased livestock and poultry production, greener pastures, and increased corn yields. Ten years later historians could record a six-fold increase in broilers, a 38 per cent increase in cattle numbers, a 15-bushel yield increase on corn, and a million acres of pastures improved. North Carolina and Virginia would even engage in a "corn war" to add zest to ambition.

The year 1950 represented more than a new decade. It was the end of an era as I. O. Schaub, the second director of the Extension Service, retired after 26 years in this position. He was succeeded by David S. Weaver, who as an agricultural engineer had gained the title of "father of rural electrification in North Carolina."

New Programs in the Fifties

September 1, 1951 was the kickoff date for the Rural Progress Drive sponsored by the North Carolina Board of Farm Organizations and Agencies. Four months later this effort came to be known as the "Challenge" program, featuring rural community development.

Also in 1951, users of feed and fertilizer voted to assess themselves five cents on each ton of feed and fertilizer to finance the unique "Nickels for Know-How" program.

In 1955 it was farm and home development, an intensified approach to rural family income problems; and program projection—county planning with the aid of a local advisory group.



Home economics extension has led to more comfortable and more efficient homes. Here women attend a reupholstering workshop under direction of home agent.

In 1956 three North Carolina counties were selected to participate in a new federal program known as Rural Areas Development.

Throughout the fifties the marketing of farm products was given considerable attention, including the appointment of specialists to work not with farmers but directly with marketing firms.

As the decade changed, a major change was underway as 4-H clubs were moved to the communities and out of the schools.

R. W. Shoffner, holder of many positions in North Carolina extension work, succeeded retiring D. S. Weaver as director in 1961. Shortly thereafter a long-range program, known as "1.6 in '66" was underway. This five-year program, developed at state and county level, was designed to raise Tar Heel farm income to 1.6 billion dollars by 1966.

Changing of the Guard

On January 1, 1963 Miss Eloise Cofer was appointed assistant director in charge of home economics programs succeeding Miss Ruth Current who retired. In mid-1963, George Hyatt was named director, succeeding R. W. Shoffner, elevated to special assistant to the Dean of Agriculture. Later in the year Carlton Blalock was named state 4-H Club Leader, succeeding retiring L. R. Harrill.

Hyatt thus became the fifth director, Cofer the third director of home economics programs, and Blalock the second 4-H Club leader.

The North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service has known stability, courage, and dedication of purpose. The pioneers who have come and gone, and the ones that remain, have built a sturdy foundation and a record of service. It is from this base that the organization moves out, here in 1964, to its second half-century.

