

THE ORIGIN OF EXTENSION

Pennsylvania's interest in Extension work in agriculture dates back to 1785 and the formation of the Philadelphia Society for Promoting Agriculture. Pennsylvania was one of the first states to formalize its farmers' institutes (1876) and to unite its teaching with the School of Agriculture in 1882. Penn State, in 1892, became the first institution in the United States to offer correspondence course work in agriculture and home economics. In 1924 Pennsylvania was among the first states to use radio in Extension educational programs.

Extension work in agriculture and home economics became a part of The Pennsylvania State University when its Board of Trustees established the Agricultural Extension Service in 1907. That same year the Board appointed Alva Agee as its first director of the Agricultural Extension Service. Agee served until 1912, then Milton S. McDowell began his long tenure as Director. J. Martin Fry succeeded McDowell in 1942 and served until his retirement in 1953. Herbert R. Albrecht was Director from 1953 until 1962, when he accepted the presidency of North Dakota State University. He was followed by Russell E. Larson, who served as Director until he became Dean in 1964, and then by Thomas H. Patton who served until retirement in 1971. Upon Director Patton's retirement, the position of Director was added to the responsibilities of the office of the Dean of Agriculture. Russell Larson was Dean at the time. When Dr. Larson went on to become Provost of the University, the office was handled on an acting basis by David McClay until 1973 when James M. Beattie was appointed Dean of the College and Director of its Agricultural and Home Economics Extension Service. Dr. Beattie served until his retirement on June 30, 1981. Samuel H. Smith was Dean and Director until July 1, 1985, when he became President of Washington State University. W. Wayne Hinish served as Acting Dean and Director in the interim until February 28, 1986, when Lamartine F. Hood was named Dean.

Until appointment of the first Extension director in 1907, the only work carried on directly with Pennsylvania farmers was by College staff participating in Farmers' Institutes. These were sponsored by the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture and held throughout the Commonwealth.

Three important programs were sponsored by Extension prior to establishment of county offices. The first program, referred to as "Popularized Education," was an effective effort to increase the number of agricultural students in the College.

In the second program, agricultural trains traveled throughout the Commonwealth, with Penn State professors conducting classes in the coaches and on station platforms. The purpose of these lectures was to let people know of the task and accomplishments of the Experiment Station. These trains drew large crowds and were continued until 1912. The other phase involved organizing day excursions. These railway excursions would bring people to the campus to visit with College scientists and see the agriculture research being conducted on the campus and the farms. As many as 1,200 people visited the campus in a single day.

The first county agricultural agent to serve in Pennsylvania was A. B. Ross, a Federal employee assigned to Bedford County in 1908. Five additional county agricultural agents were named in 1912 by the Pennsylvania Extension Service.

The first recorded work with youth in the Pennsylvania Extension program was a corn club in Mercer County in 1913, and this type of educational project soon spread to other counties. From such early work with boys and girls, the idea of 4-H clubs was conceived and is now internationally known.

In October 1913, Pennsylvania farm women responded to a request from the Secretary of Agriculture in Washington for suggestions on educational programs to improve their homes and family living. Published in 1915 as a USDA bulletin, these letters helped to set a pattern for the home economics Extension program authorized by the Smith-Lever Act. In Pennsylvania, Miss Pearl McDonald was appointed Nutrition Specialist. In the next few years, additional home economists were employed. Some were housed in county offices and some at the College, but all were normally assigned to serve a group of counties.

Rural development work in Pennsylvania, now called Community Development, started in 1956 with a pilot program in Fayette County. The program was established to stimulate economic and social development in areas with agricultural underemployment and low income. Since that time, program concerns have broadened and Community Development has become an integral part of Extension programs statewide.

The Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) was initiated in Pennsylvania counties in 1969. The purpose of this federally funded program is to bring nutrition education to low-income families. Paraprofessionals supervised by Extension Home Economists work on a one-to-one basis with program families. Today the EFNEP aides are working extensively with small groups of homemakers.

Enabling Legislation

Three legislative acts--Acts 142 and 12 of the Pennsylvania General Assembly, and the Smith-Lever Act of the United States Congress--made possible today's organization of Extension work.

Act 142 of the Pennsylvania General Assembly was approved May 14, 1913. This original legislation gave to a Board of County Commissioners the permission to appropriate up to \$1,500 per year for agricultural Extension work in its county, and to provide office space and facilities in the county courthouse for this work. In 1969, the ceiling was removed on the amount County Commissioners could appropriate to support Extension. The funds appropriated for this purpose by the County Commissioners are requested and disbursed by the County Extension Association's Executive Committee/Extension Board.

The Smith-Lever Act was passed by Congress on May 8, 1914. This act, with subsequent amendments, authorized Congress to appropriate to the states funds for the support of agricultural and home economics Extension work through their Land grant college or universities.

Act 12 of the Pennsylvania General Assembly, approved March 26, 1915 established Penn State as the legal recipient and executor of the provisions of the Federal Smith-Lever Act in Pennsylvania. Part of Act 12 reads

" . . . with all its provisions and conditions; and the Pennsylvania State College (University) is . . . designated as the proper institution to receive all appropriations made by Congress for the purpose of carrying into effect said act, or any supplements thereto; and that the treasurer, or other officer duly appointed by the governing board of said college, be designated as the proper officer to receive all appropriations made under provisions of said act."

The first Memorandum of Understanding between the University and the United States Department of Agriculture for Extension work in agriculture and home economics was approved in 1914 and reaffirmed in 1955. The Memorandum assigns the University the right to develop and manage the program with the approval of the United States Department of Agriculture through its Extension Service. This Memorandum made the University responsible for extending all phases of educational work in agriculture and home economics in Pennsylvania. In effect, this agreement makes Extension the educational arm of the United States Department of Agriculture in Pennsylvania.

In the beginning, when a group of county citizens wished to have the services of a county Extension agent, they were required to provide local support, normally consisting of travel expense, office, secretarial help, and office supplies. The Pennsylvania State College helped local citizens form a "County Farm Bureau" to secure this support; County Farm Bureaus became the County Extension Associations.

Funds at first were raised from membership dues, local business interests, and other sources until the passage of Act 142--which permitted County Commissioners to provide this support from local tax revenues. This relationship is still operative today. County Extension Associations have assumed the responsibility of requesting the local support and are recognized by the Boards of County Commissioners as the official organization to receive and administer such funds to support the Cooperative Extension Service in their counties.