

## EARLY HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF 4-H WORK

Although the main emphasis of 4-H today is the development of youth in both rural and urban areas, the beginning of 4-H resulted from efforts to reach farm families with the latest information on agriculture and the home.

Agricultural colleges and experiment stations, established by the Morrill Act in 1862 and signed into law by Abraham Lincoln, had by 1900 gathered much information related to agriculture and the farm home. However, outlets for this information were limited mainly to lectures and printed materials which could reach relatively few people directly. No one was locally responsible for interpreting this information for the people.

Then school, farm, business, and professional leaders began to advocate the idea of farm youth taking an important part in agricultural demonstrations of various kinds. Progressive county school superintendents began planning "out-of-school" programs, carried out on the farm rather than in the classroom. And, about the same time, in the early 1900's, Dr. Seaman A. Knapp was sent from the U. S. Department of Agriculture to Texas and other cotton-growing states to set up a plan for controlling the cotton boll weevil and to teach diversified agriculture in the South. One of the most important methods he used was youth clubs and, in seven years, he had created enough interest -- and obtained enough money -- to have state and county agents appointed to work with youth in several southern states.

As a result of these efforts, interest in corn, cotton, livestock, canning, and sewing clubs grew rapidly in the South, with the U. S. Department of Agriculture supervising this work in the states and counties. Interest in club work was kept high by competitive exhibits at various local and county fairs, and, soon, state corn and canning club champions were selected in several southern states. In 1909, Dr. Knapp offered a trip to Washington to the Mississippi state corn champion. Virginia, South Carolina and Arkansas also sent their corn champions to Washington. These first state corn club champions were introduced to the President and awarded the first diplomas of their kind by James Wilson, Secretary of Agriculture.

### COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE

Thousands of rural youths enrolled in corn, canning, garden, poultry, pig and other project clubs, and the success of these clubs caused rural adults to become interested in applying the lessons learned through club work. This, in turn, gradually changed their attitude toward the adult "demonstrators", who were the forerunners of our present day county Extension agents.

Work done by club members and their parents brought national recognition of their efforts by Congress. President Wilson signed the Smith-Lever Act on May 8, 1914, authorizing Cooperative Extension work in all the states. Certain land-grant colleges were to organize county units of Extension. Federal funds were appropriated for these units, and they were to be matched by local funds. This was the beginning of county Extension work as we know it now.

### THE 4-H EMBLEM

In Iowa a three-leaf clover emblem with an "H" in each leaf representing the equal development of the head, heart and hand was used as an emblem for boys' and girls' club work. At a meeting club leaders in Washington in 1911, the fourth "H" was added to stand for health. Thus was the 4-H emblem born. It is now legally the national emblem of 4-H work in the U.S., and its use is protected by law. Commercial concerns are not allowed to use the emblem in advertising or in any other manner without permission from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

### MEMBER OWNERSHIP

Representatives of the USDA, teachers, 4-H agents, and others insisted that not only should a boy or girl produce higher yields of corn, cotton, rice, garden products or canned tomatoes, and learn to sew, but that the products should belong to the boys and girls. The idea of ownership spread throughout club work and gave a tremendous push to the club idea.

### DEMONSTRATIONS

In 1910, Club girls in South Carolina gave demonstrations in canning tomatoes. Soon, club members were giving public demonstrations in testing seed corn. Later, members in teams or individually gave demonstrations in selection of materials, stain removal, selection and cutting seed potatoes and dozens of other subjects.

### RECORDS AND REPORTING

By 1911 club work was growing so rapidly, but there was no authentic way by which members reported their work or how many actually carried their work to completion.

In 1912, leaders of state agents, meeting in Washington, D. C., decided that club members must agree not only to carry out the educational features of their farm and home work, but that they must keep records as well. The state agents agreed that records should be kept in three parts: the beginning or preparation and planting of the crop, cultivation of the crop, and a final record form filled out at the end of the project. Similar records were devised for the girls' projects and other farm projects. It is significant that the work the youngsters did was called "projects," the term that is still in use today.

### 4-H - 1920 to 1930

World War I interrupted club work to some extent, but by 1920 the nation was approaching normalcy again. Club work was still done largely in project clubs until about 1920. But, by 1921 many states had started to organize these local clubs into one club, including all project groups within a community, with local officers and leaders. Many of these clubs planned a year-round program of activities, which were run by the club officers, such as demonstration meeting programs, recreation and many other educational features besides project instruction.

These local clubs set up meeting programs to have a business session, a session devoted strictly to educational subjects and activities, and also a session given to recreation. Thus, club members and their local leaders were learning parliamentary procedure, were exposed to educational subject matter and were also learning to play and work together as a community group.

This kind of meeting organization was rather unique at that time and caused wider interest among club members, their parents and the community in general. This was the beginning of community clubs as compared with the earlier project clubs. It was also the general beginning of local volunteer adult leadership in local club activities in contrast to project leader idea. These general leaders assisted members in planning most club events and supervised club members in their participation in the overall development program.

#### EMPHASIS ON OVERALL DEVELOPMENT OF YOUTH

Club programs were becoming more local in nature during the period of transition from 1920 to 1930. Leaders and club members were planning activities which tended to develop the boy and girl. There was a great deal of interest and competition in the project classes at fairs or shows and sales, but the major interest was shifting toward club programs and activities which would develop the club members. This idea, however, was just beginning and was to bear its fullest fruit in club member recognition in the following decade.

In recent years emphasis has shifted even more toward overall development of youths. Teaching subject matter is still important, but in the process of teaching, techniques are employed that lead to developing responsibility, decision-making, abilities, achievement, leadership, citizenship, and cooperation.

#### JUDGING

Livestock and crops judging for the boys and canning and cooking judging for the girls widened interest in club work and received state and nation-wide emphasis.

#### 4-H CAMPS

A few camps had been held in scattered areas before 1920. These were usually camps of only two or three days duration and were held by small groups of club members. But by 1920 several southern states were seriously making plans to create more camps and enlarge their camping program. At first these were county club camps, and the instructors were usually staff members from the college.

By 1930, county camps had developed into district or state regional camps. Instructions in various subjects, such as nature study and crafts, were given. Organized games were also important features of these camps, and vespers and a campfire program were held at night. There were movies, group singing, talent and stunt programs. These camps were a great incentive to club membership.

#### NATIONAL 4-H CONFERENCE

The First World War had interrupted the trips of project champions to Washington, and they were not resumed immediately after the war. Since these trips and recognition ceremonies in Washington had caused Congress and the nation to react favorably to club work, state extension directors suggested to the Washington office that a meeting of outstanding club members be held in Washington, D.C., under the sponsorship of officials of the U. S. Department of Agriculture. This resulted in the first National 4-H Club Camp being held on the Department grounds in 1927. This annual event is now called National 4-H Conference.

### THE 4-H CLUB PLEDGE AND MOTTO

At the first National Club Camp the pledge for club work was adopted. Otis Hall, Kansas State 4-H Leader, wrote the pledge, that is still used today:

"I pledge my Head to clearer thinking,  
My Heart to greater loyalty,  
My Hands to greater service, and  
My Health to better living  
For my club, my community and my country."

The club motto, "To Make the Best Better," written by Miss Garrie Harrison, botanist in the Bureau of Plant Industry, was also adopted at the first National Club Camp.

### SCHOLARSHIPS

Members were getting more and more club scholarships to state and regional short courses or round-ups or state congresses in the various states. These scholarships were being awarded not only for project excellence but for all-round development of the club member in learning community values and responsibilities.

### STATE CLUB STAFFS

More and more counties were appropriating funds for county and home agents. During this period many states began to set up state club staffs to service club needs in the counties.

### NATIONAL 4-H SERVICE COMMITTEE

As club work and the recognition it was receiving grew rapidly, there was need for coordinating and unifying the administration of national tours and other club events. In 1919, national and state club leaders and business leaders from the various sections of the country worked out a plan to coordinate business interests and the participating states in the national 4-H events. The group met in Chicago, and this city became the focal point for national activities. The National 4-H Committee on Boys and Girls Club Work, now called the National 4-H Service Committee, was formed. This committee has never been controlled by Extension or the government. It is made up of and controlled by business interests in the United States, with the Federal and State Extension Services as advisors.

### 4-H FROM 1930 TO NOW

Urban Interest - Urban interest in 4-H work began in the 1930's. A few cities offered 4-H to urban children. Some of the Eastern seaboard states had industrial projects in such things as electric, woodworking, and metal rooding for city 4-H boys and girls. The regular home economics and other 4-H projects were also available to them. This urban interest in 4-H has continued to grow and has become especially important during the past 10 years.

### 4-H COUNCILS

County club committees had existed since around 1915, and in some states before that. In many states the county committees gradually became county adult 4-H councils, and, from

1930 on, many counties organized county junior councils.

From 1930 to 1959, county programs grew so much that the various state 4-H weeks were not able to accommodate all county winners. Accordingly, area events corresponding to the main events of the state program were organized. This applied to camps, demonstrations, speech and other events.

Area councils were set up to plan and supervise district rally and achievement programs, district shows, sales, etc. In some states, the district 4-H councils were made up of elected members from county 4-H councils. And in some states, the state 4-H council which help with various state 4-H meetings and programs are elected to represent the district 4-H councils. The Kentucky 4-H Leaders Council was organized in 1952.