

Whitcomb (1)

KENTUCKY HISTORY OF 4-H CLUBS

In 1903 Dr. Seaman A. Knapp who was associated with the Bureau of Plant Industry of the United States Department of Agriculture began putting into effect his idea that the best way to induce farm people to put better methods into operation was to induce them to perform the operations on their own premises under guidance and thus to convince themselves of the advantages of better plans and methods.

By 1905, the extent of extension work in Agriculture and Home Economics had become such that the Association of Land-Grant Colleges appointed a permanent committee on extension work.

The idea of local support for extension work was conceived about this time and came to be accepted as a sound basis for the employment of workers whose duties were to be confined to single counties.

In 1909 Professor George Roberts, Head of the Department of Agronomy of the Kentucky Experiment Station, in cooperation with Mrs. Nannie G. Faulconer, County Superintendent of Schools, organized a boys' corn club in Fayette County. In the following year such clubs were organized in several additional counties. In 1909, a number of interested farmers in central Kentucky promoted a corn show which was held in Jackson Hall, a large room on the second floor of the Market House in Lexington. Out of this show grew the interest that led to the organization of the Kentucky Corn Growers' Association.

In 1912, arrangements were perfected with the State Fair Board to hold a boys camp at the Fair. Under the arrangement, boys who had excelled in club work were to be appointed by the Superintendent of Extension to attend the camp with expenses paid by the Fair Board. About a hundred boys attended that camp, and the plan has been pursued each year since that time. On several of these occasions, the University made a contribution of \$600.

The year 1912 also marked the appointment of the first County Extension Agents. The first four were:

Frank Montgomers	So. Madison and Rockcastle	Sept. 1, 1912
Charles A. Mahan	Henderson	Oct. 1, 1912
Nat T. Frame	Jefferson	Feb. 1, 1913
John E. Nicoll	Warren	Feb. 1, 1913

In 1913, there was begun county extension work in Home Economics, the first county worker appointed February 1, 1914.

Development of 4-H Club Work

As indicated previously club work for boys and girls began in 1909 in a few localities in Kentucky. The members were nearly all boys who engaged in growing corn. The Commissioner of Agriculture and the Western Kentucky Normal School at Bowling Green engaged to a limited extent, a short time later in fostering this work, along with the University. The

activities of the club members were confined almost entirely to the projects themselves except for occasional corn shows. By 1911 pig clubs were undertaken and by 1912 poultry clubs. Also in 1912, the idea of canning clubs for girls began to receive attention and in 1914, a number of women agents were appointed, several of them for short periods during the canning season. Soon after the passage of the Smith-Lever law, B. G. Nelson of Hopkinsville was in charge of corn clubs, H. W. Rickey of poultry clubs and Otis Kercher of pig clubs. Soon, however, Mr. Rickey resigned and B. G. Nelson came to devote his time to the work of supervising county agents in Hopkinsville area and Otis Kercher became state leader of 4-H clubs in which capacity he continued until after the war, being succeeded by Carl Buckler, March 1, 1920, who continued in that capacity until 1924 when he was succeeded by J. W. Whitehouse who has been county agent in Daviess County and later Assistant State Agent for county agents. It was during the period of service of Mr. Buckler that county vacation camps were popularized and the annual Junior Week at the University was inaugurated. Later, county achievement days, regional and state shows, and national club camp and participation in such national shows as the International Live Stock Exposition were added to the scope of activities of 4-H clubs. Demonstration teams became popular in nearly all counties. These teams, each composed of two or three boys or girls, demonstrate practices in agriculture or in home economics. Elimination contests are held in counties and in the state contest the best teams from the respective counties participate.

The boys' camp at the State Fair was originated in 1912, and the following year an educational exhibit was installed at the State Fair. Each year since that time the camp has been held and the educational exhibit has been expanded and improved. The activities of the boys at the State Fair soon came to embrace judging contests in corn, poultry, and livestock.

The steady increase in the number of club members and the quality of their work has been promoted by several other factors. The diversity of the program, definiteness of objectives and instructions, the interest and financial support of business people have been valuable contributions to success. Camps; contests, local, state-wide, and nation-wide; and the annual Junior Week at the University enriched the program and have engaged the interest and support of increasing numbers of club members, adult leaders, and of the public in general. Each approved project is supported by appropriate literature with specific instructions.

Today Kentucky has more than 88,000 4-H club members. Projects and activities are still very important. They help sell methods to improve the home, family and for other living standards as well as career guidance. The main emphasis is ~~on the development~~ on the development of youth. Not what the member can do for the project but what the project can do for the member.

A program this broad and valuable would be impossible without the devotion of more than 14,300 adult volunteer leaders guiding the developing youth.