

**HISTORICAL APPRAISAL OF HOME DEMONSTRATION WORK**  
**State of Kentucky**  
**1914 - 1939**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

The present home demonstration leader came to this state in 1924. Details of the early history are known to her only in general.

**A. Home Demonstration Work Prior to 1914**

In Kentucky, as elsewhere, some contacts with farm women were made prior to 1914 thru the College of Agriculture, largely in connection with problems of home food production. Some early efforts then included a demonstration train, carrying a staff of lecturers and demonstration material. Then came the movable schools, usually of three or four days' duration, and making extensive use of exhibits and illustrative material. Not always was there sufficient interest to justify the inclusion of a home economist in the staff of these schools, but when there was such a demand special instruction for women in a separate room was provided. Portable exhibits at county fairs were also used as a means of bringing improved practices before the public.

In 1913 a state home demonstration agent was appointed to organize extension work in home economics thru county workers. This marked the beginning of county home demonstration work. Most of the early appointments were short term with federal funds, lasting thru the summer months. The program undertaken was concerned largely with the production and preservation of fruits and vegetables with 4-H club girls. Five colored and twelve white agents were appointed to work a few months during the spring and summer of 1914. All but one of these were appointed prior to May 9, the date of the passage of the Smith-Lever Act.

**B. Conditions Confronting First Agents in Counties**

As stated above, the first agents were employed on short term appointments to work largely with girls' tomato clubs. There were no good roads, no adequate office facilities, no means of transportation, no organization nor plan of organization, no established procedures, no local funds for supplies and equipment. These early workers begged, borrowed and did everything but steal a little equipment and a few supplies, they literally had to run down classes to teach, had to meet all kinds of objections, criticisms and opposition to their programs, to get about as they could on train and trolleys, by courtesy of farmers who would come after them. Some were fortunate enough to secure the use of a horse and buggy. The story is pretty general over the country and does not need to be reviewed.

## 2. IMPORTANT CHANGES

After the passage of the Smith-Lever Act and acceptance of the provisions by the state was secured, home economics was organized in two branches known as Home Demonstration Work thru specialists under the head of the Home Economics Department and Home Demonstration Work thru county home demonstration agents under the state home demonstration leader. The scope of the work increased rather rapidly. Specialists, supervisors and county home demonstration agents were added as rapidly as funds would permit. The supervisory officers in the early days were appointed in their place of residence and supervised their work from offices established at their place of residence. As late as 1924, when the present state leader reported for duty, one member of the supervisory staff was located in Louisville. Experience demonstrated that all supervisory personnel should be located at the College and vacancies were filled by supervisors with headquarters at the College.

The function of the supervisory staff in the early days was largely concerned with obtaining necessary funds, offices and wherewithal to carry on a program. Up to 1924 no county organization had been set up except county councils in two or three counties. The greatest concern of the supervisory staff was to get funds, offices, some equipment and other physical equipment to carry on the work. The supervisory staff assisted the home demonstration agent in any way she could and in many ways. She was her advisor, counselor, ever-present help in time of trouble. She helped her organize school lunch campaigns, health campaigns, contests, get help from the specialists who were in other departments, etc.

The war doubtless interrupted and delayed perfection of county extension organizations, the development of more effective methods and procedures. From 1914 to 1918 the most urgent demand on the extension service was the production and preservation of foods, necessary changes in dietary habits and the use of substitutes. Emergency funds increased the staff of workers who were placed in counties without local financial cooperation. At the close of the war, withdrawal of federal funds resulted in decreased personnel. Since that time home demonstration work has undergone gradual normal growth and development. One might almost say that the starting point of the home demonstration program we know it now dates to 1918 when war emergency activities ceased.

In 1924 when the present state leader came to Kentucky there were about twenty-one home demonstration agents in counties, the specialists were organized under the resident home economics staff and home demonstration agents under a state leader.

### A. Functions of the Supervisor

The functions of the supervisor as we see them today include supervision of all phases of the home demonstration program. In Kentucky the supervisory staff is not primarily concerned with the details of the project plan or subject matter as such, altho she must be familiar

with teaching methods and techniques and with the subject matter program in order to supervise the work in the county. Her field of endeavor includes:

- (1) Supervision of home demonstration agents.
- (2) Supervision of specialists.
- (3) Supervision of home demonstration activities in counties not having home demonstration agents.
- (4) Expansion of the work into new counties.

Functions include supervision of the home demonstration program in relation to:

- (1) Program planning.
- (2) Appraisal of results.
- (3) Office organization and management.
- (4) Relationships and contacts.
- (5) Reports and records.
- (6) Calendars of work for home demonstration agents.
- (7) Organization and membership - community, county, state, national.
- (8) Finances, appropriations, supplementing finances.
- (9) Personnel - appointments, promotions, leaves, etc.
- (10) Recreational programs.
- (11) Development and training of administrative leadership.
- (12) Publicity and civic activities.
- (13) Special activities, such as fairs, exhibits, achievement days.
- (14) Expansion of work.
- (15) Training of new staff members.
- (16) Planning conferences - state, district and county.
- (17) Developing procedures.
- (18) Improving methods.
- (19) Interpreting policies.
- (20) Building morale and attitudes.

#### B. Financing County Extension Work

There have been no substantial changes in methods of financing home demonstration work. It has always been financed by appropriations from public funds either made by county fiscal courts or county boards of education, such funds supplemented by state and federal funds. In isolated instances private funds have been raised to keep the program after failure to get an appropriation. In a few instances farm bureaus have helped in emergency.

There has been a change in amounts requested and in procedures in going about the business of getting appropriations. A lot of opposition has disappeared, local people are taking a much larger part in getting local financial support, much less court storming is necessary and committee work is being used effectively in securing support, counties are asked to appropriate in relation to their ability to pay, emphasis has been placed on the county extension unit which includes a

county agricultural agent, home demonstration agent, assistant agricultural agent and clerk. Much less time and energy are consumed in getting financial support as the general public has become informed regarding the purpose, program and accomplishments of the home demonstration program. These changes in situation and attitudes have developed gradually with the development of organization, leadership and understanding. It is still not always an easy job. We still occasionally lose an appropriation and have to storm a court but such procedures which used to be usual are now the exception which prove the rule.

### C. Attitudes of Rural People and General Public

Attitudes of rural people and the general public toward home demonstration work are favorable. Significant changes can be noted, largely due to a better understanding of the objectives and method employed to realize them. Women have become conscious of their place in the whole program. They no longer regard themselves as someone to be taught and told but as active participants in a program of self help. The attitude of the general public has changed from one of criticism, questioning and doubt to one of support, cooperation and approval. There are still doubting Thomases and opposition, but it is not general. The home demonstration program has had a long, hard pull, tradition and precedent were against it, a woman's place was in the home, she had no business speaking in public places. Home demonstration agents couldn't make as great an economic appeal as could the county agricultural agent who put dollars in the farmer's pocketbook. The appropriation had to be secured from men on fiscal courts, men who were not always of a superior intelligence or sympathetic with the objectives of the program. Only by a high type of work over a period of years has this opposition gradually been decreased and been replaced first by tolerance and now, usually, tho not always, by an attitude of helpful, friendly cooperation and approval.

### 3. OUTSTANDING PHASES OF WORK

The organization of farm women for home demonstration work started with the organization of clubs known as home demonstration clubs. Not until 1924 was a county organization set up and a suggested constitution submitted to counties. By the close of 1925 all but a few remote counties had perfected a county organization and had adopted the suggested constitution, with a few adaptations to meet local needs. This form of organization has been effective as a piece of machinery for developing leadership, delegating responsibility, securing local participation and developing effective procedures. This year a few minor revisions have been suggested to make the organization more effective and to provide for certain functions of the state organization.

In 1932 after several years of discussion and expressed interest, a state organization was formed to unify the efforts of homemakers in Kentucky, to strengthen their voices, to further develop leadership and to broaden horizons.

In more recent years, the state organization has affiliated with the National Home Demonstration Council and the Associated Country Women of the World, international organization of farm women. Homemakers in Kentucky have frequently voiced the feeling that they are links in a chain which reaches around the world. Their sympathies, interests and understanding have been immeasurably broadened and deepened.

Altho the homemakers' organization in Kentucky is an organ of local people, it is understood that it is the official extension organization for carrying a program in homemaking for farm and rural homemakers. As such, it has kept away from political involvement, legislative programs and commercial affiliations and has held to a program of education, social and recreational activity and civic activities of a non-controversial nature.

There is no official relationship between the Farm Bureau and homemakers, altho there is a great deal of cooperation between the two organizations. The Farm Bureau has been of great help to the homemakers in securing local financial support and local office facilities. Homemakers have helped the Farm Bureau in membership campaigns, have contributed to their programs, been co-sponsors of certain projects of mutual interest and have given support to the Farm Bureau program.

Copies of the county and state constitutions are attached.

4. Over a twenty-five year program, methods of determining program and program content have changed significantly. The process of program building has been discussed in detail in the annual report. Suffice it to say here that the trend thru the years has been from miscellaneous programs which went from salads to soups, dress forms to woodboxes from month to month to programs of several months duration planned in advance, to annual programs, to long-time programs with long-time objectives. The trend has also over a period of years led from programs suggested by agents and specialists, planned by supervisors, agents and specialists, to programs selected by rural people according to their interests, to programs planned by rural people after community and county discussion to meet their recognized need to our present status in programs, programs planned by rural people after free discussion and after careful study and fact finding as a basis for determining the need. Sequences of activities and procedures have been developed to secure maximum local participation and to secure a high quality of thinking in program building. Outlook and factual material are playing an ever larger part in program determination. The last step, the participation of farm women in land use planning, is in its experimental stage right now.

The contribution of home demonstration work to the welfare of rural people is evidenced materially, esthetically, socially, economically, physically and spiritually. We possibly cannot quote figures on increased income. It is difficult to estimate the economic saving due to home production and preservation of food, remodeling of clothing and millinery, reconditioning of furnishings, of the home crafts of homemakers, higher standards of health, increased work output due to better health, improved methods, labor saving equipment. It is difficult to estimate the happiness in home and family due to more interested, mentally alert, socially satisfied women. (Home demonstration work is giving homemakers an opportunity for self-expression, ✓

is challenging her ability, is elevating the common task, is giving the homemaker an appreciation of her part in a world economy, her contribution to world society and is helping her to become a person more interesting to herself, to her family and her neighbors. To know this, one has only to attend meetings of farm women, to listen to their well conducted business meetings, to observe their up-to-date, even modish appearance achieved not thru the expenditure of large amounts of money but thru the knowledge which enables them to take an old hat and a coffee can for a block and by washing, turning, dyeing, blocking, manipulating into a pleat here, a dip there, trimming with a dyed, shellacked feather plucked from a turkey's tail, to appear in a modish, stylish chapeau. It has been done time and time again. Visitor after visitor, speakers at homemakers meetings have commented on the appearance of the audience. Not long ago one dear little county woman said in all sincerity that she felt sorry for city women, they looked so dowdy. When they had old hats they had to wear them and feel ashamed of them, while "we know how to bring them up to high style." One new home demonstration agent recently remarked to our clothing specialist, "You are responsible for the criticism that we aren't reaching the people we should. You have taught them how to look so nice on so little money that our officials can't guess the kind of incomes they have or the kinds of homes they come from."

Not so long ago a resident of our state returned to her home county after many years absence. She became interested in the home demonstration program and what it had done for her county and told a staff member of her observations. She said that she could tell the moment she entered a home whether the homemaker was active in the program. When asked how she replied that she could tell by the height of the pictures, the way they were hung, the arrangement of the furniture, the general appearance of the house, the presence or absence of the many articles that homemakers have learned to make, by the design of the wallpaper, the arrangement of the mantel, and so on and on.

A physician who recently had occasion to address a homemakers group was amazed at the knowledge of these women about foods and nutrition. He found them talking freely about the vitamins, their sources, functions, minerals and the results of deficiency of certain minerals, nutritional disorders common to the locality, their causes and cure. He said he was almost afraid to go for he was a bit afraid they had more up-to-date information than he had.

If statistics were compiled over the past twenty-five years, they would show millions of improvements made in homes, homes landscaped, kitchens made attractive and convenient, pieces of furniture upholstered, refinished, slip covered, remodeled, porches made attractive, out-door living rooms provided, rooms painted, papered, rearranged, curtains and drapes made and so on and on, garments made and remodeled, new dishes prepared, home products grown and preserved, and on and on ad infinitum. These things are not done without affecting the doers, their families and neighbors. Thru doing, appreciations, attitudes, abilities, talents and personalities have been developed.

6. Modification to meet the world war period and the food situation which presented a major problem has already been discussed.

A. During the depression, programs were modified to meet needs. Low cost meals, home production of the family food supply, reconditioning of clothing, millinery and home furnishings, use of native shrubs were stressed with the objective of helping the farm homemaker live as well as possible on what was available. Supplementing the income thru the sale of surpluses where a market was available was also stressed. A state committee on a "live at home" program functioned during this time. Home recreation, home-made toys were also included in the program.

B. The home demonstration staff went to the bat during the flood of 1937. Farm and Home Convention was canceled and county extension workers were instructed to do what they could to help. They

- (1) Organized and managed emergency kitchens for flood refugees.
- (2) Organized sewing groups to construct clothing for refugees.
- (3) Supervised rehabilitation of flooded homes.
- (4) Organized collection of food and clothing for refugees.
- (5) One even operated a short wave radio station to help members of families find each other.

After the water receded material was prepared on rehabilitation of flooded homes and reconditioning of furnishings in flooded homes. Specialists and home demonstration agents participated in a program of teaching homemakers what to do and in mobilizing homemakers who were not in flooded areas to help those who were.

We have had a series of droughts in Kentucky calling for special helps such as utilization of available foodstuffs, food production under drought conditions, low cost meals, conservation of all available food stuffs.

6. The major problems ahead in home demonstration work, as I see them, are:

A. The correlation of the programs of the many agencies working with farm people. The vocational teacher who has adult classes reaches the same group, or at least one similar to the home demonstration agent - homemakers who are sufficiently interested in self improvement and in improving their homes to come to the meetings.

B. Reaching more of the low-income, underprivileged group with the educational program of extension is certainly a major problem. We are gradually discovering procedures and devices for reaching them, but not as effectively as the upper class of farm people who have transportation, clothing, education, social standing and ambition which make them interested and able cooperators.