

## History of ISU Extension:

Although the Extension Service was not recognized as an official department in Iowa until 1906, rumblings of future legislation had already begun in the 1850s. Iowa became the first state to accept the Morrill Act, and when it came into effect in 1862 the provisions of the act were awarded to the College. The College had already been established in 1858, and being a land-grant institution, already embraced the ideal that higher education should be both accessible to all, and practical in nature. States accepting the Morrill Act were to be allocated land based on the number of representatives and senators in Congress (though this was later amended such that it reflected the need of public, accessible education for those affected by the onset of the Civil War). Paired with the Federal Land-Grant Act of the same year, Iowa was prepared to found a working college on 204,000 acres, and on October 21, 1868, Iowa Agricultural College and Farm opened its doors to students. Nineteen years later in 1887, the Hatch Act granted the College \$15,000 in federal funds to promote more community involvement, namely in the creation of agricultural experiment stations and for the circulation of new information generated by the College.

The first community activities of the College were quite similar to those later established by the Extension Service. In particular, the Seed Corn Special and other educational trains were so popular that they prompted the development of the Extension Service. The special trains and other educational outreach pursuits demanded so much of the College's time and staff that it was a necessity to separate them from the College so as to continue both efficiently. Eventually, in 1906 and under the guidance of Perry G. Holden, the Extension Service came into being, and expanded to provide year-round involvement with rural communities. All throughout the year cow testing associations, domestic science courses, and addresses before women's and commercial clubs would have taken place. In the winter, short courses lasting one week and farmers' institutes were held, as well as corn shows for men and boys. Spring brought special trains, township picnics, and a variety of demonstrations, including seed testing demonstrations, and the county demonstration farms would have also been planted at this time. Community activities of all sorts took place throughout the summer, and into the fall. Extension work was the method of distributing information farther than the College and to those who could not travel there - results of the experiment station research, vocational education and general training all improved the overall quality of agricultural products and rural life, and fostered the agricultural community.

The short courses turned out to be one of the greatest successes of the early Extension Service. At the beginning, selected soils, farm crops, animal husbandry, home economics, horticulture, and dairying were the first fields of work considered fundamental subject areas to Extension work. However, by the end of his post in 1912, Holden had also added veterinary medicine, school work, vegetable gardening, dairy testing, agricultural engineering, botany, and entomology as options for fields of work within offered Extension short courses (short course subjects would continue to expand over time). Aside from home economics, which was reserved for women only, any man or woman able to pay the ticket price was allowed to participate. Equally successful in its own right, demonstration farms served two main purposes. The first

being the primary intention, which was to conduct experimentation and put theory to practice. The information yielded here would be passed on through the College and short courses. Second, the farms were locations for cooperative farming and community education. Farmers would attend short courses or institutes on the farms, and they would help with the planting and sowing each year.

The advancements achieved by the short courses and demonstration farm work were due in large part to the Smith-Lever Act of 1914. It required that the U.S.D.A. cooperate with the land-grant colleges in carrying out programs in agriculture and home economics, provided that the Extension work continued to give academic and practical instruction to persons not attending or resident in a land-grant college. As per the agreement, \$10,000 in federal funds would be granted to the Extension Service, and additional amounts (depending on the size of the population) would be given from a pool fund which must be offset by the state or organizations within the state.

However, the Extension Service would soon find a new purpose with the start of the First World War. The alignment of the United States with the Allies created huge need for an increase in food production. Suddenly, the healthiest crops were not just an added luxury, but a necessity, and the "*Food will win the war*" slogan dominated the mindset of farmers across the United States. Iowa in particular was called upon to get everyone involved in food production, and raise its livestock and crop yields by 25%. Men and women alike joined the effort, and the Work Reserve and community clubs became an outlet for children to pitch in. This was due largely in part to the increased presence of county agents. An agent was hired for each county (Pottawattamie hired two) to maximize motivation, to ensure the efficient distribution of wartime information as it pertained to agriculture, and also to ease the transition required by the inflated demand. These efforts combined, the 1917-1918 yield revealed that Iowa's production goals had not only been met, but exceeded in some areas. Pork production had been increased by 25%, while corn, oats, wheat, barley, and rye yields were increased by 26%.

Despite the war efforts, the need for such increased production did not last - neither did the accompanying profit. A period of depression following the war, heavily affecting Iowa's farmers. The rapid decrease in income left many unprepared for the changing, post-war economy, and loss of land due to bankruptcy was not a fate as uncommon as most would have liked. During the war, farm labor bureaus had been extensively organized to facilitate a smoother and more unified workforce throughout the state just as county agents had previously done to facilitate Extension work, but now Iowa was faced with rethinking the existence of the bureaus entirely due to lack of funding. They would eventually join with the state and establish a membership fee of five dollars. Though it was a slow process, Iowa's farmers readjusted and began establishing a new normal as the mid-1920s approached. By 1924, twenty years after the birth of the Extension Service, this new rhythm in which farmers and administrative staff alike felt comfortable had been forged.

## Extension Service Activities:

- Seed Corn “Gospel” Trains and other educational trains
- Short Courses (a week in length)
  - A typical day’s schedule:
    - 8:00am-4:00pm: class work on stock and grain judging
    - 4:00pm-6:00pm: lectures on animal diseases, rotation of crops, manures, etc.
    - 7:30pm-9:00pm: lectures by prominent people on general topics
- Farmers’ Institutes (3 days in length)
- Demonstration Farms
- To a lesser degree: fairs, granges, clubs, community activities (picnics, carnivals, etc.)

## Major Events:

- Morrill Act of 1862: Making higher education a priority for the future; each state to be allocated land based on the number of representatives and senators in Congress; later amended such that it reflected the need of public, accessible education for those affected by the onset of the Civil War. Iowa Agricultural College, having been established in 1858, is the first to accept and be awarded provisions of the act.
- Federal Land-Grant Act of 1862: gave the College 204,000 acres with which to establish itself as an “State Agricultural College and Farm”
- Iowa Agricultural College and Farm: opened on October 21, 1868.
- Hatch Act of 1887: appropriated federal funds, initially of \$15,000 each, to state land-grant colleges in order to create a series of agricultural experiment stations, as well as pass along new information, especially in the areas of soil minerals and plant growth.
- 1901: The first farmers’ short course is held at the College. It lasts for two weeks, and is organized by Dean C. F. Curtiss.
- 1903: The first county demonstration farm is established in Sioux County.
- 1904: Holden starts the Seed Corn Gospel Trains
- 1906: Extension Service officially created (third major function of the College)
- 1912: Perry G. Holden resigns this year.
- Smith-Lever Act of 1914: This piece of legislation required cooperation between the land-grant colleges and the USDA in carrying on their programs in agriculture and home economics, provided that extension work consisted of giving instruction and practical instruction to persons not attending or resident in a land-grant college. \$10,000 in federal funds, plus additional amounts given from pool fund depending on the size of the population would be awarded, but additional funding must be offset by the state or organizations within the state.
- 1914: R.K. Bliss becomes the Director of Extension Service, and the first county agents are employed and sent to work in Scott county and Clinton county. Several more followed in the coming years. By 1918, every county had an agent.
- Food Production Act in 1917: greatly expanded the extension employees and staff

- 1917: Short course subjects are further expanded to include dairy manufactures and dairy association work, truck crops, agricultural economics, agricultural education, club work, and farm bureau organization and supervision.
- April 6, 1917: The United States enters WWI
- November 11, 1918: The Armistice ending WWI is signed. The Extension Service now faces the challenge of finding funding and work for the additional wartime county agents. Many farmers experience great financial burden after the demand for agricultural production significantly decreases.
- 1918: Farm bureaus and the Extension Service merge on a more significant level.