

# The Birth of the New Mexico Cooperative Extension Service

In 2014, we celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Smith-Lever Act, which established the Cooperative Extension Service, a state-by-state national network of educators who extend university-based research and knowledge to the people.

*Celebrate 100 years of extending knowledge  
and changing lives*



First County Agent Force in New Mexico, 1916



College of Agricultural, Consumer  
and Environmental Sciences  
[extension.nmsu.edu](http://extension.nmsu.edu)

*"...Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That in order to aid in diffusing among the people of the United States useful and practical information on subjects relating to agriculture and home economics, and to encourage the application of the same, there may be inaugurated in connection with the college or colleges in each state...agricultural extension work which shall be carried on in cooperation with the United States Department of Agriculture..."*

– Smith-Lever Act of 1914

*Text excerpted from*

## **First Biennial Report of the Agricultural Extension Service, 1915 and 1916 New Mexico College of Agricultural and Mechanic Arts**

### **Beginning of Extension Work**

The first Extension work done in New Mexico was in 1900 when the College began conducting farmers' institutes. These were continued until the organization of the Extension Service in 1914. From 1907 to the end of 1909 the College had one worker spend considerable time trying to perfect the county farmers' institute societies in several counties, expecting to reach and help the rural people thru [sic] them. But this work, on account of insufficient funds, was discontinued at the end of 1909 when the late J. D. Tinsley, who was in charge of it, resigned to accept a position with the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway company. The first Farmers' Week was held at the College in 1911 and for many years was an annual affair. Farmers' Days had been held prior to this and many have been held since.

Following the passage of the Smith-Lever Act in May, 1914, an agreement for Cooperative Extension work between the New Mexico State College and the Director of the States Relations Service of the Federal Government, for cooperative Extension work in New Mexico, was signed on August 3, 1914. This agreement became effective on September 2.



Demonstrating canning over an open fire (1920s or 1930s).

### **Range Livestock Improvement**

Once started, the practice [of improving herds through culling] became well established, and with the drastic culling of herds furthered by the Government in 1934, many of the inferior animals in New Mexico were done away with. During the period 1929 to 1935, a total of 4,429 registered or high grade cows was purchased. While beef cattle have taken the lead in the introduction of registered sires and cows, very good results have been obtained with the other species of animals.



4-H club members learning to make hooked rugs

### **Home Industries**

In 1930, handicraft work was done in eight counties, interest being particularly strong in rugmaking. Junior clubs were organized and the Indian handicraft work was continued at Zuni, basketweaving being engaged in, as well as pottery. In 1930 an outstanding girl's 4-H club team from San Miguel county demonstrated the making of a hooked rug at the National Western Stock Show in Denver, using native roots and herbs to wash and dye the yarns.

. . . In 1934 Santa Fe, San Miguel, Rio Arriba, and Taos counties continued to show a lively interest in home industry work with native wool. A considerable amount of such goods was marketed, mainly in Santa Fe. In 1935 the outstanding work in home industries was done in the northern counties of the state as in the three years preceding. San Miguel county carried work in wool, leather, and furniture making; Rio Arriba county reported \$1700 worth of blankets and other woolen handicraft sold; and Taos county reported increased interest being taken in all native crafts.

# The 1930s

## Depression-Era Responsibilities

[T]he Extension agent has the same sort of duties and responsibilities that he has always had, those of representing the State Agricultural College and the U. S. Department of Agriculture in assisting farm people with their agricultural and homemaking problems. In the second place, the Extension agent is confronted with the multiplicity of activities required in developing and maintaining the program of the Agricultural Adjustment Administration, consisting at the present time of the Agricultural Conservation program, which may apply to any private and state owned farm and range land. Along with these two large responsibilities, the Extension agent is confronted with the third, the largest and most important task, of working with farm people in making sound, long-time plans for the agriculture of the county.

## Communications

It has been necessary for the Extension agent to train workers to carry a great portion of the responsibility, especially responsibility for the details in efficiently maintaining the current agricultural conservation program. . . Reports of county agents show that 20,402 bulletins and circulars were distributed by them during 1935. The State Extension Office distributed 75,400 bulletins, besides those sent out by the county Extension agents.



Collage from the 1936 *Summary of Extension Work* shows preparations for drought, including a reserve supply of dairy feed, a granary filled with threshed grain, a trench silo, and a ground tank of water for livestock and garden.

Annual College Field Day: inspecting crops (1920s or 1930s).



## County Agent Work

The county agent project comprises the larger part of our extension work. It is the foundation upon which all the work is built.

A county agent is a man well trained both in the science and practice of agriculture and one who has many sources of information at his disposal. He is not placed in a county as a farmer's or stockman's adviser, but as an agricultural leader and organizer. He is a collector and distributor of valuable information along agricultural lines. He is a carrier of the best farm and ranch practices from one farmer and ranchman to another. He is willing at all times to furnish or secure for his constituents information on any agricultural problems which may arise. He works solely for the best interests of the farmers and stockmen in his county and it might be said that he is the link in the chain that connects the farmer and stockman up with their agricultural college and the United States Department of Agriculture...

County agent work in New Mexico began October 3, 1914 with the appointment of P. D. Southworth as county agent in Luna county, followed on October 20 by the appointment of M. R. Gonzalez in San Miguel county, and V. L. Martineau in Colfax county, and on October 22 of J. W. Rigney in Chaves county, giving us in 1914 a nucleus of four men. Three additional counties, Dona Ana, Eddy and Torrance, were organized in 1915 and two, Bernalillo and Union counties in 1916. A very healthy public sentiment exists thruout [sic] the state in favor of the work and from the many requests for information as to how counties may organize for it indicates a very bright future for the work.

## The 1910s and 1920s

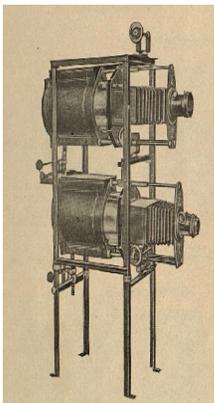
TABLE 1.—Sources of funds used for extension work, 1915 and 1916.

SOURCES OF FUNDS	1914-1915	1915-1916
Smith Lever, Federal.....	\$10,000.00	\$13,413.20
Smith Lever, State.....		3,413.20
State General.....	604.26	505.32
County * .....	4,916.66	11,166.00
U. S. D. A. **.....	7,500.00	9,116.67
Other .....		145.69
<b>Total, .....</b>	<b>\$23,020.92</b>	<b>\$37,760.08</b>

Sources of funds used for Extension work in the first years, totaling less than \$25,000 in 1915 and less than \$38,000 in 1916. (From the *First Biennial Report*.)

### Financing the Work

... the United States Department of Agriculture up to date has contributed for the support of the work more than double the amount contributed by the state. The Extension revenue is not sufficient to enable the Service to equip itself to meet the demands made upon it. More specialists are needed and several more county agents could be placed if the Extension Service had funds with which to meet its part of the financial cooperation. A state law is needed providing for state aid and one authorizing county commissioners to make appropriations for the support of the work.



### Office and equipment

[The Extension Service]...now finds itself housed in four very comfortable office rooms, equipped according to their needs with desks, chairs, vertical files, card index, bulletin cases, type-writer, tables, etc. The service has acquired a fair agricultural and home economics library, but very little in the way of illustrative material, such as lantern slides, moving pictures, charts, etc. However, some material has been acquired and is being used to very good advantage; especially is this true of the stereopticon outfits and charts.

A stereopticon, 1906  
(Wikipedia commons)

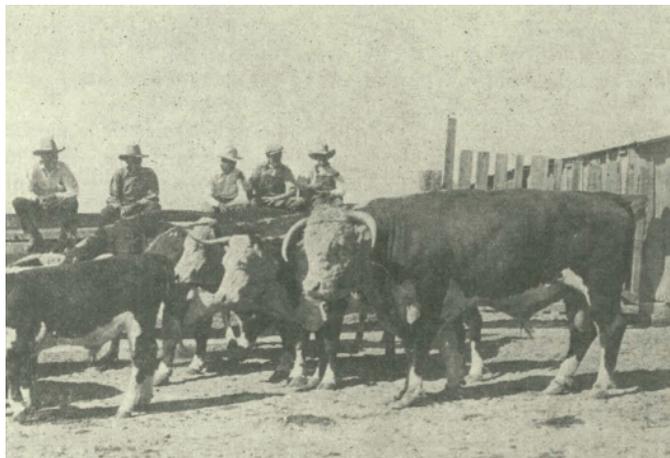
### 4-H Clubs & the Extension train

The beginning of 4-H club work in New Mexico dates back to 1912. In January of that year the New Mexico Agricultural College and the Santa Fe Railway ran an agricultural train on all parts of the Santa Fe Railway system in the state. The train carried livestock and farm exhibits and educational talks were given by specialists of the Agricultural College. Special meetings were held for the young people, in which boys' and girls' club work was discussed, and where active interest was shown clubs were organized. In 1913 the same general plan was followed with an agricultural train run in cooperation with the El Paso and Southwestern Railway, which visited all points on the Southwestern system. As a result, several boys' and girls' clubs were organized in eastern New Mexico.



Agents on the Extension train shared research and innovations regarding new farm crops, horticulture, and animal husbandry. The Extension train coming to town became a major event in most communities. It was not uncommon for specialists to speak to 13,000 by a trip's end. (This image is probably from the 1920s.)

State and County Home Agents .....	16
Foods and Nutrition .....	18
Clothing .....	20
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(above)  
Categories of  
Extension work  
in New Mexico,  
as summarized in  
1936

(left) Cattle grading  
demonstration:  
Registered herd  
sires, 1920s or  
1930s



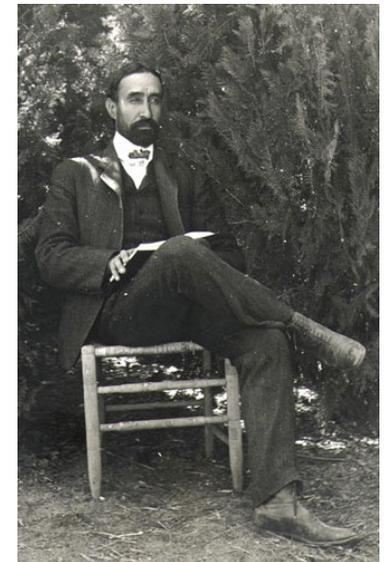
Attendance at Farm-  
ers' and Homemakers'  
Week, in the early  
years, was limited by  
the difficulties of travel.  
District farm wom-  
en's camps, held from  
1926-1931- two in the  
northern part of the  
state and two in the  
southern part of the  
state - made it easier.

### Extension Schools

Each year at the College a Farmers' and Homemakers' Week is held. At first very little interest was shown. Distances are great, railroad rates high, and the College being located in the extreme southern part of the state seems to make it impossible to get very many people to attend outside of those in the county in which the College is located. However, last year's attendance was very encouraging. There was a total registration of 200; 73 women and 127 men.

### Language

One of the future problems in county agent work and in all extension work in New Mexico will be the finding of competent men and women for the positions, who speak the Spanish and English languages. Sixty percent of the state population is Spanish-American, seventy-five percent of which speak very little or no English. The only solution of the problem as the writer sees it, is to educate and train some of our own Spanish-American boys and girls for extension work... Extension work can never be developed to its fullest extent until provisions are made for reaching and serving the Spanish-American people.



Fabian Garcia, an Experiment  
Station and Extension scientist,  
was an early bilingual resource for  
New Mexico farmers.

## Organization

All work is carried on under definite projects, and each project is in charge of its project leader who is directly responsible to the Extension Director. After the work has been thoroly [sic] discussed by all concerned and approved the details of it are then left to the project leader to carry out. . . All extension workers are responsible to the subject matter department at the College for the subject matter taught. All publications and circulars before issued are submitted to the subject matter department for their approval. Extension specialists are encouraged to keep in touch with the work of the Experiment Station. . .

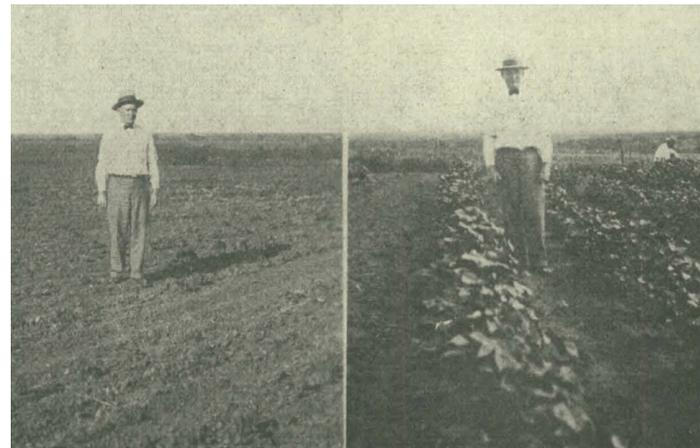
During the biennium the following circulars and bulletins have been issued:

Bulletin.	Copies.
No. 1. Jan. 1915. Boys' and Girls' Club Work.....	3000
<i>Circulars.</i>	
No. 1. May, 1915. Home Economics Extension.....	3000
No. 2. June 1915. Facts About Silos for New Mexico, (Spanish and English).....	5000
No. 3. June 1915. First Lessons in Dairying in New Mexico, .....	7000
No. 4. Nov. 1915. Study Programs Women's Clubs, Foods, .....	500
No. 5. Nov. 1915. Study Program Women's Clubs, House Planning,.....	500
No. 6. Nov. 1915. Study Program Women's Clubs, Poultry, .....	500
No. 7. Dec. 1915. Study and Program Outlines for Homemakers' Associations, .....	500
No. 8. Dec. 1915. Boys' and Girls' Garden and Canning Clubs, .....	4000
No. 9. Dec. 1915. Boys' and Girls' Field Crops Project..	4000
No. 10. Dec. 1915. Boys' Pig Club Project, 1915,.....	4000
No. 11. Dec. 1915. Boys' and Girls' Poultry Club Project, 1915 .....	4000
No. 12. Dec. 1915. Girls' Cooking Club Work, 1915,...	4000
No. 13. Dec. 1915. Girls' Sewing Clubs, 1915.....	4000

Circulars and bulletins issued during 1914 & 1915. (From the *First Biennial Report.*)

Excerpted from

## Summary of Extension Work in New Mexico (1936) New Mexico College of Agricultural and Mechanic Arts G. R. Quesenberry, Director State College, New Mexico



Unterraced field vs. contoured and terraced field: Extension demonstration, 1927.

### Establishment of the Extension Service

The Extension Service was established in order to aid in diffusing among the people of the United States useful and practical information on subjects relating to agriculture and home economics, and to encourage the application of the same. It has met a wide variety of situations in the 22 years of its history. While it has fostered continuously a program of agricultural and rural life improvement, it has met emergencies of agriculture in the World War [World War I], of pestilences, floods, drought, infestations of destructive insects, livestock and plant diseases, and the problems of agriculture in the great depression of the past few years. More changes have come about in the agriculture of our country during the last 20 years than in many scores of years prior to the last. The Extension Service has had a very potent part in the constructive changes that have come about.

*From the farmers' viewpoint no more important act [than the Smith-Lever Act] had ever been passed by Congress. It recognized the need of giving more direct attention and assistance to the solving of rural problems.*

## Publications

The material for the various publications issued has been prepared by the respective project leader in charge of the work, with the assistance of the subject matter specialists and the department head concerned. All literature has been prepared in response to a demand from people out in the state and also in the furtherance of some project work under way. . .

[We] publish a monthly "The New Mexico Farm Courier," and send it directly to the farmers. . . . Ten thousand copies are issued monthly and we are very much encouraged over the way it is being accepted by the rural people.