

Chester Extension Programs

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"My responsibility is to work with the board and work with the commissioners and be the liaison between the two. We are encouraged to look for grants and unique opportunities to expand. I have found that the administrative work has gotten more demanding."

Federal and state funds join with county money to support the service. To help offset diminishing federal funding, the state appropriated an extra \$5 million this year.

When she joined Chester County's Extension staff in 1973 Dougherty never expected to become Director, a position tradi-

tionally assumed by the Agricultural Agent. Since becoming one of the first female county directors in 1981, she has presided over both growth and change, with greater need for a multi-disciplinary approach toward a variety of audiences.

In 1983 Chester was the first county Extension office in Pennsylvania to use computers. Not only does computer technology aid preparation of the 56 newsletters

regularly sent out, it is used in record keeping and teaching.

"With the dairy herd buyout decision," Dougherty recalls, "people were able to come in, put some key information in the computer and do an evaluation as to whether or not they should be applying for this."

The statewide Extension Task Group Dougherty chairs targeted three areas of direction for the future: using new data-based sys-

tems for decision making and overall management in a technological society; making Penn State a Center of Excellence; and working with other institutions that have information.

Extension work presents an interesting challenge to the County Director. She finds that there is so much to each of the agent's fields, it never really gets stale. "They are a very vivacious group," Dougherty concludes.

Extension: The Way It Was In Chester Co.

BY MARJORIE KEEN
Chester Co. Correspondent

With \$18,000 allocated by the Pennsylvania General Assembly in 1913, agricultural extension agents were set up in Chester, Lancaster and Bradford counties. The legislature also authorized county commissioners to appropriate up to \$1,500 annually to support extension work.

In the fall of that year Chester County secured a Pierce Arrow motorcycle for the use of its first extension agent, Charles F. (Charlie) Preston.

The following spring the county put in potato plots to measure responses to different types and amounts of fertilizer. The agent presented lessons to rural school teachers on testing clover and corn seed and grafting fruit trees. The teachers were, in turn, to demonstrate these practices to their students.

Even though the 4-H clover became the national emblem of boys' and girls' club work in 1911, the term "4-H" was rarely used in Pennsylvania. The very first reference in an extension agent's report was made in March 1914 by Chester County's Charlie Preston.

Also in 1914 Preston took on the job of teaching members of the girls' canning club how to preserve their vegetables. Because of their complete unfamiliarity with a home canning outfit, he reported, it was necessary for him to assist, especially in the manner of soldering tin cans.

In a later report Preston stated, "While I have personally eaten these beans and consider their product a fair quality, it was thought by Mrs. (Nelly) Snyder that on account of the lack of blanching and in some cases incorrect soldering, it would be wisest to destroy the whole lot (of some 200 odd cans)."

Chester County Extension began early to involve local leaders in the home economics program. A recognized expert on canning, cooking and household matters, the wife of an executive committee member gave a Saturday canning demonstration in 1914.

The next year Preston reported that 65 had attended a three-day apple grading and packing school at the large Darlington Strode orchard in West Chester. He also met with peach growers from Chester and Delaware counties to explore cooperative marketing. And Preston did some grafting of European walnut scions on black walnut stock.

In its community improvement role, Preston's office became headquarters in 1916 for the movement in favor of a women's restroom in the county seat.

Attempting to increase food production during World War I,

the county agent started war school gardens in West Chester. He also secured for Chester County four tractors made available by the state Department of Agriculture. All four were kept busy throughout the 1918 season and two were still in use for fall plowing.

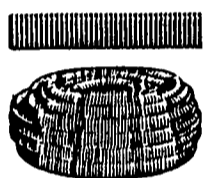
By this time Charlie Preston had been reassigned as assistant professor of farm organization extension at Penn State.

Chester County's livestock extension program was built around a livestock industry that included breeders' associations for poultry, trotting horses and heavy draft horses.

The Chester County Plan developed in 1920 carried the slogan, "Better Bulls and Boars Build Bigger Bank Balances." The U.S. Secretary of Agriculture was present at a picnic to kick off the plan, described as "the most important agriculture meeting ever held in Chester County."

Two recent books from The Pennsylvania State University give fascinating glimpses into Extension's early years: *Cooperative Extension; How It Began in Pennsylvania* by Frank Zettle (1986) and *The College of Agriculture at Penn State* by Michael Bezilla (1987).

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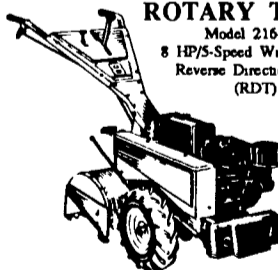
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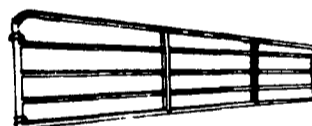


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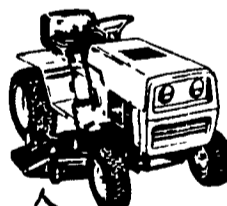
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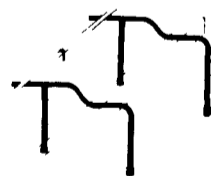
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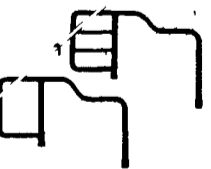
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