

# Extension Agents Led Rural Progress Effort

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The history of the South Carolina Cooperative Extension Service is largely an unsung chapter in the state's history. Yet the work done by thousands of extension service agents laid the foundation for much of the social and economic progress in South Carolina's rural and mill village communities in the 20th Century.

The Cooperative Extension Service formally began with the passage of the Smith-Lever Act of 1914, but its roots date to the passage of the 1862 Morrill Act, which provided for at least one land grant college for each state.

In 1887 the government passed a law establishing an experimental station at each of the colleges. By the turn of the century, a large number of Americans were getting access to research findings in agriculture and home economics.

The 1914 Smith-Lever Act was named after South Carolina Congressman Asbury F. Lever and Sen. Hoke Smith of Georgia. It provided for cooperation among the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the land grant colleges in conducting extension work. Instruction, field demonstrations, publications and other educational methods were given in agriculture and home economics to people who didn't attend college.

Winthrop College reached an agreement with Clemson University and the S.C. Department of Agriculture in 1915 to take responsibility for home economics extension work.

As early as the 1890s, Winthrop's President D.B. Johnson began advocating home demonstrations and home economics. Under his leadership, Winthrop began offering the first of a continuing series of summer short courses for women.

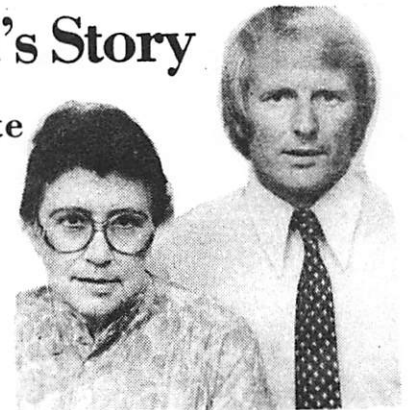
In 1909 Winthrop established a practice house, or home management house, which was one of the first of its kind in the U.S. Groups of students lived in the house for two weeks and gained experience in preparing meals and taking care of the home.

The council, which eventually had 6,000 members, made a concerted effort to develop leadership and initiative among the farm women.

This paid off during World War II, when women answered the country's call so quickly and effectively that they became largely responsible for food production and conservation. Farm women also participated in war bond drives and Red Cross work and helped nurses during influenza epidemics.

## South Carolina's Story

The making of a state



After spending time in the practice house, Winthrop students went out with missionary zeal to help improve the quality of life in the rural areas. They showed South Carolinians how to use labor-saving devices to relieve the drudgery of work, how to improve health conditions through better sanitation and a wholesome, varied diet, and how to beautify the home and its furnishings.

By the summer of 1911, Winthrop and Clemson sent students on a cooperative 10-week train tour, traveling through practically every county in South Carolina.

In the mornings demonstrations showed the use of the fireless and steam cookers. In the afternoons talks were usually devoted to sanitation and health, preventable diseases and related subjects. Free bulletins and other publications were distributed.

At one of Winthrop's short courses in 1921, farm women organized the South Carolina Council of Farm Women, making the state the first to organize its home demonstration clubs.

Women's organizations involved with home extension or home economics, such as the South Carolina Extension Homemakers' Council and South Carolina Home Economics Association, began lobbying the state Legislature, and as a result, laws were passed requiring that breads and other products be enriched.

Although the purpose remains the same, the South Carolina Cooperative Extension Service has adjusted to

meet changing conditions and technological innovations.

Each year representatives from many countries come to the U.S. to study the Cooperative Extension Service. Through teaching, research and education, South Carolina has contributed to America's status as "the breadbasket of the world."