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4-H Club Beginnings Brochure

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MSU: COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE-
4 H CLUB

Beginnings of
4H from
Boys Corn Club



FIRST FEDERALLY
SPONSORED
PROGRAM FOR
RURAL YOUTH....

The 4-H Club program for rural boys and girls began almost as soon as the Agriculture Extension work, of which it is a part. Only four years after the first cooperative farm demonstration was established in Texas in 1903, a boys' corn club in Holmes County, Mississippi, became the first Federally sponsored rural youth organization in the United States.

From this boys' corn club in 1907, scientific farming demonstrations by youths spread rapidly to other states and grew into the 4-H Club program. Millions of boys and girls in 4-H Clubs all over America have since pioneered in using better methods of farming and homemaking, while becoming better citizens through 4-H.

Originator of the Holmes County boys' corn club was W. H. "Corn Club" Smith, county superintendent of schools, later state superintendent of education, and finally president of Mississippi State College. One of his objects of the corn clubs was: "To prove to the boy, his father, and the community generally that there is more in the soil than the farmer has ever gotten out of it; to inspire the boy with love of the land by showing him how he can get wealth out of it, tilling it in a better way and keeping an expense account of his undertaking."

Closely supervising the 120 corn club boys was W. B. Lundy, first county agent of Holmes County and one of the first in the nation. These boys applied scientific "know how" from their land Grant Mississippi State College (then Mississippi A. & M. College) and from the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

In the Fall of 1907, the boys had made yields as high as 120 bushels per acre, and most of them exhibited corn at the fair in Lexington. Dr. Seaman A. Knapp, pioneer worker of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, attended this fair, and was so favorably impressed that he gave "Corn Club" Smith an appointment which made him the first man in the United States officially recognized as a boys' club agent.

D. C. Lundy, a member of the original corn club and son of the county agent who assisted the boys in Holmes County, was in 1909 the first boy from Mississippi and one of four from Southern States to win a trip to Washington, D. C. because of his outstanding corn demonstration and judging work. He produced 120 bushels per acre. Corn grown on similar land nearby, by methods common at that time, yielded 18 bushels per acre.

Quickly spreading throughout the South, boys' corn clubs started much of the movement toward diversification. This balancing of cotton with livestock, pastures and feed crops ushered in an era of more stable, more profitable and happier rural living.

Agricultural progress begun before 1907 in Holmes County has continued to the present. Cotton yield for the county averaged over a bale per acre in 1952. Beef cattle and pastures of the county are among the best in the South. The standard of living enjoyed by farm families and citizens in general is good and rapidly becoming better.



The 4-H Club program is conducted by local agents of the Agricultural Extension Service of Mississippi State College. Adult leaders, parents and active citizens are necessary for this organization to be the most good for the greatest number of boys and girls.

The marker erected in Holmes County bears these words:



FIRST BOYS' CORN CLUB

1907



4-H Clubs are reaching millions of American boys and girls yearly. These clubs, known throughout the world, developed from **Boys' Corn Club** started February 1907, in Holmes County, by William Hall "Corn Club" Smith cooperating with Mississippi State College and Seaman A Knapp of U. S. Department of Agriculture. This was first Federally sponsored rural youth organization in U. S. The 120 boys of this Club used scientific methods, under supervision of County Agent W. B. Lundy, making up to 120 bushels corn per acre, starting the shift to diversified farming.

MOTTO: To Make The Best Better



The 4-H Club program is conducted by local agents of the Agricultural Extension Service of Mississippi State College. Adult leaders, interested parents and active boosters are necessary for this organization to do the most good for the greatest possible number of boys and girls.