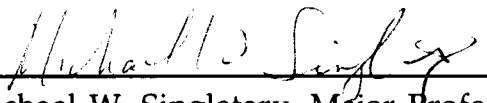


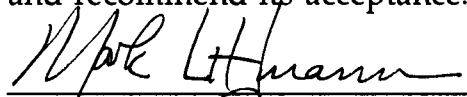
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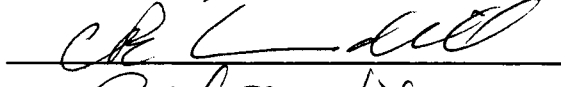


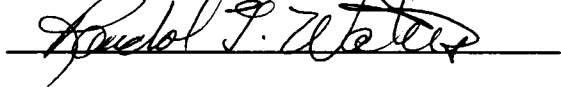
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Associate Vice Chancellor and
Dean of The Graduate School

Sowing Seeds:
The Daily Press and the Evolution
of Tennessee's
Agricultural Extension Service

A Dissertation
Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

James G. Thornton, Jr.
August 1998

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DEDICATION

For Anne,
Allyson, Ashley, and Lesley

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

During my years as a graduate student in the College of Communications, I have come to admire and respect its faculty for their abilities and skills as communicators, teachers, and researchers, and for their willingness to assist students in requests large and small. I am especially grateful to my Dissertation Committee, Dr. Michael Singletary, chairman; Dr. Paul Ashdown, Dr. Edward Caudill, Dr. Mark Littman, and Dr. Randol Waters for their edits, advice, counsel, and encouragement. I also thank Dr. George Everett, an original member of the committee, who retired before I could complete the dissertation. I also appreciate so much Dr. Littman's willingness to serve as a committee member in the place of Dr. Everett.

ABSTRACT

This study examines how three Tennessee daily newspapers treated and reacted to the concept of "teaching by demonstration,"—educating farmers in their fields—the central idea that would lead to the formation of the Tennessee Agricultural Extension Service and others like it around the country. The study covers a 5 1/2-year period from January 1909 to June 1914, one month after the Smith-Lever Act formally established a national extension education system operated through the nation's land grant universities. Chosen for this study were three of the state's largest dailies, *The Commercial Appeal* in Memphis, the *Nashville Banner*, and the *Daily Journal and Tribune* in Knoxville. The study also looks at the evolution of Tennessee's Agricultural Extension Service and farming conditions within Tennessee and the South during this time.

The study found that the idea of teaching by demonstration gained strength in the press, especially as the newspapers began paying greater attention to children's agricultural clubs. Coverage of the concept was often linked to events. More rapid acceptance and application of teaching by demonstration may have been hindered more by a legal restraint than by farmer indifference or hostility.

Editorial reaction to the idea by all three newspapers was favorable and at times enthusiastic and perceived as a solution to poor farm performance. Although the University of Tennessee and the Federal Cooperative Demonstration Work program used "demonstrations" differently in teaching farmers, the press never compared or examined the two concepts.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

About 1892, a tiny black beetle sporting a large snout crossed the Rio Grande into South Texas, settling down for a long lunch in a vast new food supply. The insect either flew across the river or was carried across in seed cotton bound for the gin. However the mode of travel, the invasion of Dixie by the Mexican cotton boll weevil had begun.

By 1894, the weevil had moved into six counties in southern Texas. The infestation then spread in a great arc north and east, leaving behind cotton fields not worth picking, bankrupt businesses, counties almost depopulated, and a people near panic. Ten years later, the weevil had reached Louisiana, infesting 10 counties, and was nearing Arkansas and Oklahoma.

By 1908, conservative estimates placed revenue losses because of the insect at \$125 million. Procedures such as early planting recommended by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to deal with the beetle had little effect in slowing its advance, and no insecticide could stop it. Although farmers would later use these procedures to grow cotton profitably in spite of the pest, by the early 1900s the perception was that *the* principal cash crop of Southern agriculture faced ruin.¹

¹ W. D. Hunter, "The Boll Weevil Problem," U.S. Department of Agriculture, *Farmers' Bulletin* 344 (Washington, 1909), 5-7; Roy V. Scott, *The Reluctant Farmer, The Rise of Agricultural Extension to 1914* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1970), 212; Alfred C. True, *A History of Agricultural Extension Work in the United States 1785-1923* U.S. Department of Agriculture, Miscellaneous Publication No. 15 (Washington, 1928), 60.

By 1910, cotton farmers and businessmen in West Tennessee had watched the pestilence advance to their front door. In a letter dated October 20, 1910, to the United States Department of Agriculture, Memphis lawyer Lem Banks wrote,

The panicky condition that accompanies the advance of the boll weevil, the loss of money, time, and the hardship endured by the people, could be largely avoided if the people could be prepared for the weevil by the time the weevil reaches their locality. At the present time, the weevil is getting into the outer edges of the Memphis territory, in Arkansas and Mississippi. The destruction of crops by this pest has not been felt in the Memphis market yet, but will be felt more and more each year.

Banks requested an agricultural agent be stationed in Memphis: "Let us have his help in combating the ignorance of, and indifference to, good farming methods that prevail in our section."²

West Tennesseans and their neighbors in the adjoining states of Arkansas and Mississippi were well aware of the danger posed by the insect. To help prevent its accidental entry into the state, the Tennessee Board of Entomology in 1905 declared a quarantine against 133 counties in Texas and 12 parishes in Louisiana, barring the shipment of cotton lint, seed and corn in the shuck into Tennessee. Bringing live boll weevils into the state was also declared illegal. In several stories, the Memphis *Commercial Appeal* reported the weevil's devastation of the 1903 cotton crop in Texas and the jittery cotton market prior to that year's harvest.³ Throughout the decade and later, this

² Farmer's Cooperative Demonstration Work and the Division of Extension, University of Tennessee, *Annual Reports 1910-1917*, 25.

³ Gordon M. Bentley, "The Control of Insects, Fungi and Other Pests," University of Tennessee, Agricultural Experiment Station *Bulletin 4* (December, 1905): 44-45; "Chronicle Summary," 14 August 1903, 9; "Texas Cotton Crop," *Commercial Appeal*, 25 August 1903, 1; "Boll Weevil Convention," *Commercial Appeal*, 11 October 1903, 1.

newspaper and others in Tennessee tracked the weevil's movement, reporting the futile efforts to keep it from entering one state and then another, and, most importantly, the battles against agricultural backwardness taking place on farms in the wake of the infestation as it swept eastward. Fortune smiled for a while on Tennessee's cotton growers, though; the boll weevil did not enter the state until November 1915, when limited numbers were found in Shelby, Fayette, Hardeman, Hardin, McNairy and Henry counties.⁴

In the meantime, Tennesseans and Southerners would be shown again and again that the real enemy of the farmer was never the cotton boll weevil, but was as Banks had written: his own ignorance and indifference.

As the weevil's shadow fell across Texas and the South, creating great apprehension and fear, it also accelerated forces that would forge the last link in a nation-wide agricultural education/communication system supported in part by federal taxes. That link, comprising a mobile army of teachers and researchers, became known as the Cooperative Extension Service or as it is called in Tennessee, the Agricultural Extension Service.

Within the fight against the weevil—and within the more comprehensive campaign for better agricultural practices aided by the press—would coalesce economic, political and educational forces that would establish agricultural extension as an agency supported and directed through the cooperation of the national, state and local governments. With the

⁴ "Report of the Associate Entomologist," University of Tennessee Agricultural Experiment Station, *Twenty-ninth Annual Report* (Knoxville, 1916), 14.

signing of the Smith-Lever Act in May 1914 by President Woodrow Wilson, that last link was welded in place.

Background

Since July 1, 1914, Tennessee's Agricultural Extension Service has operated as an arm of the University of Tennessee to communicate research-based information to citizens in all 95 counties. Today, about 600 agents, specialists and support staff, along with several thousand volunteers, attempt to carry out the extension mission, which the service proclaims is "to help people help themselves." To meet its legislative mandate, which begins with the Smith-Lever Act, the extension service as well as others across the country historically has planned and carried out its educational programs within four broad areas: agriculture, home economics, community resource development, and 4-H youth development.

Within these four areas, the Tennessee organization has focused on nine "priority educational programs" during the 1990s. They are: agricultural production efficiency and sustainability; environmental stewardship; family stability, strength and wellness; food safety and nutrition for health; 4-H youth development; leadership development; management; marketing; and natural resources.⁵ Once aimed primarily toward a rural/farm audience, extension programs are now carried into the cities. An extension publication states:

⁵ The University of Tennessee Agricultural Extension Service, "Programs for the 90's," 3-5, SP412-2M-2/93; The University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture *Directory*, 1994-1995, 21-58.

Some think of us as rural. And we are. But, we're urban, too. You'll find us in Nashville, Memphis and Knoxville, as well as Byrdstown and Tiptonville. We're in every county in Tennessee.⁶

Evolving to serve a broader audience came about in part because of a steadily declining farm population. On October 8, 1993, the Census Bureau announced it would no longer conduct its annual survey of farm residents because this group now constituted only 1.9 percent of the nation's population. The bureau's final farm survey, conducted that year, put the nation's farm population at 4.6 million, a drop of 6 million since 1980. Tennessee's farm population also declined, falling from 175,673 in 1980 to 111,680 in 1990, a loss of almost 64,000. In 1990, farm population accounted for only 2.3 percent of the state's total population.⁷

Tennessee's Agricultural Extension Service, College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources, Agricultural Experiment Station and College of Veterinary Medicine make up the four administrative units of the Institute of Agriculture. Under the University of Tennessee System, the Institute holds an equal administrative standing with the universities at Knoxville, Martin, Memphis and Chattanooga. The Institute's structure allows a close interaction and sharing of resources by faculty and staff of its four units. Many faculty hold joint appointments in the college and extension service, which disseminates research-based information, or experiment station, which conducts research. The extension service is directed from Morgan Hall on the

⁶ The University of Tennessee Agricultural Extension Service, "Bringing Knowledge to Tennesseans," 2, SP407-5M-12/93.

⁷ Barbara Vobdejda, "Agriculture No Longer Counts," *The Washington Post*, 9 October 1993, A1; Center for Business and Economic Research, *Tennessee Statistical Abstract 1996/97* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee, 1996), 431.

Agricultural Campus, where specialists and other support staff also have their offices. But the operational unit is in the individual county, and it is usually here that teacher meets student.

State extension services, such as Tennessee's, owe their existence to a cooperative partnership between the federal Department of Agriculture, state land grant universities and county governments. Each supports the partnership financially, and each contributes to the development of educational plans. However, in exchange for federal financial support, final approval of annual plans of work rests with the federal government. This structure has allowed the Cooperative Extension Service to become the "single largest informal education system in the world."⁸

Today, more than \$1 billion is spent annually on cooperative extension in the United States and about 21,000 people are employed in the 50 state systems, six territories and District of Columbia. During the past several years, the federal government has contributed about one-third of extension's revenues, with the rest coming from state, county and private sources. For fiscal year 1997-98, Congress allocated \$454 million for extension, a drop of \$14 million from 1996-97. Tennessee's extension budget also dropped in 1997-98 to \$28.6 million, down by \$1.1 million from the year before. Of the 1997-98 budget, the federal government contributed \$7.9 million or about 27.6 percent.⁹

⁸ William I. Lindley, "The Cooperative Extension Service," in *Elements of the Structure of Agricultural Education* (Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 1993), 53.

⁹ General Accounting Office *USDA Research and Extension Agencies: Missions, Structures and Budgets* (Washington, 1993), 14, 18; Office of Management and Budget, *Budget of the United States Government, Appendix, Fiscal Year 1999* (Washington, 1998), 75-77; University of

The organization uses a variety of methods to conduct its educational mission and communicate information, including person-to-person contact, seminars, meetings, office visits, telephone, direct mail, publications, electronic bulletin boards, Web sites, satellite transmission and news articles in both print and electronic mass media. Tennessee's Extension Service, as in many other states, has its own communications division. Staffed by 11 people, this department—some might term it a public relations section—helps to create awareness of extension programs as it packages information and news for dissemination across the state.

Purpose of the Study

During the long search for a more effective way to persuade American farmers, particularly Southern farmers, to grow crops and raise livestock based upon something other than custom and tradition, daily and weekly newspapers usually allied themselves with agricultural colleges, their experiment stations, and others who were struggling to sell science to men who planted and tended their crops by the moon. These publications devoted many column inches to news touting better agricultural practices and to editorials exhorting their rural neighbors to change their ways. Despite these efforts by the press and its allies, most farmers usually rejected suggestions for change and kept their ways. And the search continued for a way to convince farmers that agriculture could be made more profitable and farm life less dreadful.

Tennessee Budget Summary Report, Fiscal Year 1997-98, Book I, "Estimated Income Summary," 22.

In August 1908, President Theodore Roosevelt appointed the Commission on Country Life to investigate the problems of rural people. The commission was charged with determining how the "farmer should get the largest possible return in money, comfort, and social advantages from the crop he grows" as well as "the largest possible return in crops from the land he farms." Because Roosevelt wanted the report by year's end, he directed commissioners to summarize known problems related to farm life, as well as solutions that had already been proposed, rather than conduct a lengthy and redundant investigation. Commission members included prominent educators and journalists of the day such as Liberty Hyde Bailey, dean of the New York College of Agriculture at Cornell, who served as chairman; Walter Hines Page, editor of *World's Work* magazine; and, Henry Wallace, editor of *Wallace's Farmer*. The Commission reported its findings and recommendations in late January 1909 to Roosevelt, who forwarded the report to Congress. Because it had not been asked to approve the commission, Congress refused Roosevelt's request for \$25,000 to print the report, an expense paid instead by the Spokane, Washington, Chamber of Commerce. Perhaps because of the prominent editors on the commission, the commission's work received widespread publicity and the report was reprinted in many newspapers and magazines across the country.¹⁰

Commissioners made three broad recommendations:

¹⁰ William L. Bowers, *The Country Life Movement in America, 1900-1920* (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1974), 24-29; Page Smith, *America Enters the World: A People's History of the Progressive Era and World War I*, vol. 7 (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1985), 143.

- (1) A survey of all the conditions as well as resources that surround the business of farming and the people who live in the country.
- (2) A united campaign for rural progress encompassing all institutions, organizations and individuals who had an interest in country life.
- (3) A redirected system of rural education through a nationalized extension service carried out through the agricultural colleges using lectures, correspondence courses and demonstrations.¹¹

Appointment of the commission has been called "the great galvanizing event in the history of the rural reform movement of the early 20th century,"¹² and "an important step toward the Smith-Lever Act of 1914."¹³ The commission's report set off widespread public debate and discussion, creating a sharper national focus on the plight of rural America, particularly farmers. The report also accelerated the move toward a more systematic method of agricultural education.

This dissertation examines the 5 1/2-year period from January 1909, when the Commission on Country Life report became public, to June 1914, when the University of Tennessee and the state government agreed to provisions of the Smith-Lever Act. This dissertation looks at how three daily newspapers published in Tennessee's three most populous counties treated, and reacted to, this new and radical idea of educating farmers in their fields through demonstrations, an idea that would lead to the creation of agricultural extension services across the country. Also studied were the

¹¹ *Report of the Commission on Country Life* (New York: Sturgis & Walton Co., 1917), 28-30; Bowers, *The Country Life Movement*, 27.

¹² *Ibid.*, 24

¹³ Russell Lord, *The Agrarian Revival, A Study of Agricultural Extension* (New York: Grady Press, 1939), 53.

newspapers' attitudes toward the changing concept of farmer education during this time as well as to what extent these newspapers stimulated the debate and discussion.

Because daily newspapers (especially in 1910) are powerful forces in creating an awareness of new ideas and concepts within society, they are excellent tools in studying and understanding how society assesses and reacts to those ideas. By studying if, how and why an idea finds public favor, we can discover at least some of its public consequences, bearing in mind that the newspaper is never the only influence at work as messages enter and circulate within the public forum. Nevertheless, the reactions of individuals, social, commercial and political groups as they grapple with an idea transmitted through the press can provide valuable insight into those consequences, which of themselves can become news. In the agrarian-based Southern economy of the early 1900s, agriculture was believed by many to be *the* foundation upon which all society rested and from which all wealth flowed. Yet, millions of rural people who had built that foundation lived impoverished lives. An idea that was proclaimed to hold the promise of alleviating some of the misery endured by those millions was certain to produce public judgment, reaction and consequences.

Additionally, this study examines the evolution of the Tennessee Agricultural Extension Service within the context of economic, political and educational forces that were working at national, regional and state levels to bring about a federally supported system of rural adult education. Farming conditions and the University's attempts to reach and teach Tennessee farmers, and win their favor, were also studied.

Selected for the study were *The Commercial Appeal* in Memphis, the *Nashville Banner*, and Knoxville's *Daily Journal and Tribune*. These newspapers operated in the most populous counties within the western, middle and eastern farming regions of the state during this time. Each farming region has distinct characteristics in terms of topography, soil and elevation, which affect the type of farming carried on.

Shelby County, with a population of 191,439, in 1910 lies in the southwest corner of the state and is home to Memphis, then (and now) the state's largest city with 131,105 residents. Davidson County in middle Tennessee had 149,479 residents. Therein lies Nashville, the capital and second largest city, with 110,364 residents. Knox County in East Tennessee had a population of 94,187 with 36,346 residing in Knoxville. In 1910, Knoxville was the fourth largest city in the state. Chattanooga was ranked third in population with 44,604, but Hamilton County was ranked fourth with 89,267 residents.¹⁴

The *Commercial Appeal*, a "Democratic" paper, was published each morning and Sunday. Its reported average daily circulation for 1909 was 48,540 and 68,910 on Sundays compared to the evening *News Scimitar's* 30,156 daily and 28,088 Sunday circulation.¹⁵

Established in 1841, the newspaper was under the direction of managing editor Charles Patrick Joseph Mooney during the period of this study. Widely respected within the newspaper industry, Mooney began his

¹⁴ U.S. Department of Commerce and Labor, Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910*, Abstract with Supplement for Tennessee (Washington, 1913), 47-48, 78.

¹⁵ N.W. Ayer & Son's *American Newspaper Annual and Directory*, (Philadelphia: N.W. Ayer & Son Newspaper Advertising Agents, 1910), 847.

daily newspaper career in Memphis, then served terms as managing editor of the New York *Daily News*, the New York *American*, and the *Examiner* in Chicago before returning to the *Commercial Appeal* in 1908. Under his leadership, the newspaper began devoting a much larger share of its news and editorial space to agriculture.¹⁶

The *Nashville Banner*, an "Independent" paper, was published each afternoon Monday through Saturday. Its average daily circulation of 40,025 was almost twice that of its nearest competitor, the morning *Nashville American*, with a circulation of 21,826. The *American* and its morning rival, the *Tennessean*, founded in 1907, merged in 1910. The *Nashville Banner* was established in 1876 and purchased by Major Edward Bushrod Stahlman in 1893. G. H. Baskette served as editor.¹⁷

In Knoxville, the *Daily Journal and Tribune*, hereinafter called the *Journal and Tribune*, published each morning and Sunday and called itself a "Republican" paper. For 1909, it reported an average daily circulation of 15,000, about 2,000 more than its afternoon competitor, the *Sentinel*, which claimed a circulation of 13,069. No separate circulation figure for the Sunday *Journal and Tribune* was available.¹⁸

The Knoxville Journal, established in 1885, and *The Knoxville Daily Tribune*, established in 1876, were combined in June 1898 when both papers

¹⁶ Thomas H. Baker, *The Memphis Commercial Appeal: The History of a Southern Newspaper* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1971), 219-229.

¹⁷ *American Newspaper Annual and Directory*, 848; Jack Mooney, ed., *A History of Tennessee Newspapers* (Lewisburg, Tenn.: Lewisburg Printing, 1996), 75; "The Banner Is Thirty-Five Years Old Today and Still Growing," *Nashville Banner*, 10 April 1911, 1.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 845.

were purchased by Knoxville businessman, E. J. Sanford. Captain William Rule, founder of the *Journal*, was retained as editor.¹⁹

The *Commercial Appeal* and *Journal and Tribune* were the oldest papers within their respective cities while the *Nashville Banner* was the second oldest daily paper in Nashville. None of the three papers initiated or was directly affected by a merger during the period of study. All were locally owned, and all were members of the Associated Press; the *Commercial Appeal* also subscribed to the Hearst wire. Both the *Commercial Appeal* and *Nashville Banner* had a correspondent based in Washington, D.C.

These well-established general circulation newspapers were chosen from among the 16 dailies published in Tennessee in 1909²⁰ because they offer a diversity in geographic region and type of farming interest served, time of publication, Sunday edition, political affiliation and, of course, news. Contributing to the varying news and editorial perspectives were: the *Commercial Appeal's* liberal publication of news from three adjoining states: Arkansas, Mississippi and Alabama; the *Nashville Banner's* state government coverage; and the *Journal and Tribune's* coverage of the agricultural college and experiment station at the University of Tennessee.

Although no independent data on each newspaper's rural circulation could be located, it is clear from the volume of agricultural news and editorials published that all three dailies had a substantial number of readers among farmers. The largest total circulation, which included both rural and

¹⁹ Rule, William, *Standard History of Knoxville, Tennessee*, (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Co., 1900), quoted in Clara Estelle Masterson, "A History of Knoxville Journalism" (M.A. thesis, George Peabody College for Teachers, Nashville, 1933), 134-135.

²⁰ *Thirteenth Census*, Abstract, 681.

urban readers, was used as one of the selection criteria. It is important to note that acceptance and employment of this new concept in agricultural education did not depend on farmers alone.

Other constituencies, usually urban readers of daily newspapers, such as those who operated financial institutions, mercantile establishments, railroads, schools and universities, as well as members of the state legislature, county governments, and congressional delegation were key players in the spread of this new form of agricultural education across the state and in the evolution of Tennessee's Agricultural Extension Service. Therefore, it was important to select newspapers that, generally speaking, told the largest numbers of both urban and rural readers not what to think, but what to think about.

Today, Tennessee's Agricultural Extension Service is one of the largest components of the University in terms of personnel and annual funding, now approaching \$30 million. During 84 years as an educational/communications agency, it has influenced the lives of millions of Tennesseans. Yet, a critical study of the origins of this organization, including how the press was engaged therein, has never been conducted. This dissertation attempts to correct that deficiency and at the same time contribute to the literature of communications history by providing insight into the meaning and impact of the daily press in an agrarian society during a time when the daily newspaper was king of the mass media. The study will also permit a comparison of newspaper practices during the early 1900s as each disseminated the same basic idea within the public forum. The attitudes of three Southern newspapers toward several issues of major interest to society

can also be examined during the time known as the "Progressive Era." Furthermore, this study can make a contribution to the history of agriculture, the history of the University and the history of Tennessee.

Limitations of the Study

Although this dissertation contains census data regarding racial demographics of Tennessee farmers, some general information about the Federal Cooperative Demonstration Work's inclusive policies toward black farmers and a description of the congressional debate regarding race and Smith-Lever legislation, this is not a study of racial attitudes, prejudices or discriminatory practices of that time. When information about race is presented, it is done so only to provide background.

In Context

The time-frame for this study, 1909 to mid-1914, falls roughly within the middle third of what historians call the "Progressive Era"—from 1900 to 1920. During the first decade, the United States was engaged in consolidating its empire in the Far East and Caribbean, much of it won from Spain in 1898. Emerging as a world power, America was building the Panama Canal and would open it in 1914; American troops occupied Cuba and the Philippines and would occupy Nicaragua in 1912; and, Puerto Rico and Hawaii had been annexed in 1898.²¹

²¹ Note that few historians agree on exact dates to define the period known as the "Progressive Era." George B. Tindal, *America: A Narrative History*, vol. 2, (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1984), 889-898.

Internally, the growth of cities and manufacturing, and the combinations of industry and business were creating great social and economic problems that were overwhelming the ability of public agencies to deal with them.

Between 1889 and 1909, 20 million Americans moved to town, swelling the country's urban population to 43 million. Almost half the nation, 46.3 percent, now lived in towns and cities.²²

Although Tennessee was still largely a rural state in 1909, its urban population had increased by 85 percent, from 238,394 to 441,045, in the 20 years after 1889. Memphis more than doubled in population; Nashville grew by 45 percent; and Knoxville by 61 percent. Urban dwellers comprised 20.2 percent of the state's total population in 1909 compared to 13.5 percent in 1889. During this time, total population rose 24 percent from 1.76 million to 2.18 million. The Census defined "urban" as any place with 2,500 or more residents.²³

From 1899 to 1909, the average number of wage earners engaged in manufacturing in the United States rose by 40 percent; in Tennessee, the gain was 61 percent.²⁴

The proliferation of trusts and corporate combinations and mergers, such as Standard Oil, U.S. Steel and Harvester International, allowed one percent of American companies to produce nearly 45 percent of the country's manufactured goods by 1912.²⁵

²² *Thirteenth Census*, Abstract, 56.

²³ *Ibid.*, 64, 589.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, Manufactures, 64, 589.

²⁵ Lewis I. Gould, ed., *The Progressive Era* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1974), 2.

These two decades also marked a time of increasing reliance upon technology and a growing faith in science. The automobile, electric power and lights, and the telephone were beginning to affect people's lives in dramatic ways. Progressivism often found itself in an uneasy alliance with science and the handmaid of science, research. "They—science and research—became the new divinities, the old morality and the new scholarship."²⁶ But, "Individuals hoped that scientific and technological advances would improve the conditions of life sufficiently to produce a more enlightened humanity."²⁷

Because of the social unrest, ethnic tensions, economic distress and political ferment, Americans set into motion several reform movements. Among these were efforts to curb the power and influence of corporations and industry through government regulation, to conserve natural resources and protect the environment, to democratize government through direct elections (U.S. senators), to make local government more efficient via structural changes, to correct social injustice through labor and other types of legislation, and to energize government's public-service responsibilities by direct aid to education, roads, public health and welfare, agriculture and other programs.²⁸

The search for a way to reach Tennessee's as yet unreachable farmers was conducted in an environment in which 80 percent of Tennesseans lived in rural areas, where public education was only beginning to strike a chord in the public ear, where compulsory education was not yet state law, where the

²⁶ Smith, *America Enters the World*, 346.

²⁷ Gould, *The Progressive Era*, 1-10.

²⁸ Ibid.; Tindal, *America: A Narrative History*, 903-912; George E. Mowry, *The Progressive Era, 1900-20: The Reform Persuasion* (Richmond, Va.: William Byrd Press for the American Historical Association, 1972), 4-28.

relevance of higher education to rural life was not recognized, and where crop yields, on average, were too low to produce a living worthy of the term even in the most prosperous of counties. Tennessee was a poor state in a poor region.

Even so, attempts to reform agricultural practices and thereby improve the lives of farmers and their families in Tennessee through adult education often ran head-on into tradition and custom. Science-based information was often rejected simply out of ignorance or habit. Reform of farm practices centered in the university and the city, and espoused by city newspapers no doubt also contributed to the skepticism of many rural folk toward "scientific" or book farming.

Contributing somewhat to this environment was the state's level of illiteracy. Among those age 10 and above, 13.6 percent could not read in 1910. In the urban population, the rate was 8.9 percent compared to 15 percent for rural residents. Among rural whites 11.4 percent could not read and of rural blacks 30.9 percent were illiterate. In all, 188,859 rural Tennesseans could not read. Of these, 115,964 were native whites and 72,374 were blacks.²⁹

Three East Tennessee counties had the highest illiteracy rates among native whites 10 years old or older: Hancock County, 23.6 percent; Cocke, 20.2; and Unicoi at 19.7. For ages 10 and above, Hancock's illiteracy rate for blacks was also the state's highest at 53 percent; James (now part of Hamilton County) in southeast Tennessee was second at 43.9, and Clay in north central Tennessee had 41.3 percent. In these counties, blacks comprised only 4.4 to 9.4 percent of the population. But in Fayette County, which was 75 percent black,

²⁹ *Thirteenth Census*, Abstract, 591, 595-611.

the illiteracy rate for blacks was only slightly lower at 39 percent. Fayette is adjacent to Shelby County in southwest Tennessee.³⁰

Literature Review

The Cooperative Extension Service, viewed either as a federal entity or a state organization, has not been a favorite area for independent historical inquiry. Also, communications literature contains little in the way of material on the extension service from a historical or any other perspective.

Although material on the history of agriculture in the United States is abundant, several bibliographies reveal the scarcity of scholarly research into the origins of the extension service, especially as a component of the state university. Nevertheless, bibliographies do point the way to scholarly work and published primary material on aspects related to the origins of the service.

Two of the best agricultural bibliographies are Helen E. Edwards' *A List of References for the History of Agriculture in the Southern United States, 1865-1900*³¹ and *Bibliography of Books and Pamphlets on the History of Agriculture in the United States, 1607-1967*,³² compiled by John T. Schlebecker of the Smithsonian Institution. Edwards' survey is one of a series that revises and updates a comprehensive bibliography of American agricultural history published in 1930 by Everett E. Edwards.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Helen H. Edwards, ed., *A List of References for the History of Agriculture in the Southern United States, 1865-1900* (Davis: Agricultural History Center, University of California, 1971).

³² John T. Schlebecker, curator, *Bibliography of Books and Pamphlets on the History of Agriculture in the United States, 1607-1967* (Santa Barbara, Calif.: American Bibliographical Center, 1969).

Categorized are an estimated 900 listings under special areas or topics such as commodities and "Efforts for Agricultural Improvement." The listings are also categorized by state. Although 33 studies are listed under "Tennessee," the state's extension service is not mentioned in this category or any other. The same is true for the 2,042 titles compiled by Schlebecker, but this work provides a much larger listing of state extension histories, biographies, and books and articles dealing with rural living conditions, adult education and the political, social and economic aspects of the extension service as well as numerous primary sources such as USDA bulletins and statistical material. A few theses and dissertations are also listed.

Bibliographies that afforded additional direction are: Maryanna Smith's *A List of References for the History of the United States Department of Agriculture*,³³ *Literature of Agricultural Research* by Blanchard and Ostvold,³⁴ and *A List of References for the History of Black Americans in Agriculture, 1619-1974* by Joel Schor and Cecil Harvey.³⁵

In addition to generating enormous quantities of primary material and statistical data, the USDA produces secondary treatments that can be useful as gateways for inquiry.

Two such gateways are: *A Century of Service: The First 100 Years of the United States Department of Agriculture*, sanctioned by the USDA, and

³³ Maryanna S. Smith, ed., *A List of References for the History of the United States Department of Agriculture* (Davis: University of California, 1974).

³⁴ J. Richard Blanchard and Harald Ostvold, *Literature of Agricultural Research* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1958).

³⁵ Joel Schor and Cecil Harvey, comps., *A List of References for the History of Black Americans in Agriculture, 1619-1974* (Davis: Agricultural History Center, University of California, 1975).

Agriculture in the United States: A Documentary History are of great breadth but little depth. Because of their scope, each offers little detail on any one topic. For example, less than three pages of more than 500 are devoted to agricultural extension in *Century of Service*,³⁶ which is more of a collection of brief essays on major events, department leaders and periodic reorganizations than an integrated narrative.

Offering less organization but more information on agricultural extension is the four-volume documentary history on U.S. agriculture. This work compiles, among other things, magazine articles; bulletins and annual reports from the USDA, federal patent office, state agriculture departments, experiment stations, and extension services; and excerpts from diaries, book chapters, and the U.S. Census. These items serve to illustrate broad topics such as "Land Policies," "Education and Experimentation," or "Changes in Farming and Farm Life."

A much narrower and more useful gateway for the extension researcher is Alfred Charles True's *A History of Agricultural Extension Work in the United States, 1785-1923*.³⁷ Employed by the USDA for almost 40 years, True worked as director of the Office of Experiment Stations from 1893 to

³⁶ Gladys L. Baker, Wayne Rasmussen, Vivian Wiser and Jane M. Porter, *A Century of Service: The First 100 Years of the United States Department of Agriculture* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Agriculture Centennial Committee, 1962); Wayne D. Rasmussen, ed., *Agriculture in the United States: A Documentary History*, vol. 2 (New York: Random House, 1975).

³⁷ Related works by True are: *A History of Agricultural Education in the United States, 1785-1925* United States Department of Agriculture Miscellaneous Publication No. 36 (Washington, 1929) and *A History of Agricultural Experimentation and Research in the United States, 1607-1925* U.S. Department of Agriculture, Miscellaneous Publication No. 251 (Washington, 1937).

1915, when he was named director of the States Relations Service, which implemented the Smith-Lever Act. Beginning with the year 1785, True reviews the earliest efforts to improve farming practices in the United States through agricultural societies and farmer institutes with or without state financial aid. He also outlines the efforts by agricultural colleges to undertake various forms of extension work on their own around the turn of the century.

By 1899, extension was becoming a topic of vigorous discussion by members of the Association of American Agricultural Colleges and Experiment Stations in which True served as a committee chairman. True's work is encyclopedic and the narrative plodding, but it recounts the chronology of extension's evolution. Unfortunately, it contains little analysis of the events that True watched occur or even helped bring about. Also, the volume contains only sketchy information about the extension activities of individual states and their land grant colleges, especially before 1914. From the limited data presented about the work in the South, it is clear that only late in the game did Tennessee climb aboard the extension wagon pulled in part by federal horses. Nevertheless, for a national—though an insider's—perspective of the rise of agricultural extension education, True's work is invaluable.

Three excellent book-length studies on Southern agriculture, one of which deals exclusively with the origins of agricultural extension from a national and regional perspective, have been written since 1970. Roy Scott's³⁸ chronicle of the search for a "teaching device effective with rural adults"

³⁸ Roy V. Scott, *The Reluctant Farmer*.

remains the most significant study of extension's rise. Included is substantial information about the attitudes of several land-grant colleges in the South and North toward USDA efforts to establish a county agent system to teach farmers by demonstration. Unfortunately, Tennessee's attitude remains unrevealed in Scott's study; the university is barely mentioned.

Focusing on the first 30 years of the 20th Century, Daniel Danbom³⁹ attempts to tie agricultural extension education to the Country Life Movement, which sought to "industrialize agriculture," making it more organized and efficient. Urban America, Danbom contends, couldn't have cared less about the welfare of the individual farmer. The true goal of the urban-oriented Country Lifers was to ensure a plentiful supply of cheap food for growing numbers of factory workers, who lived in the cities. To that end, the political struggle over rural adult education was tuned, whether the politicians admitted it or not. Danbom does not provide the historical detail given by Scott, but he does paint an excellent picture of the sometimes rough reception proud rural people gave extension's itinerant teachers.⁴⁰

The most recent general study of Southern agriculture is Gilbert Fite's *Cotton Fields No More, Southern Agriculture 1865-1980*,⁴¹ which puts the struggle for a science-based agriculture within the context of more fundamental difficulties. Fite points out that Southern farmers in particular faced problems so severe that no amount of extension education would have

³⁹ David H. Danbom, *The Resisted Revolution, Urban America and the Industrialization of Agriculture, 1900-1930* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1979).

⁴⁰ Bowers, *The Country Life Movement*, provides an alternative view of the motives behind the movement.

⁴¹ Gilbert C. Fite, *Cotton Fields No More, Southern Agriculture 1865-1980* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1984).

done much good. Lack of capital, the absence of long-term credit at a reasonable cost, depleted soils, illiteracy, habit and tradition bound the great mass of Southern farmers, black and white, to their misery. Indeed, farmers would raise their standard of living, Fite said, only by producing commercial surpluses, the same goal desired by the Country Life Movement.

Also useful to this study is Russell Lord's *The Agrarian Revival*⁴² for its depiction of the often acrimonious sectional debate in Congress that accompanied passage of the Smith-Lever Act. A first-person journalistic account, Lord's study of agricultural extension is poorly documented, but nonetheless valuable for its point of view.

Danbom and Fite both decry the lack of general studies of agriculture covering the first two decades of the 20th Century, which may partially explain the scarcity of scholarly studies of the origins of state extension services. Agricultural historians have found agriculture's quiet "Golden Age" boring, preferring to study the more interesting periods of agrarian unrest.⁴³

But during the past two decades more and more scholars have begun to probe various aspects of the extension service and agricultural education. For example, in the spring of 1986, the Agricultural History Society devoted an entire issue of *Agricultural History* to articles that focus on social, racial, political and economic dimensions of extension organizations as well as the role of women in extension's origin. Grant discussed the political jousting accompanying the passage in 1914 by Congress of the Smith-Lever Act, and Crosby probes Smith-Lever's effect on black demonstration agents in the

⁴² Russell Lord, *The Agrarian Revival, A Study of Agricultural Extension* (New York: Grady Press, 1939).

⁴³ Fite, *Cotton Fields No More*, 266; Danbom, *Resisted Revolution*, 183.

South. Sturgis and Schwieder looked at the influence of farm women on the structure of early extension programs, which aimed to improve their lives and keep them "down on the farm."⁴⁴ Additional articles on extension were published in the spring 1988 issue. Unfortunately, no articles dealing with the origins of the Tennessee Agricultural Extension Service have been located.

For most of its existence, much of the history of the extension service has been written by those employed either by a state extension service or by the Department of Agriculture. While these writers do bring an insider's perspective to the narrative, they often write with overstatement, a cheerleader bias and promotional fervor. They bring little analysis or synthesis to the task, and never are administrators criticized. As such, the social, political and economic realities behind the origins of the extension service are treated superficially or altogether ignored.

In his essay, "The State of Agricultural History," Harold D. Woodman wrote that while USDA scientists and administrators have made useful contributions to agricultural history, "their work was so problem-oriented, tied as it was to the policy problems being considered by the particular bureau or office which employed them. Their history after all, was to provide background and perspective for intelligent policies and planning." But this

⁴⁴ Philip A. Grant, Jr., "Senator Hoke Smith, Southern Congressman and Agricultural Education, 1914-1917," *Agricultural History* 60 (Spring 1986): 111-122; Earl W. Crosby, "The Struggle for Existence: The Institutionalization of the Black County Agent System," *Agricultural History* 60 (Spring 1986): 123-136; Cynthia Sturgis, "How're You Gonna Keep 'Em Down on the Farm?: Rural Women and the Urban Model in Utah," *Agricultural History* 60 (Spring 1986): 182-199; and, Dorothy Schwieder, "Education and Change in the Lives of Iowa Farm Women, 1900-1940," *Agricultural History* 60 (Spring 1986): 200-215.

tended to "promote and perpetuate a rather narrow perspective for the study of American agricultural history."⁴⁵

Typical of the national extension histories are: *The People and the Profession*, sponsored by Epsilon Sigma Phi, extension's national honorary fraternity, and *Taking the University to the People* by Wayne D. Rasmussen, USDA agricultural historian until his retirement in 1986. The Epsilon Sigma Phi publication provides ample anecdotal information, including a humorous tidbit or two from Tennessee, about the problems faced by early extension workers. However, it is what it was designed to be: a public relations piece. Rasmussen provides a thin overview of extension's first 75 years from a national perspective. But he provides little discussion about conditions or movements that led to the creation of the extension service. In-depth discussion of state extension services was not attempted.⁴⁶

Many of the state extension histories can be classified as a book or pamphlet written by an extension employee, retired employee or contractor,⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Harold D. Woodman, "The State of Agricultural History," in *The State of American History*, ed. Herbert J. Bass (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1970), 224.

⁴⁶ Ralph L. Reeder, ed. *People and the Profession* (n.p.: Epsilon Sigma Phi, 1979); Wayne D. Rasmussen, *Taking the University to the People: Seventy-five Years of Cooperative Extension* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1989).

⁴⁷ Typical examples are: Merrill G. Burlingame and Edward J. Bell, Jr., *The Montana Cooperative Extension Service: A History 1893-1974* (Bozeman: Montana State University, 1984); Frederick W. Williamson, *Yesterday and Today in Louisiana Agriculture, How 25 Years of Extension Service Changed the Pattern of Farming and Rural Life* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1940); and Dorothy Schwieder, *75 Years of Service, Cooperative Extension in Iowa* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1993). Attempting to be nothing more than a promotional device is Einer Olstrom and Howard Miller, *Plus Two Score, The Cooperative Extension Service in Michigan 1940 to 1980* (Michigan State University: Cooperative Extension Service, 1984).

a section within an administrative unit history, such as a college of agriculture, or a part of an institutional history.⁴⁸ Often, they are written to commemorate an anniversary; invariably, they celebrate accomplishments, ignore failures, extol past leaders and proclaim a bright future. Even when written by a member of a university history department, they offer almost no critical analysis.

The first history of Tennessee's extension service is a pamphlet. Written by extension editor Almon J. Sims, Publication 223 covered 25 years—1914 to 1939—in a 42-page booklet. Sims can only briefly describe the high points during these years; he provides few details concerning the origins of the state extension service.⁴⁹

Fifty years later, another history, *Proud Past. . . Promising Future, Celebrating 75 Years, A Narrative History of the Tennessee Agricultural Extension Service 1914-1989*, was produced, and it, too, falls within the first category. A child of many fathers, it attempts to relay the story of Tennessee's Agricultural Extension Service in a cacophony of voices. Often repetitious, it is poorly documented and lacks focus. Despite its title, the narrative is non-existent. The material is presented by administrative division: district and department, each written by a different individual. Few details on the origins

Seventy of its 303 pages are devoted to a personnel list.

⁴⁸ Two of the better examples of these histories are: Gould P. Colman, *Education & Agriculture, A History of the New York State College of Agriculture at Cornell University* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1963) and Richard Gordon Moores, *Fields of Rich Toil, The Development of the University of Illinois College of Agriculture* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1970).

⁴⁹ Almon J. Sims, *A History of Extension Work in Tennessee, Twenty-five Years of Service to Rural Life, 1914-1939* Tennessee Agricultural Extension Service, Publication 223 (n.p., 1939).

of the service are included. Like so many other state extension histories, its aim is self-promotion.⁵⁰

Lucile Blanche Lee's 1930 education thesis, titled "The Work of The Home Demonstration Agent,"⁵¹ describes post-1914 developments in extension work among women. She describes the enabling legislation, funding sources, Tennessee's administrative structure, agent qualifications and the nature of a home demonstration agent's work. But Lee provides little historical context and no information about the evolution of home demonstration work in Tennessee.

Stanley G. Watts⁵² presents a broad outline, beginning about 1819, of the attempts to teach better agricultural practices in Tennessee. His 1967 master's thesis in history, "Knowledge for the Tennessee Farmer: The Development of Agricultural Extension in Tennessee Prior to 1914," is a valuable background resource for research in this area. Most of the thesis is devoted to describing the educational efforts of organizations and groups outside the direction and jurisdiction of the University. Such groups included early agricultural societies, railroads, the state's Bureau and later Department of Agriculture, farmers' conventions and institutes.

A chapter is also given to highlights in the University's history, such as creation of the College of Agriculture and establishment of the Agricultural

⁵⁰ Tennessee Agricultural Extension Service, *Proud Past... Promising Future, Celebrating 75 Years, A Narrative History of the Tennessee Agricultural Extension Service 1914-1989* (n.p., n.d.).

⁵¹ Lucile Blanche Lee, "The Work of The Home Demonstration Agent in Tennessee" (M.S. Thesis, University of Tennessee, 1930).

⁵² Stanley G. Watts, "Knowledge for the Tennessee Farmer: The Development of Agricultural Extension in Tennessee Prior to 1914" (M.A. thesis, Mississippi State University, 1967).

Experiment Station. Brief descriptions of the first attempts to reach out to farmers by the college and station are also presented as well as some information on the work by the first federal agents in West Tennessee. His approach is simply to chronicle events. He does not address the news media nor discuss the economic, political or educational forces behind the development of the Agricultural Extension Service.

Additional, but identical, information on early outreach efforts during the administrations of Charles W. Dabney, Jr., and Brown Ayres is given in two excellent histories of the university written by James Riley Montgomery.⁵³ The time frames studied in these published secondary sources overlap, with both periods ending in 1919. Montgomery summarizes only a few of the significant events in extension education in Tennessee, doing so within the context of the University's struggle to attract students and win permanent state funding around the turn of the century.

Communications Research

Mass media scholars have developed a substantial body of research that examines the nature and structure of news and how accurately the mass media reflect reality as they accommodate internal as well as external influences.

⁵³ James R. Montgomery, *The Volunteer State Forges Its University, The University of Tennessee, 1887-1919* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Record, 1966); *The University of Tennessee Builds for the Twentieth Century, A history of The University of Tennessee during the administration of President Brown Ayres, 1904-1919* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Record, n.d.).

Wilbur Schramm declared that news is not the event, but something constructed afterward in a way that made the event meaningful to the reader. News is assembled from eyewitness and secondhand accounts, explanations—in other words, sources—and the reporter's own knowledge and predispositions. Following a coding or modification process, such as editing, news is transmitted "to an audience where it competes with the rest of the environment for favor." Schramm also suggested that readers select news because they expect a reward, immediate "pleasure" or delayed "reality." News of public affairs, economic matters, social problems, science and education is usually read for delayed reward. Ease of self-identification with a story, regardless of reward type, is also a powerful influence on whether one will choose the story.⁵⁴

Attempting to uncover the "latent structure of news," Gaye Tuchman studied methods of inquiry, how newswriters "determine facts and frame events and debates pertinent to our shared civic life." She also studied print and broadcast newsrooms as complex organizations. "News is the social construction of reality," Tuchman contends. And the "act of making news is the act of constructing reality itself rather than a picture of reality." Instead of a mirror, news is a window frame, which produces, organizes, but limits, meaning or everyday reality.

Furthermore, news making is not a solitary process; it does not take place in a void. News, which is a form of knowledge, imparts a "public character" to occurrences, changing them from "mere happenings to publicly discussible events. Because of this, news is first and foremost a social

⁵⁴ Wilbur Schramm, "The Nature of News," *Journalism Quarterly* 26 (September 1949): 259-268.

institution." News is information made available to consumers through institutional routines; news is an ally of "legitimated" institutions; and news is gathered and distributed by those who are part of an organization. Thus, "news is a product of a social institution, and it is embedded in relationships with other institutions."

Tuchman also argues that "By seeking to disseminate information that people want, need and should know, news organizations both circulate and shape knowledge."⁵⁵

Herbert Gans in his sociological analysis of two national news magazines and two broadcast networks sought to study what American society "tells itself about itself through the news and why." Underlying the news are assumptions he called, "reality judgments." Such judgments are tied to values, many of which are shared by or originate from news sources. Much of the news is about violations of these values.

These "enduring values" are ethnocentrism, altruistic democracy, responsible capitalism, small-town pastoralism, individualism, moderatism, order and leadership. Gans also states that news is "not so much conservative or liberal as it is reformist; indeed, the enduring values are very much like the values of the Progressive movement of the early twentieth century."⁵⁶

Herbert Altschull argues that media content is "directly correlated" with the interests of those who finance the media. Those who pay choose the tunes that play. The relationship between the press and its financiers takes

⁵⁵ Gaye Tuchman, *Making News: A Study in the Construction of Reality* (New York: Free Press, 1978).

⁵⁶ Herbert J. Gans, *Deciding What's News: A Study of CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, Newsweek and Time* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1979), 39-69.

four forms: official, commercial, interest and informal, all of which at times overlap. He further states that in all press systems, the news media are agents of those who hold political and economic power.⁵⁷

Pamela Shoemaker and Elizabeth Mayfield attempted to integrate five theoretical approaches from more than 100 studies of media content with Altschull's economic theory of content. The approaches are:

- (1) Content reflects social reality with little or no distortion.
- (2) Content is a function of media routines.
- (3) Content is influenced by journalists' socialization and attitudes.
- (4) Content results from social and institutional forces working on it.
- (5) Content is a function of ideological positions and a tool of the status quo.

They conclude that while mass media try to portray social reality accurately, news content at times deviates from the view of social reality presented by sources. Deviations may be best explained by an "economics-based model with the issue-specific ideology of those who finance the mass media interacting to influence mass media content through:

- (1) Relationships with social and institutional forces such as advertisers, audiences and government.
- (2) Ideological influences on the socialization and selection of journalists.
- (3) Ways in which content is gathered, shaped and transmitted."⁵⁸

⁵⁷ J. Herbert Altschull, *Agents of Power: The Role of the News Media in Human Affairs* (New York: Longman, 1984), 254-258, 298.

⁵⁸ Pamela J. Shoemaker with Elizabeth Mayfield, "Building A Theory of News Content: A Synthesis of Current Approaches," *Journalism Monographs* no. 103 (June 1987): 1-5, 22-31.

Michael Schudson takes issue with Altschull's assertion that media content is determined by financing. To conclude that in all press systems, news media are agents of those who hold political and economic power "overrides every important distinction in which the press in liberal societies differs from the press in state-run, one-party systems."

To understand journalism as a part of contemporary culture requires seeing how it works as both a set of concrete social institutions and a repertoire of historically fashioned literary pieces. It requires, further, seeing how these institutions and practices are set within and in orientation to political democracy.

To Gans' argument that media remain primarily messengers, Schudson replied that media do far more. "When the media offer the public an item of news, they confer upon it public legitimacy. They bring it into a common public forum . . . distribute it to a large group . . . and amplify it." Now available to millions, "this has enormous effects," one of which is the stimulation of social interaction on a different scale.

In language similar to Tuchman's, Schudson said news is a form of "public knowledge . . . a modern, omnipresent brand of shared knowing. It is produced by people who operate, often unwittingly, within a cultural system, a reservoir of stored cultural meanings and patterns of discourse and organized by conventions of sourcing. . . . As a form of culture, news incorporates assumptions about what matters, what makes sense, what time and place we live in, what range of considerations we should take seriously."

"We can understand the media better," he said, "if we recognize that news is a form of culture. This is to assert that news is related to, but is not the

same as, ideology; it is related to, but is not the same as information; and it is potentially, but only indirectly, a social force."⁵⁹

Caudill's work, *Darwin In The Press: The Evolution of an Idea*, provided valuable background for this dissertation. His study of press treatment of Charles Darwin's theory of evolution covers about 120 years and examines several daily newspapers and magazines. He states that,

The history of an idea, as opposed to individuals and institutions, is the exception rather than the rule. The case has been made for a history of the press, and the case is made for the history of ideas. However explorations at their intersection are rare.⁶⁰

While many studies have engaged ideas of press and free speech, they either concern ideas that were part of the "press-media" system and helped influence the system's form, or the ideas began outside but later became part of the system, Caudill states. "But the history of ideas and the press provides two other possibilities for studying the meaning and impact of the press in culture, politics, and society."⁶¹

One alternative, he contends, is to study the concept of news and reporting "as it exists in subcultures, or in business or religious institutions." The second alternative is the study of ideas as they existed outside the organization, but were "influential concepts in the broader culture."⁶²

Today, Tennessee's Agricultural Extension Service is one of the largest components of the University in terms of personnel and annual funding,

⁵⁹ Michael Schudson, *The Power of News* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 2-6, 14, 19.

⁶⁰ Edward Caudill, *Darwinism in the Press: The Evolution of an Idea* (Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1989), 139-143.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

now approaching \$30 million. During 84 years as an educational/communications agency, it has influenced the lives of millions of Tennesseans. Yet, a critical study of the origins of this organization, or how the press was engaged therein, has never been conducted. This dissertation attempts to correct that deficiency and at the same time contribute to the literature of communications history. Furthermore, this study can make a contribution to the history of agriculture, the history of the University and the history of Tennessee.

Organization

The material in this study is arranged in the following manner:

Chapter I contains the introduction, background, purpose of the study, literature review, questions, context or setting, and method of research.

The multiple economic problems faced by farmers in the South and Tennessee are examined in Chapter II along with how the press covered and commented on these issues.

The development of the demonstration method and its spread across the South through the Farmers' Cooperative Demonstration Work program are examined in Chapter III.

Chapter IV discusses the national debate among academicians and politicians over the structure and funding of extension teaching, and examines the visibility of the debates in the Tennessee daily press.

Efforts by the University of Tennessee to reach and teach the state's farmers during the decade and a half before passage of the Smith-Lever Act are covered in Chapter V. Also examined are how the daily newspapers

presented and reacted to these efforts and the University's struggle to secure larger and permanent state appropriations.

The federal effort, as viewed by the press, to establish a farm demonstration program in Tennessee and the merging of that program with the university's are explored in Chapter VI.

Chapter VII contains the summary and conclusions.

Questions

Research for this dissertation was guided by the following questions:

1. How did the major daily newspapers in the state view the concept of agricultural education? Were attempts to bring science and farming together covered by the press? Were editorials on the subject friendly or hostile?
2. Were there differences in attitudes and coverage of farming and farm problems among the three newspapers? What was the reaction, if any, from the farm community concerning press coverage and comment?
3. Was coverage limited to purely local concerns or did reporting include regional and national developments in agriculture and farmer education? Was coverage in any of these areas consistent and/or in the nature of a campaign?
4. What were the economic conditions facing Tennessee's farmers in the decade before establishment of the state extension service? How did Tennessee's farmers compare to those in neighboring states in quantity and value of crops and livestock produced? How did the state's farms rank in size, value of land and number of implements with farms in

other Southeastern states? Was tenancy a significant factor in Tennessee agriculture?

5. How did the Agricultural Experiment Station handle its extension role before the Smith-Lever Act? Was the press enlisted to publicize its off-campus activities? If so, how did the press respond?
6. Tennessee was one of the last states to become a participant in the federal Farmers' Cooperative Demonstration Work program. Why did this happen? Was the University of Tennessee hostile to the program or simply indifferent? Did University personnel and federal agents cooperate? If so, in what fashion?
7. Were agricultural clubs for boys and girls part of the University's off-campus teaching or was this element left to the federal agents? What was the tie between these clubs and public education in rural areas? How did the press view such clubs?
8. How did the University of Tennessee conduct its political battles for more state appropriations, and what role did the institution's extension work play in this struggle? How did the newspapers view this fight?
9. Where did Tennessee's congressmen and senators stand on federal support for farmer education? Were they active in the debate on the Smith-Lever Act?
10. Did the University expand its off-campus teaching as a means to win greater public support and larger annual appropriations from the state? Or was the education of farmers the primary goal?

11. How did the state's farmers view efforts by the federal Department of Agriculture and the university to teach them how to farm "scientifically"?
12. Were individual county governments receptive to the notion of county agents? How many county courts contributed funding to help pay the cost of an agent?
13. Did the University of Tennessee participate in the debates within the Association for Agricultural Colleges and Experiment Stations over extension teaching? If so, what was the University's position?

Method of Research

The bedrock for this dissertation comprises the news columns and editorial pages of the three daily newspapers named previously. Microfilm of these newspapers for the relevant period are housed in Hodges Library. Each page of each edition of each newspaper published from January 1, 1909 to June 30, 1914, was scanned for articles, editorials, photographs, letters and advertisements related to agriculture. Within the total microfilm collection, very few pages were missing.

Once an article was located, it was photocopied and filed by month and year for each newspaper. The accumulated material was then sorted into 20 categories: crop reports-yields; Census Bureau articles related to agriculture; out-of-state farm news; University/state extension activities; Farmers' Cooperative Demonstration Work; *Journal and Tribune* farm page ; *Nashville Banner* farm page; farm column by William T. Hale; Tennessee General Assembly; railroads; "Agricultural Special" (trains); boys' corn clubs,

girls' tomato clubs; education-literacy; columns by agriculture commissioners; editorials (boxed-Memphis); editorials (other farm-related); Country Life Commission; Smith-Lever legislation; and Southern Commercial Congress. No preconceived scheme for categorization was used.

Articles and editorials in these categories were then arranged chronologically regardless of newspaper. Any mention of the term *demonstration* or *University extension work* in any article was flagged to ease creation of the narrative.

As mentioned earlier, the USDA generated an enormous amount of primary source material, including statistical data, bulletins, circulars, reports, articles, yearbooks and so on. The Tennessee Department of Agriculture, the Tennessee Agricultural Extension Service and the Experiment Station were also prolific (and still are) in producing similar materials.

Also among the valuable sources of information for this study were the extension service's *Annual Reports* now housed in the University Archives. In addition to statistical information, these reports also contain narratives by department heads and others about their activities during the year. Some of these department heads were quite candid in their observations and accounts of obstacles encountered in their work. The earliest of these reports dates to 1910. The annual bulletins and reports of the Agricultural Experiment Station in Knoxville provided similar material.

Also examined were the various county extension histories now housed in the University Archives.

University published sources included *The Register*, almost all issues of which are available through Hodges Library or the Ag-Vet Library. This

catalog contains: the trustees' biennial report to the governor and legislature, student register, faculty list, report on the Summer School of the South and commencement speeches. The board's report also contains a financial statement for the institution, accompanied by department reports and other comments that taken together amount to a plea for larger appropriations.

Other valuable sources were the published proceedings of the American Association of Agricultural Colleges and Experiment Stations and the *Congressional Record* for early 1914.

To obtain a clear picture of the Tennessee General Assembly's slow movement toward permanent state funding for the University and the Extension Service, state statutes were studied. Legislation that permitted individual county governments to appropriate funds for extension work, either in cooperation with the USDA or the University, was vital to establishing the pattern of a three-way funding partnership in Tennessee. The statutes also were examined to determine how many counties were permitted to do this and in what manner.

Other primary sources were U.S. Census reports for Tennessee agriculture for the decade ending in 1900 and in 1910.

Periodicals studied include: *Agricultural History*; *Tennessee Historical Quarterly*; the *U.T. Farmer*, published by a student agricultural club; *Wallace's Farmer*; and *Southern Agriculturist*, published in Nashville. Hodges Library and the Ag-Vet Library have either microfilm copies or bound volumes of most of these periodicals for the years involved in this study.

Secondary materials examined include the general histories of agriculture produced by the USDA and others, dissertations and theses,

histories and other materials on extension work produced by extension service personnel, University of Tennessee histories, biographies and journal articles.

CHAPTER II

A REGION BEDEVILED

During a 1906 speech to Southern educators meeting in Atlanta, agricultural reformer Seaman A. Knapp, head of the federal Farmers' Cooperative Demonstration Work program, declared,

Rural conditions . . . especially in the Southern States, have changed but little in thirty years. The houses are a little more dilapidated; the fences give evidence of more decay; the highways carry more water in the wet season, and are somewhat less easily traveled in the dry; but the environments are about the same; no paint, and slight evidence of thrift. The same old mule stands at the door with his rope line on the ground, hitched to a plow that Adam rejected as not up-to-date; the same old bushes are in the fields, and the same old weeds in the fence corners; no strange sights disturb the serenity of Rip Van Winkle; wages are about the same, and the conditions of farm life are almost exactly as they were thirty years ago.¹

About the same time, Thomas M. Campbell, a black farm demonstration agent, drove the Jesup Wagon along the bumpy dirt roads of rural East Alabama.

At most places where I stopped, the farmers lived in unscreened houses. Many, many times I was forced to eat food over which flies had crawled and these flies had equally free access to open privies, near-by barns, and pig pens. In most cases I either had to drink water from polluted surface streams or shallow wells that were little more than cess-pools, or drink none at all. I could have found better homes here and there in some communities, but my aim was to reach "the man farthest down."²

¹ S. A. Knapp, "Farmers' Co-Operative Demonstration Work," *Southern Educational Review* 3 (October 1906): 65.

² Thomas M. Campbell, *The Movable School Goes to the Negro Farmer* (Tuskegee, Ala.: Tuskegee Institute Press, 1936), 105.

In 1909, an editorial in *Wallace's Farmer* stated,

The corn belt farmer looking for good land will certainly not go to eastern Tennessee. This land is rolling and has been farmed for a hundred years. The style of farming even before the war was not by any means the best. Then came the war with its desolations and the practical bankruptcy of the farmers of that section. This one hundred years of farming has worn out the humus so that a warranty deed will not hold the soil.³

In January 1911, T. C. Karns, agricultural editor of the *Journal and Tribune*, wrote in a letter on the weekly farm page "Out On The Farm,"

As our train sped along toward Bearden, . . . our first observation was that of neglected farms. Everywhere this feature was in evidence. Buildings, fences, and other improvements were poor. On either hand was a superabundance of wasteland. Poor knolls and denuded hills grinned with poverty. The greatest need of East Tennessee is more industry and a better system of farming.⁴

During the early years of the 20th century, it was evident by any standard of measure that the legacy of slavery and war continued to ride hard upon the backs of all Southerners despite the passage of two generations since the spring of 1865. Although the South began rebuilding its burned factories, battle-damaged cities and torn-up railroads and restoring agricultural production once the War Between the States ended, evolutions in labor, land tenure and credit systems would prove to be far more insidious and damaging to the region than any Union army. In a way, these transitions slowly replaced the chains of slavery with the chains of poverty, this time shackling millions of rural Southerners, both black and white.⁵

³ *Wallace's Farmer*, XXXIV, (August 6, 1909), 983.

⁴ "Out of the Farm," *Journal and Tribune*, 2 January 1911, 8.

⁵ For detailed discussions of the South's post-Civil War agricultural development, see C. Vann Woodward, "The Unredeemed Farmer" and "Mudsills and Bottom Rails" in *Origins of the New South 1877-1913*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1971), 175-234; Fite, "Descent into

As the South's plantation-slave system of agriculture abruptly ended, values of agricultural land, buildings, livestock and implements began to collapse, falling by almost 50 percent across the region and as much as two-thirds in some states by 1870. Large quantities of land, including many plantations, were thrown onto the market at severely depressed prices, which attracted thousands who bought small parcels. From 1860-1870, the number of farms with less than 100 acres rose from 333,058 to 517,178, a 55 percent increase. In Tennessee, farms of this size grew from 59,386 to 98,873, a 66 percent jump.⁶

A Debilitating Credit System

While these buyers, mostly white, sliced up former plantations, fragmentation occurred in another more prevalent way. Tracts of land came to be tilled by freedmen and some whites, who paid their rent with a share of the crop, usually cotton.⁷ A small number of tenants rented land by paying cash. To survive until harvest, the sharecropper made arrangements with the landowner or a merchant, often the same person, who provided or "furnished" food and other supplies in exchange for a lien on the farmer's remaining crop share, which ranged from three-fourths to one-half. In such a contract the sharecropper became bound to one merchant and could obtain

Poverty," in *Cotton Fields No More*, 1-29; and, Harold D. Woodman, "The Farmer's Quest for Economic Independence," and "The South Remains Dependent" in *King Cotton & His Retainers* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1968), 334-359.

⁶ Matthew B. Hammond, *The Cotton Industry, An Essay in American Economic History* (New York: MacMillan Co., 1897), 120-134.

⁷ Some sharecroppers paid their rent with other crops such as tobacco, corn, wheat, or oats. For examples in Tennessee, see Donald L. Winters, "Postbellum Reorganization of Southern Agriculture: The Economics of Sharecropping in Tennessee," *Agricultural History* 62, no. 4 (1988): 1-19.

supplies from no other unless he paid cash. Furthermore, the farmer could sell his crop only through the creditor/merchant who applied the proceeds toward the accumulated debt. Several variations of this basic system existed throughout the South, but mercantile credit in general became the principal means of financing cotton production across the South.

The crop-lien system filled a vacuum created by the scarcity of other forms of credit that also worked to cripple business and industrial development in the South for several decades. After the War, the region began what amounted to "monetary servitude." For various reasons, which include the 1863 National Banking Act, the South was unable to attain a "proportionate share" of both national and state banks or liquid capital. A largely rural population, the lack of urban centers, low land values, and the inability of national banks to make long-term real estate loans also contributed to the South's financial strait-jacket. By 1890, the 11 states of the old Confederacy had 25 percent of the nation's population, but only 10.7 percent of national banks and 12 percent of the country's state banks. Eleven years later, these states had 13 percent of the national banks for a total of 556, half of which were in Texas alone. Tennessee, with 55 national banks, had more than any other Southern state.⁸

⁸ George Macesich, *Commercial Banking and Regional Development in the United States 1950-1960*, Florida State University Studies, No. 45 (Tallahassee: The Florida State University, 1965), 17; Roger L. Ransom and Richard Sutch, "Debt Peonage in the Cotton South," *Journal of Economic History* 32 (September 1972): 641-669; William E. Laird and James R. Rinehart, "Deflation, Agriculture and Southern Development," *Agricultural History* 42, no. 2 (1968): 115-124; *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, 1901 (Washington, 1902), 65-66.

For thousands of farm families, the crop lien drove the steel pin into the shackles, trapping them in a life of subsistence and poverty. Often, proceeds from selling the crop did not pay for "furnishings" the sharecropper had obtained during the months before harvest. The risk a merchant assumed in taking a lien on an unplanted crop was indeed high, as was the interest he paid his creditors. The cropper paid dearly for his place at the bottom of the agricultural economy pile through exorbitant prices and even higher usury rates. Once he found himself in debt, the sharecropper had little choice but to try again the next year, and the next and the next. Such unfortunate souls surrendered not only control of their lives, but also how they would farm, what crops they would grow, and how the crops would be marketed.

Scholars have vigorously debated the causes and conditions that led to this system. Some see a conspiracy of racist landowners who plotted to exploit and regain social and economic control of the labor supply. Other historians, while not disputing that racial discrimination tainted aspects of Southern life, contend that the labor, credit and land tenure evolutions were driven primarily by economics as landowners, freedmen and landless whites attempted to make the best of a bad situation. Millions of illiterate blacks coming out of bondage with no money and little more than muscle power to offer had to find a way to earn a living. At the same time, landowners needed workers for their fields. After unsatisfactory trials with wage payment methods, "subservient tenancy" brought labor and land together again in bitter devotion to the King of Crops—Cotton. Though makeshift, the system

became so large that it profoundly affected the region's economic health and quality of life, and its tyranny would last until after World War II.⁹

Pulling both independent farmer and sharecropper into its smothering embrace was the infamous "cotton culture." While it was the South's and West Tennessee's best cash crop, cotton contributed mightily to a number of regional ills, including tenant poverty. Though labor intensive, cotton was easily grown and extremely suitable to much of the region's soil and climate. Besides, labor was plentiful and cheap. The crop could not be eaten, was difficult to steal and easy to control since it had to be ginned to be sold. It was good collateral and an ideal crop for absentee landlords—as well as soil depletion. Above all, the return per acre was higher than most crops when prices were good. The emphasis on cotton either led or forced many farmers away from self-sufficiency in food production, which was a characteristic of independent farmers and plantation owners before the War. Unfortunately, by stressing cotton production, farmers fell prey to boom or bust cycles as year-to-year prices fell or rose dramatically. But for the long term, the effect was to depress cotton prices as supply continued to outpace demand.¹⁰

One agricultural historian points to an even more fundamental cause for the South's economic deprivation relative to the rest of the nation:

⁹ Jack T. Kirby, "The Transformation of Southern Plantations ca. 1920-1960," *Agricultural History* 57, no. 3 (1983): 258-259; Gilbert C. Fite, "Southern Agriculture Since the Civil War: An Overview," *Agricultural History* 53, no. 1 (1979): 4-11; Manning Marable, "The Politics of Black Land Tenure 1977-1915," *Agricultural History* 53, no. 1 (1979): 143-158; Charles S. Johnson, Edwin R. Embree and W. W. Alexander, *The Collapse of Cotton Tenancy* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1935), 1-24.

¹⁰ Fite, *Cotton Fields No More*, 10; Lou Ferleger, ed., *Agriculture and National Development, Views on the Nineteenth Century* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1990), 207-208.

The trap that southern farmers found themselves in was simply this: The farming operations of most farmers were too small and unproductive to produce an adequate standard of living in a commercial, capitalistic economy. In other words, they could not earn enough money to meet modern family needs. The heavy infusion of new entrants into farming created a surplus of agricultural labor and too many farms, which kept individuals and family incomes depressed. Moreover, it was not possible for most farmers to break out of the trap because the capital needed for larger and more profitable operations could not be accumulated through earnings or borrowed at interest rates that permitted making a profit. Finally, most of the suggestions for agricultural reform—self-sufficiency, diversification, cheaper credit, and improved efficiency—did not get at the basic problem of surplus workers in agriculture. There were too many people trying to get a piece of the southern agricultural pie, and the pie was too small.¹¹

A Grim Accounting for the South

With each decade's growth in cotton production and rural population, an unhealthy stress upon the land increased. In 1909—five years before the Cooperative Extension Service was established—slightly more than half the U.S. population was considered rural. About 77.5 percent of the South's population was classified rural, while 41.4 percent of Northerners lived in rural areas, that is, outside an incorporated area with at least 2,500 inhabitants. From 1889-1909, the South's rural population increased by almost 6 million or 26 percent, although as a percentage of the total population, the rural segment declined.

During the same two decades, the number of farms in the South rose 40.7 percent from 1.8 million to almost 3.1 million. The percentage increase from 1899-1909 was 18.2 percent for the South but less than one percent in the

¹¹ Gilbert C. Fite, "The Agricultural Trap in the South," *Agricultural History* 60, no. 4 (1986): 39-40.

North. Because few opportunities existed then outside agriculture in the South for a burgeoning workforce, labor could only go in one direction. The increase in farms came not from putting new land to the plow, but primarily from partitioning existing farm land. This was first reflected in the census of 1880, when enumerators began collecting data on farm tenure. For example, if a 1,000-acre plantation was divided by its owner into twenty 50-acre tracts farmed by tenants or renters, it was counted as 20 farms or units of operation by the census. As the number of farms in Dixie rose, their average size declined, dropping from 138 acres in 1899 to 114 in 1909. However, in much of the South about half the farms contained less than 50 acres. For both tenant and farm owner, such tiny operations usually gave only subsistence incomes.¹²

By 1909, the number of tenants almost equaled the number of farm owners in the South; tenants totaled 1.53 million and owners 1.54 million. The census placed farm tenants in one of three classifications: *share tenants*, who pay a certain portion of the products, such as one-quarter, one-third; *share-cash tenants*, who pay both a product share and cash for land rented; and, *cash tenants*, who pay cash or a stated amount of labor or products, such as \$10 labor or five bushels of corn per acre. Almost two-thirds of tenants were share or share-cash tenants, according to census enumerators. Of the 3.1 million Southern farmers, only 16,000 were managers. For several decades the number of tenants had increased much faster than the number of new farmers or owners. From 1899-1909, farms operated by owners grew by 12.7 percent, while the number of tenant farmers increased 24.8 percent. As a

¹² *Thirteenth Census*, Abstract, 54-56, 270-271, 283, 304; Fite, "The Agricultural Trap, 49.

percentage of total farmers, owners dropped from 52.3 percent in 1899 to 49.8 percent in 1909; tenants grew from 46.9 to 49.6 percent.¹³

Slightly more than 71.3 percent of the South's farmers were white, and they cultivated 88 percent of all land in farms. Blacks constituted 28.7 percent of the region's farmers, but tilled only 12 percent of all farm land. Of the 2.2 million white farmers, 60.1 percent owned their farms, compared to 63 percent in 1899; 39 percent were tenants of some type, up from 36 percent in 1899. Only one-fourth of the 890,141 black farmers owned land, down slightly from 1899; a staggering 75.3 percent were tenants up from 74.6 percent a decade earlier (figure 1).¹⁴

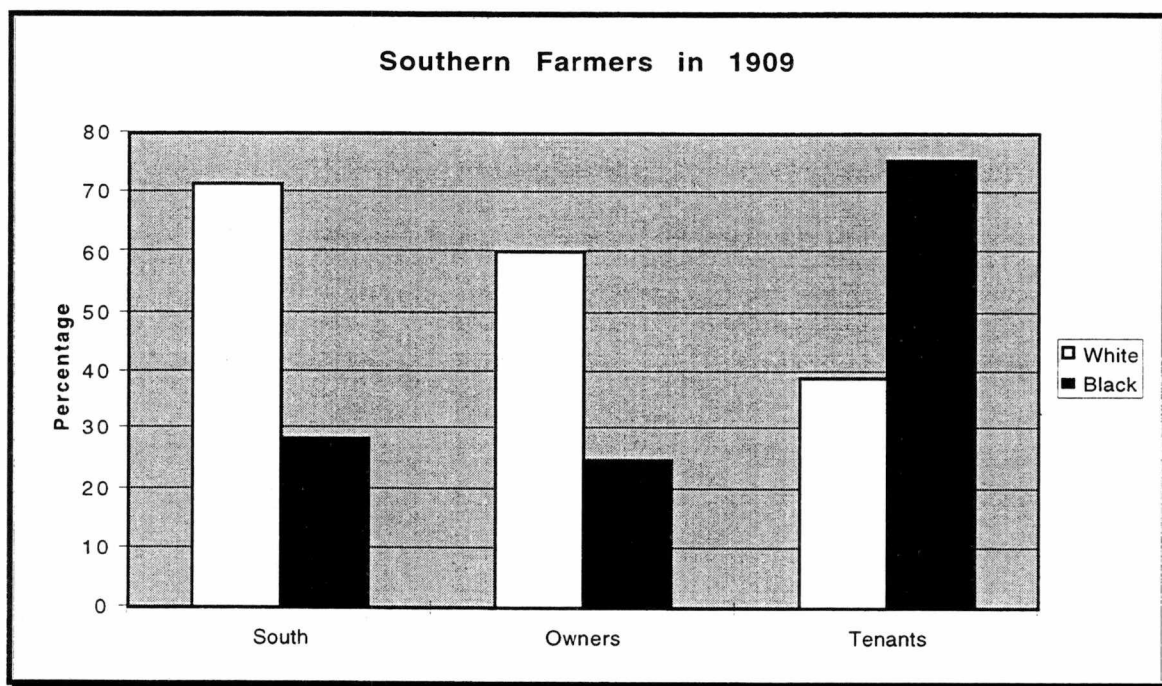


Figure 1. Racial composition of Southern farmers, by ownership and tenancy

¹³ *Thirteenth Census*, Abstract, 286. Compiled from tenure data for the three Southern geographic divisions in Table 2; 619.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 299-300.

Tennessee's Agricultural Health

Tennessee's population in 1909 was slightly more rural than the South's as a whole. Almost 80 percent of the state's 2.18 million people lived outside urban areas. The extremely rural nature of the state is illustrated in that only five cities—Jackson, Knoxville, Chattanooga, Nashville and Memphis—had populations above 10,000. Only 11 incorporated areas had populations above 5,000. Memphis was the largest city with 131,105 inhabitants. From 1889 to 1909, rural population rose by 214,620 but dropped from 86.5 to just below 80 as a percentage of the total population.

Mirroring regional trends, the number of farms in the state also rose. During the 20 years after 1889, 71,600 new farms were started, jumping from 174,412 to 246,012, an increase of 29 percent. Meanwhile, the average farm size dropped from 115.6 acres to 81.5 acres. The average owner-operated farm in 1909 held 101.8 acres and included 53.3 acres of improved land; tenant operations averaged 49.8 acres with 32.8 acres of improved land. As in much of the South, almost 49 percent of all Tennessee farms contained less than 50 acres.¹⁵

Of the state's 246,012 farmers, 84.1 percent were white and 15.6 percent were black. Of white farmers, 64.2 percent were owners and 35.5 percent were tenants; almost 28 percent of black farmers were owners and 72 percent were tenants of some type (figure 2). Information as to race across farm operator classes in the state for years before 1909 is not available.¹⁶

¹⁵ Ibid., 74, 570, 622-623, 625-626.

¹⁶ Ibid., 627.

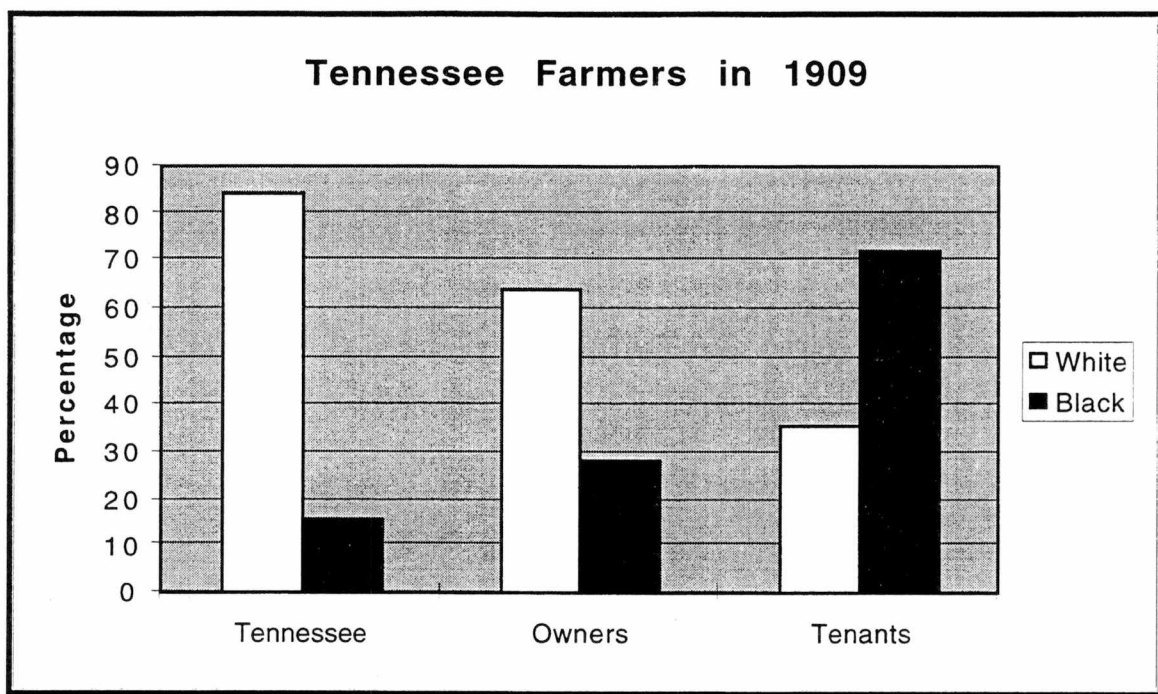


Figure 2. Racial composition of Tennessee farmers, by ownership and tenancy

Census data from 1879-1909 reveals that changes in the state's farm operator classes also reflected trends in the region. As a proportion of the total number of farmers, owners were losing ground and tenants were gaining. Farm owners in Tennessee fell from 65.5 percent in 1879 to 59 percent in 1909, while the tenants rose from 34.5 to 41 percent. The total number of farmers rose 48.5 percent during the same 30 years. By 1909, sharecroppers made up two-thirds of all tenants in the state.¹⁷

These developments did not go unnoticed. A speaker at the 1886 East Tennessee Farmers' Convention blasted tenant farming as one of the worst evils in the section. "Most of the lands now rented in East Tennessee are in bad condition and going from bad to worse," said C. W. Charlton, assistant

¹⁷ Ibid., 624, 645.

commissioner of the state Bureau of Agriculture. While urging his farmer-listeners to begin keeping a set of books, he charged that "business farming" is inconsistent with the tenant system or renting or leasing farms because most renters only wanted maximum profits and would shun maintenance. The tenant "will allow the briars to grow in the fence corners and in the field."¹⁸

Twenty-six years later in 1912, Harcourt Alexander Morgan, director of the Agricultural Experiment Station in Knoxville, used census data to call attention to conditions that had only gotten worse. Despite warnings "concerning the disasters that may be expected," corn, cotton and tobacco are still grown to the exclusion of other crops in certain sections of Tennessee," he wrote. Noting the marked relationship between the one-crop system of farming and the number of renters, he said, "The renting system, the one-crop system, and the present burdensome credit system, naturally encourage one another. They unite in discouraging livestock and winter cover crops and in robbing the soil of its fertility," Morgan said.¹⁹

A county-by-county study of 1910 census data showed a strong correlation between acreage devoted to cotton and high rates of tenancy (figure 3). Most of Tennessee's heavy cotton-producing counties lay between the Mississippi and Tennessee rivers, and most farms in nearly all these counties were operated by tenants. For example, Fayette farmers, 81 percent tenant, planted 87,494 acres of cotton; Haywood, 71 percent, planted 61,111 acres; Tipton, 70 percent, planted almost 70,000 acres; and, Shelby County with

¹⁸ Tennessee Department of Agriculture, *A Century of Tennessee Agriculture, Being the Fortieth Biennial Report, 1952-1954* (Nashville, 1954), 226.

¹⁹ University of Tennessee, Agricultural Experiment Station, *Twenty-fifth Annual Report, 1912*, 49-50.

the largest cotton acreage, 107,099, had a tenancy rate of 78.3 percent. Lake County, much smaller in area and population than these four counties, planted 30,234 acres of cotton and had the state's highest tenancy rate at 85.5 percent. Cotton helped put Shelby's total crop value at \$4.3 million, tops in the state for 1909. The average percentage of improved farm land devoted to cotton in these five counties was 42.8, with a high of 62.7 in Lake and a low of 33 in Haywood County.²⁰

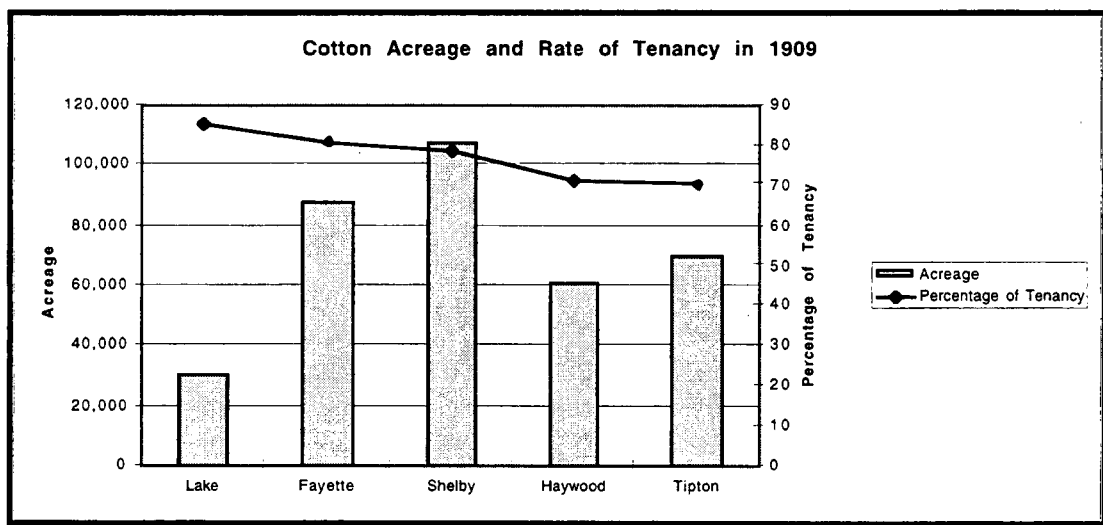


Figure 3. Rate of tenancy and cotton acreage in 5 West Tennessee counties

In two of these counties, Lake and Tipton, the majority of farmers were white. With the exception of Lake County, tenants were primarily black, ranging from 83 percent in Fayette to 54.3 percent in Tipton. Whites comprised 73 percent of Lake County's tenants. Strangely, though, the cash-paying tenants outnumbered the sharecroppers and share-cash tenants in all five counties. The percentage of cash tenants ranged from 56 in Tipton, 62 in both Fayette and Haywood, to 78 in Lake. In only two other counties, Crockett

²⁰ *Thirteenth Census*, Abstract, 645-662.

and Cumberland, did this occur. Indeed, in most of the state, sharecroppers outnumbered other types of tenants by wide margins.²¹

In four of the five West Tennessee counties with the highest tenancy rates, Lake, Fayette, Shelby, and Tipton, cotton acreage was greater than the combined acreage for cereal crops, hay and forage, potatoes, sweet potatoes and vegetables. This was also true for the percentage of improved land devoted to each crop.²²

Compared to cotton counties, the top corn- and tobacco-producing counties had much lower tenancy rates, but they were still high. The top counties in corn acreage, Obion, Giles, Maury, Rutherford and Gibson, had an average tenancy rate of 45.3 percent, planted an average 33 percent of their improved land in corn, and less than 6 percent in cotton. Two counties, Maury and Rutherford, planted no cotton.

Tenancy rates in the major tobacco producing counties, Robertson, Montgomery, Weakley, Henry and Sumner, averaged 37 percent, and in the top four counties, 41 percent. No one county allotted more than 8 percent of its improved land to tobacco; improved land devoted to corn averaged 25 percent.²³

The five counties with the greatest percentage of farm owners all lay east of McMinnville: Johnson, 86.6 percent; Carter, 84; Washington, 83.9; Van Buren, 82.3; and, Morgan, 81.7 percent. In all of these counties no single crop dominated; cotton acreage was nonexistent; and virtually so for tobacco. An

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

average one-fourth of the improved acreage was planted in corn, 14 percent in hay and forage, and 8 percent in oats and wheat.²⁴

While cotton was an important crop in many of its western counties, Tennessee's neighbors produced much more of the fiber. In a ranking of cotton acreage, Tennessee stood at Number 9 among the Deep South states with 787,516 acres that produced 264,562 bales, averaging 0.33 bale per acre. No. 2 Georgia planted 4.8 million acres that yielded 0.41 bale per acre. However, among Southern states, Tennessee was a major producer of corn, ranked behind Texas, Kentucky and Georgia in acreage and ranked No. 3 after Kentucky in production. The state's 3.14 million acres of corn produced 67 million bushels, averaging 21.3 bushels per acre for a No. 2 ranking, again behind Kentucky. Also, Tennessee's yields almost doubled corn yields in Georgia and Alabama.²⁵

Crop Diversification

Tennessee had an abundant share of the South's many agricultural ills, but its dependence on the King of Crops was not as pronounced. Cotton simply was not a suitable crop for much of Middle and East Tennessee. Thus, crop diversification was greater for the state in general than for the region. Total value of the state's crops in 1909 was \$120.7 million, placing Tennessee at No. 8 above Arkansas, Virginia, Louisiana and Florida among Southern states. The Volunteer State planted 6.36 million acres in crops for a Number 4 ranking in this category behind Texas, Georgia and Alabama. The value of crops produced in the entire South for the 1910 census totaled \$1.78 billion,

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid., 379, 404.

compared to \$2.92 billion in the North. However, the North's 196 million acres of cropland more than doubled the South's.²⁶

The most important crops to Tennessee in terms of value contributed were: cereals (mostly corn), 45.8 percent; cotton, 17.1 percent; hay and forage, 10.5 percent; vegetables, 8.6 percent; and, tobacco, 4.7 percent. In contrast, cotton contributed 42.7 percent of total crop value for the region; cereals (mostly corn), 29.3 percent; vegetables, 7.5 percent; hay and forage, 5.1 percent; and tobacco, 4.1 percent.

Of the state's improved land devoted to each crop, cereals occupied 38 percent; hay and forage, 9.7 percent; cotton, 7.2 percent; vegetables, 1.5 percent; and, tobacco, 0.8 percent. For the South, cereals were planted on 32 percent of the improved land; cotton, 21.2 percent; hay and forage, 5.7 percent; vegetables, 1.5 percent; and, tobacco, 0.8 percent. An encouraging sign for the state during the first decade of the 20th century was that most crop acreage increased at a faster rate than cotton, which grew at 26.4 percent. Although corn acreage dropped 6.8 percent and wheat 56.6 percent, oats jumped 45.4 percent; hay and forage, 63 percent; potatoes, sweet potatoes and yams, 33 percent; other vegetables, 32.7 percent; and, tobacco, 25.9 percent.²⁷

Of every 100 farmers in the state, corn was reported by 86; hay and forage by 42; cotton by 28; oats by 18; wheat by 18; and, tobacco by 10.²⁸

²⁶ Ibid., 360; 365, Table 4.

²⁷ Ibid., Tables 6 and 7, p. 367; Table 8, p. 368; 631, 632.

²⁸ Ibid., 632.

The Southern Livestock Lag

For many years, farmers' institutes, agricultural colleges, the press and other farm groups had prodded Southern farmers to improve the quality and increase the numbers of their livestock. Diversified crops and livestock went hand-in-hand in making farms more efficient, farmers were told, and such a mix would increase soil fertility, crop yields, the food supply and farm income. But heeding such admonitions was not easily done. Standing in the way of many farmers were long-standing problems: lack of capital, lack of basic knowledge in animal care, animal diseases and tiny farm operations.²⁹

At the end of the first decade of the 20th century, Southern farms continued to lag far behind their Northern counterparts in both value and numbers for most livestock categories. Of the total value of all domestic animals in the country, 60.2 percent lay in Northern hands and 27 percent in Southern.

Table 1 gives the percentage held by each region of the total number of animals in the country for six categories:

Table 1 — Percentage of livestock held by North and South

1910	Cattle	Dairy	Horses	Mules	Swine	Sheep	Poultry
North	53.5	65.9	64.4	24.5	65.2	32.2	68.7
South	31.6	27.6	23.2	72.2	31.7	13.7	24.2 ³⁰

²⁹ W. J. Spillman, "General Farming," U.S. Department of Agriculture Yearbook, 1904 (Washington, 1905), 181-190.

³⁰ Thirteenth Census, Abstract, 310-312, 314.

No consistent pattern of livestock production in the South can be determined for the first decade of the new century. Obscuring the picture is a change in the enumeration date by the Census Bureau, making comparisons from 1900 to 1910 difficult. The 1900 census was held June 1, and the 1910 census on April 15, which means that numbers for the 1910 census were lower since several weeks—when many animals are born—were lost. During these same weeks, of course, some animals were slaughtered.

Bearing that in mind, several states showed spectacular percentage gains for that decade in selected animal categories. The number of dairy cows jumped 51 percent in Louisiana, 47 percent in Georgia and Florida and 43.5 percent in Mississippi. In fact, all Southern states saw an increase in dairy cattle. Swine numbers climbed 71 percent in Louisiana, 74.5 percent in Florida and 25 percent in Georgia. All Southern states, except Kentucky and Texas, experienced gains of 4 to 20 percent in cattle, and all but Louisiana gained substantially in the number of mules. Despite these increases, the total number of animals that could have improved Southern diets remained small. For example, Georgia counted 405,710 dairy cows in 1909. The Peach State's 2.6 million population ranked second behind Texas in the South. Indiana with 2.7 million people had 633,591 milk cows, and Michigan with 2.8 million people had 767,083. Even Iowa with 2.2 million people had 1.4 million dairy cows.³¹

Along with the gains were large percentage declines. Hog numbers fell 23.6 percent in Kentucky, 15.7 percent in Virginia, 12.3 percent in Texas and 11 percent in Alabama. Sheep numbers fell in eight states, horses declined in six

³¹ Ibid., 316-334, 24.

states, seven states lost swine and four lost poultry. Considering the South's population growth, these livestock trends were not encouraging.³²

The Tennessee Picture

Livestock production was also irregular in Tennessee for this decade. Cattle numbers rose 9.2 percent; dairy, 23.4 percent; mules, 8.7 percent; sheep, 60 percent; and, poultry, 15.5 percent. Swine numbers fell 30 percent and the number of horses declined by less than 1 percent.³³ Viewed long term, however, the pattern becomes clearer. From 1880 to 1910, the number of cattle rose 6.3 percent, and milk cows, 25 percent. Hog numbers dropped 54 percent, sheep, 27.6 percent, while the number of horses rose 26 percent and mules, 33.7 percent.³⁴

Livestock were clearly important to Tennessee farmers because domestic animals of some type were reported by 95 percent of the state's farms in the 1910 census. Some 11,952 farms or 5 percent reported no animals. The percentage of farms reporting animals in the following categories was: cattle, 85.4 percent; dairy cows, 83.5 percent; horses, 62.5 percent; mules, 50 percent; swine, 73.9 percent; and, sheep, 12.2 percent. Poultry, mostly chickens, was also reported on 90.5 percent of farms.³⁵

³² Ibid., 316-334.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ *Agricultural Trends in Tennessee*, A Record of Tennessee Crop and Livestock Statistics, 1866-1952 (Tennessee Department of Agriculture, 1952), 91-110.

³⁵ *Thirteenth Census*, Abstract, 627-628.

The Poor "State" of Tennessee

Even with greater crop diversity, and somewhat encouraging livestock trends, Tennessee remained a poor state in a poor region, agriculturally speaking. The average value of all property on a Tennessee farm in 1909, though rising, was only \$2,490 compared to \$2,897 for the South and \$9,507 for the North. The national average was \$6,444. A farm's land and buildings averaged \$8,182 in value in the North, \$2,374 in the South and \$1,953 in Tennessee. The value of machinery and tools averaged \$87 for a Tennessee farm, \$95 for the South and \$296 for the North. Livestock values averaged \$450 per Tennessee farm, \$418 for the South and \$1,029 for the typical Northern farm.³⁶

Income estimates for 1900 in Tennessee also illustrate its poverty relative to other states. Annual per capita total personal income was \$61, barely half the national average, placing Tennessee fourth from the bottom among states of the old Confederacy and Kentucky. Of Tennessee's total workforce of 564,000, agricultural laborers numbered 450,000 or 79.7 percent. Annual agricultural income per worker was \$146; nonagricultural income per worker totaled \$497. Still, agricultural income was only 56 percent of the national average, while nonagricultural income stood at 79.9 percent.³⁷

An institute speaker in September 1910 described the plight of the Tennessee farmer in another way, pointing out that the economic deck, stacked against him, helped perpetuate his poverty. But the farmer foolishly

³⁶ Ibid., 281, 623.

³⁷ Richard A. Easterlin, "Interregional Differences in Per Capita Income, Population, and Total Income, 1840-1950," *Trends in the American Economy in the Nineteenth Century*, vol. 24 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960), 102-103.

abetted his condition by buying food and other items that he should have been producing. Although the speech was not included in newspaper stories at the time on the institute, portions were reprinted later in the daily press.

In his welcoming address to the West Tennessee Farmers' Institute at Jackson, attorney Hunter Wilson said,

While the farmer is recognized as one of the greatest producers of wealth, it may seem strange when I say to you that the average Tennessee farmer is a poor man. . . . The reason is that in the purchase of the very necessities of life he is made to pay daily tribute to manufacturers all over this country by unjust and unequal high protective tariff legislation. The average farmer thinks that if he was walled in from the outside world he could live at home, but I want to say to you that he couldn't.

The truth is that when he gets up in the morning, the first thing that he does is to put on a sock made in New York, shoes that were made in Boston, pants that were made in Ohio, and then sips water from a Russian bucket, with a Chicago dipper, puts it in an Illinois pan, and then washes his Tennessee face with a cake of St. Louis soap. He dries his face with a Rhode Island towel, and roaches his hair with a Vermont comb. He then drinks Cuban coffee from an Indiana cup and saucer, sweetened with sugar made in Louisiana and stirred with a New York spoon. His knife and fork and plate were made in the North, and his table cloth was made in Boston.

He eats a piece of Chicago ham, fried in Kansas lard, and sops his St. Louis biscuit, seasoned with Boston soda and Michigan salt, in Louisiana molasses. He then wipes his Tennessee mouth with a Vermont napkin, and seats his family in Michigan chairs around a table made in Minnesota. His meal was cooked on a St. Louis stove, with wood chopped with a St. Louis axe, and hauled in an Indiana wagon. He then puts a Boston bridle and harness on a Missouri mule, hitches to an Indiana plow and begins his day's work on a farm encumbered in all probability with a New York mortgage.

When the sun has measured the day he returns at nightfall and satisfies his appetite with another imported meal, and then fills an Indiana lamp with Pennsylvania coal oil, and lights it with a Boston match. He then takes down his Illinois pipe and fills it with North Carolina tobacco, and settles down in

comfort for a Tennessee smoke. When bedtime comes he gets down his family Bible, which was printed in Massachusetts, reads a chapter, says a prayer composed in Jerusalem, and then retires to bed and is guarded over by Tennessee watch dogs, one of the main home products on his farm.³⁸

The Tennessee farm may have produced watch dogs very well, but it clearly needed to do a better job of producing other things.

From 1899 to 1909, the farmers' lot improved but little, even though the total value of farm crops rose 70.6 percent.³⁹ This was caused mainly by an increase in price per unit over which the farmer had little control. The fundamental problem of increasing income by increasing production per acre remained to be solved, a USDA statistician told the Middle Tennessee Farmers' Institute in October 1913.⁴⁰

Per acre yields for Tennessee's major crops were disheartening when viewed over a 30-year span from 1879 to 1909. Corn yields stood at 21.5 bushels in 1909, down from 21.6 in 1879; cotton fell from nearly half a bale to one third; hay and forage remained at about a ton per acre, while tobacco rose from 707 to 760 pounds per acre. Oats and wheat, however, showed substantial improvements in yields per acre.⁴¹

"If I were asked to name the two biggest problems of the farmer," said F.W. Gist of the USDA, "without hesitation I would say, first to make money; second, to make more money." He explained that the state's 246,000 farms in 1909 produced an estimated \$121 million in crops and about \$65 million in

³⁸ Tennessee Department of Agriculture, *Biennial Report*, 1909-1910 (Nashville: Brandon Printing Co., 1911), 73-76.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 370.

⁴⁰ F.W. Gist, "Farm Profits," Tennessee Department of Agriculture, *Tennessee Agriculture*, II (December, 1913), 502.

⁴¹ *Thirteenth Census, Agriculture*, 5: 581-682.

animals, dairy products, poultry and eggs for an average gross income of \$750 per farm. Average net income was even lower at \$686. "Will anyone in this audience undertake to tell me how much improvements can be made with what is left of \$750 after the help is paid, the animals fed, the taxes paid, the wives and children fed and clothed? How many young men and women are going back to the farm to do all this on \$750?"⁴²

Gist made it clear that he was not talking about the "shiftless farmer, the extreme cases or the worthless tenants." Johnson County, where 80 percent of the farmers were owners, had an average net income per farm of \$561, less than the state average. In Fayette County, where 80 percent of farmers were tenants, net income averaged \$523. "The difference is that the tenant gets but half, or about \$261," Gist said. "I have heard it said that Maury County is the garden spot of the earth and from general appearances I believed it until I found that her net income per farm is only \$1,162.

"Remember, men, I am no pessimist, nor am I trying to run down your splendid State, because in this respect it is far ahead of some others. But I am trying to impress upon you the fact that you do not make enough money on your farms to make them profitable, to make their life the most desirable, to properly educate your children, to keep them away from the glare of the white lights of the city. Why even in Maury County, almost double the average for the State, the average receipts are not half what they ought to be. With an average of 59 improved acres to the farm, the receipts there are less than \$20 per acre. If it were \$40 you would have the problem of profit [still] unsolved."⁴³

⁴² Gist, "Farm Profits," 499, 501.

⁴³ Ibid., 501-502.

The statistician also put in a plug for Dr. Knapp's program, stating that the Boys' Corn Club and demonstration farmer had solved the production problem by producing 100 bushels of corn per acre instead of 25.

He urged that the agricultural colleges, experiment stations, the federal and state departments of agriculture get busier in reaching all the farmers instead of a few. "Let somebody somehow twist more money out of the Tennessee Legislature for the extension of the practical work of aiding the average farmer. That is your real problem and that is the solution. It is no sacrilege to paraphrase the words of the Good Book and say to you: 'Seek ye first the making of more money off the farm, and all these other things will be added unto you.'"⁴⁴

Through the years, speakers at institutes across the state had been unsuccessful in helping most farmers add much of anything unto themselves. Even when their speeches were widely circulated by newspapers, they had not yet found *the* key to persuading the mass of farmers to break old habits that kept them poor. Institutes preached salvation to the saved, whose numbers were few. The overriding question remained: How to reach the unbelievers, the thousands of farmers, owners and tenants, who never came near an institute or the University of Tennessee or read an Experiment Station bulletin?

In the decade before Gist's admonition, the University of Tennessee, through its College of Agricultural and Experiment Station, had been getting busier and busier in efforts to reach more farmers. But station director

⁴⁴ Ibid., 502-503.

Morgan⁴⁵ seemed to express his frustration with the pace in his 1909 report as he called for larger state appropriations. Spending restrictions on state and federal funds "limit the usefulness of the Station . . . and the dissemination of agricultural facts well known to the Experiment Station and little known to the farmers of the State." Of the more than 200,000 farmers in the state, "not more than 10,000 receive the bulletins because of insufficient funds to publish larger editions. . . . Large interest[s], such as the dairy, beef, sheep, hogs, poultry, truck, and fruit, are demanding information that the Station is in no position to acquire. The need of relief in this direction is urgent."⁴⁶

Morgan was even more critical in his report of 1910. "Our State as a whole does not fully recognize fundamental agricultural problems, and much effort, which is for the best interest of the present as well as future generations, is inadequately appreciated. The actual in agricultural achievement is still too insignificant in contrast with the possible." Again, he requested increased state appropriations.⁴⁷

Two years later, Morgan moved beyond simply requesting more money for more bulletins and addressed the problem of persuading one-crop farmers to hear, much less heed, the advice of Experiment Station personnel.

"Its solution seems possible only through the *medium of more active and systematized rural education*,⁴⁸ in which the Experiment Station, the

⁴⁵ Morgan Hall on the University of Tennessee Agricultural Campus is named in Morgan's honor.

⁴⁶ Agricultural Experiment Station, *Twenty-second Annual Report*, 1909, 95-96.

⁴⁷ Agricultural Experiment Station, *Twenty-third Annual Report*, 1910, 96.

⁴⁸ Emphasis added.

College of Agriculture, the public rural schools, the churches, and all the people must unite," he said.

From the experiments and observations made in all parts of the state it seems clear that if agriculture in Tennessee is to reach its maximum development the merits of diversity of crops must be taught to the people; silos and live stock must be possessed by them; the relation of climate to kinds of crops and systems of cropping must be acknowledged; the topography of land considered in relation to types of farming; lime used to encourage clover and other legumes; farmers encouraged and helped to own rather than rent small farms; and rural education and cooperation among the people become the ruling rural passion.⁴⁹

By now, Morgan and other University agricultural researchers certainly knew what needed to be done in Tennessee and probably knew the manner in which it would be done. A national consensus on the "how" of extension education was rapidly building, and congressional attempts to manifest that consensus via legislation had been under way for some time.

Moreover, about one year before Wilson's speech to the institute at Jackson, the first agent from Knapp's Farmers' Cooperative Demonstration Work program arrived in Tennessee, setting up headquarters also in Jackson. W. W. Campbell of Texas carried with him the key, the educational technique that would be granted congressional sanction in a "more active and systematized rural education" system in Tennessee and the rest of the country.

Bad News Statistically Speaking

That most farmers in Tennessee and the South were bedeviled by an assortment of problems, Tennessee's daily newspapers left little to doubt.

⁴⁹ Agricultural Experiment Station, *Twenty-fifth Annual Report*, 1912, 49-50.

Throughout the span of this study, the press, either in its editorial or news columns, was never reluctant to spotlight the region's or the state's warts and blemishes regarding agriculture. Also, the dailies, especially the *Commercial Appeal*, constantly reminded their readers of the startling differences between the North and South in farm practices, production and quality of life on the farm.

None of the three newspapers appeared to soft-pedal the often dire economic news or statistical reports on acreage, crop yields and so on received from state or federal agricultural departments. Like unending hammer blows, these stories drove home the message that Southern farming was inferior farming. Likewise, news of local farming, gathered and written by the newspapers' own staffs, generally presented a straight-forward accounting of the topic or event, though an element of boosterism was often included in the item. Almost all of the local and wire stories were published without bylines.

Because agricultural production was of such major importance to their local markets and economies, it is not surprising that the newspapers devoted so much space to agricultural news and information, much of it provided by official sources. Monthly and seasonal crop reports, the ups and downs of the commodities markets—especially for cotton, the boll weevil's eastward movement, livestock numbers, losses and prices, crop values, reports of acreage for each crop in Tennessee, the South and across the nation, and the state's agricultural ranking by crop within the South often made the front page of all three newspapers.

During most years of this study, all three newspapers published the extremely detailed annual report issued by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. For these and other national and state reports that carried a heavy dose of statistical information, the papers generally depended on their wire services.

Much of the time, news of Southern agriculture was disappointing. Either yields of food crops were down; acreage for corn was off, the price of hay had fallen; or, the acreage devoted to cotton had risen. Two dramatic shifts in cotton yield and price occurred in 1909 and 1911, demonstrating once again that farmers paid little attention to the law of supply and demand or expected other farmers to obey it.

Because of bad weather and the boll weevil during the 1909 growing season, farmers produced only 10.6 million bales of cotton, compared to 13.8 million the year before. The shortfall caused the average price per pound to jump from 9.45 to about 14.37 cents, an event that made the front pages of the Memphis and Knoxville papers during the fall of 1909. Nashville played the story inside. The 1910 crop rebounded to 12.1 million bales, and the average price rose to 14.6 cents. Front page headlines in the *Commercial Appeal* read: "Planters' Dreams Realized," "Highest November Price Within 35 Years." Indeed, it was a very good year for cotton. In 1911, farmers produced 16.1 million bales, the largest cotton crop ever recorded, and the price plummeted to 10 cents a pound. Consequently, the total value for the crop was \$107 million less than the 1910 crop. Memphis put this story on page 1, Nashville on page 8, and Knoxville on page 3. Placement within the newspaper as well

as placement on a page usually indicates the importance of a story to a newspaper's readers.⁵⁰

Most of the news related to agriculture, however, was far less exciting and usually repeated the same sad Southern farm saga from one year to the next. For example, a January 1909 *Banner* wire story, reported the yields of Tennessee's seven principal crops (not including cotton) for 1908. The average corn yield, at 25 bushels to the acre, was extremely low, as were yields for neighboring states. Wheat farmers had produced an average 10 bushels per acre. "As compared with the yield of some of her neighbors that of Tennessee was rather low," the reporter pointed out.⁵¹

Near the end of May 1909, the *Journal and Tribune*, published a rather dry statistical item, typical of all crop reports, from the state department of agriculture. Compared to 1908, corn acreage had increased 4 percent, cotton 2 percent, but tobacco acreage had fallen 10 percent and tomatoes 6 percent.⁵² These routine stories were usually displayed at the top of an inside page with an all-cap main headline with two or three deck heads below it. Often, the story included a table or chart for easy reading and comparing of the figures from one year or decade to the next.

Frequently news and commentary were mixed in the same story. The *Commercial Appeal* reported in a story datelined Trenton, Tenn., June 12, that Gibson County's 1910 apple crop was about to be harvested. The

⁵⁰ "Spot Cotton 15 Cents," *Commercial Appeal*, 3 November 1909, 1; "Overproduction Hurt Cotton Last Year," *Commercial Appeal*, 6 September 1912, 1; "Largest Cotton Crop in History," *Nashville Banner*, 6 September 1912, 8.

⁵¹ Walter Edward Harris, "Agriculture in Tennessee," *Nashville Banner*, 2 January 1909, 3.

⁵² "Tennessee Crop Conditions," *Nashville Banner*, 26 May 1909, 2.

correspondent also took the opportunity to promote a favorite newspaper theme: diversification.

The prices realized are from \$1 to \$1.50 per bushel. The apple crop is good, in spite of the many threatening pests and diseases that appeared early in the season.

The farmers of this county are awakening to the fact that the old custom of raising corn and cotton exclusively does not pay. Many orchards have been set out during the past fall and spring, and many more will be set this coming fall. There are several orchards near Trenton that pay annually from \$100 to \$200 per acre, which makes it worthwhile to have a few acres of trees on any farm.⁵³

In a reverse flow of information, the *Banner* occasionally printed a collection of clippings from weekly newspapers across the state, such as the *Milan Exchange* and *Savannah Courier* in far west Tennessee, the *Fentress County Gazette* in Jamestown on the Cumberland Plateau and the *Murfreesboro News Banner* southeast of Nashville. Content usually consisted of yield reports, crop conditions or unusual farm activity. A reprint from Milan gave a lengthy description of an experiment by J. A. McAlister designed to increase cotton yields. The story's last paragraph complimented the farmer in a tone similar to that used by the daily press:

Mr. McAlister will be glad to show anyone this cotton, and it will pay any farmer to go out and talk with him. He is a good thinker, a progressive and scientific farmer and has many progressive ideas that he is proving with his work.⁵⁴

"Scientific," a favorite word in the context of agriculture, was repeated in story after story across the entire range of agricultural topics. To farm scientifically usually meant that one's practices and procedures, or use of

⁵³ "Apple Crop Coming In," *Nashville Banner*, 13 June 1910, 2.

⁵⁴ "Crop Prospects in Tennessee," *Nashville Banner*, 13 July 1911, 7.

fertilizer, seed or plant variety, or selection of livestock and feed was based on research, that is, surveys, field trials or other types of testing programs conducted by experiment stations, agricultural colleges or the federal Department of Agriculture.

Along with the news about how bad things were would occasionally come news of scientific discoveries and developments that offered hope to farmers that things would get better.

In treatment that resembles today's "feature story," a McNairy County farmer, Z. T. McGoffin, outlined for readers of the *Banner* three major discoveries that had great implications for farmers in Tennessee and the South:

For several years, the planters of Tennessee have incurred enormous losses in repeated failure to secure a stand of red clover. . . . A clover immune to disease and free of seeds of pestiferous weeds is what is claimed for the plant grown at the experiment station at Knoxville.

For many years the farmers of Tennessee, and in fact of all the states, suffered enormous losses from the ravages of hog cholera, for which there was no known cure, but at last, thanks to the efforts of the Agricultural Department at Washington, backed by the powers of the general government, an infallible preventive has been discovered.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ This was not the first news account about the vaccine against hog cholera, which had been discovered in 1905 by Dr. Marion Dorset, a native of Maury County, Tenn. A graduate of the University of Tennessee, Dorset also held a medical degree from George Washington University, but never practiced medicine. In 1904, he became chief of the Biochemic Division of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The anti-cholera serum was not readily available in Tennessee until Nov. 1, 1913, when a manufacturing plant began operations in Nashville. "The Story of Dr. Marion Dorset," in *Makers of Millions*, ed. Louis D. Wallace (Tennessee Department of Agriculture, 1951), 5-59.

McGoffin also noted that the agriculture department had discovered a remedy for "black spot," a peach disease that costs the fruit growers annually many hundred of thousands of dollars.⁵⁶

Texas cattle fever, caused by the cattle tick, was another crippling disease for Southern cattle raisers. Periodic accounts of the progress being made in eliminating the cattle tick from Tennessee were published in all three dailies from 1909 on. Finally, in early 1914 news of the tick's eradication in Tennessee was released.

Tennessee is the first of the states extensively infested by the ticks to be entirely freed from this pest and released from quarantine. In 1906, about one-half this state was under quarantine.⁵⁷

All three dailies got great mileage from the 1910 census report on agriculture for the state. In August 1911, both the *Nashville Banner* and *Journal and Tribune* printed a lengthy and detailed wire service story based on the census comparing 1909 data to 1899 statistics. The *Commercial Appeal* did not publish the census report; however, the paper used census data in various stories and editorials printed over the next two to three years, as did the Nashville and Knoxville papers.

The newspapers also presented news of farm conditions in local, regional and national stories that did not contain such a heavy dose of statistical information. The sense of reform was strong in all three newspapers for agricultural practices and the improvement of rural life. The underlying theme for almost all such stories was that the South and

⁵⁶ "The Farmer Has His Inning," *Nashville Banner*, 21 March 1910, 2.

⁵⁷ R. M. Gates, "Tennessee Is Tick Free," *Commercial Appeal*, 29 January 1914, 14.

Tennessee could and must do a better job on the farm, and that sometimes required engaging in a political fight to amend a state law or enact a new one.

For example, sheep raisers, of whom there were few in February 1909, met in Nashville to organize and seek legislation to protect sheep from dogs that then were allowed to roam free. Excerpts from two of the speeches illustrate what they were facing.

I am not a sheep raiser. I have tried it twice, but the dog has beaten me both times. We have the finest state in the union for sheep, but we have got to pass a stringent dog law. — Ex-Governor Buchanan.

In the face of increasing population in the United States, our production on farm lands per acre is on the decline. Tennessee is not one of the great stock raising states, and the burden of increasing the productive power of land in the country therefore falls on us. — Harcourt A. Morgan, Experiment Station director, University of Tennessee

T. F. Dunn of Rutherford County wryly pointed out that more of the voters owned dogs than owned sheep, which complicated their efforts. Two weeks before the meeting, the *Nashville Banner* had editorialized: “. . . the state is so full of worthless dogs that destroy sheep, very many farmers who would otherwise be successful sheep breeders are compelled to abandon the industry to avoid the worry and loss.” The paper urged the legislature to protect the industry rather than give the “curs free rein and reign.”⁵⁸

News of farming conditions came from a variety of official sources, including government and railroad officials, and academicians. Railroads, represented by men such as M. V. Richards, land and industrial agent of Southern Railway, also conducted a campaign for better farming practices in

⁵⁸ “Sheep Raisers Ask Protection,” *Nashville Banner*, 4 February 1909, 2; “Sheep in Tennessee,” *Nashville Banner*, 15 January 1909, 6.

concert with the agricultural colleges and the state and federal governments. Usually the railroads were candid about their self-interests. In a November 1909 speech to the Farmers' National Congress meeting in Raleigh, N.C., Richards is reported to have said:

The attractiveness of the cities, the rewards in mining and manufacturing and other lines of business have tended to augment the city and business life at the expense of the farm life in the United States, and in consequence there has been ignorance and shiftlessness in the care of the soils, a depletion of the soil's fertility and lessening of yields.

Bad farming should become a thing of the past, he declared, if the national and state governments would give a larger share of attention to agricultural problems and the general extension of the scheme of agricultural education in the United States.⁵⁹

The *Commercial Appeal*, long an advocate of diversified farming, printed repeated warnings of the dangers of one-crop farms as the boll weevil continued moving north toward Tennessee.

Another warning to the farmers of Mississippi, of Tennessee and of Arkansas that the day of the boll weevil in this section is at hand is being carried to all who will listen by D. A. Brodie, Southern manager of the farm management department of the bureau of plant industry at Washington, D.C. With the warning he brings a remedy for the evil—diversified farming.

In the same story, the paper unabashedly accepted praise from the federal official for devoting so much ink to the battle: "Mr. Brodie gives credit for arousing sentiment in favor of diversified farming to many agencies, to the experimental stations, the lecturers, the farmers' institutes and to the newspapers, especially the *Commercial Appeal*. I want to compliment the *Commercial Appeal* on what it is doing editorially and through its news

⁵⁹ "Agricultural Population," *Journal and Tribune*, 7 November 1909, 13.

columns," he said. "I wish that other papers would follow its example in preaching the doctrine of diversified farming."⁶⁰

No doubt because of his connection with East Tennessee, the *Journal and Tribune* printed a speech by Dr. Charles W. Dabney, president of the University of Cincinnati and former president of The University of Tennessee, to the Ohio State Board of Agriculture. Additionally, Dabney's comments, though about Ohio, had relevance to Tennessee.

As in Tennessee, Ohio's rural population was moving to the cities, but in greater numbers. "In our opinion, country depopulation is due first to the meager share the farmer actually receives of the tremendous wealth he produces," he said. Calculations of the agricultural experts show that the farmer gets only 35 cents of the consumer's dollar. Dabney blamed excessively high tariffs for the problem, contending that farmers and consumers get hit with an abnormally high level of costs because of them.⁶¹

All three newspapers in this study practiced "clipping" news stories from magazines and newspapers around the country, including each other's. Sometimes the message was downright insulting.

A reprint from *Farm and Fireside* magazine stated that Dr. Milton Whitney, chief of the federal soils bureau, insists that proper cultivation and rotation will make run-down soils produce again as well as ever. "The trouble is not with the land but with the people farming it," he declared.⁶²

⁶⁰ "Brings Warning to Farmers," *Commercial Appeal*, 20 June 1910, 5.

⁶¹ "Causes of Rural Depopulation and Improvement of Farm Life," *Journal and Tribune*, 28 January 1912, A-4.

⁶² "Trouble Is With Farmers," *Journal and Tribune*, 4 November 1912, 10.

But there were many others to share the blame. In March 1913, the *Nashville Banner* published a front-page story in which state veterinarian Dr. George White took the legislature to task for not doing more to protect livestock.

"Livestock to the value of \$5 million dies annually in Tennessee from preventable diseases and it is to the shame of the state that only \$5,750 is appropriated out of the state's funds to protect the industry," Dr. White charged. He also urged the legislature to appropriate \$10,000 to better safeguard livestock. White made the comments in a speech to a group of stock raisers and farmers.⁶³

Later that year the legislature came through, allocating money to build a plant to produce hog cholera vaccine. Demand for the vaccine was so great, the state was forced to expand plant capacity in early 1914.

The State Agriculture Department announced, "The demand upon the plant for Tennessee serum has far exceeded expectations. . . . We positively know that more dollars worth of hogs have already been saved in Tennessee by serum treatment than the plant cost."⁶⁴

The Weekly Farm Page

Two of the newspapers, the *Nashville Banner* and the *Journal and Tribune*, published a weekly farm page. The *Commercial Appeal* did not, and the reason for that is not clear. The state of farming in Tennessee was an ever-present topic on the farm pages.

⁶³ "Heavy Losses in Live Stock," *Nashville Banner*, 11 March 1913, 1.

⁶⁴ "Farmers and Swine Raisers," *Journal and Tribune*, 10 April 1914, 5.

Edited by Thomas C. Karns since 1907, the *Journal and Tribune* page "Out On the Farm" was published every Monday (see appendix A). Although the content of the farm pages in the *Nashville Banner* and *Journal and Tribune* was similar, the *Journal and Tribune* produced—until the spring of 1911—the most interesting page in terms of reader involvement. In late April of that year, Karns died at age 60 in Orlando, Fla., where he had gone by train in January to improve his health. The page was suspended until the end of July 1911 when it reappeared under a new standing head, "Notes of Interest to the Farmer, the Breeder, and the Dairyman." Later it was renamed "Devoted to the Interests of Farmers, Dairyman and Poultrymen."

A graduate of the University of Tennessee, Karns wrote for the *Knoxville Chronicle* after leaving college and later wrote for the *Chattanooga Commercial*. He then became the first superintendent of public schools in Knox County, leaving that position to become a member of the faculty at the University of Tennessee, a post he held for 10 years before retiring.⁶⁵

Karns encouraged letters from readers, who responded with two to five almost every week. Many simply wanted information about a farm-related problem. The answer was often supplied by the experiment station in Knoxville. At times, readers wrote letters explaining how they had achieved greater yields, improved a poor farm, or made a good profit in hogs, following that information with advice on how others could do the same. Through these letters and hard-hitting commentary by Karns, the editor and his readers unveiled a detailed picture of farm conditions in East Tennessee.

⁶⁵ "Prof. T.C. Karns Passes Away," *Journal and Tribune*, 1 May 1911, 5.

Mixed with the letters, informational pieces and advice columns were Karns' mini-editorials, in which he scolded East Tennesseans for their sorry farming ways. For example, in early 1909 he wrote,

In East Tennessee we are content to get twelve bushels of wheat from an acre of land but here is a New York farmer who produces fifty bushes to the acre. What makes the difference? It is all a matter of farming. We do nothing to increase the productiveness of our land while the New Yorker does everything.⁶⁶

Look around you and what do you see? How many worn-out fields are in sight? How many acres of waste land could you enumerate that are paying practically nothing on investment? How much land is made to produce according to its capacity? . . . Why is it that our market at Knoxville is supplied largely from the north and west? Why do our merchants sell apples from New York, potatoes from Ohio, celery from Michigan, and hay from Kansas instead of the products of our own East Tennessee farms? In some ways it must be our fault because we certainly can produce all these things.⁶⁷

After Karns' death, the number of letters from farm residents dwindled, and the page lost its personal flavor, becoming little more than a sterile collection of "canned" articles for most issues.

The *Nashville Banner* bought its farm page ready-to-print, although local stories were printed on the page, too (see appendix B). The copyrighted sheet of "boilerplate" was provided by the Associated Farm Press in Chicago. The page, published each Saturday without a heading, contained articles of varying length accompanied by illustrations or photographs.

Like the *Journal and Tribune's* page, topics included information on sanitation, disease, livestock, poultry, orchards, soil, maintenance of buildings and equipment, gardens, fertilizer, home beautification, and flowers. Other

⁶⁶ "The Difference," *Journal and Tribune*, 25 January 1909, 6.

⁶⁷ "Could We Do Better?" *Journal and Tribune*, 1 February 1909, 6.

informational articles provided census data on farm progress or discussed the importance of good roads and good schools.

Many of the articles carried bylines of professors from agricultural colleges across the nation, experiment station researchers, and U.S. Department of Agriculture scientists.

The *Nashville Banner's* farm page also carried a substantial amount of generic commentary on farm conditions in the South, which included abundant advice on what farmers needed to do to improve their lot in life.

Supplementing the farm page beginning in August 1909 was a column titled "Farming and Horticultural Pointers," written by Will T. Hale, about whom little is known. The *Banner* announced that it had hired Hale to:

conduct a department devoted to agricultural and horticultural interests, especially dealing with intensive farming on small tracts of land, a subject that is just now attracting widespread attention in the South, and one which promises to add greatly to the value of Southern land and to the income from farm products.⁶⁸

Intensive farming meant making two ears of corn, two tons of hay, or two bushels of potatoes grow where only one had grown before.

Hale's column, compared to the farm page, had far more relevance to Middle Tennesseans. As Karns had done, he invited letters and questions from his readers, who responded. Like Karns, each week he flailed against ignorant farm practices and beliefs of the day, which kept farmers in poverty.

In August 1907, Hale wrote that "farmers need to study. They should realize the mistake of more 'mine farming'—that is, growing and selling the products alone that rob the soil of its food elements. . . . The worn-out fields

⁶⁸ "New Banner Features," *Nashville Banner*, 31 July 1909, 1.

and rundown farms prove that our agriculturists have been too careless in those matters."⁶⁹

In December of the following year, Hale touched on a fundamental reason for the decline in farming. He wrote that it was difficult to convince a farmer "who has been accustomed for years to depend upon hogs and hominy" to change his ways.

One reason is that he knows something about what he has followed all his life, and nothing about new things, and fears he will fail if he changes. Another is that he does not believe the reports which reach his ears concerning the growing of fruits or farming intensively.⁷⁰

The Editorial Page

Backing up the news columns about the terrible farm conditions in Tennessee and the South was a relentless flow of editorials by all three newspapers, especially from 1909 to near the end of 1912. Afterward, the commentary turned more to other agricultural subjects, although continued reliance on one-crop farming remained a favorite editorial target. Editorials for the *Journal and Tribune* and *Nashville Banner* were never printed more than one column wide (see appendix C and D). The *Commercial Appeal*, however, was fond of spreading its lead editorial across two or three columns in a type size slightly larger than that on the rest of the page. The practice tended to pull the reader's eye into the text block (see appendix E).

⁶⁹ "Farming and Horticultural Pointers, *Nashville Banner*, 7 August 1909, 7.

⁷⁰ "Brief Talks to Men of Few Acres, *Nashville Banner*, 3 December 1910, 10.

Usually, an editorial on agricultural conditions immediately followed a news story about an "event" such as a speech, a meeting or release of a government report. Occasionally, one of the newspapers in this study would reprint an editorial from one of the other two. The *Journal and Tribune* found an editorial from the *Nashville Banner* to its liking in April 1909. The editorial commented that before the War Between the States, many Southern farmers grew enough wheat for home consumption. After the war, cotton soared in price, driving wheat out of the region. "It was then that the Southern planter began, as the popular expression ran, 'To keep his smokehouse and corn crib in the northwest,'" ⁷¹ meaning that farmers began importing their food from other regions rather than growing it themselves.

As with news items, all three newspapers routinely "clipped" farm-related editorials from newspapers around the country. Or an editorial from a cross-state paper would provide the basis for one's own.

The *Journal and Tribune* developed an editorial around the main point of one from the *Commercial Appeal* that stated:

If we would give one-tenth as much attention in this country to corn as we do to the growth of politics, this country would become the granary of the United States, just as the delta of the Nile [is] to Egypt.

"It gives us more pleasure than we can express in mere words to be able to agree with the ably edited and always interesting *Memphis Commercial Appeal*," the *Journal and Tribune's* editorial stated.⁷²

In a two-column editorial, the *Commercial Appeal* used the analogy of a trade balance to make its point that because Southerners did not grow

⁷¹ "The Growing of Wheat," *Journal and Tribune*, 19 April 1909.

⁷² "More Corn, Less Politics," *Journal and Tribune*, 15 September 1910, 6.

enough foodstuffs in addition to cotton, they must spend all of their cotton profits and more to pay for imported food and livestock. "The balance of trade is against the whole South. . . . The people of this territory can grow all the cotton they are growing now, and can grow all the other things they need."⁷³

In addition to its regular editorials, the *Commercial Appeal* each day published a small one-column box titled, "Farmers, Attention" (see appendix F). Set in bold type, these mini-editorials preached in simple language the gospel of diversified farming, or gave simple instructions on preparing a seedbed, or the virtues of raising livestock, and so on. The paper would sometimes run the same editorial for several consecutive days. The national origin for the gospel of diversified farming was the U.S. Department of Agriculture, which disseminated this message through experiment station literature, newspaper stories, and extension activities in each state. One-crop agriculture was especially prevalent in the Deep South and blamed for many of the region's problems.

Brief excerpts from a sample of the *Commercial Appeal's* mini-editorials follow:

We should be thankful during Thanksgiving week duly thankful. . . . That we can still find in country stores, canned vegetables, fruits and condensed milk, as we do not give much attention to gardens or orchards or cows, and it's canned stuff or none with most of us.—21 November 1909

There is a cause for everything and the poverty of our lands has been caused by constantly taking away and robbing the soil year by year. . . . This system can not continue without causing poverty of our land, poverty of our people and ruin generally. Every farmer should give this serious thought.
—13 September 1910

⁷³ "Trade Balances," *Commercial Appeal*, 7 May 1911, 6.

Why can not eggs and poultry be produced at a profit in the South? The answer probably should be that Southern farmers can not see anything smaller than a bale of cotton. The poultry of the South do not get attention.—31 March 1911

There is a danger that the high price of cotton will cause too much cotton and too little corn to be planted. We can not change the law of supply and demand. Too much cotton will surely produce low prices. The reason the price has been good is that there has been only a moderate supply.

There is a heavy responsibility on our credit merchants and bankers to see that their customers do not neglect the planting of ample corn. Our credit system allows the merchant to dictate the crops that are planted, and if he is a true friend to his customers, to his country and to himself, he will not only advise, but will require that ample corn be planted.—23 April 1911⁷⁴

An overriding economic theme ran through the editorials about farm conditions in all three newspapers. Their political affiliations mattered little for their fortunes were tied to the farm, as were the fortunes of everyone else; the editorials said so. Using a variety of information, different persuasive tactics, and approaches, the newspapers created the same basic editorial message. And it was repeated month after month, year after year: If only the farmers, using modern methods, would grow more corn, hay, wheat, vegetables, fruit, hogs, sheep, cattle, horses, mules—and less cotton—they, their families, Tennesseans and Southerners would be the better for it. Prosperity would arrive.

Other themes ran alongside the theme of economics, generally telling farmers how they could find prosperity: Diversified farming, scientific farming, better roads, intensive agriculture and more agricultural education.

⁷⁴ "Farmers, Attention," *Commercial Appeal*, 1909, 1910, 1911.

And until Congress settled the matter in 1914, agricultural education would continue to mean many things to many people.

No Faces Behind the Numbers

All the statistics and all the stories about farm conditions never really painted the true picture of rural Tennessee and the South for newspaper readers. No faces looked out from behind the numbers; stories about conditions were never personalized. But for the extension agents yet to arrive, dismal agricultural and economic statistics would be translated into a miserable humanity afflicted by a variety of diseases, poor diets, malnutrition and hunger, illiteracy, poor schools, poor roads and substandard housing, coated with a liberal layer of hopelessness. The information and knowledge these agents brought with them held perhaps the greatest promise of relief the region's impoverished farm families had seen in decades. But the work would not be easy, and extension would not be a panacea.

During his address to the November 1914 convention of the Association of American Agricultural Colleges and Experiment Stations, Agriculture Secretary David F. Houston outlined the magnitude of the task facing extension. While the problems of production agriculture were great and needed solutions, "there is the whole big problem of making rural life not only profitable, which is a prerequisite, but also comfortable, healthful and attractive. . . . Making agriculture profitable would not in itself solve the rural life problem, because in too many instances as soon as farmers become prosperous they move out of the country."⁷⁵

⁷⁵ AAACES *Proceedings*, 1914, 22.

During the same convention, association president A. C. True bluntly warned, "No sooner will the extension service be well established than it will be apparent that it cannot do what its enthusiastic propagandists have led the unthinking multitude to believe it would straightway accomplish. Here and there will be great and striking results due to peculiar conditions. There may even be some steady progress in agricultural betterment over wide areas. But in the main, important immediate changes in agricultural practices will be relatively few and general advancement will be slow."

Also, "It will be clear that to many of the agricultural problems, which the extension men will encounter among the farmers, no solution, or at best a very imperfect solution, is now available," True said, and the need for more information would trigger a demand for additional research.⁷⁶

Far above these down-to-earth limitations were problems that extension could hardly approach, not to mention solve. But they affected almost every detail of extension education. Ultimately, the agents and their organization could do little about the national banking system, tariffs, a surplus farm population or the international commodities market. Southern farmers were gripped by impersonal economic, political and social forces that were simply beyond the influence of these agents.

Even so, much good waited to be done. The agents simply had to work in another dimension, in the fields and in the homes, up close and face to face. It was the only way to really help a people "farthest down."

⁷⁶ Ibid., 89.

CHAPTER III

DEVELOPMENT OF THE DEMONSTRATION METHOD

Vital to the long-term success of the extension program was a new teaching technique called the demonstration method, which was developed more or less by accident as a means to persuade farmers to adopt modern farming practices. Evolving quite independently of the need to fight the boll weevil, the technique attracted government support and was brought to bear in teaching farmers how to deal with the insect.¹ Thus, as the weevil spread across the South, so did the demonstration method, and an evolving extension program that would be formally established by the Smith-Lever Act of May 8, 1914.

Less than two months after the extension service was formally created, Archduke Francis Ferdinand was assassinated in Sarajevo, capital of Bosnia, touching off World War I. On August 15, the Panama Canal opened to traffic.

Ironically, the information needed by cotton farmers to blunt the boll weevil's destructiveness had been compiled by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Entomology soon after the insect entered Texas. Among the bureau's simple recommendations were: plow deep, plant quick-maturing varieties early, cultivate often. Such basic procedures were part of a growing body of agricultural knowledge nurtured by scientists and researchers working in the federal Department of Agriculture, which was created by the

¹ Joseph C. Bailey, *Seaman A. Knapp: Schoolmaster of American Agriculture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1945), 169-180.

Organic Act of 1862. Similar work was being done in the land-grant universities created by the Morrill acts of 1862 and 1890, and in the agricultural experiment stations established by the Hatch Act of 1887.

Predating by many decades these federally supported entities were agricultural societies, lyceums, farmers' institutes, the agricultural press, state departments of agriculture, state-supported and private agricultural schools and colleges, and other organizations, which bore most of the responsibility for adding to and disseminating the body of agricultural knowledge. But as the knowledge base grew, farmers, especially Southern farmers, were unable or unwilling to make much use of it.² For many reasons, too many farmers continued to practice subsistence agriculture, tied their fortunes to one crop, cotton, and helplessly watched as the boll weevil overran Dixie. Desperately needed was a way not only to reach more farmers, but also to break down the farmer's aversion to "book" or "scientific farming" and to overcome his stubborn suspicion of those who preached its virtue. Fortuitously, the answer to gaining much greater cooperation from the farmer would be discovered on the now famous farm of Walter C. Porter near Terrell, Texas, a small town east of Dallas.

As the boll weevil decimated much of the Texas cotton crop in 1903, cries for help brought Secretary of Agriculture James Wilson and Dr. Beverly T. Galloway, head of the Bureau of Plant Industry, to a November 5 meeting in Dallas "to discuss means of fighting the cotton boll weevil that this year

² Ibid., 171-180; Epsilon Sigma Phi, *The Spirit and Philosophy of Extension Work*, ed. R. K. Bliss (Washington: Graduate School, United States Department of Agriculture, 1952), 1-35; True, *A History of Agricultural Education in the United States*, 7-181.

has devastated whole counties."³ While in Texas, the two also visited the Porter farm at the invitation of Seaman A. Knapp, a proponent of the demonstration method, who the previous year had been named the plant bureau's Special Agent for the Promotion of Agriculture in the South. Knapp had known and worked with both men for years. A native New Yorker who had become a leading figure in the struggle to improve Southern agriculture, Knapp's agricultural background was extensive, having been a farmer, a professor of agriculture and then president of Iowa State Agricultural College at Ames, and founder of a farm journal. He had helped draft the experiment-station legislation and promote its passage. Also, Knapp was a Methodist minister, a vocation that would serve him well in the years ahead as he preached his gospel of agricultural reform.⁴

Knapp had resorted to the demonstration technique while working for a farm development and land colonization syndicate that had purchased more than a million acres in southwestern Louisiana. Farmers visiting from the North and West had proved reluctant to buy land and settle in the region. But the common-sense step of simply displaying the land's fertility and crop diversification potential turned them into eager settlers, and a near disaster into a land boom. "I then learned the philosophy and power of agricultural demonstration," Knapp said.

During the 1890s, his success in developing Louisiana's rice industry by importing Asian varieties, which produced higher yields and grains more resistant to breakage, would open the door to his appointment in 1902 as

³ Scott, *Reluctant Farmer*, 213; "Boll Weevil Convention," *Commercial Appeal*, 11 October 1903, 1.

⁴ Scott, *Reluctant Farmer*, 213; Bailey, *Knapp*, 79-108, 119, 137.

special agent. Again, demonstration farms were central to Knapp's work, and he established five in Texas and Louisiana. However, where they had served him well during his tenure with the land syndicate, the demonstration farms operated and subsidized by the Department of Agriculture failed miserably to alter farming practices. "Government" farms, though well-intended, encountered a thick fog of skepticism that hid the lessons they were trying to teach. Farmers perceived them as artificial and with little relevance to conditions or risks they faced each day on their own farms.⁵

On the Porter farm, government money and control would not be factors, simply because Knapp had no unallocated funds to disburse and little time in his busy schedule to oversee the project. He had made that clear before accepting a second invitation to meet with Terrell businessmen and farmers in late February 1903. Furthermore, a local committee was to be responsible for the project and agree to cover any losses incurred by Porter. The government, or Knapp, would supply only information and direction, and Porter, a volunteer, agreed to plant and cultivate corn and cotton on his own land using that information. Although protected against loss, he was not guaranteed a profit; success or failure depended on him alone.

... When proof was made in the harvest fields it was convincing indeed—to Porter's fellow farmers because not a penny of government money had changed hands, only some instructions that anyone could follow if he chose to take the trouble, and to the townsmen of Terrell because their guarantee fund not only stood untouched but their demonstrator announced that he was a \$700 gainer on his seventy-acre experiment and that next year he meant to work his entire farm (800 acres) on the principles just tested.⁶

⁵ J. A. Evans, "Recollections of Extension History," North Carolina Extension Service, *Circular 224* (Raleigh, 1938), 6-7; Bailey, *Knapp*, 109-148.

⁶ Bailey, *Knapp*, 149-156; True, *Agricultural Extension*, 60.

In a footnote to the published bulletin on the Terrell farm, Dr. Galloway explained that Knapp's report was not presented as a contribution to the science of agriculture, but the results "justified calling special attention to them. . . . Every good farmer can do work of this sort and every wide-awake community can organize a demonstration farm to show the people of its section that marked financial advantages will accrue if better methods of soil culture, etc., are followed," Galloway said.⁷ Wide-awake farmers were to prove to be numerous.

Although Knapp saw that the Porter demonstration farm began generating great interest and enthusiasm from the start, he apparently did not fully realize what he had unleashed until the end of the growing season. He had requested the experiment be kept quiet, "but it got out and as a result they have organized at Paris, at Ennis, at Sulphur Springs, and at a number of other points. . . . I am compelled to sit down on their enterprises," he wrote in a March 1903 letter to Wilson. Of his last visit to Terrell in late November, he wrote, "Until I went to Terrell this time I had no conception of the far-reaching results of the demonstration farm at Terrell." Everyone in that part of Texas seemed to be demanding a demonstration farm. In December, Galloway wrote to Knapp, "We are being swamped with requests for the establishment of . . . demonstration farms. They are coming in from all parts of Texas through Congressmen, railroad men, and other people."⁸

⁷ Seaman A. Knapp, "The Work of the Community Demonstration Farm at Terrell, Texas," *Bulletin 51*, Miscellaneous Papers II, (Washington, 1905), 9.

⁸ Bailey, *Knapp*, 157-160.

Also in December 1903, the Wright brothers managed to throw their rickety machine into the air at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, for the world's first powered flight of a heavier-than-air craft.

Farmers' Cooperative Demonstration Work

Following their November visit to Texas and Terrell, Wilson and Galloway decided that community demonstration farms could be used to fight the cotton boll weevil if only to instill hope in a rural population without hope. Wilson requested Congress immediately appropriate \$500,000 for the campaign, which was viewed as temporary. The legislators responded with half that amount, and President Theodore Roosevelt signed the bill January 15, 1904. The money was divided equally between the Bureau of Entomology and the Bureau of Plant Industry. Within the latter agency, Knapp was allotted \$40,000 —\$60 per county—for his work of getting information on dealing with the boll weevil to cotton farmers. But he spent only \$27,316 of the allocation the first year. Before the end of January, he had opened his headquarters in Houston and immediately set about to build a field staff for the Farmers' Cooperative Cotton Demonstration Work. Planting time was less than two months away. Knapp had celebrated his 70th birthday in December.⁹

⁹ Evans, "Recollections of Extension History," 8; Scott, *Reluctant Farmer*, 213; Bailey, *Knapp*, 170-171; True, *Agricultural Extension*, 60; U.S. Federal Extension Service, *Cooperative Extension Work 1915-1917* (Washington, n.d.), 17; S. A. Knapp, "Farmers' Co-operative Demonstration Work," U.S. Department of Agriculture, *Yearbook*, 1909 (Washington, 1910), 50-51.

At first, Knapp faced disbelief. During one meeting he was asked, "Do you mean to tell us that you have come empty-handed to Texas to relieve the distress of our people and restore confidence, and that you know of no way of destroying the boll weevil? And further, that you furnish no seed nor fertilizers, and do you intend to tell our people, 'Your remedy is to get out and hustle,' if this be true, we are to receive one of the greatest of disappointments." Explaining his plan, he replied, "People are rarely benefited by gifts; that our system of tillage insured a crop, that while they waited for the Government to give them a few thousand, they could increase their income 25 to 30 millions, add to their manhood and become independent."¹⁰

Knapp had to wage two campaigns in Texas: one against the boll weevil and another against the hostility, suspicion and jealousy aroused among agricultural organizations by his work. Attempting to dissipate the atmosphere of distrust, he conducted a patient—but not always successful—public relations campaign, reaching out to these groups, especially seeking the help of "all Agricultural Associations, Farmers Institutes, the Agricultural Colleges." Such effort was no doubt hampered because Knapp himself had little respect for the faculty of agricultural schools or their teaching methods. Even so, in July 1905, Knapp and the president of Texas Agricultural and Mechanical College, David F. Houston, agreed to exchange staff members in the spirit of cooperation, a minor event, it would seem, in the evolution of extension. But in early 1914, Houston, as U.S. Secretary of Agriculture during the Wilson administration, would play the key role in obtaining consensus

¹⁰ Knapp, "Farmers' Co-operative Demonstration Work," 62-63.

from land-grant universities, experiment stations, the Department of Agriculture and others on basic provisions of the Smith-Lever bill.

As Knapp attempted to build relationships, promote harmony and explain his mission, he also attracted powerful allies: the business community and railroads, most of the press, state legislators, Texas congressmen and grateful farmers to whom the politicians listened. But not all farmers were grateful, and convincing them to change their ways of growing cotton was not always easily done, demonstration method or not. Apathy and suspicion of anyone and anything from the government remained. The men first chosen by Knapp for his field force were not college-trained, but were middle-aged farmers, or men with farm backgrounds, who could sell new ideas, practical men who could travel into isolated rural areas, win the trust of their fellow farmers, and persuade them to sow these new ideas on their own land. College men were not always excluded by Knapp, however. The first four agents hired in Alabama in late 1906 were graduates in agriculture from Alabama Polytechnic Institute. Most of these pioneer agents were employed for 60 days, paid \$60 a month and travel expenses and allowed to work their own farms three days each week. J. A. Evans, one of the first "special agents" hired in Texas by Knapp, said,

Our job was to get small "community cotton demonstration farms," of from 5 to 20 acres each, established near the principal towns, in each county, and to enroll as many other farmers as possible as cooperators. Planting and fertilizer sufficient for the demonstration farms were furnished the demonstrators, but not to cooperators. Both the "demonstrators" and "cooperators" agreed in writing to follow instructions from Dr. Knapp as to preparation, cultivation, etc., of the "demonstration" and to make a report of yields and costs at the end of the season.

Gradually, 15-20 agents were appointed. In spite of the obstacles and large areas they had to cover, the agents began to make an impact on cotton farms in Texas and western Louisiana. During these early days of demonstration work, the guarantee fund for demonstrators was discarded because Knapp and his agents, to their surprise, discovered it was not needed to induce cooperation. By the end of 1904, about 7,600 farmers had participated in the program as either demonstrators or cooperators, and Knapp estimated that at least 50,000 farmers had followed his agents' directives. Farmers who followed instructions generally had much higher yields than those who did not, which did much to restore confidence among cotton growers in weevil-infested areas. Expenditures for Farmers' Cooperative Demonstration Work in 1905 rose to \$40,163, but under a restriction not lifted until 1913, funds could only be used in weevil-infested territory, which gradually shifted eastward. An estimated 20 agents were now assigned to Louisiana and Texas, including one each in Arkansas and Mississippi. Still, agents could follow but not move very far ahead of the insect.¹¹

In 1906, that would change. While federal expenditures for cooperative demonstration work dipped to \$37,677, the General Education Board, established and given millions by Standard Oil magnate John D. Rockefeller to improve education in the South, stepped in as a "silent partner," allowing demonstration work to outrun the boll weevil. Incorporated by Congress in

¹¹ Bailey, *Knapp*, 157, 192-196, 201, 207-210, 266-267; Evans, "Recollections of Extension History," 9-11; Scott, *Reluctant Farmer*, 219-222, 306-307; *Cooperative Extension Work, 1915-1917*, 17; Texas Agricultural Extension Service, *Silver Anniversary: Cooperative Extension Work, 1903-1928* (College Station, Texas, n.d.), 103; William B. Mercier, "Status and Results of Extension Work in the Southern States, 1903-1921," U.S. Department of Agriculture, *Department Circular 248* (Washington, 1922), 6-9.

1903, the GEB had concluded that the best way to improve education in the region was to educate farmers first, reasoning that doing so would mean more productive farms, greater incomes, and a higher quality of life, leading to more favorable economic conditions. Such conditions "must be attained before comprehensive school systems could be supported by taxation." The board learned of Knapp's work with Texas farmers through Wallace F. Buttrick, its executive secretary, who had met Knapp at the home of Texas A&M president David Houston. Buttrick, former secretary of the Baptist Home Mission Society, had often been consulted by the Rockefeller family about educational problems in the South, particularly for blacks. The GEB became convinced that Knapp's demonstration method held promise for improving life for much of the region's rural population—both black and white. In one survey, the board learned that the annual farm income in some Southern states averaged \$150; the average in Iowa was more than \$1,000. After conferences with Knapp and Secretary Wilson, board representatives and the Department of Agriculture signed an agreement in April 1906 whereby the board would pay all costs to extend demonstration work into areas as yet untouched by the boll weevil. Government funds would continue to be spent in infested areas. Expenditure control and disbursement, agent appointment and supervision, along with all policy decisions would remain with the Department of Agriculture and Knapp. The board's contributions in 1906 totaled \$7,000, jumping to \$31,200 in 1907, \$69,000 in 1908 and \$76,500 in 1909. Federal spending, still funneled through the Bureau of Plant Industry, dipped then climbed: \$39,976 for 1907, \$85,901 for 1908 and \$102,898 for 1909.¹²

¹² *Cooperative Extension Work, 1915-1917*, 17; True, *Agricultural*

The board's 1906 contribution was spent entirely in Mississippi, and the estimated total number of agents employed rose from 20 to 25. Beginning in 1907, the rate of expansion increased rapidly. Now totaling 49, agents pushed into four new states: Virginia, Alabama, South Carolina and Georgia. North Carolina and Florida were added in 1908 as the total number of agents climbed to 153. Generally, as the boll weevil moved into new areas, government funds replaced those of the General Education Board, which were then spent elsewhere. Also, where board funds were used, demonstration work was not limited to cotton.¹³

First County Agent and Cooperative Funding

Two other events or decisions in 1906 substantially affected demonstration work, allowing faster expansion and setting two patterns, one in structure and one in funding, that are generally followed to this day. Dissatisfied with the quantity of work in their area, farmers and businessmen in Smith County, Texas, requested that an agent be assigned exclusively to work in their county. Limited by funding, Knapp suggested that the community pay part of the agent's salary and expenses, to which community leaders agreed. They soon raised \$1,000, which the Department of Agriculture matched. On November 12 that year, W. C. Stallings became the first county agent in the country, an appointment made possible by cooperative financing.

Extension, 61-62; Raymond B. Fosdick, *Adventure in Giving, The Story of the General Education Board* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 6; Scott, *Reluctant Farmer*, 222-224.

¹³ Scott, *Reluctant Farmer*, 225-226; Mercier, "Extension Work in the Southern States, 1903-1921," 6, 9.

This method of funding would be widely emulated. By 1912, local support for extension would outpace General Education Board contributions. County support rose from \$2,800 in 1907, when five counties in Texas and two parishes in Louisiana supported agents, to \$76,622 in 1911, when Alabama had an agent in almost all of its 67 counties. That year, Tennessee had only 10 agents, but by 1914, the number had risen to 49. By then, financial support from counties in the South had increased to \$411,179 annually.

Legal barriers preventing local support for demonstration work were gradually removed, as states that were constitutionally authorized to do so passed legislation permitting counties to contribute to the effort. Tennessee's General Assembly gave such permission to county courts on September 26, 1913, and Governor Ben W. Hooper signed the bill into law the next day. Even so, gaining financial support from tight-fisted county governing bodies in the region was by no means assured. Knapp and his agents did not ask for financial support outright; instead, they told county officials that they would be happy to cooperate in establishing Farmers' Cooperative Demonstration Work locally should the county government wish to contribute to the program.¹⁴ This appears to be a shrewd tactical maneuver because county officials were faced with a larger question than simply approving, or more likely, rejecting a request for money. Instead, the decision was placed on a somewhat higher plane: whether to participate in a program beneficial to many of their constituents and partially paid for by Uncle Sam.

¹⁴ Scott, *Reluctant Farmer*, 227-228; Evans, "Recollections of Extension History," 12-13; Mercier, "Extension Work in the Southern States," 7-9; *Public Acts of Tennessee*, 1913, 489.

First Black Demonstration Agent

Two other firsts occurred in 1906. Thomas Monroe Campbell, who had arrived in Tuskegee, Alabama, in 1899 with eight cents in his pocket, became the nation's first black farm demonstration agent. He was assigned to serve several Alabama counties around Tuskegee Institute, which also became the first college—black or white—to directly participate in Farmers' Cooperative Demonstration Work. From the beginning, Knapp was certainly aware that all farmers could benefit from modern farming methods. He also knew that much of the cotton in the South was grown by black farmers, whose fields were just as inviting to the boll weevil as those of white farmers. In 1910, the percentage of black farm owners, managers and tenants in 16 Deep South and border states stood at 28.7 percent. Some states had much higher percentages: Mississippi—60.0, South Carolina—54.9, Louisiana—45.5, and Alabama—42.0 percent. In Tennessee, blacks comprised 15.6 percent of all farmers by 1910, operating 10.7 percent or 1.16 million acres of the state's improved farm land. In the entire South, blacks managed 18.4 percent or 27.7 million acres of the improved farm land. Of total farm acreage, 12 percent or 42.6 million acres were cultivated by blacks. To aid these farmers, Knapp directed his agents to enroll blacks as demonstrators and cooperators. On his first day in the field in Texas, agent J. A. Evans signed up two blacks, who in turn brought him the names of several other black farmers who wished to "join the U.S. government." But Knapp, mindful of racial attitudes in those days, was reluctant to appoint blacks as agents in the program. Moreover, in attempting to stretch every dollar as far as it could go, Knapp believed that white agents could work among blacks as well as whites, whereas black agents would not be able to

work among whites. But the General Education Board insisted blacks be brought fully into the demonstration program. Thereupon, Knapp reached an agreement with Tuskegee's Booker T. Washington to support a unique teaching device called the Jesup Wagon, named after its donor Morris K. Jesup of New York. The wagon, outfitted with tools, seeds, fertilizer samples, a cream separator, churn and other equipment, was to be operated and used by Campbell in demonstration work among farmers near Tuskegee. Campbell's appointment was effective November 10, and during the course of his work, he often attracted crowds made up of both blacks and whites. A few days after Campbell's appointment, similar arrangements were drawn up with Hampton Institute in Virginia to employ J. B. Pierce as the first agent—black or white—in that state to work among black farmers.¹⁵

Boys' Corn Clubs

Although Knapp's program aimed first at the immediate dangers presented by the boll weevil and at the long-standing fundamental problems of production agriculture, his philosophy of rural education encompassed a great deal more. He knew that large numbers of Southern farm families were enduring a miserable existence long before the boll weevil drew near, and to bring about meaningful change, conditions in the home had to improve greatly along with conditions in the field. "There is much knowledge applicable and helpful . . . which is sufficient to readjust agriculture and place it upon a basis of greater profit, to reconstruct the rural home, and to give to

¹⁵ Scott, *Reluctant Farmer*, 232-234; *Thirteenth Census*, Abstract: 299, 624; Bailey, *Knapp*, 227-229; Evans, "Recollections of Extension History," 12-13; True, *Agricultural Extension*, 64; Campbell, *The Movable School*, 159, 161.

country life an attraction, a dignity, and a potential influence it has never received," he wrote in 1909. That year the farm demonstration program, authorizing corn clubs, formally began reaching out to a younger, far more receptive clientele—the farmer's son. The next year, the program would include the farmer's daughter and finally, his wife, who probably shouldered the heaviest load of farm-life drudgery. Helping fund this expansion was the General Education Board as well as private and government contributions. In bringing the entire family into the educational process, Knapp knew that resistance to change among some adults could be more easily broken down. Many farmers could be taught through their sons when nothing else worked. Reconstructing the rural home would begin with the daughters and quickly capture mother's interest. Moreover, lessons learned early in life would be carried into adulthood, and more farm children would stay, Knapp hoped, on the farm.¹⁶

To make the task easier, the ever-practical Knapp decided to bring the youngsters into the fold in groups or clubs, which years later became known as 4-H clubs. Boys' corn clubs and girls' clubs had been active in several states such as New York, Texas, Illinois, Iowa, Georgia, Mississippi and Ohio for a number of years, and Knapp was well aware of how they worked. Following a visit in late 1908 to Holmes County, Mississippi, where school superintendent William B. Smith had organized a boys' Corn Club and a girls' Home Culture Study Club the previous year, Knapp took steps to make youth clubs for children of both races an important part of demonstration work. At first, his

¹⁶ Knapp, "Farmers' Co-operative Demonstration Work," 158-160; Evans, "Recollections of Extension History," 14-16; Scott, *Reluctant Farmer*, 237-238.

office attempted to work directly with county school superintendents and teachers to form and manage the clubs, although it was pointed out that the intent was not to teach agriculture in the public schools. The following March, Oscar B. Martin, state school superintendent in South Carolina was placed in charge of the program. To better promote the objectives of demonstration work, and to make teaching more effective and club participation more challenging, standards for demonstration and competition were set. Where appearance was once premier, emphasis was now given to yield and profit to emphasize a crop's economic practicality; boys were to keep their profits, but only after they had paid a fair price for using land, tools and teams, which were usually provided by their parents. Crop plots were to be one acre, records of costs kept, and a history of the crop written. Corn was selected for the first demonstrations because it could be easily grown throughout most of the South; production costs were low; it encouraged diversification; corn was the "foundation crop for home use in most of the Southern states;" and the South needed more of it.¹⁷

Corn clubs also helped strengthen the developing cooperative structure of extension work. To gain greater efficiency, direct supervision of the boys' clubs by Knapp's office soon gave way to a partnership with the agricultural colleges, which could provide closer supervision and information more attuned to club members' needs. The first such partnership began July 1, 1909,

¹⁷ Dick J. Crosby, "Boys' Agricultural Clubs," U.S. Department of Agriculture, *Yearbook* 1904 (Washington, 1905), 489-496; Evans, "Recollections of Extension History," 15; True, *Extension Work*, 65-66; Oscar B. Martin, *The Demonstration Work: Dr. Knapp's Contribution to Civilization*, (Boston: Stratford Co., 1921), 40-43; Scott, *Reluctant Farmer*, 238-241.

with North Carolina's agricultural college. Alabama Polytechnic Institute at Auburn signed up next and by December agricultural schools in Arkansas, Georgia, Mississippi and Louisiana had agreed to conduct boys' club programs in cooperation with Knapp's office. Although corn club work began in West Tennessee in late 1909, the University of Tennessee apparently never signed on with the Knapp program.

These agreements pulled the colleges deeper into demonstration work. And because a different kind of agent was needed to work with children and local educators, more graduates of agricultural colleges began finding work in the Farmers' Cooperative Demonstration program. Following Knapp's lead, the college-trained agents first sought to work through local school systems, enlisting superintendents and teachers to organize and administer club activities. For several reasons, this approach did not work. Many teachers lacked expertise in agriculture or interest in club work, and summer vacations coupled with a high turnover rate among superintendents created poor continuity. This problem was not resolved until some time after 1914, when club responsibilities officially became part of the agent's duties. Tennessee's Division of Extension first tried to carry out club work, as well as home and farm demonstration work, using county high school faculty as agents. However, this proved unsuitable, and by 1917 the approach was gradually being abandoned.¹⁸

¹⁸ Bailey, *Knapp*, 230-234; Scott, *Reluctant Farmer*, 240-243; Martin, *Demonstration Work*, 40-48; Evans, "Recollections of Extension," 14-16; Mercier, "Extension Work," 10; Tennessee Division of Extension, *Annual Reports, 1910-1917*, 88.

Girls' Tomato Clubs

Gaining entrance to a farmer's fields was one thing; gaining entrance to his home was quite another. But in Knapp's last contribution to rural education, he again was to prove a master at reading human nature. While the farmer might be persuaded to change his ways because he saw prospects of greater production and profit, no such logic was available in reaching the farm wife. Instead, she had to be shown better ways to prepare and preserve food, to clean her home or to nurse her family without giving the impression that her homemaking skills were somehow deficient. A rural school teacher in South Carolina gave Knapp's program the needed pathway into the farm home; it began in the garden with a popular and "proper" vegetable grown by the daughter and through the kitchen, entered the home.

Marie S. Cromer of Aiken County decided to organize a girls' tomato club after hearing corn club coordinator Oscar B. Martin speak to South Carolina educators at a School Improvement Association meeting in December 1909. Overcoming some resistance, Miss Cromer enrolled 46 girls the next year. With the exception of preparing the soil, club members were to do all the work necessary to grow tomatoes on one-tenth of an acre. The harvested produce was to be preserved in jars and exhibited for judging along with the member's collection of recipes. Contest prizes were usually obtained from local merchants and businesses for both corn and tomato clubs. Another incentive was the opportunity to sell the canned tomatoes for profit. During the summer of 1910, the club's activities caught Aiken County's attention. Portable canning equipment, following ripening tomatoes from community to community, led to "canning parties" where mothers of club members

pitched in to help. The activities also attracted many spectators. After visiting the South Carolina club that summer, Martin suggested to Knapp that Miss Cromer be named a Department of Agriculture special agent, becoming the first home demonstration agent, and the first woman ever to be appointed for field work by the Department of Agriculture.¹⁹

As had occurred with boys' corn clubs, interest in tomato clubs quickly spread across the South. By 1912, three years after coming under Knapp's direction, corn club membership had climbed to almost 70,000, and more than 30,000 girls had joined tomato clubs by 1913. The agent field force that year stood at 878 men and women. The types of youth agricultural clubs also proliferated rapidly. Soon, youngsters were participating in poultry, pig, cotton, potato, mutton, dairy, baby beef and other clubs throughout the South. The financial wallop of some clubs began to attract notice. For example, in 1914, 102 girls in Hamilton County, Tennessee, canned fruits and vegetables worth \$14,240. In addition to putting up the harvest from their own one-tenth acres, club members also canned the surplus from several farms and orchards.²⁰

Through farm demonstration agents' salaries, federal funds partially paid boys' club expenses, but neither this procedure nor federal dollars were available for girls' clubs until Smith-Lever. Again, the General Education Board opened its pocketbook. Two months before his death on April 1, 1911,

¹⁹ Scott, *Reluctant Farmer*, 247-249; True, *Agricultural Extension*, 6; Martin, *Demonstration Work*, 59-66; Bailey, *Knapp*, 235.

²⁰ The General Education Board, *The General Education Board, An Account Of Its Activities 1902-1914* (New York: General Education Board, 1915), 59-64; Scott, *Reluctant Farmer*, 245-246; True, *History of Agricultural Extension*, 68-69.

Dr. Knapp asked board trustees to appropriate sufficient money to expand club work for girls throughout the South.²¹ This was to be Dr. Knapp's final meeting with the board and apparently his appeal was an emotional one. Years later, Oscar Martin reminded the board's executive secretary Wallace Buttrick of the occasion. "You had some difficulty in getting those busy men together," Martin said, "but when Dr. Knapp presented the needs and plans of the work, every man had tears in his eyes, and the appropriation was made with enthusiasm and unanimity."²² By May 1913, the board's annual support for girls' clubs had reached \$75,000, with additional funds coming from local sources across 15 Southern states. Almost 200 women, called "collaborators," were now employed in girls' canning and poultry club work, giving rise to a new profession, "home demonstration agent." With passage of the Smith-Lever Act the next year, federal dollars replaced GEB funds and home demonstration became an integral part of extension work alongside farm demonstration. Section 2 of the Act declared, "that cooperative agricultural extension shall consist of the giving of instruction and practical demonstration in agriculture and home economics." As farm wives became more and more involved in their daughters' club work and fun, the door to the kitchen—and the home—usually swung open in welcome to one who was no longer a stranger, but a trusted friend. Inevitably, quietly and motivated by curiosity, adult women became students along with their daughters as agents opened new areas of instruction to include all aspects of home management and family life.²³

²¹ Fosdick, *Adventure in Giving*, 54-55.

²² Quoted in Fosdick, *Adventure in Giving*, 55.

²³ *General Education Board*, 65; Mercier, "Extension Work," 15; Bailey, *Knapp*, 235-236, 274; True, *Agricultural Extension*, 68-69.

CHAPTER IV

THE NATIONAL POLITICAL-ACADEMIC DEBATE

Grounded in Seaman Knapp's philosophy of practical demonstration, the structure of this novel educational system slowly evolved in the Southern states. Overseeing the program's direction and growth after Dr. Knapp's death was his son Bradford, a 1892 graduate of Vanderbilt University. Knapp was named to the position in part because many Southern congressmen did not want the Farmers' Cooperative Demonstration Work (FCDW) program to lose the highly respected Knapp name. Under Bradford Knapp's leadership, cooperation with the agricultural schools grew. Effective January 12, 1912, Clemson College became the first to sign an agreement with Knapp's office providing for joint supervision of all demonstration work and a cooperatively employed state agent who worked out of offices at the college. By May 1913, other Southern schools had agreed to similar arrangements. Meanwhile, extension work in varying forms and sponsored by several private organizations, as well as the U.S. Department of Agriculture, sprouted in the states of the North and West.¹

Concurrent with these developments, a political struggle to define and control extension played itself out on the national stage. Principal protagonists were the Bureau of Plant Industry; the Office of Farmers' Cooperative Demonstration Work and their parent agency, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA); the Association of American

¹ Evans, "Recollections of Extension History," 20-25; True, *Agricultural Extension*, 72.

Agricultural Colleges and Experiment Stations (AAACES); and the U.S. Congress.²

In 1912, a division of the Bureau of Plant Industry, the Office of Farm Management, persuaded Congress to increase its appropriation from \$142,940 to \$300,000 to more systematically promote county agent/farm demonstration work in the states outside the South. This was the first outright federal appropriation for "farm demonstration work," even though it had been under way in the South for several years. Under the direction of Dr. W. J. Spillman, a Missouri native, the movement grew out of earlier investigations of cropping systems and farm management practices by well-to-do farmers. Spillman had also cooperated with Dr. Knapp in 1902-1903 to establish government farms in Texas and Louisiana. As Knapp moved into demonstration work, Spillman went on to set up almost three dozen "diversification farms" across the South, which, like the government demonstration farms, accomplished little in altering farming methods. The Farm Management program, focusing on the business or economics of farming, differed in many ways from Knapp's demonstration work. Nevertheless, this parallel development was considered by some in the Knapp-directed program to be an effort to confine FCDW activities to the South. Encountering many of the problems faced by the FCDW program, such as farmers' skepticism and suspicion, the Spillman effort was also blasted by some agricultural college officials, although Spillman, unlike Seaman Knapp, actively sought the colleges' cooperation and wanted to hire their graduates in agriculture as agents. Still, some educators considered Spillman's program an

² Ibid.

invasion of territory into which the colleges themselves were moving faster and faster. Nevertheless, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Office of Farm Management gradually assumed a leading role in fostering county agent/farm demonstration programs outside the Cotton Belt, gaining the pragmatic, if not always whole-hearted, cooperation of agricultural colleges in 20 states during the following fiscal year alone.³

As the colleges individually worked out—or avoided—a relationship with the federally sponsored programs in both North and South, collectively they began paying greater attention to, and cautiously embracing, the concept of national support for extension teaching, a term they defined in many ways. Before 1900 and during the first decade of the new century, many colleges, including the University of Tennessee, conducted extension programs under various names: farmers' institutes, agricultural demonstration trains, winter short courses, cooperative experiments, lectures, reading clubs and so on. Likewise, experiment stations had a limited educational role through their publications, correspondence, visits and lectures to farmers' institutes.

In 1905, one year after Seaman Knapp began the Farmers' Cooperative Demonstration program in Texas, the Association of American Agricultural Colleges and Experiment Stations formed a Committee on Extension, whose work would "relate to such matters as farmers' institutes, correspondence courses, clubs of boys and girls, and other matters ordinarily included in such

³Association of American Agricultural Colleges and Experiment Stations, *Proceedings*, 1912 (Washington, 1913), 142. Cited hereafter as AAACES, *Proceedings* with year; Evans, "Recollections of Extension History," 20-23; Scott, *Reluctant Farmer*, 254-287; True, *Agricultural Extension*, 74; Wayne D. Rasmussen, *Taking the University to the People* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1989), 36-37.

work." Committee members were: Kenyon L. Butterfield of Rhode Island, Chairman; C. R. Van Hise of Wisconsin; B. W. Kilgore of North Carolina; C. F. Curtiss of Iowa; Andrew M. Soule of Virginia; and, W. M. Hays, assistant secretary of agriculture. Soule became director at the Blacksburg Experiment Station in 1904 after serving about nine months as director of the Experiment Station in Knoxville. A graduate of Ontario Agricultural College, he came to Knoxville in 1899 as station agriculturist and professor of agriculture. Soule later became president of the University of Georgia. John Hamilton, Farmers' Institute specialist with the Office of Experiment Stations, was chosen committee secretary. In a speech to the convention, he said college extension work "embraces the correspondence school of agriculture, the farmers' institute, the movable school of agriculture and the practice farm." But correspondence schools and farmers' institutes had failed the colleges in their mission to reach and teach "28 million agricultural people," he said. Of greater value would be the movable school and practice farm, the latter of which would provide working experience to a college's graduates, "but would also provide a supply of experienced managers for experiment and demonstration work" ⁴

Defining demonstration work proved to be no easy task either.

During a round-table discussion of the experiment stations' role in demonstration work, participants wrestled with a meaning for the term.

⁴ Apparently, the one man who could have explained the demonstration method in great detail to the academicians never attended an AAACES convention while the Farmers' Cooperative Demonstration Work was spreading across the South. Dr. Seaman Knapp is not listed in any convention guest list from 1904-1910, although other USDA officials attended and addressed the conclave during these years. He died before the 1911 meeting.

Ohio's C. E. Thorne said demonstration work was being urgently demanded of his station but expressed uncertainty on how best to conduct it. Cooperative experiments seemed to hold promise, he said. L. C. Corbett of the Bureau of Plant Industry drew a clear line between experiment-station and demonstration work. He was also the only participant to mention Knapp's work in the South, saying, "Now, I realize that that is extension work, or educational work; but to my mind that is true demonstration work" Describing work with his state's peach growers, Michigan's C. D. Smith told of demonstrations that greatly resembled those under way in Southern cotton fields. New York's W. H. Jordan defined demonstration work as "that last step of demonstrating in some form the final relation of a theory or a process to practice." Drawing another clear line, Jordan said he believed the experiment stations should be limited to investigating facts, and demonstration work should be left to the university and the college. Expressing similar sentiments was H. J. Wheeler of Rhode Island, where a demonstration department had already been established. W. J. Spillman, head of the newly created Office of Farm Management, agreed with Wheeler that "demonstration work should be taken up seriously by the colleges." But as Spillman explained his work just beginning in the South, it was clear that demonstration work to him meant a rather sophisticated demonstration farm.⁵ As the college men discussed and debated extension work over the next nine years, the term continued to hold many meanings for the educators and to be conducted in a variety of ways.

⁵ AAACES, *Proceedings*, 1905, 19, 46-47, 51, 126-132, 170-186; University of Tennessee, Agricultural Experiment Station, *Twelfth Annual Report*, 1899, 3; *Ibid.*, *Seventeenth Annual Report*, 1904, 97.

In reports to the association's 1906 and 1907 conventions, the extension committee recommended that each agricultural college move rapidly to organize and staff a department of extension if practical. Otherwise, it suggested that each school appoint a faculty committee to study and plan for a department of extension teaching in agriculture. During the latter convention, Tennessee was one of 42 schools representing 39 states to submit a report on progress in this direction: "The president (Dr. Brown Ayres) states that the Tennessee legislature at its recent session appropriated money for inaugurating this work along lines suggested by the committee of the Association of Agricultural Colleges and Experiment Stations." Dr. Ayres was referring to a \$10,000 appropriation "for the purpose of conducting cooperative experiments in agriculture and for agricultural extension work in Middle Tennessee," which was part of a \$100,000 allotment to the University of Tennessee to be spent over two years, 1907 and 1908. In other reports, many schools, including most of those in the South, stated that their extension work was being conducted through farmers' institutes, and few had acted on either of the committee's two-year-old recommendations.⁶

The slow response may have prompted the somewhat critical and urgent tone of the committee's report to the 1908 convention. Noting once more that only a handful of the association's member institutions had acted on recommendations to create an extension department or committee, the committee said it wanted "to emphasize the pressing need for organized work at the agricultural colleges." The report, delivered by Iowa's C. F. Curtiss, was somewhat blunt:

⁶ AAACES *Proceedings*, 1907, 24-35; *Acts of State of Tennessee*, 1907, 494-496.

The present scope of dissemination work among farmers is entirely inadequate. There are tens of thousands of farmers who do not take agricultural papers; probably not 1 in 25 ever attends a farmers' institute, . . . there is need of more effectively teaching the young farmers at home and in the rural schools. As a plain matter of fact, we are not today, either directly or indirectly, reaching the great masses of the tillers of the soil with educational processes that may be regarded as even fairly efficient. We are doing a large work, but we are not doing work that fully meets the problem. We must go to the farmers in their homes and communities—they will not come to us. We must show the farmers how—the farmers who do not read agricultural literature nor attend farmers' institute.⁷

In words Seaman Knapp might have written, the committee came very close to describing his philosophy of demonstration *and* extension and concluded that "the chief means of stimulating the proper recognition and adequate organization of extension work in agriculture in our land-grant colleges is a Federal appropriation for the work." The committee proposed that \$10,000 be allotted each land-grant school with an additional appropriation based on rural population, provided the states themselves contribute matching amounts. Precedent for such support had already been established with the Morrill and Hatch acts, it said. In another extremely significant step, the committee called for amending the association's constitution to create a "section on extension work." Under the rules, this proposal to give extension teaching equal footing with resident teaching and experiment station research was scheduled for consideration during the 1909 convention.⁸

Adding its voice to the growing national discussion on extension about this time was the Commission on Country Life, appointed by President

⁷ AAACES, *Proceedings*, 1908, 39-44.

⁸ *Ibid.*

Roosevelt in August 1908 to investigate problems of rural people. The commission, which held one of its 29 hearings in Knoxville, reported its findings in January 1909. Two of the commission's seven members were Liberty Hyde Bailey of Cornell, chairman; and Kenyon L. Butterfield of Massachusetts State College of Agriculture, both very active members of the Association of American Agricultural Colleges and Experiment Stations. Among the several recommendations to help rural people was one to redirect and invigorate rural education. Acknowledging the rising level of educational activity in the nation, the commission said rural education "needs to be directed and correlated, and all the agencies should be more or less federated." The commission went on to suggest the "establishment of a nation-wide extension work." To the land-grant college's original work of teaching and the younger role of research should be added "the third coordinate branch comprising extension work, without which no college of agriculture can adequately serve its state. It is to the extension departments of these colleges, if properly conducted, that we must now look for the most effective rousing of the people on the land."⁹

Several actions during the 1909 convention of agricultural schools and experiment stations indicate that the association itself had become thoroughly aroused. All within the year, the body adopted on a 42-9 roll-call vote the amendment to create an extension section, endorsed the general idea of a federal appropriation for extension, and instructed the executive committee to draft a bill authorizing a national appropriation for extension work to be

⁹ *Report of the Commission on Country Life* (New York: Sturgis & Walton, 1917), 41, 107-150; "Concerning the Country Life Commission," *U.T. Farmer*, 3, no. 4 (1909): 71.

conducted by the agricultural colleges. No mention was made of cooperating with the Department of Agriculture or other agency; schools would conduct extension programs as each saw fit. The measure was submitted to Representative J. C. McLaughlin of Michigan who introduced it in the House on December 15, 1909. McLaughlin, a member of the House agriculture committee, would also introduce the bill that more than doubled funding in 1912 for Spillman's farm demonstration program in 29 northern and western states. However, the association-backed measure, captioned "A bill for Increase of Appropriation to Agricultural Colleges for Extension Work," was not so fortunate, going no further than the committee.¹⁰

The University of Tennessee, like several other member institutions, does not appear to have been engaged at all in the association's recorded discussion and debate on extension either before or after 1910. Tennessee delegates attended all of the association's assemblies during these years with the exception of the 1909 meeting. President Ayres of the University of Tennessee did serve for a number of years as a member of the Committee on Graduate Study and in November 1913 was elected to the Executive Committee, which would also be designated as the association's committee on relations with the USDA. Also, Tennessee was not among 33 universities and stations that had organized extension departments when a January 1910 status report was released by John Hamilton. Six Deep South schools, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, North Carolina, had done so, and four appropriated a combined and unimpressive sum of \$15,180—only 5

¹⁰ AAACES, *Proceedings*, 1909, 45; *Ibid.*, 1910, 95; Franklin M. Reck, *The 4-H Story: A History of 4-H Club Work* (Ames: The Iowa State College Press, 1951), 107-108.

percent of the national total—for the work in 1909. Perhaps even shorter pockets account for Tennessee's inability to keep pace with her sister institutions rather than any misgivings by university officials about extension work. After all, by this time university personnel were traveling throughout the state to lecture at farmers' institutes, teach short courses and conduct tours. Winter short courses for farmers and their wives, sons and daughters were conducted on campus at Knoxville. Agricultural short courses for teachers were also being taught each year during the very successful "Summer School of the South," which had as guest lecturers in 1908 Dr. Seaman Knapp and Dr. William J. Spillman.

Though the University had been given the state's name in 1879, it never received one dollar from the state treasury until 1903, when the legislature granted \$10,000 to buy farm land. Dr. Ayres became president in 1904, replacing Dr. Charles W. Dabney, who had accepted the presidency at the University of Cincinnati. The next year, Harcourt Alexander Morgan was appointed Experiment Station director. Soon, Ayres, Morgan and the Board of Trustees were leading a movement to adjust the General Assembly's attitude toward the school. Gradually persuaded that the state had a financial obligation to the university in particular and higher education in general, legislators began approving larger appropriations. Nonetheless, obtaining sufficient state funding was to remain difficult for years to come.¹¹

¹¹ John Hamilton, ed., "College Extension in Agriculture: Discussions before the Graduate School of Agriculture, at the Iowa State College, Ames, Iowa, July 4-27, 1910," U.S. Office of Experiment Stations, *Bulletin* 231, (Washington, 1910), 22-23; Stanley J. Folmsbee, forward to *The University of Tennessee Builds for the Twentieth Century*, by James R. Montgomery (University of Tennessee Record: Knoxville, n.d.); Ibid., 19, 33-41; "Summer School Notes," *U.T. Farmer* 4, no. 1 (1909): 14-16; "The Morgan Story. Fourth

The land-grant colleges' first legislative arrow, the McLaughlin bill, soon became lost in the high grass of a parallel and powerful education campaign that some feared would subsume the agricultural extension movement. To the association's surprise and dismay, in early 1910 provisions similar to those of the McLaughlin bill were incorporated in legislation authorizing federal aid for vocational education. Sponsored by Iowa Senator Jonathan P. Dolliver, this multi-purpose bill attracted support from a number of powerful organizations. Even so, Congress would not buy the package. Dolliver died in late 1910, and Senator Carrol Page of Vermont carried on the fight for the next three years, but Congress continued to refuse the deal. Through its executive committee, the association pressed for passage of the McLaughlin bill on its own merit, while taking care not to oppose federal help for vocational education. Both movements would be better served if Congress dealt with them separately, the association declared.

As the land-grant schools fought off this shotgun marriage, several bills similar to McLaughlin's bill were submitted and resubmitted to Congress from 1910 to 1912. All of them died, including one introduced June 12, 1911, by Representative Ashbury F. Lever of South Carolina. But shifting political power would propel Lever's second effort further along the congressional gauntlet. The Democrats gained control of the House in 1910, increasing Lever's political influence as the second-ranking member of that chamber's agricultural committee. Democrats then captured the presidency and Senate in the 1912 elections. Hoke Smith of Georgia, as a senior member and then

Horizon," in *Makers of Millions*, ed. Louis D. Wallace (Tennessee Department of Agriculture, 1951), 22; AAACES *Proceedings*, 1913, 143.

chairman of the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry, became an ally of the cause.¹²

In late 1911, the AAACES executive committee and representatives of the National Soil Fertility League and USDA met with Lever in his office to write an extension bill suitable to all. The measure was introduced into Congress by Lever on January 17, 1912, and by Senator Smith the day before. That year marked the 50th anniversary of the 1862 Morrill Act and the 25th anniversary of the 1887 Hatch Act. Re-introduced in the House on April 4, this second Lever bill was amended in committee to require that 75 percent of available funding be spent for field instructions and demonstrations. The bill was recommended for passage. In August, the House approved Lever's bill and sent it on to the Senate after adding a second amendment requiring that the act not interfere with farmers' cooperative demonstration work. Giving full support to the bill was the AAACES, which asked the Senate to approve the measure as passed by the House. But once again, the extension bill was smothered by the issue of federal aid to vocational education. By one vote, 31-30, the Senate substituted for the Lever bill the multi-purpose Page bill, which the House would not accept in conference, and both bills died with the end of the 62nd Congress.¹³

During 1913, a legislative maneuver moved the vocational education issue out of the way, permitting extension legislation to move forward through Congress, now controlled by Democrats and dominated by southerners. Meanwhile, the USDA, under its new secretary, David F.

¹² AAACES, *Proceedings*, 1910, 81-82; True, *Agricultural Extension*, 104-111.

¹³ Scott, *Reluctant Farmer*, 297-301.

Houston, sought and obtained changes in the Lever bill to more fully protect programs already in place. These came about in a May 16 meeting attended by Houston; the AAACES executive committee; Representative Lever, who had become chairman of the House agricultural committee; and Senator Smith.

Incorporating agreements reached at this and prior meetings, the Lever bill was revamped and re-introduced in Congress on September 6. Extension became "cooperative," no longer to be conducted through different and often conflicting programs. The Department of Agriculture and the land-grant colleges would work together in "such manner as may be mutually agreed upon" to carry research-based information to the farm population. In effect, many divergent programs were combined into one national program that would be paid for with federal, state and local funds. The bill also defined the method of extension teaching for the land-grant schools as "the giving of instruction and practical demonstration in agriculture and home economics to persons not attending or resident in said colleges in the several communities . . . through field demonstrations, publications and otherwise."

Spending extension money for "college-course teaching, lectures in colleges, and promoting agricultural trains, or any other purpose not specified" was forbidden. Thus, Seaman Knapp's philosophy of "teaching by doing" and his cooperative practices begun a decade earlier became the heart of the legislation. In essence, to receive federal aid for extension, agricultural colleges would have to accept a federal partner. And they would have to disseminate their research-based information using a teaching method, demonstration, academicians had long disdained and all but ignored. At the same time, the schools would not be forced to begin a program that might be

unsuitable for local conditions, and extension work for the various states would be in the hands of the land-grant colleges.

In a 177-9 standing vote, the House passed this bill January 19, 1914, after rejecting an amendment requiring distribution of supplemental funds on the basis of total rather than farm population. The House added one amendment barring interference with farm management work and farmers' cooperative demonstration work, pending "inauguration and development" of cooperative extension work. The Senate agreed to drop Senator Smith's bill and accept the House version, debating its merits until passage by voice vote February 7. Senators turned back amendments that required funding be divided between black and white colleges in the South, and that allocations be made on the basis of improved farm land rather than population.¹⁴

Signed into law by President Wilson on May 8, 1914, the bill provided a \$10,000 annual appropriation to each state. A supplemental appropriation, rising from \$600,000 to \$4.1 million over seven years, would be allocated based on each state's rural population as a percentage of the nation's total rural population. But to get the additional money, a state would have to match dollar for dollar. Matching funds could come from the "State, county, college, local authority, or individual contribution from within the state." As intended, this last phrase contained in Section 3 ended the General Education Board's participation in extension work.¹⁵

¹⁴ True, *Agricultural Extension*, 110-115; Grant, "Senator Hoke Smith, Southern Congressmen, and Agricultural Education," 111-117; "Report of the Secretary of Agriculture," *The Abridgment 1913, Containing Annual Message of the President of the United States to the Two Houses of Congress, 63rd Congress, 2nd Session, with Reports of Departments and Selections from Accompanying Papers*, vol. 2, (Washington, 1914), 1276-1279.

¹⁵ *United States Statutes at Large*, XXXVIII, part II, 372-374.

For some academicians, the bill, even in first draft, was a bargain with the devil, and bitter was their lament. During the AAACES convention of November 1913, one of its vice presidents, Dr. Eugene Davenport, dean of the College of Agriculture at Illinois, vilified the USDA, accusing it of activities "that have led to a widespread distrust, in some cases amounting to hatred, of the Department of Agriculture by the state institutions." Attempting to make work for its expanding work force, much of which was "rejected material from the state institutions," the department's bureaus had invaded "purely local questions" when their proper function lay in activities of national scope and impact, Davenport charged. "It is now engaged in organizing a national system for placing an agent in every county for the giving of ordinary advice to individual farmers." Furthermore, the department's concept of "cooperation" was absurd because state colleges were being forced into cooperative service, something that Illinois had thus far avoided. "It will only be a question of time until some secretary will take advantage of the situation to make the state institutions little else than sub-stations of the Department." Rising briefly to defend his department was B. T. Galloway, assistant secretary of agriculture, who said the department had only followed congressional directives in its work. "Now, what can we do? We cannot refuse to obey Congress."¹⁶

Cooler temperaments in the association counter-balanced Davenport's angry charges with softer words. C. D. Woods of Maine reminded his colleagues that their "doubts and misgivings" over government interference had been spoken 25 years earlier when the Hatch Act was introduced in

¹⁶ AAACES, *Proceedings*, 1913, 121-133.

Congress. "We are up against no new proposition," he said. Woods and others also expressed confidence in Secretary Houston, who in his welcoming address had tactfully reminded the academicians that their request for federal aid seemed to have been made without fear of "interference with state rights and state functions." As a few members of the association and officials of the Department of Agriculture had done at prior conventions, Houston also underscored the widespread popularity of the demonstration method, in effect describing for the 1913 convention how research-based information would be delivered to farmers through a federal-state system.

Both sorts of agencies, federal and state alike, have information which must be taken to the farmers. We have experimented in every conceivable direction, and there seems to be a growing conviction that the method of demonstrations is the most effective one. This method is of relatively recent application and the work has developed rapidly. In the Federal Department of Agriculture it has secured a very strong hold and we are expending on it today a very considerable sum of money.

Houston quickly added, "I think we all realize that you gentlemen are the ones who must primarily deal with the individual farmer in this matter of education, but we believe that you gentlemen will recognize, that if the Federal Department of Agriculture is to secure information, it is its duty to disseminate it. Now, how shall it do this? Through cooperation." Houston went on to share his vision of future extension work, taking it far beyond boosting agricultural production to include distribution and other issues.

More than a third of my time has been taken up with the consideration of problems such as tenancy, rural credits, marketing, cooperation, sanitation and rural organization. These problems the people are concerned about.

Whether we like it or not we are face to face with the whole problem of the organization of rural life. I can not look at it partially. We shall not take helpful action unless we conceive

it as a unit, and we must look at it not only in its economic aspects, but also in its political.¹⁷

Some two months after passage of the Smith-Lever Act, the Cooperative Extension Service began its shake-down cruise. The Department of Agriculture and agricultural colleges began setting up a management structure, and working out various administrative procedures and agreements to set in motion the educational tasks required by the law. Among USDA conditions was a requirement that a state agree to provisions of the law and designate a college or colleges to receive Smith-Lever monies. Individual colleges and the Department of Agriculture also began signing a "memorandum of understanding," which spelled out in broad terms what was required of each partner. Governor Ben W. Hooper gave Tennessee's assent on May 18, 1914, and The University of Tennessee signed the general memorandum August 3. By joint resolution, the 59th General Assembly agreed to Smith-Lever provisions on January 26, 1915, authorizing the University's College of Agriculture to "organize and conduct agricultural extension work . . . in accordance with the terms and conditions" of Smith-Lever.¹⁸

The Debates in the Press

Nothing of the debate and struggle within the Association of American Agricultural Colleges and Experiment Stations over the concept of teaching by demonstration or its relationship to extension work appeared in any of the three dailies newspapers during the period under study. The academic

¹⁷ AAACES, *Proceedings*, 1913, 20-23, 138-142.

¹⁸ *Public Acts of Tennessee*, 1915, 455-456, 572; *Cooperative Extension Work 1915-1917*, 23.

struggles were simply invisible so far as press coverage was concerned. AAACES conventions met in various cities, including Atlanta, around the country each year. If the wire services covered these meetings, none of these three newspapers published the story. Nor did the newspapers ever print any locally written stories about AAACES convention activity, such as an interview with Brown Ayres or Harcourt Morgan of the University of Tennessee.

The first sign in the press of the forthcoming political struggle over extension teaching came in February 1909 with publication of the Country Life Commission's report. The *Nashville Banner* printed an Associated Press story on February 9 that summarized the commission's report and included the full text of President Theodore Roosevelt's message to Congress. Under a one-column headline, the story took up about half of page 9.¹⁹ The *Journal and Tribune* followed the next morning with a wire story that included Roosevelt's message, almost all of the report verbatim, and a three-column photograph of five commission members. Topped with a two-line head across all seven columns, almost all of page 10 was devoted to the commission's report. Under the main head, a six-line deck head across three columns above the photograph listed the recommendations.²⁰ The newspaper's political affiliation and/or the proximity of the University of Tennessee may have influenced how it handled and played the story. Strangely, the *Commercial Appeal* published nothing about the Country Life Commission or its findings, but did print in March an editorial that favorably

¹⁹ "President and Country Life," *Nashville Banner*, 9 February 1909, 9.

²⁰ "Country Life Commission Reports . . .," *Journal and Tribune*, 10 February 1909, 10.

referred to and used information from the report. The editorial complained that the American farming class was the most neglected by lawmakers.

In our own state, for instance, during the last two months we have had a legislature giving its entire time and attention first to a prohibition bill and then to a fight for the control of the political machinery of the government.²¹

In early March, Knoxville printed a front page story in which Congressman Stanley of Kentucky derided the Country Life Commission.

We don't want to have a bunch of men in frock coats and silk hats riding around in automobiles and eating canvas back duck and drinking champagne trying to tell farmers how to eat greens, draw water and milk cows. We don't want a city commission to teach farmers.

The story also related that the House had refused to go along with a Senate amendment to the agricultural appropriations bill that allocated \$25,000 to print the report. The Senate eventually withdrew the amendment.²²

The *Journal and Tribune* came back in late March with an editorial that referred to the commission's recommendations on rural education. While extolling the benefits that agricultural education for rural children would bring, the editorial also noted that few school teachers had the knowledge or training to teach the subject. Then, as if looking into a crystal ball, the editorial writer described the basic feature of the future agricultural extension system.

. . . no better service could be rendered the rural communities than to have a traveling college of agriculture in the person of two or three men who know the things that could be imparted

²¹ "Land Tenantry," *Commercial Appeal*, 7 March 1909, 6.

²² "Country Life Commission," 3 March 1909, 1.

to the interest and benefit of a community in the ways indicated, men who can grasp the practical side of a situation for every locality.²³

After April 1909, the Country Life Commission dropped out of sight in the daily press. References to the commission's report appeared sporadically over the next four years, most of them in the *Journal and Tribune*. In December 1911, the paper printed another editorial, reminding its readers that President Roosevelt had appointed a commission to study rural life. "For that he was ridiculed by a portion of the press, not because the editors of the newspapers believed the condition of the rural people was ideal; but simply for the reason they thought it a field in which they might show something of their wits."

The editorial concluded: "As the population grows larger, with smaller and better equipped farms, there are many things that are practicable and possible that will add much to the attractiveness of country life. The seed sown by President Roosevelt will not prove to be without results."²⁴

Until early 1912, nothing appeared in these three dailies of the debates in Congress over proposed extension legislation, for example, the McLaughlin and similar bills. But in January, stories began appearing in the Tennessee dailies as Representative Lever of South Carolina and Senator Smith of Georgia began introducing legislation to implement a national, and federally supported, system of extension education.

However, during 1912, almost all the articles about agricultural extension, whether wire or local copy, were printed in the *Journal and*

²³ "Agriculture in the Rural Schools," *Journal and Tribune*, 25 March 1909.

²⁴ "Our Rural Population," *Journal and Tribune*, 9 December 1911, 6.

Tribune. Most of these were published after mid-September, apparently reflecting congressional inactivity. On January 17, Knoxville published a wire story, played on page 10, announcing that Lever and Smith had introduced legislation "which is sought to revolutionize farming throughout the country." Only Knoxville carried this story, which also stated that the legislation "has the endorsement of senators and representatives irrespective of party affiliation, as well as the unanimous endorsement of the agricultural colleges of the country."²⁵

In September and again in December, the *Journal and Tribune* printed on its farm page an article, which explained provisions of the bill, outlined the logic behind the legislation, described how agricultural extension departments would conduct their work, and most importantly, how much money would be allocated to Tennessee. The article estimated \$105,000 for the first year, provided the state legislature matched dollar for dollar for the supplemental appropriation.²⁶ Of the three dailies in this study, Knoxville provided the most detail about the extension legislation.

The *Commercial Appeal* published three short wire stories about the legislation—one in November and two in December—that were little more than status reports. All were played on either page 12 or 15.

²⁵ "Farming to be Revolutionized," *Journal and Tribune*, 17 January 1912, 10.

²⁶ "Proposed Law for Establishing Agricultural Extension Departments," *Journal and Tribune*, 16 September 1912, 8; "Importance of the Lever Agricultural Bill," *Journal and Tribune*, 2 December 1912, 8.

Nashville printed one story in December reporting that members of the Banker's Association of the District of Columbia had visited the Senate to urge passage of the Lever agricultural extension bill.²⁷

On January 30, 1913, Knoxville and Memphis published identical wire stories that gave more details of the debate over and demise of the Lever legislation. In a fight that lasted several days, the Senate by a 31-30 vote substituted the Page Vocational Education Bill for the Lever bill, approved earlier by the House. That ended any chance for passage of an agricultural extension bill during that session.

Senators Page and Hoke Smith became involved in a sharp controversy during the debate, Senator Page intimating that Senator Smith had given assurances that he would support Senator Page's bill in revised form. This Senator Smith denies. Senator Page finally withdrew an amended form of his bill, which included practically all of the House bill, and the Senate then adopted the original Page bill. It is believed that as a result of the action of the Senate today, the agricultural education measure may remain in controversy between the two houses when the present session ends.²⁸

The *Nashville Banner* did not publish a story on the death of the Lever bill, and none of the three dailies printed any editorials on the subject either. Stories about congressional activity regarding agricultural extension education then dropped out of the news columns until the end of 1913.

News of the third and final drive for Smith-Lever legislation first appeared on December 9, 1913, when both Nashville and Knoxville ran wire stories inside stating that the House committee on agriculture had approved a Lever extension bill. The next day, wire stories in the two papers reported

²⁷ "Bankers Help Boost Bill," *Nashville Banner*, 17 December 1912, 14.

²⁸ "Page Vocational Education Bill," *Journal and Tribune*, 30 January 1913, 4; "Education Bill Passes," *Commercial Appeal*, 30 January 1913, 16.

approval by the Senate committee on agriculture. The stories explained that measure would "send agents into every farming county," and appropriations would rise from an original \$480,000 to about \$3.5 million each year.²⁹

Memphis did not report these developments.

On January 20, 1914, all three dailies carried wire stories announcing that the House had approved the Lever agricultural extension bill. Knoxville played the six-paragraph story at the top of page 2. Only the first three paragraphs dealt with the Lever bill; the remainder dealt with other agricultural measures. The *Nashville Banner* on page 6 and *Commercial Appeal* on page 16 printed only the first three paragraphs, the last of which read, "The bill . . . with less than an hour's debate was rushed through."³⁰

Concerning the bill's stormy passage through the Senate, which arose from sectional differences, the *Journal and Tribune* published the most information.

The *Nashville Banner* published only one story, written by its Washington correspondent, Jesse S. Cottrell, for the February 3 edition. Played at the top of page 2, the headline read, "Will Create Jobs for 500 Men," which probably attracted a lot of attention. The story stated that the government would need 50 graduates of agricultural colleges during the next year alone and that demand for graduates would increase year by year as appropriations rose. The lead paragraph stated that passage of the bill "is now conceded,"³¹

²⁹ "Agricultural Extension Bill is Favorably Reported," *Journal and Tribune*, 9 December 1913, 6; "Extension Work in Agriculture," *Nashville Banner*, 10 December 1913, 3.

³⁰ "Agricultural Extension Bill," *Journal and Tribune*, 2; "In the Interest of the Farmers," *Nashville Banner*, 20 January 1914, 6; "To Advance Agriculture," *Commercial Appeal*, 20 January 1914, 16.

³¹ "Will Create Jobs for 500 Men," *Nashville Banner*, 3 February 1914, 2.

which may have been part of the reason that a story announcing Senate approval of the Lever bill was not published. Furthermore, the Senate vote probably came too late in the day on February 7, which was a Saturday, to be carried in that afternoon's edition. The *Nashville Banner* did not publish a Sunday edition, and by Monday afternoon the story was old news.

Memphis published only one small wire story on a proposed amendment by Senator Cummins of Iowa to make improved farm acreage the basis for funding distribution. Under the Lever bill, this was based on each state's rural population as a percentage of the nation's total rural population.³² The *Commercial Appeal* provided no other information on this amendment or any others until its February 8 story announcing Senate passage of the Lever bill.

A *Journal and Tribune* wire story on February 3 reported the 40-16 defeat of the Cummins amendment, but more of the coverage dealt with a proposed amendment to allow black colleges in the South to share the Lever appropriations for extension education. Two wire stories gave considerable details of the heated exchanges between several senators from northern states allied with the amendment's sponsor, Senator Wesley L. Jones of Washington, against Senator Smith of Georgia and Senator James Vardaman of Mississippi.³³

Senate passage of the agricultural extension bill received the most prominent play in the *Sunday Journal and Tribune*, which ran its five-paragraph AP story in the top left corner of page 1 under a two-line head. The

³² "South Benefits Too Much," *Commercial Appeal*, 23 January 1914, 16.

³³ "Sharp Debates on Race Question," *Journal and Tribune*, 6 February 1914, 1; "Debate on Race Question," *Journal and Tribune*, 7 February 1914, 3.

Commercial Appeal published its story, also five paragraphs, provided by International News, under a one-column headline on page 17. Both stories reported rejection of the Jones amendment, by differing votes, and passage on a voice vote without dissent. The AP story included this information:

The bill was amended, however, as a result of a fight on the race question by placing the distribution of the fund in the hands of the secretary of agriculture and respective state governors in states having more than one agricultural college, and also specifying against race discrimination in the demonstration work.³⁴

Only the *Journal and Tribune* would publish an editorial, discussed in Chapter 6, about the new Smith-Lever Act. It would not be printed until June 5.

³⁴ "Agricultural Extension Bill Passed by Senate," *Sunday Journal and Tribune*, 8 February 1914, 1; "Agricultural Bill Passed by Senate," *Commercial Appeal*, 8 February 1914, 17.

CHAPTER V

THE UNIVERSITY REACHES OUT TO TEACH SOMEONE

Before 1909, most agricultural education on behalf of Tennessee farmers was conducted by or through farmers' institutes or conventions, the oldest of which was the East Tennessee Farmers' Convention. Established in 1872, this convention was so successful it served as a model for farmers in Middle and West Tennessee in creating their own associations during the 1880s. Though limited in reach, these organizations were excellent sources of new ideas and information for farmers who could afford to participate. Across four decades, institute and convention speakers, many of whom were agriculture professors from the University of Tennessee, presented papers on a variety of themes that would echo years later in the object lessons taught by the Extension Service's agricultural and home demonstration agents. Tenancy, crop diversification, sanitation, soil fertility, self-sufficiency, a grass-livestock economy, poultry, and better farm management methods were only a few of the topics discussed.¹

From time to time, the East Tennessee convention, which usually met in Knoxville, even attracted speakers of national reputation, such as James Wilson, secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture; Alfred C. True, director of the federal Office of Experiment Stations; and, Eugene Davenport, dean of the College of Agriculture at the University of Illinois. Speaking to

¹ Watts, "Knowledge for the Tennessee Farmer," 77-81, 88-90.

the Upper East Tennessee Farmers' Convention and Institute in May 1900, Wilson urged his listeners to turn their attention to cattle and sheep raising. "I have never seen as many natural conditions combined to make a paradise of this industry as here in Tennessee," he said.²

The Experiment Station Tries to Serve Two Masters

When the University's Board of Trustees, in a farsighted move, established the Agricultural Experiment Station on June 18, 1882, the state's farmers gained another friend and ally, which was an extension of the Agricultural College. Impetus for the station—one of the first five in the nation—came from field and feeding experiments directed by John M. McBryde, head of the School of Agriculture, Horticulture and Botany from June 1879 to June 1882. McBryde resigned to become president of South Carolina College. The Knoxville station was created five years before Congress passed the Hatch Act to spur research in agriculture, which in turn would build a stronger theoretical foundation for the teaching and practice of agriculture. The legislation authorized an experiment station for each state and territory. Each also received \$15,000 annually to help pay operating expenses, including the cost of publishing research findings. On March 28, 1887, the Tennessee General Assembly chose the University to receive Hatch Act funds, and in August, Dr. Charles W. Dabney Jr., 32, left his position as director of the North Carolina experiment station to assume dual roles as

² Tennessee Commissioner of Agriculture, *Biennial Report*, 1899-1900, (Nashville: Press of Gospel Advocate Publishing Co.), 52.

president of the University of Tennessee and director of the Experiment Station in Knoxville at an annual salary of \$4,000.³

The congressional allocation must have seemed like a bonanza to station personnel. Before 1888, the year the first federal dollars arrived, a big chunk of the station's revenue came from a state fertilizer tax that yielded only \$700 to \$1,000 annually. In return, the station was required by the legislature to analyze fertilizer and soil samples for farmers. Also, the Experiment Station had no building or library, "no laboratories, or scientific apparatus, no stock or utensils, no land or equipments of any kind. It occupied such rooms in the University buildings as could be provided for it, and used the instruments, stock, and land of the Agricultural College, free of rent."⁴ The station was not alone in its poverty. In the absence of state support, adequate funding for the entire University in those days was an on-going concern.

Assured of a steady and more substantial income, University officials reorganized the station, began hiring a staff, buying equipment, acquiring library materials, constructing offices and laboratories and planning lines of research. At the same time, staff members began reaching out to farmers. From 1888 to 1913, the University committed more and more people and time to agricultural extension duties either in cooperation with other agencies or in independent activities. With passage of the Adams Act in 1906, federal funding gradually increased to \$30,000. Though the additional money was earmarked for "original researches," the station's extension activities no

³ University of Tennessee, Agricultural Experiment Station, *First Annual Report*, 1888, 3-6; Montgomery, *The Volunteer State Forges Its University*, 17.

⁴ Agricultural Experiment Station, *First Annual Report*, 1888, 3-6.

doubt benefited. Creation of the Experiment Station at Jackson in 1907 gave the University an additional research facility as well as a base from which to reach farmers in West Tennessee.

Realistically, the developing extension mission was unavoidable. Station bulletins and reports could only go so far in disseminating research findings. Explanation and elaboration were sometimes needed even by the well-educated farmer. Less technical newspaper articles created greater public interest in station research activities and no doubt prompted many to seek information about specific problems. But, both newspapers and bulletins were of little use to those who could read but did not and thousands of residents who could not read.

Tennessee's illiteracy rate among those age 10 and above was 20.7 percent in 1900, improving to 13.6 percent by 1910.⁵

To effectively aid as many farmers as possible, and win their support, the station had to identify their problems and find practical solutions. Much of its early research was of this nature, consisting of rudimentary experiments and testing with quick application on the farm, and trail-blazing surveys of the state's soils and plants. Tennessee's three major geographical divisions, which resulted in three very different agricultural divisions, made it necessary for staff members to meet and talk with farmers in each section. There was no better way to do this than through face-to-face contact at meetings where farmers' questions propelled station staff into a larger and larger instructional role.

⁵ *Thirteenth Census, Supplement for Tennessee*, 591, 595-611.

Dabney wrote in his 1888 report, "We found it somewhat difficult to get farmers interested, at first, in the work proposed to be done here for them, but by attending farmers' meetings, and advertising the work of the Experiment Station through the columns of newspapers and supplements to newspapers, we are succeeding now in getting up a large list of names and post-offices of farmers . . . to whom bulletins and reports will be regularly mailed." By the end of 1889, almost 5,000 names had been placed on the station's mailing list, and 23 newspapers were regularly printing station supplements. "With a view of . . . gaining a personal acquaintance with their circumstances and needs, we have, so far as possible, sent representatives from the Station force to Farmers' Institute meetings," wrote director F. Lamson-Scribner in 1891, the year staff members also helped organize the East Tennessee Horticulture Society. By 1893, correspondence with an increasing number of farmers, horticulturists and others "had become a severe tax upon the time of the members of the staff," but Dabney quickly added this was the station's duty. In 1895, Charles Vanderford, station secretary, said, "letters of reply to inquiry for the past year cover several thousand pages," and, because of frequent requests for staff attendance at institutes and conventions, the station was having "serious difficulty" paying travel expenses.⁶

Riding the Institute Wave

Reflecting a growing national movement, the institutes were sponsored by the state Bureau of Agriculture to increase contacts with

⁶ Agricultural Experiment Station, *First Annual Report*, 1888, 10; *Second Annual Report*, 1889, 6-7; *Fourth Annual Report*, 1891, 10; *Sixth Annual Report*, 1893, 9; *Eighth Annual Report*, 1895, 6-7.

farmers, a move that also helped the Experiment Station. In 1891, the bureau tried to organize, without legislative funding or blessing, farmers' institutes in the counties. But the endeavor faltered. The bureau achieved greater success in 1893 reviving farmers' conventions in Middle and West Tennessee. In October 1897, the Experiment Station, now staffed by eight people, held an independent two-day school of horticulture in Madisonville as "an experiment to determine the practicability of holding similar schools in various sections of the state." R. L. Watts, horticulturist, wrote that attendance was not large, but the school, designed to give "practical instruction" on gardens and orchards, was a hit with those present. "We believe there is no better way to get the work of the Station before tillers of the soil," said Watts. "But the attendance must be larger than at Madisonville to justify so much expenditure of time and money by those whose real business is to conduct scientific researches."⁷

The Madisonville school may have shown the direction in which agricultural education should go, but it also illuminated the ambivalence of one staff member in trying to do two jobs: conducting research and instructing farmers. Nevertheless, the event helped revitalize farmers' institutes in the state. In late 1898 and early 1899, the station sponsored institutes in 13 counties, attracting more than 2,400 farmers. Newspapers helped publicize the meetings by printing the station's "press bulletins." Local "committees of arrangements" distributed programs and other literature to create more interest. This activity caught the eye of state legislators who in 1899 for the first time gave a two-year appropriation of \$5,000 to the Bureau of

⁷ Watts, "Knowledge for the Tennessee Farmer," 90-100; Agricultural Experiment Station, *Tenth Annual Report*, 1897, 160.

Agriculture for farmers' institutes. Under Thomas H. Paine and commissioners who followed, the bureau completely controlled the institutes, organizing them on three levels: county, division and state. The west, middle and east farmers' conventions became divisional institutes, and remained the strongest of the three levels, while the state and county organizations languished. From September 1899 to December 1900, the bureau held 10 divisional institutes around the state with total attendance estimated at 8,800. During the same time, county institutes attracted 2,500. Cooperating with the bureau were the agricultural college and Experiment Station, which together supplied many institute speakers and exhibits. However, neither the college nor the Experiment Station ever surrendered this field entirely to the bureau. University personnel continued to conduct separate institutes and schools as they saw fit.⁸

After faltering somewhat in the first half of the new decade, institutes rebounded in the last half, then faltered again. In 1906, the year W. C. Stallings of Texas became the nation's first county agent, attendance at institutes began climbing. But after 1909, when 40 institutes attracted 55,300 farmers, attendance began falling. Reasons for the decline are not entirely clear, but state-sponsored agricultural trains, which began rolling in 1909, and the increase in University-sponsored short courses in communities around the state may have contributed to the slide in attendance. By 1912, total

⁸ Watts, "Knowledge for the Tennessee Farmer," 100-103; Agricultural Experiment Station, *Twelfth Annual Report*, 1899, 6-7; Tennessee Commissioner of Agriculture, *Biennial Report*, 1899-1900, 17; Agricultural Experiment Station, *Press Bulletin No. 1-47*, 50, "Farmers' Institute to be held at Rogersville," *Press Bulletin No. 10*.

attendance had dropped to 10,000, although the number of institutes had climbed to 78.⁹

Agricultural Extension by Whistle-stop

Among the organizations supplying speakers for institutes were railroad companies, which were early and energetic promoters of agriculture in the state. For many years the railroads had also reduced fares for those traveling to institutes. Speaking to Middle Tennessee farmers in 1894, John W. Thomas, president of the Nashville, Chattanooga and St. Louis Railway (1884-1906), said successful farming depended on three conditions: fertile soil, industrious and well-informed farmers, and an easy and economical way to move farm products to market, which the railroad was eager to provide. Too, he preached the gospel of crop diversification and stated more than once that applying Tennessee rock phosphates, hauled by his railroad of course, would restore soil fertility.¹⁰ Mutual prosperity through better agricultural practices and close farm-railroad cooperation was a theme repeated by railroad men year after year in speeches to institutes throughout the state.

Within a few years the railroads began contributing much more than speeches to the cause of farmer enlightenment. Assuming most of the costs, the railroads in 1909 began pulling agricultural extension back and forth across Tennessee with a steam-powered locomotive. Credit for the first "Agricultural Special" is given to the Mobile and Ohio Railroad, part of the Southern Railway System. Speakers included H. A. Morgan, S. M. Bain,

⁹ United States Department of Agriculture, Office of Experiment Stations, *Annual Report*, 1909, (Washington, 1906), 353; *Ibid.*, 1912, 373.

¹⁰ Jesse C. Burt, Jr., "Railroad Promotion of Agriculture in Tennessee," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 10 (December 1951): 321-327.

botanist; C. A. Mooers, chemist and agronomist; and F. C. Quereau, animal husbandman, all of the Experiment Station at Knoxville. Other speakers included successful farmers and personnel from the state Bureau of Agriculture, which was in charge of the tour. The train made a 100-mile trip, attracting about 2,000 visitors during stops in 13 West Tennessee towns, including Selmer, Jackson, Trenton and Dyersburg. In the summer of 1912, a 6,300-mile tour that lasted 47 running days attracted an estimated 250,000 visitors during more than 200 stops throughout the state. Exhibits on dairying, soils, domestic science, crops and other topics, such as health and education, were set up in seven of the nine cars. Specials in 1913 and 1914 were also very successful. In 1913, the bureau decided to hold institutes only in areas not reached by the special trains.¹¹

Despite their popularity, the institutes and agricultural trains simply could not and did not reach the farm masses with the kind of education or sustained attention needed to bring about widespread change in agricultural practices. In the peak year of institute attendance, 1909, only 22 percent of the state's farmers attended institutes. The primary teaching tool was the lecture. Even when accompanied by lantern slides and charts, this was hardly a way to reach thousands who required more than talk and pictures to be convinced. Given the expense of travel, meals and rooms during a two or three-day event, convention-going farmers were probably among the state's more

¹¹ "The First Agricultural Special in Tennessee," *U.T. Farmer* 3 (May 1909): 163; Office of Experiment Stations, *Annual Report*, 1909, (Washington, 1910), 353; *A Century of Tennessee Agriculture*, 258; "Successful Tour of Agricultural Special," Tennessee Department of Agriculture, *Tennessee Agriculture*, I (September, 1912): 211-214; "Farmers Train Run This Week," *Commercial Appeal*, 4 April 1909, 3; Watts, "Knowledge for the Tennessee Farmer," 123-125.

prosperous, who needed the information less than their poorer neighbors. Also, like state fairs, divisional institutes met only once a year. They never established strong support organizations in all counties; many local groups met once or twice and died. Decreasing the effectiveness of these groups even more were various commissioners of agriculture and governors who often used the institutes as political soapboxes. As a means to be seen by large numbers of voters, the "Agricultural Specials" were also immensely useful to them. And, as a way to create greater awareness of the University and Experiment Station, there can be no question that the trains did that. Some newspapers put reporters and photographers aboard the trains for day-by-day coverage. Although the trains reached some farmers who did not attend institutes, this novelty had two major disadvantages: Most farmers did not live near railroad tracks, and the average stop lasted only one hour, further diluting whatever value the train had as an educational tool. More time was spent traveling than teaching.

Bringing Farmers and Teachers to the Fountain

While researchers and educators carried University services, knowledge and advice to experienced farmers, their wives, sons and daughters by way of institutes, they also attempted to induce them to leave field and home during the winter months for more structured study in "short courses" at the Knoxville campus. Sixteen farmers, including one from Fall Creek, Virginia, attended the University's first "short course in agriculture" held during January, February, and March of 1900. Men and women above age 16 and able to read and write could enroll without taking an entrance

examination or paying tuition. Students did pay a "contingent" fee of \$7, and board and lodging for the 12 weeks cost \$35 to \$50. The University *Register* emphasized the practical nature of the course, which entailed almost 400 hours of academic work. "Many persons whose educational opportunities have been restricted fear they will be unable to appreciate the course. This is unfortunate because the work is so practical and the lectures are so simple as to be understood by anyone." Methods of teaching included lecture, laboratory and shop work, excursions and observations. Practical demonstrations occupied each afternoon.

The objects of the course are to present in a practical way the results of scientific experiments in agriculture, horticulture, stock raising, dairying . . . to bring the farmers in touch with the Agricultural departments of the University and Experiment Station, and to inculcate in all the habits of study, observation and research.¹²

But the school was never a runaway success; annual attendance did not rise above 37 until 1907 when three major changes occurred. Women attended for the first time; of 62 students enrolled, 22 were female. The school began offering proficiency prizes, usually \$10, donated by citizens and companies in Knoxville and elsewhere; and the course of study, now 10 weeks, was divided into two-week segments so that students might concentrate on horticulture, animal husbandry or home economics, for example, and then return home if they wished. Nevertheless, during the winter school's first 15 years, 1900-1914, total attendance reached only 894, an average of 60 per year. Reaching the thousands of Tennessee farm families

¹² University of Tennessee, *Register*, 1899-1900, 36, 87; *Ibid.*, 1900-1901, 208; *Ibid.*, 1905-1906, 51.

who needed what the University had to offer would have to be done some other way.¹³

Expanding its contacts and influence in another direction during 1907, the College of Agriculture began offering courses in elementary agriculture for public school teachers. The courses were taught during the University's widely popular "Summer School of the South," established in 1902. The state had earlier mandated that agriculture be a required course of study in the schools, presenting a teaching opportunity to the institution. The course was designed to give teachers, many with little or no background in agriculture, at least a basic knowledge of sound agricultural practices. To encourage attendance, each county school superintendent was invited to nominate four teachers for free scholarships. Sixty-eight teachers attended the first year, 106 the next and 88 in 1909. Listed as a special lecturer on the school's program for 1908 was Dr. Seaman A. Knapp, head of the Farmers' Cooperative Demonstration Work, then spreading across the South. Knapp gave three lectures on "Agriculture in Relation to National Prosperity and Wealth" from June 25 to 27. Dr. W. J. Spillman, also of the federal Department of Agriculture, gave lectures that summer. Rounding out instructors for the school were members of the college faculty and experiment station staff. But even with free scholarships, nationally known speakers and statewide promotion, the school never attracted more than 123 in-state teachers during any one summer from 1907 to 1916. Yearly attendance averaged 78, and total attendance for the 10-year span was 783.¹⁴

¹³ Ibid., 1906-1907, 53-56; Ibid., 1900-1914.

¹⁴ James R. Montgomery, "Summer School of the South," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly*, 22 (December 1963): 361-362; "Agriculture for Public Schools," *U.T. Farmer* 2 (April 1908): 122; "Summer School Notes," *U.T.*

Teaching Agriculture in Public Schools

To help public high schools set up their agricultural teaching programs, the University, through the Department of Agricultural Education in the College of Liberal Arts, began a new form of extension work in early 1909. The University sent "the professor of agricultural education each month to each of the schools maintaining the course, to give a lesson and demonstration, to outline the work and suggest readings and reviews." About 12 county high schools around the state agreed to receive the professor, but by late 1912, only three or four counties were doing "any real work" in this area. Teaching rural children basic agricultural principles so they might use them to advantage as adult farmers was a favorite topic of *The U.T. Farmer* from 1907 onward. Most editions of the student publication carried at least one article, often written by a faculty member, promoting the virtues of such a move. Indeed, similar motivation lay behind the corn and tomato clubs that Knapp's farm demonstration program began promoting also in 1909.¹⁵

But it was asking too much of the schools too soon. The University's well-intended attempt to collaborate with high schools came at a time when public support and funding for education were slowly rising in Tennessee in concert with the value of farm property and products. A leader in the education movement was Dr. P. P. Claxton, founder of the "Summer School of the South," and head of the University's Department of Education, who later became U.S. Commissioner of Education. The state campaign was part of a larger regional and national movement to improve public education.

¹⁵ "Plans and Purposes of a New Form of College Extension Work," *U.T. Farmer* 3 (January 1909): 78-81; "A New Form of College Extension Work," *U.T. Farmer* 3 (February 1909): 100; Verd Peterson, "Agriculture in the Rural High Schools of Tennessee," *U.T. Farmer*, 7 (December 1912): 67-69.

Efforts to improve both Southern agriculture and education were closely related, and both were supported by Northern philanthropists such as John D. Rockefeller, who funded the General Education Board. The board had concluded that improving Southern education depended first on improving Southern agriculture and put most of its support behind Knapp's demonstration program.¹⁶ Likewise in Tennessee, agricultural and educational forces were allies who cooperated with others working to improve the state's quality of life. For example, the state superintendent of public education and those seeking improved roads and better health and sanitation practices in rural areas spoke often before farmers' institutes around the state and accepted invitations to ride the special agricultural trains.¹⁷

Nevertheless, Tennessee's rural high schools probably were not ready, financially or otherwise, to take on the work of teaching agriculture, much less maintain a laboratory and demonstration plot. The first county high school in the state was barely 10 years old, having been established at Tiptonville in Lake County in 1900. By January 1913, half the new schools were less than five years old, and 52 counties were still without high schools.¹⁸ The status of county high schools in 1913 could be seen in the University's student population. Generally speaking, counties that had no students at the

¹⁶ Charles Lee Lewis, *Philander Priestley Claxton, Crusader for Public Education* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1948), 141-149; Andrew D. Holt, *The Struggle for a State System of Public Schools in Tennessee, 1903-1936* (New York: Columbia University, 1938), 110, 186-189.

¹⁷ Newspaper accounts are numerous during these years of such speakers sharing common cause on the programs of farmers' institutes.

¹⁸ Harry Clark, "The High School Movement," *U.T. Farmer* 7 (January 1913): 95-97.

University either had no county high schools or the schools were poorly developed.¹⁹

Short Courses Go "On the Road"

In a much more successful step, the University in late 1909 began taking slimmed-down versions of its winter short courses off campus as free "moveable schools," again in cooperation with the state Department of Agriculture and railroads, which in 1911 began providing a demonstration car at no charge. Counties in which the courses were held usually paid most of the expenses. A mix of formal and informal—or "hands-on"—instruction since their inception, these mobile courses were somewhat less thorough than the on-campus school because of lack of time, equipment and facilities. Still, the agricultural faculty and Experiment Station staff added these outreach activities to their classroom teaching, research duties and work with institutes, the summer school, state fairs, agricultural trains and the Knoxville winter school. Lasting from one week to 10 days, short courses were held at Winchester, Jackson, Cookeville and Dickson during November and December of 1909. Total attendance was 413. During this year, the *University Register* began referring to these off-campus schools for the first time as "Extension Courses." Attendance grew to 686 in 1910 at schools held in Columbia, Jackson, Carthage, Clarksville and Johnson City. Fifty-seven attended the Knoxville winter course, and the teachers' summer course drew 107.²⁰

¹⁹ *Biennial Report*, 1912 (in *The University of Tennessee Record*, University of Tennessee Press, Knoxville, 1913), 11-12. Hereafter cited as *Biennial Report*.

²⁰ *U.T. Register*, 1909-1910, 64, 195; *Ibid.*, 1910-1911, 64, 185; *Ibid.*, 1911-

The Daily Press and University Extension

As 1909 unfolded, the University of Tennessee's Agricultural College and Experiment Station began traveling several new roads trying to find the best way to reach and teach as many farmers as possible. Some of the new methods incorporated the new idea of "demonstration" teaching in varying degrees and forms. In late 1909, the federal form of extension teaching, the Farmers' Cooperative Demonstration Program, entered West Tennessee and began enlisting young farm boys in Corn Clubs. The federal program is covered in Chapter 6.

In early 1909, stories in the *Commercial Appeal* and the Knoxville *Daily Journal and Tribune* announced that the University of Tennessee was beginning a new form of college work. A story recapping the "agitation in Tennessee" on the matter appeared in the *Nashville Banner* in October. Headlines in Knoxville and Memphis read: "Notable Extension Planned," "Agricultural Training Brought Home to Country Boy," and "Work Will Be Carried on in Cooperation with County High Schools."

Except for different lead paragraphs, both stories are identical, and given the style of writing, the story was probably supplied by Professor Josiah Main of the Department of Agricultural Education, which was in the College of Liberal Arts, not the College of Agriculture. Both stories noted that "the farmers' institute has been adult instruction of experienced farmers and has

suffered from there having been 'too little time devoted to instruction in each locality" and 'too little work done by the scholars.'"²¹

Teaching agriculture to school children was the latest idea on how best to extend University teaching of agricultural subjects beyond the campus. And it was an idea that would not die until months after the Agricultural Extension Service had been formally established in Tennessee. The concept became a favorite of the state agricultural commissioner who promoted the idea at every opportunity. Although members of the College of Agriculture were not involved in this effort, they too promoted the idea at farmers meetings and institutes.

And it was an idea that found favor with the daily press. Throughout the span of this study, teaching agriculture in the public schools would find its way into several editorials, reprinted stories and farm page commentaries. Nevertheless, it was an idea that would never take root.

Another new road opened up for University men in the spring of 1909 courtesy of the Mobile & Ohio Railroad. A page 1 story in the *Nashville Banner* in February announced that in cooperation with the state Department of Agriculture, the railroad had offered a special car for an "agricultural special"²² that would travel through several counties in West Tennessee in early April. The *Commercial Appeal*, which had already run several similar stories on trains in Mississippi, published the itinerary in March, another advance story in April, and one when the trip ended.

²¹ "New Form of College Work," *Commercial Appeal*, 10 January 1909, 17.

²² "To Instruct in Agriculture," *Nashville Banner*, 9 February 1909, 1.

The *Commercial Appeal* story called the train a "farmers' congress on wheels," and noted,

The use of special trains in connection with agricultural development and extension is something of an innovation, but is only in line with the advanced ideas and improved methods which are being adopted in many lines of this great industry. By this means the work of the agricultural authorities is much facilitated, the number of daily meetings increased ²³

Nashville and Knoxville, not on the train's route, published nothing on the train, and none of the papers editorialized on the novelty.

In May, press attention turned to the biggest event of the year for East Tennessee farmers: the East Tennessee Farmers' Convention, which attracted an estimated 1,500, to 2,000 farmers. Advance stories, which included an agenda and list of speakers, were published in both the *Banner* and *Journal and Tribune*, with the greater coverage provided by the Knoxville paper. The day the convention opened, Knoxville devoted a full page to the event. Memphis made no mention of the event.

As usual, most convention speakers stood and delivered a paper, sometimes accompanied with lantern slides or charts for illustration. And as usual, each speaker admonished the farmers to plant this or that or adopt this or that method. However, one speaker, Dr. M. Jacob of the Experiment Station, demonstrated how to vaccinate hogs against cholera. The *Journal and Tribune* provided detailed coverage of most of these speeches.²⁴

The 1909 convention was remarkable for one thing usually absent from these events: controversy. On the third and last day of the convention,

²³ "Farmers Train Runs This Week," *Commercial Appeal*, 4 April 1909, 3.

²⁴ "Third and Final Day of the Farmers Convention," *Journal and Tribune*, 21 May 1909, 4.

Professor Harcourt A. Morgan read a letter from Congressman R. W. Austin announcing that a series of meetings or "farmers institutes" conducted by representatives of the U.S. Department of Agriculture would be held in September in county seats of the first and second congressional districts.

John Thompson, state commissioner of agriculture, stating that he believed the meetings were politically inspired, had refused to cooperate with a similar undertaking in Middle Tennessee unless it was "under the auspices of the regular agricultural organization of Tennessee." Thompson's ire appeared to be aimed more at the congressmen rather than the USDA because he said its personnel were "excellent men" and "the department at Washington was always willing to cooperate with the state organization and had cooperated as was evidenced by the part taking on the program by representatives of the department at the convention."²⁵

Although University professor C. A. Mooers defended the proposed visits and one of the attending farmers said "it appeared to be an opportunity for getting the people of the various counties in touch with the speakers on some live public questions," the convention approved a resolution that "expressed its entire confidence in the commissioner of agriculture and the experiment station in looking after and directing the agricultural interests of the state, better than outsiders." The story noted that a number of farmers abstained from voting on the resolution.²⁶

Following the vote, Professor Morgan, no doubt mindful of who paid most of the expenses for the College of Agriculture and the Experiment Station, said he understood "that the resolution did not apply to the

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

department of agriculture at Washington with which the state had always had close cooperation."²⁷

The *Banner* carried a short item on the vote that read in part "the Government would bring experts to the state, but it was turned down by the convention." The next day, the *Banner* published another short story of the reaction to the vote by three of Tennessee's congressmen, including Cordell Hull, author of the federal income tax law of 1913, and later secretary of state under President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Hull commented:

The course of the institute astonished me. I think no other body of farmers has ever assumed such an attitude. . . . There is no question regarding lack of confidence in anybody involved in our course in having the department here cooperate with the State Department (of Agriculture). The State Department has but a small appropriation and cannot do everything which might be done for the benefit of the farm. We simply get the United States Department of Agriculture to step in and help out.²⁸

The reaction by Thompson and the farmers to this congressional initiative is a mystery. USDA scientists had been guests at all Tennessee farmers' institutes and conventions for years and would continue to be invited to speak. Thompson may have been piqued that the visits were to be arranged without the participation of his office. It is highly probable that the farmers, agitated by Thompson's remarks, misconstrued the intent of the visits and reacted without giving the matter enough thought. Clearly, Morgan and others from the Agricultural College were caught in the middle and tried to soften the resolution as best they could.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ "Farmers Decline Outside Assistance," *Nashville Banner*, 21 May 1909, 3; "Astounded at Farmers' Action," *Nashville Banner*, 22 May 1909, 12 .

Only the *Banner* carried the reaction story; none of the newspapers editorialized about the convention vote; and reference to the brief tempest could not be found in future issues of the three newspapers. In September, the USDA visits to East Tennessee began as scheduled. The *Journal and Tribune* carried an account of almost every stop throughout East Tennessee, briefly summarizing the speeches given.

In late summer, farmers' institutes began meeting in counties west of the Tennessee River in preparation for the divisional Farmers' Institute set for September 1-3 in Jackson, which expected about 1,500 farmers. Some 18 meetings were scheduled, but it's not certain that all were held. Nine were covered either by the *Banner* or the *Commercial Appeal*. The *Journal and Tribune* carried no stories about the West Tennessee meetings. Because the speakers and topics for each meeting were almost identical, each newspaper covered one of the early meetings in great detail. Afterward, much shorter stories giving a one-sentence summary of each speech were published as the institute moved from county to county. Poor attendance but "good interest" was noted for some of the meetings.

As he had done at the East Tennessee Convention, Thompson preached the virtues of teaching elementary agriculture in the public schools, which was always played high in each story. Topics from the May convention—with variations to meet local needs—were repeated in almost all of the county institutes and then carried into the Jackson convention. This meant that many of the farmers had already heard some of the speeches at least once. As with the East Tennessee Convention, a visit to the Experiment Station was a high point for many of the farmers.

Fifteen hundred farmers today inspected the West Tennessee experiment station, and saw it work. They went with Prof. Morgan through the pea patch and over the corn fields; they trod over the dusty farm and listened in wonder and admiration to the simple but heretofore mysterious explanation of the problems which confront the West Tennessee farmer.²⁹

One week after the convention ended, the *Banner* published an interview with Thompson in which he stated that the institutes were failing to reach the farmers.

The reporter inquired of Commissioner Thompson whether he was satisfied with the results so far obtained through the medium of these meetings, and he answered that he was not: for this or that reason it was hard to induce the farmers to attend them, and this indifference often prevent him and his colaborers from coming in contact with that large class of farmers who might be expected to profit most from the institute lessons.³⁰

In spite of the dissatisfaction with the institutes, the Department of Agriculture and the University continued to schedule them. An estimated 800 farmers met in Nashville on December 8, 9 and 10 for the Middle Tennessee Farmers' Convention. Only the *Banner* published any news stories about this event and only one story about one county meeting appeared in this paper before the convention. Given the *Banner's* attention to the county meetings in West Tennessee, it is possible that only one county meeting was held in the Middle Division. For most of the December convention, the usual speakers lectured on the usual topics in the usual manner.

Two stories, however, gave brief accounts of speeches that contained information about a new teaching concept that had not been conveyed in previous stories farmers conventions. One story, played on page 1, contained

²⁹ "Visited the State Farm," *Commercial Appeal*, 3 September 1909, 9.

³⁰ "Agricultural Instructions," *Nashville Banner*, 9 November 1909, 9.

a one-paragraph summary of a speech titled "The Relation of Teaching Agriculture to Rural Life" by Professor Charles A. Keffer of the Knoxville Experiment Station. Keffer would be named the first director of the University's Extension Department in 1913.

The reporter summarized Keffer's speech this way:

He took up the effect of rural life by proper teaching of agriculture in the schools, and said it was of incalculable benefit. "The teacher should teach with objects, and not entirely by books," he said, "and practical demonstrations should be given if the best results would be obtained."³¹

On page 2 of the same edition, W. W. Campbell, who had begun the federal Farmers' Cooperative Demonstration Work in West Tennessee in November described the program to the convention.

This demonstration work has broadened into an effort to explain to the farmers the "scientific why," not to tell the farmers how to farm. The bureau seeks to bring information to the farmers and let him test the result. Under the present methods, Tennessee farms are not producing what they could and should. The necessity for taking advantage of the agricultural opportunities presented was strongly emphasized by the speaker.³²

The arrival of the federal agent in West Tennessee may have prompted speakers from the University's Agricultural College and Experiment Station to add "demonstrations" to their lectures. However, nothing in these published accounts indicate any sort of rivalry or friction between the new federal program and the college. But less than two weeks after Campbell arrived in Jackson, the University in cooperation with the state Department

³¹ "Interest Grows Among Farmers," *Nashville Banner*, 9 December 1909, 1.

³² "Dairy Industry in Tennessee," *Nashville Banner*, 9 December 1909, 9.

of Agriculture began a new series of free "short courses," which incorporated teaching by demonstration. And news stories emphasized this new element. The announcement of the first short course to be held in Winchester in Franklin County, west of Chattanooga, was published by all three dailies in this study, but only the *Banner* published follow-up stories during the week-long course. In addition to farmers, public school teachers were invited to participate in the course, which was offered at intervals around the state.

This is a new feature in the agricultural life of Tennessee, and it is confidently believed that it will be of great value to the farmers.

At these schools, professors in charge of the work at the Tennessee Experiment Station in Knoxville will deliver lectures and give the farmers practical instructions on agricultural topics and on stock judging. There will be demonstrations in connection with the lectures.³³

Keffer outlined plans for the week to the attending farmers at Winchester. He asked that they consider themselves students in the "school of practical farming"; they were free to interrupt the teachers with questions at any time and to direct the instruction into "channels of local interest." Mornings were devoted to the standard lecture and afternoons to demonstrations conducted by the instructor. Students were shown how to prune and spray fruit trees, test milk, select and test seed, and judge corn, cattle, sheep, hogs and mules.³⁴ Although the instructors from the University had moved closer to the teaching by demonstration concept fostered by Knapp, their method still differed greatly from the federal program, which

³³ "Short Course in Agriculture," *Nashville Banner*, 19 November 1909, 1.

³⁴ "Short Course in Agriculture," *Nashville Banner*, 30 November 1909, 9.

put the farmer in the role of demonstrating for himself (and other farmers) on his own land the techniques being taught.

Three other short courses were held later in December at Cookeville, Dickson and Jackson. As with Winchester, stories about these courses were very flattering and upbeat, though attendance was less than expected. Published attendance figures ranged from 70 to 135 at the Winchester course and probably fewer attended the other three. Nevertheless, the state agriculture commissioner said he had "received a number of letters and calls applying for similar short-term schools in other counties of the state."³⁵ At Jackson, farmers learned of Campbell's efforts to establish corn clubs, several of which had been formed in Madison County already. The local Merchants Association, the Fair Association and several individuals contributed money to be used as prizes in contests to grow and harvest the best acre of corn. The *Banner* story said of Campbell's work:

It is believed here that this is one of the most important features yet inaugurated for the development of the farming interest and the farmers are manifesting commendable energy and enterprise in the matter.³⁶

Again, the *Banner* carried more stories about the University's new extension effort than any other paper; surprisingly, Knoxville published none; and, Memphis published only one short item about the Jackson meeting, which emphasized the corn clubs instead of the short course.

³⁵ "Instruction in Agriculture," *Nashville Banner*, 13 December 1909, 7.

³⁶ "Experts Conduct Agricultural School," *Nashville Banner*, 16 December 1909, 16.

Two Consistent Editorial Themes

Within the wide topic of agriculture, two consistent editorial themes emerged from the daily press in Tennessee during 1909. One theme, explored earlier, deplored general farming conditions in the state. The other expressed the need for "agricultural education." Most of this commentary was published on the editorial page, but some appeared on the farm page. In only two or three instances were individual editorials pegged to events, such as a farmers' convention or short course.

Generally, the term *agricultural education* was used very broadly by editorial writers to mean attending a farmers' short course, institute or convention; reading and putting into practice the information in a government bulletin; or visiting the experiment stations. Knoxville's farm page editor declared, "The general government is also doing a grand work in disseminating educational thought. Farmers' bulletins are sent out with a lavish hand and full of thought they are. The intelligent farmer can today learn anything he desires at home if only he has the energy to try." He also included the nearby university in his praise: "The short courses in our agricultural colleges offer a fine opportunity to the practical farmer and especially to the young man."³⁷

Similarly, Nashville's farm page editor said, "The farmers need to study. They should realize the mistake of more 'mine farming'—that is, growing and selling the products alone that rob the soil of its food elements."³⁸

³⁷ "Agricultural Education," *Journal and Tribune*, 21 June 1909, 8.

³⁸ Will T. Hale, "Farming and Horticultural Pointers," *Nashville Banner*, 7 August 1909, 7.

Often the topic was linked to other farm-related problems such as low crop production, worn-out soil, poor public schools, and bad roads. The term was also tied to the notion of scientific farming because one could not, the editors wrote, farm scientifically without a good dose of agricultural education.

The farmer of the South has not, as a rule, been active in accepting new ideas or in taking advantage of scientific discoveries which tend to make farming one of the most independent and profitable of industries. Many fail to progress through ignorance, many through disinclination, and still others through sheer slothfulness.³⁹

The *Journal and Tribune* commented,

In other words they [experiment station researchers] have shown that agriculture is a science, one worth studying deeply, and have convinced thousands that farming is the work of the scholar as well as for the man who is not a scholar. Scientific farming pays.⁴⁰

Although they harshly condemned prevailing farm practices, the editorial writers were never critical of farming as a profession. The *Commercial Appeal* wrote that "Agriculture is a great pursuit, as noble in its way as the bar or the physician's calling. In no other occupation is a man so free, so entirely his own master."⁴¹ The *Banner* declared, "The farmer in this country is still the basis of all prosperity."⁴²

Too, the press, especially the *Journal and Tribune*, was always lavish in its praise of the University and its efforts to educate farmers. "There was a time when farmers sneered at the thought that it was possible for one to

³⁹ "The Farmers' Question Box," *Commercial Appeal*, 29 June 1909, 6.

⁴⁰ "Scientific Farming," *Journal and Tribune*, 31 May 1909, 4.

⁴¹ "Back to the Farm," *Commercial Appeal*, 1 February 1909, 6.

⁴² "The Prosperous Farmer," *Nashville Banner*, 1 December 1909, 6.

become a successful farmer through the reading of books." But because of the work of the agricultural college, changes in attitudes were taking place. "It may be mentioned here that the agricultural college of the State University is doing most effective work in this section." The president, experiment station director and others were "doing the best work for agriculture in the state that has ever been done."⁴³

An editorial reprinted from the *Nashville American* said, "Hundreds of progressive farmers, stockraisers, fruitgrowers and dairymen in Middle Tennessee have cause to remember gratefully the frequent, very helpful visits to this part of the state, during 1907-08."⁴⁴

But only once or twice did an editorial, column or farm page commentary attempt to examine the fundamental question facing those who wanted to educate the farmers: How to reach the mass of farmers? In his column on poultry culture, John A. Murkin, Jr. of the *Nashville Banner* took on both the farmers' institute and government bulletins:

If rapid improvement is to be made in this area, it will have to be through a more substantial form of instruction than our present farmers' institutes provide, which meet only a small number of farmers for a day or two each year, and then furnish them with only one or two periods of instruction, lasting but a few moments each on a single topic.

In the mass of farmers to be instructed into the science and mystery of poultry culture, the information will have to be given in some more effective way than scattering broadcast bulletins and reports upon poultry subjects, which only the well-to-do and educated read.⁴⁵

⁴³ "Scientific Farming," *Journal and Tribune*, 31 May 1909, 4.

⁴⁴ "Agricultural Training," *Nashville American*, in *Journal and Tribune*, 20 April 1909, 4.

⁴⁵ John A. Murkin, Jr., "Education Needed," *Nashville Banner*, 29 May 1909, 6.

A *Nashville American* editorial about the Winchester short course, reprinted by the *Journal and Tribune*, came nearest to describing the "how" of future agricultural education.

This short course in agriculture is a form of university extension that will commend itself to the people.

This looks like an effort to carry the University into the every-day life of the people. It opens vistas of usefulness heretofore unsuspected for these higher institutions of learning, and it is bound to create in the public mind a sympathetic interest in the head of the public school system. . . . This new departure in university instruction will do more to popularize the institution among the people than all efforts heretofore made. It makes the university, in a very real sense, the people's college.

The *American* also said the work would overcome the "prejudice against higher education which has so long held us back as a State." Glimpsing the future, the editorial writer expressed concern that the agricultural faculty had insufficient time for moveable schools, but "it is hoped that the outcome of these efforts will be the establishment of a department for this agricultural extension work or at least may lead to the employment of a corps of instructors who shall have this in charge. The need is self-evident and if the right steps are taken the University will profit largely by it."⁴⁶

Agricultural News Tied to "Events"

Throughout 1910, the basic coverage pattern for agriculture in all three newspapers remained tied to an "event." The first major event of the year was a second "Agricultural Special." It rolled through West Tennessee

⁴⁶ "The State University. Warm Praise for the Agricultural Short Course," *Nashville American*, in *Journal and Tribune*, 7 December 1909, 6.

making 15 stops from March 29 to 31 and drew a total of 2,500 farmers to trackside. But few details of the lectures were given in the five stories published by the *Commercial Appeal*, the only paper to cover the train. In April, the *Journal and Tribune* announced that the state agriculture commissioner had requested a similar train be routed through East Tennessee, and noted that "the Southern railway company is doing everything in their power to promote their interests."⁴⁷

In May, the *Journal and Tribune* devoted its usual space to detailed stories about the East Tennessee Farmers Convention, and this time Memphis and Nashville published advance stories and two short follow-up articles. During the convention, the idea of establishing corn clubs, a component of the federal demonstration program, was put forth by a guest speaker from Purdue University, George I. Christie, who spoke on "agricultural education and extension in relation to the farmer and the public school." The drift of farm boys to the city could be stopped if the boys could be shown that farming was as profitable as other professions, Christie said, "which could be largely accomplished through agricultural education by establishing corn clubs . . ."⁴⁸ Christie made the same speech to the Middle Tennessee Farmers Convention in December.

In an interview published by the *Banner* in June, the state agriculture commissioner began advocating "co-operative experiment stations, the central idea of which is to bring the experiments home to the farmer." Thompson went on to describe what appear to be the basic features of the

⁴⁷ "Speak to Farmers," *Commercial Appeal*, 31 March 1910, 9; "Southern Ry. and Farmers," 25 April 1910, 6.

⁴⁸ "Two Thousand Farmers Attending Convention," 19 May 1910, 7.

federal Farmers' Cooperative Demonstration Work, except that 4-acre plots of ground for the experiments would be rented. The commissioner said these were not experiment stations in the usual sense but

plots of ground in which the various crops that can profitably be grown in this climate may be cultivated under the supervision of those best qualified to direct the work. . . . Crops thus cultivated would attract every farmer in the neighborhood and as an object lesson would necessarily prove of lasting value to the community in that hundreds would see the results. . . .⁴⁹

At an estimated cost of \$10,000 annually, Thompson said the state could put the experimental farms in reach of more than half the farming population of the state. A modified version of this concept would be picked up by the next commissioner, Thomas F. Peck, and given extensive publicity through news stories and his newspaper column.

In August, the *Banner* published a first-of-its-kind story that exclaimed, "Demonstration in farming is the modern idea, and from all accounts it has caught the popular favor in all agricultural communities, not only in Tennessee, but throughout the Southern tier of states" For Tennessee, at least, this was somewhat of an overstatement. The story explained that the term *demonstration* meant teaching soil cultivation by those who were qualified by practical experience to do so. But it is evident that the term meant one thing under the federal program and another under state-sponsored agricultural education endeavors.

The Agricultural Commissioner of Tennessee assisted by the demonstrators employed in the experiment stations have succeeded after several years of persistent effort in arousing not inconsiderable interest among the planters of Tennessee, in modern methods of farming, not only by their always interesting

⁴⁹ "Co-operative Experiments," *Nashville Banner*, 16 June 1910, 11.

talks at the various institutes held throughout the state, but by demonstrating to them the value of such knowledge.⁵⁰

Whether the researchers and scientists of the experiment station would have appreciated being called "demonstrators" is doubtful. Nevertheless, the term *demonstration* was beginning to appear more and more in the daily press, and carried two different meanings, depending on who was using it.

County farmers' institutes in West Tennessee received far less coverage in the *Banner* during 1910 and about the same as the previous year in the *Commercial Appeal*. The *Banner* as usual covered the Middle Tennessee Farmers Convention in much more detail than the *Commercial Appeal* covered the West Tennessee convention. In a few of these stories, the concept of corn clubs was brought up for discussion, but little other information was provided.

The University's 10-day short course held in Jackson and Clarksville during December received far greater and more enthusiastic coverage in 1910 by the *Commercial Appeal*. The stories emphasized that demonstrations would accompany lectures. The last day of the Jackson course was changed to "Corn Day" and all corn club members in Madison County were invited to attend the lectures and an evening rally. Also that evening, professors Morgan and Keffer spoke on "Corn Clubs,"⁵¹ a signal of things to come.

⁵⁰ "Demonstration Is the Slogan," *Nashville Banner*, 31 August 1910, 3.

⁵¹ "Revitalize the Land Short Course Theme," 12 December 1910, 3.

Few Editorials Deal with Agricultural Education

Although dozens of editorials on agricultural-related topics were published in 1910 among the three dailies, only about 10 dealt with the general concept of agricultural education.

The *Journal and Tribune* praised plans by Georgia's country school commissioners to "take scientific farming to the boys and girls of the state." Education was necessary to obtain greater crop yields and "common sense teaches that it must be done upon scientific principles." The older farmers may not see it that way, but the younger ones do and they must be taught to achieve the greatest results with the least expenditure of labor and capital, the editorial declared.⁵²

Espousing a similar philosophy, the *Commercial Appeal* stated, "The supreme question before us in these states in this day of 1910 is, can we grow sixty bushels of corn on an acre of land where once we grew thirty?" To do that, knowledge and education are necessary. While the country has educated its lawyers, doctors, engineers and electricians, "not until this generation have we looked down at the earth under our feet and realized that education in the ways of the soil has been neglected."⁵³

One of the more concise, yet revealing, commentaries of the year appeared on the farm page of the *Journal and Tribune*. Editor T. C. Karns wrote that the history of the new educational effort by the federal government through the experiment station was well worth studying and the experiment station was well worth visiting.

⁵² "A Step in the Right Direction," *Journal and Tribune*, 21 January 1910, 6.

⁵³ "Material Education," *Commercial Appeal*, 7 April 1910, 6.

And now there is a bill before Congress to give us extension work in agricultural education. Many young people are not able to leave home and attend college and so our generous government proposes to take the college out to them. Not only will it be taken to young and old alike, everybody who will is to be educated.⁵⁴

The bill referred to is apparently the McLaughlin bill, which Congress never passed. Under the measure, farmers would be educated through correspondence, lectures, agricultural extension trains and other means to be devised.

Then there is another grand work going on called "Demonstration Work in Co-operation with Southern Farmers." In this the government through a special agent carries the best work available right out onto the farm and where farmers can see and learn the very best known. This system of object lessons in agriculture has proved the most efficient means of disseminating improved methods in farm work.⁵⁵

The mini-editorial, one of the earliest commentaries on the federal program, also urged readers to write their senators and congressmen and demand passage of the federal extension bill.

In July, Knoxville again urged that agriculture be taught in the public schools, noting that Louisiana legislators were clammering for the same thing. If the South was to double or triple its production of food commodities, "it is absolutely essential that our boys and girls shall be educated in the lessons of agriculture, horticulture and home economics."⁵⁶

In a late December editorial, the *Journal and Tribune* touted university-sponsored agricultural education, but pointed out that farmers

⁵⁴ "Agricultural Education," Out On the Farm, *Journal and Tribune*, 6 June 1910, 11.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ "Agricultural Education," *Daily Journal and Tribune*, 5 July 1910, 7.

who attended the University's on-campus short course program had an advantage over those who attended the off-campus course. More than 1,000 "enthusiastic" farmers had attended the course held in five different towns during November and December.

While it is very desirable that the professors of the college of agriculture shall go out to the farmers of all parts of the state, it is quite impossible for them to take the splendid equipment of the college and the experiment station with them. So that always the farmer who attends the short course at the university has a great advantage over him who receives a week's instruction in his home neighborhood.⁵⁷

But regardless of where the short course was held, the farmers were ready for "such instruction." The editorial also warmly praised the idea of demonstration teaching, which was employed in the course.

The farmer, like everybody else, likes to be shown. And the farmer-student spends much the greater part of his brief stay at the university in learning by doing. He becomes a grafter—in no slang sense—and his grafts grow. He prunes and he sprays. It is quite different from hearing a man talk about grafting and pruning and spraying, and the practice abides with him far longer than the spoken word.⁵⁸

University Seeks Extension Appropriation

From early March 1911 until the end of the first week in July, the daily press devoted great attention to the Tennessee General Assembly, which then met biennially. The concept of agricultural extension education was submitted to its first political test in Tennessee when Senator J. R. Matthews of Fayette County, chairman of the agricultural committee, submitted a bill to

⁵⁷ "The Short Course in Agriculture," *Journal and Tribune*, 29 December 1910, 6.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

establish a Department of Extension within the University's College of Agriculture.

Both Knoxville and Nashville published the full text of the bill under a summary lead on inside pages. Memphis did not mention the bill until late March. But all three papers chronicled the bill's sojourn through the legislature. Its fate did not reflect a lack of political support for the idea because both houses at first approved the measure. Instead, the bill was the victim of bad luck, bitter partisan fighting over other issues and legislative greed. Also failing to become law was a measure to increase funding for general education and the University. Under this bill, education would begin receiving one-third rather than one-fourth of the state's gross revenues each year, which would have meant a \$50,000 annual increase in the University's allotment.

Summary of Battle for State Funding

Tennesseans have not always looked upon the University of Tennessee with favor and affection. Its location in mountainous and loyal "Union" territory did little during the late 19th Century to bolster its reputation in the rest of the state, which generally had sided with the Confederacy. That a Radical Republican legislature awarded land-grant status to the University in 1869 remained long in the memories of many Tennesseans. After the Republicans were turned out, the new Conservative legislature passed a bill to divide Morrill Act funds among the state's grand divisions. Fortunately for the Knoxville institution, the measure was vetoed by the governor, who happened to be a Republican. Rumblings to place the

land-grant designation in a more central location would be heard from time to time as years rolled by. Also serving to hinder the University was the state's political composition: East Tennessee voted Republican and Middle and West Tennessee voted Democratic. Mixed with the political differences and the lingering, though slowly dying, sectional animosity was a not-so-favorable attitude toward education, especially higher education. Consequently, until well after 1900, University operations largely depended on federal largesse through the two Morrill Acts and the Hatch Act. In 1896, the University's income totaled \$69,259, of which \$59,960 came from the federal treasury.⁵⁹

Members of the College of Agriculture and the Experiment Station helped pry open the doors to the state treasury as they traveled to towns and communities, making speeches at institutes, meeting farmers, giving advice and making the work of the University better known. Seeds they scattered eventually sprouted as good will and legislative appropriations. Indeed, much of the state's funding for the University from 1903-1913 was related to agriculture. The 1903 grant of \$10,000 to buy land for the experiment farm demonstrated that state funding could be had. And in 1905, under the leadership of a new president, Ayres, and a new Experiment Station director, Morgan, the drive for permanent state appropriations moved into high gear, but only after overcoming bitter opposition by some of the faculty who feared that state money meant state control.⁶⁰

Fortunately for the University, both Ayres and Morgan stood on similar philosophical ground in terms of what the institution should mean

⁵⁹ Montgomery, *The Volunteer State Forges*, 1-14, 65.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 110.

to the state. Ayres believed the University of Tennessee ought to lead the state's public education system and be permanently supported by the state. Morgan believed the University campus extended far beyond Knoxville to every corner and cornfield in the state. While Ayres, a native of Memphis, spent much of his time lobbying the legislature, Morgan aggressively led the movement to acquaint the state's farmers with the University. A transplanted Canadian, he held a bachelor's degree in agriculture from the University of Toronto and did some graduate work at Cornell. Recruited by Ayres, Morgan came to Tennessee from Louisiana State University where he served as entomologist, horticulturist and later zoologist. During years of experimental work in Louisiana, he became an expert on the cattle tick, then spreading Texas cattle fever across the South. He also contracted malaria while hunting the mosquito that transmitted the disease. In an unsuccessful effort to stop the boll weevil, he and fellow researchers were able to establish a cotton-free zone 30 miles wide from Arkansas to the Gulf of Mexico. Though the weevil easily jumped the zone, the experiment did yield valuable information on the insect's dispersion patterns. One reason behind Morgan's high standing among farmers is revealed in a newspaper story about his speech to the 1909 Tri-State Fair at Memphis. "While professor Morgan has a right to call himself professor, he assumes no dignity on account of his standing as an educator, but is as plain and practical in his addresses as any other farmer." Shortly after Ayres's death in 1919, Morgan was named University president, his image as a "farmer" notwithstanding.⁶¹

⁶¹ Montgomery, *The Volunteer State Forges Its University*, 117; Montgomery, *The University of Tennessee Builds for the Twentieth Century*, 24-25; *Tennessee, The Volunteer State, 1769-1923*, vol. III, (Chicago: Clarke

A breakdown of biennial General Assembly appropriations for the University, most of it attributable to the one-two punch of Ayres and Morgan, follows:

1903 —\$10,000 to buy additional land for the station farm.⁶²

1905 —\$25,000 (after \$300,000 had been accumulated in surplus that went to public schools). Of the total, \$22,500 paid for an expansion to Estabrook Hall and \$2,500 went to pay students' transportation cost to and from Knoxville.⁶³

1907 —\$100,000 for two years apportioned in the following manner: \$25,000 for salaries, \$40,000 for an agriculture building, \$10,000 for maintenance, \$12,000 for equipment, \$10,000 for "cooperative experiments in agriculture and agricultural extension work in Middle Tennessee," and \$3,000 for student transportation.⁶⁴

Also in 1907, the legislature assented to the provisions of the Adams Act, assuring the additional monies for the Experiment Station in Knoxville. As a sign of awakening interest in the University's agricultural endeavors, Madison County gave to the state about 200 acres adjacent to the City of Jackson for use as an experiment station. Although a commission had been appointed by Governor Malcolm Patterson to select the land, the site was actually chosen by Morgan at the governor's request. The legislature in

Publishing Co., 1923), 507; "The Morgan Story," 11-13; "Morgan Talks on Best Crops," *Commercial Appeal*, 2 October 1909, 4.

⁶² *Acts of Tennessee*, 1903, 569.

⁶³ *Acts of Tennessee*, 1905, 1092.

⁶⁴ *Acts of Tennessee*, 1907, 494.

February 1907 allocated \$30,000 to erect buildings and buy equipment and another \$10,000 for station salaries and operating expenses.⁶⁵

1909 —A reorganization of the Board of Trustees to assure bi-partisan representation from each section of the state found favor in the eyes of legislators.⁶⁶ The General Education Bill apportioned 25 percent of the state's gross revenue to education with 7 percent going to the University annually. The Act also stipulated that 10 percent, but not less than \$10,000 of the institution's funds, be used to maintain the West Tennessee Experiment Station; 5 percent, but not less than \$5,000 be used to conduct cooperative agricultural experiments in Middle Tennessee; up to 5 percent be used to pay students' travel expenses; and that tuition be provided free to all white in-state students in the departments of engineering, agriculture and education.⁶⁷ Revenue from the new law, however, failed to meet expectations, and the University remained in a financial squeeze.

1911 Extension Bill Victim of Circumstance

Under terms of the agricultural extension bill, one-fourth of the fees received from the inspection of fertilizer, seeds and commercial feedstuffs, estimated at \$12,000 annually, would have been used to fund the Department of Extension. The department was

... to instruct the farmers, farmers' wives and other interested parties in the state in scientific methods in agriculture and home-making in all their branches, by the conduct by said college of agricultural short courses in various parts of the state,

⁶⁵ Ibid., 1907, 1175-1176; Ibid., 242-246; *Makers of Millions*, The Morgan Story, 30.

⁶⁶ Montgomery, *The Volunteer State Forges*, 117-119.

⁶⁷ *Acts of Tennessee*, 1909, 907, 915-916.

the participant of its faculty in farmers' institutes, and conventions, the preparation and publication of bulletins. . . .⁶⁸

In many of the stories that summarized the legislature's actions, the extension bill was emphasized and made part of a deck headline. At first, it appeared the measure would become law with little difficulty. Sen. Matthews said during an inspection visit to the University and Experiment Station that the bill "would pass unanimously."⁶⁹

Eventually, it did, but only after 34 members of the House returned from Alabama where they had gone to break a quorum. That action prevented a vote to repeal an election law and, the members claimed, statewide prohibition. The legislators, 20 Republicans and 14 Independents, stayed in Alabama 79 days.⁷⁰

Upon their return, legislators approved an appropriation bill that exceeded the state's ability to pay for it by \$1.2 million. To cut the deficit, Governor Ben Hooper vetoed the extension and several other bills. Heeding the recommendations of a conference committee, legislators sustained the vetoes and further trimmed the appropriation bill until it was within projected revenues. Also, legislators had also voted themselves \$500 each for expenses while they were in session, an act that would have costs taxpayers \$65,500. They cut this to \$200 each or a total of \$26,200. The daily press and others condemned this appropriation as a "salary grab." Ironically, this amount would have funded the Department of Extension for more than two

⁶⁸ "Extension of Agriculture," *Nashville Banner*, 1 February 1911, 8.

⁶⁹ "Experimental Station Work," *Journal and Tribune*, 3 March 1911, 8.

⁷⁰ "Fusionists in Exile in Decatur, Ala.," *Nashville Banner*, 13 April 1911, 1.

years. Also allowed to die was the bill to increase from one-fourth to one-third the portion of state revenues allotted to education.⁷¹

The only good news for agriculture to come out of the legislature in 1911 was passage of a bill authorizing Shelby County to establish a demonstration farm.⁷²

Institutes Invite Corn Club Speakers

As the newspapers reported the legislature's action or inaction during early 1911, routine coverage of the various farmers' meetings throughout the state proceeded. But some interesting new elements appeared in stories from all three newspapers. For example, the *Journal and Tribune's* advance stories of the East Tennessee Farmers Convention always included the program for the three-day event. For the first time, the word "demonstration" was used in the program as in: "4:30—Demonstration in judging of dairy cattle at Jefferson Hall."⁷³

In his welcoming speech to the farmers, University President Brown Ayres also made a somewhat oblique reference to teaching rural boys and girls through a University extension program. Ayres said that although the state and national governments contribute funds for instructing teachers, it does not support educating boys and girls on the farm. "The finest products of your farms are not hogs, cattle and grain, but the boys and girls that some day will take over the reins of government, and rule it when we are no more. . . . Instructions should be sent out to spread the gospel of modern agriculture

⁷¹ "Governor Hooper Sends Message on the Big Appropriation Bill," *Nashville Banner*, 3 July 1911, 1.

⁷² "Expenses of Legislature," *Nashville Banner*, 29 June 1911, 2.

⁷³ "Convention of Farmers," *Journal and Tribune*, 15 May 1911, 10.

and home making." The children are entitled to the best education and training whether they remain on the farm or enter some other profession, Ayres said.⁷⁴

Ayres also asked the farmers to support strengthening of the agricultural college as well as the state agricultural department. No doubt mindful of the extension bill then moving through the legislature, Ayres said funds from fertilizer and other agricultural-related taxes that remain after expenses are paid should go toward educating farmers rather than being "dumped into the treasury and distributed in a general way."⁷⁵ Why Ayres did not fully explain the agricultural extension bill, or if he did, why it was not included in the story, is puzzling.

Also during the year, farmers' institutes, primarily in West Tennessee, began to hear more and more speeches about boys' corn clubs. In almost every story on the county institutes, regardless of length or from which paper, made some reference to Thomas A. Early's speech on corn clubs and how young farm boys, through demonstrations, were being taught to increase corn yields dramatically. Early had continued the work begun by federal agent W. W. Campbell to organize corn clubs throughout West Tennessee. Campbell had been reassigned to Texas.

Another important feature under discussion was corn clubs, which was ably handled by Prof. T. A. Early, urging the education of the boys and girls on the farm, making home profitable and therefore attractive. He emphasized the advantages of teaching them to grow two barrels of corn where one now grows.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ "Tennessee Farmers' Annual Convention is in Session Here," *Journal and Tribune*, 17 May 1911, 1.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ "Farmers' Institute," *Commercial Appeal*, 16 August 1911, 3.

Early shared the platform with speakers from the University and the state Department of Agriculture. He was also invited to speak to the West Tennessee Farmers' Institute, which met in Jackson the first week of September. Also on the speaker's list was H. D. Tate, who had been named to head the Farmers' Cooperative Demonstration Work in Tennessee. The *Commercial Appeal's* story on the institute's opening day estimated that 1,400 farmers were attending the event, but this and subsequent stories gave little information on the lectures. During the concluding session, farmers approved a resolution endorsing "the county demonstration farm movement recently inaugurated by Captain T. F. Peck, state commissioner of agriculture."⁷⁷

Much more detail about the work of Early and Tate was reported by the *Banner* during the December sessions of the Middle Tennessee Farmers' Institute in Nashville. Early also explained the role of girls' tomato clubs, which had recently begun to be organized in Tennessee as companion clubs to the boys' corn clubs, both of which were part of the Farmers' Cooperative Demonstration Work.⁷⁸ In greater detail than Campbell had given the year before, Tate explained the federal demonstration program.

The plan was to secure in every county a body of land and have the work of cultivation go on according the instructions of experts. The owner of the land gets the profits and is otherwise benefited by the knowledge he gains by the improved methods used. In other words, the demonstration farm is taken to the

⁷⁷ "Annual Institute Opens at Jackson," *Commercial Appeal*, 6 September 1911, 3; "Indorse County Farm Demonstration Work," *Commercial Appeal*, 9 September 1911, 14.

⁷⁸ "Home-making in Tennessee," *Nashville Banner*, 6 December 1911, 4.

farmer instead of having the farmer go to the expense of a visit to the experiment stations.⁷⁹

Touting his version of a demonstration farm, which would require the farmer to travel to it, state agricultural commissioner Peck said that such farms could work in connection with county high schools, where both parent and child could go to learn about modern agricultural methods. Peck, a native of Monroe County, south of Knoxville, made it clear that he was not criticizing the work of the University or its experiment station. Rather, he wanted to "build a foundation under them." The commissioner promoted the demonstration farm as something of a cure-all. "Such a movement would solve the problem of rural life improvement; it would insure better public roads, better rural schools, better farms, and better homes. . . ."⁸⁰

In a series of newspaper columns that began in August, Peck had been pushing the idea of creating a demonstration farm in every county of the state. The *Journal and Tribune* and the *Nashville Banner* published Peck's columns either on their farm pages or elsewhere inside. Memphis never printed the column, although it did publish accounts of Peck's speeches to various organizations in that section of the state.

Not surprisingly, the Middle Tennessee Institute endorsed Peck's "proposal to establish county demonstration farms throughout the state." The *Banner's* page 1 story on the concluding session also reported that the farmers "most heartily indorse the work of the corn club boys in Tennessee." Among the farmers' 16 resolutions was another endorsement of the agriculture train that had traveled through East Tennessee during October and November, but

⁷⁹ "Farmers Hear Many Talks," *Nashville Banner*, 7 December 1911, 9.

⁸⁰ "Make Most of Opportunity," *Nashville Banner*, 6 December 1911, 2.

the resolutions did not mention the work of the federal demonstration agents in West Tennessee.

East Tennessee's Agricultural "Demonstration" Train

Press coverage of the 1911 "Agricultural Special," which began its journey at Bristol on October 9 and ended at Tyner in southeast Tennessee on November 11, rivaled coverage of the General Assembly's antics earlier that year. Even the *Commercial Appeal* published a brief story announcing plans for the train, but the *Nashville Banner* and *Journal and Tribune* provided the bulk of the coverage. In a rare move, Knoxville published a page 1 cartoon depicting a locomotive pulling a one-room schoolhouse, sporting a flag that read "Agricultural Demonstration Train." As Commissioner Peck stood in the back door ringing a bell, an elderly farmer, carrying a slateboard and watching the train pull away, said, "Never too old to learn."⁸¹

News stories consistently referred to the train as an "agricultural demonstration train," which was a much more elaborate expedition than the 1910 train that traveled through West Tennessee. Cattle, hogs and other animals as well as exhibits of grains and feedstuffs, and various types of farm equipment were carried on the train consisting of eight cars. One flat car was "fitted for practical demonstrations."⁸² From 20 to 30 experts and officials from the state and federal departments of agriculture, the University and experiment station, state health and education departments, and Southern Railway accompanied the train. Tate and his superior, Bradford Knapp, head of the federal farmers' cooperative demonstration program, were apparently

⁸¹ Cartoon, *Journal and Tribune*, 17 October 1911, 1.

⁸² Agricultural Train Route," *Nashville Banner*, 28 September 1911, 10.

part of the group, but it's doubtful both men remained aboard the train for the entire trip. No mention of their lectures was made in any news account. If any speech or interview was reported, it was usually one given by Peck or some other state official. At each stop, four to five lectures and demonstrations were conducted simultaneously because of the limited time. News accounts reported that crowd size ranged from several hundred to 3,000 depending on the size of the town. In some communities, schools were dismissed upon the train's arrival.⁸³

Between the two newspapers, about 30 stories were published as the train made its way through Tennessee. But most of these accounts dealt with the who, what, when and where of the train itself rather than demonstrations performed or information delivered. And for the farmers who came out of the mountains to visit the train, what they saw and heard may have been more entertaining than it was educational because the train could not stay at one stop very long. At the end of the ride, Peck said, "Our object in running the Agricultural Special was to arouse an interest in the development of the agricultural industry of the state, to stimulate interest in the work of agricultural education. . . ." ⁸⁴ If a farmer—for the first time in his life—saw a purebred Jersey, there can be little doubt of that.

University Short Course Falters

The University held only three off-campus agricultural short courses in 1911, the year federal demonstration agents and University faculty began

⁸³ "Route for Farm Train," *Journal and Tribune*, 3 September 1911, 8; "Enthusiastic Reception," *Journal and Tribune*, 19 October 1911, 5.

⁸⁴ "Results of Special Train," *Nashville Banner*, 14 November 1911, 3.

sharing these teaching duties. Total attendance dropped to 436 from 686 in 1910. The *Commercial Appeal* published two long stories on the Clarksville event; Knoxville a three-paragraph advance story on Cleveland. The 10-day session at Jackson during December was covered in four stories by the *Commercial Appeal*, which revealed that because of poor attendance, the University was considering canceling the course. Expectations of 400-500 farmers attending the course each year had "failed to materialize." Professor Keffer said, "I am not in a position to say definitely, but I do not think the course will be held in Jackson again in the next few years." He said that the University might hold briefer sessions in Gibson, Weakley, Lauderdale, Shelby and Hardin counties during 1912.⁸⁵ The University's eight-week on-campus course held in January also attracted only about 60 students, 30 of these for the full term.⁸⁶

Infrequent Commentary

The newspapers published only infrequent commentary of their own creation about agricultural education during their 1911 editions, and most of that came during the last half of the year. Editorials devoted to the activities of the legislature during the first half of the year may have contributed to that.

The *Journal and Tribune* alone among the dailies in this study urged passage of the agricultural extension bill. "The farmers of Tennessee will be greatly benefited for the latest in practical farming and the best of research

⁸⁵ "Jackson Will Not Get Agricultural Course," *Commercial Appeal*, 18 December 1911, 3.

⁸⁶ "Short Course in Agriculture," *Nashville Banner*, 13 March 1911, 2.

work will be carried and virtually handed to them." The University's excellent work in this area would be enlarged and "can bear only fruitful results." The bill was an "eminently proper" way for taxes paid by farmers to be returned to them.⁸⁷

Any editorial reaction to the loss of the extension bill may have been swept away by the newspapers' reaction to a larger issue: the General Assembly's behavior. The *Journal and Tribune* called it a "huckstering legislature," and one in which the "misrepresentatives of the people outnumbered the representatives."⁸⁸ Memphis and Nashville also harshly criticized the legislature.

In the few editorials that were written on the topic, Memphis complimented a Census Bureau report that because of agricultural education, there was a growing tendency for young people to remain on the farm. Knoxville noted that the number of students in agricultural colleges was increasing each year, which would ensure an "increase in the productive capacity of lands in the United States." The newspaper made basically the same points in a editorial four months later.⁸⁹

Commissioner Peck's proposal for demonstration farms drew favorable reaction in three separate *Journal and Tribune* editorials, one of which stated,

He has an ambition to establish demonstration farms in every county in the state, and as the state appropriation made for his department is not large, the counties would do a good thing

⁸⁷ "Agricultural Extension Work," *Journal and Tribune*, 3 March 1911, 6.

⁸⁸ "It Was a Huckstering Legislature," *Journal and Tribune*, 10 July 1911, 4.

⁸⁹ "Agricultural Education," *Commercial Appeal*, 8 July 1911, 6; "Agricultural Education," *Journal and Tribune*, 30 July 1911, 4-B, and 9 November 1911, 6.

if they would provide the means necessary for the establishment and operation of such farms.⁹⁰

As publication of his weekly column began in July, Peck himself may have shouldered a large part of the editorial burden for the Knoxville and Nashville newspapers concerning agricultural education. While he did promote demonstration farms, Peck, a graduate of the University of Tennessee, explored a variety of other agricultural topics. He constantly and earnestly urged farmers to take advantage of advances in agricultural science and farming methods, arguing that in so doing, they could achieve a better life for themselves and their families.

The *Nashville Banner* praised the University's on-campus short course held each mid-winter. "Through this manner of instruction agricultural methods in Tennessee may, in time, receive a much need improvement. It would be well if such instruction could be given in every county in the state every year."⁹¹

A handful of farm page articles also praised the University's short courses, the work of its professors traveling with the agricultural train, or urged the formation of boys' corn clubs throughout East Tennessee.

Major Events and Trends in 1912

The philosophy and conduct of University-connected agricultural education activities underwent major changes during 1912.

First, federal demonstration agents and faculty of the University's College of Agriculture cooperated much more closely in conducting the

⁹⁰ "Our Agricultural Interests," *Journal and Tribune*, 26 August 1911, 4.

⁹¹ "The Farmers' School," *Nashville Banner*, 25 November 1911, 8.

school's off-campus short courses. Tate and James Minic Dean, a district agent, helped teach nine courses that attracted 945. In 1913, a total of 2,319 attended 16 schools. Tate, H. S. Nichols, assistant state agent; and J. R. Fewell, district agent, took part.⁹²

Also for the first time, federal agents were invited to speak to the East Tennessee Farmers' Convention in May on the demonstration program as well as corn and tomato club activities. These agents had recently been assigned to East Tennessee, which may have accounted for the invitations.

One of the most nationally prominent speakers to be invited was O. B. Martin, head of the Boys' Corn Club Work for the USDA in Washington, D.C. In two special sections published during the convention, the *Journal and Tribune* allocated several columns of type to speeches by Martin; state agent Tate; C. F. Striplin, district agent; and Virginia P. Moore, who had been placed in charge of the state's Girls' Tomato Club work in November 1911.⁹³

Perhaps cognizant of the spread of the federal program in Tennessee, farmers adopted a resolution stating, "We endorse all legislation now pending in Congress having for its object the extension of agricultural education by means of federal aid."⁹⁴

For the 1912 convention, officers also organized a Boys' Corn Club section, which meant that dozens of young boys attended the event with their fathers. Attendance was estimated at 2,000.

⁹² *U.T. Register*, 1911-1912, 72, 208; "Editorial," *U.T. Farmer* 7 (January 1913): 113; *U.T. Register*, 1912-1913, 73-74, 220.

⁹³ "Program of East Tennessee's Farmers' Convention, *Journal and Tribune*, 29 April 1912, 10.

⁹⁴ "Farmers' Convention Concludes Its Work," *Journal and Tribune*, 24 May 1912, 1.

Throughout the rest of the year, federal agents and University professors shared speaking platforms at short courses, farmers' institutes and conventions across the state. Stories about these events listed the names, titles and topics of the speakers among the few details given. One of the most successful cooperative experiences, to which the *Commercial Appeal* devoted seven stories over a 10-day period, occurred in late November at Bolton College in Shelby County. About 200 farmers and their wives attended the short course sponsored by the University of Tennessee. This course replaced the Jackson short course, which the University had shut down after three years because of poor attendance.⁹⁵

The entire course was under the direction of Prof. H. A. Morgan, who is at the head of the agricultural department at the University of Tennessee. He was assisted by several of the college faculty and by other experts who are engaged in work either for the university in its farm demonstration work throughout the state or for the agricultural department of the general government, which is bringing its work direct to the farmers of the country, instead of compelling them to come to it.⁹⁶

The federal agent helping to conduct this course was H. S. Nichols. Cooperation between the two groups continued to grow, probably because their combined efforts allowed them to reach more farmers. The University invited state agent Tate to speak on federal farm demonstration work during a special "Farmers Week" session of its on-campus short course scheduled for January 6-11, 1913.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ "Farmers Profited by Lectures on Farming," *Commercial Appeal*, 1 December 1912, 10.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ "Farmers Week of the Short Course," *Journal and Tribune*, 23 December 1912, 8.

During January of 1912, the University's efforts to increase attendance for its on-campus short course received unprecedented treatment in the *Journal and Tribune*. Before and during the eight weeks of the course, the newspaper published stories and photographs in about 30 editions. In three editions, a full page was devoted to various subjects and demonstrations. About 125 students attended some or all portions of the course, more than double the attendance in 1911.⁹⁸

In August, the University tried another innovation, as if to say, "If the farmers won't come here on their own, we'll go get them." The Knoxville Board of Commerce in cooperation with the University operated a series of trains in August to bring farmers from surrounding counties to Knoxville for one-day tours of the Experiment Station. An estimated 2,000 to 2,500 farmers were brought into Knoxville during the four days of the event, according to the *Journal and Tribune*.⁹⁹

But the most dramatic shift in philosophy was revealed in late December when University President Brown Ayres outlined, perhaps for the first time publicly, the institution's position on cooperative demonstration work. During an interview with the *Commercial Appeal*, Ayres said, "If the plans which we have in mind for the future development of the College of Agriculture, in connection with the general work of the University of Tennessee, are carried out, we shall be able to reach thousands of farmers where we now reach hundreds," Ayres said.

⁹⁸ "Banner Short Course in Agriculture," *Journal and Tribune*, 26 February 1912, 10.

⁹⁹ "Last of the Series of Farmers' Excursions," *Journal and Tribune*, 31 August 1912, 7.

I believe that with a sufficient appropriation to carry this work much further, and also for putting into effect on a larger scale the co-operative farming work which has been started in a few counties, the agricultural standing of every county, and thus of the entire state, could be vastly raised within the next two or three years. This is a work that needs doing, and it is a work that the modern college should be equipped for carrying forward. . . .

Our idea at the University is that if each county could employ an agricultural expert, who would co-operate with the farmers of the county, establishing 25 to 50 co-operative farm plats, covering all sections of each county, practically every farmer who was interested could be placed in touch with the demonstrations that would be made, while with one large demonstration farm, comparatively few of the total number of farmers would be benefited.¹⁰⁰

The president was also describing the federal Farmers' Cooperative Demonstration Work program. Placing a demonstrator in each county would cost from \$2,500 to \$5,000 annually, far less than what a demonstration farm would cost, Ayres said, and a sum which "almost any of the counties could well afford to pay." He also expressed hope that federal legislation on extension, already approved by the House, would pass the Senate before Christmas. But Ayres, the University and the rest of the country would have to wait a little longer. Approval of federal extension legislation was delayed for more than a year. Meanwhile, the University began working to obtain additional funding from a source closer to home.

We hope at the coming session of the state Legislature to secure an increased appropriation for use in our agricultural extension work. This work carries the short course in agriculture right to the farmers' doors in practically every county in Tennessee, or could do so had we the necessary money to carry out our plans.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ "Farm Extension Work Should Be Promoted," *Commercial Appeal*, 17 December 1912, 8.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

Ayres gave this interview during a one-day stopover in Memphis after attending a meeting of the Intercollegiate Athletic Association in New Orleans. Neither the *Nashville Banner* nor the *Journal and Tribune* picked up this story.

Nashville's Conference on Extension Teaching

Unconnected to University or federal activities, the fourth annual convention of the Southern Commercial Congress met in Nashville on April 8-10, 1912, to define "The South's Educational and Agricultural Recovery." One of the six divisional conferences, "Extension Teaching in Agriculture" sparked a torrent of stories in the *Banner* about agricultural extension education, the federal cooperative demonstration program, and the men leading the movement. A memorial exercise in honor of Dr. Seaman A. Knapp, who had died the previous April, was also held during the conference.

All three newspapers in this study carried advance stories about the meeting. Nashville naturally provided the most extensive coverage; but both the *Banner* and *Journal and Tribune* published a special section before the Congress convened. Knoxville's section devoted one and a half pages of text and photographs to a glowing history of the farmers' demonstration work along with short biographies of the highest ranking officials in the program, including the state agents.¹⁰²

Attending the conference were some of the most prominent national figures in the agriculture extension education movement: A. C. True, director

¹⁰² "Memorial Exercises in Honor of Dr. S. A. Knapp," *Journal and Tribune*, 7 April 1912, 2-3.

of the Office of Experiment Stations; Bradford Knapp, head of the Farmers' Cooperative Demonstration Work; Wallace Buttrick, secretary of the General Education Board; C. W. Burkett, editor of the *American Agriculturist*; Clarence Poe, editor of the *Progressive Farmer*; and Walter H. Page, editor of *World's Work*. Senator Hoke Smith of Georgia and Representative A. F. Lever of South Carolina were invited to attend but could not do so.¹⁰³

Also attending were presidents of state agricultural colleges and directors of experiment stations from across the Southeast and from Texas and Oklahoma. Selected to preside over the conference on extension teaching was Dr. Andrew M. Soule, president of the University of Georgia and former director of the Experiment Station in Knoxville. H. A. Morgan of Tennessee was one of two men invited to lead a sub-conference on "Extension Schools."¹⁰⁴

Throughout the congress, the *Banner* published lengthy stories on several of the speeches, including one by Bradford Knapp in which he explained in great detail how the federal demonstration program worked and its progress over the past eight years.

There are co-operative arrangements with our office today in force in every Southern state except two. [One of these states was Tennessee.] Some of these are not as complete as we wish. Some of them have not taken the form that we regard as the very best, but as I have said, we are doing things as we find them.¹⁰⁵

In South Carolina had evolved the closest cooperative arrangement. There, the agricultural college at Clemson and Knapp's department were

¹⁰³ "Extension Teaching," *Journal and Tribune*, 7 April 1912, 4; "Extension Conference," *Nashville Banner*, 9 April 1912, 6.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ "In Interest of Farmers," *Nashville Banner*, 9 April 1912, 10.

"directly cooperating" in conducting demonstration work. In fact, the state agent was jointly appointed by the college and the department. And the demonstrators were jointly appointed by the state agent and the college, Knapp said.¹⁰⁶

During the last day of the congress, members adopted a resolution endorsing the principles of the Lever bill pending in the House and the Smith bill in the Senate.¹⁰⁷

"Agricultural Special" Rolls Again

During July and August, the state Department of Agriculture's special demonstration train made its longest run yet through Tennessee. Leaving Nashville on July 1, the train, composed of eight coaches, would travel over seven railroads, making 212 stops in 75 of the state's 96 counties over a span of about 60 days. Commissioner Peck estimated that a total of 250,000 people visited the train during the trip.¹⁰⁸

As the train moved through each section of the state, newspaper coverage shifted to the paper of primary circulation in that section. A few news reports contained much more detail than what was generally provided in 1911, but overall, detailed stories were uncommon. The usual complement of agricultural experts from the University, from state and federal agricultural departments, and from health and education departments accompanied the

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ "Wide Plans for the Great Development of the South," *Nashville Banner*, 11 April 1912, 6.

¹⁰⁸ "Agricultural Special Train," 7 June 1912, 2; John Leiper, "Agricultural Train Stops," 24 August 1912, 4.

train, giving lectures, explaining exhibits, and conducting demonstrations at each stop.

State Funding for Agricultural Extension

In December 1912, the daily press began reporting signals from three sources that legislative appropriations for agricultural education activities would be requested during the 1913 session.

The University of Tennessee announced that it would once more request funds to establish an Extension Department within the College of Agriculture. State Agriculture Commissioner Peck, who since taking office had campaigned for a demonstration farm in every county, announced that he would ask the General Assembly to authorize such farms. In West Tennessee, where federal demonstration work had been underway since late 1909, state Representative W. A. Johnson was preparing a bill authorizing county courts to provide funds to employ expert demonstrators in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture.¹⁰⁹ Two of these efforts would survive the General Assembly's shenanigans; one would not.

Meanwhile, news coverage changed little from 1912 as University faculty and FCDW agents continued working together to conduct off-campus short courses and as almost 3,000 farmers came to Knoxville for the 40th annual meeting of the East Tennessee Farmers' Convention. Its routine of lectures and demonstrations remained basically the same. Considerably less ink, however, was devoted to the University on-campus short course by the

¹⁰⁹ "State University Will Ask for More Money," *Nashville Banner*, 18 December 1912, 2; "Demonstration Farms Suggested," *Nashville Banner*, 30 December 1912, 2; "Shelby Legislators Look at Work Ahead," *Commercial Appeal*, 5 December 1912, 4.

Journal and Tribune during January and February. Attendance, nevertheless, rose to 164.

For several months after and including December 1912, Peck made good use of his newspaper column published by the *Nashville Banner* and *Journal and Tribune* to promote his concept of county demonstration farms and extol their benefits. While this idea was a different approach to agricultural extension, it did not conflict with the University's aims or the federal program. It was simply supplemental.

The *Journal and Tribune* in mid-January urged the legislature to make "a good appropriation for university extension in agriculture."

It is the function of the college of agriculture to instruct not only the youth who come to the university for training; the whole rural population is fairly entitled to its benefits. Manned by specialists of recognized ability, the college only awaits the support of the state to carry its work to all the people.¹¹⁰

Two weeks later, the newspaper praised Peck for his work as agricultural commissioner and stated that the demonstration farm bill "is well worthy of favorable thought and action." The bill authorized county courts to appropriate money to set up a demonstration farm, if they wish to do so, in cooperation with the state department of agriculture. The courts also were permitted to levy special taxes to pay for a farm.¹¹¹

But Peck's proposal would not pass muster in the legislature. And to make a bad year worse, the General Assembly failed to appropriate its usual \$5,000 for the state Department of Agriculture in time to organize an

¹¹⁰ "University Extension in Agriculture," *Journal and Tribune*, 16 January 1913, 6.

¹¹¹ "Demonstration Farms," *Journal and Tribune*, 31 January 1913, 6.

agricultural train for 1913. The following year, however, a demonstration train was organized and steamed out of Nashville on July 15.¹¹²

Fortunately for the University, the General Education Bill did pass muster in the 58th General Assembly. On March 24, 1913, Governor Ben W. Hooper signed the bill into law, increasing education's share of gross state revenues from one-fourth to one-third. The University continued to receive 7 percent of the larger portion, which would mean about \$100,000 for fiscal year 1913.¹¹³

This legislature also ratified the amendment to the national Constitution providing for the popular election of U.S. senators.¹¹⁴

Then began another political free-for-all that played hell with appropriations for agricultural extension and the Experiment Station for months. After April 14, the House could not assemble a quorum because several Republicans and Independents had left the state to block repeal of liquor laws and an override of Hooper's veto of an election law amendment.¹¹⁵ A similar tactic was used in the 1911 session. Though lacking a constitutionally required quorum, the remaining legislators passed on April 17 a miscellaneous funding bill that included \$10,000 for agricultural extension. Each year, \$5,000 was "to be paid over to and expended by the

¹¹² "No Agricultural Train This Year," *Nashville Banner*, 10 July 1913, 9; "Farm Train Will Tour Tennessee," *Commercial Appeal*, 17 May 1914, 13.

¹¹³ *Acts of Tennessee*, 1913, 51-52; "Legislature Passes Educational Measure," *Journal and Tribune*, 20 March 1913, 5.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, House Joint Resolution No. 49, 272.

¹¹⁵ John Trotwood Moore and Austin P. Foster, eds., *Tennessee, The Volunteer State, 1769-1923* vol. 1, (Chicago: Clarke Publishing Co., 1923), 619.

College of Agriculture." Unfortunately, the governor promptly vetoed the bill. Again without a quorum, legislators overrode the veto.¹¹⁶

During the first extra session that began September 8, the General Assembly re-enacted an identical appropriations bill containing the two-year \$10,000 allocation for agricultural extension. The governor's veto was overridden once more, and the University received the money. Another funding bill that reallocated \$10,000 to the West Tennessee Experiment Station became law September 26 without the governor's signature.¹¹⁷ These funds replaced a 1909 maintenance allocation that was returned to the state treasury because of the delay in selecting the station site.

During the sessions, legislators approved two other bills relating to farm demonstration work. In February, lawmakers authorized Hamilton County to spend up to \$1,000 annually for a "Demonstrator of Agriculture." This bill became law without the governor's signature. However, the governor did sign a bill passed September 27 allowing all counties to "annually appropriate such an amount as may be deemed necessary or expedient" to carry out Farmers' Cooperative Demonstration Work in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture.¹¹⁸

Assured of an extension appropriation, the University—with little fanfare—set up its Department of Extension in late 1913 and named Charles A. Keffer superintendent.¹¹⁹ A one-column story at the top of page 8 in the *Knoxville Journal and Tribune* announced that the first short course to be

¹¹⁶ *Public Acts of Tennessee*, 1913, 167-181.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, First Extra Session, 375-390; *Ibid.*, 443-458.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 1069-1070; *Ibid.*, First Extra Session, 489; "Knox County Fared Well at Hands of Legislators," *Journal and Tribune*, 29 September 1913, 6.

¹¹⁹ *Biennial Report*, 1914, 16.

conducted by the new department would be held at Elizabethton in mid-October. A total of 15 short courses in agriculture and home-making, each lasting one week, would be held that fall across the state.

Prof. Morgan and his associates have endeavored for several years to procure an appropriation from the state for this extension work The amount appropriated was not as large as desired, but it will serve to establish the work and demonstrate its value, and hereafter this department of the university is expected to have easy sailing, and establish itself in the minds of the people as among the most valuable departments of the university.¹²⁰

The newspaper allowed the creation of the department to pass without comment.

The next summer, following passage of the Smith-Lever Act, the department became the Division of Extension as part of the memorandum signed by the University and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

¹²⁰ "Extension Department," *Journal and Tribune*, 8 October 1913, 8.

CHAPTER VI

FEDERAL DEMONSTRATION WORK ENTERS TENNESSEE

During the same month that the University of Tennessee held its first off-campus short course—emphasizing practical demonstrations—at Winchester in Franklin County, the first agent of the Farmers' Cooperative Demonstration Work program to work in Tennessee arrived at Jackson in Madison County.

News of the agent's assignment to West Tennessee had broken three months earlier in a one-column story at the top of page 3 in the *Commercial Appeal*. Representative Finis J. Garrett of the Ninth Congressional District, and former editor of the *Weakley County Democrat*, had received a letter from Dr. Seaman A. Knapp, head of the program, informing him that an agent would arrive in the district in October or November to begin working with farmers. The story misprinted the agent's last name, however, calling him W. W. Chambers.¹

W. W. Campbell arrived in November 1909 (fiscal year 1910) from Giddings, Texas, a small town east of Austin, where he had been engaged in a "general awakening of our country people." Campbell apparently worked in several counties around the small Texas town as he would do in West Tennessee. Engaged in an assortment of activities, he also organized and

¹ "Demonstration Work Promised," *Commercial Appeal*, 12 August 1909, 3.

conducted a "school of farmers—men and women—in the art of canning corn and such vegetables as are difficult to keep."²

Several newspaper stories during the following months state that his headquarters was at the Experiment Station in Jackson.

Of the 11 former Confederate states, Tennessee was the last to be included in the Farmers' Cooperative Demonstration Work (FCDW) program. By fiscal year 1908, its agents were working in every other Deep South state except Florida. Virginia had 17 agents, North Carolina 13, Alabama 17, and Georgia 7. Two agents began working in Florida the next year. At this time the Department of Agriculture was footing the cost for FCDW work in Texas, Arkansas, Louisiana and Mississippi, states immediately threatened by the boll weevil, and the General Education Board was paying the salaries and expenses of agents in other Southern states then outside the insect's range.³ Why Tennessee, also beyond the weevil's range, was not selected earlier for farm demonstration work remains a mystery.

Campbell's first field work in West Tennessee consisted of a one-week road trip during which he introduced himself and demonstration work at farmers' meetings in eight towns in six counties.

Two weeks before, the November price for cotton at Memphis hit 15 cents a pound, 5 cents higher than normal, and the highest price for that month in 35 years. This double-edged coincidence probably caused many

² S. A. Knapp, "Farmers' Cooperative Demonstration Work in Its Relation to Rural Improvement," Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Plant Industry *Circular No. 21* (Washington, 1908), 17-18.

³ U.S. Federal Extension Service, "Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics in the United States, 1915," *Cooperative Extension Work 1915-1917*, 18; *The General Education Board*, 34-35.

farmers to tune out Campbell's plea to diversify their crops. And yet, in the long run, the price rise may have helped demonstration work. As a *Commercial Appeal* editorial put it: "This matter of yield is perhaps the bitter at the bottom of the cup. For when all the totals are in, it will be found that the shortage in production has not been balanced by the rise in price, . . ." A major goal of farm demonstration work, of course, was to increase crop yield, be it cotton or some other crop.⁴

In the first newspaper accounts of his activities, both the *Commercial Appeal* and the *Nashville Banner* reported Campbell's speech to Weakly County Farmers and Stock Growers in Dresden on November 15. A heavy downpour throughout the day kept attendance low. Campbell was one of several speakers in a traveling program arranged by Representative Garrett in cooperation with the state Department of Agriculture and the Nashville, Chattanooga and St. Louis Railway.

W. W. Campbell, expert from the agricultural department at Washington, gave an interesting talk as to the expected demonstration work in West Tennessee the coming year. He stated that he would spend the next fifteen months in this section, and desired to have the cooperation of the farmers in the adoption of his methods upon a small scale. He thought he could fully demonstrate to them what could be done. He advised the growth of cotton, corn, peas and also livestock under his personal direction, and many farmers will avail themselves of this opportunity to see what can be accomplished.⁵

⁴ "Spot Cotton 15 Cents," *Commercial Appeal*, 3 November 1909, 1; *Ibid.*, "Fifteen-Cent Cotton," 6.

⁵ "Talked on Crops and Good Roads," *Commercial Appeal*, 16 November 1909, 3; "Farmers of Weakley Meeting in Dresden," *Nashville Banner*, 17 November 1909, 3.

The party also visited Union City, Trenton, Humboldt, Alamo, Bells, Brownsville and Ripley, all of which the *Commercial Appeal* covered in considerable detail. The *Banner* published three stories about the trip. In Humboldt, Campbell told Gibson County farmers that their land was too valuable to be jeopardized by planting the same crop year after year and said he would personally conduct a number of demonstrations during 1910 on farms near the town. In Ripley, heavy rains again fell, but Campbell made arrangements with 30 farmers to serve as demonstrators. "He covers the ground from the preparation of the soil, seeding and cultivation in a most plain way and is receiving the hearty co-operation of the farmers' institute of Lauderdale County." In Alamo and Brownsville, Campbell also announced plans to form corn clubs, forerunners of 4-H clubs, in the counties of West Tennessee.⁶

Because of the demand for corn clubs, much of Campbell's time was devoted to this task. He received a generous amount of help from county school superintendents, teachers and the Memphis Business Men's Club, which took special interest in the clubs. During his 11 months in the state, Campbell organized clubs in 12 counties with a total membership of 1,685. Eleven of these counties were in West Tennessee. One club was also organized in Bedford County in Middle Tennessee. The desire for corn clubs was probably enhanced because many West Tennesseans were already well aware of corn club work in other states. For several months before Campbell's

⁶ "Gibson Farmers Hear Experts," *Commercial Appeal*, 19 November 1909, 11; "Winslow Talks on Good Roads," *Commercial Appeal*, 23 November 1909, 3; "Discussed Good Roads and Crops," *Commercial Appeal*, 20 November 1909, 3; "He Talked About Boys Corn Club," *Commercial Appeal*, 21 November 1909, 17.

arrival, the *Commercial Appeal* had published numerous stories, photographs and editorials about club activities in Mississippi and Arkansas. In his 1910 report on Tennessee, Dr. Seaman Knapp stated, "These boys' corn clubs attracted a great deal of attention and really worked more toward creating an interest in Demonstration Work among the farmers than anything else that could have been done."⁷

Club-building efforts as well as farm demonstration work received a boost in January 1910 when Dr. Knapp visited Memphis as part of a speaking tour through nine Southern states. Even the *Knoxville Journal and Tribune* published seven stories about Knapp's tour, more than the *Commercial Appeal*, along with an advance story on the Memphis visit and another on his speech there.

In one of his trademark two-column editorials, C. P. J. Mooney, editor of the *Commercial Appeal*, wrote of the forthcoming visit,

The coming of this man is of as much importance to the people of Memphis and the farmers of the Memphis territory as the visit of a president. Indeed, its possible permanent benefits, with all due respect to our presidents, are more than the visit of ten presidents.

We want diversified farming in this country.⁸

Knapp, in an almost two-hour speech January 19 before the Business Men's Club, left a standing-room-only crowd shouting for more. He told them, "You should all get agricultural religion. If you don't, you will go to agricultural hell pretty quickly." Knapp also "flayed the 'boll weevil bugaboo' right and left," contending that it was foolish to talk about abandoning cotton

⁷ *Annual Reports 1910-1917*, 20, 22-23.

⁸ "Uncle Sam's Chief Soil Doctor Coming," *Commercial Appeal*, 6 January 1910, 6.

because doing so was "laying the foundation for agricultural distrust and that means a panic." Besides, the boll weevil "can be whipped." But, he also urged: "Diversify your crops and get more out of the soil."⁹

The *Commercial Appeal* played the story on page 1 adjacent to a two-column sketch of Dr. Knapp and a box of pull-out quotes from the speech. Knapp, always the expert on human nature, paid "glowing" compliments to Memphis, the surrounding territory, and the newspaper, which ran another story on that at the top of page 5. Knapp said the tour had been extremely successful and it was gratifying to see the spirit arising in Southerners.

And the papers have much to do with it. *The Commercial Appeal* is doing a magnificent work for us. Why, we have found it everywhere on our tour.

And those editorials of *The Commercial Appeal* on the subject. They have dynamite in them. They are certainly hitting the right spot. There is nothing that will arouse public sentiment so quickly as any great newspaper.¹⁰

Until September 1910, when he was reassigned to Texas, Campbell traveled across West Tennessee organizing corn clubs, an idea that caught the public fancy early on and received heavy coverage in the daily press throughout this study.

During a January meeting in Dresden, Campbell spoke to a "mass meeting" of farmers, businessmen and professional men at the courthouse. He persuaded local businessmen, including the editor of the *Enterprise*, to form a committee to work toward creating a businessmen's club. "The club will cooperate with Mr. Campbell . . . and will see the farmers of the vicinity

⁹ "Boll Weevil A Bugaboo," *Commercial Appeal*, 20 January 1910, 1.

¹⁰ "Press Praised by Dr. S. A. Knapp," *Commercial Appeal*, 20 January 1910, 5.

as to the culture of broom corn, potatoes for the market, and endeavor to convince them to go into the dairy business."¹¹ Such merchants and business associations were often instrumental in raising money and using their political influence with county courts to hire demonstrators to work with farmers in their counties.

In addition to reports of corn club activities, the newspaper published several other stories concerning the FCDW program. During May, both the *Commercial Appeal* and *Nashville Banner* printed AP stories announcing the General Education Board's \$113,000 contribution for demonstration work.¹²

Full-page treatment was given stories on the Farmers' Cooperative Demonstration Program, one published by Memphis in May and one by Knoxville in August. Accompanied by five photographs, the Sunday *Commercial Appeal* feature story stated that of all the agencies working to develop the South's resources, the FCDW was "numbered among the most effective," considering what it has accomplished since it was inaugurated. The story also contained two short financial statements from two cooperating farmers in Mississippi to illustrate the increased per-acre profits possible under the system.¹³

The Sunday *Journal and Tribune* reprinted a story from the September issue of *New Idea* magazine, giving the same basic information about

¹¹ "Address on Profits of Scientific Farming," *Nashville Banner*, 29 January 1910, 12.

¹² "Announce Gifts for Agriculture," *Commercial Appeal*, 25 May 1910, 16; "For Agriculture Work in the South," *Nashville Banner*, 25 May 1910, 14.

¹³ "Farmers' Co-operative Demonstration Work With the Southern Farmers," *Commercial Appeal*, 15 May 1910, 19.

Knapp's program. An editor's note tied the story to Knapp's past speeches to members of Knoxville's "Summer School of the South." Knapp was to have spoken to a 1910 session but canceled because of a death in his family.¹⁴

Nashville also published in June a shorter piece on the FCDW written by Knapp himself.¹⁵

Knapp Makes an Offer

In late August 1910, Knapp's department announced, again through Representative Garrett in a *Commercial Appeal* story, that it was ready to begin the second phase of its program. Knapp offered to assign an agent to every county that cooperated in paying his salary. The agent/demonstrator would work full-time with farmers for six months of the year at a salary of \$600. If the county raised \$300, Knapp's department would match it.¹⁶

Garrett said those interested in each county would have to raise the money and suggested

... that perhaps the county courts at its October term may be willing to appropriate all or a part of the amount and the remainder can be raised by private subscription through farmers' institutes, the Farmers' Union, merchants' associations, fair organizations and individuals.

The story also said that Obion County "will take steps to secure the \$300 offered," but gave no other details on that point.¹⁷

¹⁴ "Uncle Sam's Model Farms Work Wonders in Sunny South," *New Idea in Journal and Tribune*, 28 August 1910, Section 2, 1.

¹⁵ "Farmers' Co-operative Societies," *Nashville Banner*, 18 June 1910, 9.

¹⁶ "Agent for Obion County," 29 August 1910, *Commercial Appeal*, 7.

¹⁷ Ibid.

Before the Madison County fair in October, Campbell returned to Texas. Hughey D. Tate of Mississippi was named to succeed him as state agent. The *Commercial Appeal* published a story on two consecutive days about Campbell's departure and Tate's appointment.¹⁸

One of Campbell's last activities was to instruct Madison County Corn Club members on "gathering, packing for shipping, and securing prize corn." He also urged the boys to use the experiment station and "get the useful information given there." Promising to return to Tennessee for the Tri-State Fair, he asked the boys to prepare displays of corn for the event.¹⁹

Knapp had sent Campbell into Tennessee as a sort of "John the Baptist" to open the door for farm demonstration work. "The actual work of organizing western Tennessee will really be commenced in the fiscal year ending June 30, 1911," Knapp stated. Campbell's mission had been "to stimulate an interest in the Demonstration Work and to prepare the territory for subsequent organization."²⁰

In other news during these 12 months, a United States Court of Appeals ordered Standard Oil Co. to be dissolved because it was an "unlawful combination in restraint of trade" and was in violation of the Sherman Anti-Trust Act; Samuel Langhorn Clemens (Mark Twain) died in Connecticut; Hoke Smith was elected governor of Georgia, and the boll weevil moved into Mobile County in southwest Alabama.²¹

¹⁸ "Campbell Goes to Texas," *Commercial Appeal*, 1 September 1910, 3; "Campbell Transferred," 2 September 1910, 3.

¹⁹ "Teach Boys Corn Raising," *Commercial Appeal*, 5 September 1910, 8.

²⁰ *Annual Reports 1910-1917*, 19.

²¹ "That Standard Oil Decision," *Commercial Appeal*, 21 November 1909, 6; "Mark Twain Dies a Smile on His Lips," *Commercial Appeal*, 22 April 1910, 1; Hoke Smith Elected Governor Georgia," *Commercial Appeal*, 6

State Agent Named for Tennessee

With Campbell's departure, the difficult task of creating a county agent or extension organization in the state began. The USDA allocated \$10,000 for West Tennessee, and Knapp chose the district agent of North Mississippi, Hughey D. Tate, to lead the Tennessee effort. After graduating in 1906 from Mississippi Agricultural & Mechanical College [now Mississippi State University], Tate began working for the FCDW program and within two years had become one of two district agents in Mississippi. On October 1, 1910, Knapp named him state agent for Tennessee, and Tate set up an office in Memphis. At Tate's request, Herbert Sharp Nichols, a county agent in Sharkey County, Mississippi, was named district agent for West Tennessee and began working in Dyersburg on December 10. Nichols was also a 1906 Mississippi A&M graduate with a bachelor's degree in agriculture. "The situation at that time," Nichols said, "was this: A state agent, a district agent, and not a county agent on the job, and furthermore the people . . . knew absolutely nothing of such work and seemingly cared less." In 1912, Tate and Nichols moved their offices to Jackson, and a year later the headquarters for both was moved to Nashville.²² The move was made possible with the lifting that same year of the federal restriction that confined farm demonstration work to boll weevil territory.

Tate and Nichols apparently were not given the warmest of welcomes during their first few months on the job. Nichols remembered that they had

October 1910, 2; "Boll Weevil on Wasting March," *Commercial Appeal*, 2 October 1910, 14.

²² *Silver Anniversary: Cooperative Extension Work*, 97, 138-140; *Register*, 1914-1915, 17-18; *Annual Reports*, 1910-1917, 28.

an extremely difficult time at first persuading West Tennesseans of the value of their program. In a 1929 speech, he said,

It was useless to even discuss with the people the subject of appropriations for such work. We were looked upon by the great mass of farmers and business men as men who by some hook or crook secured an easy political job. We were called 'white collared farmers,' 'plush seat farmers,' and in some cases names that would not sound well to repeat During November and December of 1910 the time was spent meeting prominent business men and farmers and in trying to tell them of the plans of the work. A few long-headed farmers and farsighted business men saw the possibilities but these were few and far between.²³

Strangers from the Government

While many counties quickly and warmly embraced youth club work and as other longed for it, and as the press paid great attention to it, Tate and Nichols slowly introduced the cooperative demonstration program to adult farmers. That these men were "from the government" doubled the difficulty of overcoming the farmers' suspicion of strangers, let alone convincing farmers to listen to an agent.

Nevertheless, the early attitudes of West Tennessee farmers as remembered by these agents was never reflected in the daily press. About the only negative statement found in stories about demonstration work, or University-related extension teaching, was that the crowd was small. And if the crowds were small, the stories usually stated that the farmers made up for it by being "attentive" and "enthusiastic."

²³ *Silver Anniversary: Cooperative Extension Work*, 138.

For three to four weeks after Tate arrived in Tennessee, he visited western counties to become familiar with the territory and the progress Campbell had made. About the time of Nichols' arrival in December, the first county agents were hired. "To begin this work with the skepticism of the farmers and in many cases almost active opposition, it was found necessary to work through local farmers," Nichols said. "The plan was to secure good, progressive farmers, who had the confidence of their neighbors and men who could see that there was something in the so-called 'book farming.'" Paid \$37.50 a month, six trail-blazing agents were hired to work three days each week for nine months, leaving them three days to work their own farms. The original six, appointed during January, February and March 1911, were: G. B. Rhodes of Tipton County; R. L. Moore, Dyer; J. B. Skinner, Obion; L. M. McCallum, Chester; O. W. Erwin, McNairy; and A. R. Bridger of Crockett. "To these six men and to others appointed in 1912 and 1913 should be given the honor of really starting demonstration work in the state of Tennessee," Nichols said.²⁴ Salaries for these farmer-agents consumed \$2,025 of the \$10,000 first-year allotment.

In addition to the skepticism of local farmers, other problems the first agents faced included slow means of travel, no organized groups to sponsor work, soil erosion and poor housing conditions. "Work, from the very beginning, was organized around demonstrations. In fact, the work was held

²⁴ H. D. Tate, "A Report of Demonstration Extension Work in Agriculture in Tennessee, July 1, 1910 to June 30, 1915," *Annual Reports, Farmers' Cooperative Demonstration Work and the Division of Extension, University of Tennessee 1910-1917* (n.p., n.d.), 28; H. S. Nichols, "County Agent Work," *Historical Appraisal of Extension Work in Tennessee, 1914-1939* (n.p., n.d.), 44; *Silver Anniversary*, 138-139.

closer to teaching with demonstrations than it is now. Demonstrations were carried by local farmers (often after much persuasion) with fertilizers, proper methods of cultivation and varieties." Cotton seed meal was used most of the time and most demonstrations were on one- or two-acre plots.²⁵ Choosing farmers to serve as demonstrators was done with great care. After all, upon their success depended the program's success. Agents required the demonstrator to sign a statement agreeing to follow instructions exactly; land for the demonstration was then selected. An agent visited each demonstrator once a month. If the agent found that instructions were not being followed, the demonstration was terminated.²⁶

News stories about field work by these agents and demonstrators were few during 1911; what stories there are deal with Tate's speeches to farmers in Memphis and Somerville. The Memphis talk, covered by the *Commercial Appeal*, was to a small audience, but it "represented the leading planters of this territory, and many of the questions were asked of Mr. Tate on points not made clear in the discussion." The newspaper account of the lecture contained technical information on deep plowing, essential nutrients needed by plants, and soil preparation.²⁷

One of the more significant developments for Tennessee in extension education occurred January 2, 1911, but barely made the news. For the first time, federal demonstration agents and University faculty began working together to conduct the off-campus short courses. Only three courses were

²⁵ "Seventy-eight Years with Extension in McNairy County," *County Extension Histories*, University Archives.

²⁶ *Silver Anniversary*, 139.

²⁷ "Plow Deep and Plant Properly for Plenty," *Commercial Appeal*, 11 March 1911, 4.

held that year: Clarksville in January; Cleveland in November; and Jackson in December. Only the *Commercial Appeal* story about Clarksville mentions this development: "The first class of the morning session yesterday in the short course of agriculture being conducted by state and federal officials was on plant breeding with especial reference to potato culture." The *Journal and Tribune* story about the Cleveland course mentions no names, and only faculty names are mentioned in the stories on Jackson and Clarksville.²⁸ It may be that the agents were present only at Clarksville that year. In stories about short courses after 1911, names of instructors from both groups appear frequently.

On April 1, 1911, Dr. Knapp died at 78. Memphis was the only paper to publish news of his death or the appointment of a successor, his son, Bradford. Both stories ran on page 1.²⁹

When Tate announced in late summer 1911 that the FCDW program would be expanded, Memphis and Nashville played the story high on an inside page. Following his visit with Bradford Knapp in Washington in late August, Tate was interviewed by the *Commercial Appeal*. He said, "Several new counties will likely be organized, but the demand for the work is greater than the funds will permit us to undertake." He also said the "interest taken by the farmers has measured up to the general expectations of the agents in

²⁸ "Varied Problems of Farm Discussed," *Commercial Appeal*, 2 January 1911, 3.

²⁹ "Dr. S. A. Knapp Dies at Age of 78 Years," 3 April 1911, 1; "Bradford Knapp is Father's Successor," 11 April 1911, 1, *Commercial Appeal*.

charge."³⁰ It seems that the agents were beginning to win over at least some farmers. Tate went on to praise the farmers he and Nichols had encountered.

The general idea in the past has been that the farmers were indifferent and that they could not be induced to improve their methods of farming.

I do not find them so. Farmers have thought that intensive cultivation was too expensive, and they have therefore been slow to adopt it. The average farmer is conservative and not inclined to get in a hurry about taking up methods of farming entirely different from that he has always practiced.³¹

In October, Tate and J. M. Dean, who had been named district agent and based in Columbia, visited Middle Tennessee. Tate told the *Nashville Banner* that they were visiting the section "with a view of establishing demonstration farms." Again, they explained the program, and noted, "It is not the function of the demonstration work to hold farmers' institutes, nor is it a part of this work to give general lectures over the state." However, the agents could give an outline of their work to those who wanted a better understand of the program.³² But the quantity and content of stories about Tate and his agents during the span of this study indicate that they gave dozens of "general lectures" across the state.

As additional funding became available in 1911, the number of agents doubled to 16. Twelve were county agents. Two agents were hired to work with corn clubs over a much greater area, but they also performed scattered demonstrations with adult farmers in several counties.³³ During the year, a

³⁰ "Knapp Will Increase Field Demonstration," *Commercial Appeal*, 27 August 1911, 5.

³¹ Ibid.

³² "Working for the Farmers," *Nashville Banner*, 16 October 1911, 3.

³³ Tate, "A Report of Demonstration," 28.

total of 155 farmers cooperated in the program, which included 116 cotton demonstrations on 271.5 acres and 72 corn demonstrations on 219.8 acres. "Farmers adjacent to the demonstrations farms," the *Banner* said, "had begun to adopt the improved methods and reports show that 1,375 acres were being cultivated under improved methods."³⁴ Tennessee demonstrators led the South in average yields of corn for 1911—46.6 bushels per acre. Average yield for Tennessee cotton demonstrators was also tops in Dixie for 1911 at 1,672.9 pounds of seed cotton per acre.³⁵

Farmers undoubtedly began paying attention to news of such yields, calculating the inherent financial gain. Bit by bit, the frostiness that Nichols remembered perhaps melted away, helped by favorable publicity, the popularity of corn and tomato clubs, a cordial working relationship with University faculty in teaching short courses, support of businessmen, invitations to speak at farmers' institutes, and their own personal contacts. Tate and Nichols themselves conducted several demonstrations on the value of deep rather than shallow plowing. The state Department of Agriculture also invited Tate and C. F. Striplin, in charge of corn club work for East Tennessee, to board the 1912 "Agricultural Special," which they did, speaking at many towns across the state.

In February 1912, headlines over a one-column *Journal and Tribune* story announced:

³⁴ "Working for the Farmers," 3.

³⁵ *Cooperative Extension Work, 1915-1917*, 28.

Demonstration

Farm Work

Will be Undertaken in East
Tennessee at Once.

Boys' Corn Clubs Will Also be Feature.

Tate and Striplin began to seek out farmers in the northeast counties of Tennessee to take part in the demonstration program. "Along with other features of the farm demonstration work, Mr. Striplin will organize boys' corn clubs, and will undertake to revolutionize corn production in the area. Meetings were to be held with farmers, school superintendents, teachers and others. The average corn yield, 26 bushels per acre, was to be increased to 60-75 bushels per acre, according to the story.³⁶

From March on, the *Journal and Tribune* printed several stories about Striplin's work in selected counties until on June 20, he announced that he had organized corn clubs in every county in East Tennessee.³⁷ The payoff for all the hard work came in December when Nashville and Knoxville printed identical stories announcing huge increases in corn yields. One cooperating farmer, W. H. Cox, who was also a Bristol merchant, increased his average yield from 35-38 bushels to 66 bushels per acre on 22 acres. Some corn clubs reported even higher yields from one-acre plots: Sullivan County-105; Bradley County-133.5; Hamilton County-134.5; Monroe County, 90; and, Carter County, 92.25. The story concluded: "Another year of this work, conducted with the same energy and determination that has characterized

³⁶ "Demonstration Farm Work," *Journal and Tribune*, 21 February 1912, 5.

³⁷ "East Tennessee Corn Clubs," *Journal and Tribune*, 20 June 1912, 5.

Mr. Striplin's efforts, promises to work wonders among the farmers of the eastern end of the state."³⁸

Like their counterparts at the University, Tate and Nichols roamed all over the state speaking to farmers' organizations, helping organize corn clubs and soliciting demonstrators. In June, their boss Bradford Knapp got into the act, speaking to the Nashville Board of Trade, which the *Banner* played on page 3. "The work of the department is to enable the farmer to get better returns on the crop they are already familiar with and to encourage more diversified farming," Knapp told the board. In the audience was Thomas F. Peck, state commissioner of agriculture, who pledged his department's cooperation with Knapp's men.³⁹ The next day, Knapp met in Memphis with Tate; Lem Banks, a Memphis attorney; and the Arkansas state agent. Knapp told the *Commercial Appeal*, "I am satisfied that considerable progress this year is being carried on systematically and scientifically. . . The interest appears to be more general than ever before and we expect the best results that the department has been able to secure."⁴⁰

The name Knapp seemed to attract ink by the barrelful especially after his death. When it was suggested in September that public schools in Tennessee and the South observe November 27, 1912, as Agriculture Day in memory of Dr. Knapp, all three newspapers in this study printed several advance stories each running 15-30 inches. Throughout 1913, the *Banner* published about 24 stories on efforts to establish and raise funds for the

³⁸ "Big Increase in Corn Crop," *Journal and Tribune*, 18 December 1912, 5; "Teaching Young East Tennesseans How to Farm," *Nashville Banner*, 17 December 1912, 12.

³⁹ "Dr. Knapp on Agriculture," *Nashville Banner*, 20 June 1912, 3.

⁴⁰ "Bradford Knapp Here," 21 June 1912, 9.

proposed "Knapp Farm and School of Country Life" in Nashville. An occasional story on the school appeared in the Memphis and Knoxville papers.

At a meeting of the West Tennessee Farmers' Institute in October 1912, more than 1,000 farmers heard *Commercial Appeal* editor C. P. J. Mooney ask the assembly to help raise \$150,000 for the school. The newspaper, of course, carried this story.⁴¹

Subscribers to the *Journal and Tribune* read Bradford Knapp's speech to the Interstate League for the Betterment of Schools of the South, meeting during the "Summer School of the South" in Knoxville. The average farm income in Tennessee is far too low to be attractive, Knapp told the group, and the first step to making country life attractive is to increase earning capacity, which can only be done through education—education that teaches people how to do things that are useful in life. "And I do not want for one moment to belittle scholastic education," Knapp stated.⁴²

The *Banner* reported in early November 1912 that J. R. Fewell had been appointed assistant state agent to take charge of the corn club program. In that story, the agents said that as new counties were organized during 1913 they "hope to receive the cooperation of the state superintendent of education, state agriculture commissioner, the state university, experiment station, county superintendents, teachers, and railroads. The outlook for better work

⁴¹ "Ask Farmers to Aid Knapp Memorial," *Commercial Appeal*, 2 October 1912, 18.

⁴² "Annual Meeting of League for Betterment of Public Schools," *Journal and Tribune*, 12 July 1913, 12.

than ever is apparent, judging from the interest the people generally are taking in agricultural work."⁴³

In December 1912, University President Brown Ayres, as mentioned earlier, stated the school's preference for the "cooperative farming method," similar to the federal program. If properly funded by legislative appropriations, he told the *Commercial Appeal*, "we shall be able to reach thousands of farmers where we now reach hundreds."⁴⁴

In January 1913, the *Banner* reported that the office of the demonstration program was moving to Nashville.⁴⁵ Regulations that limited expenditures of federal dollars to areas threatened by the boll weevil were removed, and the number of agents grew to 26, up from 16 the year before. They attempted to cover 40 counties, most of which were in either West or East Tennessee. Only six counties in the central section had a demonstration agent that year, and three of those shared one agent. Fifteen agents worked in individual counties, most of which were west of Nashville, while the other six attempted to cover three or more counties. Five of these agents tried to serve 22 counties mostly in East Tennessee. For example, J. A. Dinwiddie of New Market had the daunting task of working with farmers in Carter, Washington and Sullivan counties and in part of Greene, Hamblen and Johnson. The *Journal and Tribune* related that Dinwiddie, a well known poultry expert from New Market, "everywhere found progressive farmers alive to his propositions."⁴⁶

⁴³ "Corn Club and Demonstration Work," *Nashville Banner*, 8 November 1912, 11

⁴⁴ "Farm Extension Work," *Commercial Appeal*, 27 December 1912, 8.

⁴⁵ "Demonstrator of Farm Work," *Nashville Banner*, 3 January 1913, 11.

⁴⁶ *Annual Reports 1910-1917*, 29; *Biennial Report of the State*

News of excellent gains in yields for 1912 demonstration plots was published mid-1913 by the *Banner*. A total of 485 new demonstration farms, 267 for cotton and 218 for corn, had been established. Average cotton yield was almost 1,200 pounds per acre, 588 pounds more than for nearby lands, which meant a gain of \$26 per acre. For corn, the average yield of 51.4 bushels compared to 29.5 for nearby land. Value of the increased yield was \$13 per acre. Tate also reported that a total of 800 demonstration farms had been established in the county since 1909.⁴⁷ These increases in yield and values were dramatic. For example, in 1909 the state's average value per acre for cotton was \$22.81, and the per acre value for corn was \$14.56.⁴⁸ Thus, cotton farmers could almost double their revenue, and corn farmers could almost do so by using the new methods of production.

During 1913 and the first six months of 1914, all three dailies published dozens of brief stories on the farm demonstration program. Story topics included announcement of a new agent; a speech or talk explaining the program; brief announcement of a rally; meeting or demonstration; meeting agenda; county progress report on demonstrators; list of demonstrator names; county yields; information on growing corn; and so on. As expected, for these routine and mostly minor stories, each paper published only those of interest within its circulation area.

In his report for 1913 demonstration farm yields, Tate included a concise statement of the program's progress and explained the tremendous losses Tennessee farmers were suffering by not using the methods advocated

Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1913-1914, 9; "Farmers Are Cooperating," Journal and Tribune, 21 March 1913, 6.

⁴⁷ "Demonstration Farm Progress," *Nashville Banner*, 2 June 1913, 4.

⁴⁸ *Thirteenth Census, Abstract, 632.*

by the FCDW. Knoxville and Memphis printed the report verbatim, but it was not found in the *Banner*. Tate wrote that in 1909-1910,

We . . . found that even the best farmers at first had little or no confidence, either in us as agents or in the methods or instructors we offered them. By a careful and diligent supervision over the few demonstration farms we were able to establish the first year, we succeeded in convincing the farmers that the instructions we gave them were not only inexpensive and thoroughly practical, but that the yields were actually increased from 75 to 100 percent on the average.⁴⁹

I find the farmers of Tennessee are a progressive and wide-awake lot, who are ready to adopt better methods. They are conservative and do not get in a hurry about changing their system of farming, but they have shown a remarkable interest in the demonstration work, and I believe, they will make great advancement within the next few years.⁵⁰

Tate also said he believed that the problem of changing farming methods was entirely economic.

I know that the social and educational conditions are not what they should be, but it is poor business to keep telling these people the advantages of modern conveniences and equipment . . . and the wholesomeness of life in the country or trying to minister to their spiritual natures when they do not have the wherewithal to provide for themselves their physical needs or the comforts of life.⁵¹

Demonstrating Before the County Courts

Of all the stories published by the three daily newspapers on the Farmers' Cooperative Demonstration Work, the most interesting and revealing were those that reported county court dispositions of requests to pay

⁴⁹ H. D. Tate, "Farm Demonstration Work in Tennessee," *Journal and Tribune*, 30 March 1914, 10.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

a portion of an agent's salary. For it was here at the community level that the educational and economic forces behind this concept tested their political strength.

And of these political tests, one of the more entertaining concerned agent R. E. (Rube) Ellis and the county court in Weakley County at Dresden, where on a rainy November day in 1909, W. W. Campbell gave his first talk to Tennessee farmers.

Ellis left a comfortable teaching position at an Oklahoma college to take the job as agent in Weakley County. A graduate of Mississippi A&M, he must have been a good match for the county because he remained there for the next 35 years, retiring in 1948.⁵² But getting there took a while.

In October 1912, Weakley County's governing body had balked at the first request for an appropriation. Judge G. T. Mayo doubted that any farmer would pay attention to a man who drove up in an automobile, took off his gloves and began giving instructions on farming.⁵³

However, during its January 7 meeting three months later, the court after much debate approved the expenditure. Ellis' first-year salary—\$1,710—was to come from three sources: the county court appropriated \$850, county banks pledged \$500, and the federal government kicked in \$360. "Weakley County has at last waked up and lined up with the progressive counties of the state . . . , " a story in the *Banner* said. Only one man voted against the proposition. "This county demonstrator will be employed at once. In fact, State Agent Tate has already been wired of the action of the court and has a

⁵² "Advent of the County Agent in Weakley County," *District I County Extension Histories*, University Archives (n.p., n.d.).

⁵³ *Ibid.*

gentleman whom he proposes sending here." The story went on to say that two years earlier, Representative Garrett had tried to get a similar measure approved; "but the court then was composed of men who are no longer members and his measure failed."⁵⁴

Accompanied by Nichols, Ellis arrived in Dresden during extremely cold weather in late January. That night and the next morning a number of farmers came in to meet the new man. "While all these men called appeared to be in doubt as to the value of this new worker, they showed the highest degree of courtesy and extended best wishes," Ellis said.⁵⁵

But these meetings led to contacts with prominent farmers in the community such as W. R. Hawks, a veteran potato grower. Hawks invited the two agents to come to Gleason where he would arrange a meeting with area farmers. Similar meetings were arranged in Sharon, Sidonia, Ore Springs and Greenfield where farmers would gather to meet and hear Nichols or Ellis explain their work. Also, names of prospective demonstrators and cooperators were obtained from prominent businessmen in each community.⁵⁶

At every encounter with farmers, the agents emphasized only the basics of good soil preparation and intensive cultivation of crops. "Nothing was said relative to rotation, drainage, limestone, phosphate, poultry and dairying. The value of good deep plowing, thorough disking, frequent and shallow cultivation in the producing of corn, cotton and tobacco was stressed," Ellis remembered. Soon the new agent was left on his own to seek

⁵⁴ "Demonstrator for Weakley," *Nashville Banner*, 7 January 1913, 2.

⁵⁵ "Advent of the County Agent," (n.p., n.d.).

⁵⁶ Ibid.

out farmers who would work with him either as demonstrators or cooperators. In a horse and buggy along roads churned to mud, he traveled from community to community or from farm to farm meeting as many people as he could. The weather was bitterly cold, and he often spent the night with a farm family.⁵⁷

During these first forays in February and March, Ellis made many life-long friends. Though rebuffs and refusals were always part of the job, he also encountered many farmers who befriended the young agent during those dark and dreary first days on the job.⁵⁸

In October 1913, the County Court, after hearing Ellis' report on the first year's work, approved funding the demonstration program for the second year. Ellis told the court that whether his work had been successful or not, he at least had "put 5,000 farmers to discussing the work." Magistrate Snip Eskridge, a bit of a wit, replied that he believed Ellis' statement. Five thousand people *were* talking about his work with "100 people considering it favorably and 4,900 people condemning it." Nevertheless, the court turned down Eskridge's motion to fund the program for only four months of the year "since farmers did not need any information except during the crop season." Ellis continued his work.⁵⁹

Proponents of demonstration work in Shelby County, which included the editor of the *Commercial Appeal*, also passed their political test on the first and following attempts.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

Shelby was the first county to fully fund the salary for a full-time agent, doing so on October 9, 1911, long before the legislature had authorized this type of expenditure. In three stories of considerable detail published over two weeks, the *Commercial Appeal* described how the court approved the \$1,500 appropriation "unanimously." Requesting the money was a 12-man committee of the influential Business Men's Club of Memphis. Those who came before the court to request the money and describe the program included C. P. J. Mooney, editor of the paper, and agent Nichols, who said that the government would add \$300 to the amount appropriated by the court.⁶⁰

After hearing the request, the matter was referred to the county attorney for a legal ruling. At the October 9 meeting, the attorney reported that the appropriation "could be made only in connection with the county industrial school." The school agreed to cooperate, and John E. Stansell was hired as county agent. By January 1912, he had selected 22 of the 25 farmers who would cooperate as demonstrators. In October 1913, he reported that the demonstrators were producing yields "several times" greater than normally produced in the county.⁶¹

In Davidson County, however, readers of the *Banner* learned that the county court had rejected a petition from the Nashville Board of Trade to allocate \$1,500 annually for an agent because it believed it had no authority to do so.⁶² The action drew a letter to the editor signed by Patrae, who stated,

⁶⁰ "Will Test All Laws Affecting the County," *Commercial Appeal*, 4 October 1911, 4; "Farm Demonstration Appropriation Made," *Commercial Appeal*, 10 October 1911, 5.

⁶¹ Ibid., "County Dotted with Experimental Farms," *Commercial Appeal*, 24 January 1912, 4; "Farm Demonstration Finds County Favor," *Commercial Appeal*, 14 October 1913, 8.

⁶² "Denies the Application," *Nashville Banner*, 2 January 1912, 3.

Here was an opportunity for the County Court to have procured an invaluable source of information which is much needed by our farmer, dairy and stock men. . . . Hope the County Court will think about this matter, help the farmer and rural man to play their avocation so as to obtain the very best results.⁶³

Although the *Banner* did not comment on this action by the county court, Will T. Hale, the paper's agricultural columnist, was extremely critical. "Have the farmers no rights that the officeholders are bound to respect? Or do the farmers elect men to office who do not do their duties?" The action of the court "was a blow to agriculture unnecessarily given, and the manner of rejecting the proposition was reprehensible. . . . It would be a good idea for the farmer-voters to prod those members of the County Court who shied at the pitiful sum of \$1,500 a year for an experienced agriculturist's aid to better farming matters in this county."⁶⁴

In September 1912, Representative Sam R. Sells tried on his own to prod 10 of the county courts of the First Congressional District into cooperating financially in the demonstration program. Sells told the *Journal and Tribune* that the FCDW had approved funds to pay 10 full-time agents provided the county courts chipped in. "It is now squarely up to the various county courts to say whether or not they desire the help of the department," he said.⁶⁵

There is no theory connected with it: it is a plain, practical demonstration to the farmer how, by adhering to methods recommended by the department of agriculture, he can greatly

⁶³ Forum of the People, "Education—County Court," *Nashville Banner*, 12 January 1912, 8.

⁶⁴ "Action of the County Court," *Nashville Banner*, 20 January 1912, 12.

⁶⁵ "Ten Counties of His District," *Journal and Tribune*, 13 September 1913, 5.

enhance his yields per acre It is my sincere hope that the various county courts, at the October term, will take advantage of the proposition by making the necessary appropriation. In no instance will more than \$500 to the county be required, and if the county be small, an appropriation of \$300 will be sufficient.⁶⁶

The story did not name which of the 10 counties in the district Sells had asked to participate. If any of them later appropriated funds for demonstration work, it went unreported in the Knoxville and Nashville newspapers.

A State Bankers' Association Report published in the *Commercial Appeal* in January 1914 listed West Tennessee counties that had appropriated funds to supplement government aid to hire agents. They were: Shelby, \$1,500; Madison, \$337.50; Gibson, \$400; Weakley, \$850; Crockett, \$400; Tipton, \$1,000; Dyer, \$500; Haywood, \$800; Henderson, \$360; and Fayette, \$500. The report also said that in all the counties except Shelby, Henderson and Madison, "the bankers have been directly responsible in getting the appropriations. Where the matter has been agitated in West Tennessee, only the counties of Chester and McNairy have turned the proposition down."⁶⁷

Boys' Corn Club Work

If the reception was somewhat chilly for Tate and Nichols, it was warmer for Thomas A. Early, who took over the work that Campbell spent most of his time doing. Early was already a familiar name in the tri-state region. While superintendent of education in Yalobusha County, Mississippi, he had worked with Knapp to establish corn clubs in North Mississippi and

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ "Will Employ Experts," *Commercial Appeal*, 11 January 1914, 3.

East Arkansas. Before his November 1910 appointment as leader for boys' corn club work in Tennessee, Early came to Memphis as Knapp's special representative seeking to raise \$5,000 in local funds to supplement federal dollars. Early said that amount would finance the work in the Memphis area for two years. With strong editorial backing of the *Commercial Appeal* and vigorous support of the City Club and Business Men's Club, half the amount was raised within three days. By early December slightly more than \$5,000 had either been raised or pledged.⁶⁸

The reception in the daily press for the corn clubs was red hot. As in other states, the clubs became extremely popular, and their activities and exhibitions received widespread publicity, especially when yields began to be reported. The three newspapers in this study published more stories on agricultural clubs than on any other single topic during the 5-1/2 -year span studied. The stories on average were also much longer. If a club was formed in a county, it warranted a story listing the charter members; if contest winners were announced, that produced a story and sometimes a group photo; when preachers in small country towns began advocating the corn club movement, that got a story, too.⁶⁹

Establishing corn clubs fit well into the early demonstration work, which was necessarily limited to the basics of cultivating two crops: cotton and corn. The clubs served to reinforce the lessons taught by demonstration

⁶⁸ "Plan to Encourage Boys' Corn Clubs," *Commercial Appeal*, 14 October 1910, 7; "Will You Co-Operate in This Great Work?" *Ibid.*, 6; "Boys' Corn Club Fund is Growing," *Commercial Appeal*, 19 October 1910, 9; "Campaign for Corn Clubs is Successful," *Commercial Appeal*, 4 December 1910, 4; "Bring the Corn Belt South," *Commercial Appeal*, 3 October 1909, 6; "Boys' Corn Clubs Do Great Work," *Commercial Appeal*, 3 October 1909, 4.

⁶⁹ "Preachers Talk Farming," *Commercial Appeal*, 4 April 1911, 8.

to adult farmers. The East Tennessee Farmers' Institutes created a Boys' Corn Club Section for its May 1912 convention, as did the Middle Tennessee Farmers' Institute for its December meeting. Both institutes also sponsored corn clubs as auxiliaries that met as part of their conventions. Membership climbed to 2,600 in 1912 and to almost 4,000 in the peak year of 1913. More importantly, club members proved to their farmer-fathers that corn production could be increased so much that their cribs would not hold it.⁷⁰

A 16-year-old Tipton County youth, Norman Smith, became the state's top corn producer in 1910. He grew 125.5 bushels on one acre and won a trip to Washington, D.C.⁷¹ Smith's accomplishment made headlines across the state. Hundreds of other boys also produced yields that greatly surpassed the normal production of the state's adult farmers.

In Cumberland County on the plateau, the *Journal and Tribune* reported, potatoes had become the chosen crop for boys' clubs organized by J. E. Converse. He was employed not by FCDW, but by the Agricultural Experiment Station in Knoxville. Converse became an assistant in charge of cooperative experiments at Cookeville in April 1907. Working in Cumberland, Overton, Putnam and Wilson counties, his experiments included testing lime and fertilizer requirements and plant varieties. Another assistant, L. R. Neel, stationed at Columbia in Maury County, was active in corn club work.⁷²

⁷⁰ "East Tennessee Farmers' Institute," Tennessee Department of Agriculture, *Tennessee Agriculture*, I (July 1912), 83; "State Boys' Corn Club Organized," Tennessee Department of Agriculture, *Tennessee Agriculture*, I (January 1913) 484; *Cooperative Extension Work, 1915-1917*, 31.

⁷¹ "Boy Farmer at City Club," *Commercial Appeal*, 5 November 1910, 4.

⁷² "Boys' Potato Club Formed," *Journal and Tribune*, 15 February 1912, 7; Agricultural Experiment Station, *Twentieth Annual Report, 1907*, 5;

One of Converse's club members, 13-year-old Green Taylor of Creston, produced 384 bushels of potatoes to the acre in 1912, dramatically demonstrating the impact of local agricultural research on local pocketbooks. The 16 club members who competed that year produced an average yield of 258 bushels per acre and an average net profit of \$50 per acre. One youngster's net profit hit \$111 per acre. Because the average net farm income in Tennessee during this time was only \$686,⁷³ these increases were dramatic. "They have demonstrated that it is possible to raise potatoes on the plateau, to get a good yield and make a good profit on the cheapest if not the poorest land of our state," Converse told the Middle Tennessee Farmers' Institute. He also pointed out that while Tennessee was importing 4-5 million bushels of potatoes annually, Cumberland County alone could produce more potatoes than that.⁷⁴ The Cumberland County Court thought so much of the work it contributed \$150 to the program.⁷⁵

In 1912, corn club work became the responsibility of the farm demonstration program and thus came under Tate's general supervision in Tennessee. When Early resigned to become financial secretary of a committee attempting to raise \$150,000 for the Knapp school in Nashville, J. R. Fewell as assistant state agent was placed in charge of boys' club work. J. M. Dean

Twenty-fifth Annual Report, 1912, 54; *Twenty-second Annual Report*, 1909, 95.

⁷³ Gist, "Farm Profits," 499, 501.

⁷⁴ "Boys' Potato Club Winners," *Journal and Tribune*, 7 January 1913, 7; "Potato Club Movement in Tennessee," Tennessee Department of Agriculture, *Tennessee Agriculture*, I (January 1913): 399-401, 478-483.

⁷⁵ "Boys' Potato Club Formed," 7.

became district agent for Middle Tennessee at Columbia and C. F. Striplin settled in as district agent for East Tennessee at Maryville.⁷⁶

Dean's work in 1912 drew flattering comment from the *Columbia Herald*. "A man unassuming, yet pleasing in his address and thoroughly interested in and in love with the work, he has gone about the work with a determination that has brought results, and when results are shown, the people generally sit up and take notice." He enrolled 603 boys in clubs in 17 counties and 147 competed in contests, earning a total of \$1,583 in prizes. Average yield for the young farmers was 58 bushels, but the average of the best single yield from contestants in each of the 14 counties reporting was 103 bushels.⁷⁷

In East Tennessee's Hamblen County, several records were set in 1912. The county, said the *Journal and Tribune*, had the state's largest corn club with 52 members; five boys produced yields of more than 100 bushels per acre, the largest number in any club to do so; and the club produced the state's highest average yield—92 bushels per acre per member.⁷⁸

The *Journal and Tribune* in 1912 began sponsoring a corn club contest for East Tennessee boys, offering \$125 in prizes. First prize was \$25 for the largest yield on an acre of ground, \$15 for the second largest yield and so on. These were prizes well worth the effort for young boys to pursue because the

⁷⁶ "Boys' Corn Clubs and Pig Clubs," Tennessee Department of Agriculture, *Tennessee Agriculture*, I (July 1912): 136; "Demonstration and Corn Club Work," Tennessee Department of Agriculture, *Tennessee Agriculture*, I (December 1912): 346.

⁷⁷ "Corn Club Work in Middle Tennessee," Tennessee Department of Agriculture, *Tennessee Agriculture*, II (February 1913): 37.

⁷⁸ "Five members of Corn Club," *Journal and Tribune*, 28 December 1912, 3; Tennessee Department of Agriculture, *Tennessee Agriculture*, II (April 1913): 117.

average per capita annual income in Tennessee for 1909 was \$61, and the annual average agricultural income per worker was \$146. Beginning in March, the newspaper heavily promoted the contest in several stories, some placed on the front page, and in advertisements, announcing that prizes would be awarded November 16. More than 500 boys entered the contest. The paper even published the names of every corn club member in East Tennessee. University faculty and federal corn club organizers were enlisted to judge the contest.⁷⁹

In early 1913, the newspaper announced that total cash prizes for the second contest had risen to \$1,000 in gold. Boys in 42 East Tennessee counties could enter the contest, and the top six would share the money with \$500 going to the first-place winner, an astronomical sum for that day. The newspaper even wrote letters to every county court member in East Tennessee "suggesting that those courts make appropriations for cash prizes for corn raising by the boys in their respective counties." Indeed, some county courts in the state found it easier to contribute to the agricultural clubs than to invest financially in demonstration work. The replies of several members, all favorable, were printed in the newspaper. Knox County's reply was boxed and placed in the top center of the page.⁸⁰

The court approved a \$500 appropriation for the county contest. In a brief address to its members, William Rule, editor of the paper, said, "The proposition is one in which The Journal and Tribune is not in any way

⁷⁹ "Thousands Expected . . .," *Journal and Tribune*, 18 November 1912, 8; Easterlin, *Interregional Differences in Per Capita Income . . .*, 102-103.

⁸⁰ "Members of East Tennessee County Courts Endorse . . .," *Journal and Tribune*, 4 January 1913, 2; "Knox County," *Nashville Banner*, 7 January 1913, 2; "The Journal and Tribune's \$1,000 Contest," 13 January 1913, 8.

selfishly interested."⁸¹ Nevertheless, the corn contests must have generated enormous good will (and circulation gains) for the newspaper.

After only six counties had appropriated money for corn club prizes, the *Journal and Tribune* found it necessary to chastise the other county governments. The "editorial" filled up almost two full columns of type on the farm page.

The Journal and Tribune proudly but with becoming modesty assumes a small share of credit for pioneer work in promoting the movement for larger and better yields of corn . . . and still is seeking to encourage the young, as well as the old, farmers of East Tennessee to adopt modern methods of farming.

This paper feels that it has in large measure contributed its share to the movement for the uplift of agriculture and that the county courts of East Tennessee now should liberally co-operate. But few have done so, although promises have been made by individual members.⁸²

Pointing to the \$500 appropriation of Knox County, which was more interested in truck farming, gardening and dairying than in corn production, ". . . we can't refrain from reminding those justices who have promised to co-operate that we are looking to them to make good on their promises."⁸³

More than 600 boys entered the 1913 contest, but as luck would have it, a prolonged drought ruined most of the corn in East Tennessee. About 200 boys "stuck it out," however. Bruce B. Wills, 17, RFD 1, Mountain City, in

⁸¹ \$500 More in Cash Prizes for the Boy Corn Raisers of Knox County," *Journal and Tribune*, 7 January 1913, 2.

⁸² "A Word to Members of East Tennessee County Courts," *Journal and Tribune*, 17 March 1913, 10.

⁸³ Ibid.

Sullivan County, won first prize with a yield of 120 bushels and two pounds per acre.⁸⁴

The *Journal and Tribune* was the only paper to sponsor a corn club contest, to promote any farm-related activity so heavily, or to invest so much energy, ink and paper in persuading county courts to support corn clubs.

Girls' Tomato Club Work

Out of the campaign to improve public education in Tennessee came the first leader of girls' club work in the state. The grassroots cultivation of better schools was carried on through the School Improvement League set up by the Cooperative Education Association, which hired Miss Virginia Moore of Gallatin as state organizer September 14, 1908. A direct, no-nonsense and plain-spoken woman, Moore reported to P. P. Claxton, chairman of the association's executive committee. In 1909, the Southern Education Board, a subsidiary of the General Education Board, began funding the work of organizers such as Moore in Southern states that wanted help. Although the Cooperative Education Association did not last long, the school improvement leagues or associations lived on, spreading rapidly into nearly every county in the state largely because of Moore's work.⁸⁵

Moore's career in the Extension Service began as a tomato club volunteer. During the fall of 1910, Thomas Early asked her to assist in organizing a tomato club at a rally in Shelby County. Although she knew little about canning, she agreed to help, diligently studying the only bulletin

⁸⁴ Advertisement, *Journal and Tribune*, 5 November 1913, 1; "Winners of 1913 Contest," 22 December 1913, 1.

⁸⁵ Moore to James D. Hoskins, 9 July 1946, 7; *Biennial Report of Superintendent*, 1911-1912, 415, quoted in Holt, *The Struggle*, 171-177.

she could find on the subject. Late into the night and early the next morning, both Moore and Early canned tomatoes in Mason jars with screw tops, preparing for the first "canning party." Early the next summer she agreed to take on club work, still as a volunteer, in addition to her league duties.⁸⁶

Her appointment as a "state collaborator" by the U.S. Department of Agriculture was not made until November 16, 1911. The *Nashville Banner* said Moore "has received an unusual honor in recognition of her efficiency by being appointed to a Government position."⁸⁷ Moore was in charge of Tennessee's Girls' Club Work.

That summer, armed with a \$400 allocation from the General Education Board, she began selecting volunteers to teach canning in the counties during two months of the summer. From the first, Moore attempted to finance the work on a cooperative basis, offering \$50 from GEB funds if the county school board would contribute \$100. Among the first volunteer leaders or collaborators chosen were Mrs. Myra Tandy, Lawrence County; Mrs. Maggie Lansden, Madison County; Mrs. Katherine E. Vaughn, Coffee County; Mrs. Elizabeth Lauderbach, Hamilton County; Mrs. Lizzie B. Reagan, McMinn County; and, Miss Melissa Byrd, Bradley County. By May 1912, Moore had paid collaborators working from six to 10 months in Madison, Coffee, Lawrence, Bradley, Hamilton and Benton. "Lincoln and Lawrence, Shelby and Henry had started some local work, but I was not able to secure local aid in these counties until later."⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Moore to Hoskins, 1-5; *Annual Reports 1910-1917*, 17.

⁸⁷ "Miss V. P. Moore Highly Honored," *Nashville Banner*, 18 November 1911, 3.

⁸⁸ Moore to Hoskins, 1-5; *Annual Reports 1910-1917*, 17.

As Moore traveled the state to speak on improving local schools, she also explained tomato clubs, about which people were eager to hear. Too, she demonstrated tomato canning to audiences at the Summer School of the South, the University of Chattanooga, the three state normal schools, the three divisional farmers' institute homemakers sections, which she had organized in 1910, and various other county and state farmers' meetings. During Moore's first public canning demonstration, held in a grove of trees outside Manchester in Coffee County in August 1911, more men than women attended, and they seemed more interested in what was going on than the women. Assisting the agent was Katherine Vaughan. Moore built her program of work on what she saw and heard at this event. "Women were not in the habit of getting out. They were [a] resigned, hard-working class with a dull, hopeless look—feeling a pride in being 'porely' and feeling broken down. They took it as part of their duty as a good wife, it seemed,"⁸⁹ she wrote.

In January 1912, Moore gave up school improvement league duties to devote full time to tomato club work. However, she retained her office in the state Department of Education in Nashville. Her relationships with county school superintendents also remained close, ensuring their cooperation in obtaining the "best home economics or a successful teacher or a matured woman of education and culture to lead in the work." Woven into club activities were lessons on biology, economics, language, geography and arithmetic, history and nutrition similar to those taught corn club members. After the lesson, a hot dish was often served to bolster a cold school lunch. In

⁸⁹ Moore to Hoskins, 1-5.

keeping with the Knapp philosophy, Moore tried to find well-trained knowledgeable people, who also had common sense or "gumption."

They . . . must be able to see a situation quickly, act quickly and for the good of the work and not for selfish reasons. . . . They must love girls and rural women and see their needs, but never pity them or appear to "stoop down," but always to work with and to involve a program of education suited to their particular needs.⁹⁰

Not until the beginning of 1912 did the tomato clubs begin to catch the attention of the daily press. A few stories appeared sporadically in 1911, most of these in the *Commercial Appeal*. Following Moore's appointment, the stories began following her as she traveled from county to county. Coverage was not nearly so heavy as for the corn clubs, but the stories appeared to be spread fairly evenly among the three dailies.

In counties where tomato clubs were started, canning parties quickly became very popular, drawing people from miles around. Fall rallies were "real events," featuring contests, parades and speeches. Canning schools and demonstrations presented opportunities to teach sanitary food preparation techniques and how to defeat the house fly without offending the homemaker. Many of these activities were covered and photographed by the dailies. A *Journal and Tribune* story on Knox County's club, stated,

Ropes had to be stretched around the canning apparatus to keep the crowds back. . . . However, the crowd was banked around the protecting ropes twelve or fifteen deep, and the girls who did the canning Thursday were watched by hundreds of people.⁹¹

⁹⁰ Ibid., 5-8; *Annual Reports 1910-1917*, 38.

⁹¹ "Knox County Tomato Club, *Journal and Tribune*, 26 September 1913, 9.

Stories announcing the formation of tomato clubs across the state were also a staple item. And when Sylvia Richmond of Soddy Daisy won a scholarship to the University of Tennessee for her tomato club work, the *Nashville Banner* put the story on page 4. Dr. Ayres had earlier agreed to Moore's request for a scholarship provided the recipient was a graduate of an accredited high school in the state. "In 1912, Miss Richmond made the best record in canning work of any young lady in the South."⁹²

Moore also credited tomato clubs and rallies with diffusing feuds in some counties and breaking down what she called the "caste system" in the bluegrass section of the state. Slowly, in measured steps, emphasizing teamwork, the tomato club program grew. Moore applied the brakes amid a statewide clamor for more clubs. "I held them off and made a rule not to start the work unless we had a local collaborator to organize and supervise the work. This sentiment helped to get more local aid with which to employ county collaborators," and tomato club membership steadily rose, reaching 1,900 in 1913.⁹³

By then, agents were working in 18 counties that had agreed to pay at least one-half of their agent's salary. Four agents worked year-round, and the rest were hired for 6-10 months of the year. All were required to work in 6-12 communities, and no club could have less than 10 members. Hamilton County, which Moore called "one of the richest and most progressive in the state," quickly approved her bold request for \$900 in local aid in late fall 1912, months before receiving legislative permission. Hamilton also provided a Ford runabout for Mrs. Elizabeth Lauderbach, domestic science teacher at

⁹² "Canning Club Girl Honored," *Nashville Banner*, 13 May 1914, 4.

⁹³ *Annual Reports 1910-1917*, 38

Soddy High School, to use in her club work. She was the first county collaborator in the state to receive a car, no doubt to the envy of other agents who remained horse and buggy bound.⁹⁴

A River of Opinion

All three newspapers in this study wrote hundreds of editorials of their own and reprinted editorials from other newspapers and magazines during the period January 1, 1909 to June 30, 1914 that dealt with the broad range of agricultural issues. Also, the Knoxville and Nashville papers frequently included their own and others' commentary on their farm pages.

Within this river of opinion flowed editorials that explained and praised the agricultural extension activities of the University and cried for greater support by the state for the school as it went about doing good.

Often a paragraph or two calling for greater effort to educate the state's farmers would be included in editorials where the main focus was to call attention to farming conditions in Tennessee. Too, pleas for change, for adopting new farming methods, for achieving greater production, for raising more livestock, were aimed at Tennessee farmers as a class.

Though appearing less frequently, editorials directly concerning the Farmers' Cooperative Demonstration Work and agricultural clubs for boys and girls made a respectable showing within the stream of commentary.

The *Commercial Appeal* vigorously embraced the boys' corn club concept. Editor Mooney frequently used his famous boxed "Farmers, Attention" editorials to ask communities if they had formed a corn club, or to

⁹⁴ Moore to Hoskins, 9.

call attention to the clubs in some other way. Set in bold type, these editorials, which usually promoted crop diversification, ran on the editorial page almost every day over the span of this study.

In its first major editorial on the matter, set across two columns, the paper urged area farmers to "bring the corn belt South." Pointing to yields of 60-80 bushels obtained by corn clubs in Mississippi, the paper suggested holding a "congress" of corn club boys in Memphis within three months. "We suggest this matter for the consideration of the Business Men's Club and to the progressive citizens of Memphis."⁹⁵ No congress was held; instead, the boss of corn clubs himself, Dr. Seaman Knapp, came to speak in Memphis.

Dr. Knapp's pending visit to Memphis in January 1910 prompted another two-column editorial urging farmers "big and little, all merchants and bankers" to attend Knapp's speech. Mooney wrote most of his editorials using short, simple one-sentence paragraphs for greater impact and clarity. The Memphis area in its raw state "is the richest spot in the United States," Mooney wrote.

That is why The Commercial Appeal is always harping
about diversified and scientific farming.

That is why we are glad Dr. Knapp is coming.

That is why we print stories about corn clubs.

And we are going to keep up this line of preaching until
the fight is won.⁹⁶

An editorial asking for public support to raise \$5,000 to support corn clubs in the region was printed twice, first on October 14, 1910, and again one month later "by request." Therein, Mooney explained Knapp's program, urged the formation of corn clubs, and threw in a plea for diversified

⁹⁵ "Bring the Corn Belt South," *Commercial Appeal*, 3 October 1909, 6.

⁹⁶ "Uncle Sam's Chief Soil Doctor . . .," 6 January 1910, 6.

farming.⁹⁷ "*The Commercial Appeal* . . . regards this as the most important work now underway in Memphis. Help this movement along. Contribute." By the end of December, the entire sum had been raised. The FCDW matched the amount, ensuring the program would function for two years.

Although its favorite editorial theme throughout this study was diversified farming, the *Commercial Appeal* occasionally returned to direct comment on the idea of demonstration teaching, as in this 1913 editorial:

The Agricultural Department of the United States has struck a new trail. Carrying instructions to the farmers by lectures and pamphlets has not been wholly satisfactory. . . . The Department feels that this method of letting the farmers know what the experts have to teach should not be abandoned, but it should be supplemented by demonstration work.⁹⁸

While the *Commercial Appeal* did not engage in direct sponsorship of corn clubs, it did couple its strong editorial support of the Knapp School of Country Life in Nashville with financial backing. The paper used an editorial on Sunday, March 1, 1914, to announce it would award six scholarships each year for the next five years to the school.⁹⁹ The action drew several letters of praise, including one from P. P. Claxton, U.S. commissioner of education. Claxton's letter and two others were printed as engravings rather than set in type.

Of the three newspapers in this study, the *Nashville Banner* published the fewest editorials on the FCDW and agricultural clubs. Contributing to this may have been the county assignment pattern. Work by the FCDW appeared

⁹⁷ "Will You Co-operate in This Great Work," *Commercial Appeal*, 16 November 1910, 6.

⁹⁸ "Showing the Farmer How," *Commercial Appeal*, 9 June 1913, 6.

⁹⁹ "Scholarships to be Awarded by the Commercial Appeal," *Commercial Appeal*, 1 March 1914, 6.

to flow from West Tennessee, skipping over most of the central counties, into East Tennessee. For example, of the 26 agents in the state in 1913, most worked either in West or East Tennessee. Although FCDW headquarters moved to Nashville in early 1913, only six counties in Middle Tennessee had a demonstration agent that year. Nevertheless, those editorials the *Banner* did publish strongly praised the merits of the program.

Agricultural editor Will T. Hale in March 1910 began pleading for corn clubs in Middle Tennessee. While many old farmers are "too full of prejudice" to adopt scientific ways, "the boys do not regard it as absolutely necessary to farm as their parents or grandparents farm."¹⁰⁰

The *Banner* also published several editorials asking for donations to ensure that the Knapp School of Country Life would be established in Nashville. A \$250,000 endowment from the General Education Board was contingent on \$150,000 being raised by Southerners. The editorials reiterated Knapp's principle of demonstration, explained that the school would teach modern farming methods and pleaded with farmers to participate in the demonstration program and their children in corn and tomato clubs. "This city has a double interest in the work. It will profit, as the South generally will profit, by the better system of farming that it is proposed to inaugurate, and the location of the school here will, of course, be an immediate practical advantage."¹⁰¹

In January 1913, another *Banner* editorial proclaimed, "The good effects of the Boys' Corn Clubs are not to be disparaged."¹⁰² As tomato clubs began

¹⁰⁰ "Boys the Better Corn Growers," *Nashville Banner*, 18 June 1910, 10.

¹⁰¹ "The Country Life School," *Nashville Banner*, 27 December 1912, 6

¹⁰² "The Cure of Lands," *Nashville Banner*, 8 January 1913.

organizing, Hale extolled their virtues too and heaped a generous portion of praise on the Cumberland County potato clubs, where some per acre profits rose about \$100.

Following the release of Tate's report on demonstration plot yields for 1913, the *Banner* pointed out that farmers doing their own work in their own fields had proved the program's worth.

The farmers of Tennessee are not quick to abandon old methods until they are shown the advantage of the substitute. But the figures and the facts presented by Mr. Tate are so compelling that it should not require further agitation on his part to enlist the farmers of the state in this great work of increasing their yield by revising their methods.¹⁰³

Knoxville's *Journal and Tribune* could not say enough about boys' corn clubs. Once the newspaper began sponsoring corn club contests for East Tennessee youngsters, its editorial and farm page lit up all through 1912 and 1913 with home-grown "corn" commentary, as well as reprints or excerpts from the *Age-Herald* in Birmingham, Alabama, the *Washington Dispatch*, *Houston Post*, *Atlanta Journal*, and *Louisville Courier-Journal*. In 1914, it reprinted an editorial from the *State Journal* in Ohio about the amazing yields obtained by Cumberland County potato clubs. "The boys have taught them [their fathers] a lesson."¹⁰⁴

Typical of comments in *Journal and Tribune* editorials was this paragraph: "If a man can raise more corn on an acre, with proper cultivation, than has been grown on six acres, farmers may well wonder why they have been wasting their time and their strength in scratching over a large number

¹⁰³ "Farm Progress," *Nashville Banner*, 25 March 1914, 8.

¹⁰⁴ "Boys Raise Potato Yield," *Journal and Tribune*, 20 January 1914, 6.

of acres."¹⁰⁵ As if to decrease the emphasis on yields, another *Journal and Tribune* editorial said, "The lesson being imparted to the boys of the corn clubs is not simply to grow a hundred bushels of corn to the acre . . . but it leads them to exercise the brains nature has given them" to become better farmers.¹⁰⁶

Although the newspaper published a number of stories on girls' tomato clubs, only one editorial on these clubs could be located.

The demonstration teaching concept also received the unequivocal backing of the *Journal and Tribune*, although not as often as the corn clubs. Representative Sells' attempt to persuade county governments to voluntarily share the cost of a farm demonstration agent was "a good move."

If the counties in the First District through their county courts take hold of the proposition, and see that it is tried out, it will not cost a large amount of money, and whatever it may cost will be quickly repaid many times over.¹⁰⁷

After the Smith-Lever Agricultural Extension bill became law in May 1914, the *Journal and Tribune* alone editorialized on the new law. While most of the legislation passed during the 15-month-long session was a "dreary waste," the bill providing for "active and efficient farm demonstration work is an exception. It is the oasis in the desert. . . . The Smith-Lever law marks a beginning in the right direction, and the beginning has not been made any too soon."¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ "The Boys Making Good," *Journal and Tribune*, 25 January 1913, 6

¹⁰⁶ "Encouraging Boys to Become Farmers," *Journal and Tribune*, 21 January 1913, 6.

¹⁰⁷ "Farm Demonstration Work," *Journal and Tribune*, 21 September 1913, 4.

¹⁰⁸ "Farm Demonstration Work," *Journal and Tribune*, 5 June 1914, 5.

With passage of the Smith-Lever Act, however, Southern farmers lost their long-time benefactor, the General Education Board, and its thousands of dollars in contributions each year to the farm demonstration program. The bill provided that matching funds could come from the "State, county, college, local authority, or individual contribution from *within* the state."

Wire stories from the newspapers in this study did not report this provision as Smith-Lever made its way through Congress in early 1914. Editorially, the daily press was also silent.

Later that spring, all three newspapers published several wire stories concerning congressional debates on the new \$19 million agricultural appropriations bill, a separate issue from Smith-Lever. But because the national extension program was not yet up and running, the appropriations bill allotted \$628,000 to continue the Farmers' Cooperative Demonstration Work program. Senator Kenyon of Iowa, aiming squarely at John D. Rockefeller, tacked on an amendment that barred contributions or endowments from individuals or corporations to the demonstration program.¹⁰⁹

On Wednesday, April 22, the front pages of all three newspapers in this study were filled with other disturbing news: American troops had invaded Mexico, landing at Vera Cruz. Four Marines and 200 Mexicans were killed in the first fighting.¹¹⁰

Reacting to the agricultural bill amendment, the lead editorial in the April 25 edition of the *Commercial Appeal* was titled "A blow at the South."

¹⁰⁹ "Senate Passes Agricultural Appropriations Bill," *Journal and Tribune*, 24 May 1914, 6.

¹¹⁰ "First Blood at Vera Cruz," *Commercial Appeal*, 22 April 1914, 1.

In bitter words, the editorial charged that Senator Kenyon was really taking revenge on the South because the region had received most of the federal dollars for farm demonstration thus far. But "By denouncing Rockefeller, Mr. Kenyon hopes to 'get by' and conceal his true motives." The editorial went on to explain that more was at stake for the South than simply Rockefeller's money.

The whole corn club work in the South would fail except for outside contributions. During the last three years the bankers of Tennessee have contributed several thousand dollars to farm demonstration work. This money has been spent by United States government officials.

Throughout Mississippi, Arkansas and Tennessee, bankers, merchants and farmers have offered prizes through the Agricultural Department and have made contributions for excellence in farm demonstration work, for corn club and tomato club work. These contributions were entirely patriotic.

John D. Rockefeller was not seeking to curry any favor with the southern people. Mr. Rockefeller has turned over certain monies to a board. The members of this board are estimable gentlemen. One of them is a southerner.¹¹¹

During debates in the Senate, one senator charged that Rockefeller's money was "covered with the blood and tears of women and children shot down in the Colorado mine strike." Attempts by Southern senators to remove the amendment failed.¹¹²

After the bill had gone to a conference committee in June, the *Nashville Banner* also charged in angry words that the amendment's purpose "is, purely and solely, political." If administration forces manage to remove the amendment, the editorial stated, opponents of the President "will set up a

¹¹¹ "A Blow at the South," *Commercial Appeal*, 25 April 1914, 6.

¹¹² "Awful Roast for Rockefeller," *Journal and Tribune*, 5 May 1914, 3; "Senate Passes Bill," *Commercial Appeal*, 24 May 1914, 18.

howl that 'President Wilson and the Democratic party are not for the farmer and the laboring man; they are for Rockefeller.'"¹¹³

The editorial also explained that the General Education Board had contributed about \$1 million to farm demonstration work in Southern states. "The United States Department of Agriculture has made the bills, the General Education Board as paid the bills and never asked a question." And because Congress was also considering revoking the board's charter, the editorial expressed fear that the Knapp School of Country Life was in danger.¹¹⁴

It is the most nefarious little political scheme that has been attempted in a lifetime. We much mistake the temper of the present administration at Washington if it is to be browbeaten by pettyfogging demagogues of the Kenyon type.¹¹⁵

As of July 1, 1914, the Farmers' Cooperative Demonstration Work was formally merged with the Extension Department at the University of Tennessee. FDCW headquarters in Nashville was closed and files and personnel moved to Knoxville. Heading the University's new Division of Extension was Charles A. Keffer, horticulturist, who had been director of the school's Extension Department since October 1913. Tate became his assistant director, and Nichols and Dean became district agents.¹¹⁶

As of June 30, 1914, the three newspapers had remained silent on the merger. There was a war going on in Mexico.

¹¹³ "Discouraging Progress, *Nashville Banner*, 9 June 1914, 6.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ *U.T. Register*, 1913-14, 77, 226-227.

CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Throughout the first decade of the 20th century, the University of Tennessee in Knoxville continued to search for a better idea in its quest to reach more and more of the state's farmers with research-based information that could help them make farming a more profitable enterprise. Reaching large numbers of farmers for more than a day or two was only part of the problem for faculty and experiment station researchers. Convincing the great mass of farmers to pay attention to and apply the knowledge offered by the University was even more problematic.

A new tactic was tried beginning in November 1909. The University's annual short course, held in January and February of each year, was modified and taken off campus to towns around the state, the first to Winchester. Free of charge, the course included teaching by "demonstration" along with lectures. School teachers and farmers were invited to attend. In news accounts, the term "demonstration" was stressed as a new element in the University's extension teaching activities.

The three daily newspapers in this study helped launch this better idea into the public forum, publicizing it and praising it in varying degrees much as they had done for other University activities.

Into West Tennessee about the same time came a federal agent, the first of several who also brought a better idea. Acceptance in Texas had been phenomenal, and this idea, too, was called demonstration—cooperative

demonstration. To these agents, however, demonstration meant something different. First, farmers did not have to leave their farms; the agent came to them. Second, the agent demonstrated nothing. He simply imparted information about seed selection, soil preparation, and cultivation. Following instructions, or cooperating, the farmer demonstrated for himself the new techniques the agent espoused.

And, usually, the farmer saw for himself the payoff in much higher yields at little additional cost to produce the crop. For this program, cotton and corn were the crops of choice.

Two of the newspapers in this study covered the arrival of the agent, explaining why he had come, who sent him and how he would work. In time, all three newspapers would explain again and again the federal brand of "demonstration" teaching.

From late 1909 on, these two different concepts of demonstration teaching would be conducted within the public arena and would co-exist in the press without apparent conflict. Indeed, their advocates soon began cooperating in conducting the short courses. Each would receive editorial praise as would other ideas that made their way into the press: teaching agriculture in the public schools, county demonstration farms, and agricultural trains. But these last three concepts, shining more or less brightly in the press for two to three years, then faded away.

The rural public school teachers were not trained to teach agriculture; most counties could not afford the proposed county farms, which would reach and teach too few farmers; agricultural trains were poor vehicles to deliver information, but the novelty made great copy.

The daily press continuously and generously reminded readers how badly the state's farmers did their jobs. Census and crop reports generated many stories of gloom. These always prompted calls for more agricultural education, which could mean one of several activities: attending farmers' institutes, conventions, and short courses, or reading and applying the information in an experiment station bulletin that was free for the asking.

But Tennessee's farmers were not entirely to blame; some of them could not read. The state's illiteracy rate among those age 10 and above was 13.6 percent in 1909. Also, investing in a better grade of pig or cow was foolish given the prevalence of hog cholera and the cattle tick. But there was much farmers could do to improve their productivity if, according to the press, they would only practice scientific farming, that is, grow more than one crop and rotate them, build up depleted soil, grow cover crops such as clover.

The information on how to do this, as well as how to grow more foodstuffs, was free from the tax-supported experiment station and state agricultural college. In a sense, the news and commentary about the state of Tennessee's farming united the three newspapers in a general campaign that lasted for most of the span of this study, but was most energetic from 1909 to well into 1912. Of course, each newspaper flavored its commentary and reported the facts most applicable to its circulation area or section of the state.

Even in routine farm-related stories about federal- or University-sponsored meetings or other kinds of gatherings, such as county institutes, scheduled short courses, and agricultural train stops, the Memphis, Nashville and Knoxville dailies engaged, perhaps unknowingly, in a parallel campaign that kept the "teaching by demonstration" concept before the public.

These stories were usually so brief that including much detail was out of the question. But the name of the speaker, title of his speech, or the reason for the meeting were usually part of the story. Together, the dailies produced hundreds of these low-impact stories, most of which contained a reference to the concept of "teaching by demonstration" either in the University or federal context. Thus, even in minor stories, this idea was constantly "refreshed" and kept alive in the public forum.

From a broader perspective, the University's extension teaching activities and the Federal Cooperative Demonstration Work (FCDW) program could be compared to two rivers that for awhile ran parallel and then finally merged. Tennessee's daily newspapers did not and could not cover the flow of the two rivers in the same way. Geography, type of farming, and proximity to the University or to FCDW demonstrations were among the influences on if and how events were covered. And none of the newspapers ever recommended one demonstration concept over the other.

Affecting the course of these rivers were debates and events at the national, state and local levels, which also received varying levels of coverage and commentary from Tennessee's dailies. At the national level, academic and political powers eventually put together a bill that was a win-win for both land-grant universities and the federal farm demonstration program.

The bill incorporated the teaching by demonstration concept, and set up a three-way partnership and financing arrangement between the federal and state governments, and the land-grant universities. In return for accepting a federal partner and funding, administration of the program was

placed in the hands of the land-grant universities, which could tailor systematized extension work to local needs.

The debates among land-grant schools regarding the concept of teaching by demonstration and the role of extension in the university did not appear in any of the three newspaper in this study. Beginning in early 1912, the *Journal and Tribune* provided most of the coverage of the political debates in Congress concerning extension legislation. Again in 1913, the Knoxville paper carried more news about the final and successful drive for extension legislation, which culminated in the Smith-Lever Act.

In 1911, before the national effort for extension legislation became so active, the University moved to win the state's political sanction of its extension teaching activities through increased appropriations. The effort and the idea, however, were swamped by political battles over repeal of prohibition and control of the state election commission, issues that packed far more emotion and weight. Consequently, as Tennessee legislators left the state, the bill to create and fund a University Department of Extension was sacrificed in the name of a balanced budget—and legislative greed. Editorially, the press remained oddly silent on the extension bill's demise.

In preparation for its second request for extension funding from the General Assembly, the University in late 1912 through its president revealed that it had basically adopted the philosophy of the federal program.

"Cooperative farm plats" demonstrated the way to go, not to mention the Smith-Lever legislation pending in Congress. The *Commercial Appeal* alone carried the story of this philosophical change of heart.

The second foray before the state legislature, at first, produced the same results for extension legislation as did the 1911 episode, although the legislature approved additional funding for the University. But in a special session of the General Assembly with a quorum present in each house, legislators approved a bill to fund and create a Department of Extension within the University's College of Agriculture. Another bill authorized county governing bodies to appropriate funds to carry out farm demonstration work in cooperation with the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

This news made few ripples in the daily press.

The federal concept of agricultural education by demonstration teaching survived its political test in Congress. But the idea also faced political consequences not in the state legislature, but before county governing bodies, whose members included farmers. Seaman Knapp had pioneered the cooperative partnership whereby local government, businesses or business organizations, paid part of the cost of putting an agent into the county in those early years.

As with University-related extension education activities, press coverage of the federal demonstration work was determined in part by the activity within each farming section. Individual dailies generally paid the closest attention to events within their section of the state.

The federal program might have won greater cooperation from county governments much faster had not they been stymied by a legal restraint. County courts were not authorized by state law to spend money in this way. This impediment to the county courts was not removed until September

1913. For all its editorial support of this idea, the daily press never seemed to realize how much this fact hindered acceptance of the idea on a much larger scale. Commentary on this point was absent, although it was used by more than one county court as grounds to reject the proposal.

This might have been the greatest single reason in Tennessee's failure to take a more cooperative stance with the FCDW as happened in the Carolinas, Mississippi, Alabama and Georgia.

As it were, local banks, business organizations and trade groups often stepped in to ante up the necessary local contributions to meet the conditions of Uncle Sam's proposition. Some county courts, such as in Shelby, got around the restraint by contributing funds legally to some other entity, in this case, a school, which then was given responsibility for seeing to the details of cooperating in the federal program.

Program advocates in Shelby County were lucky to have among their numbers the editor of the *Commercial Appeal*, C. P. J. Mooney, who himself argued the merits of the proposal before the county court. The newspaper provided detailed information about the court's deliberations and decision.

While the *Commercial Appeal* enthusiastically supported the notion of agricultural education in general and the teaching by demonstration idea in particular—as well as anything to do with the Knapp name—the newspaper, or more accurately, its editor, was also conducting a more general campaign to promote better farming practices. Everything else occurred within the context of that campaign.

Throughout this study, the newspaper constantly promoted the idea of crop diversification. Mooney's boxed editorials, published every day on the

editorial page, reminded farmers that dependence on a single crop was foolish. What does it profit you, he asked, if you must spend your profits from cotton to buy food for your table? The *Commercial Appeal*, more so than the other two papers in this study, was fond of publishing feature-length pieces on crop diversification success stories from other states, such as Mississippi. Because crop diversification was among the themes preached by the University, the experiment stations, and by the FCDW, their educational activities fit nicely within the campaign.

The concept of demonstration teaching and its relationship to the University's extension mission received extremely good play in April 1912 during the convention in Nashville of the Southern Commercial Congress. Special sections in both the *Nashville Banner* and *Journal and Tribune* greatly amplified the merits of the concept.

Also receiving a lot of press during the convention was the life and times of Seaman A. Knapp, who popularized the demonstration concept as a tool for working with farmers. In a special memorial exercise in April 1912, prominent educators and politicians from throughout the Southeast paid tribute to Knapp's memory and his work. Lengthy stories in both the Knoxville and Nashville papers gave concise histories on Knapp's background and how he "discovered" and began advocating teaching the farmer by "showing" him what to do.

This same kind of treatment by the press continued during preparations to observe "Agriculture Day" in Knapp's memory on November 27, 1912. Each story on Knapp usually contained background information that

explained his importance to agriculture as father of the demonstration method.

When efforts began to establish the Knapp Farm and School of Country Life in Nashville, coverage by the *Nashville Banner* took on the nature of a campaign. Memphis and Knoxville, meanwhile, published an occasional story and editorial on the school. The concept of demonstration teaching went along for the ride as story after story (and editorials) in the *Banner* included a brief history of the idea. These stories essentially were "great man" mini-histories, which seemed to make it easier for the newspapers to discuss the teaching concept Knapp advocated.

Incorporated within the federal demonstration program was the agricultural club for children—corn for boys and tomatoes (or canning) for girls. With the formation of the first clubs in West Tennessee in early 1910, this one topic, especially boys' corn clubs, received more coverage than any other.

Nothing captured and held the attention and interest of the press (or the public) like the agricultural clubs. It was almost love at first sight. Not only were more stories printed about this topic, but more group photographs of young winners in county contests were published than of any other group. Perhaps interest was maintained because the newspapers could print stories filled with the names of boys and girls, whose parents would buy one or more copies of the paper. Or perhaps it was the sense of competition in trying to grow the best acre of corn or the anticipation of much greater yields of corn that captured the interest of the press and the public.

The Knoxville *Journal and Tribune* became more deeply involved in corn club activity than any other paper. In early 1910, the *Commercial Appeal* had given strong editorial support to back up its reporting on efforts to raise \$5,000 in local funds to support formation of corn clubs throughout the tri-state region. But that was the limit of its involvement in the campaign, which raised the money within three months.

Journal and Tribune editor William Rule told the Knox County Court, that the newspaper had no selfish interest in its promotion of the corn club contest. And the promotion was most energetic. Its 1912 contest offered \$125 in total prizes with \$25 as first prize for the contestant who could grow the best acre of corn. Taking part in the judging were personnel from the Knoxville experiment station and the farm demonstration program.

For the 1913 contest, the newspaper offered a total of \$1,000 in prizes with \$500 going to the first-place winner. Promotion of both contests was heavy through news stories and house advertisements. It may be that the newspaper was genuinely attempting to promote better farming practices through its heavy involvement in these contests.

Also for the 1913 contest, the *Journal and Tribune* may have gone several steps beyond what would be considered normal editorial support for any activity. The newspaper wrote members of several county courts in East Tennessee to ask that they appropriate cash prizes for corn contests within their respective counties.

Many members replied to the newspaper, endorsing its suggestion. Along with letters from dozens of contest entrants, the *Journal and Tribune* published the replies of county court members, all of which took up a full

page. Later, in a two-column editorial on its farm page, the newspaper reminded the county officials of their comments and asked that they back up their endorsement with an appropriation.¹

Whether the *Journal and Tribune* used the corn club contests for financial gain is not known. If so, its action is an extreme example of Herbert Altschull's contention that media content is determined by financing.² If not, it would appear to be an extreme case of altruism.

As the academic debates began to wind down and as the political debates over extension legislation in Congress began, the two rivers of agricultural extension work in Tennessee began merging. No doubt aware of the national direction this issue was taking, the federal agents and University faculty may have come to an "informal" agreement to cooperate in conducting short courses. Most other Southern states would agree to more formal and elaborate arrangements with the FCDW.

No absolute statement or action indicating this "informal" arrangement was found in the news or editorial column, however. Only the briefest of references to this "beginning" in 1911 appeared in the daily press. But once the names of men from both the University and the federal program began appearing frequently in stories in all three newspapers associated with the same event, the new development was apparent.

¹ "Members of East Tennessee County Courts Endorse . . .," *Journal and Tribune*, 4 January 1913, 2; "A Word to Members of East Tennessee County Courts," *Journal and Tribune*, 17 March 1913, 10.

² Altschull, *Agents of Power: The Role of the News Media in Human Affairs*, 254-258, 298.

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to look at how three daily newspapers published in Tennessee's most populous counties treated, and reacted to, a new and radical idea of educating farmers in their fields through demonstration. This concept would serve as the foundation for the Smith-Lever Act of May 8, 1914, which created a national system of agricultural education in cooperation with the land-grant universities.

The study also examined the evolution of the Tennessee Agricultural Extension Service within the context of economic, political and educational forces that were working to bring about this system.

The following major conclusions can be drawn:

1. Throughout the span of this study, the idea of teaching by demonstration not only stayed alive, it also gained strength in the press, especially after the press began paying greater attention to agricultural clubs for children.
2. Treatment of the demonstration concept as news was greatly influenced by its connection to an "event" and most of the time by the proximity of that event to the newspaper's coverage area. But there were deviations. For example, Nashville often gave more coverage and better play to farm-related events sponsored by the University even when the event was closer to Knoxville. At the same time, events of major consequences to the entire state at times received less play because of their connection to a "place" outside the newspaper's coverage area. For example, passage of the Smith-Lever Act received front-page treatment in the *Journal and Tribune*, which was far better play than that given the story by the other two papers. The

presence of the University of Tennessee in Knoxville no doubt greatly influenced how the story was played by the *Journal and Tribune*.

3. Although major stories given prominent play were occasionally printed along with favorable editorials about the farmers' cooperative demonstration program, a steady stream of low-impact local stories about meetings and events in all three papers probably served more than anything else to keep the concept "amplified" and circulating within the public forum and in front of the county courts.
4. More rapid acceptance and application of the concept of demonstration teaching in the fields may have been hindered more by a legal restraint than by farmer indifference or hostility, especially after the first year of demonstration work in West Tennessee. Until late 1913, county courts could not under state law legally appropriate funds to cooperate in hiring farm demonstrators. The political and economic consequences of the idea at the local level, therefore, could never be fully and fairly examined. In some counties, however, banks, businesses and individuals contributed money to enlist the services of a county agent.
5. Editorial reaction to the idea by all three newspapers was favorable and at times enthusiastic. Often the press discussed the idea within the larger context of agricultural education as a solution to poor farm performance. In the case of the *Commercial Appeal*, it continued its own campaign for crop diversification as it covered and commented on activities that sought the same goal. At no time did the press compare or distinguish between the federal brand of demonstration teaching and the University's notion. Apparently, the difference made no difference to any of the newspapers.

6. Even though news of the University's extension activities and its concept of demonstration teaching had been widely disseminated by the daily press since 1909, the University's efforts to win extension funding were twice buried by political issues that paralyzed the legislative process.
7. Underlying all the coverage and commentary in the daily press about agriculture was an economic theme. The financial health of all three newspapers, and their cities, was in that day tied much closer to the fortunes of agriculture. Even so, the press displayed a genuine concern for the overall well-being of rural families. Also, as the newspapers preached agricultural education to farmers, the message in the press was intended to aid everyone's economic salvation.
8. Several of the above conclusions can be linked to research by Gans who wrote that news is "not so much conservative or liberal as it is reformist."³ And a strong reformist bent was clearly present in the press coverage of agricultural problems and proposed solutions. Calls for reform in agricultural practices among farmers never ceased, and they were often tied to other reform efforts to improve rural life. Among these efforts, education was viewed as the single most important avenue to bring about reform in agriculture.

Gans also stated that news judgments are tied to "enduring values." They are: ethnocentrism, altruistic democracy, responsible capitalism, small-town pastoralism, individualism, moderatism, order, and leadership.⁴ More than any other value, news stories during the span of this study dealt

³ Gans, *Deciding What's News*, 39-69.

⁴ Ibid.

with order or rather *disorder* in agriculture. Gans placed disorder stories into four major groups: natural, technological, social and moral.⁵ Most of the stories in this study can be grouped under the heading of technological disorder, but strong overtones of social or even moral disorder were often present within the news and commentary about agriculture. Small-town pastoralism, because of press emphasis on rural values and the potential goodness of life on the farm, can also be found in the press coverage of agriculture during this study.

Gans considered efficiency and performance to be components of altruistic democracy. Under this value, journalists hold politicians as well as citizens to the same high standards.⁶ This value was also implicit in stories and commentary published by all three newspapers as farmers were constantly exhorted to increase production.

9. Because acceptance of the idea of teaching by demonstration did not depend on farmers alone, the "two-step flow" hypothesis⁷ formulated by Paul Lazarsfeld, Bernard Berelson, and Hazel Gaudet has implications for this study. Press coverage of agriculture and the demonstration method showed that political, educational, business, and other opinion leaders, such as well-to-do farmers, played major roles in the spread of the demonstration concept. The two-step flow study, titled *The People's Choice*, revealed that while opinion leaders were selectively influenced by the media, the majority of people were largely unaffected by "propaganda" from the

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Paul F. Lazarsfeld, Bernard Berelson, and Hazel Gaudet, *The People's Choice* (New York: Columbia University, 1948).

media. The study also showed that ties between people—personal influence—were an important part of the mass communication process.

Suggestions for Further Research

The rural weekly press was not a part of this study. But an examination of selected rural papers that operated within the circulation areas of the daily newspapers in this study might provide additional insight into how this idea of teaching farmers in their fields by demonstration was treated by the newspaper closest to the farmer. Areas for examination could include editorial and coverage comparisons regarding agricultural conditions between rural and city papers; indications of the University's influence on the rural press; county institutes; and treatment by the press of the "strangers from the government" who brought the farmers' cooperative demonstration program into the small towns and rural areas, as well as farmers' reception of the idea.

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APPENDICES

SILOS AND SILAGE

A Silo Thirty Feet Deep Will Furnish Silage for Practically Six Months
When Fod at the Rate of Two Inches in Depth Daily

BY H. ALWOOD

[illegible][illegible]

THE CORN-FIELD ANT

of 1.470

[illegible]

It is well-known that ants of the genus *Formica* are extremely hostile to a variety of other insects, especially other colonies of their own species. Many observations having been made on the behavior of hostilities, assuming almost the same form in all species of *Formica*, but between them. Nevertheless, the almost inviolable intolerance exhibited by different colonies of the same species has not been explained.

of fern. One of the small red houses
awa, which often include black
and positive to the absence of U
housekeeper, is frequently found at
them in the hole of the fern-aid

A California horticulturist has succeeded in grafting a dwarfed blackberry onto the raspberry upon a climbing root vine. He believes he will be able to raise remarkable fruitfulness from this graft.

Appendix C

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a veritable hell on earth

"BOOK LEARNING" FOR FARMERS

There was a time when an overwhel-
ming per cent of the farmers of the
country, made light of any statement
that what they called "book learning"
was any benefit to those who till the
soil. To say it was, was to put the
sayer in what was looked upon as a
ridiculous and untenable attitude be-
fore the farming world.

There may be some yet, who look at
it in that way; but the number is
smaller than ever before. It was said
that experience was all that could pos-
sibly make a successful tiller of the
soil. But it should be known, that in
every branch of science, "book learn-
ing" is but the experience of men of
previous generations. Progress in the
sciences has not come with anything
like suddenness, it has been step by
step, here a little and there a little. As
advances have been made, they have
been written and printed, and thus one
generation through the use of books is
given the benefit of the research pre-
vious generations.

Take for instance, the East Tennes-
see Farmers' convention, that has held
regular meetings for forty years, who
will pretend to say they have been of
no benefit to the farmers in this divi-
sion of the state? Year after year, the
farmers have gathered in these conven-
tions, swapped experiences, and where
one has by this or that method attain-
ed to good results he has told it to
others who have profited by it. That
is the concentration of experiences, a
combination of the experiences of the
many.

Agriculture is a science, this has been
shown by the agricultural colleges of
the country, which will stand as a mon-
ument to the wisdom and the foresight
of Senator Morrill, throughout the years
and the centuries. All soils are not
alike, some will produce what others
will not, and a knowledge of one's
soil, is now seen to be as of much im-
portance to the tiller of the soil,
as a knowledge of the intricacies of
the law is to the lawyer. There is no
more reason why the lawyer may add
to his knowledge of the law by reading
than there is that the farmer may add
to the knowledge of his soils by read-
ing books. What is in the books is a
record of past experience.

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Journal and Tribune editorial, March 26, 1913

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FARM PROGRESS.

The Farmers' Co-operative Demonstration work, which was begun in Tennessee four years ago, is beginning to produce results. For the first two years no work could be done outside the cotton-growing portion of the state for the reason that the Congressional appropriation was primarily to aid the farmers in readjusting their methods of cotton-growing on account of the advent of the boll weevil.

H. D. Tate, State Agent, has issued a general summary of the results that have been obtained practically during the last two years or since an act of Congress permitted an expansion of the work.

The increased yield of corn per acre was 16.6 bushels and Mr. Tate says: "We find that it took very little more labor and but little extra expense for the demonstrators to apply the methods that increased their corn yield 16.6 bushels per acre."

These demonstrations were not conducted on a limited number of farms and by a few of the progressive and ambitious farmers. On the contrary, 552 farms had the demonstration work, including 4,541 acres, with an average of more than 8 acres to the farm. The average yield on the demonstration plots was 41.3 bushels. The yield on adjoining and similar land was 24.7 bushels, an increase for the scientifically cultivated land of 68.2 per cent. The value of the increased yield on the total corn acreage is estimated at \$95,364.14 and the value of increased yield on the total cotton acreage, \$24,449.11.

The farmers of Tennessee are not quick to abandon old methods until they are shown the advantage of the substitute. But the figures and the facts presented by Mr. Tate are so compelling that it should not require further agitation on his part to enlist the farmers of the state in this great work of increasing their yield by revising their methods. The interest that has already been demonstrated is a fair basis for the conclusion that with

the continued co-operation of the government officials the acreage yield in Tennessee will within the next few years be tripled.

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Nashville Banner editorial, March 25, 1914

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What They Are Doing in Mississippi

In The Commercial Appeal this morning you will read a story written by an agricultural expert on how a man in Tennessee raised hogs for less than two cents a pound. Hogs are selling at ten cents a pound.

You will also read another article in The Commercial Appeal of how two young brothers, farmers, near Jackson, Miss., grow little cotton, but are making a fortune out of potatoes, alfalfa and corn. In fact, these young men grow anything in Mississippi they want to grow.

You probably read during the week the story of the Illinois Central's demonstration train journey through the delta and through the region near Natchez and Jackson. That train, with Captain Merry, was sent South again by the order of President Harahan, who, since coming into the headship of the Illinois Central railroad, has done everything possible to make it easier for the Mississippian to reap great rewards in agriculture.

Ten years ago land along the Illinois Central near Jackson sold for \$15 an acre. That land is now bringing from \$25 to \$35 an acre.

A German colony went down to Madison county several years ago and began farming. They have made good. They grow oats, alfalfa, clover, corn, cattle, sheep, hogs, potatoes and very little cotton.

Over in the delta conditions are rapidly changing. A reporter for The Commercial Appeal made this journey with Captain Merry along the main line of the Illinois Central and Yazoo & Mississippi Valley railroads and notes a marvelous change in the face of the earth.

Plantation homes are being improved and out-buildings and fences are being white-washed. Women are raising poultry and men are growing hogs, cattle and their own mules.

Land in the delta that a few years ago sold for from \$3 to \$5 an acre is now bringing from \$25 to \$50 an acre, and in a few years this land will fetch a hundred dollars an acre.

The Illinois Central is arranging for an exhibit from Mississippi, to be taken to the Land Congress, which opens in August and lasts for thirty days. There is a bill before the legislature to provide \$2,000 for the expense of this exhibit. It will be a great thing for the state if the legislature makes an appropriation. If not, President Harahan will see that the exhibit is made.

The good work for diversified farming in Mississippi is so well under way that it will not fail. We of Tennessee have much to do in this line, and we must go about it. The good work must be pressed, not only in Tennessee and Mississippi, but in Arkansas and Alabama and in the whole South. Let us grow everything we eat and much that we wear, and our cotton will be the cash crop. Wall street panics will then come and go on their way unnoticed.

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Farmers, Attention!

Restore your land to its original condition when fresh, and then you will have made good your bank account with the soil, and by continuing the system you and your children and your grandchildren can farm that land for all time to come and each year gather bountiful crops and leave a soil that will produce as much or more the next year.

The restoring of land will take time. You did not wear it out in one year, nor can you fully restore it in one year. Deeper plowing, the planting of cover crops to protect land from winter washing, cow peas and soy beans alone or in corn in summer, red clover, crimson clover in winter, saving carefully all manure and putting it on land, raising more live stock. These are the things that must be done. Any farmer can do them. The important thing is to make a start and stick to it. You can write to the agricultural station of your state, describe your land, tell them what you want to do, and they will take pleasure in outlining a plan that will enable you to get more each year from your farm than you are now getting and yet by rotation of crops build up your soil.

By the way, we wonder if one reader of this paper in a hundred saves and spreads manure on his land every year. If you have not done so, begin now. Go out and with mowing machine, or mowing blade, depending on what you have, cut all weeds and coarse grass you can that will not make hay. Stack this near your barn and use it as bedding each day during the winter. Cut your corn. This can be done by hand or machine; shock it. Take off ears and put the corn stalks in your lot. This will give some good feed, and will make a large amount of manure. Early in spring of 1911, as you haul and spread this on your land, you will realize that you have begun to build up your soil, and that for you the time has come when you will no longer year by year rob yourself and your children by robbing your soil.

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Farmers, Attention

Recently the business men of Memphis raised a fund of \$5,000, to which is added from the office of Dr. S. A. Knapp of the agricultural department the sum of \$5,000, making a total of \$10,000 to be spent in pushing the Boys' Corn Club work in the territory around Memphis. When hard-headed city business men open their purse to encourage corn growing, surely the farmer should take heart and redouble his energies to make a big corn crop in 1911. It shows that the city now wants you to grow on your own farm your corn, meat, hogs and live stock. Will not our farmers respond by demanding a corn club for their boys in every county, and further, try to beat the youngsters in the yield of 1911 corn crop. Only one thing is needed, do the right thing at the right time.

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Commercial Appeal boxed editorial,
Jan. 12, 1911

Commercial Appeal boxed editorial,
July 19, 1910

VITA

James G. Thornton Jr. was born at Fort Hood, Texas on July 14, 1947. He attended elementary schools in Escambia County, Ala., and graduated from T.R. Miller High School in 1965. He attended Jefferson Davis Junior College in Brewton and graduated from Auburn University in 1969 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Journalism.

After working as a reporter and city editor of the *Columbus (Ga.) Ledger*, he and his wife, Anne, purchased *The Tri-City Ledger*, a weekly newspaper in Flomaton, Ala., in 1973 and published the newspaper until December 1986. He entered graduate school at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, earning a Master of Science degree in Communications in 1990. In the fall of 1990, he entered the doctoral program at the University of Tennessee.

He also served as publisher of the *Auburn Bulletin* in Auburn, Ala., and worked on the copy desk for the *Playground Daily News* in Fort Walton Beach, Fla., and the *Herald-Courier* in Bristol, Tenn.

Thornton has also taught in the Journalism Department at Auburn University and in the Communications Department at Emory and Henry College in Virginia.

He is presently employed by the Tennessee Valley Authority in Knoxville, where he leads the graphics and editing section of TVA University, the company's education and training division.