

Celebrating 100 years of success — Dubois County Purdue Extension

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It has been a factor, a driving force if you will, in Dubois County. But often its existence is more or less taken for granted, another agency that, hmm, does what? Teaches kids about cows and cookies? Maybe helps the farming community?

Ask many residents and they may know that Dubois County Purdue Extension is the umbrella organization over 4-H. Or that it is has something to do with natural resources. And maybe that it has been around awhile, but how long, hmm, not sure.

Try 100 years (okay, you got that already by reading the headline so 20 points for catching it).

In Indiana, Purdue is the land grant university over the Cooperative Extension Service.

The Cooperative Extension Service, by the by, is one of the nation's largest providers of scientific research-based information and education (more on that in a sec). It's a network of colleges, universities, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, serving

communities and counties across America.

Purdue's Cooperative Extension Service program areas include:

- Agriculture and Natural Resources
- Health and Human Sciences
- Economic and Community Development
- 4-H Youth Development

So how did this all begin?

Would you believe the origins reach all the way back to President George Washington, with influence from President Abraham Lincoln and the most direct push via legislation by President Woodrow Wilson?

Would I lie to you?

Yes, good old George was a visionary. In his final address to Congress in 1796, Washington proposed a board or office be established to promote agriculture, so the man who allegedly chopped down the cherry tree also planted the seed for what would later be fertilized with broader ideas and would grow into a national organization with branches in every state covering not just agriculture but other areas of economic and personal development as well.

So what did my man Abe do for the cause?

On July 2, 1862 Abraham Lincoln signed the Land Grant College Act, and we today are the beneficiaries. Land-grant colleges were called people's colleges or farmers' colleges, and they were also known as democracy's colleges.

The Morrill Act of 1862 (which was the name of the actual bill Lincoln signed), was a major boost to higher education in America. The grant was originally set up to establish institutions in each state that would educate people in agriculture, home economics, mechanical arts, and other professions that were practical at the time. The land-grant

act was introduced by a congressman from Vermont named Justin Smith Morrill (hence the name). He envisioned the financing of agricultural and mechanical education.

He wanted to assure that education would be available to those in all social classes.

This bill gave each state 30,000 acres of public land for each Senator and Representative. These numbers were based on the census of 1860. The land was then to be sold and the money from the sale of the land was to be put in an endowment fund which would provide support for the colleges in each of the states.

The land-grant has improved the lives of millions of Americans. This was not the case in the early stages. At the time the grants were established, there was a separation of races. In the South, blacks were not allowed to attend the original land-grant institutions. There was a provision for separate but equal facilities, but only Mississippi and Kentucky set up any such institution. This situation was rectified when the Second Morrill Act was passed and expanded the system of grants to include black institutions.

Indiana's Land-Grant institution is Purdue University, a public research university in West Lafayette, founded in 1869 after Lafayette businessman John Purdue donated land and money to establish a college of science, technology, and agriculture in his name. That was a mere seven years after the Morrill Act was signed into law.

It took a few more years for creation of the Cooperative Extension Service, plus another bill signed by a different president.

The Smith-Lever Act was signed into law on May 8, 1914, by President Woodrow Wilson. Besides providing funding, the bill required cooperation between federal and state, and provided the structure to develop the Cooperative Extension Service. From this well did everything spring, from county



Holland Guernsey Cow Club at the 1928 County Fair.

agents who taught farmers how to increase agricultural production to boys and girls clubs that morphed into 4-H, to extension specialists who served as educators for homemakers.

Indiana was crucial to the early development of the Extension Service because much of the structure the state developed and implemented before passage of the Smith-Lever Act was adopted nationwide after 1914.

And so it was that the Hoosier State was a leader in the efforts of ag colleges across the land, as well as the experimental stations and the increasing awareness of the need for education.

Purdue Extension is a service that has been tailored to meet the needs of Indiana.

According to the Purdue website, "Our educators, specialists, and volunteers live and work in all 92 Indiana counties. We provide the link between Land Grant research and Indiana citizens. In doing that we provide practical solutions to local issues. We provide information and expertise that's available in the form you want, when you want it. That's Purdue Extension, Indiana's home team advantage."

Here's a synopsis of what Purdue Extension Dubois County is all about:

Agriculture and Natural Resources

Extension educators with agricultural and natural resource specialties offer programs and information on agricultural production and financial management for farmers, food and fiber processors, manufacturers and consumers. We also provide expertise in environmental issues, natural resource conservation and land use.

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The above picture is from the 1943 records of the Dubois County Purdue Extension.

Miss Viola Cox, one of the 4-H Club members who did a fine job in helping harvest the strawberry crop on the farm of Gus Ahrens. Miss Cox was also a representative of the Kiwanis Club at the Junior Leadership Training Camp at Greencastle, and the winner of the Dubois County Dress Revue.