

Purdue University

The History of Indiana Future
Farmers of America Association

History of American Education

Ed. 500b

August 2, 1979

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The Indiana Association of the Future Farmers of America is neither new nor slightly known. Its impact on the state's vocational agriculture education is a major one.

To understand and follow the development of the Indiana F.F.A. Association, one needs to take a look at the national organization, which has fifty-one chartered members - every state in the Union plus Puerto Rico. Many events and highlights of the Indiana Association were direct results of the National Future Farmers of America Association and its activities.

Organized in November 1928, the F.F.A. is an integral part of the program of vocational agriculture in the public-school systems of America. It is intra-curricular and has served to strengthen instruction for students in vocational agriculture by providing a laboratory for practical training in agriculture, leadership, cooperation, and citizenship. Every local and state association, as well as the national organization, is self-governed by the youth members under adult counseling.

The National Organization

Vocational agriculture courses under the National Vocational Education Act were first established in 1917.² From the beginning the boys enrolled in these vocational classes felt drawn together due to their similar country backgrounds and desires for fanning vacations. Shortly after vocational agriculture courses were started, local programs in most states developed so-called "agricultural clubs;" and Indiana was no exception. At first the organizations formed were largely social and recreational in nature; but educational, self-improvement, and cooperative features were often included under the guidance of resourceful local teachers. As the number of local vocational agriculture organizations grew, so did the idea of a larger state-wide association to organize together these local groups. Between 1923 and 1928, a number of states, Virginia being the most notable, formed organizations of vocational agriculture students. Groups known as "Junior Farmers," "Young Farmers," "Future Farmers," and the like, emerged from various parts of the country. Due to the excellent organizational talents of Henry C. Groseclose, the efforts of the Future Farmers of Virginia attracted the most national attention. Many states soon followed Virginia's pattern of organization. Propositions for a national organization arose by 1927. During the Summer of 1928, the Agricultural Education Service of the Federal Board for Vocational Education drafted a temporary constitution, purposes, and ceremonies, patterned after that of the Future Farmers of Virginia. The first national convention was held in November 1928; and since then, the growth of the Future Farmers of America has been steady and rapid. Similar organizations, patterned largely after the FFA, are now found all over the world; and an international program within the FFA has arisen.

FFA in Indiana

Indiana Vocational Education Law, approved February 22, 1913, and amended March 14, 1919, provided the beginning of vocational agriculture courses in Indiana. The formation of local agriculture interest groups appeared immediately and grew rapidly.

The first step in the organization of the Indiana FFA Association was taken at a meeting of the Executive Committee (now called Board of Control) of the Indiana Vocational Agriculture Teachers Association on May 8, 1929, at Purdue University. A.T. Marvel, then President of the I.V.A.T.A., presided at this meeting.

The other members of the committee included nine others vocational agriculture teachers from around the state; three members of the Indiana Farm Bureau Federation; three professors of the Department of Education of Purdue University; and Professor M. Smith, State Supervisor of Vocational Agriculture. A committee was selected to draft a state F.F.A. constitution and to report to the June 1929 State I.V.A.T.A. Conference.

On June 21, 1929, representatives of vocational agriculture departments adopted a state constitution, elected temporary officers, and voted to hold the first state Congress (now called Conference) of the Future Farmers of Indiana that following fall. Charter 19 was granted to the Indiana Association of Future Farmers of America on September 64 1929, by the national organization of Future Farmers of Arrerica.⁷ The first Congress was held at Purdue University on October 18-19, 1929. Officers for the following year were then elected with Lester Burge, Martinsville, selected as the first President. Z. M. Smith, State supervisor of Agricultural Education, and w. A. Smith, Department of Education of Purdue University, were elected as the first State Executive Secretary-Treasurer and State Advisor respectively. At the time of this first state congress, twelve chapters had been chartered and were represented by their official delegates. These twelve chapters in order of charter numbers were:

Battleground (now Harrison)
Kempton (now Tipton)
Pierceton
Martinsville
Middleburg
Madison Township of St. Joseph County
Nappanee
Columbia City
Monrovia
Paragon
Seymour
Wea Township (now McCutcheon)

The development of the Indiana Association was slow during those first years. Hindering its growth was the lack of publicity due to poor communications in that time period. The public didn't know the purposes and objectives of the association and feared that duplication and needless competition would uproot other rural youth organizations. The teachers of vocational agriculture had to be educated statewide to the program and to learn of its value before any real expansion could occur.

Between 1948 and 1958, the growth of F.F.A. in Indiana saw its largest increase in both number of chapters and number of members, as both tripled during that time. From 131 chapters and 3,208 members in 1948, the numbers rose to 365 and 9,796 by 1958.⁹ Largely due to the consolidation of township schools, the number of chartered chapters in the state association has now dropped. to 215, while the membership has grown to well over 11,000 members. With the new interest in vocational education for all students, both rural and metropolitan, and for special educational purposes, F.F.A. will continue to grow in both members of chapters and of active members.

The fifty-year history of the Indiana Future Farmers of America Association has seen many highlights.

In the early days of the local and state organizations financial difficulties were prominent. Therefore, 1932 was declared "promotion year." Many local chapters devised original and successful money-making projects to finance not only their own chapter activities, but also those of the state association. The enterprising Middlebury chapter canned tomatoes and tomato juice and sold them locally.

Through the years chapters have managed to fund activities by various means from selling citrus to having slave auctions and from marketing of chapter farm plot production to marketing of chapter grown bedding plants.

In 1961 the Indiana F.F.A. Foundation Board was initiated; the Board financially sponsors one of the finest F.F.A. award programs in the country. Through the years some of the donors have been leading industries in the state, such as the Indiana Fann Bureau Cooperative, Association, the Indiana Farmers Grange, Standard Oil Company of Indiana, and Mid-States Steel and Wire Company.

"Firsts" have always been recorded and valued in the F.F.A.. Indiana F.F.A. has had plenty of "firsts" in its history, including:

First Indiana boy to receive an American Farmer Degree (the highest degree an individual member can achieve); W. C. Haase of Martinsville in 1930.

First donor to the Indiana F.F.A. Wabash Railroad with five trips to the National Convention in 1929.

First Honorary Fanner; z. M. Smith in 1930.

First boy to receive Hoosier Farmer Degree (highest individual degree in state association; Orval Ummel, of Battleground, 1929.

First Indiana man to serve on the National F.F.A. Board of Directors; John "Pop" Linke of Columbus, as National Advisor in 1934-1941.

First Indiana boy to "be elected National F.F.A. President; Irvin Schenk, Reitz Chapter of Evansville, 1941.

First Girl state officer; Debbie Michael, 1974.

These are but a few of the many "firsts" that have taken place within the Indiana F.F.A. Association.

Individuals and chapters from Indiana have also received National honors as well as State.

Three Indiana members have held the office of National President. Several other Hoosiers have served as National officers, including Kevin Drane from Ninevah, Indiana, the current National F.F.A. Vice President of the Central Region.

Under the direction of Mr. W. S. Weaver, the Delphi Chapter was recognized as a Gold Emblem Chapter in the National Chapter Contest during the late 40's and early 50's several times.

Gold Emblem ratings, the highest ratings an individual, teams or chapters can receive, have been given to Indiana in livestock judging, dairy judging, poultry judging and many other areas of the award program.

Other notable events occurring in the history of the Indiana F.F.A. are listed chronologically below:

1946 Post-war convention, known as the Victory Convention honoring F.F.A. members who served in the armed forces Establishment of awarding an individual annually as Star Hoosier Farmer.

1952 Amendment of the State F.F.A. constitution to provide that the fathers of the state officers receive Honorary Hoosier Farmers Degree

1953 Formation of State F.F.A. Chorus

1959 Participation at the First National Leadership Conference held in Washinton D.C.

1968 Initiation of the Purdue Collegiate F.F.A. Chapter Establishment of the Indiana F.F.A. Association owned F.F.A. Leadership camp on 168 acres, located at Trafalgar, Indiana.

1970 Permission of girls as official members

During the war and post-war years, the Indiana F.F.A. was actively helping the country. During World War II a Victory Committee was established, which suggested ways in which Indiana F.F.A. members could help win the war. Suggestion included:

Increase the collection of needed scrap materials.

Increase the purchase of war bonds and stamps.

Each member should strive to increase the production of critical products through his supervised fanning projects and by raising victory gardens.

All members should cooperate in the eradication of black markets.

Stress Conservation.

Increase fanning efficiency.

Observe all victory rules of your government.

- a) The 35 miles per hour speed limit.
- b) The use of your car only when necessary.

Use farm machinery more cooperatively.

In the years immediately following the War, Indiana F.F.A. chapters participated in the Youth Helps Youth project, in which American youth groups gave aid and encouragement to youth groups in the American Zone of Occupied Germany:

The German groups needed the moral support of having correspondence with American youth groups and of finding out how the young people here work and play and what their citizenship attitudes are.

The Indiana F.F.A. Association has progressed right along with the other states, to form, the largest and most active national vocational education organization in the United States. Perhaps the recipe for a

good productive F.F.A. Chapter, submitted by the Delphi F.F.A. Chapter to "The Newsletter," best illustrates the Indiana F.F.A. as well as the National F.F.A. associations and the reason for their success.

Ingredients: One intelligent group of officers.
 One -smooth executive committee.
 One interested adviser.
 Several dozen "good eggs," not hard-boiled.

Mixing: Mix with -A barrel of fun
 Plenty of common sense
 A generous amount of diligence, service far-sightedness, and cooperation
 An unlimited supply of tact.
 Sprinkle it with--Humor.
 Add plenty of--Pepper.
 Equal amounts of pull and push.

Method: Use a light but firm hand and stir with enthusiasm.
 Use soft soap on members; rub it in--there is nothing like lubrication to prevent friction.
 Keep members in a warm atmosphere of cordiality until

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