

History of 4-H Club Work in Alaska

1930 to 1948

1930

Boys and girls 4-H club work in Alaska began July 1, 1930, when W. A. Lloyd of the Extension Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C., visited Alaska and organized the Extension Service of the Alaska Agricultural College and School of Mines. Dr. Charles E. Bunnell, President of the School, was the first Director of Extension Service and served without salary. Mr. George W. Gasser, Head of the Agriculture Department, was the first Assistant Director of Agriculture; and Mrs. Lydia Fohn-Hansen, Head of the Home Economics Department, was the first Assistant Director of Home Economics. Both assistants were only part-time workers for the Extension Service, and since it was already July and school would begin again in the fall, there was not time to lose. Accordingly, Mr. Gasser and Mrs. Fohn-Hansen, accompanied by Mr. Lloyd, made a trip to Southeastern Alaska by rail, visiting communities along the way to give demonstrations and talk with the people about Extension work.

The "Golden Heart Garden Club" of Fairbanks was the

first club to blaze the 4-H trail. This club was made up of 12 boys with Nellie Landon Grandison (Mrs. Peter Grandison) club leader, in which capacity she served in this same club for many years, being presented with a Certificate of Appreciation in 1940 after 10 years of leadership service. A few days later a group of 15 Fairbanks girls, some of them Indian girls, organized the "Golden Heart 4-H Sewing Club," led by Mrs. Anne Crites.

During the first six months of 1930 there were organized in addition to the two Fairbanks clubs already mentioned, one club at Matanuska, one at the Eklutna School (sewing), two at Anchorage, and one at the Jesse Lee Home in Seward (sewing). By the end of the year seven more clubs were organized, which included one at Wrangell (sewing), one at Ketchikan, one at Petersburg, and one at Cordova, making a total of 14 clubs and 163 members for the year. The demonstration teams were coached at Fairbanks for the Tanana Valley Fair.

1931

On April 1st Ross Sheely succeeded Mr. Gasser, who resigned as Assistant Director of Agriculture.

Club work was organized in 10 different communities of Alaska with an enrollment of 229, 53 boys and 176 girls, and 16 organized clubs. Three 4-H judging teams

were trained. During the first few years the Director of Extension Service took charge of club work throughout the Territory and most of the work carried on consisted of gardening, baking, and sewing.

1932

The Extension Service staff increased to four with the addition of Dr. Jules B. Loftus as Extension Veterinarian.

From 1932 to 1935 the enrollment in 4-H work varied from 80 to 170 members. A number of clubs were organized in Indian and Eskimo villages along the Yukon and Kuskokwim Rivers in northern Alaska. At Noorvik, located on the Kobuk River and well within

the Arctic Circle, 21 little Eskimo girls joined a sewing club and did excellent work. Their leader was Mildred W. Hemsing. They held 12 meetings each year, their officers were efficient, and complete reports were sent to the Extension office after each meeting. Another active club organized in 1932 was the Tshaleanka Sewing Club located on the lower Kuskokwim River. From the minutes of this club we have taken the following statements: "We study 'Robert's Rules of

Order'. It is hard for us to understand. We will practice. It will be easier soon." A total of 12 clubs were

organized with a membership of 168.

1933

Ross Sheely replaced President Charles E. Burnell, who resigned as Director of the Extension Service. In July of this year the Matanuska Experiment Station was transferred to the Alaska Agricultural College and School of Mines.

The Eklutna 4-H Sewing Club sent an exhibit of Indian rugs made by members of the club to the Pacific Livestock Show at Portland, Oregon. Two judging teams were trained.

1934

Miss Madge Reese, Field Agent for the Western Section, was the first representative from the Washington office to visit the Alaska Extension Service since Mr. Lloyd's visit in 1930. The Alaska Agricultural College and School of Mines now

operated two experiment stations which formerly were th U.S. Experiment Stations.

A 4-H garden exhibit was held in Fairbanks in September.

1935

On June 30th the Alaska Agricultural College and School of Mines became the University of Alaska. It was during this year also that the Alaska Rural Rehabilitation Corporations with its many colonists came into the Matanuska Valley. Mr. Sheely was loaned to the Alaska Rehabilitation Project in the Matanuska Valley and resigned his position as Director of the Extension Service on October 25th. He was replaced by Lorin T. Oldroyd in December.

A great many boys and girls came to the famous Matamuska Valley from the States. Because of its being so late when they arrived, very little organized club work could be carried out although some of the girls did some canning and a little sewing. Mr. Shelly and Mrs. Fohn-Hansen spent most of the summer of 1935 with the colonists in the Matanuska Valley and completed plans for extensive 4-H club work in 1936.

1936

In April, Joseph T. Flakne, former Superintendent of the Fairbanks Experiment Station, was appointed District Agricultural Agent for the Matamuska Valley, and Ruth D. Armand, District Home Demonstration Agent for the same district. In February Miss Ruth Peck succeeded Mrs. Fohn-Hansen, who resigned as Home Demonstration Leader.

Mr. Sheely and Dr. Loftus made infrequent visits to some parts of the Matamuska Valley to pay farm and home calls and to assist the homesteaders in making a living, but because the number of Extension workers was small, the Territory large, and the population scattered, very little organized work among men and 4-H club members was attempted in the Southwestern District; however, eight 4-H clubs were organized with

a total membership of 38 boys and 80 girls. Thirty-six of the 38 boys were taking 4-H club work for the first time also, consequently the work had to start from the absolute bottom. Leaders who had had previous 4-H training were not available. Leaders of any sort were difficult to obtain. This first real 4-H club organization in the Matanuska Valley was accomplished by Miss Ruth DeArmand and Miss Ruth Peck. The forerunner of our present annual Round-up was held in Fairbanks with 55 members and four leaders present. Altogether there were 338 members enrolled in 4-H clubs in the Territory, 285 of which completed. The Director felt it would be easy to enroll 1,000 members if the Extension Service could furnish supervision. Alaska 4-H clubs were heard over the air for the first time when the Fairbanks clubs broadcast over KFAR in Fairbanks.

1937

Miss Ruth Peck resigned as Home Demonstration Leader and Ethel McDonald succeeded her on October 12th. Another resignation was that of the District Agent in the Matanuska Valley, Mr. Joseph Flackne. His place was filled by the appointment of I.M.C. Anderson. Mrs. Florence Syverud became the first District Home Demonstration Agent in Southeastern Alaska on August 2nd. The offices of the Director of

Extension and Director of Experiment Stations were combined on July 1st and Mr. Lorin T. Oldroyd took charge of both.

It was during 1937 that King's Lake Camp in Southwestern District was opened for the benefit of the people in the community, but the first really successful 4-H camp did not take place until the next year.

1938

Dr. Jules Loftus resigned as Extension Veterinarian to become Superintendent of the Petersburg Fur Farm. I.M.C. Anderson was half-time Livestock Specialist for the Extension Service in cooperation with the Experiment Stations, and directed 4-H club work for the boys. Howard Estelle became District Agricultural Agent in the Matanuska Valley. Ruth De Armand resigned on September 1st and J. Hazel Zimmerman was appointed to fill her place as District Home Demonstration Agent in the Matanuska Valley.

The Home Demonstration Leader became responsible for the leadership of 4-H club work. The President of the University invited the 4-H clubs to hold the annual Round-Up at the University of Alaska the latter part of

July. There were 25 leaders and 160 members present, some traveling more than 500 miles to attend. This meeting proved very successful. A 4-H Club Leader's Council was organized in Anchorage and Fairbanks. Recreation camps were held in the Matanuska Valley and at Anchorage for the first time. This year saw a total of 46 clubs in the Territory with a total membership of 382. The farthest south club was at Ketchikan, the farthest north club at Candle, the farthest west clubs at Alaknagik and Bethel, and the greatest massing was in the Interior. In the Southwestern District the work was carried on to include the remainder of the district to Anchorage, Seward, Seldovia, Homer, and way points.

1939

Miss Zimmerman succeeded in organizing a large number of clubs in Southwestern Alaska, the Kenai Peninsula, the Matanuska Valley, and the Tanana Valley. A few clubs carried out their projects through correspondence. The Southwestern District alone had 33 clubs with 118 boys and 190 girls. Much of the District Agent's time was given to 4-H work. Th

annual Round-up planned for this year had to be cancelled because of a measles epidemic in the Matanuska Valley. The Territory boasted of a total of 52 clubs and 504 members. A 4-H Leader's Council was organized in th Matanuska Vally and Anchorage, and since then in Seward and the Tanana Valley.

1940

Miss Ethel McDonald , Home Demonstration Leader, resigned May 30th and Lydia Fohn-Hansen returned to the Extension Service as Specialist in Clothing and Handicrafts and to fill Miss McDonald's place as Home Demonstration Leader. In November the District Home Demonstration Agent in the Matanuska Valley, Miss J. Hazel-Zimmerman was placed in charge of 4-H

club work in the Territory with headquarters at Anchorage. On December 1st she was appointed Territorial 4-H club leader to direct club work in the Territory and act as Home Demonstration Agent for the Kenai Peninsula. Dr. . F. Graves was appointed Extension Veterinarian in December to fill the vacancy left by the resignation of Dr. Jules Loftus in 1938.

The annual Round-up was held with 142 members and leaders present. Both boys and girls club camps were held at King's Lake. There were 68 organized clubs claimed for the Territory and an enrollment of 577 -

337 girls and 240 boys. Out of this number 374 completed their work. 4-H club work was under the leadership of the Home Demonstration Leader until July 1st.

1941

Miss Mae Stephenson succeeded Miss Zimmerman as District Home Demonstration Agent in the Matanuska Valley and Harold W. Rice succeeded Howard Estelle as District Agricultural Agent in the Matanuska Valley and had charge of boys club work in the Southwestern District. The Southwestern District office was closed on the recommendation of W. A. Lloyd, who felt a full-time 4-H Club Leader for the Territory was more urgently needed than a District Home Demonstration Agent in Southeastern Alaska. Dr. E. F. Graves resigned as Extension Veterinarian on April 1st to become Territorial Veterinarian.

4-H Club Sunday was observed in Palmer this year. The first 4-H Banquet was held in connection with Achievement Day. Mrs. B. J. Bingle and Priscilla Miller were the first Alaska representatives attending the National 4-H Camp in Washington, D.C. Priscilla was a member of the North Star 4-H Club in Matanuska. This year there was a total of 67 clubs in the Territory with 576 members enrolled and 83 leaders in charge. Emphasis was placed on the production and preservation of food.

1942

The Territorial total was 54 clubs, 69 leaders and 605 members, with 486 completing. Four hundred and one

members enrolled in the food production and conservation program, of which 283 completed.

1943

Harry W. Cheek became Assistant to the Director but resigned in October. Lola Tilly, Head of the University Home Economics Department, became Home Demonstration Agent for the Tanana Valley. Harold W. Rice resigned as District Agricultural Agent in the Matanuska Valley in April to join the Armed Services, his place being filled by W. M. Rogers in June. Helen Maugham became a temporary Assistant Home Demonstration Agent in the Matanuska Valley, starting

December 1st. Mae Stephenson resigned October 23rd as District Home Demonstration Agent in the Matanuska Valley.

There was no Round-up this year. Local club camps were held instead. 4-H work showed a gain by increasing to 61 clubs, 66 leaders, 611 members, and 564 completions.

1944

Miss Mae Stephenson started work as the Southeastern District Home Demonstration Agent, reopening the office which had been closed in 1941. Helen Maugham, the temporary agent serving in the Matanuska Valley, resigned February 28th and was succeeded by Mrs. Anna Diamond who also served temporarily from April 1st to May 30th. From June 15th to August 15th Mrs. Emma C. King, another temporary

assistant, worked in the Matanuska Valley until the arrival in August of Miss Francis Bryne, who became the permanent District Home Demonstration Agent in the Matanuska Valley. Mrs. Lavee Wood was a full-time emergency worker helping Mrs. Fohn-Hansen, and Mrs. Tilly was employed for three months during the summer when she was not occupied with school duties. Mr. W. R. Carter was an emergency

Agricultural Agent who gave some help with victory gardens.

1944 was the Territory's banner year for 4-H Clubs. There were 86 clubs and 966 members, 407 boys and 559 girls, with 635 completing.

1945

The vacancy created by the resignation of Miss Stephenson in southeastern Alaska in November of 1944 was filled by the appointment of Miss Imogene Ward in February, 1945, with headquarters at Ketchikan. Miss Elizabeth Crites, a recent graduate of the University of Alaska, was appointed Assistant Home Demonstration Leader and Home Agent for the Tanana Valley on June 1st. Upon his release from the Armed Services, Harold W. Rice became Assistant to the Director in November and with the resignation of Miss Zimmerman he also became Territorial 4-H Club Leader with headquarters at the University. In November Francis Byrne resigned as District Home Demonstration Agent in th Matanuska Valley and W.

Rogers resigned as District Agricultural Agent in the same area.

A territorial membership of 280 boys and 453 girls gave a total of 733 members, with 611 completing. There were 83 clubs. Twenty-seven per cent of the total budget, or \$9,000, was spent on 4-H club work. Two \$50 bonds were awarded in the Southwestern District to two 4-H garden club members. Lynn Sandvik of Palmer won one bond with the best farm garden, and Jerry Till of Anchorage won the other with the best home garden. Jerry Till's story for this year is the best the Territory has produced to date (1948) in any project.

1946

Miss Margaret Martin succeeded Miss Bryne as District Home Demonstration Agent in the southwestern District on February 1st with headquarters in Anchorage. Robert Kessler succeeded W. Rogers as District Agricultural Agent in the Matanuska Valley in January. Edith Bablutsel became Assistant Territorial 4-H Club Leader in the University office on July 1st. Harold Rice reigned in October to accept a position at the Matanuska Experiment Station, which left the supervision of 4-H work to be shared by Directory Oldroyd and Mrs. Fohn-Hansen. Miss Ward resigned as District Home Demonstration Agent in Southeastern Alaska.

The totals for the Territory were 52 clubs and 519 members, of which 151 were boys and 368 girls. The

first Round-up since the war was held at the University with 80 members and leaders present. 4-H club work showed quite definitely the inroads made upon it by Teen Town and Scout organizations which sprang up throughout the Territory at the close of the war. A Junior Territorial 4-H Council was organized for the purpose of assisting leaders and district agents. The first officers were Audrey Ann Woods, President; Lynn Sandvik, Vice-President; Sanna Urie, Secretary-Treasurer; and Richard Dangler, Reporter. The first members (representatives from each town) were Julia Weikuluk, Eklutna; Barbara Chandler, Skagway; Richard Eidem, Fairbanks; Dick Baldwin, Anchorage; Myra Ann Graber, Homer; and Charlotte Williams, Fort Yukon.

1947

Miss Margaret Martin resigned in July and her place was filled in November by Miss Marilyn Johnson. Miss Mary Robinson was appointed to succeed Miss Ward in Southeastern Alaska in September. This time the office was located at Petersburg instead of Ketchikan.

There were 37 clubs organized in the Territory; 412 members enrolled and 331 completions. For the first

time in its history the Territory was represented at the National 4-H Club Congress in Chicago from November 30th to December 4th. Trip awards in three contests and bond awards in six contests were extended to Alaska 4-H club members by various companies:

Contest and Donor:

Poultry, Swift & Company

- District Winner and Award: Richard Dangler, Seward, and John Boswell, Fairbanks, both received medals.
- Territorial Winner and Award: Richard Dangler, Seward, received a trip to Chicago.

Contest and Donor

Dairy Foods Demonstration, Kraft Cheese Company

- Winner and Award: Gloria Smith, Palmer, received a medal at the district level as an individual winner and also received a \$50 bond as the Territorial winner.
- Phyllis Dangler, Seward, received a medal at the district level as a team winner and also received a \$50 bond as the Territorial winner.

Contest and Donor

4-H Girl's Record Project, Montgomery Ward & Co.

- District Winner and Award: Richard Dangler, Seward, received medal.
- Territorial Winner and Award: Edona Myers, Seward, received a \$100 bond.

There were no entries in these contests from Southeastern Alaska because a new agent had not yet been appointed to fill the vacancy caused by the resignation of Miss Ward in 1946. All of the winners in these contests were from Southwestern Alaska except one, John Boswell, who represented the Interior.

By the end of 1947 there were 35 clubs in the Territory and 410 members. This small number was due to the fact that Southeastern Alaska had been without an agent for a year and only three clubs were organized late in the year when Miss Robinson arrived to open the office in Petersburg. The projects offered have gradually increased in number from merely Gardening, Baking, and Clothing, to include Meal Preparation, Knitting, Handicrafts, Puppets, Child Care, Camp Cookery, Canning, Yard Improvement, Poultry, Rabbits, Calf, and Potatoes. The native village at Unalakleet was the first one to go all out for 4-H club work under the direction of the Native Service teachers, Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Berry. They attracted attention of many clubs and 4-H boosters in the States when an article about their club appeared in the January, 1948 issue of the "Country Gentleman".

SUMMARY

Statistics:

- 4-H club work started in Alaska in 1930.
- The Golden Heart Garden Club in Fairbanks was the first 4-H club in Alaska.
- The first Round-up was held in 1936.
- 1944 was the banner year for 4-H club work - 86 clubs, 966 members, 636 completions.
- Unalakleet was the first native village to go all out for 4-H club work - 1947.

Personnel:

- Dr. Charles E. Bunnell - 1st Director of Extension
- Mr. Ross Sheely - 2nd Director of Extension
- Mr. Lorin T. Oldroyd - 3rd Director of Extension
- Lynn O. Hollist - 4th Director of Extension
- Allan H. Mick - 5th Director of Extension
- Mr. George W. Gasser - 1st male Extension worker
- Mrs. Lydia Fohn-Hansen - 1st female Extension worker and 1st 4-H club worker
- Miss J. Hazel Zimmerman - 1st Territorial 4-H Club Leader
- Mrs. Harold W. Rice - 2nd Territorial 4-H Club Leader

- Miss Edith Bablutsel - 1st Assistant Territorial 4-H Club Leader
- Mrs. Peter Grandison - 1st local 4-H club leader in Territory (15 years of service)

Outstanding 4-H Club Members:**1941:**

Priscilla Ellen Miller, Matanuska. First representative from Alaska to attend the National 4-H Club Camp in Washington, D.C.

1944:

Donald Irwin, Palmer. Alaska's winner in Rural Electrification Contest. Received a \$100 bond.

1945:

- Henry Kircher, Palmer. Made a profit of about \$1,000 on his garden. He harvested 78 crates of celery. (It was so tall and well developed that special crates had to be made in which to market it. Ten stalks filled a crate.) The crates of celery weighed about three tons. Twenty crates of cauliflower weighing about 900 pounds were also produced, plus five and one-half crates of lettuce

and three crates of onions.

- Evelyn Foster, Palmer. Winner in Better Farm & Home Methods Electric Contest. Received \$50 bond.
- Lynn Sandvik, Palmer. Winner in Better Farm & Home Methods Electric Contest. Received \$25 bond.
- Shirley Monroe. Received \$25 bond in Better Farm & Home Methods Electric Contest.

Garden Contest Winners:

- 1st - Jerry Till, Anchorage, \$50 bond for best home garden.
- 2nd - Joanne Norene, Anchorage, home garden.
- 3rd - Lynn Sandvik, Palmer, \$50 bond for best farm garden.
- 4th - Henry Kircher, Matanuska, a farm garden.
- 5th - Nick Muller, Matanuska, farm garden.

Jerry Till, Anchorage. 4-H garden story was the best 4-H story ever written in Territory as late as 1948.

1946:

- Lynn Sandvik, Palmer. Winner of Sear's Garden Contest in Southwestern Alaska. Received \$700 from garden products and stored \$125 worth for winter.
- Flo Alice Dinkel, Wasilla. Canned 95 quarts and 105 pints of fruits, vegetables and salmon.
- Richard Ulrichson, Fairbanks. Won 1st prize in Sears' Garden Contest in Interior Alaska.
- Lavon Nelson, Palmer. Canned 200 quarts of different foods.

1947:

- Dick Baldwin, Anchorage. Made \$1,500 with a plow and tractor plowing gardens for others. He was able to buy his tractor with the start given him by his 4-H garden.
- Lynn Sandvik, Palmer. Won trip to Portland, Oregon on garden produce exhibited at Fair.

First Alaska Representatives to attend National 4-H Club Congress in Chicago:

- Richard Dangler, Seward. Winner of Poultry Contest for Southwestern District and Territory. Received medal and trip to Chicago.
- Flo Alice Dinks, Wasilla. Winner of Clothing Achievement Contest for Southwestern District and Territory. Received medal and trip to Chicago.
- Lynn Sandvik, Palmer. Winner of Garden Contest for Southwestern District and Territory. Received medal and trip to Chicago.

Other contest winners:

- Phyllis Dangler, Seward, and her brother, Richard Dangler, Seward. Winners of Team Dairy Foods Demonstration for Southwestern District and Territory,. Received \$50 bond each and a medal apiece.
- Gloria Smith, Palmer. Winner of Individual Dairy Foods Demonstration for Southwestern District and Territory. Received medal and \$50 bond.
- Edona Myers, Seward. Winner of Girl's Record Contest for Southwestern District and Territory. Received medal and \$100 bond.
- John Boswell, Fairbanks. Winner of Poultry Contest for Interior District. Received medal.

1948:

Second group of Alaska representatives to attend the National 4-H Club Congress in Chicago...

- Jack Bradway, Fairbanks. Winner of Garden Contest for 4th District and Territory. Received medal and trip to Chicago.
- Phyllis Dangler, Seward. Winner of Clothing Achievement Contest for 3rd District and Territory. Received medal and trip to Chicago. Also winner of Home Improvement Contest for 3rd District and Territory, but because she won the trip in Clothing Achievement she was not eligible for another Territorial award. Received medal only.
- Donald Dinkel, Wasilla. Winner of Poultry Contest for 3rd District and Territory. Received medal and trip to Chicago.
- Richard Dangler, Seward. Winner of Food Preparation Contest for 3rd District and Territory. Received medal and right to compete with other State winners for a national scholarship. Since he received a trip last year, he was not eligible for another trip as Territorial winner.

Other contest winners:

- Dick Baldwin, Anchorage. Winner of the Garden Contest for 3rd District. Received medal.
- Flo Alice Dinkel, Wasilla. Winner of Girls' Record Contest for 3rd District and Territory. Received medal and \$100 bond.
- Francis Dinkel, Wasilla. Winner of Meat Animal (Swine) Contest for 3rd District and Territory. Received medal and 17 jewel Elgin pocket watch.
- Genevieve Deland, Palmer. Winner of Dairy Animal Contest for 3rd District and Territory. Received medal only, since she was not 14 years of age on January 1, 1948, which disqualified her for Territorial award.
- Lynn Sandvik, Palmer. Continued his garden project for the 8th year in succession, with a

garden of 8-1/2 acres. During this nine year period the income from his garden has brought him \$3,680. He has made a total of 87 exhibits and won 87 ribbons. Because he won the Garden Contest last year and received a trip to Chicago, he was not eligible to enter the same contest again this year.

- Mary Ohkiaya, Alma Teetuh, and Clara Siverly of Mt. Edgumbe, were invited to give a demonstration at the Yakima Fair in Washington State. They demonstrated fish preservation by native methods.

Notes:

This document was transcribed and interpreted by members of the 4-H National History Preservation Program from a photocopy of a report done on a manual typewriter in 1948. While every effort was made to maintain accuracy, there may be errors in names and places due to the poor quality of the original document.