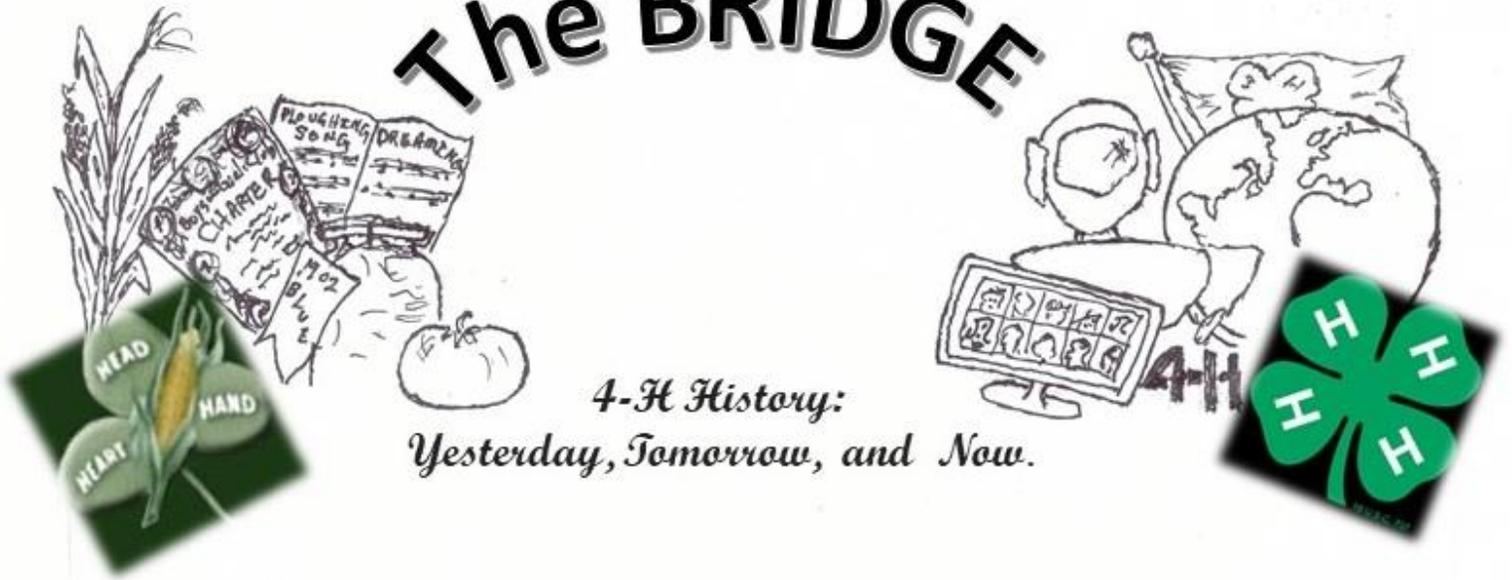


The BRIDGE



*4-H History:
Yesterday, Tomorrow, and Now.*

Vol. 12, No. 4

November, 2023

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In Search of the Oldest 4-H Clubs

By the 4-H BRIDGE Editorial Board

The 4-H BRIDGE Editorial Board meets once a month to make sure we have a newsletter produced each quarter. Usually, the hour is filled with creative ideas that never seem to make it into an actual newsletter, but we do enjoy the give and take! However, here is one of those ideas that actually made it! We are in search of the OLDEST 4-H Club still in operation. So, we ask: is that YOUR 4-H CLUB?

It all started during our July 2023 meeting. Right in the middle of the meeting, **Tom Tate**, N4-HHPT Chair and BRIDGE Editorial Board Member, informed his fellow members that the N4-HHPT webpage received a question from a New Jersey 4-H Club asking if they are, indeed, the oldest 4-H Dairy Club in the U.S. having organized in 1923. Checking our website, Tom found several old 4-H clubs mentioned, but do they still meet? Then he found a story online that identifies another 4-H Dairy Club that is one year older and IS still meeting.

The article appeared in The Delmarva Farmer on July 8, 2022 (<https://americanfarmpublications.com/kent-clover-calf-4-h-club-turns-100/>). It told the story about a 4-H dairy club that celebrated its 100th birthday last year, having formed in 1922. It goes by the name "Kent Clover Calf 4-H Club". The name says "calf", but they are dairy through and through. There was nothing left for Tom to do but to respond back to the 4-H Club in New Jersey and give them the "old" bad news.

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But that got the Board thinking. During their August 2023 meeting, that “old” issue was raised anew. “If there were two such clubs in existence for over 100 years, there are probably more! After all, this is a BIG country!” the board members reasoned. And so, the word went out. Tell us about your 4-H oldsters. And the responses came flowing in!

Justin Crowe, Tennessee 4-H, responded saying, “Our first 4-H club was in Benton County, TN. Our first member was Mertie Hardin.” Now we didn’t ask about who the first member was, so that was an interesting piece of news. However, Justin did not tell us what year Mertie’s club began. So, the search continued.

Lupita Fabregas Janeiro, Missouri 4-H, informed us they had a 4-H Club that organized in Iron County in 1914. Then she told us that not only was it the first Missouri 4-H Club, the Ironton 4-H Club was still in operation!

Not to be outdone, **Jessica Jens** of Wisconsin 4-H, said their first 4-H Club formed in 1914, called itself the Linn 4-H Club of Walworth County, and then continued to meet each year since, too!

Turns out that Florida also has a 4-H Club that formed in 1914 and is still continuing on into today! **Stacey Ellison**, Florida 4-H, said it is the Barrineau Park 4-H Club and they have been meeting in Escambia County since 1914.

Lisa Phelps, Maine 4-H, says Maine’s longest running 4-H Club is the Four Leaf Clover 4-H Club of Shapleigh, Maine. She didn’t say when they started, but it wasn’t their first. Lisa said Maine’s first club formed in 1913. It was a potato club for boys and was organized by F. H. B. Heald. He called it the Scarborough Agriculture Club. Plus, Lisa told us 4-H was not just about boys in Maine. A few months after Heald’s club formed, some girls in Macwahac, Aroostook County, started a club under the leadership of Miss Ava Chadbourne. They called it the Home Economics Club. That club formed on January 23, 1914. If you visit the University of Maine’s campus in Orono, you’ll see one of the buildings is named Chadbourne Hall. It was named after Miss Ava Chadbourne.

By our count, that is only 5 of the 56 U. S. states, District of Columbia, and territories, leaving 51 more to go. What is your longest-running 4-H Club and what was your first 4-H Club? Now that is history inquiring 4-H’ers want to know. Send your response to: Editor@4-HHistory.com.



4-H Wireless Clubs (in the 1920’s),

By Larry L. Krug, From the pages of the N4-HHPT website

Editor’s Note: When I was a 4-H Member (PA 1967-1977), a local radio station (WAZL) aired a 5-minute program called the Penn State Extension Moment. I believe it was aired once a week. It was shared by the four Luzerne County Extension Agents, each taking a show. Penn State Extension did not have 4-H Agents at that time. The Extension Agents shared the 4-H work, too, and our end of the county was covered by Al Skala. I don’t recall if it was his idea or mine, but one of us thought it might be an interesting idea to have 4-H Members take one of his shows each month and make it theirs. So, in November of 1972, I organized a group of 4-H’ers into a club we called the Lower Luzerne County 4-H Radio Club. Our project was to write and record that monthly 5-minute show - any shows we missed, Al had to do, himself, sometimes on VERY short notice - and we did that through 1977. We thought we were very special when our friends told us at school, “Hey! I heard you on the radio!” I have always thought that our 4-H Club was something special and unique, until someone told me about the following article that they found posted on the National 4-H History Preservation Team’s website! Who was it that once said, and probably not for the first time, that there was nothing ever new under the sun? To read all the history about radio and 4-H presentations, visit: <https://4-hhistorypreservation.com/History/Radio/>

¹Ecclesiastes 1:9

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When 4-H history books discuss the early subject-oriented clubs they often place their emphasis on corn clubs, canning clubs, pig clubs and other similar specialty clubs. However, as early as 1920... perhaps even earlier, there were also 4-H wireless clubs (or radio clubs) in existence.

The April 1922 issue of "Farm Boys and Girls Leader" has a short feature about one of these clubs - the Ocean County Wireless Club in Toms River, New Jersey:

Wireless Concerts Given by Boys' Club Members

"A wireless concert was given not long ago by members of the Ocean County Wireless Club, for the entertainment of the Farm Bureau, at Toms River, N.J. This club, which was organized by the county club agent, had succeeded in getting a central receiving station installed in the courthouse. The program, which was heard by the entire audience by means of an amplifier, came from Newark, N. J. It consisted of operatic solos, orchestral selections, a speech, and the market report for the day. At 10 p.m. the audience set their watches by standard radio time given out officially from Arlington, Va, near Washington, D.C.

"This central receiving station is one of the achievements the boys in the wireless club have been working toward for some months. The club was organized shortly after the United States Department of Agriculture began sending out market reports by wireless. Under the general supervision of the county club agent it has developed to a membership of 52 boys in all stages of wireless knowledge and equipment. Their original intention was merely to broadcast market reports, but it soon became evident that a central station was needed that would take high wave messages that could be relayed at a lower wave length to those having small sets.

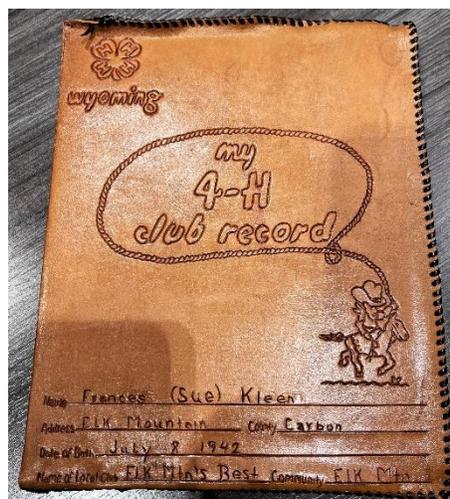
"As the club acquired better apparatus it was able to expand its activities and since the initial concert the boys have taken a complete wireless about the county to different community meetings and giving as many people as possible the thrill of hearing music that is being played miles away, and the satisfaction of receiving authoritative market information of value in the farming business."



A Visit with Sue



Bo Ryles, a member of the N4=HHPT, recently visited one of the team's founders and first editor of this newsletter, **Sue Benedetti**, at her home in Oregon. Sue was thrilled to hear that the team is still actively working on gathering and preserving the history of 4-H. She reminisced about the team's formation and expressed how crucial it is for this work to continue.



During their visit, Sue shared her 4-H Member Record with Bo. She was a member of the Elk Mountain's Best 4-H Club. The record is dated July 8, 1942. Just goes to prove, once a 4-H'er, always a 4-H'er!

Sue, we miss you.

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Telling History or Selling History? Perhaps a Little of Both!

Telling:

Maybe you heard, but there is a history of 4-H being researched and written. In our May issue of this year, we announced that the National 4-H History Preservation Team has made one of its goals to be the writing of a new history of 4-H. Since 4-H has been well documented from its start to 1980, this new book is documenting its history from 1980 to today.

N4-HHPT members **Jo Turner**, Missouri, and **Ron Drum**, Pennsylvania, have been contracted by National 4-H Council to make this book a reality. They, in turn, have recruited 25 present or former 4-H professionals to help them conduct the research that is required for this book. These Research Contributors are interviewing key players in the field they are studying and reviewing reports and other data written and collected during the past 40+ years to be able to tell the 4-H story. The research the RC's produce will be used by Turner and Drum when they write the final manuscript of the new book.

The project was conceived by the N4-HHPT in 2019. On November 3, 2021, National 4-H Council committed to funding the project. Shortly thereafter, N4-HHPT 80-20 Project Co-Chairs, **Dr. Nancy Valentine** and **Ron Drum**, organized an Editorial Board. The Editorial Board developed the foundational structure upon which the book is being developed.

Other members of the History book team are **Dr. Bo Ryles**, N4-HHPT member and National 4-H Council's Project Liaison and **Leah Wooddall**, Project Manager. The plan is to have the book completed no later than April 2025.

Of course, writing a history of 4-H is not the only goal of the N4-HHPT. Among the Team's other goals are the archiving of historic 4-H materials, hosting a 4-H History website, outreach to state 4-H program leaders, and keeping the 4-H Community up to date on all the 4-H "old" news through this newsletter.

Selling:



The N4-HHPT exhibit at the Big E.

Big E was held September 15 – October 1 and it always takes place on the ESE Fairgrounds in West Springfield, Massachusetts. Spearheaded by Massachusetts State 4-H Leader (Retired) and N4-HHPT member, **Linda Horn**, the Big E N4-HHPT exhibit was a big success.

This fall, the N4-HHPT used two opportunities to tell the "world" how well the team is doing on achieving these goals and how everyone can be involved. One was an information booth exhibited at New England's Eastern States Exposition, better known as The Big E. The Big E is a state fair-like event that the six New England states and New York participate in. This year's



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Building on the big Big E success, the Team did it again, at the National Association of Extension 4-H Youth Development Professionals Conference held this year in Pittsburgh, PA October 10-12. The photo above to the right is the Team's NAE4-HYDP Conference exhibit, ready to welcome all 4-H Educators who want to learn some 4-H History and/or want to join the team. Our readers may notice some similarities in the two photos. That is because Massachusetts 4-H Educator **Kim Pond** hand carried items from the Big E exhibit to the exhibit in Pittsburgh.

This exhibit was also a big success. Of course, it helps to have a great location in the exhibit hall! The N4-HHPT's booth was just across the aisle from National 4-H Council's prime location as can be seen in this photo, taken from inside the booth and looking out at the scene across the aisle.



It also helps to have great staffing. In the photo below, we see N4-HHPT Chair **Tom Tate** (left) and N4-HHPT Member **Bo Ryles** (right) explaining one of the finer points of history to a conference attendee.



We have no word from Tom on if that conference attendee DID join the N4-HHPT, but YOU can. If you'd like to get involved, or just want more information about the Team, send a request to: Editor@4-HHistory.com.

You, too, can be a part of history!



4-H Fun FACT

In our previous edition, we interviewed New York 4-H Alum, Anita Hodson, the woman who helped President Dwight D. Eisenhower cut the ribbon and open the National 4-H Center on June 16, 1959. We also told you she spent her career as an Emergency Room doctor. What we didn't tell you was she had two children. Elke, married to Alex, earned a PhD from MIT and now serves her country working for the United States Dept of Energy. Tim holds a BS in Electrical Engineering from University of Pennsylvania. He is now sailing a tall ship, the Kalmar Nickel, out of Wilmington. Both are in their 40's. Plus there are two granddaughters, June (Juniper), age six and Tillie (Matilda), age four. Anita says that "the joys of parenting have been a blessing and are woven into all the career facets of my life."

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Tell Us Your 4-H History Story

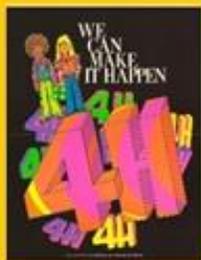
Share your photos and stories of the history YOU made in 4-H!

We know you've made 4-H History. So, tell us about it! The world wants to know YOUR 4-H history!

Send your articles to: Editor@4-HHistory.com

Submissions longer than 500 words must include a 500-words or less summary. The in-depth articles will be posted to our web-site and linked to the summary that will appear in the newsletter.

Thanks for reading The BRIDGE. Look for our next issue February 15, 2024!



The BRIDGE Editorial Board:

*Sue Benedetti, Gwen El-Sawi, Tom Tate, Jane Jopling, Bonita Williams, Betty Gottler,
Linda Horn, Ron Drum*

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