

The BRIDGE



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



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Full Circle Moment

By: Jeanine C. Goldsmith, Sr. Director, Grant Administration, National 4-H Council

Editor's Note: On Aug. 30, 1890, Benjamin Harrison, the 23rd President of the United States, signed the second Morrill Act into law. The first Morrill act was signed in 1862 by Abraham Lincoln. It created the Land-grant University system. The Morrill Act of 1890 created a similar system of LGUs for Black people. The 4-H program is produced and conducted by the LGUs.

A national celebration commemorating the 135th anniversary of the signing of the Second Morrill Act was held in Washington, D.C. September 9 - 10, 2025. The celebration's theme was "Celebrating Legacy, Growing Opportunities, Inspiring Innovation, and Uplifting Communities." Among the celebration's many participants was National 4-H Council's Sr. Director of Grant Administration, Jeanine Goldsmith. Although not a 4-H member growing up, through her work at National 4-H Council over the last 17 years, Goldsmith has come to develop "a deep appreciation for the impact 4-H has on young people. I strive to continue supporting land-grant universities and their efforts while ensuring Council provides equitable grant opportunities for all." Of her experience attending the 135th anniversary of the signing of the Second Morrill Act, she told us that it was an honor.

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When I started at Council, I didn't know much about 4-H beyond the image of white kids in agriculture. Then I attended my first 1890s conference and realized there were Black kids in 4-H too and Black people who were holding it down in the Ag spaces too. It was truly eye-opening for me.

Fast forward 17 years, last night I had the honor of attending the 135th Anniversary of the Second Morrill Act of 1890. This legislation established dedicated land-grant institutions (the 1890s) for Black students, creating opportunities to attend college and pursue degrees. The celebration recognized 135 years of meaningful contributions these institutions have made in the U.S. and in agriculture.

Through my work at Council, I've partnered with many 1890s institutions and continue to ensure they have opportunities to apply for the grants we offer. In the picture are a few of my 1890s partners—people I've built strong relationships with over the years who keep the youth and communities they serve at heart every day. I'm truly honored to work alongside them.

In the photo, on the left, **Jeanine Goldsmith**. With her are **Dr. Rukeia Draw-Hood** - Executive Director of the Extension Committee on Organization and Policy (ECOP) 4-H Leadership Committee; **Manola Irby** - Assistant Director for Extension/1890 4-H Program Leader with the Alcorn State University Extension Program; and **Dr. Tiffany Franklin** - Vice Chancellor for Extension and Outreach at the Southern University Agricultural Research and Extension Center



1890 Land-grant Universities

The United States has experienced several difficult periods throughout its history as it has grown from a collection of thirteen independent British colonies in the 1770s into the strong, vibrant nation that it is today. One of those difficult periods included the years leading up to, and culminating in, the Civil War, 1861 - 1865. The following is an excerpt from the presently being written, and soon to be published, latest national 4-H History book, a project of the N4-HHP Team.

Another particularly difficult period for the United States closely followed the Civil War's end as the broken nation attempted to reconstruct itself between 1865 and 1900. As the nation reached the 1890's, it found itself once again to be a split nation, this time the split was Black Americans living parallel lives to white Americans, and beside these groups Americans of other races and ethnicities were each trying to find their places as well.

In the North, Extension programs implemented racially mixed or separated programs based on local interest and need. In the South, however, segregation had become "normalized", especially after Congress passed the second Morrill Act, the Morrill Act of 1890.¹ This act created a separate Land-grant system of Black colleges and universities. These Land-grant institutions became known as the "1890's", and their programs, including Extension programs, in theory, equally paralleled those of the "1862's".² In reality, "equality of programs" was another ideal America chased with varying results.

It took some time for the various LGUs to learn how to work together, but today nineteen (19) 1890 LGUs established under the Second Morrill Act of 1890 stand beside, and work together with, the 1862s (established by the first Morrill Act of 1862) and the 1994s (Native American Land-grant institutions) to offer 4-H programs whenever and wherever possible.

The nineteen 1890 LGUs³ are:

- [Alabama A&M University](#)
- [Alcorn State University](#)
- [Central State University](#)
- [Delaware State University](#)
- [Florida A&M University](#)
- [Fort Valley State University](#)
- [Kentucky State University](#)
- [Langston University](#)
- [Lincoln University](#)
- [North Carolina A&T State University](#)
- [Prairie View A&M University](#)
- [South Carolina State University](#)
- [Southern University System](#)
- [Tennessee State University](#)
- [Tuskegee University](#)
- [University of Arkansas Pine Bluff](#)
- [University of Maryland Eastern Shore](#)
- [Virginia State University](#)
- [West Virginia State University](#)

¹ Lawrence, M. (2022, August 30). *Celebrating the second Morrill Act of 1890*. National Institute of Food and Agriculture, United States Department of Agriculture. Retrieved March 18, 2023 from <https://www.nifa.usda.gov/about-nifa/blogs/celebrating-second-morrill-act-1890#:~:text=On%20Aug,in%20agriculture%20and%20mechanical%20arts>.

² Wessel, T. and Wessel, M. (1982). *4-H: An American Idea. 1900 – 1980*. National 4-H Council. p. 165 https://4-hhistorypreservation.com/eMedia/eBooks/4-H_An_American_Idea_1900-1980.pdf

³ <https://www.aplu.org/councils/1890-universities/council-of-1890s-institutions/#:~:text=APLU's%20Council%20of%201890%20University,West%20Virginia%20State%20University>



Did You Know...?

Black History Month began in 1915, 50 years after slavery was abolished in the United States and one year after the passage of the Smith-Lever Act. In 1926 the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH) sponsored a "National Negro History Week." The second week of February was selected to coincide with the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln (Feb. 12) and Frederick Douglass (Feb. 14). President Gerald R. Ford officially recognized Black History Month in 1976. (Excerpted from <http://www.history.com/topics/black-history/black-history-month>)

In North Carolina club work for African American youth began in 1914 with the organization of a group in Sampson County under the leadership of G. W. Herring. Participation grew steadily and by 1945 African American youth participation in North Carolina 4-H exceeded 29,000. "...the 4-H Club Foundation of North Carolina was founded in 1950 in order to raise money for the establishment of a camp for African American boys and girls." (History of 4-H in North Carolina, NCSU Libraries, NC State University)

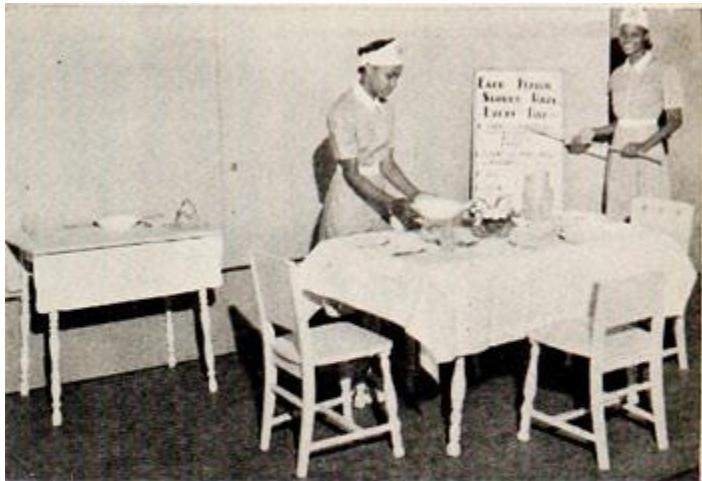
https://www.lib.ncsu.edu/specialcollections/greenngrowing/4H_history.html

West Virginia initiated "camp-outs" in the 1920s for African American youth and had the first African American State 4-H Camp (Camp Washington-Carver), as well as many segregated county camps. Learn about the beginnings of this camp at: <https://www.nps.gov/places/camp-washington-carver.htm> and <https://www.nps.gov/neri/planyourvisit/camp-washington-carver-clifftop-wv.htm> .

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4-H'ers from 11 Southern States participated in the American Negro Exposition (ANE) held in Chicago in the summer of 1940 to celebrate "the 75th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation and the achievements of African Americans." During the exposition 4-H members gave demonstrations on 4-H projects and skills they were learning including sewing, canning, raising chickens and hogs, and peanut farming. More information is available on the ANE at: http://4-hhistorypreservation.com/History/4-H_Promotion/Single_Story.asp?ps=161



Negro farm families are encouraged to grow a balanced menu in their gardens and how to serve a meal. Two Virginia 4-H Club girls, Margaret Thurston and Addie Perkins demonstrate during the exposition.

National 4-H Club News, August 1940

In 1965, for the first time, Black 4-H'ers in South Carolina joined South Carolina white 4-H'ers attending the State 4-H Club Week at Clemson University, the National 4-H Conference in Washington, DC, and the National 4-H Congress in Chicago. Passage of the Civil Rights Act brought changes to 4-H but not without challenges. When separate programs were eliminated, some programs were discontinued until adjustments could be made. (From The History of South Carolina Cooperative Extension Service by Clyde E. Woodall,

You can map significant people, places, and events that help to tell the story of African American 4-H programs and all 4-H programs in your state on the 4-H History Map: https://4-hhistorypreservation.com/History_Map/ and by getting involved in "Voices of 4-H History" at <https://4-hhistorypreservation.com/Voices/>.

The National 4-H History Preservation Team continues to build a repository of historically significant resources that document the history of African American 4-H programs.



Seventy-five Years of Mooing

by Linda R. Horn, Ph.D; former University of Massachusetts 4-H Program Director.

Editor's Note: In 2027, 4-H will celebrate its 125th Anniversary. Are you ready to join the party? Now is the time to start thinking about, and planning, how you will add to the celebration. One way would be to celebrate the 4-H stories of your 4-H History! Tell us the stories about how 4-H has impacted the youth and their families and communities in your area. Here is an example of one such story. Tell us yours.

A seventy-fifth birthday is quite an accomplishment in anyone's life. Imagine all the accolades, memories, and people that would be part of such a celebration. Just such a celebration took place on October 26, 2025, at 4-H Volunteers Bill and Jen Syme's farm, Enfield, Connecticut. They were celebrating the 75th Anniversary of the Merry Moo-ers 4-H Club. During the celebration, photos were shown, memorabilia were shared, stories were told, and food was enjoyed in abundance. Special recognition was given to club alum and long-time volunteer Jack Collins who was celebrating his 60th year as a Connecticut 4-H Volunteer and his 68th year of involvement with the club!



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4-H educator Jen Cushman recognizes Jack Collins for his service to the Merry Moo-ers 4-H Club and Connecticut 4-H.

The Merry Moo-er's 4-H Dairy Club was established in 1950 by the Oliver Stoughton family at their farm in West Suffield, Connecticut. The club was called the "West Suffield Merry Moo-ers 4-H Dairy Club." Many young people from the surrounding area joined and learned animal husbandry, breeding, healthy feed practices, and showmanship. They participated with their animals at local fairs including the Hartford County, Conn. 4-H Fair.

One day, 11-year-old 4-H member Jack Collins learned about the dairy club while strolling through the dairy tent at the Hartford County 4-H fair. Jack belonged to another 4-H club and was at the fair to give a 4-H demonstration on making a hotbed garden. He decided to walk through the dairy tent to see some of his West Suffield Merry Moo-ers 4-H friends who were showing dairy 4-H projects. He was intrigued, having never shown or worked with dairy previously. His new adventure then began.

Jack purchased a six-month-old calf from a farmer in a neighboring town for \$75 and began to attend Merry Moo-ers meetings which, at that time, were held at the farms of various members. Everyone brought snacks, picnics were held, and sometimes an impromptu baseball game was played while lifelong friendships were made.

Eventually the Stoughton family moved to New Hampshire, so club leadership transferred to club alum Betty Biggerstaff and her family who also lived in West Suffield. Nineteen-year-old Jack Collins became the assistant leader. With most of the club members now living in Enfield, the club moved their meetings to their present meeting place, the Enfield Collins Powder Hill Farm and shortened their name to the Merry Moo-er's 4-H Club.

Over the years club membership grew, shrank, and grew again, but the family atmosphere of the club remained. Club members, parents, and friends continued to share their ideas, talents and love with each other. The Merry Moo-ers 4-H Club continues to have a large presence in the Hartford County, Connecticut 4-H Fair, and many members participate annually in the Eastern States Exposition (Big-E) 4-H shows.



Above we see the Merry Moo-ers 4-H Club in 1964 attending the Hartford County 4-H Fair in Connecticut. The person identified as #13 is Club Member Jack Collins. When the photo was taken, the Hartford County 4-H fair was held at

Bradley Field, state-owned land next to Bradley Airport, now called Bradley International Airport, in Windsor Locks, CT. At that time the county fair and the University of Connecticut were leasing the property from the state for \$1.00 per year.

Below we see the Merry Moo-ers 4-H Club of today.



We wish the Moo-ers another 75 years (at least!) of mooing, teaching, sharing, camaraderie, and, especially, learning.



The National 4-H History Preservation Team Update

National 4-H History Preservation Committee: Connecting States and Strengthening Our Shared Story
by Tina Veal, Illinois

The National 4-H History Preservation Committee has been actively engaging with states to strengthen awareness, collaboration, and capacity around preserving the rich history of 4-H. Over the past several months, committee members have focused on connecting with individuals and teams who share a passion for safeguarding 4-H's legacy and ensuring it remains accessible for future generations.

In October, the committee hosted a booth at the NAE4-HYDP Conference in Atlanta, providing an opportunity to connect face-to-face with Extension professionals and volunteers interested in 4-H history preservation. (see photo) These conversations were invaluable and reinforced the strong interest across states in documenting, preserving, and sharing local and state 4-H stories. During the conference, the committee also invited states to identify a primary contact who can help share updates, resources, and opportunities related to history preservation efforts.



*Holding down the fort at the 2025 NAE4-HYDP Conference N4-HHPTeam Booth.
L to R: Ron Drum, Tina Veal, John Rutledge, Kendra Wells, Bo Ryles, Jo Turner*

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Building on that momentum, the committee launched a **4-H History Preservation Orientation Series**. This series was designed to provide an overview of national history preservation efforts, offer practical guidance for preserving materials, and highlight examples of how states are approaching this work through various models and partnerships.

The first Orientation was held via Zoom on January 21, 2026, and was a resounding success. There are **two remaining sessions** in the Orientation Series, and all are encouraged to participate:

Wednesday, February 18, 2026

Register by February 13, 2026

“When in Doubt, Don’t Throw It Out” — A practical look at the many ways 4-H history can be preserved at the local and state levels, including guidelines and resources you can put to use right away.

Wednesday, March 18, 2026

Register by March 13, 2026

Learn from colleagues about partnerships for preserving 4-H history and explore successful models being used in Minnesota, Georgia, and other states.

Register here: <https://form.jotform.com/260028628432050>

We encourage you to stay connected and engaged with the National 4-H History Preservation Team through the following resources:

- **National 4-H History Preservation Team Website:**
<https://4-h.org/about/history/>
- **National 4-H History Facebook Page:**
<https://www.facebook.com/4H.History/>
- **“The Bridge” Newsletter:**
<https://4-hhistorypreservation.com/Newsletter/>
- **National 4-H History Instagram:**
<https://www.instagram.com/4hhistory>

Together, through shared learning and collaboration, we can continue to preserve and celebrate the stories that define 4-H.



4-H Fun FACT

In 1904 P.D. Johnson, a black schoolteacher in Newton County, started the Georgia Negro 4-H program by organizing a corn demonstration garden for sons and their fathers who wanted to learn better corn production methods.

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!

We welcome all stories about our 4-H history. The Editorial Board reviews all submissions and determines if, and when, a submission will be published. Submissions should be approximately 500 words in length. The Editor reserves the right to edit all submissions. The Editor will work with the author when changes are needed. Authors will be asked to review their article and give final approval before it is published.

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Send your articles, questions, and comments to: 4hhistorynews@gmail.com. Please note that this is a **new email address**, different from the address that was listed in previous editions of this newsletter.

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