

# The BRIDGE



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

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## **Historic 4-H Educational Resources available at the National Agricultural Library (NAL)**

By Sarah Lee, Director of Special Programs, NAL; Tom Tate, National Program Leader (Retired), Extension Service, USDA

The United States has five “National” libraries: the Library of Congress (LOC), the National Library of Medicine (NLM), the National Transportation Library (NTL), the National Library of Education (NLE) and the National Agricultural Library (NAL). The NAL is visited annually by educators and researchers from around the world because it is an international treasure that holds one of the world’s largest collections of agriculture and related sciences subject-matter. Much of the institutional memory of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and its partner institutions and agencies is held by the NAL, and available for reference by NAL users. It was established as the USDA’s library by the Organic Act of 1862, signed by Abraham Lincoln.

During the 1970’s (1978-1981) a major reorganization of the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Federal Extension Service (FES), which included the 4-H National Headquarters, occurred forcing 4-H to relocate their significant collection of documents and reference materials to the NAL facilities in Beltsville, Maryland. These collections became the National Extension Repository of Extension and 4-H. Long time FES librarian Elsie Carper helped manage the transition. Today, those



National Agricultural Library, 1970  
Cover of [Extension Service Review](#)  
National Agricultural Library call number:  
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special collections are known as the Elsie Carper Collection. From 1981 through 1994, Extension Service and Land-grant University (LGU) staff worked with NAL staff to integrate boxed materials into the special 4-H collections.

Check out this video:  
“4-H History at the USDA NAL”  
produced by the USDA NAL in  
cooperation with the N4-HHPT.

<https://youtu.be/LmTIZY3uGtA>

In 2008, USDA reorganization struck again. USDA’s national Extension office, then known as the Cooperative State Research Education and Extension Service (CSREES), was transitioned into the National Institute for Food and Agriculture (NIFA). As in previous transitions, program materials were boxed to be moved. Much of the 4-H material was transferred to the National 4-H Center in Chevy Chase, Maryland. A team of volunteers, all members of the National 4-H History Preservation Team (N4-HHPT), tackled the task of improving access to these records.

They sifted through the materials deciding which were most worthy of digitization to make them accessible online. Most of these digitized materials have been posted on the N4-HHPT website, [www.4-hhistorypreservation.com](http://www.4-hhistorypreservation.com), to help 4-H educators and other interested parties benefit from these historic 4-H educational resources.

Around 2016, another USDA reorganization called for NIFA to be relocated from Washington, DC to Kansas City, MO. Once again, reference material and documents related to 4-H Youth Development were transferred to the National 4-H Center for storage. In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic caused many organizations within the U. S. to close their operations, one of them being the National 4-H Center. In 2021, this situation forced National 4-H Council to sell the Center property. Once again, educational materials stored at the Center had to be moved. Currently, more than 100 boxes of 4-H educational materials are stored in a temporary storage facility and remain inaccessible to 4-H Youth Development educators and researchers.

Presently, members of the N4-HHPT are working with NAL Special Collection managers and University of Maryland Library School faculty exploring options for making these 4-H materials accessible again. It will take a major effort to review, sort, and prioritize these materials requiring history to repeat itself. As in the past, 4-H partners at the national, state, and local levels will all be needed to help transition historic 4-H educational resources from their present hard copy and media forms into accessible files housed in locations such as the NAL and the 4-H History Preservation Website.



The following article is reprinted from the NAL website:

<https://www.nal.usda.gov/exhibits/speccoll/exhibits/show/manuscript-collections/elsie-carper-collection-on-ext>

### **The Elsie Carper Collection on Extension Service, Home Economics, and 4-H**

The Elsie Carper Collection on Extension Service, Home Economics, and 4-H spans almost nine decades from 1908 through 1994. Elsie Carper compiled and preserved the history of home demonstration and 4-H during her four decades as an administrative assistant for the national 4-H program and nearly two decades as an historian during her retirement. Carper saved various items given to her by Extension specialists and program leaders, and donated the materials to the National Agricultural Library. The collection includes materials pertaining to the work of three important people in the history of the Extension Service, specifically Seaman Knapp, Oscar Herman Benson, and Gertrude Warren.

The collection spans 8.75 linear feet and occupies 14 archival boxes. Materials are in good condition. There are no restrictions on use of the collection. In 2003, Jan Scholl, 4-H Curriculum Specialist, The Pennsylvania State University, and Kate Hayes, Technical Information Specialist, National Agricultural Library, initiated processing of the collection. Barbara Stommel, Special Collections Librarian, National Agricultural Library, completed the processing in 2005. Additional materials contributed by Jan Scholl, including a history of the National Association of Extension Home Economists through 1975 and 4-H Club song records, were added to the collection in June 2006.

[View the finding aid for this collection.](#)

[View posters from the Elsie Carper Collection.](#)

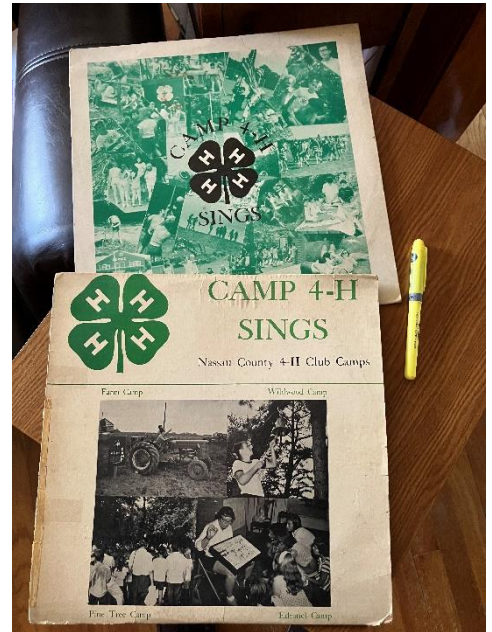


### For the Record, Camp 4-H Sings!

You just never know what you might find hidden away in your attic or basement, or perhaps that closet down the hall that you never go into anymore. NY 4-H alum, Linda Degen, had just such an occasion and she found these!! Two records entitled "Camp 4-H Sings". The problem is, she isn't sure how she came to own them.

"I remember being in 4-H doing baking, competitions, sewing, etc." she said, "and clearly, I must've purchased the albums. They are songs that we sang, I believe." Linda was a 4-H Member in the 1960's and 1970's. She remembers going to what she called "4-H Camp Riverhead". Trying to learn more, she contacted some of her friends. That's when she remembered that they sang the song "Kumbaya". "We also discussed the 1,000 wood stairs down to the beach at camp in Riverhead," she added. It is not surprising they remembered these steps. Anyone would remember 1,000 stairs to anywhere if they had to walk them, especially UP!

Our 4-H "Ace" BRIDGE Reporter and NY 4-H alum, Jane Jopling, is, herself, a proud owner of one of these records. She owns a copy of the LP uppermost in the photo to the right. Jane said, "If I remember correctly, the oldest one was done at Dorothy P Flint 4-H Camp which is Nassau County's 4-H camp in Riverhead, Long Island. I believe the record I have was made in the 60's and I think it was under the direction of Marilyn Meyer, NY Extension Agent Camp Director. I remember that the kids practiced, and a recording company (or person) came with the equipment and recorded them in the dining hall. Not sure if it was done at the Boys (Wildwood) or Girls (Edrael) camps. There was a third camp at that time for younger boys that then became a camp for girls called Pinetree. My record cost \$3.50 new."



In today's dollars, that would be close to \$30.00.<sup>1</sup> And as an aside, Jane remembered those steps too. "There were at LEAST 1,000!", she exclaimed.

Do you know these records? Perhaps you, too, have one, or even both, sitting in your collection. If so, tell us about them! Were you one of the 4-H Campers whose voices are immortalized on one, or both, of these LP's? What can you add to the history of these "4-H Camp Sings" records?

Perhaps you went to a different 4-H Camp, in a different county or state, and made different records! Maybe your 4-H Club or County 4-H or State 4-H also made records, or movies, or..., the possibilities are endless! And so are the memories, but you can preserve the memories by telling us YOUR story!!

Send your articles of 500 words or less to: [Editor@4-HHistory.com](mailto:Editor@4-HHistory.com)

<sup>1</sup> Conversion Calculator at <https://www.officialdata.org>





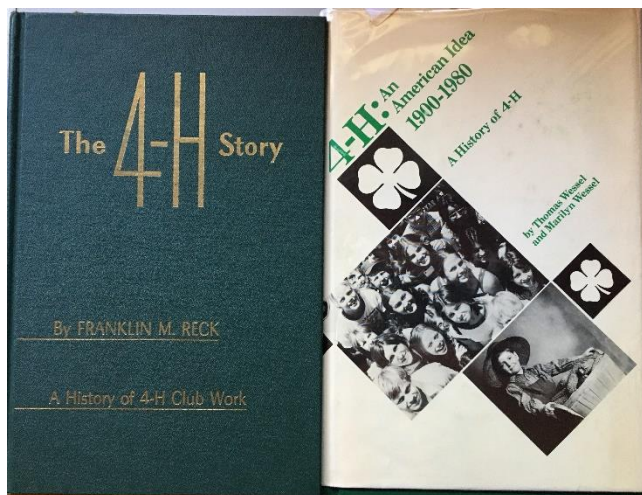


Read all about it!!  
4-H History from  
1980 - 2020 is being  
written!!

Head. Heart. Hands. Health. The 4-H Club. It has been a part of America since 1902. Now National 4-H Council and the National 4-H History Preservation Team announce a new book about the history of 4-H is being written. Previous 4-H history books have told the 4-H story through 1980.

This new book will bring the story up to date by focusing on how 4-H has grown and changed during the 40-year period from 1980 to 2020. National 4-H Council is providing financial support to produce this new edition and expects to publish the new 4-H history book in 2025.

Two 4-H'ers have been given the honor of telling this story, Dr. Linda Jo Turner of Columbia, Missouri, and Ronald C. Drum of Drums, Pennsylvania.

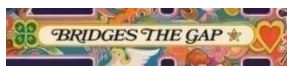


According to Jo Turner, "I was born into 4-H. My grandmother helped start the 4-H Club I belonged to." Jo credits much of her professional success and achievements of her 40-year 4-H career to her 4-H Membership while growing up and that list of achievements is long. It includes titles such as Missouri Area 4-H Youth Specialist, Missouri State 4H Youth Development Specialist, Missouri State 4-H Youth Development Director, Interim Director of University of Missouri Extension, Consultant to National 4-H Council and Consultant to 4-H Liberia. The University of Missouri-Columbia has awarded Jo with a Bachelor of Science degree, a Master of Science degree, and in 1992, a Doctor of Philosophy degree.

Ron Drum joined 4-H as soon as he reached the Pennsylvania minimum enrollment age of nine and never left. He, too, spent a 40-year professional career implementing 4-H through county and state 4-H positions in Massachusetts, Maine, national roles with USDA and National 4-H Council, and as an advisor to the National 4-B Program of Botswana. He holds a Bachelor of Science degree from Pennsylvania State University and a Master of Science degree from Worcester State University of Massachusetts.



Together, Jo and Ron represent more than 100 years of 4-H professional and volunteer experience. The National 4-H History Preservation Team and National 4-H Council believe Jo and Ron are well equipped to tell the 4-H story.



*The official Newsletter of the National 4-H History Preservation Team*



## 4-H Fun FACT

Nancy Shelstad, University of Idaho Area 4-H Youth Development Educator, tells us, as of March 2023, NAE4-HYDP's membership stands at 4,001. This includes active, life, affiliate, and student members. The Editor figures he is that 4,001<sup>st</sup> member because he just recently paid his Life Membership dues!

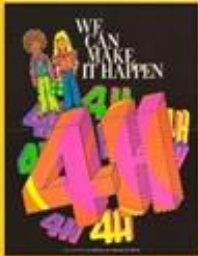
### *Tell Us Your 4-H History Story*

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](mailto: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 August 15, 2023!*



*The BRIDGE Editorial Board:*

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