

CHAPTER II

THE OFFICIAL CREATION OF THE EXTENSION SERVICE AND ITS EARLY DEVELOPMENT UNDER HOLDEN, 1901-1912

The year 1901 may be taken roughly as marking the beginning of a new era in extension activities in Iowa. Before that time the work was lacking in continuity, definiteness, organization, and scope.

The county agricultural societies and the State Agricultural Society were still sponsoring their fairs and carrying on their other activities, but they did not provide a sufficient outlet for the large body of knowledge in the fields of agriculture and home making that had accumulated by the year 1901. The farmers' institutes seem to have lost ground. They never reached a large percentage of the farmers and homemakers and their method of instruction was not the most effective. The institute workers taught principally by the lecture method and there was no follow-up to see that the stimulation of the institute resulted in action by the farm family. The Agricultural Division of the College was growing, but the number of its graduates who returned to the farm was small compared with the total farm population. Agriculture was not yet taught in public high schools. Farm organizations, which were so prominent in the 70's and 80's, had almost passed out of existence. It is estimated that by the time the first extension act was passed, less than five percent of the farmers in Iowa belonged to a farm organization. The time was ripe for new adventures in extension activities.

Between 1901 and 1906 much extension history was made. The idea of extension service in agriculture and home economics seems to have caught the imagination of the people in all of the states at about this time. A few departments of agricultural extension were created in the 90's, but by 1907, thirty-nine state agricultural colleges were carrying on some form of extension work. (62, p. 31.) In 1905 the Association of Agricultural Colleges and Experiment Stations appointed a committee which recommended (62, p. 31): "that each college represented in this

association organize, as soon as practicable, a department of extension teaching in agriculture, coördinate with other departments or divisions of the agricultural work, with a competent director in charge and, if possible, with a corps of men at his disposal. This department should take on, just as far as possible, all phases of extension teaching now performed in other ways."

In 1901, a farmers' short course of two weeks' duration was organized through the efforts of Dean C. F. Curtiss. This short course was held at the College and attracted many people from the beginning. It was later shortened to one week and is now known as Farm and Home Week.

1. HOLDEN'S EARLY EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

In 1902, P. G. Holden was brought from Illinois to become Professor of Agronomy at Iowa State College. Regarding this event John P. Wallace recently wrote (73):

"Professor Holden had made a national reputation for himself by his work in Illinois and it was the desire of the College to secure him as head I believe of the crops department. The legislature had adjourned and their appropriation was not sufficient to pay him the salary that was needed. Realizing the need of his services and the benefit there would be in having him come to Iowa we [*Wallaces' Farmer*] were glad to pay a part of his salary for two years. I do not remember the exact amount we contributed but I believe it was \$250.00 per year for two years and after that the Legislature was glad to give the additional appropriation necessary to keep him on the staff."

Relative to his coming to Iowa State College, Professor Holden wrote Professor Taff as follows (15):

"When I was approached by Dr. Beardshear and by Dean Curtiss, to interest me in accepting the position of Professor of Agronomy at Ames, I made it clear that my work would be of a different nature from that which the authorities might possibly expect, that I had a strong feeling that every person that lives in the State is in reality a pupil or a student of the college and that the college must see to it that everyone receives some direct help from the college and if this was true, that there was only one way by which it could be done and that was to take the college to the people. Go to the people and help them where they are, as they are, under their own conditions with their own problems. My contention was that at that time they had two-thirds of a college, that the other third, which in my estimation was a

very important part of the work of the college, was to see that knowledge was translated into actual life, and living, by the people of the state."

In 1903 Holden started the county farm demonstration work near Orange City in Sioux County. In 1904, five counties coöperated; in 1905, eight counties coöperated; and in 1906, ten counties coöperated. The projects were with oats, alfalfa, corn, and with quack grass eradication. (28.) This county farm demonstration work, according to Holden, was the beginning of county agricultural agent work. (9, p. 1.)

In 1904 Holden started what he called "Seed Corn Gospel Trains." These are said to have been the first seed corn trains ever operated.¹ In his first annual report Holden states that these trains stopped at 670 towns; passed through 96 of the 99 counties; traveled nearly 10,000 miles; and 1,085 talks or lectures were given to more than 127,000 people; and more than 30,000 bulletins were distributed.

In January, 1905, Holden started the first local short course, at Red Oak. During the year 1906-1907 short courses were held at Red Oak, Mt. Pleasant, Lenox, and Liscomb. These courses offered definite instruction for a period of one week and were popular from the beginning. They came to be one of the chief extension activities. (28, 1907.)

2. THE FIRST EXTENSION ACT IN IOWA

The demands for outside help became so numerous and urgent that the regular staff of the College could not well take care of them without seriously neglecting the instructional or experimental work. It took much help to sponsor the county demonstration farms, the special corn trains, the local short courses and to meet the demands for help coming from such organizations as the Iowa Corn Growers' Association and the Iowa Grain Dealers' Association. In addition to these calls for help, individuals throughout the state were writing letters about and seeking assistance with their personal problems. The extent of this outside work made it apparent that the College should create an Extension Service to take care of it. (28, p. 2.)

Professor Holden gives an interesting account (15) of the specific event leading to the first extension act by the legislature in 1906:

¹The first agricultural train in Iowa was run in 1897. Credit for the idea is given Mr. Farmer, then assistant general freight agent for the M. & St. L. Railroad, but Uncle Henry Wallace had much to do with the organization and management of this train. (72, p. 176.)



PERRY GREELEY HOLDEN
Superintendent of Extension Department 1906-1912

"At the conclusion of one of our Corn Trains, as we were coming back in from Mason City to Des Moines, Uncle Henry Wallace called me into the passenger coach and made the remark that Mr. Trigg, Mr. Wells, and he had talked over matters and that they had a few questions they wanted to ask me. Mr. Wallace asked the first question, which was this. 'Mr. Holden, these people whom we met all along the line have expressed a wish to have more of this educational work. Now, what is the future of it all? Does this end it, or is there something we can do in the future, to make it more valuable?' I remarked that there should be a force of people from the college who should give all of their time to helping stimulate people all over the state to greater activity and greater interest in the study of the great business of agriculture. He said, 'How can such a thing be accomplished?' I said, 'Mr. Wallace, it will be necessary to secure an appropriation to provide for this kind of work.' He asked me if I would draft a bill covering my ideas, along this line, which I did. This bill, considerably trimmed down, finally passed the legislature and became a law."

The first extension act was passed by the Thirty-first General Assembly and was approved April 10, 1906. This act provided that Iowa State College should "undertake and maintain a system of Agricultural Extension work. Under this the said college shall be authorized to conduct experiments in the various portions of the State, and in giving instructions wherever, in the judgment of the college authorities, it shall be advisable. . . . The college authorities are authorized to give instruction in corn and stock judging at agricultural fairs, institutes and clubs, and to aid in conducting short courses of instruction at suitable places throughout the State; to give lectures and demonstrations on the growing of crops and fruits, on stock raising, dairying, land drainage, and kindred subjects, including domestic science." The act carried an appropriation of \$15,000.

This act was introduced into the house by the Honorable E. W. Weeks, of Guthrie Center. Some of its best friends and supporters outside the legislature were the Iowa Corn Growers' Association (Grant Chapman, president); the Iowa Grain Dealers' Association (George A. Wells, secretary); the Grange; *Wallaces' Farmer* (Uncle Henry Wallace, editor); the *Register and Farmer* (Joe Trigg, editor); J. R. Sage, director of the Weather and Crop Service for Iowa; and W. H. Manse, industrial commissioner for the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad.

3. PLAN OF ORGANIZATION

In organizing the work under the first extension act in Iowa, two general plans were considered. The first plan proposed was to divide the appropriation among the various departments in the Agricultural Division of the College, depending upon these departments to secure special help for extension work. Objections offered to this plan were: (a) That the members of the Legislature would feel that it was simply another means of securing added appropriations for the various departments; (b) That no one could be held directly responsible for the use of the appropriation as a whole; and (c) That the extension work would not be so well done as it would be in the hands of a department whose sole business it was to attend to that particular task. (9, pp. 32-33.)

The second plan proposed, and the plan finally adopted, was to place the extension work in the hands of a separate department which should bear the same relations to the college authorities as other departments. This department was to be held directly responsible for the use of the appropriation and for the accomplishment of results. (28, p. 4.)

In his first annual report (28, p. 5) Holden stated that while he favored the first plan of organization, President Storms and Dean Curtiss favored the second plan, which was adopted. He continued, "I can say for this policy that it has worked splendidly during its first year of trial."

The newly created Extension Department was headed by a superintendent who was nominally responsible to the Dean of Agriculture.² He had the authority to organize his department, to plan its work, to employ its help, and to make expenditures within the limits of his appropriation. While it was expected that the Extension Department should secure information from the subject matter departments and the experiment station, it was not directly connected with them.

4. POLICY AS TO THE USE OF FUNDS

The Extension Department from the beginning adopted the policy of requiring a certain amount of effort on the part of the local community before it would give help. The plan given herewith was adopted by the trustees of the College in 1906. (28, pp. 4-5.)

²The superintendent of the Extension Department was made directly responsible to the president in 1912 and his title was changed to "Director."

a. "The local expenses of all lectures, demonstrations, short courses, and other forms of agricultural education shall be borne by the communities in which they are held, and so far as possible the traveling expenses of lecturers and workers in attending to such work shall be met by the communities or organizations served.

b. "The Agricultural Extension funds shall not be used for supporting any feature of education or experimental work that is carried on at Ames, except such assistance as may be rendered in connection with the special two weeks' short courses and summer school."

For the first year (1906-1907) the superintendent was paid a salary of \$3,200 and the specialists averaged \$1,100 each. These salaries totaled \$10,070.82. Other items of expense were stenographic and other help \$1,475; furniture \$400; maps, charts, photographs, and supplies \$600; stationery, printing, bulletins, and traveling expenses \$2,374.53. (28, p. 7.)

5. ACTIVITIES OF THE DEPARTMENT FOR THE FIRST YEAR (1906-1907)

In his first annual report (28, pp. 5-6), Holden wrote that it was impossible for him to cover the entire field of agriculture with only \$15,000 so that he selected soils, farm crops, animal husbandry, and home economics as special fields of work because he regarded these as fundamental. He later decided to add horticulture and dairying to his first year's program.

The Extension Department was popular from the beginning. Holden reported (28, 1907) that more than three times as many requests for help were received the first year as could be filled by the extension staff and such help as could be secured from other sources. Farmers and business men contributed liberally toward the financial support of the work by taking care of local expenses and often paying salaries of special assistants.

A fairly complete record was kept of the activities of the staff. A summary is given herewith. (28, pp. 22-25.)

During the first year of the Extension Department, short course schools were conducted at Red Oak, Mt. Pleasant, Lenox, Liscomb, Ames, Spencer, and Dows; the last two named being domestic science short courses.

During the year county experiment station work was conducted in the following counties: Sioux, Greene, Marshall, Taylor, Kossuth, Story, Montgomery, Chickasaw, Polk, and Page.

The total number of plots was 4,000 and the total number of acres in the plots was 112½. A total of 700 samples of corn was tested for yield and 7,100 people visited the county farms to study the experiments.

During the year special assistance was given to the county superintendents of Page, Floyd, and Cherokee counties in introducing definite agricultural work into their schools. An agricultural exhibit was held at the state fair.

During the year Professor Holden delivered 172 lectures and conducted 77 corn judging contests. Mary F. Rausch gave 90 lectures and 41 demonstrations, and conducted 17 judging contests. M. L. Mosher gave 55 lectures and conducted 34 corn judging contests. R. K. Bliss delivered 49 lectures and conducted 14 stock judging contests. A. H. Snyder gave 25 lectures and conducted demonstrations at the state fair and at several county fairs.

A total of 66,500 miles was traveled during the year by members of the department and student assistants.

Five bulletins were prepared by department members for publication during the year as follows:

“Healthful Homes,” by Mary F. Rausch.

“Raising Pigs,” by R. K. Bliss.

“Manures,” by A. H. Snyder.

“Rotation of Crops,” by A. H. Snyder.

“Suggestions for the Testing of Dairy Herds,” by J. C. Guthrie.

6. PERSONNEL DURING HOLDEN'S ADMINISTRATION

The personnel of the Extension Department was headed by Perry Greeley Holden. Holden was born in Dodge County, Minnesota, and received his higher education at the Michigan Agricultural College and the Michigan State Normal School. He had been employed at a variety of occupations before coming to Iowa as the following excerpt from his biography in *Who's Who* indicates.

“Fellow and instructor agriculture, Michigan Agricultural College, 1889-93; professor science, Benzonia College, Michigan, 1895; county superintendent of schools, Benzie County, Michigan, 1895-96; professor agronomy, University of Illinois, 1896-1900; agriculturist for Illinois Sugar Refining Company, 1900-01; organized Funk Brother Seed Company for scientific breeding of corn, 1902; professor of agronomy and vice-dean, department of agriculture, Iowa State College, since 1902. Con-

ducted first railway train for carrying agricultural instruction to farmers, 1904; at head of all agricultural extension work of Iowa State College, July 1, 1906-Jan. 1, 1912."

Holden's greatest contribution to agriculture is said to have been his ability to translate talk about agriculture into action.³

In an interview (May, 1932), Holden stated that in selecting men he endeavored, above all, to select persons in whom people would have confidence. He also desired men who were willing to work and who would coöperate. He tried to avoid cynics. It seems to have been his policy to select his staff more on their ability to get results than on the academic degrees held. His staff was made up, for the most part, of young men who had graduated from Iowa State College with a Bachelor of Science degree in Agriculture, and had no previous experience in extension work.⁴

The personnel of the staff for the first year (1906-1907) was as follows: P. G. Holden, superintendent; J. W. Jones, horticulture; A. H. Snyder, soils; R. K. Bliss, animal husbandry; M. L. Mosher, farm crops; Mary F. Rausch, household economics; J. C. Guthrie, dairy; and G. E. Stayner, secretary.

It is interesting to note that R. K. Bliss, the present director of the Extension Service, and his three highest ranking assistants, Murl McDonald, Paul C. Taff, and Neale S. Knowles, were all on Holden's staff.

Mr. Bliss was born at Diagonal, Iowa, October 30, 1880. He was graduated from Iowa State College in 1905 with the degree Bachelor of Science in Agriculture. He was made a member of Holden's first extension staff in 1906, taking charge of the animal husbandry work. After Holden left the department in January, 1912, to run for Governor, Bliss was made acting head of the department until the following July. He then left Iowa to become head of the animal husbandry department in the University of Nebraska. In 1914 he returned to Iowa as director of the Extension Service and has held the position ever since. In point of service he leads the two preceding directors by a big margin. Holden served six years and Kennedy only two.

Murl McDonald was born in Clay County, Nebraska, January 1, 1886, and was graduated from Iowa State College with a Bachelor of Science degree in Agriculture in 1911. He worked

³George E. Farrell, in charge of Coöperative Extension Work in the North Central States, gave this as his opinion in a personal interview at Ames, July, 1932.

⁴It was almost impossible to secure men with previous experience in extension work at that early time.

part-time in the Extension Department while he was a student at the College in 1907 and 1908. He came into the department on full-time in December, 1910. He left in 1912 to go into county Y. M. C. A. work. Bliss brought him back in 1914 and he has been connected with the work continuously since that time.

Paul C. Taff was born at McLean, Illinois, February 28, 1887, and was graduated from Iowa State College with the degree Bachelor of Science in Agriculture in 1912. He began work in the Extension Department as a helper in 1906. He later enrolled in the College and worked part-time for the Extension Department. He was placed on the staff permanently in September, 1912. He was acting head of the department from April 1, 1914, to October 1, 1914—the interval between Kennedy's leaving and the coming of Bliss. His first work was with farm crops and soils and later as supervisor of correspondence courses.

Neale S. Knowles was born at River Falls, Wisconsin, in 1863. She took work at the State Teachers College at River Falls, Wisconsin, and in 1904 completed her college course, including home economics, at Milwaukee-Downer. She taught school in Milwaukee for seven years and then went to Alabama. She was teaching home economics in an agricultural high school in that state when she was called into the extension work at Iowa State College in December, 1907. She was secured to assist Miss Edith Charlton, who became head of the home economics extension work after Miss Rausch left in September, 1907. In April, 1909, Miss Charlton also left and then Miss Knowles assumed the leadership which she has held to the present time.

7. THE EXTENSION PROGRAM

As has been stated before, Holden began his program with six specialists in the fields of soils, farm crops, animal husbandry, home economics, horticulture, and dairying. By the time he left, January 1, 1912, he had expanded the original lines of work and had added school work, vegetable gardening, dairy testing, agricultural engineering, botany, and entomology. (28, 1911.)

The activities making the heaviest demands upon the extension staff in the fall of the year were state, district, and county fairs; farmers' picnics; harvest festivals; street fairs and carnivals; granges; clubs; and the county demonstration work. The staff's time was occupied in the winter, to the practical exclusion of everything else, by short courses, farmers' institutes,⁵ and

⁵These institutes were a carry-over from those started by President Welch in 1870.

corn shows for both men and boys. In the spring their chief activities were concerned with planting county demonstration farms, seed-testing demonstrations, township picnics, and special trains. The work continued throughout the year in the schools and with teachers and superintendents. The same was true of the cow testing associations,⁶ the domestic science courses, and addresses before women's clubs and commercial clubs. (28.)

While all this was going on, time was found for preparing circulars, gathering data, answering correspondence, listing materials and making charts.

Extension work was carried on during Holden's administration by two major activities, namely, local short courses and county farm demonstration plots. These occupied by far the largest amount of the time of the specialists, and at certain seasons, practically all the time of the entire staff. (28.)

a. Local Short Courses

The idea of the local short course seems to have originated with a group of farmers from Red Oak who had attended the short course conducted by the College at Ames. Consequently, the first local short course in Iowa was held at Red Oak in January, 1905. These courses proved to be popular and grew rapidly. Holden stated in his first annual report that thirty-eight requests for short courses for 1907-1908 had been received and that he proposed to hold eleven. These courses had been held at 58 points in Iowa prior to the year 1911. (28.)

The short courses differed from the institutes in that they lasted a week instead of about three days, and there were more definite class work and more discussion.⁷ An outline of a day's routine will illustrate their serious nature: From 8:00 a. m. to 4:00 p. m., class work on stock and grain judging; from 4:00 p. m. to 6:00 p. m., lectures on animal diseases, rotation of crops, manures, etc.; in the evenings from 7:30 to 9:00 lectures by prominent people on subjects of more general interest such as teaching agriculture in the schools, homemaking, the importance of livestock interests, and similar subjects. The boys and girls later came to have a prominent part in these short courses. The

⁶In 1909 the first cow testing association in Iowa was formed in Black Hawk County. This type of association has been successful ever since and has continued to increase in numbers.

⁷R. K. Bliss, director of the Extension Service of Iowa State College, recently stated that he believed that some of the best extension work ever done was done in these early local short courses.

women were given work paralleling in time and emphasis the work of the men. A few short courses were strictly for homemakers, but most of them were for both men and women. (28.)

b. County Farm Demonstration Work

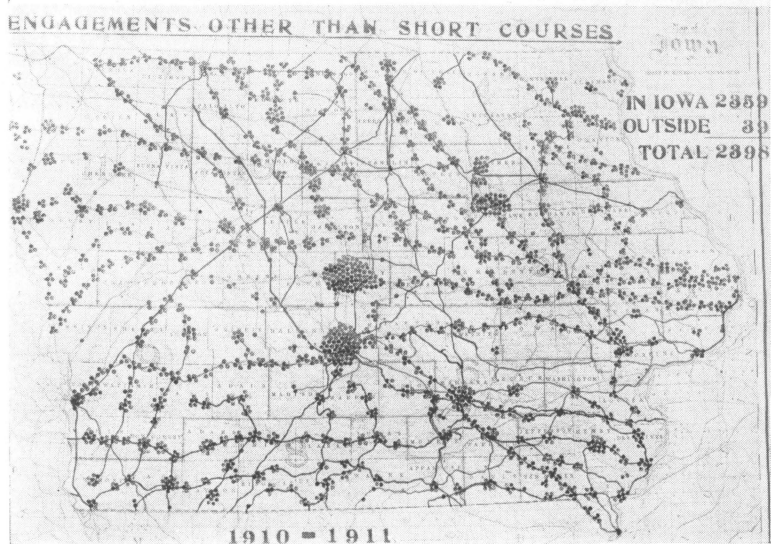
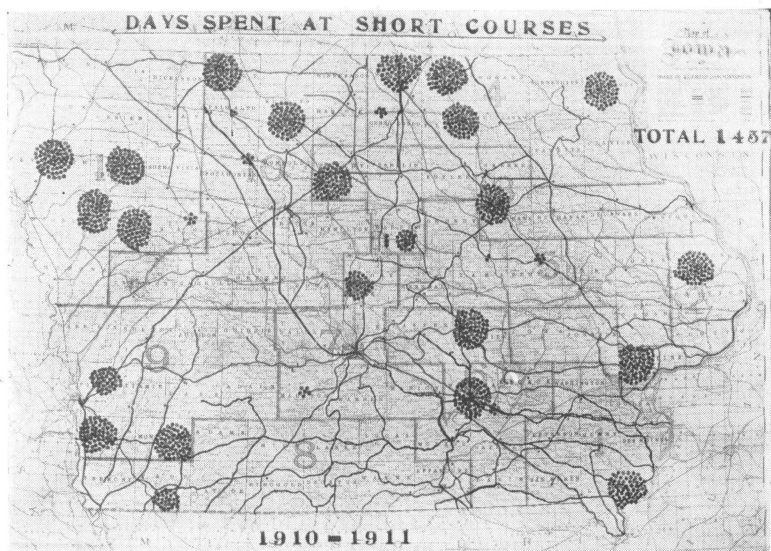
The county farm demonstration plots, or experiment stations as they were sometimes called, seem to have grown out of a discussion at a farmers' institute in Sioux County, at Hull, in the winter of 1903. The farmers were in the midst of a sharp argument when Holden entered the meeting. A Mr. Hawkins called upon Holden to give his opinion on the question of whether or not Ames was too far away and conditions too different for the experiments of the College to be of value in Sioux County.

Holden replied (59), "Mr. Hawkins, you are discussing one of the biggest things in the world." Holden took the view that every county should put on demonstrations and have someone in the county to direct the demonstration projects. He would have this man advise the farmers as to the best solution of their problems and also to work with the boys and girls.

As a result of this discussion, county farm demonstration work was started on the county farm in Sioux County in the spring of 1903. County farms were chosen because they belonged to all the people and were centrally located. Field demonstrations and simple experiments were conducted with oats, alfalfa, corn, and the eradication of quack grass. Corn, however, received the chief emphasis. Holden was often called the "Corn Man" because he stressed corn so much.

In the fall of the year, large gatherings, or picnics, were held at each of the county farms to view the results of the work. From 400 to 3,500 people usually attended these gatherings. The plan followed was for those interested to visit the plots in the forenoon and listen to an explanation of the work by some member of the Extension Department. At noon the people gathered for a picnic dinner, in family or neighborhood groups. After the dinner, programs of general interest were held in which some local people and one or two from the College took part. (9, pp. 37-38.) Data from these plots were published in circular form up to 1915.

From a beginning in Sioux County in 1903, the work grew rapidly for a number of years. In 1904, there were 5 counties; in 1906, there were 10 counties; in 1908 there were 14 counties, and in 1910 there were 16 counties. (28, 1911.)



Upper: Location of short courses and man-days spent at each by Extension Service workers, 1910-1911.

Lower: Engagements, other than short courses, of Extension Service workers, 1910-1911.

While section two of the first extension act in Iowa (see Appendix I) made provision for "experimental work," the College trustees decided against experimentation in the Extension Department as it was otherwise provided for in the experiment station set-up. The county farm demonstrations had in them an element of the experimental, but this work was finally discontinued in 1915. The county demonstration farms were, however, a forerunner of the county agent plan of extension work which a little later came to occupy such an important place in Iowa.

8. DEVELOPMENT OF THE EXTENSION DEPARTMENT UNDER HOLDEN (1906-1911)

	1906-7	1910-11
Appropriation	15,000	32,000
Amount paid by local people.....	14,980	60,027
Number of people reached.....	10,050	166,897
Number of short courses	4	22
Number of county farm experiment stations....	7	16
Junior enrollment		15,454