

# Learning A Living

90 Years of Extension Service  
In Otsego County Michigan



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Compiled by: Philip J. Alexander  
2008



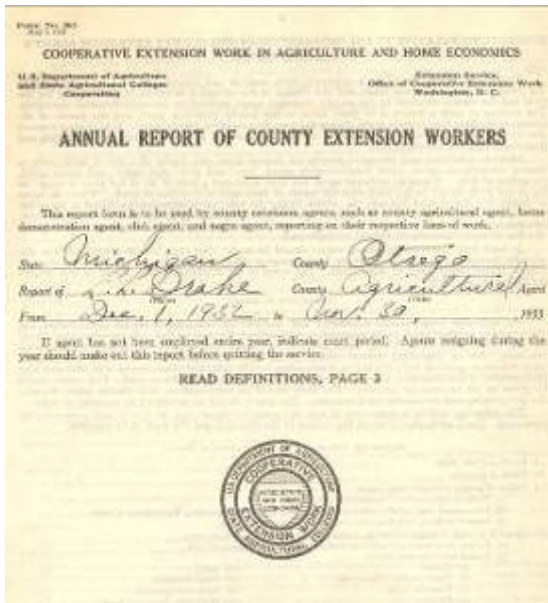
On the cover:  
Al Bob Kassuba driving his first tractor – a 1940  
John Deere model B.  
Ray McMullen, County Agent, is operating the  
mower.

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# Introduction

A few years ago, a box of Extension Service annual reports for the years 1930 to 1969 were found in storage. These documents not only record the history of the Extension Service in Otsego County, but also tell an interesting story about everyday life in Otsego County. The reports offer a complimentary yet different perspective of the past found in local newspaper articles, personal biographies, and other historical accounts. They mirror the development and progress of Otsego County. They also illustrate the changes that occurred due to Extension research and educational programs.



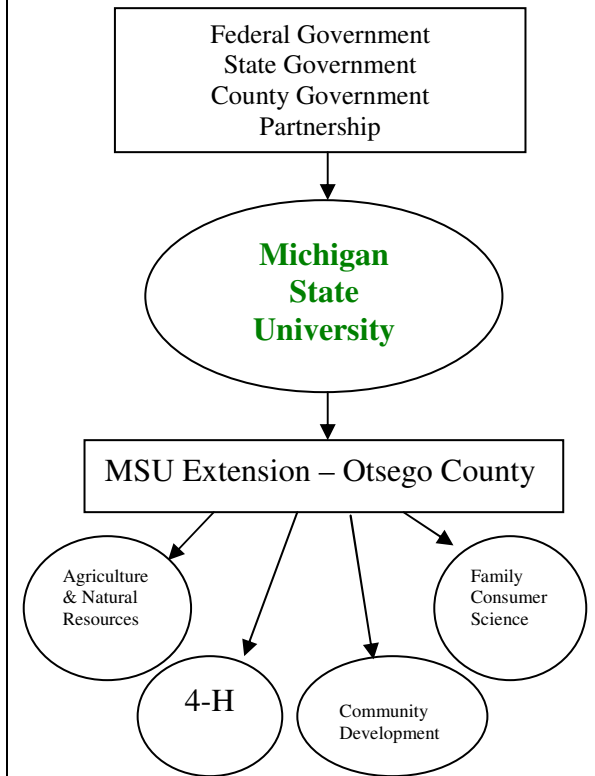
Cover of the 1933 Annual Report of County Extension Workers prepared by Leon Drake

Even after 90 years, many people are not fully aware of the Extension Service and what it does. Some people are familiar with 4-H, or know it's where they get their soil tested or take a bug to be identified, but they don't have a clear understanding of how those pieces are connected. So, let's begin with a brief overview of the Extension Service.

The Extension Service was created in 1914 by the U. S. Congress because of its concern for the education of the average citizen. In-depth information about the Extension Service can be found in the publications listed on pages 33 and 34 of this document.

The purpose of the Extension Service is to help people improve their lives through an educational process that applies knowledge to critical issues, needs, and opportunities. Tag lines such as "Better Living Through Learning", Helping People Help Themselves", and "Bringing Knowledge To Life" have been used to convey that message.

The Extension Service is a unique partnership of the federal, state, and county governments. It is linked to our state's land grant institution Michigan State University. Perhaps the following diagram of the organizational structure will help explain how the pieces fit together.



**“Learning A Living”** provides a brief summary of 90 years of Extension Service programming in Otsego County as gleaned from the annual reports. The following pages provide a glimpse of the wide variety of ways that the Extension Service has made a positive difference in Otsego County. The first part presents a chronology using a timeline of events. The second part gives highlights of key topics.



Courtesy OCHS



Courtesy UAHC



Courtesy UAHC

# 1910s – 1920s



Courtesy OCHS



Courtesy UAHC



Courtesy OCHS

## Highlights from 1917 - 1929



The Extension Service office in Otsego County was established in 1917. The office was located in the court house. Rollin D. Bailey and then Lawrence R. Queal served as the County Agriculture Agent

during those first 18 months. Throughout the years of World War I (1917-18), the Emergency Food Production Act supplied the Extension Service with temporary agents during the duration of the war.

In 1919, following the end of World War I, Arthur C. Lytle began his 10 1/2 year assignment in Otsego County.

### What was Otsego County like in 1917?

- The population was declining from 6552 in 1910 to 6043 in 1920
- Electricity was only in Gaylord
- Few rural homes had telephones
- Radio was popular – no television
- One-room schools dotted rural areas
- US 27 was a gravel road
- I-75 was 40 years in the future
- There were 2 passenger trains daily
- Farmers used horses not tractors

“The deciding factor in getting an agricultural agent was the need for someone to direct the fight against grasshoppers, which had ruined thousands of dollars worth of crops in prior years.”

**1918:** The Farm Bureau in Otsego County was organized on December 15, 1918. A portion of the membership dues was used to pay local Extension expenses.

**1919:** Sunflowers for silage were tested

**1921:** Distributed 22,000 pounds of WWI surplus explosives to clear land for farms

**1922:** Held 88 meetings during the year with a total attendance of 4092 people.

**1923:** Top O’ Michigan Potato Show held in Gaylord on November 7-8-9. Extension Agent Lytle served as Secretary-Manager.

**Home Demonstration** work started among the ladies of three communities with considerable success.

**1925:** First **4-H Clubs** in Otsego County were started. Floyd Warner of Hayes Twp was the leader of one of the potato clubs.

### “A Brief History of Extension Work in Otsego County”

Source: 1939 annual report

“Early Extension Workers did most of their work on an individual basis. Demonstrations established in the early days has resulted in making possible more group work for present day workers.

Extension activities first started in Otsego County during the World War. Timbering operations were still active. A big majority of the farmers spent a part of their time working in some phase of the lumber business. Timber camps provided a ready market for hay, livestock and some farm produce at prices higher than could be received at terminal markets. The boom prices stimulated rapid agricultural expansion.

Alfalfa was introduced during the war, but in 1919 Otsego County reported only 237 acres. The use of lime and marl was also emphasized.

Potato production expanded rapidly. In the early 1920s potato production received a further stimulation in the production of certified seed. The premium paid for the certified seed also encouraged a wider adoption of recommended practices for crop rotations and crop production. During this period the Otsego County Cooperative Marketing Association and a cooperative creamery were organized. Many farmers also purchased pure-bred cows and imported pure-bred bulls. The final closing of the lumbering activities together with the Industrial Depression, resulted in different type of extension activities. People were forced to turn to their farms for their entire living at a time when established “full-time” farmers were having difficulty in making a living and paying obligations.”



# 1930s



Courtesy UAHC

Otsego County Clothing Club.  
Mrs. Don Bailey, Leader



## Highlights from 1930-1939

**1932:** A demonstration at the C.J. Franks farm west and north of Gaylord showed the value of potash in complete fertilizer in alfalfa seeding.

A corn variety test on the Alvin Widger farm demonstrated why barley should be grown for grain in this area and corn just for silage.

Practically every farmer in the county grew some potatoes and nearly everyone had some for sale. Otsego County ranked 3rd in production of seed potatoes of Michigan counties "There is no other cash crop worth mentioning."

There were no swine from a commercial view point and practically no sheep.

The county was well peppered with Bang's Disease which causes calves to die at birth.

As an economic measure, extension work was discontinued as of May 31, 1932. The Board of Supervisors re-instated it in June and put up to a popular vote for the November election. The vote had a decisive majority of rural votes and approached a two to one majority when the city votes were counted: 1132 Yes – 682 No.

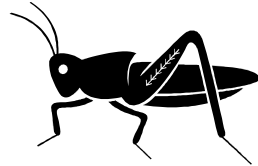
Total annual office expenses were \$476.48.

**1933:** With less than 500 farmers in Otsego County, the work of extension was largely personal and direct.

Except for recreation interests, the county is wholly agricultural with a great many of the farms of the primitive or pioneer type. Because of this, the extension program has always been designed and intended to improve the economic and social condition of these farmers.

**1933:** The most persistent drought on record.

For the first time in history, a couple dozen farmers asked for instruction in killing rats.



The battle continued combating grasshoppers.

Home economics group formed in Vanderbilt with 26 members.

Stanley Yuill experimented with irrigating three acres of his 28 acres of raspberries. He claimed that he sold 8000 quarts of berries and 6000 came off these 3 acres. The tourist and resort business provided a market for many of the berries.

The Girl Spud Growers 4-H Club at Five Lakes was started by Mrs. Bessie McBride.

**1934:** Staff changes and reorganization resulted in a three county assignment (Otsego, Montmorency, and Crawford) for the new county agriculture agent, Arthur Glidden who replaced L. L. Drake.

**1935:** "This will go down in the history of Otsego County as being the year of serious insect infestation for home gardens."

Dearborn Colony was created by the Utilization Division of the Resettlement Administration using approximately 4500 acres of tax reverted land in the Johannesburg vicinity. Eighty families from the Dearborn area were to relocate here and establish farms.

**1936:** "Elmer the Hired Man" a weekly column in the Herald Times began its nine year run.

The first Otsego County Farm Festival and Potato Show was held October 28, 1936

Sewing machine repair school for area homemakers was a very popular program



**1937:** Increased demand of local dairy products due to opening of the Northern Michigan Tuberculosis Sanitarium

**1938:** European corn borers noticed for the first time in Otsego County.



# 1940s





## Highlights from 1940 - 1949

**1940:** The Otsego County recreation map was produced. “This was the first attempt in Michigan to assemble service information on a map on a county basis.”

Land Use pamphlet was published.

**1941 – 1945:** World War II

**“Our farmers here in Otsego County are proving that they are willing to contribute their money, their sweat, and even their blood to preserve our country. But let us remember that the first job for any farmer is to produce food.”** Extension article in the November 19, 1942 issue of the Herald Times

Arthur Glidden, County Agricultural Agent, acted as liaison officer between the county council of defense and the USDA War Boards. Results of the coordinated efforts:

- Victory Garden Program
- Rural Fire Prevention Campaign Pledge Drive for War Bonds and Stamps
- Salvage Collection Activities which brought in 2266 tons of scrap metal

**1943:** There were 45 War Club members in Otsego County



**1942-44:** Milkweed floss was used as a substitute for kapok in life jackets for Navy Aviators. A collection campaign was conducted in Otsego County under the direction of Claude

Wilson of the War Hemp Industries in Petoskey. 4-H participated in this effort.

**1942:** Only one farmer had cattle testing positive for Bovine Tuberculosis.

The Michigan State College Ram Truck made stops in Hillman and Gaylord. Fourteen rams were sold – 3 Southdown, 3 Oxfords, and the rest were Hampshire.

**1943:** Kiwanis 4-H Club Fair held in September at Gaylord 4-H Club Camp. Exhibits for the one day event were limited to livestock, canning, gardening, and flowers.

Changes in the income tax law made the Farm Account Book a “best seller”.

First mention of a secretary being hired for the Extension Office. Wages were \$661.50 a year.

**1944:** Soil Conservation District organized in Otsego County. Extension played a key role in getting this new agency established. Labor shortage during potato harvesting caused a 3 week recess at Gaylord Community and St. Mary Schools.

**1945:** Otsego County potato growers declared war on Bacterial Ring Rot. Special Potato Committee and County Potato Development Association were formed.

**1946:** Northern Michigan Beef Breeders Association was formed representing 14 counties. C.S. McReynolds was president and Arthur Glidden was secretary – treasurer.

**1946:** The first Tourist & Resort Workshop conducted by Extension’s Conservation Institute was in Gaylord with Robert McIntosh, Clare Gunn, and Faith McCauley.



**1947:** Ray McMullen became the 7<sup>th</sup> Agricultural Extension agent to serve Otsego County.

**1948:** The Extension office moved to the Chamber of Commerce’s log building next to the courthouse

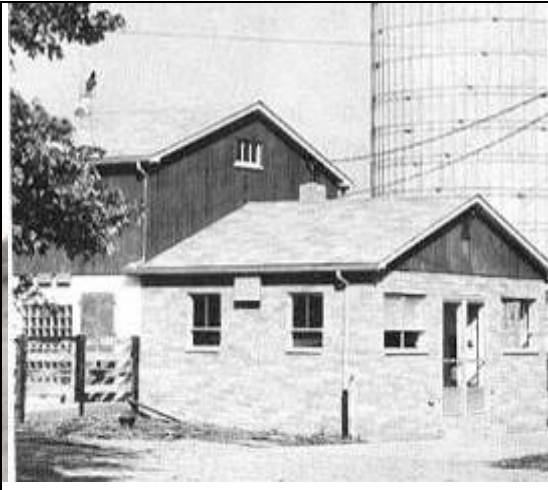
**1949:** Assisted Bagley Township Improvement Association in organizing a Farmer’s Market.

Plans for building and remodeling 68 farm buildings were made by the Extension office.

Assisted C. S. McReynolds and his wife with their first production sale of registered Hereford breeding cattle at Elmac Hills Ranch. Their 3000 acre ranch is located 14 miles northeast of Gaylord.

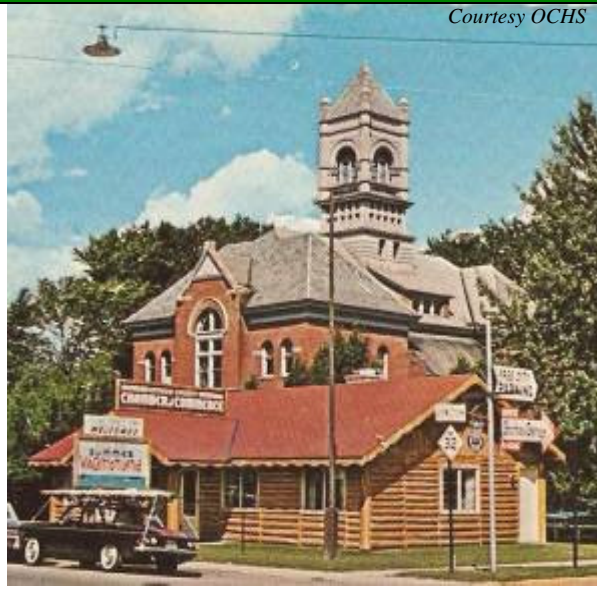
Winners of the Tractor Derby at the 4-H Fair (1<sup>st</sup> time event) were Don Leinerth, Melvin Welsh, and Virgil Vinicki.

“The potato industry in Otsego County is decreasing slightly each year. Acreages have been reduced but yields have been increased through use of better seed, approved practices and use of spray and dusting materials.”



# 1950s

*Courtesy OCHS*



## Highlights from 1950 – 1959

Michigan State College became MSU in 1955

Staff changes during the 1950s include: Mrs. Rose Mary Head (office secretary) was replaced by Mrs. Carolyn Crittenden. During 1953, there were 4 different office girls on the job. Dorothy Prebble, the present secretary, also assisted the Chamber of Commerce which is housed in the same building. Miss Joyce I. Engel District Home Demonstration Agent began her assignment in Otsego, Cheboygan & Montmorency Counties on September 1, 1953. The office moved to the courthouse in 1956.

The 7 one-room schools at the beginning of the decade decreased to only 2 by 1959. In 1953, Gaylord Rural Agricultural School was approved as a Smith-Hughes school with a Vo-Ag department and FFA. Vanderbilt also constructed a new school building.

During this decade, several new ski resorts were built. Extension workshops for the tourism and resort industry were popular.

**1950:** Otsego County had its first 4-H saddle horse project. Three members of the Hayes 4-H Club carried the project

Tours for high school students were conducted to show results of improper land use and practices which are considered good land use.

A scrapbook contest “How To Save Our Soil” for elementary grade school children – Richard Widger and Ed Wilkie won the competition.

The first Zoning Commission was appointed by the Otsego County Board of Supervisors. The County Agent served as secretary.

**1951:** WATC radio station began airing the Extension farm program 6 days a week

**1952:** Noted as “one of the outstanding 4-H events of the year”, 225 4-H club members, leaders and parents attended the 3<sup>rd</sup> annual Recreation Jamboree at the Gaylord 4-H camp.

By far, clothing was the most popular girls 4-H project. Mrs. Dittmer of Dittmer Clothing Store sponsored incentive awards for the 4-H clothing and knitting programs.

The Extension Service cooperated with Otsego County people and the University of Michigan in conducting an “Our Community Tomorrow” Institute in Gaylord.

**1953:** The Gaylord State Bank distributed 200 complimentary copies of the Farm Record Book developed by MSU Dept of Ag Econ.

**1954:** Potato production has declined from 90% to 15% of crops grown in the county.

Sixteen milk houses were constructed.

A half million trees were planted throughout the county as part of conservation efforts.

The Otsego County Fair replaced the Kiwanis 4-H Fair which had operated since 1943.

### 1954 Ag Census Snapshot

There are 350 farms and a total population of about 7,000 people. 328 farms reported having electric service. Only 26% have telephone service. There has been a 300% increase in numbers of items as telephones, home freezers, grain combines and milking machines since 1950. Pick-up hay balers and forage harvesters have increased from one to 51 and 31 respectively. There is now an average of 1.1 tractors and 1.2 automobiles per farm.

**1955:** First year that most farmers could start qualifying for Social Security. “Barnyard Economics” meeting conducted to explain the program in detail to local farmers.

A new program to encourage applying lime on soils that have a low ph was introduced. About 70% of cropland in Otsego County require from 1 – 3 ½ tons per acre of agriculture lime. Offering free soil tests and 75% cost sharing resulted in about four times as much lime applied as had been in any previous year.

Smith-Lever Act added Rural Development to the Extension Service mission statement.

**1956:** Christmas tree sheering and shaping demonstrations conducted.

**1957:** Allaire Schleicher, a member of the Johannesburg Busy Bee 4-H Club, was selected as an IFYE delegate to Uruguay.

**1958:** About half the farmers are employed off the farm to supplement the family income.



# 1960s – 1970s



## Highlights from 1960 – 1979

**1960:** Soil Improvement: Thomas Theisen of Elmira Township was the first to use bulk spreading of commercial fertilizer in the county. The resulting crop of 7 ½ – 8 tons of silage per acre convinced Tom and his neighbors of the benefits of this practice.

A report on the Tourist and Resort Institute was given to the Otsego Lake Chamber of Commerce resulting in a request for over 30 bulletins on motel management.

**1961:** Largest 4-H electrical club in northern Michigan with 45 boys from Otsego County. This was a successful effort to attract older boys to 4-H. Leaders included: Carl Carlson, Donald Crandall, Pardie Olund, George Galbraith, and Douglas Styles.



**1962:** The section of I-75 that runs through Otsego County opened. Major changes and rapid growth would result.

**1964:** Weekly outdoor cooking demonstrations at Otsego Lake State Park helped campers feel welcome and learn about food safety.

There were 35 certified seed potato growers in Elmira.

**1965:** MSU President John Hannah toured two beef farms in Otsego County.

**1965:** “One of the most significant developments in Otsego County was the adoption of the county zoning ordinance which became effective August 5, 1965.” The effort actually began in 1939 when an intensive land use study was made in the county but remained idle since the 1950s.

U.S. Plywood opened in Gaylord

**1966:** Commercial beef cattle production continues to grow more important as an enterprise in Otsego County.

More than 100 local teens - including 12 boys attended the 4-H Baby Sitting Clinic

**1967:** Extension specialist, Gladys Knight, held an all day workshop for women who are responsible for quantity food preparation. She also assisted with the kitchen plans for the new Methodist Church in Gaylord.

The Extension office made a temporary move until the new courthouse opened in 1969.

Welcome Mat Project for new residents to get acquainted was initiated. This was a forerunner of Welcome Wagon.

**1969:** Forest Products Short Course conducted for pallet makers using second grade hardwood.



**1969:** Les Howard became CED following the death of Ray McMullen. One of his first tasks was to help develop a county-wide building code and green belt amendment to the county zoning ordinance.

**1974:** Julia Beard transferred to Emmet County after 19 years serving as Extension Home Economist and 4-H Agent in Otsego and Montmorency Counties. The dual position was split. Bonnie Hamlin became the new Home Economist. 4-H is assigned to Roger Manning, a multi-county agent in Alpena with a program assistant located in Otsego County.

The Pigeon River Advisory Council is created to provide input to the DNR’s management of the nearly 100,000 acre forest. Les Howard was a member of the 17 person Council and served as chairman for several years.

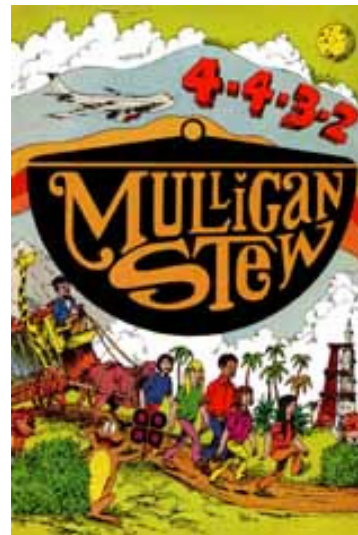
**1975:** Otsego County celebrated its Centennial

**1979:** “Grasshoppers have been a very serious problem - from loss of most of a hay crop, total loss of oats for grain, and destruction of many gardens. The most unusual situation involved eating a tuba harness and destroying the reed in a clarinet when the instruments were left on the ground while band members practiced.”

Ann Widger began her 25 year career heading up the 4-H program in Otsego County.



1980 - 2007



## Highlights from 1980 – 2007

Extension office on the move: During this time period, the Extension office moved three times. In 1980, the office moved from the County Courthouse to the second floor of the McNamara Insurance building. Four years later it moved to 200 Livingston Blvd in the J. Richard Yuill Alpine Center. Then in 1998 the office was relocated to the 4<sup>th</sup> floor of the Alpine Center where it is currently.

Staff changes: **1992** Les Howard retired as County Extension Director and is replaced by Jack Middleton. **2003** Jack Middleton retired as County Extension Director. District Extension Educator, Phil Alexander, took on County Extension Director role in addition to his 21 county assignment. Alexander retired in December 2007.



Longtime 4-H Agent Ann Wright retired in 2003 and Bethany Prykucki is hired.

Several Home Economists served Otsego County as part of a multi-county assignment from 1980 -2007 namely Pam Kail (Cheboygan), Janet Rathke (Charlevoix) , Marlene Caszett (Antrim), Kris Sorgenfrei (Presque Isle), and Linda Cronk who is also the Crawford County Extension Director.

Ben Bartlett, Cheboygan County Extension Director, has served as the Agriculture Educator in Otsego County since 2004.

**1981:** Montmorency County got its own County Extension Director (CED) allowing Les Howard to be full time in Otsego County.

Horse Barn built at fairgrounds and named “4-H Cooperative Barn”.

**1986:** Leadership Development series of workshops conducted in Otsego County.

**1987:** Otsego County celebrated Michigan’s Sesquicentennial. Les, Phil, Ann, and Pam served on the year-long county committee.

**1991:** The county is inundated by gypsy moth which prompted voters to approve a special millage for a suppression spraying program. Extension provided technical assistance and produced fact sheets for homeowners.

**1993:** The Family Nutrition Program (FNP) began in Otsego County aimed at families who were eligible for food stamps.

**1994:** The Breastfeeding Initiative began in collaboration of MSU Extension, the Health Department and Otsego Memorial Hospital.

### New 4-H Programs

Adventure Quest Day Camp, Horseback Riding for the Handicapped Program, Dad and Daughters Dance, Folk Patterns, Michigan History Expo for 4<sup>th</sup> Graders, Agriculture and Natural Resources Day at Fleming’s Farm. The 4-H livestock and gardening programs expanded greatly.



New logo and name

**1997:** MSU Extension partnered with RSVP and United Way to create the Volunteer Center.

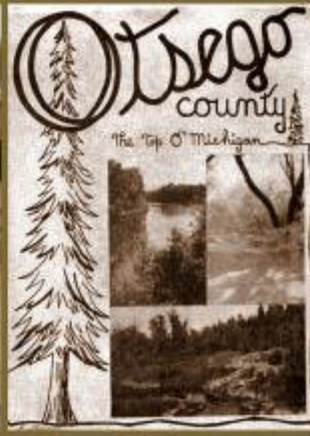
**1999:** Otsego County began offering The Michigan Master Gardener Volunteer Program to people who are enthusiastic about gardening, who want to learn more about growing plants and are willing to share their knowledge with others.

**2000:** The first annual Northern Michigan Small Farm Conference was held in Gaylord and continued there until 2003 when it was relocated to Grayling.

**2003:** Citizen Planner – a program to assist people serving on local zoning and planning commissions was conducted.

**2004:** Historical Barn Survey conducted in Otsego County as part of Matthew Pearson’s AmeriCorps\* VISTA internship with 4-H.

**2006:** Otsego County became one of the first Elder Friendly Community in Michigan.

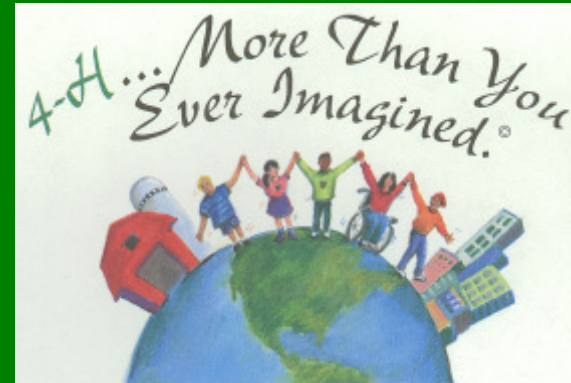




## Agriculture & Natural Resources



## 4-H



## Home Economics



## Community Development



Extension programming is traditionally divided into these four categories

## Agriculture

“Agriculture has been very important in Otsego County both from an economic standpoint and as a way of life. Before the turn of the century (1900), large numbers of county residents lived on farms.

Agricultural activities were closely associated with lumbering and lumbering activities. Many residents worked in lumbering camps during the winter and put up hay and other crops during the summer months. With the decline of lumbering, families turned to their farms as a sole source of income. With the loss of the ready market provided by the lumbering camps, many farms in the county were abandoned.”



Seventeen types of farming were recommended for various areas of Michigan. Otsego County was split between #12 “Northern potato and dairy” and #13 “General, Self-Sufficiency and Part-Time”.

Soil type, climate, length of growing season, and topography are the main factors for determining agriculture potential. Basically, farm products fall into two categories: plants and animals. For Otsego County, the main plants (crops) are potatoes, alfalfa/hay pasture, and corn for silage. Specialty crops such as sunflowers, onions, artichoke, and raspberries were experimented with on a limited basis. The animals (livestock) have been primarily dairy cows and beef steers with hogs, sheep and chickens being less popular.

In the 1970s reports, farm operations were divided into four types: 1) absent owner – manager, 2) family, 3) part time, and 4) subsistence. Farm management and marketing programs concentrated on farm buildings, soil improvement, pest and weed control, and improving farm profitability. During this decade, the average farm size (by acres) in Otsego County was the largest in the state.

This laminated rafter barn built in 1940 by Harold Bailey was the first of its kind in the county. The construction of this barn gave local contractors valuable experience.



1938 appears to be a period of transition for farming in the county. Both horses and tractors are used as shown in the photos taken from the 1938 annual report.



Of the total land area of Otsego County 24% is in farms. Of the total farm acreage 40.6% or 32,932 acres are available for crops.

The acreage of potatoes exceeds the acreage of any other annual crop, and the farming program on most farms in the county is based around potato production. The more successful farms as a general rule have developed some form of livestock enterprise. Dairy cattle are the most common type of livestock; but during the past few years the production of dual-purpose and beef types has increased. A few farmers have developed a successful sheep enterprise and have demonstrated that this type of livestock is adapted to the county.

## Potato Farming



**1940:** The fertilizer demonstration on the Albert Burzynski farm in Chester Township produced outstanding results. The two crates at the right were taken from rows fertilized with 2-12-6. The other two were “filled” from an equal area of unfertilized plants.

Dr. John Muncie, Extension Plant Pathologist, was called to Otsego County to assist in controlling Bacterial Ring Rot which was one of the most serious diseases for potatoes.

It was noted that substandard potatoes could be used for canning; however they were of no market value.

### 1936 Potato Show

“Due to the lack of financial support it wasn’t possible to hold the Top O’ Michigan Potato, Apple and Seed Show that had been held at Gaylord for 12 years. Instead, a combined show with northwest Michigan was held in Kalkaska. The Otsego County Farm Festival and Potato Show was held at Gaylord on October 26, 1936. It provided an educational demonstration for farmers of this county.”

Various types of potatoes were grown in Otsego County over the years. Here is a summary from the 1944 annual report:

**Chippewa** – good yielder, subject to scab and blight rotting in bin. Popular due to its good cooking quality.

**Menominee** – holds type (shape) well, yields good and has a very good scab resistance. Very late, cooking quality not so good.

**Katadhin** – Does not yield as well as Chippewa. Set shallow and few in a hill. Holds type very well.

**Sebago** – Reported to be blight resistant. Very good yielder. First year it has been grown in the county.

**Pontiac** – Red skin, some objection to color. No resistance to scab. Good cooking quality. Acreage has increased greatly during the past 3 years.

**Erie** – A new white skin variety. Has scab resistance, yields good, holds type well, cooks well.

**Russet Rural** – The most common variety grown in county. Acreage greater than all other varieties combined.

**1952:** Recommendation that growers plant only those varieties which the consumer wants, such as Sebago, Kathadin, and Chippewa.



Tom Milbocker’s potato digger is equipped with a canvas which reduces mechanical injury  
1939 p. 23



### 1939 Otsego County Potato Growers Contest

	Total Yield Per Acre	Total Yield U.S. No. 1 Per Acre	No. acres Grown	Variety
* Geo. MacKenzie	388	233	6.4	R.R.
* Chester Greenman	306	192	10	R.R.
Herb Gingell	283	190	9	R.R.
Lloyd Skilton	275	175	5	R.R.
* Carl Griswold	274	248	8.2	R.R.
* William Hansen	269	135	6	R.R.
* Tom Milbocker	256	236	5	Chip
Wayne Townsend	265	211	8.7	Kat
* William Campbell	235	138	7	R.R.
Ray Moorehead	232	151	6	R.R.
Pat Bryson	220	163	10	R.R.
* Harold Bailey	214	184	7.5	Chip
Estelle & Son	199	120	11.4	R.R.
Darrell Fleming	196	140	5.6	R.R.

\* Certified Seed Growers

## Beef and Dairy

Beef and dairy cattle production in Otsego County was a logical choice due to the growing season, abundance of pasture lands, and access to major transportation routes.

**1926:** Dairy program resulted in a series of well attended meetings throughout the county. A local bank established a \$10,000 revolving fund at 5% interest with which to purchase high grade or pure bred cows. Fifty-two farmers were approved by the bank and the county agent this year.



Courtesy OCHS

**1926:** “Assisted local creamery to instill business principles”

**1946:** Extension played a key role in the formation of the Northern Michigan Beef Breeders Association (NMBBA). Originally the annual feeder sale was held at the stockyards provided by the Otsego County Chamber of Commerce at the fairgrounds.

### Did You Know?

The pens were built from materials that were obtained by tearing down the grand stand.

**1962:** Mass change over to bulk cooling resulted in larger and fewer dairy farms.

**October 10, 1963:** The largest beef sale east of the Mississippi River was held at the NMBBA auction in Gaylord.

**1966:** “Commercial beef cattle production continues to grow and become more important as an enterprise throughout northern Michigan. Marketing programs such as the Feeder Cattle Sale have been educational tools that assisted in promoting this industry and utilize a great natural resource of this region, grass.”

**1967:** “The D. H. Fleming herd which was increased from 30 cows to 85 cows two years ago along with construction of an 80’ x 120’ free stall barn, this year for the first time will reach if not exceed a herd average of 500 pounds of butter fat per cow.”

**1968:** Now 2500 head of cattle are processed with about the same number of man hours as was required 20 years ago for 500-600 head

**1984:** The Gaylord Livestock Auction closed so the NMBBA leased the facility on South Otsego Avenue to continue the weekly sales. Eventually, the entire operation relocated to the facility on North Townline Road. The volume of business had to increase in order to keep the sale going. It is the only weekly livestock auction north of Clare and draws from the thumb of Michigan and the upper peninsula.



*Photo courtesy of A. J. Townsend*

*First Annual*  
**4-H CLUB FEEDER SHOW**  
*October 24, 1946*  
**Feeder Cattle Sale**  
*October 25, 1946*  
 Sponsored by  
 NORTHERN MICHIGAN BEEF BREEDERS ASSOCIATION



Norris Horrocks,  
 Ray McMullen, and  
 Marge Tolman  
 adding up the sales  
 from the 1967  
 livestock sale

## Natural Resources

### Forestry

Approximately 75% of land in Otsego County is forest. Various forestry and wood industry programs have been conducted by Extension over the years. Here are some examples:

**School forests and 4-H:** The school forest program in Otsego County was started in 1934 when the Gaylord High School secured a fractional 40 acre parcel in section 6 of Bagley Township. The second school forest was established at Vanderbilt in 1937. The Johannesburg School forest was established in 1938 in section 33 of Charlton Township. Two thousand Norway pine trees were planted by the Johannesburg students. The survival rate of all three locations was approximately 90%. The cost to the school was \$1.00 for each description and the cost of recording the deed. 4-H Forestry Club projects were conducted in connection with the school forests.

### Sawmill clinics and wood lot management:

Workshops and individual consultations were provided by local staff, regional forestry agent Russ Kidd, and campus specialists like Hank Huber.

Pulpwood workshop and Sawmill Operators Clinic were conducted throughout the 1960s.

Reforestation, Christmas Tree farm management, and controlling gypsy moth are other forest related services offered by Extension.



1940 Annual Report: “An example where forestry and soil conservation meet. The barn which appears in both pictures is the same building. Wayne Townsend who owns the land shown in the bottom picture has planted pine trees in contour furrows, while his neighbor who owns the land in the top picture continues to crop the hill-side. Which land will remain productive the longest?”

### Water Quality

The vast majority of residents use groundwater for drinking water. Preventing groundwater contamination is necessary to sustain our health and quality of life. For the past several years, Extension has offered free well water testing at MSU’s Ag Expo in conjunction with the Michigan Groundwater Stewardship Program.

### Soil

“Does my soil need lime?” and “What kind of fertilizer should I use?” are typical questions asked by local farmers and homeowners. Soil tests are conducted by Extension to answer those questions with proper recommendations.

### Oil and Gas

During the 1970s and 80s, there was a surge in oil and gas exploration. Otsego County was a prime market. Educational assistance was provided to help landowners understand the leasing process, what questions to ask, and how to avoid common pitfalls. Extension bulletins such as E-2121 “Oil & Gas Royalties: Look Before You Lease” helped people deal with this significant opportunity.

“Although the water resources provide the basis for the resort and recreational developments, the value of timber growth in providing game cover and the aesthetic background for the natural playground should not be over looked.”

-- 1940 land use pamphlet

## Home Economics



Extension personnel from campus were sent throughout the state to teach classes in home economics. The first mention in Otsego County was in 1923 and was conducted under the local leader plan. This meant that a few residents were trained by an

Extension Specialist then they re-taught the information to the members of the local study groups located around the county. These projects were very popular and brought a complete Extension program into many farm homes which could be reached by no other method.

**1935:** “The interest the leaders took in this project was displayed at the February meeting which was held during one of the worst blizzards. All the roads were blocked and travel was difficult. However, one of the leaders, Mrs. James White, traveled half a mile on snow shoes to get to the road which was open and then had a friend bring her to the meeting. Mrs. Gladys Fox, another leader, traveled  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile on skis and walked the remaining 3 miles in the blizzard to attend the meeting.”

**1936:** The first Home Demonstration Agent assigned to Otsego County was Alice Hertzler in 1936. Programs in the early years included food preparation, human nutrition, hot lunches at rural one-room schools, canning, home furnishings, and sewing.

Part of the  
Otsego County  
Home Economics  
Achievement Day  
Exhibit

May 23, 1935



Extension Study Groups were formed throughout the county as the primary method of delivering the home economics program. They provided an occasion for both educational and social purposes. Study Groups also offered an opportunity to develop leadership skills. Although open to everyone, nearly all of the participants were women.

Study Groups operated through the Michigan Association of Extension Homemakers (MAEH). The association later was renamed Family and Community Education (FCE). Further details can be found on page 26 of this document.

Achievement Day in the spring and the annual Fall Rally brought all the groups together to celebrate their progress and accomplishments.

The Extension worker assigned to this program area went by different titles over the years. These included Home Demonstration Agent, Extension Home Economist, and Family Consumer Science Educator. Some of the Extension Home Economists in Otsego County also served as the 4-H Agent and often served in 2 or more counties.

### Study Topics from the 1960s

International understanding  
Poison proofing the home  
Leadership development  
Stretch the family budget  
Reupholstering older furniture  
Aging the modern way

**1967:** Exhibits at the County Fair “help spread the gospel of their training during the past year”

**1972:** MAEH delegates began attending County Board of Supervisor meetings. It was noted that the tone and temper of the proceedings became more genteel when the women were in the audience.

## Family Nutrition Program (FNP)

The Family Nutrition Program (FNP) began in December 1993. Otsego County was among the first counties in the state to pioneer this innovative approach to assist low income families. FNP provides information and technical assistance to people who are eligible for food stamps. Educational programs are conducted throughout Otsego County to reach people at schools, senior centers, the Friendship Shelter, and 4-H Adventure Quest Day Camp to name a few examples. A home visit to help individuals on a one-on-one basis is another convenient and effective option.



Lori Hunt, FNP Educator, is pictured here with volunteer Joyce Bowers conducting a food demonstration at the 1996 Otsego County Fair.

FNP helps people who receive food stamps make more informed decisions related to buying and preparing food. Typical lesson topics include food safety, meal planning, label reading, and creative ways to enjoy healthy meals. To help the younger generation form good eating habits, a six-week cooking program through 4-H was held at the Vanderbilt Area School during the 1990s.

An example of how Extension program areas “cross pollinate” is Project Fresh. While the main emphasis of Project Fresh is to encourage people to eat more fresh fruits and vegetables, it also benefits local growers who sell their produce at the Farmers Market. Project Fresh is administered by WIC (Women, Infants and Children) and distributes a \$20 coupon book to eligible families. A similar program aimed at assisting senior citizens called Senior Project Fresh was added in 2005.

The Demonstration Kitchen located next to the MSU Extension office on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor of the Alpine Center was created in 2005. Several individuals and organizations donated time and materials to renovate the former conference room into the Demonstration Kitchen’s fully equipped two learning labs. Cooking classes for area high school students, senior citizens, 4-H Clubs, and residents of the Transition House keep the facility busy with hands-on educational activities.

St. Mary student, Zack Boerema, in the photo to the right is making cupcakes.



## Parenting Programs



Parenting programs have been provided by MSU Extension for many years in various formats. Several of the annual reports mention Extension Home Economists and Homemaker Study Groups focused on parenting issues.

In more recent times, collaborative programs were administered through the local Extension office. TAPESTRY was operated in conjunction with the Educational School District. Mary Tithof and Michelle Franks conducted one-on-one assistance to area families with young children.

A second program, the Breast Feeding Initiative began in 1994. Its main purpose is to educate and provide support to breastfeeding moms and their babies. It is an interactive parent and tot program. Children learn social skills at an early age. Playgroup - a once a week opportunity at the Community Center – provides time for parents to network with other families. In the photo above, Debby O’Neill, Mother-to-Mother Peer Counselor, is relaxing at the County Fair.

# 4-H

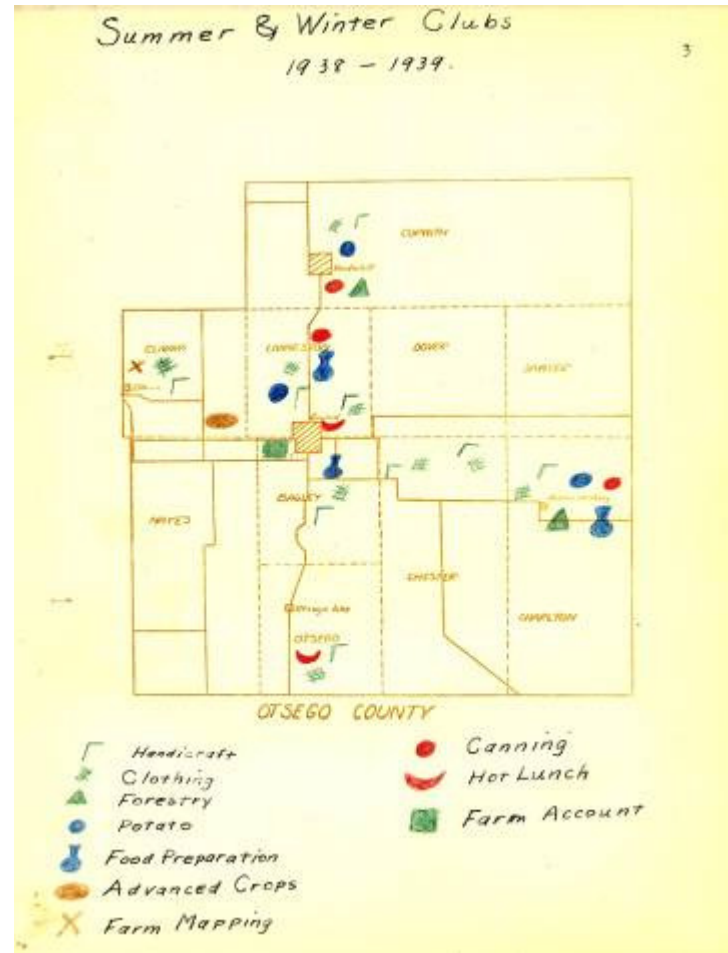
“To Make The Best Better”



4-H in Otsego County began in 1925 and was originally called Boys' and Girls' Club. The following year, Mr. Lester V. Benjamin was hired to work with 4-H in Otsego, Cheboygan, and Montmorency Counties. Financial backing for County Club work was provided by the Gaylord Chamber of Commerce. Five potato and six canning clubs were started for summer programs. Sewing, Handicraft and Hot Lunch were started for the winter months.



1940 Otsego County 4-H Dairy Achievement Day at Johannesburg



This map from the 1939 Annual Report shows the location and types of 4-H clubs in Otsego County. There were a total of 135 boys and 119 girls enrolled that year in 29 clubs. Llewellyn Karr was the District 4-H Club Agent serving Presque Isle, Alpena, Montmorency, and Otsego Counties

## 1940 Achievement Day



4-H Achievement Day was held in the spring of each year to showcase and evaluate the winter projects. Left to right: Clark Oliver, Amy Lee Fox, Robert Briley, and Junior Larson

The **Otsego County Fair** served a similar purpose for 4-H projects conducted in the spring and summer.



Some of the 4-H livestock winners at the 1994 Otsego County Fair



## 4-H

### Summer Camp

For many youth in Otsego County, one of the main events of summer vacation is attending 4-H camp. This annual event has been held since the 1920s. The location has changed from time to time and has included campers from surrounding counties.

4-H Camp provides an opportunity for youth to meet others from neighboring counties and provides a leadership opportunity for older teens. Traditional activities such as archery, canoeing, and swimming along with current ones such as water quality, goecaching, and photography.



### Horseback Riding for the Handicapped

An innovative 4-H program developed in the early 1990s to meet the needs of an underserved audience was the Proud Equestrian Program (PEP). PEP gave handicap children a fun opportunity to ride horses and improve their coordination. The program also provided 4-H teen and adult leaders a valuable learning and volunteer experience.



### What Is 4-H?

4-H is a fun, educational program designed to help kids learn more about topics they are interested in. 4-H is a great way to make new friends, and join in fun activities with people your own age. The mission of Michigan's 4-H Youth Development is to create environments, through collaborations, that build strong and healthy youth who are proactive in a complex and changing world.

4-H programs are instrumental in building life skills in youth such as leadership, communication, citizenship and career development. Adult volunteers support 4-H programs by working interactively with the young people and serving as positive role models. Both members and leaders participate in local meetings with their clubs and may also take part in the annual county fair. 4-H youth programs are found in rural and urban areas throughout Otsego County.

### Otsego County 4-H Staff

Lester V. Benjamin



Mary Ilford  
(later Guggisberg)

Andrew L. Olson  
Claude M. Elmore  
George K. Johnson  
John C. Post  
Sherry Huff  
Judy Heinowski  
Rhonda Behnke



Ann Widger Wright  
1979 – 2003



Current 4-H Educator  
Bethany Prykucki

## Camp Gay-Gug-Lun

1926: "Through cooperation with several agencies secured a district Club Encampment for boys and girls club members from 27 counties are eligible for attendance. 207 was the total enrollment this, our first year. We hope to make this a permanent institution for Otsego County." See photo below

In 1933, the buildings shown in the post card to the right were built. Funding was provided by a special grant by the Michigan legislature. Camp Gay-Gug-Lun was dedicated on August 3 by Gov. Green. The local newspaper declared it to be the "finest camp of its kind in the world".

Questions still being researched include: When did the camp close? How did it get turned over to the Otsego County Fair Association?



### How the Camp got its name

"Gay" is for Gaylord, the location of the camp.

"Gug" is for Guggisberg. John C. Guggisberg was a long time businessman in Gaylord. In the 1920s, he was the state superintendent of 4-H clubs and worked with the state legislature to get appropriations for the camp buildings. He served as State Representative of the Otsego-Cheboygan district from 1939 – 1945.



"Lun" is for Lunden. Herman Lunden was a prominent business leader in Otsego and Montmorency Counties. He was a lumbering company executive, banker, and president of the Otsego County Fair.

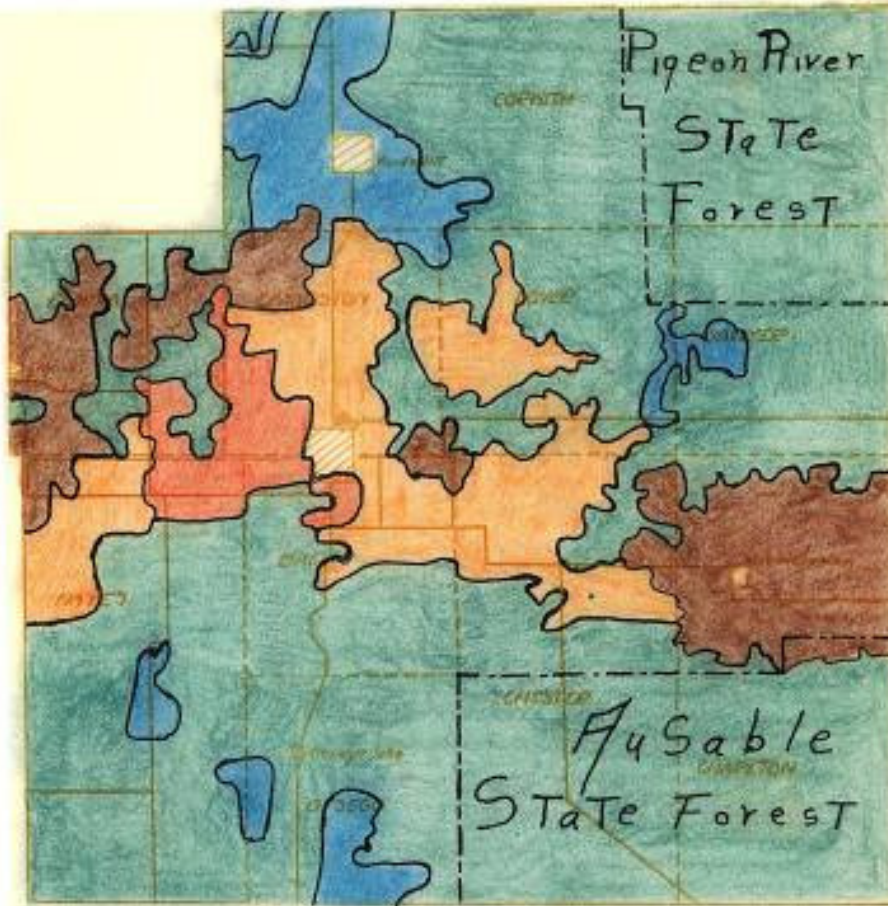
*Courtesy OCHS*



*Courtesy OCHS*



## Community Development



SUMMARY OF LAND USE MAP PREPARED BY COUNTY PLANNING COMMITTEE -- 1938

- Brown** – Adapted to agriculture. Best farm land in county.
- Orange** – Adapted to agriculture but has disadvantages of hills or less durable soils in comparison with brown area
- Blue** – Adapted to agriculture but less desirable than orange area
- Red** – Principally in agricultural uses at present. Questionable if this area can continue as profitable farm land on a long term basis
- Green** – Non-farm land. Generally unadapted for agricultural uses

Land Use Planning: The 1938 map in the left column was the county's first comprehensive effort in land use planning. A study tour was conducted to assess current and potential uses for agriculture, fish and game, forestry, scenic beauty, and resort services and accommodations.

**1939**: "Otsego County in Retrospect and Prospect: Its assets and the possibilities afforded" by County Extension Director Arthur Glidden and the Otsego County Planning Commission was published.

**1967**: "The programs and activities conducted under this heading (planning and zoning) probably affect more people directly and indirectly now and in the future than any other program with which the Extension office is associated."

### Landscaping

**1943**: Extension specialist O. I. Gregg conducted landscaping demonstrations on the county court yard and the yards of three private homes. We do not know just how this will "take" but we have hopes - the county can stand plenty of it. Future landscaping projects for a church in Gaylord and the Fairview Cemetery were planned.

Tourist and Resort: As early as the 1924 annual report, tourism was recognized as an excellent opportunity for development and a way to compensate for the loss of the lumber industry. Campus specialists conducted several workshops and conferences during the 1940s – 60s.

**1984**: The first district extension tourism agent in the United States, Phil Alexander, was hired and stationed in Otsego County.

Leadership Development: Extension has a long history of programs related to leadership development. It is a pillar of 4-H and Home Economics efforts. In 1998, Extension conducted a six part series titled "Expanding Horizons". Currently, Extension plays an active role in Leadership Otsego County sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce.

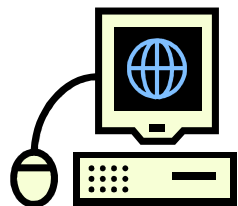
Elder Friendly Community: Recognizing the impact and value of the increasing number of retirees, Extension partnered with the Otsego County Commission on Aging to become the first in the state to pilot test this new initiative focused on creating a community for a lifetime.

## Communication & Outreach

Making sure local residents are aware of the service provided by MSU Extension and making it easy for them to access the information have been constant challenges for Extension staff. Often described as “The Best Kept Secret”, it might be the wide range of subject matter and services as well as not fitting into a neat box that causes some fuzziness about what Extension is and what it does.

Getting the word out presented an interesting dilemma even back in 1955. “One of the problems is that there are so few telephones out in the county. Most communication must be made by letter or driving to the farm or house.”

County Extension Director Ray McMullen was up to the challenge when he wrote in the 1958 annual report: “Try to work out a plan so that every family in the county will at least know what Extension has to offer. Too many people say ‘I didn’t know this was available’. Evidently they don’t listen to the radio, read the newspaper, or know their county services.”



Internet  
Web Site

[www.msu.msue.edu](http://www.msu.msue.edu)

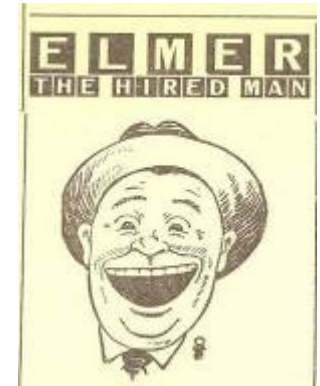
Extension uses a wide variety of delivery systems to disseminate educational information. It was reported in 1923 that “Educational endeavors augmented thru the use of a moving picture machine – agriculture films featured at a series of meetings.” Other forms of communication include:

- Special Events and Activities
- Newsletters
- Workshops and Conferences
- Meetings, meetings, meetings
- Demonstrations
- Telephone inquiries
- Office walk-in customers
- Bulletins such as these



### Public Relations – Media

Weekly newspaper columns such as “Elmer the Hired Man”, “Here and There”, “Down on the Farm”, and “4-H Roundup” were featured in the Gaylord Herald Times and Vanderbilt’s Our Town.



### Radio

15 minute updates were broadcast on WATC radio during the 1950s, 60s, and 70s. The agriculture report was given on Monday and Home Economics or 4-H on Thursdays.



Mike Reling, of The Eagle 101.5, hosted The Morning Show remote broadcast from the Extension office in 2004

## Advisory Council

The role of the Extension Advisory Council is to provide support, advice and direction for MSU Extension efforts in Otsego County.

The council helps Extension staff identify community assets and needs, evaluate the Extension program and publicize its effectiveness. Council members also help identify resources and collaborators.

### WHAT MSU EXTENSION MEANS TO ME



*Michigan State University Extension is a tradition. Extension has always exhibited the tradition of serving, giving, educating, and enhancing people's lives.*

*Through the years, extension has adjusted to the changes in our communities and the changes in the world around us. MSU Extension continues to bring a huge variety of knowledge to the public. Extension is learning, growing, and expanding our horizons. Hurray for MSU Extension as they continue to move forward with vision and expertise.*

**-- Mary Sanders  
Advisory Council Member**

## MAEH



The Michigan Association of Extension Homemakers (MAEH) was organized in 1936. Extension Homemaker Study Groups were formed

throughout Otsego County. The names of the neighborhood groups included Wide Open Spaces, Happy Neighbors, Meridian Line and Gaylord Evening Study Group.

Min Jackson and Gladys Fox were MAEH members for over 55 years.

Through the years, MAEH's educational programs have contributed to the improvement of family and community life and of international understanding.

To reflect its broader mission, MAEH changed its name to Family and Community Education (FCE) in the 1990s.



Otsego County MAEH members attending College Week at MSU in 1938

## Master Gardener



### Alpine Master Gardener Association

Approximately every two years MSU Extension offers the Master Gardener Class in Otsego County consisting of a series of horticultural workshops. This would not be possible without the assistance of the Alpine Master Gardener Association.

In 1999, the graduates of that class, along with previous Otsego County Master Gardener Volunteers, formed the Alpine Master Gardeners Association (AMGA); there are currently 69 active members. The purpose of the Association is to enhance the Master Gardener Volunteer Program, helping the MGVs maintain their commitment of renewed education and volunteer hours. The volunteer effort is focused on educating the public through lecture and hands-on gardening projects. Current projects include maintaining gardens at the Alternative Landscaping & Demonstration Garden at the Alpine Center, lecture series at the County Library, annual fall workshops, and maintaining gardens at the South Maple and North Ohio Schools.

The association offers its members educational programs, group tours of gardens, and field trips to visit local nurseries.

## Collaborative Partnerships

The 1930 annual report noted the support of the **Gaylord /Otsego County Chamber of Commerce**. “The business men, both as individuals and through their organization, the Chamber of Commerce, have always vigorously supported the work.”



The battle against potato blight. “As soon as the seriousness of the situation became apparent, a visit was made to Father Kaminski, Pastor of St. Mary Church. Father Kaminski again offered his 100% cooperation and called the seriousness of the situation to the attention of his people. Circular letters were

mailed to all potato growers giving specific recommendations. The week following Father Kaminski’s announcement in church and the first circular letter, the Otsego County Cooperative Association sold 3 tons of copper sulfate to spray on the potato fields.” A second example of Father Kaminski’s assistance and influence was evident with the establishment of the Soil Conservation District in 1944. “Perhaps the most effective work in getting a good vote at the referendum was done by Father Francis Kaminski. He spoke of the organization of the District for 2 Sundays previous to the referendum. He urged landowners to get out and vote and suggested that they vote in favor of the organization of the District.”



The Gaylord Kiwanis Club played a major role in several Extension programs such as sponsoring the 4-H Fair from 1943 - 1953.

### A sampling of our partners

- Agricultural Cooperatives
- Church groups
- City of Gaylord
- Farm Bureau
- FFA
- Gaylord / Otsego County Chamber of Commerce
- Granges
- Kiwanis
- Library
- Northern Michigan Beef Breeders Association
- Otsego Conservation District
- Otsego County Economic Alliance
- Otsego County Fair Association
- Otsego County Parks and Recreation
- Otsego Memorial Hospital
- Rotary
- Schools throughout Otsego County
- Sportsman’s Club
- Townships of Otsego County
- United Way
- Village of Vanderbilt

## It's All About People

“Assist people in making decisions that would improve family income and protect or improve their health, safety and welfare” is the goal of Extension as stated in the 1967 annual report. People are both the recipients (“customers”) as well as the providers of Extension programs. Volunteers serve on our advisory councils, are 4-H club leaders, get involved in research projects, and re-teach what they’ve learned.

Here are five examples of Otsego County individuals and families who have been active with Extension for many years.



**Ed and Francis Burzynski** were 4-H leaders for over 45 years. They started the Sturgeon Valley 4-H Club in 1955 with sister-in-law Martha Nowak. All seven Burzynski children were active in 4-H projects including sewing, woodworking, gardening, and livestock.

In the photo above are left to right in the back row: Denni, Tom, Ed, and Francis Burzynski. Front row are Tom & Denni’s daughter Beth and Denni’s nephew Chad Fate.

“The story of the **Briley family**, consisting of Gordon, Robert, Clemma and Lillis and their father and mother serves as an example of several similar families. The two oldest children started 4-H Club work in 1934. Mr. and Mrs. Briley were active in the organization and leadership of the clubs. As the younger children, Robert and Lillis reached club age they also became interested in club activities. Many honors have been received by the Briley family, but more important has been the development of the family. The 4-H Club activities in girls projects interested Clemma in home economics work and as a result has enrolled in Michigan State College. Gordon is now taking over the active work on the home farm and in addition to his potato work is now growing hybrid seed corn on a commercial scale. In addition to continuing active leadership in 4-H Club activities the parents are both taking leading parts in other Extension activities.” 1939 Annual Report page 103.

**Carl Widger** was a charter member of one of the first 4-H clubs in Otsego County. He earned many awards and accomplishments. Later, as a young adult, Carl became a 4-H leader and served for more than 30 years. As a progressive farmer, he participated in several Extension demonstration test projects. In addition to serving on the county 4-H Council for many years, Carl was also a member of the State 4-H Council in the 1970s. A memorial 4-H scholarship was established for Carl and his wife Lila in 1986.



Margaret (right) presenting her granddaughter Beth Prusakiewicz with a special 4-H award

**Margaret (Moorhead) Woodmansee** has been involved with 4-H for many years and has also been an active member of MAEH for over 55 years. She attended Camp Gay-Gug-Lun as a 4-Her in the mid 1940s. Later she became a 4-H leader. “Leader Mete so inspired the two Otsego County Delegates, Mrs. Margaret Woodmansee and Mrs. Roberta Wolf, that they have organized several new summer groups.”

The **Gene and Barbara (Kelso) Fleming** family has been involved with various Extension activities. They have served in key leadership roles related to Extension’s agriculture and 4-H programs. Barbara served many years on the county Extension Advisory Council.

Students from throughout Otsego County were hosted at their farm for the annual Agriculture and Natural Resources Day. This event provided a hands-on learning experience that just couldn’t be done in a school classroom.

Their 600 acre farm in Elmira Township was the second officially designated centennial farm in Otsego County.

# Otsego County Extension Staff

Philip J. Alexander 1984-2007  
 Diann Axford 1987-1991  
 Rollin D. Bailey 1917  
 Benjamin J. Bartlett 2005 To Date  
 Julia Saigeon Beard 1954-1974  
 Lester V. Benjamin 1926-1930  
 Rhonda Fleming Behnke 1978  
 Marlene Caszatt 1998-2002  
 Carolyn Crittenden 1950-1951  
 Linda Cronk 2005-To Date  
 Kim Dillon 1991-1997  
 Leon L. Drake 1930-1933  
 Claude M. Elmore 1945-1946  
 Joyce I. Engel 1953-1954  
 Michelle Franks 2001-2003  
 Cindy Funk 1994-1998  
 Denise Gapinski 1990-1999  
 Arthur W. Glidden 1938-1946  
 Mary Ilford Guggisberg 1930-1932  
 Bonnie Hamlin 1974-1982  
 Rose Mary Parlett Head 1947-1950  
 Judy Heinowski 1976-1978  
 Winfield S. Harrison 1939-1940  
 Phyllis Henry 1945-1946  
 Alice Hertzler 1936-1938  
 Lester J. Howard 1969-1991  
 Cindi Huellmantel 2002-2007

**Extension work as a life profession involves more than a mere job – it is also a philosophy of living.**

**To be able to refer to your occupation with pride, to engage in the wide variety of tasks, to enjoy association with people – and through it all to realize that are engaged in a constructive job which in turn is assisting others, and at the same time building yourself , is to reach the philosophy of Extension Work.**

**- Arthur Glidden, 1939**



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Sherry Huff 1975  
 Lori Hunt 1993-To Date  
 Dorothy Prebble Jensen 1953-1957  
 George K. Johnson 1948-1954  
 Pam Kail 1982-1988  
 Llewellyn B. Karr 1936-1938  
 Bonnie Karlake 1967-1982  
 Arthur C. Lytle 1919-1930  
 Susie Marshall 1998-2002  
 Raymond M. McMullen 1946-1969  
 Jack Middleton 1991-2003  
 Terry Murphy 2000 - 2007  
 Renetta Noa 1998  
 Betty Noeske 1982-1987  
 Cathy O'Connor 2007-To Date  
 Debby O'Neill 1998-To Date  
 Andrew L. Olson 1941-1944  
 Theresa Plachta 1999-2004  
 John C. Post 1954-1957  
 Bethany Prykucki 2004-To Date  
 Lawrence R. Queal 1918-1919  
 Janet Rathke 1988  
 Kristin Sorgenfrei 1992-1996  
 Mary Tithof 2001-2004  
 Orville F. Walker 1959-1964  
 Nola Jean Weber 1947-1947  
 Joyce Williams 1951-1953  
 Ann Widger Wright 1979-2003



## Campus Connection

The Extension office in our county is a direct link to the vast research and informational resources found on the campus of Michigan State University. There are 16 colleges within MSU and eight work directly with Extension.

Extension is housed in the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources (CANR). Extension Specialists are in the following departments:

Agricultural Economics  
Animal Science  
Biosystems & Engineering  
Community, Agriculture, Recreation and Resource Studies  
Crop & Soil Sciences  
Entomology  
Fisheries & Wildlife  
Food Science & Human Nutrition  
Forestry  
Horticulture  
Plant Pathology



Extension Specialists, like the soil scientist in the above photo from the 1940s, traveled to Otsego County occasionally to personally meet with local constituents and provide assistance.

### Computer Lab at County Library

In 1996, Dr. Paul Freddolino approached the Director of the Otsego County Library, Maureen Derenzy, to explore the idea of creating a computer lab for MSU social work students taking classes through the Alpine Regional Education Center (AREC). The 8 computers used the Library's internet connection to provide access to on-line resources at MSU. The agreement allowed the general public to also be able to use the new technology. "It was the biggest gift," said Derenzy. "There was nothing like it in northern Michigan."

### Area of Expertise Teams

In the 1990s, an issue based, multi-disciplinary approach called Area of Expertise Teams was initiated. Extension educators from campus and the counties joined efforts in addressing the state's most pressing problems and opportunities. Of the 28 teams, the most active in Otsego County included Community Development, Food Nutrition & Health, Forage/Pasture Grazing, Forestry, Land Use, Leadership, State & Local Government, and Tourism.

### University Center at Gaylord

Michigan State University along with eight other colleges and universities formed the University Center in 2002. It was an expansion of AREC and would allow residents of Otsego County to take higher education courses locally.

In addition to "bringing the University to the people", there are several opportunities for citizens of Otsego County to attend programs at MSU. Here are a few examples:

**Farmers Week / ANR Week:** This annual event began in 1916 and is held during MSU's spring break. It offers lectures, source for the latest in farming techniques and research. Many statewide associations also meet during this event.

### Little Farmers Week

As an alternative to going to MSU, campus brought an abbreviated version of Farmers Week to Otsego County during the 1950s. For five consecutive days, two Extension Specialists each took an hour at each meeting to discuss new ideas and methods regarding general agriculture.

**Ag Expo** is Michigan's largest agriculture equipment exposition. It began in 1978 and is held in July at the 35-acre demonstration field.

**4-H Exploration Days** is an annual MSU pre-college program that offers nearly 200 fun, action-filled classroom and field trip sessions. During their three-day stay, participants attend sessions such as decoy carving, sign language, produce their own TV show, and 4-H Business & Entrepreneurship. This event began in 1970.

**College Week** was originally named Farm Women's Week, then College Week for Women, and finally College Week, this annual program was discontinued in the late 1990s.

## Extension Workers Creed

I believe in people and their hopes, their aspirations, and their faith; in their right to make their own plans and arrive at their own decisions; in their ability and power to enlarge their lives and plan for the happiness of those they love.

I believe that education, of which Extension is an essential part, is basic in stimulating individual initiative, self-determination, and leadership; that these are the keys to democracy and that people when given facts they understand, will act not only in their self interest, but also in the interest of society.

I believe that education is a lifelong process and the greatest university is the home; that my success as a teacher is proportional to those qualities of mind and spirit that give me welcome entrance to the homes of the families I serve.

I believe in intellectual freedom to search for and present the truth without bias and with courteous tolerance towards the views of others.

I believe that Extension is the link between the people and the ever-changing discoveries in the laboratories.

I believe in my own work and in the opportunity I have to make my life useful to humanity.

**Because I believe these things, I am an Extension Professional**

## MSU Extension Today

Extension programs have adapted to the changes taking place in Otsego County over the past 90 years. The graphic below illustrates the major topics being addressed locally with the input and guidance of focus groups, key stakeholders, and the County Extension Advisory Council. Note that the people of Otsego County are the center of all activity. The smaller, concentric circles show how Extension programs are interwoven and are delivered in a synergistic approach.



## Future of MSU Extension

One of the striking aspects of working for MSU Extension is realizing that this organization has been serving Michigan residents for more than 90 years. This history of Extension in Otsego County is a great testament to the adaptability of the Cooperative Extension model of engagement between a land grant university and communities. Cooperative Extension work begins with understanding the needs and opportunities facing people, communities and businesses in the local setting, and then consists of addressing those needs and opportunities through educational programs that are based on the most current scientific findings available. In this respect, MSU Extension in the future will not differ at all from the past that is documented so well in this book: MSU Extension staff assigned to work in Otsego County will continue to work on understanding the needs and opportunities across the county and then bring in educational programs to address those situations.

What will differ in the future will be the needs and opportunities people will face and the ways we go about addressing those needs and opportunities. For example, the wood resources of Otsego County may be tapped for new bio-based fuels and materials. Extension educators may need to provide education programming for wood harvesting and wood processing businesses that may develop in this new economic sector. Similarly, an aging population facing increasing health care costs may generate a need for new education programs in preventative medicine, health maintenance and development of new community resources to support seniors with more self-directed health management.

The way we deliver education programming will likely change as well, with information technology providing opportunities to deliver education programs through the internet at times and in ways that are user-driven. The partnerships we depend on to deliver education programs may change as well, involving new partners, such as community colleges or perhaps non-government organizations.

The mission statement for MSU Extension – MSU Extension helps people to improve their lives through an educational process that applies knowledge to critical issues, needs and opportunities – will be as relevant in the future as it has been for the past 90 years. And we intend to ensure that MSUE can continue to serve this mission by keeping it connected to the local needs of Michigan’s families, communities and businesses.



**Thomas G. Coon**  
**Director, MSU Extension**

## Conclusions

***Learning A Living*** condenses 90 years of Extension work in Otsego County into a few pages. It is intended to give a brief overview by highlighting a sampling of the wide array of Extension programs and services. In doing so, hopefully the reader will become more aware of Extension's educational role and its important contributions to improving the quality of life in Otsego County.

Extension brings our state's land grant university to the people of Otsego County through a three way partnership of the federal, state, and county governments. Extension's commitment to lifelong learning is what sets it apart from other government services.

Learning is an experiential process. The participant is actively involved in discovering the answer. That is the point of the Proverb featured in the center column of this page. Arthur Glidden stated it this way in the 1940 annual report:

“The most successful Extension programs are those which carry out conclusions made by local people. It is important to present facts leading to conclusions, rather than to present conclusions and expect them to be taken for granted.”

**Tell me and I'll forget;**

**Show me and I may remember;**

**Involve me and I'll understand**

**-- Chinese Proverb**

It should be evident that Extension programs have changed over time and are based on local conditions and priorities. Ray McMullen stated Extension's challenge in the 1957 annual report as “meeting the needs of the people in a fast changing world”. Those words are still true today. Not only do the types of questions, concerns, problems, and opportunities continue to change, so do the ways in which people want to receive information. Delivery of Extension programs have also had to keep pace with changing preferences and technology.

Looking back should also be useful in preparing for the future. Hopefully this brief history is recognized as more than interesting trivia and photos of the good old days. Just as Extension programs 50 years ago are different from those today, it should be expected that they will continue to adapt to new and exiting issues in the future.

***Learning A Living*** provides a glimpse of Extension work in Otsego County that has helped people achieve safer, healthier, happier, fulfilled lives. This has been achieved – not by telling people what to do or doing it for them – but by Helping People Help Themselves.

## Reference Notes

## For More Information about MSU Extension

Special thanks to the many people who helped with this project including: Sarah Roberts at the MSU Archives, Ann Wright, Les Howard, Bethany Prykucki, Margaret Woodmansee, Mary Sanders, Barton Briley, Maureen Derenzy, Tom Burzynski, and Cathy O'Connor. Most of the information and photos are from the Otsego County Extension annual reports which sometimes included separate reports from the County Agent, Home Economist, and 4-H Club Agent. Other sources of resource materials include the author's collection, the Otsego County Historical Society (OCHS), MSU Extension – Otsego County files, the MSU Archives Historical Collection (UAHC), and Maureen Ballenger who is the daughter of former County Extension Director Ray McMullen.

Cover: Photo from Albert “Bob” and Anna Kassuba

Page 1 Cover of 1933 annual report by Leon Drake. Graphic of organizational chart by author

Page 2 Photos left to right top row: County Courthouse; 4-H Raspberry Club from the 1929 4-H Club Agent Report p.4; Sunflower test plot from the cover of the 1920 annual report. Bottom row: Potato sprayer courtesy of the OCHS; 4-H calf fitting demonstration 1928 4-H Club Agent Report p.4, Top O' Michigan Potato Show courtesy of OCHS.

Page 3 Photo of R. D. Bailey courtesy of the OCHS.

Page 4 1930s photos left to right top row: 1938 land use tour 1938 p.28, 4-H boys planting pine seedlings 1938 p.49, wind erosion 1938 p. 40. Bottom row: 4-H clothing club 1930 4-H Club Report p.3; abandoned house for sale 1938 p. 38, hybrid corn test plot 1938 p.7

Page 5 Northern Michigan Tuberculosis Sanitarium postcard from author's collection

Page 6 1940s Photos left to right top row: family fishing in Pigeon River State Forest 1940 p. 74; Ray McMullen, Jack Post, and unidentified SCS man outside log office – Ballenger collection; Kiwanis 4-H Club Fair 1943 p.38. Bottom row: Patsy MacKenzie with lamb 1940 p. 63a; WWII Victory Garden poster from Wikipedia; mattress making at Charlton Township Hall 1941 p. 57

Page 7 Milkweed clip art – USDA NRCS web page; photo of Ray McMullen – Ballenger collection.

Page 8 1950s photos left to right top row: Archery practice at 4-H summer camp 1953 p.29; dairy barn photo from Extension bulletin; cooking demonstration with June Howery and Geraldine Briley 1948 p.32. Bottom row: Extension office in Chamber of Commerce log building courtesy of the OCHS, 4-H gardening 1953 p.16; Red School courtesy of the OCHS.

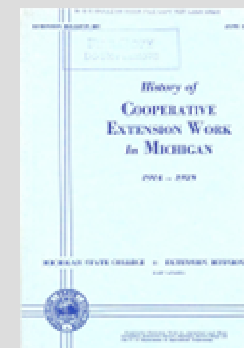
Page 10 1960s photos left to right top row: tree seedling planting from Gaylord Chamber of Commerce; 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary logo; 4-H dress revue judges Mattie Lee Townsend, Roberta Wolf, Margaret Woodmansee, and Shirley Moorhead, Julia Saigeon standing – Ballenger collection. Bottom row: natural gas well from Gaylord Chamber of Commerce, 4-H rabbit show ribbon from office file; “new” County Courthouse where the Extension office was located from 1969-1980.

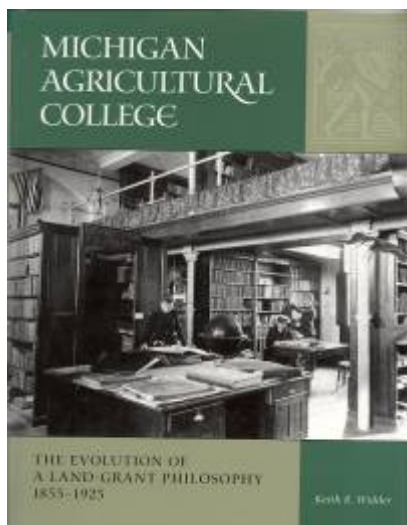
Page 11 I-75 sign from Michigan Department of Transportation's web site; photo of Les Howard from office file

Page 12 Photos left to right top row: Centennial Farm sign at Albert “Bob” & Anna Kassuba's farm – author's collection; entrance to the Extension office at 200 Livingston Blvd.; Phil Alexander, Ann Wright, Betty Noeske, Les Howard, and Pam Kail. Bottom row: 4-H Adventure Quest Day Camp from office file; cover of 4-H Mulligan Stew from MSU 4-H web site; NMBBA livestock auction yard from Gaylord Chamber of Commerce

Page 13 Photo of Jack Middleton and MSU Extension logo from office file

Page 14 Agriculture and community development clip art from MS Word, 4-H from MSU 4-H web page, and home economics from MyPyramid.gov web page.





“Extension thrived because it was highly organized at the federal, state, and college levels, and its agents worked with and through local government and associations, which they often had helped to organize in their counties. Paying attention to the details of the activities of people’s ordinary lives such as sewing clothes, preserving food, harvesting more potatoes per acre, and raising healthier chickens, made up the ‘stuff’ of extension. People welcomed agricultural and home demonstration agents into their homes, fields, schools, churches, and most important into their lives. “ -- excerpt from page 212

## Reference Notes

Page 16 Map from Extension Special Bulletin 206 in 1939; photo of laminated rafter barn from 1940 annual report p.49; team of horses plowing from 1938 annual report p.42; and alfalfa seed combine from 1938 annual report p.11.

Page 17 Photo of potato crates from 1940 annual report p. 31; unidentified man from 1940 annual report p.27; Tom Milbocker’s potato digger from 1939 annual report p. 23, and Potato Growers Contest results from 1939 annual report p.20.

Page 18 Photo of Gaylord Creamery courtesy of OCHS; Feeder Cattle Sale brochure from 1946 annual report; and photo of Norris Horrocks, Ray McMullen, and Marge Sanders Tolman – from the Ballenger collection.

Page 19 Two photos of conservation practices from the 1940 annual report p. 43.

Page 20 Photo of clothing demonstration from the 1949 annual report p.31a; and the photo from Achievement Day Exhibit from the 1935 annual report p. 41.

Page 21 All three photos from the author’s collection and subjects are identified in the accompanying text.

Page 22 Photo of 4-H Dairy from the 1940 annual report p. 60; map from the 1938 4-H Club Work Report p. 3; photo of 4-H Achievement Day from the 1940 annual report p. 51; and photo of 4-Hers at the 1994 Otsego County Fair from office file Back row left to right: Mykel Jozwiak, Beth Prusakiewicz, Linda Slivinski, Pat Cook. Front row left to right: Billy Holewinski, Penny Gapinski, and Danielle Zimmerman

Page 23 Photos with welcome sign and horse from office file; photos of Mary Guggisberg and Bethany Prykucki from the author’s collection; and photo of Ann Wright from Ann Wright.

Page 24 Postcard of 4-H Club Camp from author’s collection, and photos of John Guggisberg, panoramic view of camp, and Herman Lunden on horse courtesy of the Otsego County Historical Society.

Page 25 Land use map from 1938 annual report p. 27.

Page 26 Scanned images of Extension bulletins from MSU Extension web page; scanned image of Elmer The Hired Man from the Otsego County Herald Times; and photo of Mike Reling from the office file.

Page 27 Photo of Mary Sanders and image of the MAEH emblem from the office file; photo of College Week from the 1938 Home Extension Work Report p. 10; and the MSU Master Gardener logo from the office file.

Page 28 Photo of Monsignor Kaminski and scanned image of the Top O’ Michigan Fair premium book courtesy of the Otsego County Historical Society; and the first Kiwanis 4-H Fair from the 1943 annual report p. 38.

Page 29 Photos of the Burzynski family and Margaret Woodmansee from the office files.

Page 30 Photo of the 2007 Extension team from the office files.

Page 31 Photo of the four men (names and date unknown) – from the Ballenger collection

Page 32 Graphic with concentric circles from the office files

Page 33 Photo of Director Coon from the MSU Extension web page