

Happy 100th Anniversary to the El Dorado County Farm Bureau!

The University of California Cooperative Extension and the Farm Bureau have a long history. In fact, without the farm bureau we wouldn't have a county based cooperative extension system. Really!

Let's take a stroll down memory lane....

The earliest organizations of farmers began to develop in the late 1800s. Those groups organized under a variety of names and philosophies, including The Grange, The Farmer's Alliance, The Agricultural Wheel, The Ancient Order of Gleaners and the Equity.

The origin of the Farm Bureau followed a different path and didn't occur until shortly after the turn of the century. Farm Bureau grew out of the Extension education movement occurring at land grant colleges across the nation.

The land grant colleges were established under the Morrill Act of 1862. The Hatch Act of 1887 established agricultural experiment stations. Each had provisions for "farmer's institutes" and other forms of off campus education for farmers.

The Extension concept, however, did not take root until the early 1900s, when the agricultural colleges developed Extension departments and staff. The devastating boll weevil gave an unexpected boost to the concept of traveling professors and field demonstration projects.

With a financial assist from the Department of Agriculture, Dr. Seaman Knapp took to the road to "teach by doing rather than telling." The field trials were developed to deal with the boll weevil. It had the effect for the first time of taking the classroom to the farm. Texas has the distinction of assigning the first "county agent."

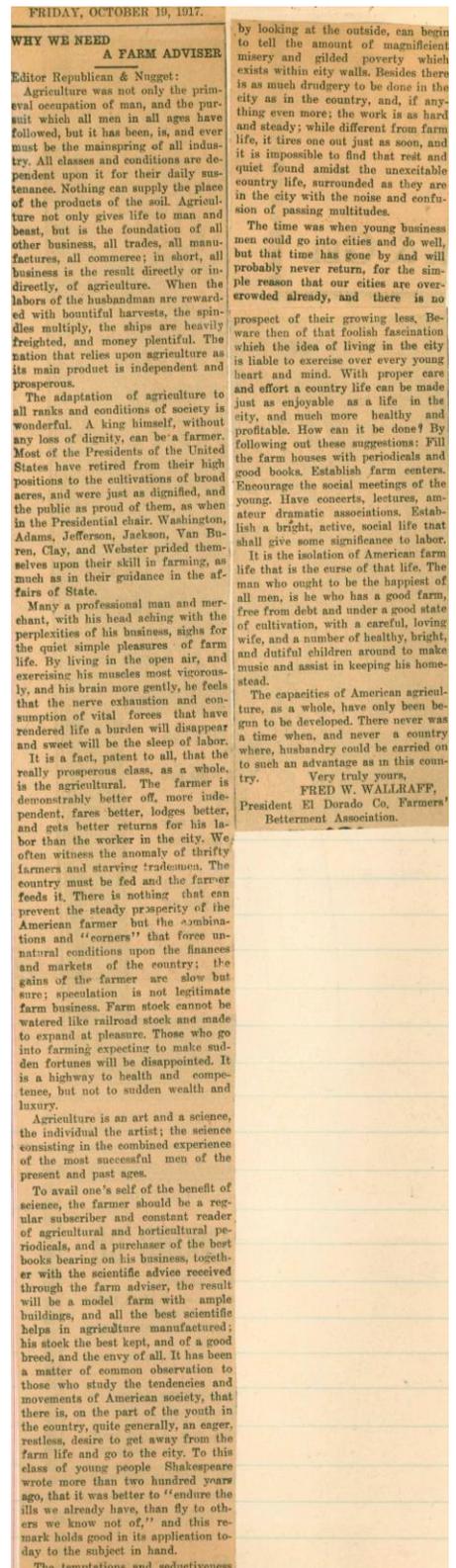


Figure 1 Why we need a farm advisor.

In 1911, John Barron, a farm boy who graduated from Cornell University, went to work in Broome County, New York. He was the first county agent to serve as a "farm bureau" representative. The Farm Bureau venture was financed jointly by USDA, the Binghamton Chamber of Commerce and the Lackawanna Railroad.

The new function operated as a "bureau" within the chamber of commerce, hence the name for the early organization. The Broome County Farm Bureau eventually separated from the chamber and began functioning as an independent entity in 1914.

Similar farm organized educational efforts quickly sprang up in Missouri, North Dakota, Vermont, Minnesota, Iowa, West Virginia and Illinois. The passage of the Smith Lever Act in 1914, providing added funds for education efforts, greatly boosted the effort. The local Farm Bureaus served as the organizational network needed to further the Extension education efforts of the county agent. It was during a 1916 meeting of state county agent leaders that the designation "county farm bureau" was formally adopted. The county Farm Bureau, or occasionally smaller units called parishes, initially served a social and educational function. But as the farmers met, they realized the broader potential of the new organization.

County Farm Bureaus throughout the nation started forming their own independent organizations similar to Broome County. The counties then quickly affiliated into statewide organizations. In March 1915, Missouri became the first to form a statewide organization.

Locally, it was the year 1917, when farmers in El Dorado County began to organize. An article that appeared in the local newspaper, on Friday, October 19th, 1917, read "WHY WE NEED A FARM ADVISER." Figure 1 The editorial written by Fred Wallraff, President for the I Dorado County Farmers' Betterment Association wrote about the benefits of agriculture to the local economy stating, "Agriculture not only gives life to man and beast, but is the foundation of all other business, all trades, all manufacturers, all commerce; in short, all business is the result directly or indirectly, of

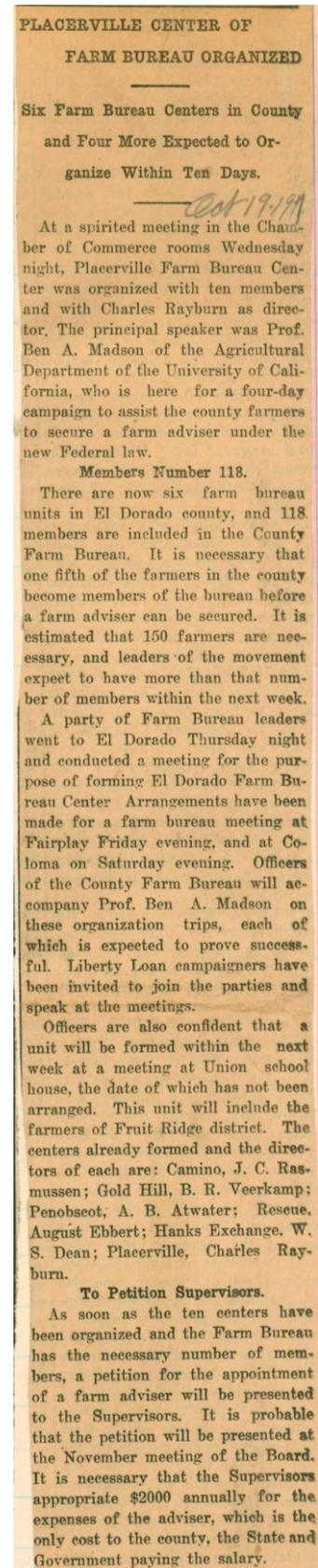


Figure 2 Placerville Center of Farm Bureau Organized.

agriculture.” Wallraff also expresses the value of education to the farmer, the importance of keeping abreast to recent science and research and the need for a farm adviser. “The farmer should be a regular subscriber and constant reader of agricultural and horticultural periodicals and a purchaser of the best books bearing on his business, together with the scientific advice received through the farm adviser, the result will be a model farm with ample buildings, and all the best scientific helps in agriculture manufactured; his stock the best kept, and of a good breed, and the envy of all.”

In the same newspaper issue, October 19th, 1917, another article titled, Farm Bureau Organized, Six Farm Bureau Centers in County and Four More Expected to Organize Within Ten Days. The story highlights the need for organized farmers to be a part of a farm bureau to secure a farm adviser. “It is necessary that one fifth of the farmers in the county become members of the bureau before a farm adviser can be secured. It is estimated that 150 farmers are necessary, and leaders of the movement expect to have more than that number of members within the next week.” Figure 2

Those numbers were reached, and it January 1918, the first farm adviser, Burle J. Jones started in El Dorado County.

Figure 3

As the University of California Cooperative Extension in El Dorado County prepares for its celebratory 100th Anniversary in 2018, we will continue to highlight stories from the past. We again want to congratulate the El Dorado County Farm Bureau on their huge milestone and thank all the members both present and past for everything they have done to promote, preserve, and protect agriculture in El Dorado County.

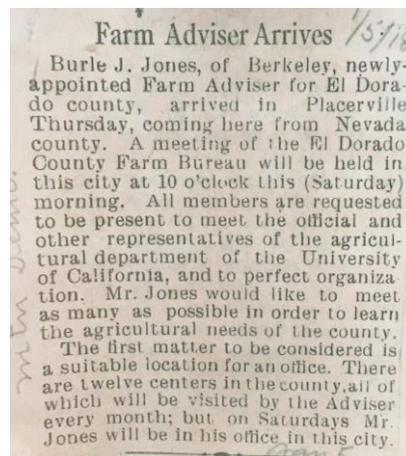


Figure 3 Farm Adviser Arrives

Scott Oneto
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