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## Chapter 4

# Depression Era

Beginning in 1929, with the stock market crash, the economic situation in South Carolina, and the country at large, became progressively worse. Cotton and tobacco prices continued to decline. Money and credit became very scarce. State appropriations for Extension work reached a precarious position in 1932 and 1933, and only the service and support of agricultural leaders, Council of Farm Women, and friends of Extension prevented funds for Extension being left out of the state appropriations on two different occasions. (Morgan, 1970)

During these years, reduced incomes resulted in the widespread concern for the education of the family to have well-balanced meals. Miss Lonnie Landrum pioneered an educational program in food selection and use to keep the family members healthy and to provide the variety needed. School lunches today are an accepted fact. Not so in the 1930's, except in some rural schools, many of them one teacher schools, where home demonstration club members took turns providing a hot dish at noon. It was often soup, or a hot milk drink, a pot of Hopping-John, or chicken bog or pilau.

Membership in the South Carolina Council of Farm Women went through a period of rapid increase during this time. The all time high membership figure for this organization was recorded in 1936 with 17,478 members. This may have been due in part to the economic times and the need of people to make the most of their limited resources. Membership figures (Minutes, 1930-40) for the period were: 1930 - 7,552; 1931 - 9,234; 1932 - 9,859; 1933 - 11,572; 1934 - 11,072; 1935 - 15,446; 1936 - 17,478; 1937 - 15,117; 1938 - 13,077; 1939 - 13,793; and 1940 - 14,269.

The Associated Country Women of the World (ACWW) was formed in 1930 when Lady Ishbel Aberdeen and a small group of women conceived the idea of calling together the rural women of the world in Vienna. When they met, it was discovered that, although these country women lived in different countries and spoke different languages, they all had the same interests and problems. Mrs. Alfred Watt, Canada, was elected the first president of ACWW. It was comprised of 181 rural organizations in 51 countries from five continents and met every three years. Headquarters were and still are in London, England. (Minutes, 1936)

The South Carolina Council of Farm Women, in 1930, endorsed a law to place vocational guidance in each high school in the state and in 1931 went on record as requesting all housewives, institutions and, particularly, our state col-

leges to use South Carolina produce, both raw and canned, whenever possible. Examples of county programs during this period (Minutes, 1930) include:

- Richland County held a county-wide health day picnic for 310 girls with appropriate exercises.
- Two hundred thirty-three children in Lancaster County and 840 in Florence County were served hot lunch.
- Three towns in Oconee County held weekly clinics conducted by a county nurse and doctor where pellagra work was done.
- Berkeley County helped furnish vegetables and milk for 28 children at nutrition camp for a month.
- The Darlington County council contributed milk, eggs, and vegetables to pellagra patients. They also paid hospital bills for some school children and put one deaf and dumb girl in school.
- Bamberg, Clarendon, Colleton and Sumter Counties asked for a full time health unit in their county.
- Richland asked for an appropriation for a dentist in school—this was made and a dentist is now at work in the schools.

Even though the country was in the depths of the depression during the 30's and the Extension budgets could not provide for full-time salaries of some of the home economics staff members over a three- or four-year period, progress continued to be made. The Home Demonstration Councils helped save the Extension appropriations (federal and state) in 1931 and members appeared before the legislative appropriations committee in 1931-33. (Woodall, 1992)

In 1932, the State Legislature threatened to cut Extension funding from the state budget. The South Carolina Council of Farm Women immediately moved into action as evidenced by the quote from the State President's report. (Minutes, 1932)

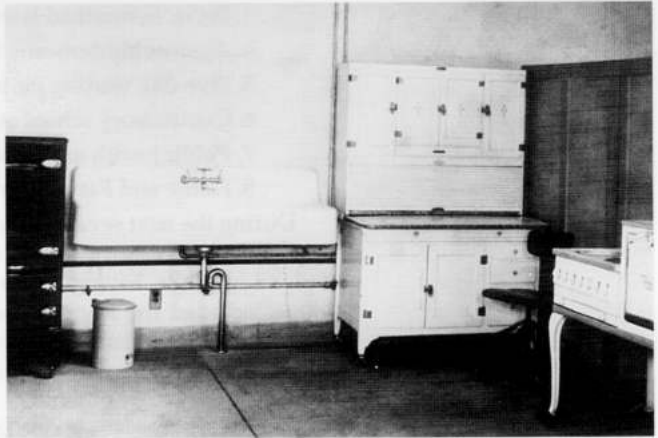
"Your President sent letters at once to each council president urging her to have council members see respective delegations and let them know the Farm Women wanted the work retained on the same basis. A few days later it became imperative to have the wires hum again. This your president did as the expense account will show.

Then a gentleman from Greenville, member of the Senate, introduced in the Senate a bill to abolish the law providing for agents in each county. Had this passed many counties would today be without agents. We who have so little would have even less.

It was your President's pleasure to appear before the Finance Committee and voice the plea of twelve thousand farm women for the retention of Extension work and workers. To her surprise, she found only three farmers on this committee and they were not all entirely dependent on the

farm for a living. I am glad to report that Extension work was continued."

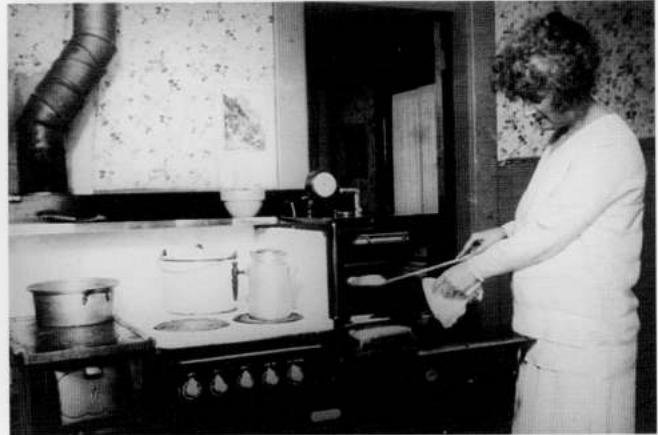
Marketing of farm products continued to be most satisfactory. Marlboro County reported \$4585.80 in curb market sales and Hampton County reported \$9000 in poultry sales alone. As one woman said, "What I've made there has enabled me to educate my children. I've also been able to put in running water and get a bathroom built and equipped with my own money made through selling at our market." And during the years of the depression, the only cash income on many farms was brought in by the homemaker through her market sales. (Carson, 1946) Contributions doubled in 1932 to \$8582 for relief for the poor and tubercular work.



*Running water was becoming a reality*

The State Council recognized the importance of education and was determined that rural children should have equal educational advantages with town and city children. They continued to insist on better trained teachers, more adequate equipment, and longer school terms. (Minutes, 1932)

Home demonstration work among blacks was expanded in 1933 during the food emergency program. As an emergency relief measure, home demonstration agents were placed in every county. This created a problem for Mrs. Marion Baxter Paul, then State Supervisor, to get qualified workers who were also eligible for relief. Through contacts with county relief centers and other sources, she was able to complete the task. (Johnson)



*"Modern" appliances were coming to the farm*

As a result of the benefits derived from this work, and the effort put forth by these new workers, Allendale, Florence, Marlboro, Orangeburg, and Sumter counties made appropriations for a permanent appointee and the rural women of Greenville County pledged to contribute \$300 per year for a permanent agent.

As various measures brought more funding, additional workers were placed in the counties and this enhanced the

work with boys and girls. All agents, both men and women, worked with programs for boys and girls. (Johnson)

The legislative program of the South Carolina Council of Farm Women in 1933 recommended (Minutes, 1933):

1. Sales tax.
2. Rural electrification.
3. Better homestead laws.
4. Against burdensome taxation of farm land.
5. Five-day waiting period for marriage.
6. Compulsory school attendance.
7. Public health unit in each county.
8. Home and Farm Agent in each county.

During the next several years following 1933, Extension was called upon to assist in the establishment of other federal agencies having to do with agriculture. Some of these included the Rural Rehabilitation Service, now the Farmers Home Administration; the Production Credit Associations, Rural Electrification Cooperatives, Soil Conservation Districts, and others.

Camp Long was opened as the first State 4-H Club Camp in South Carolina in 1933. The establishment of this camp

was the result of the efforts of Mr. Monson Morris and other winter residents of Aiken who made contributions. The camp was named in honor of Director W.W. Long. Director Long died on November 13, 1934, and was succeeded by Mr. D.W. Watkins.

Mrs. J.L. Williams from Greenwood County was elected State President in 1934 and more and more county councils became involved in pushing



4-H Club girls in food production State Fair, 1932

the rural electrification program. As one person said, "It is a cherished dream of mine that we may see power lines along our principal highways and electric current available to country people at reasonable rates, thus carrying city advantages to the farm, and helping to make country life more attractive and satisfying." (Minutes, 1934)

In McCormick County, an effort was made to have a law passed prohibiting any vehicle passing a school bus while it was loading or unloading children on highways and efforts were continued to get rural electrification. (Minutes, 1934)

A Home Management Specialist (responsible for home management, housing, and home furnishings) was appointed in 1935. County black home demonstration staff were added. Along with the concentration on rural electrification, the need

for school lunches, county libraries, and the use of cotton in every way possible, received attention of the home demonstration agents and council members. (Woodall, 1992)

Home demonstration council members (white and black) volunteered to serve lunches and worked until 1947 to secure federal funds for school lunches. With the realization of inadequacies of county libraries, concerted efforts were placed on establishing adequate libraries. Home demonstration council members served as volunteers to operate libraries in the smaller counties until an adequate staff could be hired. (Woodall, 1992)

Aiken and then Greenwood women got the first county appropriations for library trucks, and the Darlington council women raised the money and bought a truck themselves. Of course, after the WPA started in 1935, all councils that had started to work for such libraries got help from them. (Carson, 1946)

Mother Walker led the County Home Demonstration Councils to establish community development centers. Chesterfield County was the first in 1930, converting the town dump on donated land into a town park with rustic bridges, sunken flower gardens, and a club house with a kitchen, supply room, lights, and water to be used by community organizations. By 1935, 42 of the 46 counties had at least one center. These centers were often a starting point for the intensive community development work later on in the 1950's. (Woodall, 1992)

The following excerpts from the minutes of the South Carolina Council of Farm Women illustrate the kinds of things being accomplished (Minutes, 1935).

I would like for this council to sponsor a movement for maternity-infancy care by trained mid-wives. When we consider that 50 per cent of the babies born in the state are delivered by mid-wives, then we see how important it is that they have the proper training. ...the maternity death rate in South Carolina is the highest in the United States, a fact and a condition which should cause the citizens of this state to hang their heads in shame. The council calls you to continue to work for rural electrification. There is no single thing we could do towards restoring South Carolina farm homes to their proper and rightful place than to make electricity available to every farm in the country. We want to work to wipe out diphtheria, to make a study of maternity and infancy work, to build more sanitary closets, and to work for a health unit in each county.

Hot lunches were served in 541 schools to 126,411 children. Three hundred four homes were screened. Seven hundred forty-one sanitary closets built. General clinics held 215, typhoid clinics 286, dental clinics 41, diphtheria clinics 27, T.B. clinics 32, prenatal clinics 61, physical examinations 713, small

pox vaccinations 1603, health contests 105, health programs held 29, wells covered 42, and wells installed 62.

The pellagra work done by Home Demonstration Agents and council women in cooperation with health agencies in the counties in the early 1930's was tremendous. In addition, the Health Committee helped with an educational program to wipe out diphtheria in 1935. They also sponsored and helped with hot school lunches, county nutrition camps for underprivileged children, testing wells, screening houses, testing cows for T.B., getting sanitary toilets for rural schools, etc. (Carson, 1946)

The South Carolina Council of Farm Women joined the Council for the Common Good in 1935. This council was an organization of women's groups throughout the state representing over 60,000 members and served as a very powerful force in the public policy arena.

The South Carolina Council of Farm Women became affiliated with the Associated Country Women of the World in the early 30's. It was comprised of 181 rural organizations in 51 countries from five continents, and met every three years with headquarters in London. South Carolina had 267 members attend the 1936 meeting of ACWW in Washington, D.C. and has had at least one delegate at every meeting since. Representatives of 23 foreign countries and 42 states were present at the 1936 meeting. As one person said, "We are no longer narrow or provincial; we are world-minded. This is our first adventure in international relations. As a member of the S.C. Council for the Common Good, an organization of 60,000 women, we have a powerful influence in affairs of state and nation." (Minutes, 1936)

Excerpts from the minutes of the 1937 meeting of the South Carolina Council of Farm Women provide some idea on the interests and values on this dedicated group of volunteers.

Perhaps as never before our county councils are realizing "We are not here to dream, to drift. We have hard work to do and loads to lift."

We know that extension work is for all people, but it cannot reach all people unless you and I go out and bring them into our clubs and make them feel welcome. The Home Demonstration Agent cannot reach many who need her help, but you and I can reach them. So I urge you to go out and bring in these needy ones and let them share in the blessings that we are receiving. The Council of Farm Women is greatly interested in promoting a closer relationship between farm and city women. As some one has said: "The needs of the two groups, the rural producer and the urban consumer, are interdependent and a satisfying life for both hinges on closer cooperation."

The work of black extension agents has been stressed in some counties. Frankly, we as a whole will never get very far until we realize that we are our brothers' keeper and give to the black race better schools, better reading facilities, and train the farm boys and girls for life on the farm. It is one of our problems. Until their illiteracy is blotted out, we will hold a low average.

Realizing the rottenness of politics and especially the methods used in times of election, we the women of South Carolina should endeavor to make a better record for our glorious state.

God's word, which is our law above man-made laws, forbids marrying when one's husband or wife is alive and no matter what we may say, it stands. The present day divorce is nothing short of "legalized adultery". We hold up our hands in horror at legalized liquor, yet stand for such a thing. Decent society should use every means possible to ban this law from ever being on our statutes.

Several officers of the State Council attended a conference on illiteracy in Columbia in 1937. Later, the president, Mrs. J.L. Williams, was appointed by Governor Johnson as a member of the State Committee on Literacy.

The Council appealed to the South Carolina Congressional Delegation in 1937 to support the Civil Service Retirement Act. It was successfully passed but Extension personnel (Cooperative Extension Service employees) were not included for benefits until 1945.

The Citizenship Committee of the South Carolina Council of Farm Women, during this time, sought to awaken rural women in the state to their duties and privileges as citizens in community, county, and state. Progress was slow at first with efforts to encourage farm women to enroll and vote. The committee worked for five years before they got 50% of the members enrolled to vote. In some cases their husbands objected and some of the women themselves thought it an unladylike thing to do. However, by 1938, 90% of the members of the Council of Farm Women were voting and have been doing it ever since. (Carson, 1946)

In her address to the state convention in 1938, Mrs. J.L. Williams, State President included the following remarks. (Minutes, 1938)

Many of our council presidents are developing into splendid leaders and are contributing much to the upbuilding of their communities. But our great need at the present time is to develop leadership among our rural men. We need leaders in our communities, in our legislative halls, and in the halls of Congress, to protect and promote the interests of agriculture and to mold rural thought and opinion. I think one of the greatest things the county councils of farm women could do would be to encourage and develop leadership among rural men.

We have seen and marveled at the development of leadership among farm women during the brief seventeen years the State Council has been in existence. I believe we could see a similar development of leadership among our farm men if they were given a similar opportunity for taking part in group meetings and discussions. It seems to me it is plainly up to the farm women to take the initiative in providing these opportunities by encouraging their husbands and brothers to become members of and to take active parts in national farm organizations, for it is necessary today to organize and learn to cooperate with others in order to maintain our independence.

Recommendations of the South Carolina Council of Farm Women in 1938 included the following:

- 1) Due to the fact that there is a ruthless disregard for the preservation and protection of wild life in South Carolina, it is recommended that we ask the passage of laws for the protection of fish and game.
- 2) We recommend that the county councils cooperate with the local farmers' organizations to the end that leadership may be developed among our rural men.
- 3) Our marriage law should require that the physical examination include the Wasserman blood test. We have three states with this law. We should demand a confirming test and this would help to stamp out venereal diseases. The need for such legislation is attested by the fact that more than 60,000 babies are born in this country every year with congenital syphilis.

The sound doctrine of living at home for the farmer was set forth with a rhyme by W.P.A. Administrator Hopkins in his address in 1939 when he said:

*"A garden and a cow,  
A smokehouse and a sow,  
Twenty-four hens and a rooster,  
and you'll have more than you uster."*

Mrs. Landrum Sellers from Spartanburg County was elected State Council President in 1938 at a time when Extension was readjusting its program to an educational basis to assist farm families to build back after the depression. During this period, much emphasis was given to education programs with low-income farm families, whose problems had been brought into focus during the hard years that had just passed. An intensive live-at-home program was emphasized, this time under the title "Better Farm Living," which stressed again the home production and conservation of food and feed and adequate nutrition of the farm family.



Minutes of the 1939 State Council reflect some of the accomplishments of the council during this period.

Many of our council presidents are developing into splendid leaders and are contributing much to the rebuilding of their communities. Many homes have been improved. The country woman is now enjoying a modern home with all the conveniences of which her city cousin boasts. Recreational centers have been established, traveling libraries can be seen in many counties. Health clinics are being held—over 10,000



*"Live-At-Home" program with large productive gardens was emphasized.*

people attended such clinics this year sponsored by county councils. New scholarships are being given and the live at home program has been practiced. The National Home Demonstration Council was organized in Washington in 1936. The South Carolina Council of Farm Women became affiliated with the National Home Demonstration Council in 1940 and has had delegates at every annual meeting since. County Negro Home Demonstration Councils and the State Palmetto Council, organized during the 1930's and 40's, showed evidence of leadership development through community project sponsors. Members served as volunteers for school lunch programs and in the 1940's worked hard to provide a demonstration house. (Woodall, 1992)

Camp Bob Cooper, a Works Progress Administration work camp on Lake Marion, was donated to the Clemson College Extension Service in 1939 by the Santee-Cooper Authority to be used as a second State 4-H Club Camp. This camp was named in honor of Dr. Robert M. Cooper, of Wisacky, South Carolina, a member of the Clemson College Board of Trustees, and, who, as Administrator of the Santee-Cooper Authority at that time, was largely responsible for the camp being made available for 4-H Club work. (Morgan, 1970)

With surplus cotton a national problem, the use of cotton in every way possible was made a high priority. A national mattress and comfort-making project was initiated in 1940 to use the surplus cotton and to provide bedding for low-income families. The home demonstration staff super-



4-H girls participating in canning contest.

vised the program. Centers were set up for families—both white and black—to make mattresses on the site after the mattress and comfort covers had been previously constructed. The size of the centers varied with small ones making ten a day to large ones making 100 a day. The clothing and home management specialists worked out the mattress and comfort-making process, then trained the county home demonstration staff to set up and give overall supervision to the center. A local person was

usually employed for day-to-day supervision in the large centers. Families paid 50 cents per mattress for expenses.

William H. Funchess, retired extension worker, remembers his first experience with Extension. It came with the mattress program when his parents were helped by this program. His mother was helped to construct several mattresses out of cotton. He said, "We used these mattresses for years and my mother still has one on a spare bed in her home." (Woodall, 1992)

Education was a priority of the council throughout its history and is evidenced by the number of scholarships given by counties and the state council. At the state level, a second scholarship fund was started in the 1930's by the State Council of Farm Women—the Landrum-Layton Scholarship. Yearly assessments were paid by each County Council. In addition, a majority of the county councils (both white and black) established loan funds for local 4-H club members to attend college. (Woodall, 1992) For example:

Berkeley County has assisted 14 girls to receive an education through their Marie Cromer scholarships. Besides their Marie Cromer scholarship, they have a boy at Clemson on a D.W. Watkins scholarship. Clarendon county has two Marie Cromer scholarships. Colleton has two girls using Marie Cromer scholarships and one boy using D.W. Watkins scholarship. All counties support the Johnson-Walker scholarship. (Minutes, 1940)

The State Council supported and worked diligently for the food enrichment legislation of the late 30's and early 40's. The State Nutrition Committee was organized during this period. This committee promoted state legislation which promoted the enrichment of corn meal, flour, rice, and grits which were sold in the state.