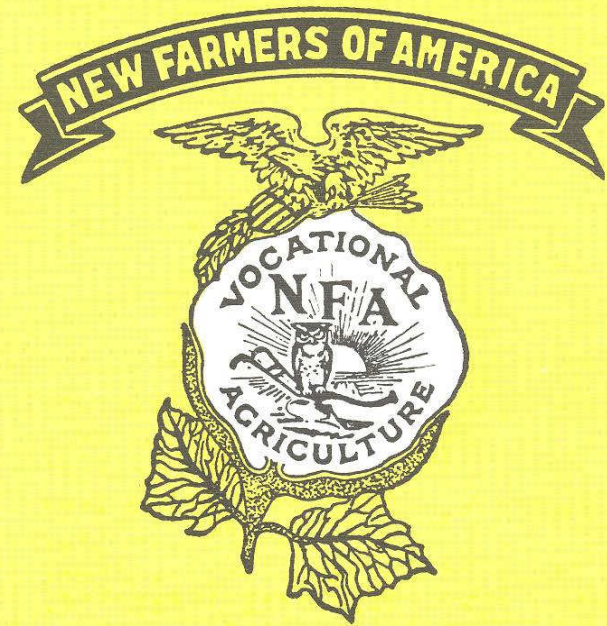


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A Chronology
Of
The New Farmers of America,
An Organization For Negro Boys
Who Were Students of
Vocational Agriculture.
From Its Inception as
Local Chapters By States
In 1926-27 Through Its
Structuring As A National Group
Under The Name
"New Farmers of America"
And Finally Its Demise and Anonymity
By Merger/Amalgamation With The
Future Farmers of America.

This research publication is dedicated to the life of Dr. Ernest Mishael Norris, Ph.D., and published in the interest of Education through Vocational Agriculture, which was Dr. Norris' life work.

Understanding is the manifestation of true affection and appreciation.

— Dr. Ocleris Simpson, Ph.D.
First Printing - July, 1993

Only at the local level would the Negro official drop the word "deputy" from his title.

In one of the small caucus sessions, Dr. Spanton let it be known that one of three persons would be acceptable to him as deputy national executive secretary of NFA, namely:

J. C. McAdams, Texas

W. S. Davis, Tennessee

J. R. Thomas, Virginia

The Negro group, upon the relay of this information to them, went into conference and prevailed upon Dr. W. S. Davis to accept the appointment. He was approved and appointed by Dr. Spanton.

Information about the changes in organization "filtered through" and permeated the entire delegation at the convention. A pall prevailed, similar to a "wake" until broken by a speech of welcome made at the first general session of the convention by President J. R. E. Lee of the host college. He uttered a strong and urgent plea for a Negro to be added to the U.S. Office of Education who would in turn be appointed National Executive Secretary of NFA. His speech was interrupted many times with resounding applause. The convention took on new life and ended on a happy note of high hopes. The Lee Welcome became the convention keynote.

The remaining years of NFA were within the U.S. Office of Education.

tional Agriculture. NFA would have its prorata share in such funding.

On Sunday evening prior to the opening of the 7th National NFA Convention in Tallahassee, Florida, a meeting was called for state supervisors and Negro teacher trainers to meet with Dr. W. T. Spanton and W. N. Elan, both of the Washington Office. Both white and black participants were tense, in anticipation of the inevitable—what the whites considered a necessary legal umbrella and blacks considered an unnecessary “white father’s” imposition filtering through from the recent disappointing appointment. The meeting opened with a round of introductions and proceeded with Dr. Spanton explaining the need to legalize NFA into the U.S. Office of Education and the various state departments of education comparable with the arrangements for FFA. The format and advantages of the arrangement were outlined and the disadvantages of continuing under the old plan were enumerated. As a result of private caucuses between Dr. Spanton and segments of the teacher training group the general plan of operation emerged as follows:

- (1) National NFA headquarters would be in the U.S. Office of Education, Washington, D.C.
- (2) Dr. Spanton would serve as National Advisor of NFA — same as for FFA except that a Negro teacher trainer would continue in the advisory role and be active as in the past but would carry the title “Deputy National Advisor.”
- (3) The old dual position of executive secretary-treasurer would be split into two positions: executive secretary and executive treasurer. S. B. Simmons would be relieved of the dual position and would be permitted to hold the position of executive treasurer.
- (4) Dr. Spanton would fill the position of executive secretary along with the position of national advisor until such time as he would be able to appoint a Negro from his staff as executive secretary of NFA.
- (5) Within the states the state supervisors of vocational agriculture would serve as state advisors of NFA and Negro teacher trainers would continue in their advisory roles but would bear the title “deputy state advisors.”

FORTY LONG YEARS . . .

A Chronologue of efforts to secure professional status employment for Negroes within Federal Agency Sponsorship of Vocational Education in Agriculture



A Memorandum prepared on behalf of former workers in the New Farmers of America program, Together With An Historical Sketch of the operations of the Vocational Agricultural program as it was styled under the titles Future Farmers of America, New Farmers of America, and then after the amalgamation, Future Farmers of America

By

ERNEST MISHAEL NORRIS, PH.D.
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Edited by Ocleris Simpson, Ph.D., Dean of Agriculture Research & Extension, Langston University, Langston, Oklahoma, with the assistance of Professor Cecil L. Strickland, Ph.D., Head of the Department of Agricultural Education, Prairie View A. & M., University, Prairie View, Texas.



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position. Therefore, after recovering from the shock and sadness of his untimely death, members of the Conference of Negro Land-Grant College Presidents attempted to create sentiment in favor of such appointment. Within a few months, the U.S. Civil Service released a circular announcing an unassembled examination to fill this vacancy. Several Negroes with training and experience in Agricultural Education applied for civil service rating. There were those who looked with apprehension upon the requirement that the person to be considered eligible must have had supervisory experience in working with "special groups." The Caucasian appointment (W. N. Elam of Texas) that was finally made bore an element of disbelief in the minds of some in regard to the application of this requirement to his dossier. Herein lay the basis for resistance given by Negro teacher trainers to "federalizing" or "legalizing" NFA into the U.S. Office of Education and the cold reception given to the idea at the seventh national convention in Tallahassee, Florida.

NFA — INSIDE THE U.S. OFFICE OF EDUCATION

1941 - 1965

During the last 24 years of operating at the national level NFA was headquartered in the U.S. Office of Education under arrangements comparable with but slightly dissimilar to those of FFA. During the year 1940-41, considerable correspondence and many personal conferences were the means used in exploring the need and conceiving the importance of "legalizing" NFA comparable with FFA. There was the assurance that NFA would have broader participation in financial aids that were and would be made available to FFA. Only under such arrangements could teachers, teacher-trainers, supervisors and field agents claim official time and travel in connection with NFA activities. Already Dr. W. T. Spanton, National FFA Advisor, and members of his staff had taken the initiative to organize interested business men and firms into a foundation to sponsor award programs in Voca-

NFA — OUTSIDE THE U.S. OFFICE
OF EDUCATION

1935 - 1941

DURING THE FIRST six years of national existence NFA operated outside the U.S. Office of Education, except on a consultative basis. The arrangement was for quasi headquarters at A. and T. College, Greensboro, North Carolina, with S. B. Simmons, State Supervisor of Vocational Agriculture in Negro Schools serving as executive secretary-treasurer and with Dr. H. O. Sargent, Federal Agent for Agricultural Education — Special Groups serving as a roving consultant and general advisor throughout the several states. Also during this period, Church Banks, Teacher Trainer, Prairie View A. and M. College, Texas (1935-37) and J. R. Thomas, Teacher Trainer, Virginia State College, Virginia (the remainder of the period) served as national advisors — maintaining communication with Simmons and Sargent largely through the mail. With Banks and Simmons more than a thousand miles apart, face to face contacts were expensive and rare. The situation was quite different with Thomas and Simmons in adjoining states.

Simmons spearheaded planning for each national convention — filling in program details after arriving at general agreement on format from the Washington office and the national advisor. Normally, Simmons would make extensive contacts largely by mail, occasionally in person, with the teacher trainer at the host institution to finalize arrangements locally for national conventions.

Both Sargent and Banks came to untimely deaths in auto accidents — Sargent while on a supervisory trip in Louisiana, 1936, and Banks while returning from a Father and Son banquet in Texas, 1937. Both men provided initial direction and stimulation to NFA at all levels — local, state, sectional, national, in their respective ways and means. More is said about them elsewhere in this bulletin.

At various times Dr. Sargent had mentioned the eventual need of a qualified Negro to do the work of his

FOOTPRINTS

of

DR. ERNEST MISHAEL NORRIS

Born in Leon County, Texas September 3, 1903 Ernest received his elementary schooling at Copeland Glade School of Flynn, Texas. In 1909 he entered secondary school at Boyd Institute, a Baptist School at Oakwood, Texas, graduating in 1920.

He entered Tuskegee Institute in 1920, returning in 1923 after having earned a Certificate in general agriculture with emphasis on agricultural education. Beginning his further studies in agriculture at Prairie View, Texas A. & M. College in 1925 he earned a B.S. degree in agricultural education graduating in the class of 1927.

Ernest began his studies with Cornell University in 1930 seeking a Masters degree in agricultural education which he received in 1931 with a minor in agricultural economics. He immediately began work towards a doctoral degree in 1931, taking extra transferential courses in education from the University of Cincinnati which he completed in 1932.

Ernest began work towards the completion of his doctorate with Cornell University in 1933 and received a Ph.D. degree in Agricultural education with a minor in agricultural economics and rural secondary education in the class of 1934.

After leaving Tuskegee Institute in 1923 he had accepted a position as teacher of vocational agriculture at Sumpter County Training School, Livingston, Alabama for the 1923-1924 term. From there he returned to Copeland Glade School of Flynn, Texas as school principal 1924-25. Ernest left this position to resume studies towards a degree at Prairie View A. & M. 1925-27. After having received his B.S. in agriculture he took a position to teach horticulture and food preservation at Prairie View Normal & Industrial College, serving from 1927-1929.

In 1929 Ernest married Malio Reto Poole of Mobile, Alabama. They had two children, a daughter Jean, and a son Ernest Mishael, Jr.

In 1929 he took a position with Kentucky State

College as Agricultural Teacher Trainer and Director of Research from 1929-1937. He was Head of Agricultural education at Kentucky State and Director of Graduate Studies, including Chairman of the Graduate Studies Committee from 1937 until his retirement in 1968.

Ernest was selected for special services to the government in the interest of Agriculture. In 1935 he was given leave of absence to serve as State Manager and Supervisor of a Study of Vocational Education and Guidance of Negroes. This was a national study conducted in Kentucky and directed out of the U.S. Office of Education at Washington, D.C., served from 1935 to 1936.

In 1945 he was selected to serve as Special Assistant to the Director of Personnel, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C., serving 1945-1946.

In 1956 he was again on leave of absence to serve as Director of Fundamental Education and Executive Dean For Jarvis Christian College of Hawkins, Texas, serving from 1956-1958.

Other special assignments for Dr. Norris included Director of Research for Kentucky State College 1934-1937; Director of Research Kentucky Negro Educational Association 1935-1937. Also served as Chairman of a General Education Committee at Prairie View A. & M. College for "Study of the Improvement of Teacher Education."

Dr. Ernest M. Norris served as National Executive Secretary of the New Farmers of America from 1947 until 1965.

He was serving as head of Prairie View A. & M. College Department of Agricultural Education at the time of his retirement in 1968.

candidates ran for the office from each of the sections: Eastern, Elbert Pettiford, N.C. and Joseph Johnson, Virginia; Southern section, David Simmons, Alabama and Almot, Waddell Thompson, Texas; David Simmons was elected president. Elbert Pettiford, first vice president; Wardell Thompson, second vice president and Joseph Johnson, third vice president. Howard Brazil of Mississippi was elected secretary. C. H. Banks of Texas was named National Advisor. S. B. Simmons of North Carolina was elected executive secretary-treasurer.

The Committee recommended that the board of trustees be made up with a member from each state. All National officers are automatically members of this board. State organizations not having a National officer are to name a member for this duty. The supervisors in those states which are to be provided members may select this member or leave it to the State organization to select him.

Signed

Maxcy Reed, Arkansas, Chairman

T. Lawrence, Florida

Edward Finney, Virginia

Prof. H. Smith, Arkansas, Advisor

Roster of attendance at the first National NFA convention, by states is given in the appendix.

Receipts and expenditures for the current year, 1935, convention were as follows:

Receipts in Connection with the National Meeting
of New Farmers of America

August 4 to 7, 1935

Texas	\$ 8.00	Florida	8.00
Oklahoma	8.00	Georgia	8.00
Arkansas	8.00	South Carolina	8.00
Tennessee	8.00	North Carolina	8.00
Mississippi	8.00	Virginia	8.00
Louisiana	4.27	West Virginia	8.00
Alabama	8.00	New Jersey	5.27

EXPENDITURES

Clerical and supplies	\$ 25.00
Transportation S. B. Simmons to Tuskegee and Washington	25.00
Medals	45.75
Picture of group	3.50
*Cut (as appeared in Norfolk paper)	10.00
Printing of programs	4.00
Receipt Book10
Total	\$113.35

*August 31 Fees

By State Organization:

Total Cash	\$105.55
Extra cash received for additional medals	10.25
Total cash received	\$115.80

NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT: In keeping with the old custom the report of nominating committee was called for last. This was done because the officers felt that this report would require much discussion and time. The candidates for president were named and asked to outline their program if elected. The following

About The Editor

DR. OCLERIS SIMPSON

Ocleris Simpson was born in Leon County, Norman-gee, Texas. He was a member of the New Farmers Of America (N.F.A.) at an early age and was mentored by Dr. Ernest M. Norris while a student at Prairie View A. & M. College where he received his B.S. degree in 1960.

Ocleris Simpson received his Masters Degree in Animal Science at Iowa State University in 1962 and a Ph.D. degree in Animal Science at the University of Nebraska in 1965. Dr. Simpson is most noted for his research in human nutrition and excellence in research administration.

In following the footsteps of Dr. Ernest M. Norris, Dr. Simpson rapidly became a national leader in developing research programs, facilities and budgets for the 1890 Land-Grant Colleges and Tuskegee in cooperation with the Cooperative State Research Service/United States Department of Agriculture and the United States Congress.

Although Simpson detoured from Vocational Agriculture and pursued a career in the Agricultural Sciences, he continues to work with deans of agriculture at the 1890 Land-Grant Colleges and U.S.D.A. to recruit and promote the training of students in agricultural education.

It was due in great part to both the wisdom and vision of Dr. Ocleris Simpson, coupled with his unique experience in the field of Agriculture Research and Extension Services, which led to the creation of the E (Kika) de la Garza Institute for Goat Research.

Dr. Simpson is currently serving as Dean for Agricultural Research and Extension at Langston University, Langston, Oklahoma.



OCLERIS SIMPSON, Ph.D.
 DEAN, AGRICULTURE RESEARCH & EXTENSION
 LANGSTON UNIVERSITY
 LANGSTON, OKLAHOMA

Wednesday, August 7 — 1:30 p.m.

In this session, reports of the ten committees were received. Reports of the budget and nominating committees provide historical perspectives of interest.

Budget Committee Report: The following budget was recommended for 1935-36.

32 Superior Degree Keys	\$224.00
Medals for Judging Contest	30.00
Stationery for National Organization	30.00
Stenographic help, stamps, etc.	50.00
Printing Manuals (1,000 copies)	50.00
Annual Conference Expense	50.00
Miscellaneous Expense	91.00
.....	
	\$525.00

The sub-committee made up of teachers recommended the following practice with respect to dues.

1. Minimum fee per state\$ 5.00
2. State with from 6 to 50 chapters will pay fee per chapter 1.00
3. State with 51 to 75 chapters shall pay a flat rate of 50.00
4. State with 76 to 125 chapters will pay 75.00
5. State with 125 to 150 chapters will pay 100.00

BUDGET COMMITTEE	SUB-COMMITTEE
Willie Phillips, Ark.	Prof. C. King, La.
John Williams, Va.	Prof. J. R. Thomas, Va.
Theo. Robinson, Fla.	Prof. C. E. Dean, No. Caro.
J. C. West, Ga.	Prof. P. S. Bowles, Miss.
Elbert Pettiford, No. Caro.	Prof. I. S. Lance, W. Va.
Prof. A. E. Wood, Advisor, Ark.	

Building, Boys Trade Building and Veterans Hospital, Self Help Project for reestablishing farmers in the occupation of farming and ending with a watermelon feast on the Institute farm.

Monday Night, August 5 — 7:30 p.m.

Banquet given by Chilean Nitrate Educational Bureau for some 300 delegates, school officials and friends, with W. J. Haley of Alabama A. and M. College, Huntsville, Alabama and David Simmons of the Alabama NFA Association acting as co-toastmasters. Simmons presented the presidents of the various state associations and Haley presented the outstanding teacher of vocational agriculture from each of the states represented.

Tuesday, August 6 — 9:00 a.m.

Meeting at the Children's House for the Judging Contest, the groups were organized by Dr. Sargent and the morning was devoted to judging corn, potatoes, and eggs. The afternoon was spent in judging livestock at Alabama Polytechnic Institute.

Tuesday Night, August 6 — 8:00 p.m.

The oratorical contest was conducted in the Chambliss Children's House with five NFA boys selected from the elimination of the previous day. Other features included a main address given by J. A. Links, Chief of the Agricultural Service, U.S. Office of Education, Washington, D.C. and music for the occasion furnished by quartets from Texas and Virginia.

Wednesday, August 7 — 8:00 a.m.

Shortly after calling the meeting to order, a recess was called for committees to complete their reports. Following the recess, Dr. H. O. Sargent gave a practical address telling how NFA was started, giving accomplishments of the different states and setting forth worthy objectives to strive for. Dr. George Washington Carver, the famous Negro scientist appeared before the group in an inspiring appeal to the boys to render to the world efficient service and how they as farm boys could do so. The Secretary called the roll, the thirteen states and a representative from each reported on achievements in his particular state in relation to NFA.

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Mississippi, Edward Welch, Mississippi, J. C. Polk, Arkansas, James Nash, West Virginia

MANUAL COMMITTEE: Advisor, Mr. K. A. Williams, N.C., Malton Zackary, North Carolina, Otis Harris, Tennessee, Eliza Campbell, Texas

NOMINATING NATIONAL OFFICERS COMMITTEE: Advisor, Mr. H. T. Smith, Arkansas, Maxcy Reed, Arkansas, Timothy Lawrence, Florida, Edward Finney, Virginia

NATIONAL MEDALS AND REPORTS COMMITTEE: Advisor, Mr. C. C. Cooper, Oklahoma, Alva Andrews, Oklahoma, Master Breeden, South Carolina, Julius Thomas, Alabama

CONTEST COMMITTEE: Advisor, Mr. Fields, Georgia, Napoleon Cordy, Georgia, Leroy McLaurin, North Carolina, Therman Taylor, Texas

ALUMNI ORGANIZATION COMMITTEE: Advisor, Mr. S. E. Palmer, Texas; Wardell Thompson, Texas; Howard Brazil, Mississippi; Robert E. Jones, Jr., Virginia,

UNIFORM COMMITTEE: Advisor, Mr. R. W. Pegram, Virginia; Theron Cralle, Virginia; Berrion Bell, Georgia; J. C. Crawford, Georgia

BUDGET COMMITTEE: Advisor, Mr. A. E. Wood, Arkansas; Willie Phillips, Arkansas; John Williams, Virginia; Theodore Robinson, Florida; J. C. West, Georgia; Elbert Pettiford, North Carolina

A run-down on features of this first National Convention of NFA shows interesting variety:

Sunday, August 4, 1935 —8:30 p.m.

Logan Hall

Opening session as previously described.

Monday, August 5, 1935 — 9:00 a.m.

Chambliss Children's House

Business Session

Temporary organization session as previously described.

Monday, August 5, 1:30 p.m.

Tour of places of interest beginning with Booker Washington monument and including Institute Farm, Agricultural

Agriculture, Tuskegee; and A. Floyd, Teacher Trainer for Alabama who spoke on the purpose of the meeting.

Selection of officers for the temporary organization included J. R. Thomas, Virginia Advisor; Elbert Pettiford, North Carolina, President; Paul Greene, North Carolina, Secretary; Pettiford and Greene being selected because they were the only two sectional officers present. The next matter of business was to select two delegates to represent each of the thirteen states present with students. Two other states had no student representatives. This selection resulted in a roll call as follows:

State Delegates:

Alabama, Clinton Calloway and Sherman White
Arkansas, Maxcy Reed and John L. Polk
Georgia, Napoleon Cordy and Roland Hall
Florida, Willie Hill and Smith Counts
Mississippi, Howard Brazil and E. J. Houston
Oklahoma, Lance Barber and J. K. Diggs
North Carolina, Leroy McLaurin and Norwood King
New Jersey, V. Pitts
South Carolina, Philip Frederick
Virginia, Joseph Johnson and E. N. Finney
West Virginia, Willie Wilkins and Kenneth James
Tennessee, Edward Taylor and Otis Harris
Texas, A. T. Kisse and Waddell Thompson

The following committees were appointed:

CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS COMMITTEE: Advisor, Mr. Chas McCloud, S.C., Philip L. Frederick, S.C., Waddell Thompson, Texas, Smith Counts, Florida

PUBLICITY AND NATIONAL N.F.A. DAY COMMITTEE: Advisor, Mr. L. C. Johnson, Alabama, David Simmons, Alabama, Valdema Pitts, New Jersey, William Kelly, Tennessee

PROGRAM OF WORK COMMITTEE: Advisor, M. W. L. Carter, Virginia, Joseph Johnson, Virginia, Lance Barber, Oklahoma, J. W. Sander, Georgia, Kenneth James, West Virginia

RESOLUTIONS COMMITTEE: Advisor, Mr. L. T. Ellis, Mis-

Foreword

The Cat And The Mouse

The cat is in command.
He plays and oh,
what fun!

The mouse goes free.
He is re-captured.
There is no urgency
about either,
for the cat
is in command.

Finally,
the mouse is killed,
and
the cat filled. . . .

Farmers of America with a tentative Constitution and By-Laws.

In 1936, the National Organization held its second meeting at Hampton Institute, Virginia, when the tentative Constitution and By-Laws with certain modifications and changes were formally adopted. The third national meeting was held August 29 to September 1, 1937, at Prairie View State and Industrial College, Prairie View, Texas. The fourth meeting was held at Georgia State College, Savannah, Georgia, in 1938. In 1939, the fifth national meeting was held at Bordentown, N.J., and in 1940 the sixth national meeting was held at Pine Bluff, Arkansas.

At the present there are 916 chapters and 55,000 active and associate members; making NFA the largest incorporated Negro farm group in the world.

THE FIRST NATIONAL CONVENTION NEW FARMERS OF AMERICA

Dr. H. O. Sargent, in collaboration with Negro Teacher Trainers in the various states and with officials of the host institution, scheduled the first national convention of the New Farmers of America for August 4, 5, 6, 7, 1935 at Tuskegee Institute, Alabama. The program agreed upon provided for eight features, namely: (1) Preliminary session for introductions and general orientation, (2) business session-temporary organization, (3) business sessions-permanent organization, (4) elimination contest-oratorical, (5) work of committees, (6) first national judging contest, (7) oratorical contest, (8) entertainment.

David Simmons, President of the Alabama Association NFA served as the presiding officer for the first general session. Invocation was given by another Alabama boy, Phelix James. In response to a welcome to Alabama and Tuskegee Institute by David Simmons. Phillip Frederick of South Carolina acknowledged the courtesy on behalf of the visiting delegation. Elbert Pettiford of North Carolina and the Virginia NFA quartet provided leadership in music for the session. Other major features of this session included addresses by Dean W. T. B. Williams, filling in for President F. D. Patterson; Dean J. R. Otis of the School of

organizations held their annual meetings in the various states of their section from 1928 until 1935. During these years, the New Farmers organization was known only by name of each respective State: for example, N.F.F. designated the "New Farmers of Florida" and N.F.T. meant the "New Farmers of Tennessee." All other states were similarly designated.

NFA NATIONAL

In the same paper, previously referred to, S. B. Simmons⁵ outlined the historical development of the NFA at the National level. Here it should be recognized that Simmons was the strongest exponent and coordinating influence among the Negro group for the foundation of the national Organization of the New Farmers of America. In his paper he said this:

During these years the idea of a National Organization of New Farmers of America had been growing. At the Orangeburg meeting of the Eastern Section in 1929 the consensus of opinion of representatives from Florida, Georgia, Alabama, North Carolina, South Carolina, New Jersey, West Virginia and Virginia was that a national Organization was not only feasible but highly desirable and necessary for securing the best results in the State Associations and promoting vocational agriculture in the Negro schools throughout the Southland. A committee was appointed to submit recommendations at the next Sectional meetings for the purposed organization and also to design appropriate pins, medals and keys. S. B. Simmons of North Carolina served as Chairman of the committee. At the Sectional meeting in Washington, D.C. in 1931, reports favorable to having a National Organization were discussed and adopted. Meanwhile, the Almot and Southern Organizations also felt that such an organization was desirable. Early in 1935, the late Dr. H. O. Sargent, Federal Agent for Agricultural Education, made arrangements to hold the first National meeting of the New Farmers of America at Tuskegee Institute, Alabama. A. Floyd, Tuskegee, Alabama, and S. B. Simmons, North Carolina, were put in charge of arrangements. In August of the same year, representatives from all the Southern State Associations met and formed the National Organization of New

⁵ Ibid

Prefatory Note

Although available, names were withheld from this chronologue, purposely, to avoid possible embarrassment to anyone.

Authentication of every assertion in this statement is available in records, reports and/or the memories of survivors associated with this history.

HISTORY OF THE NEW FARMERS OF AMERICA

Written by

S. B. Simmons in 1940

THE NEW FARMERS OF AMERICA had its beginning in Virginia during the winter of 1926-27, with the organization of the New Farmers of Virginia at Petersburg. This organization was begun at the suggestion of Dr. H. O. Sargent, then agent for Negro education in the Office of Education at Washington, who believed that the time was ripe for an organization of Negro agricultural students similar to the Future Farmers of Virginia. G. W. Owens, Teacher Trainer of Virginia State College, wrote a constitution and by-laws for the organization, which in the beginning was composed of eighteen local chapters with about 400 members. Other chapters rapidly followed. In April, 1927, the New Farmers of Virginia chapters held their first State meeting and rally at Virginia State College, Petersburg.

In the meantime, other states, stimulated by Dr. Sargent's advocacy of an organization for Negro agricultural students, signified their desire to establish similar groups and were supplied with details concerning the New Farmers of Virginia as well as with copies of its constitution and by-laws. In a few years, most of the Southern States had set up local chapters and State Associations. At this stage of development each state maintained a separate and distinct organization.

The first sectional group meeting was held at Virginia State College in 1929. At this meeting the Eastern Sectional Organization was formed, consisting of North Carolina, South Carolina and Virginia. Later Maryland, West Virginia and New Jersey were added. A year or so later, the Almot Sectional Organization was formed, consisting of Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma and Texas.

Shortly following the Almot organization, the Southern Sectional Organization was planned, consisting of Alabama, Georgia, Florida and Tennessee. The sectional

Additional light is shed on the state and regional level of NFA development in a paper presented to the National Convention of NFA in 1941 by S. B. Simmons⁴ who at that time was State Supervisor of Vocational Agriculture in Negro Schools, North Carolina. Also, he had been in the "thick" of early NFA developments (State and regional levels) and was at that time terminating his tenure as National Executive Secretary-Treasurer of the NFA — having been elected to this position at the first national convention, 1935.

⁴ S. B. Simmons, "History of The New Farmers of America," Paper presented in lieu of his Annual Report, Sixth National NFA Convention, Tallahassee, Florida, 1941.

Prologue To Failure

THREE YEARS PRIOR to effecting the merging of the Future Farmers of America and New Farmers of America, adult officers of the two groups began joint discussion of plans for perfecting the consolidation smoothly. Included in the prospectus of thought was (1) the possibility of getting a new name for the organization; (2) charting the episode of events preliminary to final action; (3) ways of minimizing intra-group attrition incident to the merger; (4) ways of capitalizing on the best thought and talent of both groups; and a number of other discernable problems and possibilities.

Throughout these discussions members of the Negro group were reminiscent of the fact through the years their particular ethnic group had never been represented by employment in professional positions at the federal level in Agricultural Education. Naturally they were apprehensive of being merged out of rather than merged into roles of usefulness and effectiveness. There was the possibility of Negroes, both boys and adults, becoming a "lost chord" in the rhythm and symphony of FFA music. As a result of this apprehension, at the July, 1965, joint meeting of the controlling boards of the two organizations the following resolutions were presented by the Negro group:

RESOLUTION OF THE NATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL AND THE NATIONAL BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE NEW FARMERS OF AMERICA

Resolution No. 1

WHEREAS, the National Constitution and Charter of the FFA will have to be remedied to coincide with the reorganization of the U.S. Office of Education, and for proper constitution of Board and staff personnel;

BE IT RESOLVED that the reconstitution of these instruments provide equitable representation of the two groups included in the merger.

Resolution No. 2

WHEREAS, the NFA was created as a parallel organization to FFA in an educational climate of legal interpretation that "separate but equal" facilities provided justice under the Constitution of the United States;

WHEREAS, representatives of the U.S. Office of Education in the year 1941 met with State representatives of the NFA and instructed this group that in order to "legalize" NFA the organization would have to be subjected to the authority of general administration by the U.S. Office of Education—which instructions were agreed to and followed;

WHEREAS, during a period of 24 years of the above-mentioned legal interpretation, there remained an unfulfilled promise of assigning to the U.S. Office of Education a Civil Service professional position of NFA origin, with responsibilities for the general administration of affairs pertaining to the national level of the organization;

WHEREAS, the legal justification of separate but equal facilities in the education of the races is now null and void in the USA;

WHEREAS, in the merging of the two organizations there is additional administrative burden at the National level for which there are no apparent additional Civil Service provisions at this time;

BE IT RESOLVED that a portion of the NFA funds in the national treasury be dedicated to creating a temporary arrangement for personnel and other necessary appurtenances in bearing this burden; and be it further resolved that the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare be petitioned in regard to setting in motion the establishment of a permanent Civil Service position to replace this temporary position within twelve months after its creation.

Resolution No. 3

WHEREAS, former NFA chapters in the retirement of paraphernalia and the acquirement of FFA para-

homa; Louisiana provided experiences in demonstrations, contests, and recreation; Florida gave recognition to outstanding chapters; increased extra-class activities highlighted the programs in New Jersey; exchange of ideas, improved social contacts and broadened vocational experiences highlighted the program in Virginia.

Dr. Sargent continued to work unceasingly in the interest of a national grouping of members. His contacts with the several States enabled him to be well informed regarding the prevailing programs and policies. The background history also includes the work of G. W. Owens, Teacher-Trainer of Virginia College, who wrote the first constitution and by-laws of the New Farmers of Virginia. Virginia held its first State Rally in 1927. In the meantime, other States, stimulated by Dr. Sargent's advocacy of an organization for agricultural students in areas where separate schools were maintained, expressed the desire to become organized; therefore, copies of the constitution and by-laws of the Virginia Association were sent to each State.

THEN THE SECTIONS

With the establishment of the State Association came added impetus to the desire to have a National organization for all members. This resulted in the formation of the Washington Section in 1928, comprised of Virginia, North Carolina and South Carolina. Later New Jersey, Delaware and Maryland were added. The Almmot Section, including Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Oklahoma and Texas, was formed a year or two later. The original States were Arkansas, Louisiana, Texas and Oklahoma, designated as the A-L-Tex-O Section. A little later the Gulf Section, including Florida, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Tennessee and Kentucky, organized. The Gulf Section later became known as the Sargent Section, with Mississippi shifting to the Almmot Section.

Sectional meetings characterized the growth of the Washington chapters during the "1928-plus period" with South Carolina, North Carolina, Maryland and the Nation's Capital serving as host to the group. The other two sections also met during these years with respective States serving as host.³

³ Dr. M. A. Fields, "New Farmers of America - 25 Years of Accomplishments" New Farmers of America, in Cooperation with U.S. Office of Education, U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Washington, D.C., 1959.

grams conducted at the annual meeting of this organization is proverbial.

They have adopted a plan of elimination contests for NFA chapters in Mississippi, which is worthy of imitation by other States. District chapter teams compete in elimination contests, the Winners of which are eligible to compete in the State contest. As a result of this program practically every vocational agriculture student in Mississippi takes a part in these contests.

Officials of the different States speak in the highest terms of the good work which the New Farmers of America are doing in getting the agricultural pupils and citizens of the community interested in the vocational program in agriculture.

Most of the States now have annual meetings of representative students from the different chapters of the New Farmers of the State. At these meetings, judging, oratorical, and other contests are staged, which give the students training in practicing the principles of agriculture learned in the classroom and show the public how the Negroes are benefitting from the program of vocational agriculture.

Dr. M. A. Fields, Teacher Trainer Agricultural Education, Virginia State College, Petersburg, Virginia, in doing a history of the New Farmers of America for the 25th (Silver Anniversary) National Convention, reports on developments during this period as follows:

STATE ASSOCIATIONS FIRST

Many States, sensing the need for organized effort with rural in-school boys, established organizations prior to the inception of the national idea. It was only natural to find a wide variety of interests expressed by the respective States in their suggestions regarding the framework and organization. The policies and plans of these many state agricultural clubs varied according to the particular situations and the initiative of the leaders. For example, Arkansas stressed fairs and exhibits; Kentucky emphasized judging; Texas was organized around the progressive farmer idea; leadership training and establishment in farming characterized the work in Alabama; judging and program planning were evident during the early meetings in Okla-

phernalia will have the burden of a double investment in chapter paraphernalia;

BE IT RESOLVED that State Association treasuries of NFA be authorized to give whatever relief that may be allowable to local chapters of FFA who are in this wise double burdened.

Resolution No. 4

WHEREAS, the merging of NFA and FFA is a wholesome product of the Civil Rights Act passed by the U.S. Congress and signed into law by the President of the USA, in the year 1964;

BE IT RESOLVED that the U.S. Department of Justice be asked for a legal review of the resolutions Numbers 1, 2, 3, and 4 above and herein stated.

Needless to say, the presentation of these resolutions converted an amicable atmosphere into one of consternation, suspicion, and "off side" whispers.

After rather limited and guarded discussion in open assembly, the Chief of the Branch called the Adult NFA officers aside and emphasized the hazards to intra-branch progress in solving the problem if these resolutions were implemented at this time. He further pledged diligence in effort toward resolution of this matter by the beginning of the next calendar year.

After this meeting the two groups, NFA and FFA, went their respective ways in planning their national conventions for the first and second weeks, respective, in October, while maintaining open lines of communication in the joint planning of a merging ceremony to be conducted during the FFA Convention in Kansas City.

All went well in Atlanta, Georgia, with the final NFA Convention and in Kansas City with the FFA Convention, at which there was every evidence of congeniality of acceptance, in public display, with the merging ceremony and several appearances of the 50 voice NFA chorus then appearing as the FFA chorus.

Both President Lyndon Johnson, by telegram and

Vice President Hubert Humphrey, by telephonic address, praised the merging feature very highly, and related it to "upward bound of the great society."

With all this build up in a joyful climate one can imagine the depth of disappointment with the NFA group when in the minutes of the Governing Committee of the Future Farmers of America, Washington, D.C., November 30, 1965 (a month later) there appeared this sad, sad note:

"Mr. Hunsicker reported that his efforts to obtain the appointment of a former NFA member as a regional representative for agriculture who could also serve as a member of the FFA Board of Directors was not approved by the U.S. Office of Education officials. It was moved by Mr. Johnson, seconded by Mr. Gray and carried that continued efforts to obtain the appointment of a competent representative of the Negro race as a member of the Agricultural Education Regional staff be continued."

Being unable to secure a specific statement as to which officials of the U.S. Office of Education did not approve of the efforts or what were the points of disapproval, those seeking such information began to reflect upon "forty long years" gone by and here again, **FAILURE.**

Community and home improvement programs have been undertaken successfully by FFA chapters in several States.

A number of chapters in South Carolina, for instance, report their entire membership enrolled for some kind of home improvement program. The community programs carried on in Louisiana are well known throughout the country. Much of the credit for these programs is due to the different NFA chapters which have cooperated with the agricultural teachers in carrying out their community plans.

For their work in planning and conducting community fairs Arkansas NFA chapters hold high rank.

The interesting thing about the achievements of NFA chapters is that they are not always confined to purely agricultural accomplishments. Tennessee, for instance, is famous for its NFA quartets. In the past few months eight of these quartets have taken part in radio broadcasts through local stations.

NFA chapters in Georgia have specialized to some extent on father-and-son banquets, and have held a number of very successful affairs of this kind.

Special emphasis has been laid by Alabama NFA on oratorical contests. It does one good to attend the State meeting of the Alabama NFA association and to hear the chapter members who compete in these public-speaking contests.

Texas chapters have made a name for themselves staging plays or other kinds of public entertainment for the community. In this way they keep their activities before the public and from the funds realized from these entertainments are usually able to pay their chapter dues to the State association and the expenses of delegates to the annual State conference.

Contest plans have been successfully worked out by New Farmers in several States. In Oklahoma, a judging team from the NFA chapter located near Hennessey won first place in the interstated judging contest in which teams from Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma, and Texas competed. The excellent record made by this team ranks it as one of the best if not the best team of Negro vocational agriculture students in the country.

Florida was one of the first States to organize a State association of NFA. The excellence of the pro-

Any one not familiar with the achievements necessary to attain these various grades will find them interesting reading. For example, to attain the status of a Superior Farmer, a New Farmer member must hold the degree of Modern Farmer, with all that it implies of achievement in scholarship, leadership and cooperation; must be engaged in a farming occupation or have definite plans for becoming a farmer or a teacher of vocational agriculture; must possess ability to farm, as demonstrated by ability to conduct an outstanding program of supervised practice work throughout his vocational training period; must have earned and deposited in a bank or productively invested at least \$300; must possess demonstrated ability to work with others, through participation in some agricultural cooperative enterprise or movement; and must be recommended by the Regional Board of Trustees of the NFA and receive the majority vote of the delegates present at a sectional convention of New Farmers of America. But the very fact that these specifications have been fulfilled by a number of New Farmers is proof that they are made of stern and sturdy material, and that through their membership in the New Farmer organization they are receiving a training which will be invaluable to them in the future.

Four years ago representatives of the New Farmers from the States of North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia and Maryland met in Washington, D.C., and formed a sectional organization of New Farmers of America. Taking their cue from this organization, New Farmers in Texas, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi and Oklahoma have formed a similar organization. Plans are under way also to form a sectional organization in the south central States. Eventually, it is hoped, these three sectional organizations will form a national organization similar in character to the national organization of the FFA.

New Farmer chapters, like Future Farmer chapters, set up definite objectives of accomplishment. One of the objectives of North Carolina chapters is a Thanksgiving offering for the poor. Last Thanksgiving there was collected and distributed to the needy in the respective communities in the State represented by NFA chapters over \$3,000 in cash, food, and clothing.

The Virginia chapters emphasize thrift. At the last State meeting several chapters reported that 100 per cent of their membership either had savings accounts or had money invested in farming.

How It All Started . . .

When the Smith-Hughes bill was signed into law as the National Vocational Education Act, 1917, the Negro population of the South, fifty years removed from the slave economy of cotton farming, was still predominantly a rural farm people. The migration stream to northern industry hardly had begun. However, the technological draft of manpower for a world at war would soon take its toll of the situation.

In the early development of vocational education in the South, much of the provisions for Negroes, were in agriculture.

Three years prior to this piece of legislation, provisions under the Smith-Lever (cooperative agricultural extension) Act had placed a Negro on the job as federal field agent for the promotion of this work among Negroes. Therefore, Negro leadership expected a similar arrangement under the Smith-Hughes Act. The disappointment existed, though slight, when a southern white man was appointed as the first Federal Agent for Special Groups.

Because of the unique personality and background of this man for the job, at that time, he was generally accepted by Negro leadership, under temporary and expeditious arrangement. This agent of the federal government, at various times voiced the hope and eventual necessity for professional level employment of a Negro, by the federal government, in the program.

PROFESSIONALIZING THE EDUCATION OF NEGROES IN AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION

During the early "thirties" the Julius Rosenwald fund concentrated largely on providing fellowship for Negroes to improve their level of training especially in vocational education. Several Negroes in positions as itinerant teacher trainers, resident teacher trainers and supervisors were awarded fellowships for graduate study in Agricultural

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Education. The white Federal Agent in Agricultural Education for Special Groups assumed considerable responsibility in the sponsorship of these fellowship grants in agricultural fields. At the time of his death, in 1936, several Negroes held the masters degree in Agricultural Education, rural Education and in various areas of technical agriculture.

In 1936 the Conference of Negro Land Grant College Presidents were so very certain that Negroes, from the standpoint of training and experience were ready for professional roles at the federal level in Agricultural Education, that they had a committee wait on the Assistant Commissioner for Vocational Education, and plea for the employment of a Negro in the position vacated by the death of the federal agent.

Some Negroes responded to the Civil Service Announcement, thinking their chances of appointment were good, by virtue of the provision that the person employed must have had supervisory experience in working with special groups. Of course, there was the disappointment, which was beginning to get usual, when the white person appointed had doubtful supervisory experience in working with Negroes. No further word was heard at that time regarding the qualifications of Negroes for this position.

“LEGALIZING” THE NEW FARMERS OF AMERICA

When the New Farmers of America Organization for Negro boys was formed in 1935 as a counterpart to the Future Farmers of America for White boys, its nationalization, constituted of state and sectional federations, was promoted strongly by the first Federal Agent for Special Groups in Agricultural Education. Although affiliated with the U.S. Office of Education, the organization operated autonomously outside the Office, having as national advisor a teacher trainer from one of the member states and an executive secretary-treasurer from another member state.

Early in 1941, rumors began emanating from Washington that the NFA would have to be “legalized” by

A paper presented by Dr. Sargent in 1934 gives a rather vivid picture of the development of the New Farmers of America up to that time:

THE NEW FARMERS OF AMERICA

by

DR. H. O. SARGENT

FEDERAL AGENT, AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION

OFFICE OF EDUCATION

FUTURE FARMERS OF AMERICA

NATIONAL RADIO PROGRAM

(N.B.C. Farm and Home Hour:

12:30 to 1:30 p.m., E.S.T.)

MONDAY, MAY 14, 1934

The New Farmers of America, commonly known as the N.F.A., is an organization of Negro students of vocational agriculture. It is similar in its aims, purposes and activities to the Future Farmers of America.

The New Farmers of America was organized in Virginia at the same time as the Future Farmers of America. From Virginia the NFA has gradually spread to all States in which separate schools for Negroes are maintained, and today there is a New Farmer chapter in practically every Negro school having a vocational department of agriculture.

The purposes of New Farmers of America, as outlined in its constitution and by-laws, are: To create more interest in the intelligent choice of farming; to encourage cooperative effort among students of vocational agriculture; to develop rural leadership; to promote thrift; and, to advance vocational education in public colored schools.

The organization is divided into local chapters, set up in schools providing organized instruction in agriculture, and State and sectional associations. There are at the present time approximately 500 local chapters with a total membership of 12,000. Active membership is of four grades, based on achievement. The new member enters as a Farm Hand; and is advanced as his achievement justifies successively to the grade of Improved Farmer and Superior Farmer.

he developed the farmer training program, he has received the acclaim of both races. To the Negro he was in life a friend, in death a hero.

NFA — STATE AND SECTIONAL

To a large extent the programs of training in Negro schools were patterned after those in the White schools, with certain exceptions based on differences in economic and social status, inherent in two different historical backgrounds in the American culture.

H. O. Sargent being a regular member of the federal staff in vocational education stood at a vantage point to see what went on in each camp. He attended meetings of the Southern Regional Conference of State Supervisors and Teacher Trainers in Agriculture and conducted meetings of the Conference of Negro Teacher Trainers and Supervisors in Agriculture.

being brought under the guidance and control of the Agricultural Education Branch of the U.S. Office of Education. Negro teacher trainers and supervisors were urged (commanded) to attend an evening meeting in Tallahassee, Florida, prior to the opening of the Seventh National NFA Convention, the next morning.

At this meeting it was soon made clear that the Negroes were to vote approval of the transitional plan else federal funds could no longer be used to subsidize traveling expenses incident to participation in NFA activities. The state supervisors (white) were present to help the federal representatives impress upon the group the necessity for such actions and to see that those from their respective state voted "right."

The Negro group was apprehensive about their future roles in determining policies for the organization and for giving professional guidance to the program. Their Chief assured the group that every effort would be made to give a Negro professional status in the U.S.O.E. and that the work of this person would be devoted primarily to the NFA program.

NOW WE ARE "LEGAL"

Another year passed with no further word from the Chief. Then time for the eighth national convention arrived. The Chief brought to this convention the member of his staff who was serving as national executive secretary of FFA. His was a sad story of no progress in getting a Negro appointed to the U.S.O.E. and that the double duty he had been performing as both administrative advisor and administrative executive secretary of NFA was "impossible." He had a conference with the three senior adults of the NFA group and asked acceptance of a temporary arrangement whereby the executive secretary of FFA would serve the NFA in the same capacity except that he would be administrative executive secretary of NFA. These three adults were given the tedious assignment of breaking the news paternally to the other Negroes and of "softening them up for the kill." A few years passed with this arrangement. The Chief attended the next three National Conventions

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and then declared for himself a moratorium of 14 years on attending National NFA Conventions. It was only after urgent prevailing on the part of adult NFA officers, that he agreed to visit the 25th (silver) anniversary convention. He came and remained through one of the eight sessions. It was apparent that he was too busy otherwise to devote official time to NFA.

The staff member appointed as temporary administrative secretary succeeded in getting the City of Atlanta (Georgia) to serve as the permanent host for National NFA Conventions in the year 1949, thereby discontinuing the system of rotating from state to state. Then summarily, he stopped working with NFA. Just as summarily, the Chief appointed as permanent administrative executive secretary for NFA the person on his staff who had been rejected for this position by the Negro group eight years earlier. Now they must accept the arrangement and like it.

A blackout of 10 years prevailed over discussions regarding a Negro appointed in Agricultural Education to the U.S.O.E.

A NEW CHIEF TAKES OVER

When a new Chief assumed the position of administrative advisor of NFA, Negroes thought they discerned in him a more outgoing attitude toward giving Negroes professional employment in the Agricultural Education Branch of the Office and that special interest in their program would improve.

About this time several Negroes received letters from the new Assistant Commissioner for Vocational Education asking that they submit applications in order to get on the Civil Service register for certain professional positions in Agricultural Education. The first impression was "what's the use?" Yet a sizeable number, at least as a matter of challenge, submitted applications with sound supporting credentials. Ratings were received in a reasonable period of time from Civil Service. Then again a "blackout." Those who said "what's the use?" were right again.

cultural clubs whose members were those students taking agriculture as their major field.

For a number of years, on the basis of true academic ratings, these institutions were no more than glorified high and post high schools. In the early 1890's a U.S. Supreme Court decision provided the theory of "separate but equal" as the basis for a permissive policy of segregation of the races, in educational establishments and otherwise, in the South.

Thus, with dual programs of public education fully in force in the Southern States, the plan of operation under the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917, provided for Negro departments and White departments of vocational agriculture in the Southern States.

In the beginning, the Federal Board for Vocational Education appointed a Federal Agent for Vocational Agricultural Education — Special Groups to give national level supervision and guidance to the work in Negro schools.

Although the term "Special Groups" included Indians and Mexicans as well as Negroes, very few persons knew the term extended beyond the predominant group — Negroes. For the situation and for the time, the person appointed to this position in 1917 was a "natural" in many respects. His biographical sketch in the NFA Guide² reads like a citation for excellence in services:

Dr. H. O. Sargent was born near Russellville, Alabama in 1875. He graduated from Alabama Polytechnic Institute, Auburn, Alabama, with the degrees of Bachelor and Master of Science. Later he was awarded the degree of Ph.D. at George Washington University, Washington, D.C.

In 1917, Dr. Sargent went to the U.S. Office of Education and was placed in charge of vocational training in agriculture for the Negro schools. For eighteen years he served in that capacity. His labors carried him to every Southern State. He was loved by educators, both white and colored throughout the entire South.

Dr. Sargent's interest, understanding of, and sympathy for the Southern Negro was one of his commendable virtues. For the service he rendered and the way

² NFA Guide, 1960 edition.

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tutes and other means of spreading information about "better agriculture."

The Morrill Act of 1862 which created the great Land-grant College System is recognized as a milestone in the development of a formal training program in agriculture.

The author then draws into focus these preliminaries as follows:

Perhaps the closest approach of any of these to the vocational agriculture training we know today was the handful of special agricultural schools where students received classroom instruction plus the benefit of experience of working on the school farms.

In 1880, Booker T. Washington established agricultural teaching for Negro boys in his little one-room school of Tuskegee, Alabama. Friends bought a 100-acre farm for the school to give the students a chance to pay part of their expenses and at the same time to obtain intelligent training in the best methods of farming.

A state bill passed in 1889 established Congressional District Agricultural Schools in Alabama. A similar movement was going on throughout the country. At the turn of the century, farm boys in many areas were able to get training in agriculture from schools of less than College Grade.¹

Just as Booker T. Washington was a pioneer in the type of training in agriculture provided at Tuskegee Institute, so was the Institute a type of pioneer in the "student club" concept of developing a sense of belonging for those who studied agriculture. At Tuskegee, the Agricultural Club is as old as the institution. A similar statement could be made for Hampton Institute, Virginia — the recognized Mother institution for Tuskegee.

In the early days of the Negro Land-Grant College, the programs of training in agriculture in these institutions were patterned largely after those at Tuskegee and Hampton rather than their counterparts — the White land-grant colleges. Thus, these colleges developed functioning agri-

¹ W. A. Ross, "FFA at 25," *A Record of High Achievement the first 25 years of the Future Farmers of America*. (U.S. Office of Education, Washington, D.C., 1953), p. 3.

THE ADMINISTRATIVE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY RETIRES

Finally retirement came for the Administrative Secretary who had been imposed upon them by the Chief. The Negroes knew then their day had arrived. But if ever they were mistaken, this was it!! The regular staff position to which this job was attached was abolished. There were off-side suggestions that the Administrative Executive Secretary might be continued on payroll for two years out of reserve NFA funds and that at the end of that period a Negro might be "eased in through the back door of the establishment."

Months passed and a back log of assignments and responsibilities connected with the position of administrative executive secretary were going on building up unfulfilled. It was then that the Executive Secretary called, long distance, the Chief of the Branch and inquired as to who would be serving in this "spot." Hurriedly the Assistant Chief of the Branch was so designated. This arrangement obtained until the time for that person to retire and the assignment was passed on to his successor.

MERGER vs "SWALLOW UP"

During the three year period that the matter of merging the two organizations was in the discussion stage it became more and more apparent that one party and one only would be the concessionaire. NFA would be giving up all — name, charter, constitution, bylaws, special prizes, awards, insignia, emblem, jacket, creed, flag, banner, colors, adult leadership for guidance, consultation and advice. FFA would give up nothing—not even alter its constitution to provide for one board membership from NFA. The National FFA membership would be increased by 13 per cent, while in some of the southern states the membership would increase by as much as 25 to 30 per cent. In turn, these increases in membership would offset increases in every type of income to the organization. Also, this would mean a more extensive service load.

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AGAIN, HOPE UPON HOPE

The Negro group was aware of the need for additional staff, not only to carry the heavier work load incident to the merger but to do the work required under the new education acts as well. Knowing all this, the Negro group took seriously and hopefully the promise that every effort would be made to get a Negro appointed to a position in Agricultural Education in one of the regional offices of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

Equally acceptable was the assurance that the person so appointed would be made a member of the FFA Board of Directors.

The person being considered in this case seemed entirely satisfactory to all parties concerned. Now this was real progress, finally.

Then came the blackout on information for about five or six months and after that a whispered rumor that a federal appointment had come through but with another agency and not in agricultural education.

Forty years and the end is not yet! Patience? Tolerance? Forbearance?

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Prologue To An Episode

WHEN ONE contemplates a history of the New Farmers of America Organization in the broader perspective, it falls in place as an episode in the total history of the FFA motif in vocational agriculture instruction.

When a group of Negro farm boys and their adult advisors met at Tuskegee Institute, Alabama, August 4, 1935, for the purpose of forming a national organization of the New Farmers of America, except for difference in skin color, they were highly similar to a small group of white farm boys and their advisors who met only seven years earlier in Kansas City, November 20, 1928.

In intent, purpose and design, both groups were identical. Of course, the Negro group came from a block of states generally referred to as the South, whereas, the white group was nation-wide in representation.

The white group met to organize a national organization of farm boys studying vocational agriculture in the public schools throughout the United States. They called their organization the **Future Farmers of America**.

The Negro group met to organize a national organization of Negro farm boys studying vocational agriculture in the public schools throughout the United States (although by situation and circumstances it was regional). They called their organization the **New Farmers of America**.

THE NATURAL SETTING

IN THE STORY of "FFA at 25" the author highlights a prologue for his narrative in the various movements and efforts to provide vocational training in agriculture in the United States.

He mentions the interest of George Washington in the establishment of a "Board of Agriculture" and the efforts of early agricultural societies — forerunners of present farm organizations — in developing fairs, exhibits, insti-

Afterword

— The Boy and The Fish —

Keep still.

Be a nice fish.

Stop fluttering and
giving trouble.

All I am going to do
is gut you. . . .

FFA AND NFA MEMBERSHIPS JUST PRIOR TO THE MERGER

Geographic	FFA* July, 1965	NFA** June 30, 1965	Total
ALL STATES	454,516	52,427	506,943
***Southern States			
1. Alabama	21,137	4,288	25,425
2. Arkansas	18,499	3,543	22,042
3. Florida	13,531	3,984	17,515
4. Georgia	25,131	8,615	33,746
5. Louisiana	12,381	2,000	14,381
6. Mississippi	13,542	4,121	17,663
7. North Carolina	30,852	8,121	38,973
8. Oklahoma	16,829	419	17,248
9. South Carolina	11,091	2,522	13,613
10. Tennessee	18,487	1,886	20,373
11. Texas	50,644	9,503	60,147
12. Virginia	13,579	3,425	17,004
TOTAL, SOUTHERN STATES	245,703	52,427	298,130

*Figures taken from National Future Farmer Circulation
January 3, 1966

**Figures taken from Annual State NFA Reports

***These are the 11 states reporting NFA Memberships,
June 30, 1965

NOTE: It is a reasonable assumption that, today, Negro boys constitute slightly more than a tenth of the National FFA Members and more than a sixth of the FFA Membership in the eleven southern states shown in the table.

A Passing Observation

The Ostrich

- Head in the Sand -

Only a paper barrage . . .

Soon after the famous 1954 U.S. Supreme Court decision . . .

- a. Directive to NFA — go through the NFA Guide, Constitution and By-laws and delete every reference to race (Negro); otherwise operate and do business as usual.

- b. Directive to Annual Conference of Negro Teacher Trainers and Supervisors — since the member states spread geographically over three of the regular four regions, change the title to the “Interregional Conference . . .”; otherwise operate and do business as usual.