



1910s – 1920s



Highlights from 1917 - 1929



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

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

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

What was Otsego County like in 1917?

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

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

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

1919: Sunflowers for silage were tested

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

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

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

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

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

“A Brief History of Extension Work in Otsego County”

Source: 1939 annual report

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

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

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

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