SEAMAN A. KNAPP

When the Land-Grant Colleges were first established there was usually only one professor of agriculture. This man handled all teaching activities, cutting across all fields of subject matter. In addition, he handled correspondence with farmers and gave lectures from time to time to various groups. Gradually, however, additional members were added to the faculty and the schools subdivided into departments as the demand and financial support would permit.

There was an ever-increasing demand for help by farmers not resident at the colleges. Soon after the turn of the century a few institutions organized departments of Extension where staff members devoted their entire time to attending meetings, organizing various types of farmers institutes, holding schools, and by other means endeavoring to answer the demand from the field.

THE BOLL WEEVIL

In 1903-04, a situation developed in Texas that was to profoundly affect the methods and techniques used by the various institutions to furnish information to farmers.

In 1892, the cotton boll weevil crossed from Mexico and 10 years later had covered a large part of the cotton territory of Texas. This insect brought about the almost complete destruction of the cotton crop in many areas. The economy of the whole South revolved around cotton. When the farmers failed to produce, banks and business in general felt the effects, resulting in farming and business failures and general economic depression. Some remedy had to be found immediately to prevent a catastrophe.

Under such conditions the states called upon the Federal Government for help and Congress appropriated $250,000 to combat the boll weevil. Half was assigned to the Bureau of Entomology, half to the Bureau of Plant Industry. Entomology directed its efforts to finding means of killing the weevil, while Plant Industry worked along the line of producing new crops and changing the types of farm management to make farming successful under boll weevil conditions.

With the funds made available by Congress, the department rented and operated farms in various sections of Texas. New equipment was purchased and the necessary labor hired. Many of these farms made a good showing on paper, but the farmers generally failed to accept the recommendations. Human nature being what it is, the farmer's attitude was "if I had the money like the Government, I would farm too, successfully."

The situation was desperate. Fortunately, however, a new type of Extension activity was inaugurated which came to be known as the Farmers Cooperative Demonstration Work. This movement profoundly affected the whole future of agricultural education, not only in the South but throughout the nation. Originator and leader of this movement was Seaman A. Knapp, since generally recognized as the father of demonstration work.

Dr. Knapp was born in New York in 1833 and prepared for college at an academy in Vermont and graduated from Union College in New York. For some years he taught in the colleges in that area, but after being crippled by an accident which seriously impaired his health he moved to Iowa in 1866 and settled on a farm. Continued poor health compelled his leaving the farm and for several years he was superintendent of a State Blind Institute. In 1874 he again returned to the farm, raising general crops combined with livestock, principally Berkshire hogs and Shorthorn cattle. He became a member of the stock breeders' associations and

later established an agricultural paper through which he advocated a diversified agriculture. At this time he became acquainted with James Wilson, afterwards Secretary of Agriculture who was then a farmer in Iowa. In the fall of 1879, Dr. Knapp became professor of agriculture of the Iowa State College at Ames and in 1884 was elected president of the institution.

In 1886, Dr. Knapp resigned as president of the college and went to Lake Charles, La., where he had charge of the agricultural development of a large tract of land in western Louisiana. He found it very difficult to interest the native population in improved methods of agriculture and prospective buyers from the North refused to settle in the region because agricultural conditions seemed so unfavorable. To overcome this situation, he offered very favorable terms to one settler for each township on condition the settler would farm under his general direction. This plan proved so successful that thousands of Northern farmers settled in this region and even the natives undertook better farming.

One of the main crops produced in that area was rice, and when there arose a demand for better varieties Secretary of Agriculture Wilson sent Dr. Knapp to Japan, China and the Philippines to investigate rice varieties, production and milling. With the introduction of Japanese varieties and improved practices there was a great expansion in the rice industry.

In 1903, at a mass meeting of businessmen and farmers at Tyrrell, Texas, Dr. Knapp submitted a proposition to establish a demonstration farm under the auspices of the Department of Agriculture, provided the community would select a suitable place and raise by subscription a sufficient amount to cover any losses that might be sustained by the owner and operator of the farm by reason of following the directions of the department in the matter of planting and cultivation. His proposal was accepted and a committee of eight was formed to provide the $1,000 as an insurance fund. Farmer Walter C. Porter volunteered his farm of 70 acres of land. In spite of boll weevil damage Porter estimated at the end of the year that he received a profit of $700 more than he probably would have made if he had followed his old practices.

DEMONSTRATION SUCCESS

The success of the Porter demonstration attracted wide attention and there was immediately a strong demand for similar demonstrations throughout the State. In the fall of 1903 the Secretary of Agriculture and the Chief of the Bureau of Plant Industry visited that region and personally looked over the demonstration at the Porter farm. On their recommendation Congress promptly made the emergency appropriation of $250,000 to combat the boll weevil. In the Bureau of Plant Industry $40,000 was assigned to Dr. Knapp to determine what could be done by "bringing home to the farmer on his own farm information which would enable him to grow cotton despite the presence of the weevil."

Dr. Knapp established headquarters at Houston, Texas, in January, 1904, and took counsel with farmers, bankers, merchants, railroad presidents and other businessmen. Contributions of money, railroad passes and other aids were received, and on February 19, 1904, W. D. Bentley was appointed as an agent to work along the lines of the Fort Worth and Denver Railroad. Meetings were held in towns along the route, and farmers were enlisted to undertake demonstrations.

At first most farmers were unwilling to undertake the demonstrations, but after Bentley joined the Farmers Union, which was the principal farmers' organization in the area at that time, he had better success. Other agents were appoint-

ed as rapidly as satisfactory people could be found and during 1904 the number increased to 20 in Texas, three in Louisiana and one in Arkansas. During that year over 1,000 meetings were held and 7,000 farmers agreed to demonstrate. In 1905 the work was expanded to include Oklahoma and Mississippi.

Since the automobile had not at that time come into general use, agents worked in 10 to 20 counties along the railroad line. They listed representative farmers and obtained their cooperation as demonstrators. Farmers were furnished with working plans and instructed in keeping records and making weekly reports. Each demonstrator was expected to grow from five to 20 acres of cotton under the direction of the agent who visited him at least once a month. Field meetings were held and all farmers were invited to become cooperators by carrying out recommended practices, but cooperators did not have the monthly visits from the agents.

The funds appropriated by Congress to combat the ravage of the boll weevil were limited to expenditures within the infested area. However, the success of the Knapp demonstrations gained wide publicity and there was an ever-growing demand for similar work in the areas surrounding the weevil infestation. Farmers and businessmen knew the weevil spread from 50 to 150 miles per year, and called for assistance. Such assistance was made possible in 1906.

In 1902, John D. Rockefeller had established the General Education Board and endowed it with millions of dollars "for the promotion of education within the United States of America without distinction of race, sex or creed." The Board was given power to establish schools of any grade or description, to cooperate with associations in collecting and publishing statistics and other information, and any other means of public education. The general policy of the General Education Board for its work in the South was to cooperate with the leaders there and not to interefere with their enterprises. Wallace Buttrick, secretary of the Board, visited many colleges and universities in the United States and Canada.

It so happened that his visit to the Texas College occurred when Professor Knapp was lecturing there, and Buttrick was favorably impressed with Dr. Knapp's plan of demonstration work. He arranged for a conference with Dr. Knapp and Secretary Wilson in Washington. It was Dr. Knapp's opinion that if demonstration work could be started in a state, county or community with outside funds it would soon get local support and would spread with the ultimate result that the "teaching of agriculture and domestic arts would become an accepted feature of rural education."

The General Education Board decided to supplement Federal appropriations so the work could be started in the area not infested with the boll weevil. To that end, it signed an agreement with the Secretary of Agriculture which provided that "the farmers' cooperative work in which the General Education Board is to become interested shall be entirely distinct in territory and finance from that carried on solely by the Department of Agriculture." It also provided that "the United States Department of Agriculture shall have supervision of the work and shall appoint all special agents of this extended territory in the same way that they are now appointed, that the said agents shall be under the control of the said department in every respect as fully as any of the agents of the department." The agents were paid a salary by the General Education Board and each was given an official commission from the Department of Agriculture at a salary of $1.00 per year. This gave them official status and enabled them to use the franking privilege for official business.