

HISTORY

The New York State Home Demonstration Agents' Association was organized on October 27, 1919, at the Green Lantern Tea Room in downtown Ithaca. The organization meeting was held at a time when the home demonstration agents (then known as home bureau managers) from 28 newly organized county home bureaus were attending a Statewide Extension conference on the Cornell University campus, location of the New York State College of Agriculture.

According to the minutes of the meeting, it was the feeling that "home bureau managers could be mutually helpful to each other and to the College Extension Service" and that there was "need and value in having a federation of home bureau managers." Vera McCrea of Cortland County (Mrs. J. D. Searles) was unanimously elected president, and committees were appointed.

At a second meeting, four districts were approved, western, eastern, northern, and central. Years later, as the number of counties and agents increased, five districts were set up; and in 1953, six, to provide for more intimate district discussion meetings and to minimize travel time and travel expenses. The districts added were Finger Lakes and Southern.

At a third meeting the constitution committee reported, but the constitution was not approved until November 1, 1920.

EARLY HISTORY

By the time the constitution was adopted the agents were beginning to feel that the name Federation of Home Bureau Managers was not appropriate, and in 1922 it was changed to the New York State Home Bureau Managers' Association. Meanwhile, the agents had petitioned Martha Van Rensselaer, state leader of home demonstration agents, to set aside time for their association meetings during the annual State Extension conferences on the Cornell University campus, and during the annual meetings of the New York State Federation of Home Bureaus. The agents' association worked effectively with both the state federation of home bureaus and the State Extension Service in the many years preceding the separation of the New York State Extension Service from the State Federation of Farm and Home Bureau and 4-H Club Associations in 1956.

In the early days of the Cooperative Extension Service program, the agents of the three departments facetiously referred to themselves as sodbusters, doughbusters, and kid boosters, and the names were carried into their organization meetings. The dough-buster title referred to the breadmixer that at one time was almost standard demonstration equipment in the home demonstration agent's Model T Ford as she visited from farm to farm.

From 1922, when the minutes reveal that the agents "favored the Home Bureau Managers' Association (rather than the Federation of Home Bureau Managers) for professional purposes, and Ye Olde Order of Doughbusters for recreational or less serious occasions," until 1947, the heading for both the constitution and the minutes carried the double title. The slate of officers was usually presented for the High Dame of the Rolling Pin, her Right and Left Hand Maidens, the Kneader of the Dough, and the Manipulator of the Dough. New agents were required to go through a mock initiation of stunts and charades. Distinguished initiates included Miss Van Rensselaer; Flora Rose, co-director, with Miss Van Rensselaer, of the College of Home Economics; Dr. Ruby Green Smith, of the state leader staff who became state leader of home demonstration agents following Miss Van Rensselaer; and Florence Hall of the Federal Extension Service. A round seal with crossed rolling pins and the name Doughbuster was printed on stationery for officers' correspondence with members.

In keeping with this light hearted foolishness, the annual banquet held jointly by the three department agents' associations was known as the Frying Pan Dinner. The Frying Pan Dinner was discontinued in the mid-1930's when the home demonstration agents decided that it was too boisterous, and threatened not to attend. It was replaced by the present dinner meeting of the three departments at the annual Extension conferences on campus.

The doughbuster names and initiation practices passed into history in 1947, when agents expressed the feeling that the organization had outgrown such things. A new streamlined constitution was drawn up and a formal candlelight initiation was substituted. In 1963 the association dispensed with the initiation ceremony as something not in keeping with the organization or the times.

ORGANIZATION AND THE CONSTITUTION

The original constitution (1920) was lost. A new constitution was written and it was revised many times over the years. The 1947-49 revision was the streamlined and modernized version dedicated to changing times. The 1959 revisions laid the foundation for the present organization and committee structure.

In the present organizational structure, the elected state officers and the elected chairmen of the six districts constitute a board of directors. The state leader serves as counselor and ex officio member. The board of directors meets at the call of the state president, usually during a state Extension conference or training school on the Cornell campus; or, for Extension program and administration discussions, at the joint call of the state president and the state leader of home demonstration agents.

State meetings are arranged for by the president and her executive committee, usually at a time when the greatest number of agents is expected to be on the Cornell campus attending a conference or training school. Between state meetings, time is set aside for the transaction of needed association business at the regularly scheduled monthly district meetings held for program discussion.

The committee structure in the 1950's, before the realignment of the State Extension Service (and separation from the Federation of Home Bureaus), was divided into three categories: association business committees; committees having to do with home bureau federation activities such as the state fair exhibits, and the family life, good citizenship, and crafts projects, which were Extension projects but sponsored by the federation; and 8 or 10 subject matter committees. The subject matter committees, according to the 1952 constitution, were to serve as a liaison between agents and the State Extension staff for the improvement and development of subject matter programs and teaching methods. The subject matter committees at that time were appointed by the association president with the approval of the association executive committee.

The 1953 constitution stated that subject matter committees should be appointed at a meeting of the association board of directors, state project leaders (specialists), and state leaders. At present, the subject matter committees are not a constitutional part of the agents' organization.

In the 1959 revision of the constitution, a president-elect replaced the first vice-president position; and a sum of money, not to exceed \$200 each was allotted for the president, president-elect, and the two agents recognized for distinguished service to attend the annual meetings of the national organization. The position of Ithaca representative was changed to social chairman. The representative had been a liaison person on the board of directors since the beginning of the association.

The objectives outlined in the constitutions of the 1950's were: to provide a means for the discussion of common problems, to foster loyalty to the association and the Extension Service, and to encourage professional growth and sociability.

The present (1963) constitution states, in general, that the purpose of the association is to provide a permanent New York State organization for home demonstration agents whereby professional standards may be raised, fellowship among members promoted, ideas and methods exchanged, leadership and service recognized, and member participation in the national association stimulated.

The archives contain the constitutions for 1939, 1947, 1949, 1952, 1953, 1957, 1959, 1963, and 1966. The revisions made in the 1960's brought the state constitution in line with the national constitution, the changes in the Extension administration and program, and changing times. More constitutional changes are pending.

THE NATIONAL HOME DEMONSTRATION AGENTS' ASSOCIATION

New York State was among the 13 charter members of the National Home Demonstration Agents' Association.

In the late 1920's Extension workers over the nation were talking of a national association, and in 1930 Dorothy Williams of Chemung County expressed the New York State home demonstration agents' interest by making a motion that they join in such a movement and appoint a committee to work to this end with similar committees from the state agricultural and 4-H Club associations and the State Extension staff. This was the beginning of the professional improvement committee.

There had also been discussion of a national home demonstration agents' association at the pre-convention house party meetings that brought home demonstration agents together preceding the annual meetings of the American Home Economics Association.

In 1931, Mrs. Eileen Androus of Onondaga County made a motion that "a delegate be sent to the Detroit meeting from the doughbuster's organization." This was the house party meeting for home demonstration agents held at the St. Clair Inn preceding the annual meeting of the American Home Economics Association in Detroit, during which plans were made for the national organization. Mabel Milhan of St. Lawrence and later Rensselaer County attended and reported.

The actual organization meeting took place in June 1933, preceding the Milwaukee meeting of the American Home Economics Association, and the constitution was voted on in June 1934 preceding the New York City meeting of the American Home Economics Association.

Eloise Irish of Franklin County was elected secretary of the new national organization. In her report to the state association she said that 30 states had joined, that dues of 25 cents per person for organized states and 50 cents per person for unorganized states had been decided on; and that the purpose of the national organization was to promote "unity of feeling in the national Extension Service, and an exchange of ideas among the Extension agents in their home demonstration work."

New York State was very actively involved in the national association around 1950 when Mrs. Katherine Norton Britt of the Buffalo City Home Bureau was chairman of the committee to revise the constitution (1947-1949), and Mrs. Mary Switzer of Erie County was third vice-president (1949), and president (1950-51). New York was the hostess state for the 1953 national meeting in Buffalo. Louise Weatherwax of Oneida County was convention chairman. Mrs. Katherine Britt represented the national association at the first postwar meeting of the Associated Countrywomen of the World (with which the State Federation of Home Bureaus was affiliated) held in Amsterdam, Holland, in 1947.

A number of other New York State agents have been prominent in the national organization over the years. Eloise Irish served as secretary in 1933; Mrs. Lois Mathewson of Steuben County was vice-president in 1937-38; Helen Birchard of Saratoga County was named third vice-president and editor of The Reporter in 1965-66. A number have served as regional counselors: Sara Kerr of Tompkins County in 1944 with Mabel Milhan of Rensselaer County filling out her unexpired term in 1945; Mrs. Katherine Norton Britt of Buffalo City in 1947; and Mrs. Frances Mayer of Niagara County in 1961-62.

Mrs. Orrilla Wright Butts of Delaware, Genesee, and Livingston Counties, who became state leader of New York State Home Demonstration Agents in 1954, served on the advisory council of the national association in 1956 and 1957; and Miss Vera Caulum of Oswego County, who became state leader in 1959, served on the council in 1964 and 1965. Elizabeth Lee Vincent, dean of the New York State College of Home Economics, served on the council in 1949-50 and was keynote speaker at the national meeting in Boston in 1950.

The New York State association has actively encouraged members to attend and participate in national meetings; and the state leader staff has encouraged county executive committees not only to grant professional leave (other than vacation or annual leave) but to contribute to the expense of the agent attending, in the interest of professional improvement.

NATIONAL RECOGNITION AND AWARDS

One of the coveted honors in home demonstration work across the nation is that of being selected, upon the recommendation of the State Association, to be among those honored at the recognition ceremony which is the climax of each national meeting. Because of its large membership, New York State is permitted to recognize two agents each year.

To receive this honor, the agent must have outstanding accomplishments to be cited, and a ten-year service record. The selection was originally by popular vote, but is now determined by the State Association recognition committee in conference with the state leader. The first agent in New York State to be recognized was Adelaide Barts of Nassau County in 1946.

New York State home demonstration agents, as well as agents from other states, are eligible to be considered for two awards sponsored by the national association: the Grace Frysinger Fellowship, and the Florence Hall Award.

The Grace Frysinger Fellowship of \$500 is to be used toward one month's travel and living expenses while studying and observing home demonstration work in another state, or other states. The selection is made by a national committee. The recipient must have had a minimum of 5 years of Extension experience. Any eligible agent may submit an application and plan of work. Application forms are available through the national organization.

The Florence Hall Award is \$200 in recognition of outstanding work. The State Association in consultation with the state leader makes recommendations to the National Association for this award. It is to be used for professional improvement in a broad sense, a trip to another state to observe home demonstration work, expenses to a national meeting, or expenses toward a sabbatical or summer school leave. Carolyn Boegly of Broome County received this award in 1962; Mrs. Marjorie White of Cayuga County in 1964.