

# OUR LAND-GRANT HERITAGE



*A brief history of OARDC and OSU Extension: How they started, how they help Ohioans, and why and how they work together.*

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY AND approximately 50 other state-supported universities can claim the distinction of being land-grant universities. First and foremost, a land-grant university is “the people’s university.” This is apparent in the origins of the land-grant idea. In 1862, Abraham Lincoln signed the Land-Grant Act, authored by Justin S. Morrill of Vermont, into law. The law granted to each state part of the “people’s” land then being held by the U.S. government with the understanding that this land would be sold and the proceeds invested to support “at least one college in each state.” In Morrill’s words, the leading objective of these new land-grant universities “shall be, without excluding other scientific and classical studies, and including military tactics, to teach such branches of learning as are related to agriculture and mechanical arts in order to promote the liberal and practical education of industrial classes.” By signing the Morrill Act into law, Abraham Lincoln made it possible for all citizens in this country to aspire to the benefits of higher education.

When you understand the purpose and origin of The Ohio State University, you understand why the horizons of higher education had to be broadened by the land-grant concept. A land-grant university is



*Charles Thorne, first full-time director of the Ohio Agricultural Experiment Station, on horseback at the 1917 Wheat Field Day in Wooster.*

the people’s university and, like the people, it directs its gaze not only to the past but also to the future. Teaching alone could no longer satisfy demands that people placed upon their new institutions. Research and public service now took their place and together became the tripod upon which these new higher-education institutions rose to meet the needs of the twentieth century. The phrase “teaching, research, and public service” has become synonymous with land-grant universities.

## ORIGIN OF OARDC

While from a broad perspective the land-grant concept became

successful, the evolution was not without debate and disagreements in many states. Ohio was no exception. During the early years of Ohio State, the emphasis was toward a liberal-arts education rather than agricultural and mechanical arts. This alienated the agricultural community within the state, and many boycotted the university. In 1882, an attempt was made to heal this rift with the establishment of an agricultural experiment station at the university. The Ohio Agricultural Experiment Station (OAES) was incorporated with the university farm, and the two agriculture professors divided their time between classroom duties and directing research on station land. The budget was a meager \$3,000 per year.

Because many land-grant universities had moved to liberal-arts institutions and away from the agricultural and mechanical arts, the U.S. Congress passed the Hatch Act of 1887, which provided funds for states to establish an agricultural experiment station under separate federal funding and to provide \$15,000 annually for continued support. Dissatisfaction with the OAES's work had already caused a separate board of control to be named, and with the acceptance of the Hatch Act funds the board hired Charles Thorne as the first full-time director in 1887. At Thorne's urging, the board received permission from the Ohio General Assembly to relocate the station by open bids from each county in the state. Wayne County's bid of \$85,000 in monies and land was accepted as the high bid. In 1892, Thorne moved the station from the university at Columbus to Wooster. The station was renamed the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center in 1965.

The well-being of Ohio's citizens and the state's economy is intimately tied to environmental quality, food safety and food quality, the development of new technologies and enterprises, and increasing the value of agricultural products. Today, OARDC is working for Ohio's citizens to conduct research that addresses these areas.

## ORIGIN OF EXTENSION

The Smith-Lever Act of 1914 formalized the responsibility of the 1862 and 1890 colleges to provide extension work in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The purpose of Extension, as defined in the legislation, "is to aid in

diffusing among the people of the United States, useful and practical information on subjects relating to Agriculture and Home Economics, and to encourage the application of the same." Section 2 of the act further specifies that Extension work would consist of giving instruction and practical demonstrations in agriculture, home economics, and related subjects to persons not attending college and giving information through demonstrations, publications and other methods.

However, Extension work in Ohio started before the formal act of 1914. A.B. Graham was employed as the Superintendent of Extension on July 1, 1905. His plan (a bit gender-biased by today's standards) included the following:

"To elevate the standard of living in rural communities.

"To emphasize the importance of hard work and habits of industry, which are essential to building a strong character.

"To acquaint boys and girls with their environment and to interest them in making their own investigations.

"To give to the boys who shall become interested in farm work an elementary knowledge of agriculture and farm practices and to girls the simplest facts of domestic economy.

"To educate the adults in elementary science of agriculture and in the most up-to-date farm practices."



*A.B. Graham of Springfield, Ohio's first superintendent of Extension (1914).*

This first plan for Extension work in Ohio contained guidelines touching the lives of individuals, families, and communities. Within a short time the new Superintendent of Extension launched methods of doing Extension work that are still in use: meetings, bulletins, news releases and more.

Today, OSU Extension still touches the lives of individuals, families, and communities through the four program areas of agriculture and natural resources, family and consumer sciences, 4-H and youth development, and community development. Using the latest technology, and backed by OARDC research findings, OSU Extension accomplishes the mission of helping "people improve their lives through an education process using scientific knowledge focused on identified issues and needs" and the vision of being the premier educational network in the state of Ohio.