



Mobilizing the rural home front : the extension service, Montana women, and World War II
by Kathleen Elizabeth Werner

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in History
Montana State University

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Abstract:

The U.S. government's push to mobilize all sectors of its population during World War II has taken many forms. For women, most of the attention has focused on urban workers and others who may have engaged in factory work. Rural women, however, were important during the war. Agricultural production was vital to America's success; a country needs to feed its people to win a war. Unlike the popularization of work in the factories, women's labor in agricultural production was not feminized. The government worked to create an ideology for rural women that preserved their identity as homemakers but also encouraged agricultural labor. In the rural front, women had to be pulled into the effort; mobilizing them to the cause was essential to national unity.

The purpose of this research is to examine the mobilization efforts made towards rural Montana women. What kinds of messages did the national press issue to women, and specifically, to what extent did the Montana Home Extension Service participate in assisting the government's construction of rural women's wartime identity? Examining the Cooperative Extension Service's annual reports in Montana demonstrates how the government sought to mobilize rural women. By looking at Montana State College Home Economics Department's domestic and scientific training demonstrates how rural women were helped during the war years. Lastly, by comparing those findings with national magazines idea of women's identity in World War II shows the importance of homemakers. The study reveals that rural women were presented as patriotic homemakers, whose sole aim was to preserve democratic ideals and safeguard the family.

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**MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY
Bozeman, Montana**

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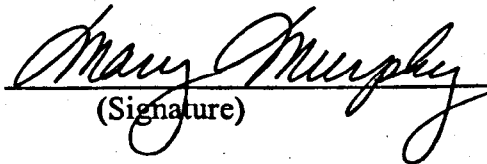
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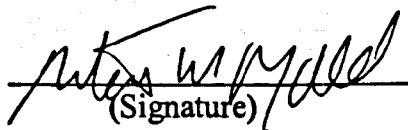
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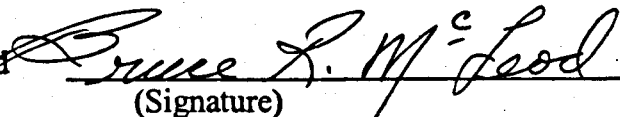
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ABSTRACT

The U.S. government's push to mobilize all sectors of its population during World War II has taken many forms. For women, most of the attention has focused on urban workers and others who may have engaged in factory work. Rural women, however, were important during the war. Agricultural production was vital to America's success; a country needs to feed its people to win a war. Unlike the popularization of work in the factories, women's labor in agricultural production was not feminized. The government worked to create an ideology for rural women that preserved their identity as homemakers but also encouraged agricultural labor. In the rural front, women had to be pulled into the effort; mobilizing them to the cause was essential to national unity.

The purpose of this research is to examine the mobilization efforts made towards rural Montana women. What kinds of messages did the national press issue to women, and specifically, to what extent did the Montana Home Extension Service participate in assisting the government's construction of rural women's wartime identity? Examining the Cooperative Extension Service's annual reports in Montana demonstrates how the government sought to mobilize rural women. By looking at Montana State College Home Economics Department's domestic and scientific training demonstrates how rural women were helped during the war years. Lastly, by comparing those findings with national magazines idea of women's identity in World War II shows the importance of homemakers. The study reveals that rural women were presented as patriotic homemakers, whose sole aim was to preserve democratic ideals and safeguard the family.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Last night it was the County Nutrition for Defense Committee. Things seem to be much nearer when you are on such committees. We are not only making plans for families to feed themselves since there will be a distinct shortage on the grocers shelves. But also should it be necessary to evacuate families on the West Coast, we will have to have something to feed them when they arrive until they can get adjusted. It isn't the hectic planning for war gardens of War I, but rather serious sober planning. There won't be tin cans available. I wish the whole thing were well over.
--Harriette Cushman, 10 March 1942 Letter to Cushman Family.

A very personal account of the work of extension agents in Montana, Harriette Cushman's letters to her parents revealed the state's need for a concerted effort in keeping rural citizens updated on and interested in World War II. More importantly, setting up Nutrition Committees and Production for Defense Committees, while geared to the agricultural sector of the extension work, demonstrated Montanans' urge to participate in the war effort. Harriette Cushman also illustrated the unique way in which agricultural agents contributed to the overall effectiveness of Montana's patriotic responsibilities.

On July 1, 1922, Cushman began her thirty-two year career as Montana State College's (MSC) Poultry Specialist.¹ In fact, her appointment as a Poultry Specialist for the Extension Service made her one of the very first and, few, women in her field. She led the development of Montana's cooperative turkey marketing pools, helped upgrade state poultry flocks, improved new techniques for egg marketing, and worked for the improvement of poultry production on the Indian reservations. Her job would see her through a worldwide depression, a world war, and the political paranoia of the 1950s.

¹ Montana State College was officially changed to Montana State University in 1965.

Through all these events, Cushman remained committed to Montana, the college, and its people.

Born in Birmingham, Alabama, Cushman did not seem destined for Montana. She was a gifted woman who had worked all over the nation. She served in non-academic sectors as a biochemist in New Jersey and Pennsylvania. Her distinctive career as a Poultry Specialist would lead her to employment in California and Idaho but she would eventually call Montana her home.²

A woman working in a field dominated by men, Cushman's job as Poultry Specialist was exceptional. The majority of the women involved in Extension Service labored as home demonstration agents. As a Southerner, Cushman was typical of many agents, men and women alike, working in the West. Trained at eastern universities, they quickly plied their skills at western land grant colleges.³ However, by the 1930s and 1940s, the eastern-trained personnel were quickly replaced by local men and women eager to spread their knowledge in the local communities in which they grew up.

Numerous studies have been written about the effects of World War II on the American woman. Like Rosie the Riveter, most of the attention has been focused on urban workers and others who engaged in factory work.⁴ Rural women, however, were important during the war. Agricultural production was just as vital as the production of war materials; a people and military, which are not fed, cannot win a war. The United

² Harriette Eliza Cushman, "Faculty Records," Collection 1253, Personal Papers, Merrill G. Burlingame Special Collections, Montana State University, Bozeman, Mont.

³ Harriette Cushman earned several degrees and certificates from Mt. Holyoke College, Cornell University, and Rutgers.

⁴ See Doris Weatherford, *American Women and World War II* (New York: Facts on File, 1990). In addition, Sherna Gluck, *Rosie the Riveter Revisited: Women, the War, and Social Change* (Long Beach, Calif.: California State University, 1983).

States government relied on farmers and ranchers to make available the necessary vegetables, grains, and meat to feed soldiers and citizens. Men living in rural areas were deferred service until well after harvest season. When men did go off and fight, however, their wives and daughters were encouraged to take up the hoe and farm for the war cause.

In World War II, the war was fought on many fronts, especially the rural front. Women had to be pulled into these events; mobilizing them to the cause was essential to national unity. Unlike in the campaigns designed to lure women into industrial work, agricultural labor was not feminized. In fact, there has been little research into how national institutions worked to create an ideology for rural women that preserved their identity as homemakers but also encouraged their agricultural labor. Several institutions provided that message, critical to that was the Cooperative Extension Service, and Home Economics training, especially at Montana State College.

The purpose of this research is to examine the mobilization efforts made towards rural Montana women. What kinds of messages, for example, did the national press issue to women, and specifically, to what extent did the Montana Home Extension Service participate in assisting the government's construction of rural women's wartime identity? This study is an examination of ideology makers during the war, not necessarily the reactions of Montana women to that ideology.

Typically, the government, especially the Department of Agriculture, and reformers were of the opinion that rural women were the glue that held together not only the home but their communities as well. They were viewed as catalysts for any change

that could take place in rural regions. If extension agents could transform rural women's frame of mind, they, in turn, would revolutionize the community.

Like the politicization of domestic work among Revolutionary War women, World War II worked to create a nationalized responsibility for homemakers in the rural West. Demonstration agents no longer placed their primary emphasis on modernization but increasingly focused on conserving and salvaging for the homemaker and her family, and, to some extent, the community. Many of the programs practiced during this time were geared to a national effort. Examining home demonstration programs in Gallatin, Park, Sweet Grass, Jefferson and Madison counties illustrates a broader national trend as each county and state had to work within the confines and restrictions of the United States Department of Agriculture policies.⁵

As the central location for the Montana Extension Service, Montana State University has extensive documentation on the roles that Home Extension Agents have played during the 1940s. For example, I examine the types of programs that were initiated, how they were implemented, and to what extent these programs were successful in creating a role for women during the era. The examination of the policies of the CES and their agents, however, also needs to be compared with the views of women popular cultural presented at this time.

Chapter 1 explores the role of the extension agents and their programs during the war. The mission of the home demonstration agent was to understand the needs of her female clients and improve the rural conditions in which they lived. The use of CES documents, for historical and social research, is examined from the beginning of the

⁵ Jefferson and Madison, while two separate counties, were overseen by one agent.

Smith-Lever Act through the 1930s.⁶ CES programs after 1941 were modified to fit a world at war. Modernization was no longer the catch phrase; instead calls to “renovate, reuse, and salvage” became the most common slogans.

Chapter 2 examines the influence of the Department of Home Economics at Montana State University. The majority of female students at MSU in the 1940s enrolled in home economics courses. Both the Home Economics Department and the Extension Service were located in the College of Agriculture at Montana State College. Graduates readily found available employment with the Extension Service. Their domestic and scientific training before World War II serviced Montana women during the war years when their husbands and sons were fighting overseas. Importantly, the Home Economics Department worked with the Extension Service to provide women with bulletins and circulars adapted to wartime living.

Chapter 3 examines popular magazines of the time to provide either a contrasting or a comparable view of the national models for women during the 1940s. What messages were communicated by advertisers and magazine articles to their female subscribers? Specifically, were the messages in magazine articles and advertisements the same messages disseminated by the Extension Service? Popular magazines such as *Ladies Home Journal* and *Good Housekeeping*, along with *Montana Woman* provide examples of the kind of ideas the mass media presented to women during the war

Using statistical evidence, Extension Service annual reports, and the work of the Montana State University Home Economics Department, I will provide evidence of the

⁶ See Sandra Schackel, *Social Housekeepers: Women Shaping Public Policy in New Mexico, 1920-1940* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1991) and Holt, *Linoleum Better Babies and the Modern Farm Women*.

extent of the mobilization effort of women in Montana and in America's West. More importantly, examining the agricultural extension programs in Montana enables researchers to understand the unique circumstances rural women faced during the war.

Impact of the Extension Service in Montana

Made possible by the passage of the 1914 Smith-Lever Act, Cushman and other women found employment in newly legislated extension work. The United States Congress ratified the act as "a third arm of the land grant system in order to transmit information from colleges and the Department of Agriculture to the local people."⁷ It was a concerted effort that involved federal, state, and county cooperation. Importantly, the Smith-Lever Act provided massive programs of adult education. What came out of it was the Cooperative Extension Service (CES). Concerned with the decline in farm population during the early part of the 1900s, the act was primarily directed to a male-dominated agricultural sector. However, local and federal governments saw the potential for home economics instruction in rural areas. The CES desired to provide informal educational opportunities for rural dwellers. For women and families, the act encouraged the dissemination and application of useful, practical information relating to home economics, and other related subjects among average rural citizens.⁸ Such topics for homemakers included nutrition education, gardening, energy, and financial accounting.

⁷ Paul D. Warner and James A. Christenson, *Cooperative Extension Service: A National Assessment* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1984), 6.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.

Access to education became a major concern for the government, which felt that its rural citizens were symbolic of the country's agricultural heritage.

To promote "better living, better happiness, more education, and better citizenship," the Smith-Lever Act utilized methods formulated by land grant universities.⁹ Historically, the Cooperative Extension Service focused on program development and implementation. Extension emphasized service to local citizens. Instead of an in-class teaching style at a single location, the CES extension programs used home visits, telephone calls, and office appointments to reach clientele and their family on an individual basis. They also utilized workshops, leader training and subject matter meetings. For women in rural areas, however, home demonstration clubs in individual homes proved the most popular.

Home demonstration not only provided a social setting but also offered women some control. "The work in home economics Extension has from the outset been organized largely on a neighborhood or community basis, usually in clubs of from twelve to twenty five women."¹⁰ Each group typically selected its own officers and planned their own agendas. Local programs were usually concerned with food selection and preparation to provide adequate nutritional requirements. Extension programs strove to provide clientele with programs they desired. Home demonstrations also gave a personal touch to education. Programs, however, were typically the same everywhere because it was thought "the work of the home demonstration agent is more standardized the nation

⁹ Smith-Lever Act of 1914, Public Law 95, 63rd Cong., 2d sess. (8 May 1914).

¹⁰ Edmund de S Brunner, and E. Hsin Pao Yang, *Rural America and the Extension Service: A History of the Cooperative Agriculture and Home Economics Extension Service* (New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1949), 37.

over, the components of home life being similar everywhere.”¹¹ Demonstration agents soon learned, however, that diversification was desirable. Traditionally, “extension’s clientele have been referred to as middle-class, rural residents.”¹² For purposes of this study, the observation marks a bit of truth. While Montana families were not all middle-class, more than 60% of its population was rural.¹³ While they stressed that work was standardized, agents realized that their clientele had different needs, depending on their race, class, and region. For example, a family in Montana was more concerned with electrifying the home in the 1930s and 1940s than a family in New York. However, agents and their clients were restricted in that they needed to select programs from federally approved projects. Extension allowed for some community individuality but only to the extent that they could choose from a pre-selected menu.

Extension programs developed various teaching methods to provide knowledge to their rural clientele. One way to disseminate information was through objective illustrations, including charts, posters, exhibits, slide films, motion pictures, pageants, and plays. Written and printed materials in the way of bulletins, circulars, and correspondence letters gave rural citizens a visual printed example of some of the modern techniques utilized. Oral methods like telephone calls, office calls, radio programs, phonograph records, and home visits are the basic outlets that allowed the CES agents to connect personally with their clients. While no one method met all the needs, visits to farmhouses and ranches seemed the most successful.

¹¹ Brunner and Yang, *Rural America and the Cooperative Extension Service*, 96.

¹² Warner and Christenson, *Cooperative Extension Service*, 21.

¹³ *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, 1042, supervised by Morris H. Hanson, (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1943).

Home demonstration methods were successful in the mid-twentieth century in that they taught skills effectively. Seeing, hearing, and hands-on examples encouraged change. While beneficial primarily to the client, demonstration also provided an opportunity for developing and stabilizing leadership for CES agents. Home demonstration visits enabled CES agents to increase their confidence in speaking and demonstrating. At a social level, home demonstration promoted personal relations between demonstrator and people. For the rural woman and home demonstrator, this particular method yielded viable results. With rationing and price shortages, World War II had a slight negative impact on home demonstration visits.¹⁴ Agents usually traveled by car, which because of gas and tire rationing, was reduced throughout the conflict. During the war, personal visits to individual farms were reduced in favor of group socializing. A demonstrator would stop at one house and women from the nearby area would gather. While demonstration methods slightly decreased during World War II, group demonstrations provided a social atmosphere for women who lived far apart and rarely saw their neighbors. Women learned how to ration meat and butter and, at the same time, ease their fears through comfort the group provided.

For demonstration visits, agents would obtain permission to use the farm and/or a house of a farmer and his wife. They would then publicize the place and time of the demonstration to people within the area. In order to reduce gas use, the CES agent held visits in neighborhoods and communities for multiple days. For women, the demonstration lessons focused on issues surrounding the house and family. "Food selection and preparation, making and using a fireless cooker, care of poultry, year-round

¹⁴ Brunner and Yang, *Rural America and the Extension Service*, 113.

garden, rug and curtain making, clothing, use and care of milk in the home, eradication of household pets, soap making” were all important lessons for rural women.¹⁵ While health, sanitation, and modernization were primary concerns for homemakers, they were also interested in keeping up with the latest fashions of the day and how to achieve those on a limited budget. The “Demonstration worker is concerned with teaching women and girls how to achieve maximum amount of good taste, utility, and attractiveness at minimum cost.”¹⁶ Clothing style and construction along with home furnishing projects competed with nutrition and health. Thus, homemakers learned to judge fabric and color, renovate and construct furniture. World War II, on the other hand, changed the focus to creating victory gardens, reusing old fabrics, storing food and reducing the use of valuable resources such as rubber and tin.

Home demonstration was not just essential to disseminating knowledge to rural families. Extension work proved crucial in realizing employment opportunities for women enrolled in home economics classes. Land-grant colleges in the midwest were more open to home economics courses than universities in the east. Colleges were willing to train women in order to promote scientific and efficient management of households. The U.S. government and universities felt that trained professionals could better teach women than unqualified personnel. “Some women without college degrees filled these positions in the early years, but the professionalization of home economics eventually required that all extension agents have degrees and specialized training.”¹⁷ In

¹⁵Brunner and Yang, *Rural America and the Cooperative Extension Service*, 115.

¹⁶Ibid., 96.

¹⁷Marilyn Irvin Holt, *Linoleum Better Babies and the Modern Farm Woman, 1890-1930* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995), 56.

an age of technological advances, farmwomen were generally accepting of women who had the necessary training to teach them the newest, advanced skills to target the house. However, they readily embraced females from their own community and background. Montana State College, while initially using non-native female agents, soon with the popularity of the home economics degree, found local students willing to take on the role of extension worker.

World War II put unprecedented demands upon the American farm and home. Broken families, in which young men suddenly drafted or enlisted in military service, hit the homemaker directly. Women participated “almost full time in the various salvage drives in search of metals, fat, paper, and rags.”¹⁸ Extension programs and agents were there to ease the distress of the war for Montana families. By overhauling demonstration programs, however, they also gave Montanans a sense of responsibility in the war effort.

As Francis Smith, State Home Demonstration Leader in Montana, reported:

The wartime challenge to home economics has been gladly accepted and we in Montana, as elsewhere, are carrying on such activities as will enable families to win the war on the home front. ‘Salvage, save, renovate, and conserve’ has been our slogan and we have applied it to every area of homemaking and family life, --to the problem of feeding the family, clothing the family, keeping the family comfortably housed, in good health and a state of high morale.¹⁹

An urgent goal for state extension agents for their clients was to “make the greatest contribution toward the winning of the war.”²⁰

¹⁸ Holt, *Linoleum Better Babies and the Modern Farm Woman*, 67.

¹⁹ Francis Smith, “Annual Home Extension Report, 1942,” Box 17, Accession 00021, Montana Extension Services Records, Montana State University Archives, Bozeman, Mont, 1.

²⁰ Smith, “Annual Home Extension Report, 1942,” 1.

CHAPTER TWO:
"DON'T LEAVE THE FARM, GIRLS, UNCLE SAM DEPENDS ON YOU"¹

The immediate objective of Extension in Montana, as elsewhere, is to make the greatest possible contribution toward the winning of the war. . . Naturally, there has been confusion and conflict in changing from a peacetime status to total war situation. Even so, it is remarkable how rapidly people have adjusted to wartime demands and how eager they are to do their part in preserving American freedom and American ideals.
--Francis Smith, 1942 Annual Report.

Prior to World War II, programs in Montana's Home Extension Service primarily involved the implementation of new machinery. The agents stressed modernization by bringing scientific practices to the household, but they also emphasized beautification of the home and its surroundings. At any time, demonstrations included selecting and buying clothing fabric, creatively using the sewing machine, flower arrangement, or using steam processing when canning goods. While the tradition of service did not change during World War II, the four major areas of demonstrating: nutrition, clothing, health, and home efficiency assumed new importance. The Home Extension Service shifted gears to target their clients' potential to contribute to the war effort.

A new emphasis emerged among extension agents during World War II. Agricultural production was extremely important to the war effort. The need to supply the American population and her soldiers overseas increased the demands placed upon agriculture to produce more crops. Men in farming areas were deferred service until after harvesting; in some cases men were permanently relieved of active military duty. Still, as men were conscripted into the war effort, women had to fulfill the dual roles as both

¹ Excerpt from the poem in *South Dakota Farmer Semi-Monthly*, June 23, 1916. Reprinted in Marilyn Irvin Holt, *Linoleum Better Babies and the Modern Farm Woman*, 145.

homemakers and farmers. The new emphasis of extension agents was to supply homemakers with information about how to accomplish their work more effectively and efficiently. Time-saving hints about how to run their home could accomplish the task. Importantly, at least for production purposes, the push for Victory Gardens and the "Share the Meat" program were designed to produce more foods in rural areas, providing more resources for the national effort. As a subsidiary of this, the agents also tried to enforce patriotic values in homemakers by encouraging them to read and memorize the Constitution as well as the Pledge of Allegiance.

In addition, programs such as food preservation and furniture re-upholstering combined with their goal of making the home a better place to live. However, they had the added significance of contributing to the war effort and giving homemakers a direct role in the conflict. Fabric selection and other programs were eliminated during the war and were money in the household economy.

How did women respond to these new, revised programs? It was difficult to gauge the overall success, since annual reports did not incorporate all clientele voices. The extension reports did, however, try to determine the overall reaction. Agents were responsive to dissatisfaction within individual county and state programs. If clients deemed a program impractical to their time and contribution to the war, the project was scrapped.

By showing women the ways to can and preserve goods safely, utilize old fabric, or efficiently manage the household, county home demonstration agents propelled the national movement for a unified country. According the National Extension

Homemakers Council, "The decade of the forties began with a mobilization of resources in support of World War II, and a shifting population due to expansion of industrial production resulted in more Homemakers going to work in fields and factory."² As husbands and sons left home, the resulting labor shortage left Montana homemakers in charge of both the farm and the household, a tremendous task that took precious time and energy. "Lessons on reducing home labor such as short cuts in cooking, sewing, cleaning, and laundry were most helpful" to women with little or no male support.³ Home demonstration agents were there to make the transition from peace to war that resulted in women's new labor roles as smooth as possible. The catch phrase heard through many households was "Eat it up, Wear it out, Make it do, or Do without," symbolizing the homemaker's duty to the war effort.⁴

"How War Affects Home Demonstration"⁵

Like other states, Montana restructured its plans to best suit American families during the war. In many instances, extension programs incorporated previous years curriculum with new agendas geared to fighting and, ultimately, winning the war. In Montana, home extension realized this need and closely examined programs that would

² Charline Warren, *An Official History of National Extension Homemakers Council, INC., 1930-1990* (Dallas, TX: National Extension Homemakers Council, 1991) 18.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Section title from Francis Smith, who outlined the effects of war on the Extension Service in her 1942 Annual Report.

best suit their clientele in a time of war. In some cases, they retained programs while discarding others for more practical plans that focused on issues concerning the war.

The Montana Extension Service started 1942 with renewed vigor. In January, Francis Smith, Montana State Home Demonstration Leader before and during the conflict, recorded the home extension's intent to contribute to World War II. "The wartime challenge to home economics has been gladly accepted and we in Montana, as elsewhere, are carrying on such activities as will enable families to win the war on the home front," testified Francis Smith.⁶ In 1942 there were 468 home demonstration clubs in the state, with 8,621 female members, 5.36% of the state's women.⁷ Smith stated that there had been a downward trend in the number of women involved in home demonstration clubs.⁸ She attributed the decline not to clients' displeasure but rather a lack of funds and the absence of female extension workers:

This is a strong indicator of the need for more county home economics workers for, in the writer's opinion, this situation is not entirely attributable to war but points to the inadequacy of the home economics programs without trained professional leadership in the county level.⁹

The Montana Extension Service was aware of the low levels of participation for women in the state. However, Smith was careful not to blame the dwindling numbers on the war but on the persistent lack of personnel in each county and the sources to pay agents.

Smith's figures referred to the combined agricultural and home extension programs. Because of limited funds at this time, the Montana Extension Service united

⁶ Smith, "Annual Home Extension Report, 1942," 1.

⁷ Ibid., 2. Total number of women age 21 and over in Montana taken from <http://fisher.lib.Virginia.edu/census/>. While the percentage does seem relatively low, radio programs and word-of-mouth had the potential to reach a higher audience.

⁸ Francis Smith did not record when the number of women in home demonstration clubs started to decrease nor did she give any figures for the decline.

⁹ Smith, "Annual Home Extension Report, 1942," 2.

the agricultural and home extension programs under one agent for some counties. Since there was a higher demand for agricultural agents in each county, it was easier to pay for a full-time farming representative. In theory, agricultural agents were required to divide their time between both farmer and homemaker. Since agricultural agents were men, however, the interests of women were typically left by the wayside, to be picked up by local home demonstration clubs.

Using federally designed statistical forms; home demonstration agents kept detailed monthly and daily reports regarding their clientele input and program success. While home extension agents regularly updated their county reports, Smith stated that reports from "home extension work in agricultural agents' annual reports was less satisfactory than usual this year."¹⁰ Smith also stated that the problem was that agricultural agents might have considered "home economics in wartime relatively unimportant."¹¹ She was concerned that the results of 1942's extension work, if one year was the test, illustrated a regression in home demonstration work:

It may be that in wartime reports are even less valid than in peacetime for measuring this type of progress in the type of educational effort. The increased members in home demonstration agent counties and the decreased membership in agricultural agent counties may be a better indicator of the way we are traveling.¹²

Male agents who appeared little interested in homemakers gave Smith concerns that women in those counties were not receiving the attention they needed.

¹⁰ Smith, "Annual Home Extension Report, 1942," 21.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

The increased membership in demonstration clubs in 1942, despite the lack of agents, perhaps reflected a sense of anxiety in Montana women who needed regularity and security in their lives.

Wartime brings into sharper focus many problems in feeding, clothing and housing the family and calls for application of much knowledge and many skills which in the normal times may seem less important. At the same time, there has been a tendency on the part of women to feel the work they were doing at home was not "war" work but that they should be doing something special and glamorous.¹³

This created a dual problem for the Extension Service. First, they needed to determine, for their clientele, what specific wartime problems materialized for the homemaker and make them aware of these. Second, they had to convince women that the work they were doing in the home was real in the sense that they needed to maintain the morale, comfort, and health of their families and community during the war.¹⁴

Reaching Every Client: County Level Extension Work

With the lack of needed personnel, Francis Smith made extra supervisory visits to counties. In 1942 she was in Gallatin County for one day on April 25, in Madison and Jefferson Counties for two days on April 29 and October 15, Broadwater County for one day on April 24, and in Park County on April 8.¹⁵ During these visits, she checked the implementation of specific programs and made sure the training for agents went well.

To the trained home economist, many more needs are apparent than the homemaker is conscious of. To be able to help homemakers realize or

¹³ Smith, "Annual Home Extension Report, 1942," 16.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., 11.

have an awareness of their problems is an ability highly prized in an extension worker.¹⁶

Smith's idea of a successful extension program was one in which the extension worker utilized her skills and education to influence the rural homemaker. To help with the war effort, Francis Smith attended national conventions. One addressed the topic of "Share the Meat Program" in St. Louis. She participated in the American Association of Land Grant Colleges and Universities meeting in Chicago. In Spokane, she went to a conference regarding the "Seven Point Program to Control the Cost of Living." Smith also attended a Regional Conference on Wartime Clothing Problems.¹⁷ Although Smith increased her visits in individual counties to pass on information she was learning, one woman could not successfully reach every urban and rural family.

Because of economic conditions, it was easier for agents to combine typical home visits into one group demonstration for communities. While group demonstrations proved difficult for women living far away, it was deemed necessary because of gas rationing. Clients were also relieved to discover that they would not have to spend hard earned and dearly needed cash for implement camps and achievement days, especially with a labor shortage and the current rationing situation.¹⁸ In 1942, however, the number of home visits by home demonstration leaders exceeded those of the previous year.¹⁹

¹⁶ Francis Smith, "Annual Home Extension Report, 1943," Box 17, Accession 00021, Montana Extension Service Records, Montana State University Archives, Bozeman, Mont., 35.

¹⁷ Smith, "Annual Home Extension Report, 1942," 9 and 11.

¹⁸ Implement camps were typically week or weekend camps in which women from various communities met at one locale to learn the use of new appliances or demonstration techniques. This was a great chance for women to get away and socialize with others. World War II, however, strained family resources and women were less likely to leave for a camp or pay for one when the money could be used elsewhere.

¹⁹ The number of home demonstration agent visits exceeded 1941 by 870. Whether because of new interests for new clients or because other projects were reduced is hard to say. However, home demonstration agents definitely increased their client list during the war.

While the state may have increased the total number of home visits, each county varied. Some counties like Roosevelt showed a number of "home calls far in excess of any other county's."²⁰ However, the average county showed a decrease of 15 home calls in 1941.²¹

Agents were concerned that if they could not always reach individual homes, then someone with a bit of training should be available. "Neighborhood" leaders played a crucial role. They were created to help the Extension Service gain a more complete coverage in rural areas. Neighborhood leaders were volunteers. However, some agents asked women to take on the role, especially when there were few volunteers.²² Park County relied on neighborhood leaders to work with the local nutrition committee to promote food preservation and participate in the "Share the Meat" program. They even received information on the "Cost of Living" program, which Smith said, "served a useful purpose in making the neighborhood leader more aware of the complex wartime problems and adjustments facing the people."²³ They likewise worked on "Victory Garden" programs. The use of neighborhood leaders was vital to the success of the Home Extension Service. "This understanding provides that extension agents, through neighborhood leaders will reach all rural families, of which there are approximately 46,078 rural farms and 49,739 rural non-farm" families.²⁴ If the goal was to reach every rural family in the state, neighborhood leaders increased the success rate.

²⁰ Smith, "Annual Home Extension Report, 1942," 26.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Neighborhood leaders were especially helpful in Montana where only 16 counties out of the 56 counties employed full-time home extension workers in 1942.

²³ Smith, "Annual Home Extension Report, 1942," 32.

²⁴ Ibid. Francis Smith based these figures on the number of occupied dwellings in the state, out of the 1940 census.

To determine the position of rural housewives, home demonstration agents were asked to set up committees on home management, clothing, and nutrition. To test the desirability of certain programs, agents for each committee circulated an "Information Sheet," such as a questionnaire. "They met with agents to study the situation which homemakers were facing in keeping their families properly fed, clothed, housed, and otherwise cared for in wartime."²⁵ This helped in determining future programs that would last the duration of the war. Conserving Human Life at Home, Renovating Furnishings to Make Them Outlast the War, and Conserving the Family Dollar were a few of the programs presented to members that related directly to the war situation.

While the "Information Sheet" was helpful in revealing the needs of clients throughout the state, county agents tended to devise the questionnaire in ways they thought would help their individual counties. "There was no absolute uniformity in the forms used in various counties. An original pattern was discussed with agents and their committees and change made for local situations before being taken out to the groups."²⁶ This was effective in that it not only provided input into what clients desired in their programs during the war but it allowed women to decide for themselves what they thought was important. If one county considered learning first aid as important, another county might feel that Victory Gardens were the surest way to contribute to the war. By not using a single pattern, home demonstration was able to provide variety for their clients and agents. At the same time, however, Francis Smith mentioned "there was less

²⁵ Smith, "Annual Home Extension Report, 1942," 17.

²⁶ Ibid., 18.

freedom of choice than in previous years.”²⁷ For example, “a nutrition major or minor was included as a ‘must’ in most counties.”²⁸ This may have provided fewer choices for the clients but in programs where there was selection, home demonstration group members had the final say, using ballot votes to cast their choice.

Counties chose what programs they wanted while including courses required for every county. Some counties were definitely more active in certain projects than others but all counties participated in food preservation. Some worked on Victory Gardens while other counties left that to the 4-H groups in their community. Few counties were innovative when planning programs. Gallatin County started a Tractorette Training School for homemakers.²⁹ Outside of Gallatin, the other counties were either hesitant to start new practices or were content with the programs available, as long as they dealt with the current war issue. As Francis Smith reported earlier, Nutrition and Health was a “must” for every county in Montana. Programs that ensured the safety of their families were generally well received. All homemakers were aware of the acute labor shortage but women living on ranches and farms were typically already working, at least part time, in the fields. These women did not desire programs geared toward working outside of the home, they wanted to alleviate the dual labor roles thrust on them.

²⁷ Smith, “Annual Home Extension Report, 1942,” 18.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ The Tractorette Training School was designed to give women operating and mechanical knowledge of tractors, in case of a possible farm labor shortage in Montana.

Securing the Well-Being of Every Family Member: Nutrition and Health

With the onslaught of World War II, home extension and food preservation received a massive boost. "Conserving the nation's food supply and preparing to feed war-torn Europe became synonymous with patriotism."³⁰ Keeping the family fed and nourished was a primary concern for rural women in Montana and home extension agents were actively engaged in providing up-to-date information:

Rationing of many commercial canned foods as well as sugar, meat, butter and coffee kept Home Demonstration agents busy teaching homemakers how to plan and serve nutritionally balanced meals with food on hand.³¹

In Montana, the "Health and Nutrition" program reached 3,906 people. Of that number, 2,346 reported to county home demonstration agents. In conjunction with the war effort and trying to make their families safe and secure, 1,985 reported better balanced meals, 1,813 used better methods of food preparation, and 715 had better meals for their money.³²

County programs typically centered on food preservation. Extension Service bulletins distributed throughout the state followed county extension agents' tasks in demonstrating proper preservation techniques. Prior to World War II, bulletins sent out concerning food preservation commonly mentioned its importance for the coming winter months. In "Home Canning by Safe Methods," Jessie E. Richardson and Helen L. Mayfield stated, "Many homemakers are approaching the summer with extensive plans

³⁰ Marilyn Irvin Holt, *Linoleum Better Babies and the Modern Farm Woman*, 73.

³¹ Warren, *An Official History of National Extension Homemakers Council, Inc.*, 22.

³² Smith, "Annual Home Extension Report," 1942," 40. The word "better" used in balanced meals and meals for their money to implied nutritional.

for canning and preserving foods.”³³ For fruits and acid vegetables, the authors recommended the Hot Water-Bath Processing, Steamer Processing, and Oven Processing. Cooker Processing, they maintained in the bulletin, was the only safe method for non-acid vegetables and all meats. Following the roles of extension as a disseminator of technologically sound research, the bulletin illustrated the proper way to use each processing technique. They also provided a timetable for cooking, with consideration to altitude and product.

Bessie McClelland, State Extension Nutritionist, released a bulletin, “Dehydration of Garden Products,” seven months after America’s entry into the war. She wrote, “Drying is the oldest method of food preservation” because the organisms found in food cannot grow without moisture.³⁴ While McClelland did not mention the war in the bulletin, the appearance of a bulletin illustrating a technique for the preservation of garden products coincided with home extension’s goal of storing food for the family. She also illustrated a preservation technique that was affordable to homemakers, in contrast to the earlier bulletin by Richardson and Mayfield, which illustrated the uses of costly appliances.

In May 1944, however, Jessie Richardson and Helen Mayfield updated the previous bulletin by supplying clients with a circular, “Vegetable Preservation Handbook for Wartime Use.” In it, the authors changed the rhetoric of the earlier bulletin with mention of the war. They prepared the handbook “to supply reliable and up-to-date

³³ Jessie E. Richardson and Helen L. Mayfield, “Home Canning by Safe Methods,” (Bozeman, Mont: *Montana Extension Service, Bulletin 193*, February 1941), 3.

³⁴ Bessie McClelland, “Dehydration of Garden Products,” (Bozeman, Mont: *Montana Extension Service, Bulletin 193*, February 1943), 3.

information about the preservation of the vegetables grown in Victory Gardens.”³⁵ The authors considered each vegetable that could be grown in Montana’s gardens. Working on the precepts of science and efficiency, they discussed “the modern methods, such as canning, freezing, and dehydration; but [also] of some older, simpler procedures – storage, brining, and pickling, that are scientifically sound.”³⁶ Like earlier bulletins such as Bessie McClelland’s handbook, this manual relied on informative illustrations and timetables to demonstrate the proper techniques for preserving homegrown products. Now, however, Richardson and Mayfield redirected woman’s canning to target the war effort. “The present food situation makes it necessary to preserve all available garden products,” not just family favorites. Products such as chard, asparagus, and rutabagas were included with the more traditional vegetables of squash, onions, cabbage, tomatoes, and beans.

Gallatin County, like other Montana counties, greatly emphasized the necessity of Nutrition and Health during the war years. All-day demonstrations on food preservation were held in Bozeman, Three Forks, and Manhattan.

Particular stress was given at these meetings on food preservation by freezing and dehydration since it was felt that most women were rather well-informed about the newer accepted methods of preservation by canning. The scarcity of pressure cookers also had a bearing on the type of information desired by the farm women.³⁷

³⁵ Jessie E. Richardson and Helen L. Mayfield, “Vegetable Preservation Handbook for Wartime Use,” (Bozeman, Mont: *Agricultural Experiment Station, Circular 178*, May 194), 3.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ George A. Woolley, “Gallatin County Annual Extension Report, 1943,” Box 40, Accession 00021, Montana Extension Service Records, Montana State University Archives, Bozeman, MT, 78.

Other quick freeze demonstrations were given during 1943-44 in the communities of Willow Creek, Ft. Ellis, Manhattan, Belgrade, and Three Forks.³⁸ In addition to dehydration and freezing programs, Miss Lasich, the War Food Assistant, held pressure-cooking tests "because of the increased interest in farm gardens and food preservation work, as necessitated by war needs."³⁹ Interestingly, over half the participants at the Bozeman meeting were attended by women from town.

In the other three counties, preservation demonstrations emphasized canning rather than freezing and dehydration. For Sweet Grass County, "Forty-four women reported canning 4,492 quarts of vegetables, 6,666 quarts of fruits and berries, and storing 41,608 pounds vegetables."⁴⁰ In 1942, Park County created an extensive health and nutrition program. The county appointed a County Nutrition Committee under Civilian Defense to setup projects geared toward the well being of communities and families. For example, two Red Cross nutrition courses were completed in Clyde Park, Wilsall, and Livingston. Moreover, the Clyde Park Ladies Aide taught a course in nutrition to over fifty women. In addition, the film, *Hidden Hunger*, was shown in two county theaters.

Unlike Gallatin County which was concerned primarily with food preservation, Park County home demonstrations were concerned with providing educational programs on proper nutrition for the their community. Miss Bessie E. McClelland, Montana

³⁸ George A. Woolley, "Gallatin County Annual Extension Report, 1944," Box 40, Accession 00021, Montana Extension Service Records, Montana State University Archives, Bozeman, MT, 48.

³⁹ George A Woolley, "Gallatin County Annual Extension Records, 1945," Box 40, Accession 00021, Montana Extension Service Records, Montana State University Archives, Bozeman, MT, 105.

⁴⁰ E.R. Cook and H.M Oefstos, "Sweet Grass County Annual Extension Report, 1942," Box 72, Accession 00021, Montana Extension Service Records, Montana State University Archives, Bozeman, MT, 3.

Nutrition Extension leader, trained women about the various methods of food preservation in Park County.⁴¹ In 1943, "six home demonstration clubs in the county sponsored food preservation demonstrations."⁴² Women in Jefferson and Madison Counties were also concerned about the nutritional welfare of their families. Many of the communities had "special programs and speakers to discuss the importance of balanced diets and essential foods in the diet" especially with the rationing of important foods like meat and butter.⁴³ In addition, during 1943 and 1944, "emphasis was placed on planning, producing and preserving an adequate family food supply and on planning meals designed to maintain good nutrition in spite of shortages and rationing of important food items."⁴⁴

Some counties also implemented new health programs. Gallatin County provided emergency medical care and Red Cross training. "World War II focused attention on the need for more families to be prepared to cope with many of their own medical and nursing problems."⁴⁵ For the first year of the war, 304 improved better health of family members through better food preparation, 38 reported physical examinations while 37 reported preventive measures for diphtheria and smallpox.⁴⁶ While some of these tactics seem irrelevant in the face of war, many mothers and wives were concerned about the health of their family. If they could protect their families from harmful bacteria, then

⁴¹ George L. Hart, "Park County Annual Extension Report, 1942," Box 35, Accession 00021, Montana Extension Service Records, Montana State University Archives, Bozeman, MT, 17.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 33.

⁴³ Joe Leonard, "Madison and Jefferson County Annual Extension Report, 1942," Box 51, Accession 00021, Montana Extension Service Records, Montana State University Archives, Bozeman, MT, 32.

⁴⁴ Joe Leonard, "Madison and Jefferson County Annual Extension Report, 1943," Box 51, Accession 00021, Montana Extension Service Records, Montana State University Archives, Bozeman, MT, 24.

⁴⁵ Warren, *An Official History of National Extension Homemakers Council, Inc.*, 19.

⁴⁶ Smith, "Annual Home Extension Report, 1942," 40.

they felt they were doing at least some part to protect the American way of life. The increased numbers of people in the "Foods and Nutrition" programs reflected a heightened concern for family's health and lifestyle, which may have been a general response to wartime fears.

Making the Home Safe and Aesthetically Pleasing: Home Management

In determining programs for the duration of the war, Francis Smith stated, "Wartime brings into sharper focus many problems in feeding, clothing and housing the family and calls for application of much knowledge and many skills which in the normal times may seem less important."⁴⁷ In the area of Home Management her statement raised several questions: Were some of the previous programs too frivolous? Was content presented useful to families during stressful times? Did meetings provide emotional outlets for war strained families? Members in home demonstration clubs may have felt unpatriotic if they were spending hard earned money on luxury items, such as lawn ornamentation.⁴⁸ Margaret Tuller, Head of Extension's Home Management Program, noted that adjustments were made because of the war emergency. "The present clothing situation of down-graded quality, lack of utility garments, care and repair problems, make the homemaker acutely aware that clothing the family properly also presents an acute wartime problem."⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Smith, "Annual Home Extension Report," 16.

⁴⁸ See section "From Beautification to Production: Victory Gardens."

⁴⁹ Smith, "Annual Home Extension Report, 1943," 33.

Of Montana's 56 counties, 23 participated in home management programs during World War II whose motto was "Salvage, Save, and Renovate." In other words, 6,199 people were reached in projects. Out of those women, 3,806 listed 11,662 new or improved practices in home management.⁵⁰ Many of the programs set up for this section revolved around improving the kitchen, good housekeeping, household operation, and family economics. Prior to World War II, agents and clientele tended to focus on the attractiveness of households and kitchens, refinishing rooms, and keeping accounts without particular regard to renovating or making do. The four major changes in home management during the war were:

The elimination of non-essential subjects, wartime interpretation of those subjects which were retained, addition of new subjects in line with home management's contribution to a conservation program, and combining home management and house furnishings to individual counties.⁵¹

Programs designated as non-essential were purchasing selections and any demonstration geared toward aesthetically pleasing home improvements such as purchasing new slipcovers for furniture or flower arrangements. Some that required installation of plumbing and electrical wiring were postponed.⁵² Programs with these sorts of emphases tended to cost money and require material that might be rationed.

Those deemed retainable for the duration of the war were programs that could easily mesh with wartime rhetoric. For example, "Conserve the Family Dollar" and "Conserve Time and Energy" demonstrations were retained. Conserving the family dollar "attempted to assist the government's program of inflation control, debt clearance,

⁵⁰ Smith, "Annual Home Extension Report, 1943," 41.

⁵¹ Tuller, "Home Management Annual Extension Report, 1942," Box 8, Accession 00021, Montana Extension Service Records, Montanan State University Archives, Bozeman, Mont., 44.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 5.

and bond buying.”⁵³ It was a switch from 1941’s program, which discussed monthly budgeting and long-term financial planning. Margaret Tuller emphasized that with the absence of men, women would not only have to work in the house but in the fields as well. For this, conserving time and energy programs focused on creating short cuts in household chores “to make possible a smooth-running household in the face of long hours in the field.”⁵⁴ This resulted in increased food production as agricultural areas proved crucial to supplying the nation. Women who could reduce their time in the home could spend more time in the field. However, while the program centered on the fluid transition from field to home, it resembled previous programs that tried to design short cuts from chore to chore. Creating more storage space or knowing how many steps there were from the stove to the pantry may have seemed more important if women knew they were conserving their own individual time for the welfare of the nation.

New subjects were also added to help win the war against fascism. “Conserve Equipment,” taught the proper care and use of tools and machinery, which could have been anything from stove maintenance to fixing sewing machines. Demonstrations on how to maintain and fix the sewing machine were included. Margaret Tuller’s bulletin, “Use and Care of Household Equipment,” demonstrated extension’s position in providing homemaker’s a role in the war effort and making them aware of it. In this case, Tuller’s bulletin placed women as maintainers of household appliances. With a shortage of available domestic devices, homemakers were urged to maintain the appliances they already owned for the duration of the war. The bulletin illustrated the general rules and

⁵³ Tuller, “Home Management Annual Extension Report, 1942,” 5.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 5-6.

maintenance for ranges, refrigerators, washing machines, irons, vacuum cleaners, small electrical appliances, and kitchen utensils.⁵⁵ Tuller insisted that women “follow manufacturer’s instructions regarding a specific piece of equipment” and properly storing their appliances.⁵⁶ Like Bessie McClelland, in her article on dehydration, Tuller did not mention the war but the bulletin’s release during the war reaffirmed the Extension Service’s commitment to rural homemakers. The conservation of equipment extended to making the home the safest place in the world.

Programs were not all about work, but concerned play as well. “Home Recreation in Wartime” centered on family and community entertainment. These projects ranged from game and reading nights to community picnics to reading the Constitution. Programs not only aimed at conserving household energy and money but also targeting the moral uplifting of an entire family and instilled nationalist values in a time of war.

Outside of extension, there was cooperation with other women’s clubs and organizations. For example, the Montana Federation of Woman’s Clubs discussed a “Dollars for Defense” program at a general session of state meetings in Helena on June 19, 1943. The Home Management branch of Gallatin County extension participated in a demonstration on refinishing furniture with the Arts and Crafts Section of Bozeman Woman’s Club. There was a talk on “Woman’s Part in the War” with the Episcopal

⁵⁵ Margaret Huston Tuller, “Use and Care of Household Equipment,” (Bozeman, Mont: *Montana Extension Service, Bulletin 213*, June 1942), 2.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 3 and 4.

Senior Guild at Bozeman. A survey class at Montana State College attended a lecture on "Possibilities of Extension Work for the Home Economics Graduate."⁵⁷

Interestingly, "Furniture Renovation" was one of the most popular sub-projects in home management for 1944. As part of the war effort, the upholstery and refinishing demonstrations helped with conserving furniture. A bulletin released five months before the attack on Pearl Harbor, "Simple Upholstery Methods," may not have been geared to the war effort but its emphasis on homemakers' reupholstering their own furniture presaged the later importance of conserving furniture.⁵⁸ In the annual report, Margaret Tuller maintained,

Making use of materials on hand to create a more comfortable and attractive home has been the wartime stress in house furnishings work. The home has acquired a new importance with tire rationing, and its peaceful atmosphere in a time of turmoil can do much to keep the people free from the arch-enemy on the home front – War Nerves.⁵⁹

The reports for Gallatin and Sweet Grass counties did not illustrate the same concentration on home management issues as in Park, Jefferson and Madison counties. These programs were left to the 4-H clubs in Sweet Grass.

In Park, Jefferson and Madison counties, extension clubs not only focused on health and nutrition but they were concerned with personal financial issues. Park was one of the counties that saw an increase in the enrollment in home demonstration clubs during the war. In fact, in 1941 participation led to "the largest number of clubs to ever

⁵⁷ Tuller, "Home Management Annual Extension Report, 1943," Box 8, Accession 00021, Montana Extension Service Records, Montana State University Archives, Bozeman, Mont., 12.

⁵⁸ Margaret H. Tuller, "Simple Upholstery Methods," (Bozeman, Mont.: *Montana Extension Service, Bulletin 198*, August 1941).

⁵⁹ Tuller, "Home Management Annual Extension Report, 1943," 30.

carry the home demonstration program” in Park County.⁶⁰ The clubs in Park County concentrated on projects that were geared to family economics. Some demonstrations consisted of training on saving and spending for things worthwhile, taking over household accounts, and understanding Montana inheritance laws.⁶¹ The family economics projects reflected the homemakers’ need to realize the extent to which the war was going to impact their families. By taking over the household accounts and keeping track of their spending, women knew that they were going to have to adopt any household jobs their husbands may have done before they headed off to war. Moreover, by understanding the inheritance laws in Montana, wives grappled with the heavy responsibility of knowing what to do in case of a loved one’s death. Park County’s practical approach to family economics in a time of war illustrated its acceptance of the difficult times ahead. Not only did it reflect the regional acknowledgment, the projects also reflected a national outlook as “farm women sought to understand the global and national affairs on rural and farm income.”⁶²

This was in stark contrast to Jefferson and Madison Counties whose home demonstration clubs concentrated on projects that lessened work in the home and increased production in the fields:

The Home Demonstration Clubs, as a great many other activities, were affected by the war and priorities. As a specific example, they changed one of their Leader Training programs from Home Dry Cleaning to Soap and Water Cleaning of Special Garments.⁶³

⁶⁰ Hart, “Park County Annual Extension Report, 1942,” 41.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Warren, *An Official History of National Extension Homemakers Council, Inc.*, 24.

⁶³ Leonard, “Jefferson and Madison County Annual Extension Report, 1942,” 11.

By switching Home Dry Cleaning with the practical use of soap and water to clean garments, agents realized their clients desire to save money while at the same time contributing to the war effort by scrimping on expensive products. Moreover, home demonstration clubs, in acknowledging the loss of labor and scarcity of particular materials, made the cost and availability of clothing an important point in 1943 and 1944:

The economics aspects of clothing are of first concern, that is, the selection and care of fabrics and the use of substitutes and synthetics. The trend toward home sewing is accelerated, hence, help with clothing construction and renovation are often needed.⁶⁴

Because of this concern, demonstration clubs held projects on renovation of clothing and textiles in an effort to decrease family expenses. By reusing fabric material, homemakers not only saved money but could put the accumulated funds to another use, hopefully, as the government wanted, to buying war bonds and stamps and getting out of debt.

The concerns extension agents felt for their clientele reflected the rural background toward which extension work was specifically geared. Through programs, Tuller stressed:

It is our hope that rural women may feel they are contributing to the war effort by aiding the government in its program of inflation control, by conserving materials made scarce by the war, by maintaining a normal home even in the face of added responsibilities in the production of food, feed, and fiber; and in building morale for the rural family at a time when the country is grieved by the loss of loved ones and when many of the normal outlets for the relief of nerve-strain are no longer possible.⁶⁵

Extension agents were not only worried about the emotional balance of their clients; they also knew that rural women needed to feel that they were making a contribution to the

⁶⁴ Leonard, "Jefferson and Madison County Extension Report, 1943," 24.

⁶⁵ Tuller, "Home Management Annual Extension Report, 1942," 40.

war effort, even if they were not leaving the farm for wartime factories or military service.

From Beautification to Production: Victory Gardens

Prior to the war, the majority of the programs in home demonstration focusing on outdoor household projects usually centered on beautifying the home grounds. This changed dramatically during World War II. Projects eliminated many programs relating to beautification and instead utilized home grounds as an area for food production:

Over the years, we have been building up interest in the improvement of home grounds. Real progress has been made in several counties . . . With the coming of war, it has been necessary to divide most of the time and attention which might otherwise have gone into farmstead beautification into vegetable gardening and food production.⁶⁶

Although most of the produce cultivated from gardens reached the immediate family, any excess canned or stored vegetables and berries were given to the local community or sent to other regions of the country and world; places where American troops were located or where there was a significant decrease in goods. Smith reported, "At least 16 home demonstration agents report spending 279 days in this work with 361 leaders assisting."⁶⁷ Smith, however, neglected to mention that many victory garden productions were divided among 4-H groups, agricultural extension agents, and home demonstration clubs. World War II witnessed an increased devotion to gardening. "With the food situation growing daily more acute, many people who have always insisted that

⁶⁶ Smith, "Annual Home Extension Report, 1942," 43.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

gardening 'doesn't pay' must do something about it anyway."⁶⁸ Some homemakers may have felt disloyal to the nation if they used their soil for ornamentation and not for planting. While home demonstration agents tended previously to emphasize gardening as a creative outlet, they redirected their emphasis to the importance of productive gardening on the farmstead and how it directly related to the war effort.

In the counties of Montana's southwest region, there was considerable focus on the construction of Victory Gardens. "It was urged that these gardens be planned on the basis of supplying a year round food supply for the entire family."⁶⁹ If families could provide for their immediate needs, then they were decreasing the funds the U.S. government spent on rural Montana and placing more emphasis on winning the war overseas. In an effort to supply people with the newest, up-to-date information on planting Victory Gardens, Gallatin County aired a special radio broadcast over the Z Bar Net to the more populated areas of Montana. "This series emphasized preparation of seed beds, purchase of seed in the amounts to supply the entire family for garden produce on a twelve month basis."⁷⁰ Although the radio broadcasts were geared to the bigger towns, many families in sparsely populated areas were able to receive the transmission, thus using the extension agency to gain gardening information.

In Sweet Grass, the general goal of the county extension program was "A Garden on Every Farm." Like Gallatin County, Sweet Grass placed special emphasis on "home gardens as a means of providing family food needs."⁷¹ Extension agents and clients were

⁶⁸ Smith, "Annual Home Extension Report, 1942," 43.

⁶⁹ Woolley, "Gallatin County Annual Extension Report, 1943," 78.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Cook and Oefstos, "Sweet Grass Annual Extension Report, 1942," 8.

aware of the need to contribute to areas where there was a need for produce. Not only did families plant Victory Gardens but by “releasing both fresh commercial and canned vegetables for use elsewhere,” rural families alleviated the need for rationed products and, again, relieved the nation of providing food for every community.⁷² Families and their communities became more independent.

In 1943, Sweet Grass held 15 meetings where gardens were discussed with a total attendance of 295 people.⁷³ Sweet Grass divided the Victory Garden program into two parts: a campaign among farmers and one focused on town gardens. In the urban campaign, neighborhood leaders were instructed to canvass every house in the town of Big Timber. The campaigns in Sweet Grass for Victory Gardens reached 659 families.⁷⁴ In the case of Sweet Grass, demonstration leaders worked in conjunction with agricultural agents to implement these campaigns. Moreover, they utilized neighborhood leaders to ensure the completion of a successful program. In doing so, “the Victory Gardens provided all the fresh vegetables needed during the summer and a vast quantity of canned and stored vegetables for the winter.”⁷⁵

The local 4-H clubs and agricultural extension agents oversaw the execution of Victory Gardens in Park County. While some home demonstration leaders may have discussed the importance of Victory Gardens, they primarily, with their clients’ wishes, geared their work toward food preservation. In the case of Jefferson and Madison counties, like Park County, the community 4-H clubs led the Victory Gardens.

⁷² Cook and Oefstos, “Sweet Grass Annual Extension Report, 1942,” 8.

⁷³ H.M. Oefstos, “Sweet Grass Annual Extension Report, 1943,” Box 72, Accession 00021, Montana Extension Service Records, Montana State University Archives, Bozeman, Mont, 46.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

In addition to planting Victory gardens, enhancing the area around the farmhouse maintained wide appeal:

All agents are promoting gardens this year in order that we may have the food we need. While the major attention must and should be on vegetable gardening, we must not allow the interest in improved yards to go by default. The family that has invested time and energy in developing a home with attractive surroundings had something to protect and preserve, -it becomes their symbol of democracy. We cannot have too many of these.⁷⁶

Still, while beautification may have been the primary issue prior to the war, after Pearl Harbor "many families changed their plan in line with the war effort when spring came."⁷⁷

Going the Extra Mile: Miscellaneous Programs

In some cases, county home demonstration clubs created programs that did not entirely fit into the programs outlined by the state. Also, the Montana Home Extension Service created new programs to fit in with the nation's war programs. One series, Child Development and Parent Education, introduced a program titled, "Democracy and the American Home."⁷⁸ Part of the program had women and their families listening to radio news broadcasts that focused on current issues, specifically the war abroad. Out of the 1,026 different people who adopted this program, 672 listened to the radio. In addition to radio broadcasts, 365 people read newspapers dealing with current national and state problems. In Montana, 380 people learned the Pledge of Allegiance while 292

⁷⁶ Smith, "Annual Home Extension Report, 1942," 44.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 37.

memorized the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights. Interestingly, 298 people learned the correct use of the American flag, 219 secured birth certificates, and 85 registered to vote.⁷⁹ The numbers demonstrated increased activity in American thought and politics.

In reviewing the war situation for 1943, Francis Smith noticed that rural Montana was affected by the general problems associated with war. From labor shortages to travel restrictions, all shaped extension work in the state of Montana. As Smith noticed:

The manpower shortage has called women and children into agricultural and other jobs as never before. The rationing of tires and gasoline has had its effect, forcing a re-evaluation of transportation facilities on the part of rural people as well as extension workers.⁸⁰

Smith made the connection, like many others of her time, to the adverse consequences of war on the homemaker.

In the realm of family relations, sending sons and daughters off into the military service or industrial complexes not only impacted the family but the community as well, physically and emotionally. Young persons leaving the area placed an extra burden on agricultural labor. Although some young men were exempt from the military, farms found it increasingly difficult to employ seasonal workers. Chester Shore, author of *Montana in the Wars*, estimated farm labor in 1942 was 58% below normal.⁸¹ Because of this, many women were employed in farm and ranch labor. The extension's awareness

⁷⁹ Smith, "Annual Home Extension Report, 1942," 37. That is not to say that these were strictly the uses taken from the "Democracy and the American Home" program, however, these seemed to deal directly with American democracy while some of the other programs focused on getting the family to read and discuss together. Also, the figures only reflect the reports of 1026 people out of 1776 individuals and families who were reached for this program.

⁸⁰ Smith, "Annual Home Extension Report, 1943," 2.

⁸¹ Chester Shore, *Montana in the Wars* (Miles City, MT.: Star Printing Company, 1977), 106. <http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/census/> showed the number of employed male farm laborers at 15,070.

of this prompted many counties to create programs specifically designed for the new “working” homemaker.

Gallatin County was especially aware of this. In a letter to all Officers of the Rural Women’s Clubs, George Woolley, the Gallatin Agricultural Extension agent, broached the subject of organizing for the war effort. His letter raised, “the possibility of conducting a training school for girls and women so they may become more familiar and more proficient in the use of tractors and other farm machinery.”⁸² The Home Demonstration Council realized that with the prospective labor shortage in Montana, women would be spending more time in the field. The Council knew that “women and girls can be of great assistance in some types of field work.”⁸³ The agricultural sector in conjunction with home demonstration, made a determined effort to afford women the chance not only to learn how to handle a tractor, but to repair one if it broke down. The program, however, was limited to 24 women in the county, and only 21 signed up for the training sessions. Moreover, most of the women who signed up for the course were from Bozeman; it was reasonable to assume that women living on farms already knew how to work a tractor. Living in town, these women may have enrolled in the course to procure outside jobs. Out of Sweet Grass, Park, Gallatin, Jefferson and Madison counties, Gallatin was the only one that decided to acquaint its female clientele with the mechanical needs of the family farm. Gallatin County Home Demonstration Clubs, in conjunction with the local Owenhouse Hardware Company and the International Harvester Company, provided the means and place to hold the school. While not all slots

⁸² Woolley, “Gallatin County Annual Extension Report, 1942,” 24.

⁸³ Ibid.

were filled for the Tractorette Training School, Gallatin was the only county in Montana to make the effort. One county's attempt at alleviating the labor shortage through female self-reliance demonstrated that counties could, if they desired, create programs designed for the specific needs of their members.

Conclusion

For Sweet Grass, Park, Gallatin, Jefferson, and Madison counties, home demonstration programs reflected the need for rural homemakers to contribute to the war effort. By listening to the concerns and being aware of the needs of their clients, agents were willing to overhaul traditional projects. By giving their clients a choice in programs and allowing them to vote on projects, agents were giving women a voice.

Home extension wanted to influence every homemaker in the state. This approach returned to the idea of women's link to family and community building. Agents made a concerted effort to keep rural homemakers satisfied. If agents could reach and meet the needs of their clients, then, they could possibly stem the migration of families out of farming communities and into urban regions. Women and their families, with the home extension's influence, could stay on the land and still win the war on the home front. Agents needed to demonstrate that homemakers were contributing to the war effort by securing the safety and health of their family and immediate community. The message was: do not leave the farm, girls; you can make your contribution to the nation just as effectively if you stay home.

CHAPTER THREE:
THE TIES THAT BIND: MONTANA STATE COLLEGE HOME ECONOMICS
DEPARTMENT AND THE EXTENSION SERVICE

Today one of the most important fields in the world's struggle for democracy is home economics. Schools of home economics headed by the great organization known as food administration are teaching the women and men of the world every possible means of contributing to the world's food and clothing supply. This is as important a branch of the allied organization as is the artillery, or the infantry. No woman today is considered educated who does not know food values and nutrition.
--Sandra J. Anderson, "World War I and the Women of Montana State College"

During World War I, the Montana university system printed a booklet for women to "prepare themselves" in the reconstruction of American democracy.¹ Although geared to an earlier war, it proved crucial to the work homemakers performed during World War II. Home economists worked to increase the productivity and efficiency of rural homes in America, especially during wars. The pamphlet's assertion that home economics was "the most important field in the world's struggle for democracy" not only illustrated women's importance in the home but also demonstrated the significance of home economics. Democracy supposedly started in the home. The United States looked to homemakers as the binding force that kept the nation together. Men may have provided the political structures to new nations, but women supplied the morality and health they had learned in the home.

Home Economics and Extension Service have, from the beginning, attempted to institute a certain type of ideology consistent with domesticity for women. However,

¹ Robert Rydell, Jeffrey Safford, and Pierce Mullen, *In the People's Interest: A Centennial History of Montana State University* (Bozeman, Mont: Montana State University Foundation, 1992), 30.

some in the Home Economics movement had a more expansive vision of domesticity, as they hoped both to furnish women jobs outside the home and to prepare homemakers for reform activities in the wider society. The Home Economics movement embraced the new emphasis in an era of scientific management in business. They applied a similar approach to homemaking, both in studying its needs and suggesting changes that would make work more efficient. They wanted to turn the household into a well-functioning machine.

Rural states have traditionally been the leading representatives in home economics, especially western states with their many land-grant colleges. Montana has been no exception. At Montana State College (MSC) home economics teachers had traditionally found they could receive better funding and salaries if the discipline fell under the rubric of the Department of Agriculture. For Montana State College, it was practical for students in home economics to work as extension agents for the Department of Agriculture. Female students took their newly acquired skills and devoted their resources to the rural communities in Montana. They could first spend a few years working, and then work in their own households. For many, however, these jobs proved long lasting. Many women remained employees in the Extension Service well-after marriage. Some, like Harriette Cushman, even remained single for the rest of their lives, opting to contribute their time and energy to the state.

The Home Economics Department at MSC held strong ties to the Extension Service. Not only did the department provide the Extension Service with valuable employees, but home economics also created and implemented courses in home

demonstration. "The campus resident teaching program in home economics began in 1896," three years after Montana State College opened.² The "Extension Service state-wide educational programs began before 1900 with the Farmer's Institute."³ Because both services, at their very inceptions, were targeting the same women and instituting many of the same practices, it only seemed natural to work together. Working with one another, home demonstration and MSC's home economic department created ties that, to this day, have provided women services and occupations.

U.S. Home Economics: Managing the Home and a Career

By the early twentieth century, Catharine Beecher's concept of Victorian domesticity evolved into a significant movement for career opportunities for women. This development led to the formation of home economics in the United States. While Beecher's idea of domesticity focused on the middle-class housewife and her domestic servants, her ideology increasingly moved closer to the progressive reforms championed by Jane Addams and Hull House.⁴ Beecher's work examined middle and upper-class women's problem of hiring and training immigrant women as servants. Unintentionally, the focus on properly training immigrant women resulted in a new emphasis on sanitation, cleanliness, and efficiency. Unlike Catherine Beecher, however, Ellen

² Merrill G. Burlingame, "From Domestic Economy to Home Economics: A History of the Home Economics Department, Montana State University, 1893-1978," Typescript Collection 2245, Research and Personal Papers, Merrill G. Burlingame Special Collections, Montana State University, Bozeman, Mont, 50.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Catharine Beecher's guidelines gained popularity in the nineteenth century with her *Treatise on Domestic Economy* in 1842.

Richards, a reformist-progressive thinker and the founder of the American Home Economics Association, wanted the idea of domestic science to target not only immigrants, but also middle-class native women. Richards also saw home economics, as it was later termed, to be the means by which women's role in the home could lead to women's employment.

In 1907, Richards began the American home economics movement from a series of conferences in Lake Placid. What resulted was the "the creation of the American Home Economics Association (AHEA)."⁵ As a progressive reform movement, home economics became more than just another word for housekeeping. Its derivation from domestic science and household arts, insured that both, one traditionally implying a "way to move women trained in science into employment in academics and industry" and the other to increasing community awareness in public high schools rather than private ones, would be incorporated into a catch-all-phrase.⁶ Home economics, in Richard's eyes, tied the "notion of home as women's traditional sphere to the cachet of the new social sciences, it represented a compromise acceptable to the diverse factions that made up the early home economics movement."⁷ Ellen Richards believed that the movement would ultimately be tied to the land-grant colleges cropping up throughout the mid-west. However, she desired the movement to rank among the echelons of northeast, Ivy League schools, which she considered far superior to the schools in the west. While Richards

⁵ Sarah Stage and Virginia B. Vincenti, editors, *Rethinking Home Economics: Women and the History of a Profession* (Ithaca, NY.: Cornell University Press, 1997), 5.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid., 6.

strove for the recognition of home economics as a path for female career opportunities in the East, it ultimately gained acceptance elsewhere.

The Department of Agriculture “actively supported research in home economics.”⁸ It increasingly controlled the resources and jobs provided by the Hatch Act of 1887 and the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917.⁹ The majority of the funds for home economics came from the Smith-Hughes Act:

As a result, Midwestern, land-grant schools established Home Economics Departments intended to promote domestic roles for young women. Ironically, the departments they created provided career opportunities for college-educated women to be employed outside the home to gain a foothold in academia. The home economics faculties at the land-grant schools prepared students for more careers in teaching and institutional management than for housekeeping.¹⁰

Ellen Richards’ dream of a movement geared to supplying careers for women was ultimately accomplished with the help of the federal government.

There were controversies in the development of home economists as workers. While Richards “urged women to conceive of housekeeping in the broadest sense and to make careers of carrying the values of the home into the community at large,” other experts disparaged her efforts.¹¹ They envisioned the AHEA as the protector of homemakers everywhere, not as a professional organization:

Let such a woman come into the home and express her art through its decoration, its furnishings, and its color schemes; or instead of going into

⁸ Stage, *Rethinking Home Economics*, 9.

⁹ The Smith-Hughes Act provided funding for training in home economics, while the Hatch Act funded Experiment Station research.

¹⁰ Stage, *Rethinking Home Economics*, 8.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 29.

a narrow field of dietetics, let her come into her home and there plan balanced menus and study nutrition values for her own family.¹²

Re-instituting Victorian ideas, some members of AHEA focused on women's role as guardian and the home as a sanctuary. The house was to be a refuge in which women provided their families with the love, health, and care sorely needed in a growing industrial society.

However, supporters of Richards' goal of home economics altered the rhetoric of women's roles as preservers of the home and extended it to encompass society as a whole. Proponents of Richards took the idea of the home, "with its implicit challenge to the values of urban industrialism, to buttress female moral authority and to press for a greater role for women in social or municipal housekeeping."¹³ They perceived women, trained in home economics, as a redeeming feature of American society. They were to clean up messes left in the wake of industrialization. For this to happen, academic institutions needed to prepare women for their new societal role. Moreover, these newly trained women were also to take on the role as educators for homemakers who wished to stay at home and be the first and, last, line of defense in preserving her family.

Home economics professionals taught homemakers the art of keeping the household functioning like a smooth machine. In the name of efficiency, home economics graduates plied their trades to urban and rural areas, teaching homemakers across the nation how to expand their activities inside and outside of the home:

¹² Excerpt from Christine Frederick quoted in Sarah Stage's article, "Ellen Richards and the Significance of the Home Economics Movement" in *Rethinking Home Economics: Women and the History of a Profession*, edited by Sarah Stage and Virginia B. Vincenti (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 29.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 30.

As a significant link between science and society, home economics applied scientific principles to address concerns of importance to many Americans, whether by combating dirt and disease or by popularizing modern theories of child rearing.¹⁴

Homemaking was continually thought of as a profession or business, one that needed leaders to teach the science and efficiency that it took to succeed in the occupation.

While most graduates were destined for housewifery, the Agricultural Extension Service took the opportunity to hire newly trained home economists. Statewide Extension Services realized the potential in hiring home economists, and quickly supplied women jobs at the community, county, and state level. "The women faculty in home economics acquiesced to this state of affairs. Largely blocked from employment in traditional departments such as chemistry, economics, or sociology," they quickly recognized that the few avenues for career advancement would be in agriculture.¹⁵ Society may have deemed it appropriate for women to use their skills in their individual households, but many chose otherwise.

Montana's Home Economics Program

Like Harriette Cushman, Dr. Gladys Branegan was a not a native Montanan. She received her education in Wisconsin, Nebraska, and, ultimately, obtained her Master's degree in chemistry, nutrition, and vocational education at Columbia University. The combination of vocational education and nutrition proved indispensable to Montana State College when they hired her in 1920 as the Home Management Specialist in the

¹⁴ Stage, *Rethinking Home Economics*, 15.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 77.

Extension Service. The following year, the college asked her to become the head of the Home Economics Department.¹⁶ MSC's choice proved astute. Her work in extension prior to her move to home economics gave Branegan the incentive and the knowledge to implement crucial changes in the department. She realized that courses and research projects needed development in order to provide jobs for her students and to give guidance to rural homemakers.

Montana State College's founding as a land-grant institution insured that Montana's rural population would have access to educational possibilities. "The rapidly growing institution, the changes in home living of the American people, and the research oriented growth of the subject matter areas demanded constant revision."¹⁷ In fact, Branegan's constant revisioning of the department programs followed the guidelines implemented in 1893 by the Domestic Economy Department.¹⁸ The objectives were "to give young women a liberal education with a scientific basis to train them along the lines pertaining to the science, management, and care of the home."¹⁹ Moreover, the department's other goal, "to give training to those who wish to become teachers of Home Economics," provided the Extension Service an opportunity to hire native Montanans who were willing to bring their clients up-to-date on the newest technology in home efficiency.²⁰ The liberal and scientific background of the female student body was not necessarily geared to the management of their individual households. With the added

¹⁶ Burlingame, "From Domestic Economy to Home Economics," 32.

¹⁷ Ibid., 37.

¹⁸ The Domestic Economy Department eventually changed its name to Home Economics in accordance the AHEA and the nations continuing association with the title.

¹⁹ Burlingame, "From Domestic Economy to Home Economics," 37.

²⁰ Ibid.

background in education, the students could demonstrate their learning to extension clientele. It was no surprise that MSC's first graduate degree "was granted to Elizabeth Cooley, daughter of the Director of the Extension Service."²¹

Branegan's efforts to increase the Home Economics Department's wider acceptance of nation-wide scholarship appealed to the university administration. She pursued the inclusion of Montana State College women in the world of academia which, ironically, had been Ellen Richards' goal. With funding from the Hatch Act, Branegan's attempts led to a greater emphasis on graduate work. This led graduates to utilize the resources of the Extension Service, not only for funds but also laboratory equipment, clientele response, and annual records. Students, now, did not have to apply for graduate work and scholarships out-of-state. The resources were available at home. The school, however, encouraged its faculty to obtain advanced degrees outside of MSC. While many of these women found positions at other institutions, others returned to work for MSC and the state government.²²

The location of the Home Economics Department added to the increased dependence on the Extension Service. "When the Agricultural Building was completed in 1908 [. . .] Home Economics, including staff from Home Economics Extension, was given an entire floor."²³ The president of MSC, James Hamilton, was known to remark that the school was leading the other institutions in the northwest for instructing "sewing, cooking, sanitation, and all the branches which train well balanced and competent

²¹ Burlingame, "From Domestic Economy to Home Economics," 38.

²² Ibid., 40.

²³ Ibid.

homemakers.”²⁴ However, the close relationship maintained between Extension Service and home economics faced a hurdle when increased student enrollment and the demand for new courses required a new building for the Home Economics Department. With the entire statewide university system facing high enrollment after World War I, a “five million dollar bond issue for buildings was approved by popular vote in November 1920.”²⁵ The university presented the Home Economics Department with a new building, a practical structure named Herrick Hall.²⁶

The university feared problems might arise with the separation of extension and home economics. “However, Miss Branegan’s early work in the Montana Extension Service, and her friendship with Blanche Lee (head of the Home Extension Service at this time) helped maintain the close relationships between these two aspects of the home economics program.”²⁷

A Partnership from the Beginning: Extension Service and Home Economics

Montana State University and the Montana Extension Service have always had a partnership disseminating information to rural homemakers. As a “cooperative” idea, the Extension Service sought to bind colleges and national, state, and local governments to aid farmers. A major division of the college was the Agricultural Experiment Station, established by the Hatch Act of 1887. Its purpose was to receive questions from local

²⁴ Burlingame, “From Domestic Economy to Home Economics,” 40.

²⁵ Ibid., 41.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid., 42. Blanche Lee was head of the Home Extension Service during the move by the Home Economics Department into Herrick Hall.

farmers and ranchers, attempt to answer them, and then record that specific information. Before the Smith-Lever Act of 1914, questions and concerns prompted by farmers' wives were ignored. Congressman Lever remarked on this in his speech to Congress in 1914:

Our efforts, heretofore, have been given in aid of the farm man, his horses, cattle, and hogs, but his wife and daughters have been neglected almost to the point of criminality. This Bill provides the authority and the funds for inaugurating a system of teaching the farm wife and farm girl the elementary principles of homemaking and home management and your committee believes there is no more important work in the country than this.²⁸

Clubs throughout America catered to the needs of the homemakers. In fact, there were a variety of associations created for the sole purpose of helping the housewife, most of them local. However, no nationwide system of assistance and information existed. There were abundant organizations in rural America such, as the WCTU, the National Federation of Women's Clubs (NFWC), United Daughters of the Confederacy, National Farm and Garden Association, and the National Congress of Farm Women. However, the federal government, especially the USDA, felt that these organizations did not thoroughly instruct women in domestic economy or improving rural life. For this purpose, the federal government created the home Extension Service:

The American Farm Bureau and other farm groups hired female agents in home extension. This expanded employment was solidified with the passage of the Smith-Lever Act, an important piece of legislation directed at promoting scientific farming and coordination between the USDA and agricultural colleges.²⁹

Expecting to organize home demonstration clubs across the state, college representatives and county extension agents worked side-by-side to provide home

²⁸ Quote by Congressman Lever, reprinted in Charline Warren's, *An Official History of National Extension Homemakers Council, INC.*, 5.

²⁹ Holt, *Linoleum Better Babies and the Modern Farm Woman*, 67.

economics sessions. In 1924, Blanche Lee, close friend to Gladys Branegan and State Leader of Home Extension work, took on the task of organizing Montana home demonstration clubs under one agency. "She had been impatient with the many loosely organized women's groups, each with its own pattern."³⁰ Lee, as with other nation-wide agents, "worked out a standard form for organization," one that would include all home demonstration clubs in Montana.³¹ By working toward the goal "of mobilizing rural women and introducing domestic economy, experts hoped to fulfill the dream of a fully, organized, homogenous rural society."³² The desire for a more efficient household, while aiming to decrease the amount of work homemakers did, also sought to erase the misperception that rural women lagged behind their urban counterparts. The department of Home Economics created classes designed to minimize steps in food preparation and to find faster, easier ways to clean the house.

The goal of many land grant colleges was to create authoritative voices for modernization, women who were properly trained in home economics and followed a curriculum that was duplicated from state to state. For this reason, "the agent was the expert. Club discussion centered around what she had to say, not on the knowledge that came from folklore, ethnic customs, or everyday practice."³³ The elimination of old practices for sterile new techniques had the added effort of encouraging the rural homemaker to conform to the rest of society. She no longer lagged behind her urban sister but competed effectively with her in the kitchen. Success was predicated on the

³⁰ Burlingame, "From Domestic Economy to Home Economics," 63.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Holt, *Linoleum Better Babies and the Modern Farm Woman*, 69.

³³ Ibid.

implicit notion of women's ties to the community. If every woman's household were a smooth running machine, then the community, as a whole, would be well maintained.

Home Economics During the War:

Home Economics and Extension steadily expanded in the twentieth century. New courses implemented during World War I, such as Food Preservation, provided a needed connection between Extension and Home Economics. In addition, the Purnell Act of 1925 allocated the funds for home economics research. "This research was associated with the Agricultural Experiment Station's on-going programs established by the Hatch Act of 1887."³⁴ Herrick Hall with its laboratories and better facilities enabled further teacher training and research that benefited the Extension Service. Moreover, during World War II, growing staff and faculty and demands from the Extension Service required the Home Economics Department to add new courses.

One of these programs turned out to be Furniture Renovation, a program the home management branch of the Extension Service employed to decrease spending on new furnishings in homes during World War II. The department built upon the fundamentals in providing training "in the arts and sciences associated with the home, the family, and the community" during the war.³⁵ This training for the welfare of home and family, as discussed in the previous chapter, prepared extension agents to assist homemakers during

³⁴ Burlingame, "From Domestic Economy to Home Economics," 43.

³⁵ *Montana State College: Divisions of Agriculture, Engineering, Household and Industrial Arts, and Science, MSC Catalogue from 1944-1945* (Bozeman, Mont.: Renne Library, Montana State University), 72.

the war. While new courses were not implemented at this time, the department redirected its courses to the problems of living during the conflict. Clothing 209 previously focused on consumer buying problems. During the war, the course may have added sections on re-using old fabrics instead of buying new material. Foods 203-205, could also have examined the nutritional content of non-rationed foods and how to prepare them in pleasing, family meals.³⁶

Dr. Jessie Richardson, director of research in the Home Economics Department beginning in 1925, "developed a series of sociological studies on the quality of living in rural Montana."³⁷ Her social scientific approach in analyzing problems of homemaking supplied the Extension Service with important information on its clientele.³⁸ The research studies done under Dr. Richardson "provided the home agents with the information they needed concerning food value of vegetables and their proper care and preparation, together with the value of meats and milk, and their best care and use."³⁹ Home Economics research and the Extension Service's use of the findings proved invaluable during World War II, especially with the concerns of butter and meat rationing:

During the war period, 1941-1945, the staff gave special attention to the food restrictions, and provided information to extension agents on such subjects as sugar substitutes, breads, and vegetable and fruit preservation, especially drying, all tested for Montana conditions.⁴⁰

³⁶ Montana State College: Divisions of Agriculture, Engineering, Household and Industrial Arts, and Science, *MSC Catalogues* from 1939-1945 (Bozeman, Mont.: Renne Library, Montana State University).

³⁷ Burlingame, "From Domestic Economy to Home Economics," 44.

³⁸ Look at Chapter One for various circulars and bulletins resulting in her research.

³⁹ Burlingame, "From Domestic Economy to Home Economics," 44.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 45.

In June 1945, for example, Jessie Richardson wrote a circular for the home Extension Service. "Sugar Substitutes and Their Uses in Canning and Baking" tackled the issue of food rationing. She wrote, "with the need for increased food preservation, and the present restrictions on sugar, many questions are being asked about canning and baking."⁴¹ Utilizing the work from her research in the Home Economics Department, and disseminating the study through the Extension Service, the author prepared instructions on how to use corn syrup, honey, molasses, and sorghum in various recipes from raspberry and rhubarb jams to Applesauce Cake and Quick Chocolate Cake.⁴² In addition, Richardson and her associate, Helen L. Mayfield, submitted a bulletin on preserving vegetables in wartime.⁴³

Gladys Branegan remarked that a curriculum based on teacher education, and home projects "seemed adequate for county extension agents."⁴⁴ Having established a curriculum meeting the needs of the students, Branegan left Montana in 1945 to fill a position at Ohio State University (OSU), another land-grant institution. OSU asked her to promote graduate and research programs, a goal she felt she had already attained at Montana State College. While offered other lucrative positions in renowned colleges, the ex-President of the American Home Economics Association refused. Branegan was convinced "that the land grant college offered the best opportunities for home economics development."⁴⁵

⁴¹ Jessie E. Richardson and Helen L. Mayfield, "Sugar Substitutes and Their Uses in Canning and Baking," (Bozeman, Mont: *Agricultural Experiment Station, Circular 183*, June 1945), 1.

⁴² *Ibid.*, Table of Contents.

⁴³ Discussed in the First Chapter.

⁴⁴ Burlingame, "From Domestic Economy to Home Economics," 56.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 57.

Conclusion

The ties between Montana State College's Home Economics Department and the state Extension Service provided multiple levels of aid to women in Montana. The Home Economics Department afforded women an education based on scientific home management and household efficiency. They were able to institute an ideology consistent with domesticity. In addition, their education presented some women with a chance to find employment outside of the household. They became teachers in Home Economics, worked as researchers, and increasingly obtained jobs as county and local demonstration agents in Montana. By providing employment opportunities for women, Home Economics also expanded domesticity to incorporate the wider community.

The Home Economics Department created courses designed to support the Extension Service's goal in reaching every Montana homemaker. They wanted their clientele to be up-to-date in providing efficient, technological procedures in the management of their households, utilizing the resources available from Montana State College. During World War II, new courses did not necessarily target women's role in the conflict. Courses in the Home Economics Department, however, used the traditional programs but modified them to address the war's impact on the family and home.

Research into food preservation and clothing renovation proved valuable tools in the promotion of innovations for the home. MSC, likewise, utilized the funds and resources provided by the Extension Service. It used annual reports and surveys done by the Extension Service to assess the needs of women. Research during the war years

focused on the preservation of garden products for wartime use or developing recipes using sugar substitutes. Importantly, the research culminated in bulletins and circulars printed by the Extension Service for their clients. In both cases, each institution utilized the other to promote the welfare of women in Montana.

CHAPTER FOUR:
SERVING AMERICA'S HOUSEWIVES: MAGAZINE'S DEPICTION OF
THE NATION'S HOMEMAKER

Although refresher courses, conferences, and meetings are perhaps the most important and direct means of providing professional employment, reading and study of current publications are also very important. The state staff subscribes to a variety of periodicals and publications and purchases occasional books that are used by both specialist and agent to provide up-to-date authoritative information in connection with the various interests of home making education.

--Francis Smith, "Annual Home Extension Report, 1943."

Among the publications the staff subscribed to in the 1943, were *Ladies Home Journal* and *Good Housekeeping*. The magazines Smith and other home demonstration agents in Montana used to provide "authoritative" up-to-date information were read by many American women interested in issues of home, marriage, family, and relationships. While it is uncertain how many women in Montana subscribed to various journals, the influence of magazines cannot be taken lightly. In an era before television and when much of Montana relied on the radio broadcasts and journals, magazines were essential in transmitting ideas. For example, the War Advertising Council turned the magazine industry into the "largest single purveyor of domestic propaganda for the war effort."¹ The Council fostered "the inclusion of advertising space of exhortations to buy war bonds, conserve food, and donate blood."² The magazine industry reached a large range of people throughout the United States, since individual subscribers, library patrons, and

¹ Nancy A. Walker, *Shaping Our Mothers' World: American Women's Magazines* (Jackson, Miss: University of Mississippi, 2000), 67.

² *Ibid.*

people who bought copies at the newsstand read their products. Any information written in journals was sure to be noticed by women everywhere.

The messages implemented by magazines and the Extension Service was similar. The Montana Extension Service looked to provide women with a sense of duty. Montana women's role as housewives was stressed. They could accomplish a successful end to the war by protecting the family. Women now participated in a national movement to win the war against the Axis powers. Magazine discourse encouraged housewives to help in the war effort as well. Not necessarily to seek employment outside of the home, but to volunteer for the Red Cross, participate in food drives, and, like the Extension Service, to secure the safety of their individual families.

In participating in a national campaign, women looked to experts to instruct them. The Extension Service provided instruction in the way of home demonstration agents. They showed women how to preserve vegetables and fruits correctly or how to renovate furniture with used fabrics. Magazines with their articles and advertisements, glorified her role as homemaker. Women needed to stay at home to watch over the moral fiber of the nation's youths. As Nancy Walker stated in *Shaping Our Mothers' World: American Women's Magazines*, "Women were presented as participating in a national cause yet firmly placed within the home: supporting federal rationing policies in what they fed their families, trimming the household budget to buy bonds."³

Two popular magazines, *Ladies Home Journal* and *Good Housekeeping*, targeted their subscriptions to the homemaker and the single woman. Initially, the magazines tried to include topics concerning the war. However, they soon decided that women also

³ Walker, *Shaping Our Mothers' World*, 67.

needed a sense of stability. Thus, *Good Housekeeping* and *Ladies Home Journal* kept many of the same services they had before the war. In the February 1942 issue, the magazine told its readers that “as a homemaker, you can make a definite contribution by planning carefully, budgeting carefully, buying carefully.”⁴ To take part in the national defense, homemakers should be careful with consumer buying. In the same issue, the magazine informed readers that since December 8, *Good Housekeeping* re-organized its publications “in order to carry out the peculiar responsibilities which naturally fall to it.”⁵ The magazine, however, said they would not totally disregard previous formats. In fact, the magazine “will try to remember that entertainment and instruction and homely advice must continue as long as families are families.”⁶

Montana Woman had a more narrowly defined audience. The magazine was designed for the state’s General Federation of Woman’s Clubs (GFWC). Unlike popularly syndicated journals that strove to maintain a balance between wartime and normalcy, *Montana Woman* looked to participate fully in the war effort. Through a long tradition of volunteer service since 1890, the General Federation of Woman’s Clubs focused on helping others in times of peace and crises.⁷ The United States’ entry into World War II was a familiar playing ground for the GFWC. They reorganized their volunteer efforts to focus wholeheartedly on the war struggle. The magazine urged women to buy war bonds and stamps, to volunteer for the Red Cross, and to plan nourishing meals for their families on the home front. They tended not to include

⁴ *Good Housekeeping*, February 1942, 10.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ <http://www.gfwc.org>

romantic stories with happy endings; their goal was to provide service for the duration of the war.

Like home demonstrations and journal articles, advertisements in magazines appealed to nationalism as well as to vanity. The advertisements, however, still pushed specific products. For example, the *Ladies Home Journal* exhorted the use of Woodbury Facial Soap while *Montana Woman* encouraged subscribers not to buy luxury goods but products used daily, such as Sapphire Flour.⁸ Home demonstration agents, on the other hand, were not required to promote specific products. While companies advertised specific products, demonstrations worked on larger issues of nutrition and health while using goods readily available to clientele.

Montana Woman: A Magazine for the Housewife

Writing a month before America's entry into World War II, Mrs. J.E. Young, Fairfield District Chairman of Montana's Federation of Club Women, in her report, American Home Department, outlined the responsibilities of homemakers across the United States:

We as keepers of the home and families must realize the responsibilities which are many and indeed grave. We are responsible for the physical, mental, and moral, and spiritual fitness of the generation. In the home we are building defenses which are upholding this America or wrecking its very foundation.⁹

⁸ *Ladies Home Journal*, March 1942, 53.

⁹ J.E. Young, American Home Department, *Montana Woman: Official Organ of Montana Federation of Women's Clubs*, November 1941, 7.

By outlining the role of women in America, and especially in Montana, Young illustrated the role *Montana Woman* would play during World War II. The magazine dedicated its pages to the latest news and developments of homemaking concerns implemented or discussed at the national, state, and local levels for club members. Defining goals similar to those of the Extension Service, Montana clubwomen focused on nutrition, bond and stamp buying, and consumer responsibilities.

Young also addressed the question of homemaker as worker: "Did it ever occur to you that the largest single group of workers in this, our U.S.A., is the housewife?"¹⁰ The article further illustrated homemakers' mission by enumerating their responsibilities. "They are responsible for the making of attractive home –raising better fed and clothed children and managing the highest standard of mass home living that the world has ever known."¹¹ She verified women's occupational abilities but only in the home. The role may not have been glamorous but it was important. With the possibility of war looming over the United States, the homemaker's duty was already outlined.

Women could contribute to winning the war as keepers of the home. With this in mind, mothers and wives should, as Young urged, take nutrition "out of the laboratories and put it on the family table three times a day if we are to make a lasting contribution to our nation's strength."¹² Women could also acquaint themselves with Red Cross training in the event that their families needed immediate medical attention.

A month after the United States entered the war, Maude Sullivan Lynch, Director of Volunteer Participation Work for Montana wrote in the *Montana Woman* on Civilian

¹⁰ Young, American Home Department, *Montana Woman*, November 1941, 7.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

Defense. She took Young's earlier theme to the national level by stating, "Homes make or break individuals –therefore nations. It is for the women to take care of the health, morale, and spiritual welfare of our people."¹³ The *Montana Woman* and its writers catered to this belief in women's duty to the home. Many of their articles focused on subjects related to the home and family. For instance, in October 1942, the magazine published an article called "Fat Facts," an instruction on "how to save your kitchen grease and fats."¹⁴ Fats needing saving consisted of waste drippings from ham, lamb, poultry, and beef as well as deep-frying fats. The article further instructed the homemaker on how to save and store the fat.¹⁵ By conserving fat from foodstuffs, the housewife was doing her part in the war effort. An article titled, "Child Welfare in Wartime," claimed that wars enhanced the value of children. It was imperative that they receive the proper nutrition. The article also stated, "War was a good time to teach children the satisfaction of work by participating in fat and scrap metal drives."¹⁶ By focusing articles on the family and community, *Montana Woman* shaped women's roles, at least for club members, during the war.

The magazine's subscribers were presented with a great deal of information concerning their role in World War II. The security of the family, as a number one priority, was a primary theme throughout the publications. In addition to buying war bonds and stamps, articles focused on nutrition for the family, Americanization, Victory Gardens, and consumer rationing. In an address to club members, Mrs. J.H. Morrow,

¹³ Maude Sullivan Lynch, Civilian Defense, *Montana Woman*, January 1942, 3.

¹⁴ "Fat Facts," *Montana Woman*, January 1942, 6.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Mrs. Dan Fundus, "Child Welfare in Wartime," *Montana Woman*, November 1942, 11.

state chairman, gave a Department of National Defense report. In the report, she touched upon two concerns of which homemakers should be aware. She stated that the "greatest stress of this department has been placed on bonds and stamps, and that it was successful."¹⁷ Morrow also reminded club members to cooperate with FBI agents. They should report any suspicious activities to the bureau.

There was a great deal of interest in nutrition among clubwomen, "with a large number of classes enrolled, and a close cooperation with the state and county home demonstration agents."¹⁸ For example, the *Montana Woman* announced:

A State Nutrition Council through Dr. Gladys Branegan, Dean of Household Arts, Montana State College, with County Nutrition Councils in nearly all counties and other economic agencies and teachers afford opportunity for cooperation by the clubs.¹⁹

This close collaboration between institutions ensured that homemakers, especially the federation club members, would make nutrition a priority during the war.

In "All Out for Victory," Morrow also discussed the various ways to make meals nutritious, especially when using products grown at home. "And with more rationing soon, the thorough knowledge of nutrition is necessary in home."²⁰ She highlighted the use of products grown from Victory Gardens and their preservation. She reminded her readers, "You must build strong healthy bodies to withstand the struggle ahead of us due to the coming sacrifices."²¹ Morrow, again, reminded her subscribers of the importance of buying bonds and stamps. "The purchase of bonds and stamps by every club and

¹⁷ J.H. Morrow, Department of National Defense, *Montana Woman*, May 1942, 20.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 21.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ J.H. Morrow, "All Out for Victory," *Montana Woman*, October 1942, 3.

²¹ *Ibid.*

every individual member, should be a major objective in every single club."²² In the area of Victory Gardens, Mrs. W.I. Higgins, Montana Federation Women's Club Chairman of Gardens, told readers "the office of War Information is planning an intensive spring campaign to urge every potential gardener to grow vegetables."²³ She argued that home gardens were a vital source of nutrients for the nation.

Montana Woman dealt not only with state issues but also with national concerns. This magazine, along with other nation-wide, syndicated publications, "viewed readers as active participants in the national struggle and presented the war itself as having entered the home."²⁴ By defending the home, women were preserving American ideals and way of life. Serving non-rationed goods, buying war bonds, and growing victory gardens all contributed to defending the home. The magazine encouraged volunteer work, such as Red Cross training, and the roles of workingwomen, but the majority of the issues focused on the home.

Mrs. J.H. Morrow, Chairman of Assisting Directors in the War Service Department, in addition to her role as State Chairman, reminded Club Presidents and the War Chairman that, "We Club women cannot go to the front and fight, but we may participate in the battle at home through sacrifice, cooperation, and giving."²⁵ In order to preserve freedom, "women," Morrow urged, "must give a new meaning to the home, new impetus to morale and be concerned with education."²⁶ First on Morrow's list was the selling and purchasing of war bonds and stamps, a concern repeated throughout articles

²² J.H. Morrow, "All Out for Victory," *Montana Woman*, October 1942, 3.

²³ W.I. Higgins, Victory Gardens, *Montana Woman*, April 1943, 4.

²⁴ Walker, *Shaping Our Mothers' World: American Women's Magazines*, xiii.

²⁵ J.H. Morrow, War Service Department, *Montana Woman*, January 1943, 15.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

and advertisements in the magazine. The call for bond buying from *Montana Woman* and other subscriptions rallied women in Montana. Chester K. Shore in *Montana in the Wars*, stated, "Montana had the record of oversubscribing first in eight World War II Savings Bond drives."²⁷ The March 1942 cover announced, "Women cannot wear a uniform and wield a gun, but they can buy a bond and get their friends to buy them. This is a part made for them to play."²⁸ The cover assigned women a role as purchasers of bonds but they appealed to women's guilt by stating, "What have you done toward the defense of America?"²⁹ In addition, the cover also addressed the subject of minimizing production of non-essential items. "The Government urges us to put our money in Defense Saving Bonds, now, and wait to replace such things as cars, washing machines, radios and vacuum cleaners until the need for defense production eases up."³⁰

The cover of the November 1942 issue made clear the connection between patriotism and bond buying by depicting an illustration of the Statue of Liberty with the United States flag as the backdrop. The cover text asserted, "War Bond Will Help Keep It Flying," appealing to women's sense of duty and patriotism. Whether buying or selling bonds, supporting the troops appeared to be a major concern for the General Federation of Club Women. In another ad, a group of Montana Federation officer pleaded for their own club members to "avenge Montana's glorious Helena" by replacing her "with your purchase of war bonds."³¹ Another advertisement placed by the Montana Federation

²⁷ Chester Shore, *Montana in the Wars*, 107.

²⁸ Cover of *Montana Woman*, March 1942.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Montana Woman*, September 1943, 20.

officers said, "They don't quit those fighting men of ours."³² So why should the club members? "We've got to invest those savings again and again in war bonds to help our fighting men through victory."³³

Emphasis on bond purchases was not exclusive to club officers; companies followed suit with a host of advertisements. The United States Treasury Department and War Advertising Council included an advertisement in the April 1944 issue. They stressed the importance of buying war bonds, not solely to show patriotism but for the future well being of America's children. The question, "Will your child be a victim of this war—after its over?"³⁴ To insure that America's children would not be victimized by the war, the government urged women to guarantee their security with a war bond.

Other advertisements in the *Montana Woman* appealed to women's patriotic duties. The River Press in Fort Benton, Montana ran an announcement for patriotic stationery. Women could buy sheets of paper with the American Flag printed on them. Safeway, a grocery chain, under a banner, "Our Job Is To Keep 'Em Fit for The Duration," announced, "From week to week we shall have to meet changes in our routine of living. Some food items will not be as plentiful as before. Some will be rationed."³⁵ If any problems in consumer purchasing arose, Safeway would be there for the readers. Homemakers could depend on Safeway. Other companies used the magazine to forewarn women of the unavailability of certain goods. In the November and January 1943 issues, Montana Power Company notified women that there would be no more vacuum cleaners

³² *Montana Woman*, January 1944, 10

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ *Montana Woman*, April 1944, 20.

³⁵ *Montana Woman*, November 1942, 10.

or irons “after present dealer stocks are depleted.”³⁶ The company stressed the importance of “Fix ‘em up . . . Make them do” with regard to appliances.³⁷ For further effect, the Montana Power Company illustrated a homemaker either ironing shirts or vacuuming with a “V” emblazoned in the background. Other companies, such as Sapphire Flour, provided homemakers with monthly recipes using non-rationed goods along with their product. This creative use of commercialism targeted women’s desire to serve varied meals while doing their part in rationing. Such meals included Baked Tomatoes and Beef Up-Side Down Pie.³⁸

The Montana General Federation of Woman’s Clubs took an active position during World War II by gearing *Montana Woman* to issues concerning the housewife. Importantly, the magazine and its various writers acted as intermediaries for the national government and women in the clubs. The magazine sought to illustrate homemakers’ role in the war effort by writing articles outlining their duties each month. Companies catered to club members by employing patriotic themes to urge them to acquire their goods and services. Some companies, like Safeway and Montana Power Company, used the magazine to keep customers informed of possibly rationed products and the unavailability of others. Every aspect of *Montana Woman* targeted a specific audience: Montana club members working in the home.

³⁶ *Montana Woman*, November and January of 1942.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ *Montana Woman*, November 1943, 11 and January 1944, 9.

Targeting Housewives and Single Women: National Magazines

In contrast to *Montana Woman*, which had a specific audience and agenda, nationally syndicated journals attracted a wider demographic readership and did not exclusively gear their publications to the war effort. However, *Ladies Home Journal* and *Good Housekeeping*, like *Montana Woman*, sought out the homemakers as its readers of choice. They wrote stories and reports on topics they thought would interest the housewife.

In "I Married My Soldier Anyway," an article submitted to the editors by a young bride of a new draftee, the bride told women why she married her boyfriend before he left for war. "Being Danny's wife would make me a stronger person. I felt sure my love was deep enough to survive the upsets of the future. So why shouldn't we be together in the little time we had?"³⁹ The young bride countered objections to a rushed marriage and stated that, for her, marriage was the only alternative.

In an article by Jo Anne Healey, "Nice Girls Go on Military Weekends," Healey discussed whether it was a good idea for single women to attend a military weekend at army bases. Was it dangerous? The author asserted no, "Everyone knows that the finest young men are in America."⁴⁰ The writer, after countering objections about going to military camps, outlined the way women should behave at the functions and how ultimately to meet a nice young man. Unlike the *Montana Woman*, which discussed

³⁹ "I Married My Soldier Anyway," *Good Housekeeping*, June 1942, 33.

⁴⁰ Jo Anne Healey, "Nice Girls Go On Military Weekends," *Good Housekeeping*, June 1942, 4

topics deemed appropriate for the homemaker and her family, these magazines catered to the romantic ideals of young single and married women.

However, *Good Housekeeping* did present some articles in each issue concerning the patriotic activities of both men and women. The February 1942 queried, "What Do They Defend?" and discussed the reasons why American soldiers were fighting. The men were not defending anything glamorous or spectacular but rather a "peaceful return to familiar street corners," the "pleasant memories of his boyhood," and "the skies wide and roaming."⁴¹ *Good Housekeeping* wanted its readers to understand that America's men were fighting for things worthwhile, so they, too, should protect those cherished dreams.

Before and during the war, the *Ladies Home Journal* included a segment each month on "How America Lives." The series centered its series on America's individuality but the commonalities all Americans had in their families. During the war, the series turned to featuring Armed Forces families. The magazines crossed lines of rank and forces to show, in detail, the lifestyle of a military family. "How America Lives" series in March 1942 began with "Meet Draftee Reuben Hinson of Fort Riley, Kansas." A single man living in a training camp, Draftee Hinson illustrated how enlisted men prepared for the war. Hinson, for instance, began his day in the early morning with "clumps of boys in dungarees and mushroomed-shaped hats" practicing for war.⁴² Through the article, women were given a glimpse, aside from personal letters, of how their husbands and sons were training for the fight overseas.

⁴¹ Hazel Parker, "What Do They Defend," *Good Housekeeping*, February 1942, 4.

⁴² "How America Lives: Meet Draftee Rueben Hinson of Fort Riley, Kansas," *Ladies Home Journal*, March 1942, 91.

By contrast, "Meet Sergeant and Mrs. Daniel Boone" depicted a husband and wife team. The husband trained draftees for deployment at Fort Riley, Kansas while his wife, a hairdresser, catered to women living at the camp. Both had specific duties on camp and readers were given a glimpse of life for a military housewife.⁴³

Moving up the ranks, the series looked at Coxswain and Mrs. Bob Houk, married weeks before the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Houk was already in the Atlantic on a Britain-bound freighter before America's entry into the war. This couple, compared to the others in the series, emotionally depicted the separation felt by many couples during the war, one somewhere overseas and the other at home.⁴⁴

The last of the series illustrated the life of Major General and Mrs. Holland M. Smith. As the Major Commanding General of the Atlantic Fleet Amphibious Force, Major General Holland and his wife epitomized the ambitious achievement of a military family. He represented the military capabilities of the United States while she symbolized the faithful homemaker who followed her husband through thirty-six years of military service.⁴⁵ By illustrating the lives of military men and the women who stood by them in times of conflict, *Ladies Home Journal* gave readers not only a sense of patriotism but several female role models who embodied the traits desirable during the war. Some of the wives, like Mrs. Bob Houk and Mrs. Daniel Boone worked outside the home, while Mrs. Holland M. Smith made her home a safe harbor waiting for her husband to return.

⁴³ "How America Lives: Meet Sergeant and Mrs. Daniel Boone," *Ladies Home Journal*, March 1942, 99.

⁴⁴ "How America Lives: Meet Coxswain and Mrs. Bob Houk," *Ladies Home Journal*, March 1942, 107.

⁴⁵ "How American Lives: Meet Major General and Mrs. Holland M. Smith," *Ladies Home Journal*, March 1942, 103.

“What is Your Dream Girl Like?” reported the results of a questionnaire that went out to soldiers, sailors, and marines. Of the military men polled, 28% preferred the “Domestic type, fond of cooking and children.”⁴⁶ Overwhelmingly, the men desired women to be “devoted to home and children.”⁴⁷ They also preferred “not to have their wives work after marriage unless an emergency made it desirable.”⁴⁸ The article in *Ladies Home Journal* echoed *Montana Woman* by reinforcing the role of housewife through America’s fighting men’s fantasies. They wanted their girls to be domestic.

During World War II, *Ladies Home Journal* included an advice column in their monthly issues. “If You Ask Me” was a highly popular feature that asked the opinion of First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, “one of the most interesting, well-informed and unusual woman of our times.”⁴⁹ She agreed to respond to questions mailed to her and post them in the magazine. Some of the questions were personal, but many questions were directed with issues concerning the war environment. “Do you think it right to draft boys and draft money”?, “would you please tell me if any of your sons in the service is in actual danger”?, or “what do you think freedom from want means”?⁵⁰ Looking to the First Lady as an authoritative voice on military concerns, demonstrated women’s concern for the war and their acceptance of a woman’s expertise.

Good Housekeeping presented, “Rationing Has Brought a New Cookery,” which instructed homemakers how to create dishes that please, how to give cereals a new role in

⁴⁶ Louise Paine Benjamin, “What is Your Dream Girl Like?” *Ladies Home Journal*, April 1942, 114.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Eleanor Roosevelt, “If You Ask Me,” *Ladies Home Journal*, November 1942, 33.

⁵⁰ Eleanor Roosevelt, “If You Ask Me,” *Ladies Home Journal*, March 1942, 29 and June 1943, 30.

the diet, how to save shortening wisely, and how to serve vegetables with variety.⁵¹ Just as in *Montana Woman* and extension programs, *Good Housekeeping* illustrated a way to salvage fats because the fats were “urgently needed to make the glycerin used in explosives and other munitions of war.”⁵² Homemakers needed to do their part in achieving victory and saving waste fat was a vital component.

Advertisements in *Good Housekeeping* and *Ladies Home Journal* used patriotism as a primary theme for selling products. Unlike *Montana Woman*, however, these magazines were more individualized. They primarily targeted the reader’s wants and needs, not attention to her family’s needs. Ads also employed a working theme. Kotex Sanitary Napkins ran a series of advertisements that depicted the woman working at various tasks intended to contribute to the war. One of its ads derided women who stayed at home because of their menstrual cycle. One showed a girl reading a letter from her brother. The ad ridiculed little sister for staying at home when her brother was fighting for freedom. Do not wait to fight, use Kotex and do your part such as “organize an all-school treasure hunt for the scrap material Uncle Sam needs for his win.”⁵³ Be loyal to Uncle Sam and the boys overseas by using Kotex Sanitary Napkins. 3-M ‘Scotch’ Tape ads illustrated women “stitching” an airplane wing. “One girl puts the rivets in the holes. Another temporarily fastens them in place with ‘Scotch’ tape. Close behind her comes the riveter hammering them in.”⁵⁴ Women working for the war industries use ‘Scotch’ tape to make the best products stressed the company; the readers should as well.

⁵¹ Katherine Fisher, “Rationing Has Brought a New Cookery,” *Good Housekeeping*, July 1943, 90.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 92.

⁵³ *Ladies Home Journal*, September 1942, 44.

⁵⁴ *Ladies Home Journal*, April 1943, 96.

In addition to patriotic themes, ads employed a romantic or flirtatious feel to their products. Kotex reprimanded girls who could not entertain troops because they were laid low with menstrual cramps. He “told you that being with you is what makes my furlough worthwhile.”⁵⁵ The girl in question was first shown lying in bed; later she is dressed in eveningwear ready to entertain. The caption reads, “To think that at five o’clock you were ready to break your date. Because today’s eight hours of defense work seemed like eighty.”⁵⁶ Kotex Sanitary Napkins, the advertisement implied, would not only make women feel comfortable but allow them to fulfill their patriotic duty as American citizens by improving their disposition and socializing with American soldiers.

War bonds were not advertised in national magazines to the extent they were in *Montana Woman*. Typically, a product would incorporate a seal of US Bonds and Stamps to demonstrate their support for the war. Philco Corporation used the “For Victory, Buy United War Bonds and Stamps” seals in their advertisements to demonstrate the company’s war production efforts.⁵⁷ Cigarette companies also used the US Governments War Bond and Stamp seal. Chesterfield cigarettes depicted army men enjoying themselves with a pack of their brand of smokes. Not only was it a patriotic advertisement but it also supported the war effort through Bonds and Stamps.⁵⁸

Other advertisements employed the well being of America’s soldiers to ask women to buy a company’s product. Armour and Company, makers of dairy products, wanted their consumers to appreciate the company’s efforts in helping the military

⁵⁵ *Ladies Home Journal*, October 1942, 18.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Good Housekeeping*, January 1943, 13.

⁵⁸ *Ladies Home Journal*, January 1943, 62.

because they supplied fats to grease jeeps and tanks, glycerin to make explosives, and medicines prepared in Armour laboratories.⁵⁹ If women bought their dairy products from Armour, they would sustain the troops with vital material to win the war. General Electric, like Montana Power Company, implored readers to take care of their appliances. "For the duration they will be difficult or even impossible to replace because General Electric men and factories are on war work."⁶⁰ Companies were not only creating products designed to help the war but their workers were also fighting.

Conclusion:

Consumer magazines rarely depicted current, up-to-date events of the war. As Mary Zuckerman stated in *A History of Popular Woman's Magazines in the United States, 1792-1995*, "The traditional mission of the women's magazines, focusing primarily on women's roles as mothers, wives, and homemakers, shaped their dealings with the government information, censorship, and propaganda."⁶¹ They stressed the problems at home such as fashion and homemaking. *Good Housekeeping* and *Ladies Home Journal* projected their articles and advertisements to a broad, national audience. Nonetheless, they focused the role of women during World War II on their capabilities as homemakers. While there were stories of romance between workingwoman and soldiers, the majority of articles examined women in the context of family and

⁵⁹ *Ladies Home Journal*, February 1943, inside cover.

⁶⁰ *Ladies Home Journal*, June 1942, 58.

⁶¹ Mary Ellen Zuckerman, *A History of Popular Woman's Magazines in the United States, 1792-1995* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1998), 194.

community. Wives and mothers were expected to know how to serve nutritious, rationed meals and to buy products essential in keeping up the fight overseas. Advertisements centered on a patriotic theme. Kotex, for example, catered to both the housewife and worker when they depicted women working or volunteering. But still, the articles and advertisements in *Ladies Home Journal* and *Good Housekeeping* did not always focus on contributing to the war.

Montana Woman, by contrast, focused entirely on the war effort. Articles were devoted to regional, state, and local issues concerning members of the General Federation of Woman's Clubs. As a volunteer organization, the GFWC concerned itself with the safety of the family and community. Saving waste fats, maintaining appliances, getting children to collect scrap metal, and buying war bonds, were essential elements in Montana's contribution to the war.

Despite regional and occupational differences, the magazines and their advertisements targeted women's potential as keepers of the family and consumers. Magazines, like Home Extension agents, zeroed in on women's potential on the home front. However, magazines were less likely to focus on their subscribers' desires than were Home Extension agents. Rather, they were more likely to give in to the demands of the government and companies buying space in their journals. Both, however, tried to shape the homemaker's role in World War II.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Domestic participation in the war effort provided a morale boost for rural homemakers unable to work in war industries. Their keenness in contributing to the conflict placed a higher demand on home demonstrations. As an avenue for cohesiveness in American society, the Home Extension service not only assisted in the construction of rural women's identity during the war, it also mobilized homemakers as protectors of the home front. "Eat it up, Make it do, or Do Without," symbolized the homemakers' primary objective during World War II.¹

America's push for citizen involvement created opportunities for women. Men headed to theaters of war, while women headed to factories and plants. The location of war industries on the east and west coasts allowed many women the chance to work in fields previously closed to them. As iron welders, ship builders, and munitions makers, women enthusiastically forged new careers. The government, while encouraging them to work, believed that theirs was a temporary position. While the government needed workers to fill vacant positions, they offered the jobs to women with the thought that they would gladly relinquish them when the war ended. Women were to set down their tools and don aprons when soldiers returned home.

Domesticity as a white, middle-class ideology, tried to relegate women to the house. The majority of women before the war, however, were not homemakers; they

¹ Warren, *An Official History of National Extension Homemakers Council, INC.*, 18.

were wage earners. They worked out of necessity and, at times, enjoyment.² During the war, they labored to contribute to the war effort and to support families while husbands were away.

Many women lived far from war industries. Thousands moved to the coast, but many women, especially with children, found it difficult to leave home. Out of necessity or desire, many simply stayed where they were. In Montana, women desired to contribute to the war effort like everyone else. As the government and popular press promoted patriotism, they reworked the homemaker's role to fit wartime attitudes. The United States mobilized housewives into action by centralizing women's responsibility as protectors of the family: focusing their time and energy on the home.

It was an easy transition to protector of the family, since women were already viewed as keepers of the home. In creating duties for homemakers, the government looked to various institutions for help. As excellent disseminators of information, the Home Extension Service mobilized homemakers into action. In making the "greatest contribution toward the winning of the war," Home Extension looked to help the homemakers adjust to wartime demands.³ Extension agents urged women to manage their households efficiently, making use of old fabrics and appliances, or preserving products grown in Victory Gardens. Women's work in the home was not popularized, as was that of women laboring in industries. However, it was thought necessary to the safekeeping of American ideals and family life.

² Sherna Berger Gluck in *Rosie the Riveter Revisited: Women, the War, and Social Change* reported that in 1940 over 11.5 million working-class women worked out of economic necessity.

³ Francis Smith, *1942 Montana State Home Extension Annual Report*, (Merrill G. Burlingame Special Collections, Montana State University Libraries, Bozeman, 1943), 1.

The Montana Extension Service relied on an array of informative sources; foremost was the Home Economics Department at Montana State College. The extension service received up-to-date information on current research related to war problems. Circulars and bulletins on new food preservation techniques, recipes using sugar-substitutes, or substituting soap for detergent in laundering clothes provided Montana homemakers with new methods focused on economy for the war effort. Gallatin, Sweet Grass, Park, Jefferson, and Madison counties illustrated the connection between the two institutions. Gallatin extension, realizing the acute labor shortage in the county, asked the college to help develop a Tractorette Training School for women. Likewise, the home economics department relied on the extension service to supply employment opportunities to graduates. They also utilized funds and resources from the extension service to further research in health and home concerns.

The Home Extension Service, as well as its clients, relied on the magazine industry to demonstrate women's potential as guardians of war-disrupted families. In mobilizing women to contribute to a national campaign, the magazine industry rallied behind the cause. *Ladies Home Journal* and *Good Housekeeping*, along with *Montana Woman*, consistently ran articles dedicated to the war effort. They discussed the separation of families in war, women's duty to the war effort, and the consequences of early marriage. Like the Home Extension Service, magazines also supplied rationing tips and recipes. Unlike the Extension Service whose aim was practical involvement, the *Ladies Home Journal* and *Good Housekeeping*, also recognized the need for entertainment. They alleviated the burdens of war by offering light-hearted tales.

Companies realized the potential in using patriotic-based advertisements in magazines. Women purchased products that made them feel that their consumer power contributed to the war effort. Philco Corporation illustrated their company's war production efforts while Kotex recommended women to be patriotic and wear their sanitary napkins.

Japan's formal surrender on September 2, 1945 marked the final end to World War II. Montana's Extension Service, however, began their post-war planning back in 1944. They slowly replaced war programs for projects that anticipated better times. Food preservation and Victory Gardens were still highly popular, but demonstrations such as "Renovating Furniture to Make Them Outlast the War" and "Home Recreation in Wartime" were eliminated. Rural electrification and its impact on the house became a major concern for many Montanans, which prior to World War II, had been an ongoing project for the extension service.

With more money to spend, homemakers were eager to buy innovative appliances for their newly electrified homes. They were also keen on buying new clothes and fabrics. Scrimping was no longer a priority. Women's eagerness to purchase new consumer goods revived older programs initiated prior to World War II such as fabric selection and clothing construction. The Montana Extension Service, realizing that the war was coming to an end, looked ahead to the future needs of their clients. In promoting "better living, better happiness, more education, and better citizenship," in the war, however, the Home Extension service did what it was conceived to do: help rural American housewives.

The homemakers' role in World War II harkened back to the ideals constructed during America's War for Independence when the newly created nation designated women as representatives of American principles. As keepers of the home and nurturers of the next generation of young Americans, women, with their perceived moral superiority, had the right to cultivate democratic ideals within the household. The home was viewed as a safe haven where democracy could thrive, secure from the fascist regimes of Germany, Japan, and Italy. By taking care of the family and home, women were seen as actively preserving democratic ideals. Raising strong, healthy children and maintaining a semblance of stability, free from the hardships across the ocean, made homemakers feel that they were contributing to the war effort.

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