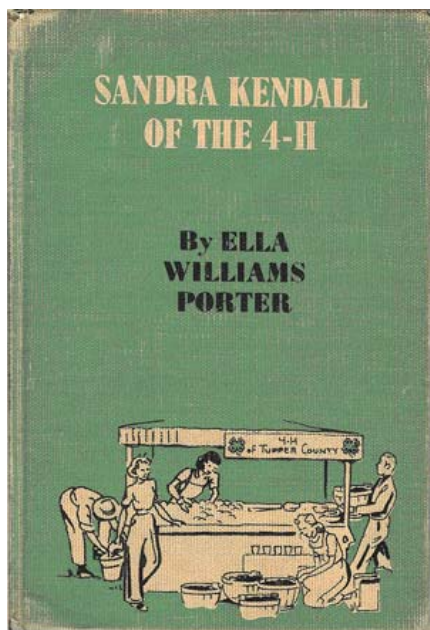


Extension FCS Careers - Fiction and Non-Fiction

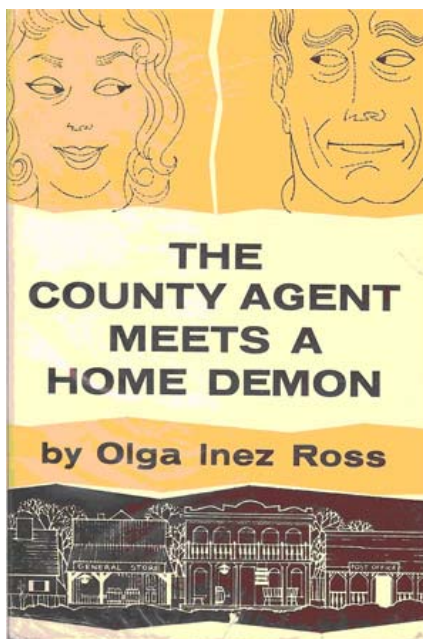
Jan Scholl (PA), 75th Anniversary Committee

It may be hard to believe, but early FCS Extension educators were portrayed to teens much like Nancy Drew (amateur sleuth), Cherry Ames (nurse) and Vicki Barr (flight attendant) were in the middle 20th century. Based on more than six years of research, four career novels were found with main characters serving as Extension home demonstration agents. While these books are fiction, they represent Extension FCS programs at the time of publication. Input and in some cases flow charts were provided from state and national program leaders to the authors. The books were published between 1942 and 1968. They were first discussed in an article in the 2007 *Journal of NEAFCS*. The information was updated in the December 2008 issue of the *Family and Consumer Sciences Research Journal*.

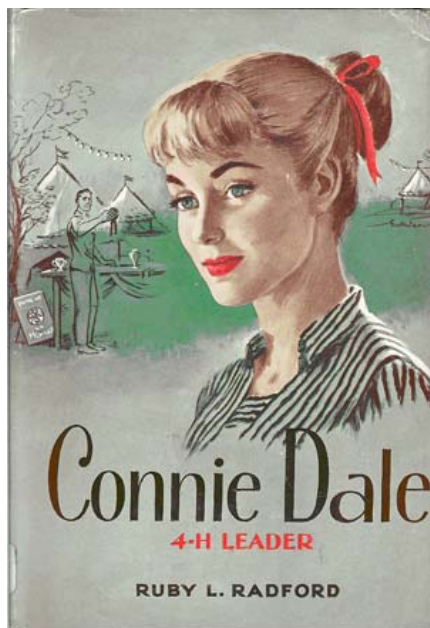
The titles are listed with their covers and the dates of publication. Complete citations are in the reference section that follows the article.



Sandra Kendall of the 4-H
1942



The County Agent Meets a Home Demon
1957



Connie Dale, 4-H Leader
1958



County Agent
1968

All four books were designated as "career romances." The lead characters were women and the prospect of finding a young man (not necessarily a co-worker) was central to the theme of each book. The books are appealing and well written. The authors, however, did not "sugar coat" the careers of those they were describing. Each character experienced a great deal of difficulty in her work. Many of the communities portrayed had diverse and low-income families with young people on the edge of delinquency. The four women had to design solutions (with others) to solve local problems. Effective solutions took time, patience, sacrifice and communication. As was the case with many FCS educators at the time, the main characters in the books were involved in 4-H programs.

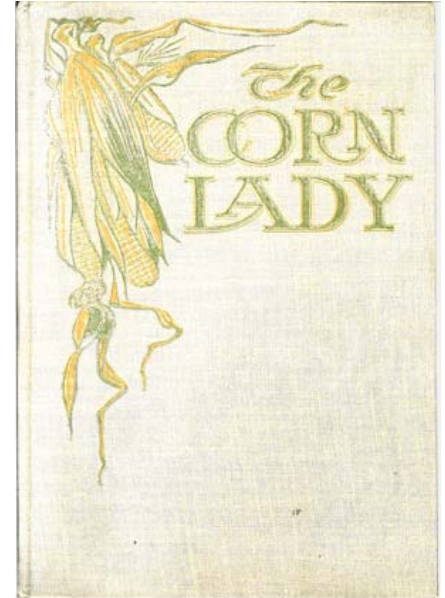
Another book of note, written about food careers was *Sally and Her Kitchens*. The novel is not specifically about Extension work but shows how one can build a career through progressive experiences in summer internships and permanent positions. Much of this story is based on real life experiences.

There are many biographies written about women in 4-H and FCS work. Some are available in special collections. Others are the basis of historical research for a thesis or dissertation. Still others were published as books. One of the earliest and little known books is *The Corn Lady* by Jessie Field (Shambaugh). Jessie Field has often been described as the "Mother of 4-H." The 1911 book is a summary of her work with Iowa youth and includes letters to her father, field experiments, and method demonstrations for others to replicate.

These books are quite rare as they have long been out-of-print. The last one was published more than 50 years ago! Still, some libraries have copies or the titles can be interlibrary loaned from other college or university libraries. On occasion, they become available on-line or through book dealers. Because the books are scarce, no longer reflect current Extension programs and there are newer communication technologies available to young people, the concern for the future of our profession is: How can we share our experiences and attract a new generation of Extension FCS educators?

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The Corn Lady
1911