

EXPERIMENT STATION

**KANSAS STATE COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE
AND APPLIED SCIENCE**

MANHATTAN, KANSAS

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS

KANSAS RURAL INSTITUTIONS:

III. A COUNTY AGRICULTURAL CENTER¹

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Among the 105 counties in Kansas, Rice County has taken the lead in making a comprehensive plan for a county agricultural center and has made a substantial beginning in the application of the plan. So far, Rice is one of the few counties in the United States to take this step. It may excel most of these few



Figure I-The present building at the Rice County Agricultural Center.

in the comprehensiveness of its plan. A brief discussion of the Rice County plan and of its operation from its inception in 1938 to June 30, 1946, may be useful to citizens in other places where county agricultural centers may be considered.² The word "center" is used instead of the word "building" for the reason that the Rice County plan calls for not only the main building but also one or more minor structures and for various outdoor facilities.

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²For information and assistance in preparing this discussion, the author's thanks go to R. G. Nichols, Rice County Clerk; to E. H. Hodgson, former state senator; to George W. Sidwell, Rice County Agricultural Agent; and to the Extension Service of Kansas State College. Several others, chiefly citizens of Rice County, gave minor but much appreciated assistance.

THE GROWING NEED FOR FACILITIES

Since 1914, when the enactment of the Smith-Lever law launched agricultural extension education on a nationwide scale, the need for county facilities suitable for use in extension work has increased at an accelerated rate. Extension work throughout the country makes extensive use of the county as a basis for organization, and the county seat town usually is the headquarters for the county extension organization. This fact gives rise in each county to a need for office space for extension workers, for storage space for equipment, and for accommodations for committee meetings, exhibits, demonstrations, meetings of large county groups, serving large dinners, and various other activities. Lacking these facilities, the work is handicapped.

In the early days of extension work, the county agricultural agent and his office assistant commonly were given office space of a sort in the damp and musty basement of the county court house. Few court houses were planned to include facilities for extension work. Hence, in many instances the personnel and the organization representing the industry of greatest importance in the county and of direct concern to the majority of citizens of the county had the least suitable and least efficient county facilities. Unhappily, this situation still persists in some counties in Kansas and other states.

As extension work demonstrated its high value, despite its handicaps, it gradually was expanded. In many counties home demonstration agents were added to the full-time county extension staff. In an increasing number of counties 4-H club agents also were added. Then came various county committees with office staffs. These and other features of the expansion of extension work at the county level made the need for adequate housing and other facilities increasingly acute. Renting space in commercial office buildings helped to meet the need but it usually was expensive and often was unsatisfactory for other reasons as well.

THE COUNTY FAIR ANALOGY

In some Kansas counties, the taxpayers through their county governments have provided for agricultural fairs accommodations analogous to those needed for extension work. The analogy rests on the fact that the county fair is maintained chiefly for the direct benefit of agriculture and provides important indirect benefits for the entire county population, as is true of extension work. In 1946, several Kansas counties owned land and buildings used chiefly or exclusively for holding fairs, usually once a year. According to the State Board of Agriculture, the value of these accommodations ranged from less than \$10,000 in each of several instances to as much as \$100,000 in one instance. If counties are warranted, as they doubtless usually are, in providing and maintaining these accommodations for

use for periods seldom exceeding a week each year, it seems reasonable to assume that they would be warranted in providing adequate facilities for the extension work, which goes on continuously.

THE AGRICULTURE OF RICE COUNTY

Situated slightly south of the center of the state, Rice County maintains an agriculture typical of that of a large part of the Kansas wheat belt. In 1939, crops were harvested from 242,000 acres. Of this total, 182,000 acres, or 75 percent, were devoted to wheat. The remaining acres were devoted chiefly to sorghum crops, 32,000 acres; corn, 13,000 acres; hay, 5,000 acres; and all other crops, 10,000 acres. In 1940, the county contained 28,000 cattle of all ages. Of these, 5,300 were beef cows and 1,200 were dairy cows. There were 4,300 sheep and 5,100 swine. The number of farms, the average size of farm, and the percentage of tenancy as reported by the United States Bureau of the Census are shown in Table 1:

TABLE 1.-RICE COUNTY FARM DATA

Year	Number of farms	Average size, acres	Percentage of farms operated by tenants
1930	1,427	298	46
1935	1,447	290	46
1940	1,487	289	50

The figures in Table 1 suggest a fair degree of stability in the number of farms and in their average size. The state and national trend toward fewer and larger farms was reversed in Rice County during the decade covered in the table, but the trend toward increased tenancy was followed.

The average real estate tax on farm property in the county in 1939 was \$0.50 an acre, or \$144.50 for the "average" farm of 289 acres.

Figure 2 is a map of Rice County and shows the central location of Lyons, the county seat where the agricultural center is situated.

COUNTY EXTENSION PERSONNEL

Rice County was one of the first in the state to have a full complement of extension personnel: an agricultural agent, a home demonstration agent, and a 4-H club agent. The work of these three usually requires at least two clerical employees. Moreover, the Soil Conservation Service placed two technical men in the county to work in cooperation with the Extension Service. The educational program of the Rice County Farm Bureau involves frequent meetings of small groups of farm

people, such as the board of directors of the farm bureau, the local leaders of the various extension projects, the officers of the women's units, the 4-H club leaders, and often special committees. Finally, it is desirable that the entire membership of the county farm bureau, or as many of the members as practicable,

RICE COUNTY KANSAS

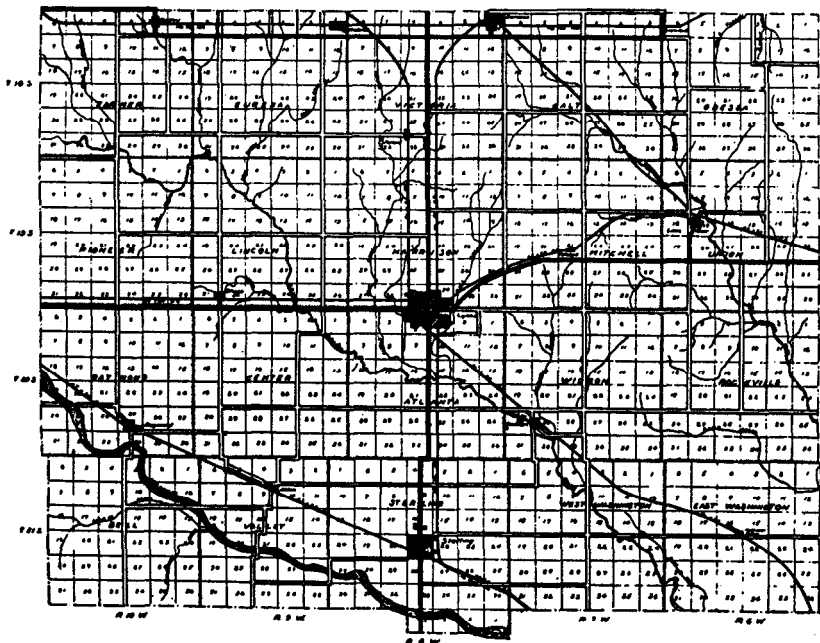


Figure 2--Map of Rice County showing the principal highways and the central location of Lyons where the county agricultural center is situated.

meet annually or oftener to review the progress of the extension work and to stimulate and plan improvements in that work. Hence the extension activities in the county require adequate facilities for meetings as well as for office work.

INITIAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE BUILDING PROJECT

Rural institutions that require widespread public support do not just grow. Somebody must generate or import the basic idea underlying the institution. Somebody must lead in bringing the idea into acceptance. Somebody must stimulate a widespread desire, or at least willingness, to have the idea placed into effect. Somebody must devise ways and means and see to it that these are used to bring the institution into existence and place it into use.

The proposal of a county agricultural center for Rice County was made originally by Mr. George W. Sidwell, county agricultural agent. Mr. Sidwell not only made the original proposal but also served as "spark plug" throughout the development of the project. As county agricultural agent of Edwards County, where he served before coming to Rice County, he had been impressed with a suite of offices which the county commissioners had fitted up in the basement of the court house for the use of the Edwards County Farm Bureau. If, thought he, a county may provide a fairly commodious suite of offices in the court house, why shouldn't it be able to provide one or more separate buildings with facilities for making the county agricultural program fully effective? Arriving in Rice County, he found the office facilities of the county farm bureau seriously inadequate. In 1938, he proposed to the county commissioners that they provide a county agricultural center, reminding them that the rental on the inadequate offices currently in use amounted to several hundred dollars a year and that additional facilities were needed. This was the actual beginning of the project.

The county commissioners, all farmers, were favorably disposed; but not being sure of their legal authority in the matter, they consulted the county attorney. The latter informed the commissioners that they were without legal authority to expend public money for a county agricultural center. This information momentarily put an end to the project; but only momentarily, for the county agricultural agent was not so easily discouraged. He requested and received permission of the commissioners to arrange for introduction in the state legislature soon to convene of a bill to give the commissioners the necessary statutory authority.

PERMISSIVE LEGISLATION

Mr. E. H. Hodgson, a prominent Rice County farmer and an active member of the county farm bureau, was a member of the State Senate. He readily adopted the county agricultural agent's suggestion that the senator undertake to obtain the desired legislative action. Accordingly, on February 2, 1939, Senator Hodgson introduced Senate Bill 190. As finally enacted, the bill, now Chapter 338 of the Kansas Session Laws of 1939, reads as follows :

Section 1. - In any county having a population of not less than fifteen thousand nor more than nineteen thousand with an assessed tangible valuation of not less than forty million dollars nor more than fifty-five million dollars, the board of county commissioners are hereby authorized to make an annual levy of not to exceed one-fifth of one mill upon all tangible property of the county for the purpose of creating and providing a building fund to be used for the acquiring of a site for, erection, equipment, and furnishing of a building to be used for 4-H club pur-

poses and also to be used for an office for the farm bureau. Said levy may be made annually for a period of not to exceed two years. The board of county commissioners shall determine the amount to be raised by such levy. Such fund may be used for the purposes as in this act provided and any time after the first levy has been made; if there be sufficient funds created the board of county commissioners may proceed to advertise and acquire the site and let the contract for such building under the law as now provided. The tax levy herein authorized shall be in addition to all other levies authorized or limited by law.

"Section 2.-This act shall take effect and be in force from and after its publication in the official state paper."

In its progress through the legislature the Hodgson bill was amended significantly. In the original bill the maximum authorized special tax levy was two-fifths mill. This figure was arrived at on the assumption that the project would cost forty to fifty thousand dollars. Presumably assuming, as was then fashionable, that a Public Works Administration grant for half the cost would be forthcoming, the senate committee on public buildings cut the size of the special levy in two and on February 8 recommended the amended bill for passage. On March 16, the Senate, sitting as a committee of the whole, changed the figure for county minimum population from 16,000 to 15,000 and the figure for county minimum property valuation from \$45,000,000 to \$40,000,000 and recommended the bill, as amended, for passage. On March 17 the bill passed the Senate with 23 votes in its favor and none opposed, there being 11 senators absent or not voting.

Introduced in the House on March 18, the bill was referred to the committee on assessment and taxation. Recommended for passage without further change, it passed the House on March 30 with a vote of 100 to 0, there being 24 members absent or not voting and one member passing. The bill was approved by the Governor on April 3. It became effective on publication in the official state paper on April 10, 1939.

It is to be noted that the law is purely permissive. It authorizes but does not require the commissioners of any Kansas county within the limits of population and assessed valuation specified in the law (Rice county is the only county within these limits) to make a special annual levy of not to exceed one-fifth mill for not to exceed two years.

DEVELOPING LOCAL SUPPORT

Now that the county commissioners had the necessary statutory authority, they wished to know the state of public opinion in the county before they imposed a new tax on every one of the county's property owners, both urban and rural. With the support and assistance of the county farm bureau officers and directors, the county agricultural agent and Miss Ella Meyer, the

county home demonstration agent, carried on a campaign of education among the civic clubs, chambers of commerce, women's clubs, women's units of the farm bureau, and other organizations within the county. Each organization was requested to send a statement of its attitude to the county commissioners. The organizations, both urban and rural, responded enthusiastically in support of the project.

Following receipt of the statements from organizations the county commissioners arranged a public hearing at which any taxpayer might express his attitude. The hearing was attended by about 76 citizens. Only one person, a professional man, expressed opposition. The others enthusiastically supported the project.

THE SPECIAL TAX LEVY

Having specific statutory authority and the all but unanimous support of the articulate public, the county commissioners were now ready to levy the tax. For the year 1939, they fixed the levy at one-fifth mill (0.20), the maximum rate permitted by the statute. A year later, for the year 1940, they adopted a slightly lower rate, 0.18 mill. Table 2 shows the tax base in round numbers and the sum raised by the special levy in each of the two years as reported orally by the county clerk in December, 1945.

TABLE 2. TAX BASE AND SUM RAISED

	1939	1940
Assessed value, tangible property:		
Outside incorporated places	\$17,000,000	\$17,000,000
Inside incorporated places	27,000,000	28,000,000
Total	\$44,000,000	\$45,000,000
Special levy, mill	0.20	0.18
Sum raised by special levy	\$ 8,796	\$ 8,162

The figures in Table 2 support the following statements: (1) Tangible property inside incorporated places, of which there are eight in the county, bore more than 60 percent of the burden of the special levy; while tangible property, including the farms, outside the incorporated places bore less than 40 percent of the burden; and (2) the total sum raised in the two years, \$16,953, is less than half the "forty to fifty thousand dollars" originally contemplated as the cost of the project. This fact, together with the unavailability of financial aid from the Public Works Administration, made it necessary to reduce extensively the original plan for the project.

The special tax levy, being widely distributed, bore lightly upon tangible property and individual taxpayers. If it is assumed that all tangible property outside incorporated places was

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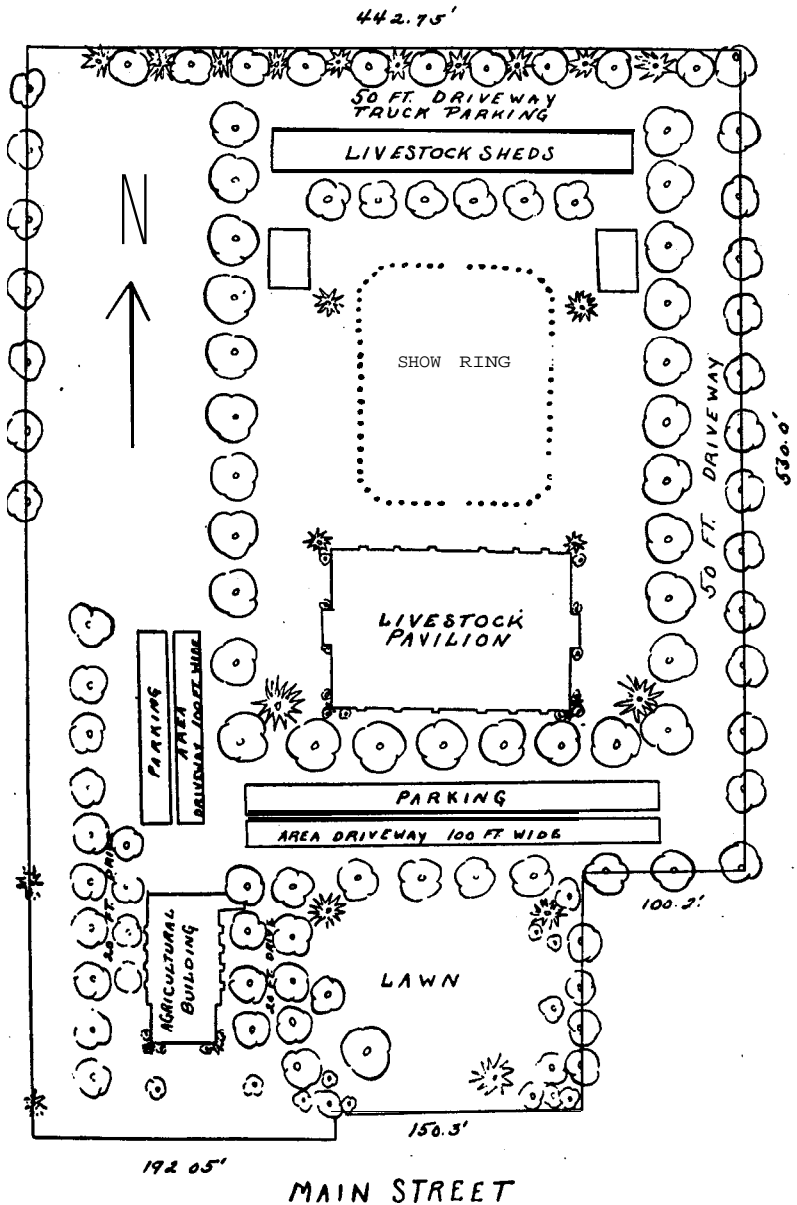


Figure 3-Site of the Rice County Agricultural Center showing the present building, at lower left, and the general plan for development as originally contemplated.

farm property and it is recognized that this property paid about 40 percent of the sum raised, then farm property in the two years contributed a total of about \$6,800, or \$3,400 a year. This would mean an average of \$2.27 per farm each year for two years. The figure is too large, for the reason that not all the tangible property outside incorporated places is farm property. The total

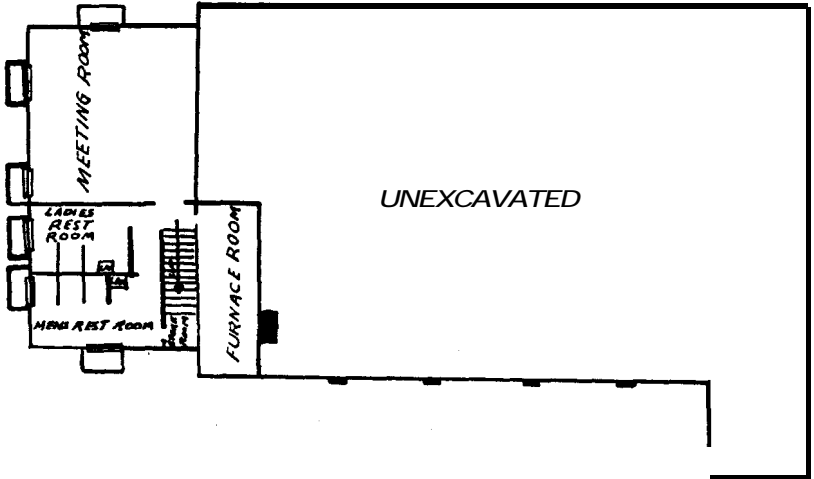


Figure 4-- Basement floor plan of the present building at the Rice County Agricultural Center.

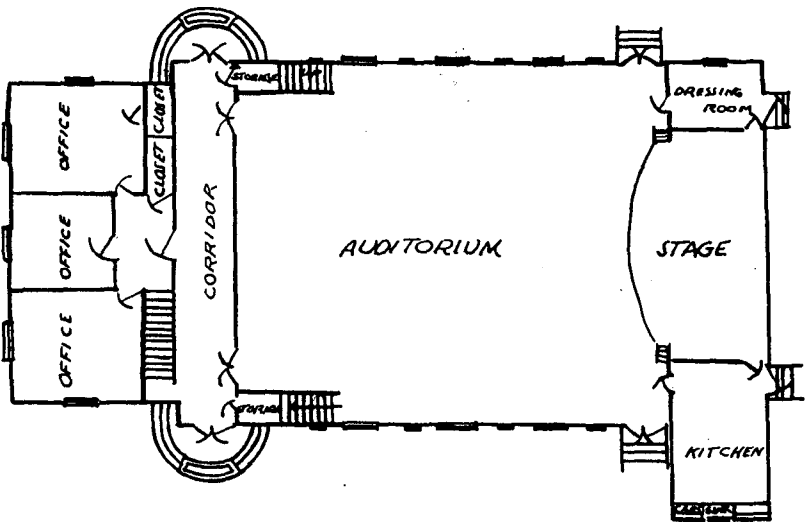


Figure 5-- Main floor plan of the present building at the Rice County Agricultural Center.

population, rural and urban, of Rice County during the two years of the special levy was about 17,000, as reported by the State Board of Agriculture. This figure is close to the amount of the special tax, \$16,958. Hence the per capita average of the special tax was approximately one dollar for the two years, or 50 cents a year. Whether considered per capita or per farm, the burden of the special tax was not a heavy one.

THE SITE AND THE BUILDING

In 1938, the Lyons Chamber of Commerce purchased for \$400 and gave to the county a site for the agricultural center. The site is rectangular except for some small irregularities at the south end. It is approximately 700 feet long and 440 feet wide and contains about six acres. It is situated only five blocks from the center of the town on one of the principal streets, which is also a through highway. It is just within the city limits and adjacent to open country. An outline of the site and a general idea of its future development as originally contemplated are shown in Figure 3.

The building, situated at the southwestern corner of the tract is a substantial structure of red brick and concrete. It is 100 feet long and 50 feet wide. The partly excavated basement contains a furnace room, two toilet rooms, some storage space, and a committee room. On the main floor are three offices, an ante-room now used also as an office, four storage closets, a corridor, an auditorium (which is also used as a large dining room and which has space to seat about 500 persons), a large kitchen, a stage, and a stage dressing room. A view of the building is shown in Figure 1 and the floor plans are shown in Figures 4 and 5.

On September 27, 1941, when the building was formally dedicated, the cost, including that of the six-acre site, was stated as \$18,636. The difference between this sum and the \$16,958 produced by the special tax levy was provided by the Lyons Chamber of Commerce and the Rice County Farm Bureau.

The total was less than half the sum contemplated when the original plans were made. As already stated, the legislature reduced the maximum special tax levy from two-fifths mill, as originally proposed, to one-fifth mill. This reduction necessitated sharp restrictions in the development of the project. This is why in the opening sentence of this report Rice County is said to have made a "substantial beginning in the application of the plan" rather than to have placed a complete plan into effect.

USE OF THE BUILDING

As the building was provided and is maintained at public expense, it is reasonable that its use be made available to as large a portion of the public as practicable. On the other hand,

as the purpose of the building as defined in the law is to serve the needs of the 4-H clubs and the county farm bureau, it is reasonable that these needs be given priority in the use of the building. In the operation of the institution, these two facts are taken fully into account. Virtually any group of citizens may use the building when it is not in use by a farm group. This policy is analogous to that governing the use of public school buildings, in which use by schools has priority but other uses not incompatible with the major purpose are permissible.

The office facilities are used continuously by the county agricultural agent, the county home demonstration agent, the county 4-H club agent, the county weed control supervisor, two local representatives of Soil Conservation Service, and the stenographic and clerical staff. The auditorium is used with or without the kitchen by a wide variety of county and local groups. The extent of this use during each of six recent months, three in the autumn and three in the spring, is indicated below:

September, 1945.-A soil improvement meeting, a marketing meeting, two meetings of farm bureau women's units, a rural life council meeting, two meetings of War Dads, a church women's dinner, and four other group uses, a total of 12 on 12 different days.

October, 1945.-A 4-H achievement day, five meetings of farm bureau women's units, two meetings of the rural life council, a meeting of the farm bureau board, a poultry show, a soil improvement meeting, a 4-H group meeting, a local women's club meeting, and six other group uses, a total of 19 on 15 different days.

November, 1945.-A meeting of the farm bureau board, a 4-H club dinner, a civic club ladies night, a high school football dinner, a meeting of farm bureau township vice-presidents, four meetings of farm bureau women's units, a handicrafts demonstration, chamber of commerce farmers' night, two rural life meetings, a project leaders training school, a 4-H club leaders' meeting, and five other group uses, a total of 20 on 18 days.

March, 1946.-Three meetings of farm bureau women's units, a township school program, a dinner of a high school pep club, a dinner of a fraternal order, a soil improvement meeting, a 4-H club demonstration, a 4-H club festival, and three other group uses, a total of 12 on 12 days.

April, 1946.-Five meetings of farm bureau women's units, two livestock association meetings, and three other group uses, a total of 10 on 10 days.

May, 1946.--Four meetings of farm bureau women's units, a men's supper, a freezer-locker demonstration, a town club picnic, a women's homemaking demonstration, and seven other group uses, a total of 15 on 13 days.

The above samples are sufficient to show that the building is used extensively and by a wide diversity of groups of citizens of the county. They show that there were 88 group uses on a total of 80 different days during the six months. These figures involve uses on both week days and Sundays. As the records are not quite complete, the actual use was somewhat greater than that indicated. With the office facilities in use all the time and the auditorium-kitchen facilities in use on not far from half the days, the building must be regarded as an important county institution.

USE OF THE GROUNDS

As the building occupies only a small portion of the six-acre tract, an arrangement was made for use of part of the land for victory gardens. During each of four years, 1943-46, a group of 24 Lyons business and professional men gained valuable outdoor recreation and produced a great deal of food on 24 gardens, each 50 feet square. The gardens were irrigated. Pipes to convey the water were provided by oil men of the county and were installed by the city of Lyons. Each allotment holder paid three dollars a year, to cover the cost of plowing and of irrigation water, and planted and cared for his own plot. The cash value of the garden products grown is estimated as at least \$1,200 annually, or an average of \$50 a garden each year.

MANAGEMENT AND OPERATION

Responsibility for determining the policies to govern the use of the center is vested in the board of directors of the county farm bureau. The bureau president appoints from the board membership a committee of three members. This committee exercises general oversight and sees to it that the policies adopted by the board of directors are followed. Detailed application of the management policies is attended to by the three county agents-agricultural, home demonstration, and 4-H club-the agricultural agent carrying the major responsibility.

The annual cost of the center cannot be determined accurately. Maintenance and operation of the facilities are supported financially from several sources. Not all the contributions are recorded or even definitely evaluated. The cost of light, heat, and water is paid by the county and is not segregated from other similar county expense. Extensive voluntary uncompensated service is rendered by members of the farm bureau and of its women's units, by county agents, and others. All the many non-agricultural groups that use the building either pay for the extra janitorial work entailed by such use or do the work themselves. As the property is owned by the public (the county), it pays no taxes. There are extensive contributions of dishes, silverware, kitchen equipment, and the like from the women's

units of the county farm bureau. In these circumstances, precise figures on the cost of operation and maintenance are not to be expected.

Since the building was opened in the autumn of 1941 the sum of \$500 a year has been budgeted in the county appropriation for support of the farm bureau, for janitorial service, and for other maintenance items. The janitor is the only paid worker engaged regularly in the care of the building. He is employed on part time at the rate (June, 1946) of 50 cents an hour. His pay usually amounts to approximately \$25 a month. This leaves about \$200 a year for purchase of janitorial supplies and for other materials used in building maintenance.

The cost of operation and maintenance is increasing, owing to increased use of the building, aging of the building, and increased costs of labor and materials. So far it has been possible to keep the building in reasonably satisfactory condition; but it seems certain that a larger sum must soon be budgeted for operation and maintenance if deterioration of the building and impairment of service are to be averted.

JOINT USE BY VARIOUS PUBLIC AGENCIES

It is often contended that the local representatives of all the public agencies dealing exclusively or chiefly with agriculture and rural life in the county should have their offices at one place. There is some evidence in support of the contention. Certainly a single office location may promote physical and financial efficiency and serve public convenience. But there is some evidence on the other side. It has to do with public relations and with what may be called psychological efficiency. An example is provided when one agency is concerned only with education, as is the county farm bureau, and another is charged with regulatory work. Acceptance of educational service by farm people must be voluntary. In a free country it cannot be imposed by force, and even the appearance of compulsion is certain to repel at least some of the intended beneficiaries. Regulatory work, on the other hand, often entails inspection of the citizen's private affairs, sometimes involves arrests, fines, imprisonment, and always necessarily implies the existence of force and the possibility of compulsion and penalties.

When housed together, educational work and regulatory work are easily confused by the citizen, so that each is blamed for the defects, real or supposed, of the other. A citizen who resents certain actions, however necessary, of the regulatory agency may erroneously ascribe the actions to the educational agency and refuse to have anything to do with it. This sort of error has occurred in numerous instances. It is sufficiently serious to warrant careful study by groups considering county agricultural centers. There is doubtless some wisdom in the practice of housing the public high school and the police de-

partment in separate buildings, usually several blocks apart. In the use of her agricultural center Rice County has not yet met this question, but she may be obliged to deal with it if and when the facilities are increased.

THE PUBLIC'S ATTITUDE

From the time that the project began to assume definite form, the preponderant sentiment of the people of Rice County has been favorable. The prevailing attitude among members of the Lyons Chamber of Commerce is suggested by the chamber's contribution of the site. Another evidence of public attitude is the all but complete absence of protest while the project was in the discussion stage. A third is expressions of numerous persons, both rural and urban, interviewed in June, 1946. These expressions were all favorable. Finally, there is the evidence of public use. The extent to which the public, again both rural and urban, uses the facilities indicates wide approval.

The attitude of the public appears to be based on several facts, including: (1) Recognition by the towns of their dependence on the countryside; (2) recognition by both towns and countryside of the importance of organized educational programs for rural improvement; (3) the educational campaign in 1938 and 1939 regarding the need for and the value of a permanent home for the county's major agricultural organizations; and (4) generally satisfactory operation and use of the building since its dedication in September, 1941.

SOME PRESENT IMPERFECTIONS

Notwithstanding the great usefulness of the present center, the persons in charge of it are increasingly conscious of its imperfections. As its present usefulness is being demonstrated, the desirability of improvements and of additional features of both building and grounds becomes increasingly apparent. Many of the defects result from the enforced reduction of 50 percent or more in the size of the project as it was originally planned. The major present defects appear to be the following:

1-The building is too small and there should be one or more additional buildings. The present facilities are inadequate for the accommodation of the 4-H club fair, especially its livestock exhibits, and for several other desirable activities.

2-The kitchen needs additional space for use in food preparation other than cooking; for making and dishing salads, for example.

3-There should be additional office space so that the county agricultural agent and farmers who come to see him would not have to share space with a part of the clerical staff and its typewriters; a fire-proof vault for records and other similar valuables; storage space for mechanical equipment belonging

to the farm bureau, such as motor cars, sheep-shearing machine, auditorium chairs, and tables, and for bulletins and stationery supplies.

4-There is need for a waiting room for people who come, often in considerable numbers at the same time, to see one or another of the county agents; and for more commodious meeting places for the increasing number of committees.

5-The lighting of both the auditorium and the offices should be improved, and the auditorium should be equipped for prompt darkening for showing slides and films used for visual education.

The above-mentioned defects are those that now appear to be most urgent. Many of them, thanks to Rice County's experience, could be avoided by any county providing an agricultural center at some future time.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

Discussions with the county agricultural agent and other Rice County citizens regarding future development of the project reveal that consideration is being given to several improvements, among them the following:

1-Correction of the defects discussed in the preceding section.

2--Covering the present concrete floor of the auditorium with some soft but durable material.

3-Outdoor picnic facilities, including ovens, tables, seats, incinerators, and similar items.

4-Reading room, with some good periodicals and possibly a few books, for use chiefly by rural people. Fitting up such a room and providing pictures and other decorations for it might well be financed by voluntary contributions from rural and urban individuals and organizations.

5-Landscaping and fitting up of a recreational area to include the northern portion of the present tract and at least a portion of the land lying between that tract and the north salt works, the area to be available for use by both urban and rural people.

6-A livestock pavilion, which might also serve as a community sale pavilion and as a place for exhibits of plants, animals, home-making activities, farm and home equipment and appliances, and for holding large meetings.

7-Increased landscape development and improvement, and increased and improved motor car parking facilities.

8-An annual operation and maintenance fund for the building, or buildings, and grounds to begin at, say, \$1,000 (six cents per capita of county population or, if paid wholly by farmers, seventy cents per farm) and increasing as the project grows, the buildings age and the activities increase, to, say, \$3,000.

AN IDEAL OF DEVELOPMENT

The Rice County Agricultural Center is capable of almost unlimited development. When one notes what already has been done and the enthusiasm of the people concerned one visualizes additional desirable developments of the purposes, the facilities, and the usefulness of the project. The center might well be developed as an expression of the farm and home aspirations of the rural people of the county with respect to cooperative effort in education and action. It might well be developed as a center for the increase of understanding and good will between town and countryside and between youth and age. It is desirable that the people of the county have an ever-increasing sense of ownership, pride, and responsibility with reference to the facilities, and that they use them as extensively as practicable.

A county agricultural center has great potentialities as a place for agricultural, home-making, inspirational, and educational activities of the rural citizens of the county. The activities might well range from committee meetings, lectures, and demonstrations to sports, amusements, and quiet contemplation. Exhibits might well range from pigs and pickles to paintings, handicraft, and statuary. Indeed, there is no discernible limit on what such a center might become if it had the benefit of adequate public interest, cooperation, enthusiasm, and good will.

ADDITIONAL LEGISLATION

Two topics involving legislation in addition to the Hodgson Act of April 10, 1939, seem appropriate for brief discussion here. The first is the fact that the Hodgson Act has been amended. The second is the need for additional permissive legislation if Rice County is to carry out fully its original plan for an agricultural center and if other Kansas counties are to provide comparable institutions.

Four years after its passage the Hodgson Act was placed into the General Statutes Supplement of 1943 as section 19-1561. In 1945 the legislature amended this section in three essential respects. The amended form is Chapter 166 of the Session Laws of 1945. The significant changes made in the Hodgson Act are included in the following extract from the 1945 amendment:

"Section 19-1561 of the General Statutes Supplement of 1943 is hereby amended to read as follows: Sec. 19-1561. The board of county commissioners of any county is hereby authorized to make an annual levy of not to exceed one-fifth of one mill upon all the taxable property of the county for the purpose of creating and providing a building fund to be used for the acquiring of a site for, erection, equipment, and furnishing of a building to be used for 4-H club purposes: Provided, That no such levy shall be made until and unless the question of the making of such levy shall have been submitted to the qualified voters of such county at a general election and a majority of those voting on

the question shall have declared by their votes to be in favor of making such levy for a period of not to exceed two years. The board of county commissioners are authorized to submit such question on their own motion at a general election and such submission shall be made in the manner provided for voting bonds. Said levy may be made annually for a period of not to exceed two years. The board of county commissioners shall determine the amount necessary to be raised by such levy."

The present statute, quoted in part above, differs from the Hodgson Act in that it (1) applies to all counties; (2) restricts the use of the building to "4-H Club purposes" whereas the Hodgson Act specified, "also to be used for an office for the farm bureau"; and (3) requires that the proposed special tax levy be subject to the approval of the voters of the county at a general election.

In short, the present statute broadens the permissive authority by extending it to all the counties of the state but narrows it by confining it to "4-H Club purposes" and requiring a favorable popular vote. These changes probably reflect (1) the virtually unanimous sentiment favorable to 4-H Club work; (2) divided sentiment regarding county farm bureaus; and (3) opposition to county expenditures for new projects not definitely approved by popular vote.

The second topic—the need for additional permissive legislation—is important if Kansas counties are to be permitted to develop county agricultural institutions commensurate in usefulness with the importance of the agriculture and the rural homes of the counties. The legislation should be strictly permissive, not compulsive, so that each county might decide for itself and on its own responsibility. It seems that the permissive legislation might well be in the form of an amendment to Chapter 166 of the Session Laws of 1945 and that it might well—

1—Increase the permitted maximum special tax levy from one-fifth mill to two-fifths mill, as proposed in the Hodgson bill as it was introduced in 1939. This would allow Rice County to complete its project and it would allow any other county wishing to do so to provide itself with a comparable rural institution. The county commissioners would be free to propose a special levy either equal to or less than the maximum of two-fifths mill. A county agricultural center requiring an expenditure of \$50,000 would cost only about as much as two miles of a two-lane concrete road at prewar prices.

2—Include as a permitted use other county farm bureau work as well as 4-H Club work, which, it is important to recognize, is a part of county farm bureau work. The county farm bureaus are public educational agencies organized and operated under a Kansas law of 1916 as amended. As such agencies they are clearly entitled to necessary facilities provided at public expense if the people of the counties so desire. This fact has long been

recognized through the provision by the counties of rented office facilities for the county farm bureaus. It seems logical and desirable to include in the permitted use the entire educational program of the county farm bureaus as well as that important part of the program known as 4-H Club work.

SUMMARY AND COMMENT

Although no more than a substantial beginning has been made in the development of the Rice County Agricultural Center, the experience so far gained is potentially valuable in the improvement of the Rice County institution and also in the development of comparable institutions in other counties. A study of this experience has suggested a number of comments which may be useful.

1-The site and the present building in Rice County cost a little more than one dollar per capita of the county's population. The cost was much less than the cost of one mile of a two-lane concrete road at prewar prices.

2-The careful advance planning for the Rice County institution resulted in acquiring a site that makes future expansion readily feasible.

3-Extensive and increasing use of the institution by both rural and urban groups and absence of adverse public criticism indicate a high degree of public approval.

4-At prewar prices county agricultural centers satisfactory for Kansas counties could be provided at a cost of \$15,000 to \$20,000 each, where a single building is used, and \$30,000 to \$50,000 each where the center includes a main building, several additional structures, and several acres of land for outdoor facilities.

5-Existing state legislation (Chapter 166 of Kansas Session Laws of 1945) which is wholly permissive, authorizes levying a special tax by any county to finance the construction of buildings "for 4-H Club purposes", but it does not explicitly authorize the use of such buildings for those parts of the county farm bureau's legally-required educational program other than 4-H Club work. It seems desirable that the legislation be amended to increase the maximum special levy from one-fifth mill to two-fifths mill and that all educational work of the county farm bureau be included in the permitted use.

6-In each county considering an agricultural center a carefully conducted educational campaign should precede action regarding the special tax levy, and there should be ample public hearings so that the citizens might act intelligently in deciding whether or not the center should be provided.

7-Once a center is provided, it should be used to the maximum practicable extent by both rural and urban groups, rural groups having priority.

8-Responsibility for the management of the center should be placed in the county farm bureau so long as state law designates that organization as the county unit in the conduct of extension work in agriculture and home-making. The farm bureau board of directors may well appoint from its own members a center committee to function for the board under policies fixed by the board. There should be an ample fund set aside annually for the operation and maintenance of the center.

9-Whether agricultural regulatory (police) activities as well as educational activities should be provided for at a county agricultural center is a moot question which should be carefully considered and thoroughly discussed in each interested county before it is decided.

10-A carefully-planned, well-conducted, enthusiastically-supported, and extensively-used county agricultural center can be an invaluable rural institution. It can serve effectively as a meeting point for town and countryside, for youth and age, and for representatives of the numerous vocations that are necessary in the complex life of the county. It can be a center for inspiration, education, enthusiasm, and good will for the promotion of the public welfare throughout the county.