

# Role of the Agricultural Industry and Judging Events in Formation of the Future Farmers of America

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## Abstract

*Early agricultural education included youth judging activities, in which farm boys matched skills with students from neighboring schools. In 1925, students competed in a National Dairy Judging Contest in Indianapolis held specifically for vocational students. Based on the success of this contest, the Federal Board for Vocational Education requested the contest committee make arrangements for hosting a national livestock judging contest for vocational students the next year. Representatives from the American Royal Livestock Show agreed to provide a livestock judging contest and educational program specifically for vocational students. In 1926, students from 22 states converged in Kansas City, Missouri to compete in the first National Livestock Judging Contest. Cooperation between Kansas City agribusiness leaders, the Kansas City Star, and the U.S. Department of Education staff led to the development of a National Congress of Vocational Agriculture Students, consisting of agricultural youth showing and judging at the American Royal. The congress played a substantial role in the formation of the Future Farmers of America and shaped many traditions still practiced by the organization today. Authors explore the traditions of judging events and industry sponsorships in the context of today's National FFA Organization.*

**Keywords:** American Royal Livestock Show, career development events, contests, Future Farmers of America, F.F.A, livestock judging, National FFA Foundation

## Introduction

Why last week when I was there [Kansas City], there was 1700 young boys and girls brought there by that great paper, the *Kansas City Star*, from over 30 states. They were taking vocational training and had led their various districts back home in the studying of farming, and stock raising, and had been brought to see the American Royal Live Stock Show. To see the Kings and Queens of Cattle, Sheep, Hogs, Horses. Real Kings and Queens that produced something. . . These not only have the breeding, but they [students] got to face the judges and be marked on their merit. -Will Rogers (Rogers, 1978, p. 250)

The excerpt from Will Rogers' speech at the first National Congress for Vocational Agriculture Students, in conjunction with the 1926 American Royal, underscores both the significance of the congress as a vocational youth development event and the important contribution of Kansas City, Missouri agribusinesses in creating and planning the congress.

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The 1926 American Royal hosted the largest gathering of junior farmers which had ever officially attended a livestock show in the United States (All Gather at Royal, 1926). More than 900 vocational agriculture students and 400 4-H club members from across the nation converged on Kansas City that November for a common purpose: to compete in the first national livestock judging contest held specifically for vocational agriculture students. In addition to the judging activities, Kansas City businesses, agricultural industries, local newspapers, and leaders of the United States Federal Board for Vocational Education created the National Congress for Vocational Agriculture Students, a week-long festival celebrating youth achievement in agriculture. The overwhelming success of student judging, the Congress, and supplemental events brought increased attendance and attention from students across the United States in 1927. The following year, 33 delegates from 18 states met in Kansas City at the Third National Congress of Vocational Agriculture Students and created the Future Farmers of America (FFA) (National FFA Organization, 2015).

The National Congress for Vocational Agriculture Students laid the groundwork for the formation of the Future Farmers of America. However, the details and implications of the congress have not been explored. Researchers have examined the role of youth development and the historical development of the FFA, including corn clubs (Uricchio, Moore, & Coley, 2013), the role of Virginia (Hillison, 1993), and the impact of leadership training activities in the development of the FFA (Connors, Falk, & Epps, 2010; Connors & Velez, 2008). A gap in the literature existed regarding the role of agricultural judging competitions and industry partnerships in the formation of the Future Farmers of America.

### **Purpose and Objectives**

The purpose of this historical study was to examine the history of the National Congress of Vocational Agriculture Students and the significant events in Kansas City, Missouri which contributed to the formation of the National Congress of Vocational Agriculture Students. Three objectives guided this study:

1. describe the events leading to the formation of the National Congress of Vocational Agriculture Students;
2. describe the meetings of the National Congress of Vocational Agriculture Students; and
3. identify the contributions of the National Congress to the formation of the Future Farmers of America Organization.

### **Historical Framework**

The history of the FFA has been a significant topic for those in school-based, agricultural education because it is an integral part of the three circle model of agricultural education (Croom, 2008). Researchers have examined the historical foundation of the FFA from a variety of perspectives, including the importance of early youth clubs and the importance of youth leadership development. The research outlines the early agriculture clubs, such as the corn clubs (Uricchio, et al., 2013) and Future Farmers of Virginia (Hillison, 1993). These studies detail the events which started with the early agriculture clubs of the 1910s to the foundation of the FFA. The importance of leadership development in the history of FFA has been researched more extensively (Hoover, Scholl, Dunigan, & Mamontova, 2007). The topics investigated have included the FFA Creed (Connors & Velez, 2008), leadership camps (Connors, Falk, & Epps, 2010), and parliamentary procedure (Connors, 2004). These studies highlight the significance of youth leadership development in the FFA from its inception. These studies have helped develop the narrative of the

FFA history; however, the role and impact of the National Congress of Vocational Agriculture Students, livestock competitions, and business interests have not been explored.

The early 1900s saw a movement toward organized agricultural youth education, including corn and poultry clubs, tomato clubs, school agricultural clubs, farmers' institutes, 4-H, Boy Scouts, and school-based classes (Hillison, 1993; Tenney, 1978; Terry, 2014; Uricchio, et al., 2013). Early club work included competitions between clubs and individuals, including corn yield competitions, livestock exposition and judging events (Hillison, 1993; Tenney, 1978; Uricchio et al., 2013). Many club leaders and administrators viewed agricultural competitions as beneficial for both club members and their parents. For members, competition improved work ethic, cultivated agricultural interests, increased school and work attendance, and fostered a desire to continue education at the university level (United States Department of Agriculture, 1917). Parents who saw increased yields and profitability from corn test plots were often quick to adopt modern agricultural practices (United States Department of Agriculture, 1917). Agricultural educators utilized contests to catalyze and support the adoption of scientific agricultural practices among rural populations.

Agricultural club meetings and judging events allowed for social interaction among members; early agricultural leaders saw clubs as an opportunity for leadership and social development. In 1922, Nebraska agriculture teacher L. D. Clements proposed a Junior Farmers Association, whose first purpose was to develop rural leadership and citizenship (Tenney, 1978). At the 1926 Virginia agricultural and athletic rally contest, Walter Newman proposed the idea of a statewide agricultural club, the Future Farmers of Virginia (FFV). Newman received favorable feedback from participants; a year later, Virginia agricultural instructors approved the constitution and future plans for the FFV, a youth agricultural organization whose goals included the promotion of vocational agriculture, scholarship, and rural leadership (Groseclose, 1930; Yeatts, 1954). In 1927, Walter Newman encouraged other states to develop a state youth organization similar in structure and purpose to the Future Farmers of Virginia (Hillison, 1993). In 1928, 33 delegates from 18 states gathered in Kansas City, Missouri as part of the third national Congress of Vocational Agriculture Students to create the Future Farmers of America. Thus, the details involved in the formation of the Future Farmers of America are well researched from the perspective of the Future Farmers of Virginia; however, what events influenced the formation and helped shape the Future Farmers of America at the American Royal in Kansas City, Missouri?

### Procedures

Historical research methods were used to accomplish the objectives of this study (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). We first generated the research purpose and objectives. Next, researchers searched state archives for local periodicals, agricultural education publications, historical books, and government reports from 1915-1929, using "National Congress" and "Future Farmers" as criteria for inclusion as a data source. From these documents, researchers identified individuals, business, and organizations of influence to the Congress and secured personal accounts, conference programs, and institutional histories of such parties. Researchers analyzed data from both the congress and individuals to build a chronological list of themes relevant to the research objectives.

Both primary and secondary sources were utilized to obtain needed information to address the research objectives. Primary sources included newspaper articles in the *Kansas City Star* and the *Kansas City Weekly Star*, whose editor was instrumental in the formation of the national congress. Additional primary sources included personal diaries, programs from the convention, Federal Board for Vocational Education reports and documents, books, organizational histories, and texts of speeches given by prominent leaders. Secondary sources included websites, newspaper articles, and journals. Information was obtained from locations such as the *Journal of Agricultural*

*Education*, the Missouri Historical Society, the American Royal, the *Agricultural Education Magazine*, the National FFA Organization's archives, and the University of Missouri Library. Sources were subject to both internal and external criticism. External criticism was controlled by the use of newspaper articles, federal documents, national databases, and historical records of organizations involved which were written by professionals at the time of the event's occurrence. Internal criticism was facilitated through comparing historical accounts of the same events from different authors and types of artifacts.

### Findings

The findings section is divided into chronological themes which highlight the major events that lead from the formation of the National Congress of Vocational Agriculture Students to the Future Farmers of America in Kansas City, Missouri.

#### Early Contests in Agricultural Education

Youth in vocational agriculture classes began formal competition in the Midwest in the form of corn-growing clubs and in the South as cotton-growing clubs early in the 20th century (Hummel & Hummel, 1913). Records showed state-wide judging contests were facilitated for vocational students in Virginia and Alabama in 1919, and in North Carolina, Nebraska, and New Mexico in 1920 (Tenney, 1978). In Virginia, local judging winners were sent as a team to compete at the state fair in Richmond, where they engaged in competition to determine the best judging team in the state. These interschool vocational contests served as the first type of recognition for students' outstanding abilities related to in-school agricultural instruction (Virginia FFA, 2011).

The grassroots development of secondary vocational agriculture judging contests did not go unnoticed by national leaders of vocational education. In 1924, the National Society for Vocational Education appointed a special committee to investigate the possibility of hosting a national dairy judging contest specifically for vocational students, to be chaired by C. H. Lane, and included representatives from agricultural extension and state supervisors of agriculture. The judging contest would be held in conjunction with the 1925 National Dairy Show in Indianapolis (Stimson & Lathrop, 1954), and included a vocational exhibit (Federal Board for Vocational Education, 1925). After committee inquiry, W. E. Skinner, general manager of the National Dairy Show, presented the idea of a separate exhibition for vocational agriculture students to the Show's executive committee. The committee agreed to host a separate dairy contest for students in vocational agriculture, on the condition the show was not responsible for providing prizes nor for funding the separate contest (Stimson & Lathrop, 1954). Vocational pupils were allowed to compete in the contest if they met four conditions:

- 1) judges were under 21 years of age;
- 2) judges had not competed in a dairy-judging contest of interstate or national character;
- 3) judges had not exceeded four years of training in any approved vocational course in agriculture in less than college grade; [and]
- 4) judges were, at the time the vocational team was selected by the State supervisor of agriculture, a bona fide vocational pupil enrolled in either an all-day, part-time, or evening class in vocational agriculture. (Federal Board for Vocational Education, 1925, p. 120)

Seventeen states competed in the first National Vocational Dairy Judging Contest held at the National Dairy Show at Indianapolis, Indiana on October 12, 1925 (Tenney, 1978). Four major dairy breed associations and dairy businesses donated prizes for judging winners. The top

individual in the judging contest was Arthur Kothe from Keytesville, Missouri (Stimson & Lathrop, 1954).

In 1925, the national contest committee reported the success of the vocational dairy judging contest to the National Society for Vocational Education at a meeting in Cleveland, Ohio (Stimson & Lathrop, 1954). Many states had organized both livestock and dairy judging competitions for vocational youth, and some states, including Illinois, had organized district qualifying structure to select teams for the state competition (Federal Board for Vocational Education, 1926). States in the southern region were engaging in contests featuring cotton growing, essay-writing, and livestock judging. "Nearly every state in the [union] holds an annual judging contest of some kind" (Federal Board for Vocational Education, 1926, p. 81). Contests included judging farm crops, repairing Ford cars, and agricultural mechanics contests. Arkansas students matched production hens in an egg-laying contest; horticulture, dairy foods (Babcock test), and a shop work contest were also held on a state level. Other vocational-specific contests in 1925 included a potato judging contest for students of Washington, Oregon, and Idaho; Idaho leaders also facilitated a transportable state-wide seed and grain judging contest, as sponsored by Union Pacific Railroad (Federal Board for Vocational Education, 1926).

In his 1925 report, Dr. Lane acknowledged many students were judging at separate vocational livestock judging contests in Portland's Pacific International (35 teams), the Rocky Mountain Livestock Show, and the Denver Livestock Show. Students from Washington and Wyoming traveled to Chicago in 1925 to compete in the non-collegiate division of the International Livestock Judging Contest (Federal Board for Vocational Education, 1926). At this meeting, another committee, chaired by Dr. C. H. Lane, was appointed to investigate hosting another vocational judging contest at the 1926 National Dairy Show in Detroit. In addition, the committee was charged with arranging a similar vocational student judging contest, specifically for livestock, at the 1926 International Livestock Exposition in Chicago (Stimson & Lathrop, 1954).

The International Exposition in Chicago had hosted a non-collegiate judging contest (Tenney, 1978) which included vocational students and others (Federal Board for Vocational Education, 1926) since 1921. The Federal Board committee decided to offer a national livestock judging contest for state winners at the International Exposition. In this contest, the winning vocational team from each state would compete as a separate group for national honors. However, when the Federal Board committee presented this proposal, the Board of the International Exposition objected. The chief concern, raised by Dean of Agriculture Curtis of Iowa State College, was the use of competition livestock for the judging contest. Undaunted by Curtis' objection, the committee secured commitments from external groups to provide non-show livestock specifically for the judging contest. The Ohio State University agreed to provide sheep, Michigan State College would provide hogs, the University of Illinois would bring cattle, and the Union Stockyards in Chicago would be in charge of bringing horses to the event (Stimson & Lathrop, 1954).

The special committee prepared a revised statement of reasons justifying a separate vocational contest, addressing the concerns raised by Dean Curtis. The statement was submitted to the International Livestock Exposition Board of Directors and was read at a board meeting on April 28, 1926. The board, however, decided to continue the current non-collegiate contest and voted against a separate vocational contest (Stimson & Lathrop, 1954).

### **Kansas City Opens Doors to Youth**

After this rejection, Dr. C. H. Lane traveled to Kansas City, Missouri to discuss the idea of a national vocational livestock judging contest with representatives from the American Royal

Livestock Show, the Kansas City Chamber of Commerce, the *Kansas City Star*, and various breed organizations in the Kansas City, Missouri area (Stimson & Lathrop, 1954; Tenney, 1978). In May of 1926, C. H. Lane spent two days meeting with local agricultural leaders. These meetings yielded two agreements:

- 1) The officials at the American Royal Livestock Show, the Kansas City Chamber of Commerce, and various breed associations enthusiastically offered to host a national livestock judging contest and promised every means at their disposal to make the event a success.
- 2) The officials agreed to host a separate contest for vocational students, provide judges, facilities, trophies, animals, and clerical help for the contest to be held on November 15 and 16, 1926. (Stimson & Lathrop, 1954, p. 579)

The federal board suggested the national livestock contest should be patterned after the 1925 national dairy contest. In addition, the host parties agreed to create a National Congress of Vocational Agriculture Students in conjunction with the inaugural vocational livestock judging contest in Kansas City, Missouri (Federal Board for Vocational Education, Annual Report, 1926). On May 22, 1926, the special committee recommended to the federal board to accept the American Royal's invitation. The committee then sought and received approval of the national contest from the Federal Board of Vocational Education, the Secretary of Agriculture, and Dr. C. W. Warbuton, Director of Extension for the United States Department of Agriculture (Stimson & Lathrop, 1954). Fifteen days later, on June 7th, 1926, Dr. Lane sought and received approval from Dr. Warbuton to conduct the contest through the special committee under the auspices of the office of the USDA. On June 24, 1926, Dr. Lane sent out a letter to state supervisors announcing the contest and to seek commitment to participate from state supervisors of vocational agricultural education:

The committee has decided to accept the offer of the officials of the American Royal Livestock Show and provide a contest and program at Kansas City, November 15 and 16. It is believed that we should make this contest national in scope and of sufficient importance to cause the officials of the American Royal to feel that it is worth their while to set up a separate contest and program for our group. What are the prospects for your State being represented at Kansas City? Announcements concerning details of the contest will be sent to state supervisors of vocational agriculture in the course of a couple of weeks. Sincerely yours, C. H. Lane. (Stimson & Lathrop, 1954, p. 580)

### **The Journey to Kansas City**

In November of 1926, agricultural youth from across the country converged in Kansas City, Missouri to compete in the first national livestock judging contest organized specifically for vocational students. Vocational students were housed in the Hotel Baltimore, while the 4-H youth stayed at the Commonwealth Hotel. Each youth group was housed with both their leader and a special chaperone. Event organizers sorted students by region to make them feel comfortable and reduce feelings of homesickness. Vocational students traveled to Kansas City from as far away as California, Michigan, Minnesota, Louisiana and Pennsylvania to participate in the American Royal Livestock Show vocational judging event. State champion teams from 22 states competed in the livestock judging contest (Educating for the Farm, 1926).

Students and chaperones traveled to Kansas City by vehicle and locomotive. The team from Idaho chose to travel by stock train rather than passenger car to avoid the expense of railroad fare.

However, at Denver, the students and chaperone were forced to abandon the stock train in favor of a more expensive passenger train, as the stock train would have arrived in Kansas City after the conclusion of the contest. Many who attended the 1926 American Royal were sponsored financially by local civic clubs or by the communities or states they represented. The vocational judging team from Willowa, Oregon raised \$600 by popular subscription to finance the trip to Kansas City for their team, which included three student judges, one alternate judge, and a coach. Community members in Santa Rosa, California donated \$171 to each student, which offset their entire cost of the trip. (A Parade of Youth Tonight, 1926).

### Youth in Kansas City

The 1926 American Royal Livestock show was both largest gathering of young farmers at a livestock show in the United States and the inauguration of the National Vocational Agriculture Congress. More than 2,000 boys and girls registered as American Royal Livestock Show delegates, which included student judges and youth livestock exhibitors. Of the 2,000 youth, 1,524 were vocational agriculture students and 500 were members of 4-H clubs (All Gather at Royal, 1926). Twenty-two teams of vocational agriculture students judged classes of cattle, swine, sheep, and horses at the American Royal on Monday, November 15, 1926, starting at 8:00 am (Paxton, 1999). W. J. Kennedy, from St. Joseph, Missouri, served as the official for the contest. W. L. Nelson, from Columbia, Missouri, served as the contest superintendent (Club Honor to Oklahoma, 1926).

In addition to the judging events, agricultural youth from the National Congress of Vocational Agriculture students and the 4-H Royal Congress participated in several other events in Kansas City during their stay. Kansas City businesses and American Royal leaders planned a “splendid educational program” for both male and female youth (The National Livestock Shows, 1926, p. 6). The students attended banquets, traveled on sightseeing trips, and enjoyed entertainment throughout Kansas City (Junior Farmers at the Star, 1926). The activities on Monday, November 16, 1926, included a parade of more than 1,300 boys, including members of 22 state winning vocational livestock judging teams, in the Tan-Bark arena during the American Royal Horse Show. Each school’s livestock judging team carried an identification banner; the students were preceded by a band and bagpipes of Scottish Highlanders. After the youth parade, James E. Gorman, President of the Rock Island Railroad, spoke to the crowd, then exhibitors led a parade of cattle valued at approximately 1 million dollars. (A Parade of Youth Tonight, 1926)

The 1926 congress program also included entertainment for its participants. On Tuesday, the *Kansas City Weekly Star* hosted a dinner for congress participants at 5:45pm in the Pompeian room at the Hotel Baltimore. W. A. Cochel, a farmer and editor of the *Weekly Kansas City Star*, presided as toastmaster at the dinner. Guests at the dinner included more than 900 vocational agriculture students and 400 members of 4-H clubs. Featured guests included John R. Tomson, President of the American Royal; George A Collett, President of the Kansas City Stockyards Company; Congressman W. L. Nelson of Columbia, Missouri; Dr. C. H. Lane, Chief of Agricultural Education; and Will Rogers, the keynote speaker (Will Rogers at Royal, 1926). Will Rogers was invited to speak to the group by his friend Cochel, (Knopp, Potts, & Holloway, 2008). A telegram to the *Weekly Star* from Rogers, sent from Spartanburg, South Carolina, told of Rogers’ pleasure in being asked to entertain the young farmers. (Will Rogers at Royal, 1926)

At the banquet, Mr. Rogers spoke for more than an hour, to the great delight of the youth in attendance. A few minutes before Will spoke, youth from Oklahoma sang a song which brought a smile to the native Oklahoman. Rogers opened his remarks by pointing out he had arrived to the dinner late and hadn’t eaten anything, so if his talk was rotten, he didn’t owe them anything (Rogers

Jokes at Farmer, 1926). Rogers also shared his thoughts on the importance of vocational agriculture classes:

I was introduced as a farmer. That's not right. I've had a farm for 20 years and haven't made the taxes yet. The only reason I still got that farm is that I can act the fool...In a more serious vein, more was being accomplished along agricultural lines than in any other field of instruction. When you all finish your course, you know much more than your grandfather or father does about farms. You can't say that about other lines. (Rogers Jokes at Farmer, 1926, p.2)

Dr. C. H. Lane announced the contest winners following Rogers' talk. The team from Oklahoma placed first, the Washington team placed second, Arkansas placed third, Texas fourth, and Ohio fifth (Club Honor to Oklahoma, 1926). Oliver Newton, from Abbott, New Mexico was honored as the top individual judge and received a \$500 scholarship from the Kansas City Merchants Association, awarded by W.I. Drummond, chairman of the board of governors of the American Farm Congress. Drummond also awarded a check for \$300 to Howard Lindstrom from Fairfield, Washington as second high individual, and \$200 to Cecil Fry, third individual, from Ponca City, Oklahoma. In addition to the livestock judging contest, William Woods, of Bowling Green, Missouri was awarded the Kansas City Stockyards trophy in the ton litter contest (American Royal Juniors in Big Congress, 1926).

### **Youth's Effect on the American Royal**

The youth who attended the American Royal brought with them an excitement which was felt throughout the American Royal Livestock Show and facility. Observers noted boys cheering in the arena, singing school songs, walking through the exhibits, and inspecting the livestock in the sheep pens and walkways (Educating for the Farm, 1926).

Beyond the judging events, the American Royal provided additional educational opportunities for rural students who had traveled to Kansas City. More than 1,000 youth visited the headquarters of the *Kansas City Star* on Wednesday, November 17, 1926 (Junior Farmers at the Star, 1926). George A. Collett, chairman of the Executive committee of the American Royal, noted students learned valuable lessons in animal production and the value of Kansas City as an agricultural market during their visit (All Gather at Royal, 1926). Collett recognized the livestock show was the attraction and was a reason students traveled to Kansas City, but the education and entertainment provided by the business people of Kansas City contributed to the great success of the inaugural congress (All Gather at Royal, 1926).

### **Growth in the Congress**

The number of students registered for the American Royal Livestock Show and congress increased in 1927, as did the number of states represented, number of activities. American Royal officials also added a national vocational meats judging contest. In all, more than 1,600 vocational students registered for the 1927 Vocational Agricultural Congress in Kansas City. That November, vocational agriculture livestock judging teams from 27 states and meats judging teams from 17 states traveled to a chilly Kansas City, Missouri (Student Judging a Feature, 1927).

On Monday at 8:00 am, the National Vocational Student Livestock Judging Contest began in the main arena of the American Royal. Mr. J.A. Linke, Federal agent in charge of Vocational Education in Agriculture for the North Central States, served as superintendent of the livestock contest. At 2:00 pm, 17 high school teams participated in the National Vocational Meat Judging



Contest, headed by Mr. Lester B. Pollum of Topeka, Kansas (Student Judging a Feature, 1927). At the completion of the judging event, contestants enjoyed a buffet-style dinner at the Royal building, sponsored by the Kansas City Chamber of Commerce. At 8:30 pm, vocational students marched in a parade and watched the horse show in the American Royal Tan-Bark arena (Students Throng the Royal, 1927).

Tuesday morning's agenda included a tour of the Kansas City Stockyards, making motion pictures; and at noon, students toured the Armour and Company Packing Plant (Students Throng the Royal, 1927). Dr. Lane described his satisfaction with the 1927 congress: "It takes some time to build the congress to the point at which we are aiming, but we are making progress and we are happy over the treatment we have received here" (Students Throng at Royal, 1927, p. 2). At the awards banquet, Lane announced the results of the livestock and judging contests. The top individual in the livestock judging contest was Gordon Reese of Hillsboro, Texas. He was presented a \$500 scholarship from the Kansas City Stockyards. The second high individual was James Kyle from Rural Retreat, Virginia. Mr. Kyle received a \$300 scholarship from the Kansas City Stockyards. The third place individual was Willie Martin from Merrimec, Oklahoma; he was awarded a \$200 scholarship from the Kansas City Stockyards. The top teams in the livestock contest included: 1) Oklahoma; 2) Texas; 3) California, 4) Virginia; and 5) Colorado (Record in Boys' Congress, 1927). In the meats judging contest, the top individual was Paul Davies from Manhattan, Kansas; second high individual was H. Johns from Lodi, California; and third high individual was Billy Daniels from Manhattan, Kansas. In the team competition, top honors went to the Kansas team, followed by teams from California, Kentucky, Missouri, and Colorado, respectively (Record in Boys' Congress, 1927).

Wednesday's congress agenda was filled with opportunities for both education and entertainment. Students visited the Southwestern Bell telephone building, then toured the Kansas City Sears-Roebuck and Company building. Students attended a matinee on Wednesday afternoon. That evening, students were guests at a Kansas City, Kansas Chamber of Commerce dinner at Ararat Temple (Student Judging a Feature, 1927).

A constitution and bylaws for the national congress were adopted in 1927. The constitution outlined rules and regulations for the livestock and meats judging contests. Each contest division included rules regarding the organization and control of the contest, eligibility of the contestants, superintendents, judges, contestant expectations, classes to be judged, and educational resources available (Federal Board for Vocational Education, 1927). Although the document was identified as Misc. 526 of the Federal Board of Vocational Education (Stimson & Lathrop, 1954), the original copy was titled as Misc. 826, written by a committee including Dr. C. H. Lane, chairman; Ray Fife, Ohio; Guy E. James, Missouri; William Kerr, Idaho; and E.B. Nelms, Oklahoma (Federal Board for Vocational Education, 1927).

Other business conducted at the 1927 congress included adoption of an official cap for vocational agriculture students. This blue and gold cap, the ceremonial colors of the American Royal Livestock Show, was adopted by the American Vocational Association as the official cap for vocational agriculture students throughout the United States (Stimson & Lathrop, 1954).

### **Formation of the Future Farmers of America**

Out of the American Royal livestock show this year will grow a national organization of vocational agriculture students, to be known as Future Farmers of America. The organization will be perfected at 2:30 pm tomorrow at the Hotel Baltimore as an outgrowth of the 3<sup>rd</sup> annual National Congress of Vocational

Agriculture Students. The organization has been active the last 2 years, since its founding in Virginia, but it has been a state and local organization. Now its widening scope makes a national organization feasible, and such will be accomplished tomorrow. Representatives of approximately 25 states will join in the new league for the promotion of agriculture among high school students. (Future Farmers to Band, 1928, p. 2)

By the spring of 1928, representatives attending regional agricultural education conferences had discussed and adopted definite proposals defining the type and kind of vocational agriculture student organization they desired. At the conference of Southern States, state supervisors and teacher trainers submitted a resolution recommending each state develop a state vocational youth organization, with the explicit intention of using state organizations to build a regional or national federation (Tenney, 1978). During the summer of 1928, a committee was formed to draft a constitution. C. H. Lane charged W. T. Spanton of Missouri with the assignment of constructing the temporary constitution to obtain a charter under the corporate laws of Virginia (Johnson, 1971). Spanton's work, in cooperation with the other committee members, was largely based on the constitution of the Future Farmers of Virginia (Tenney, 1978).

More than 2,700 vocational agriculture students and 4-H club members participated in the 1928 American Royal Livestock Show (The Greatest American Royal, 1928). Thirty states were represented in Kansas City, Missouri at the third congress. At 5:30 pm on Saturday, November 17th, the Kansas City, Kansas Chamber of Commerce hosted a banquet for exhibitors and members of the judging teams, followed by a horse show in the Tan-Bark Arena at the American Royal. Sunday's proceedings began with a church service at 10:30 am, followed by a concert at 2:00 pm, an automobile tour of Kansas City, sponsored by the Kansas City Implement, Hardware, and Tractor Club, and a 7:00 pm conference of coaches and officials, with J.A. Linke presiding (Program, 1928). Monday's activities included an 8:00 am start for the livestock judging contest and a 2:00 pm start for the meats judging contest.

The FFA board of trustees held a meeting on November 18, 1928. In attendance were Dr. Lane, and Messrs, Maltby, Linke, Groseclose, and Sampson. At this meeting, trustees prepared for the work of the organization by provided keys to each state, discussing dues, preparing a handbook, awarding keys to American Farmers, the nominating committee, and the FFA program of work for 1928-29 (Groseclose, 1929). On Tuesday, November 20 at 2:30 pm, the first meeting of the National Future Farmers of America was called to order by Dr. C. H. Lane in the Hotel Baltimore (Groseclose, 1929). Dr. Lane outlined the aims and purposes of the FFA organization. Delegates heard a speech from J. C. Swift, President of the American Royal, where he posited how the American Royal had long since ceased to be merely a horse and cattle show. Students were entertained by a poem reading by John F. Case, author of "*Tom of Peace Valley*". Eight American Farmers were named at the first congress, a constitution was adopted, and Leslie Applegate and five regional officers were elected to national office (Hail Future Farmers, 1928).

The work of C. H. Lane was instrumental to the success of the National Congress of Vocational Agriculture Students and the eventual founding of the Future Farmers of America. "No organization has even been formed with a greater promise for productive work than the Future Farmers" (Hail Future Farmers, 1928, p.3). Dr. Lane was named the first national advisor of the Future Farmers of America.

## Discussion

Many separate events in the early 1900s led to the formation of the Future Farmers of America. With the passage of the Smith-Hughes Act in 1917, student numbers in vocational agriculture programs quickly increased (Hillison, 1987). By 1926, agriculture classes were in 25% of schools, providing instruction to more than 100,000 students (Educating for the Farm, 1926). Boys' and girls' clubs further influenced the formation of the Future Farmers (Uricchio et al., 2013). However, one cannot overlook the important contribution of the National Congress of Vocational Agriculture Students and related judging events in the formation of the Future Farmers of America. Judging events were important to the organization's formation, and much of the structure and tradition we see today in the National FFA, especially National FFA Convention, can be traced to those early days in Kansas City, Missouri.

Agricultural business and industry partnership were essential to the formation and continued success of the national judging contests and the national congress. The judging contests and national congress were created through a partnership forged by Lane with livestock breed organizations and Kansas City, Missouri business leaders. Kansas City businesses provided agricultural tours, speakers, livestock expositions, awards, and meal sponsorships to congress' participating students.

W.A. Cochel, editor of the *Kansas City Weekly Star*, was a key contributor to the success of the congress. Cochel publicly supported the congress as banquet toastmaster and through detailed accounts of the congress in his newspaper. Cochel also contributed privately to the success by securing Will Rogers as the keynote speaker for the awards banquet. The *Kansas City Star* played an important role in both securing and supporting the national congress, the judging events, and subsequent creation of the National FFA Organization. In 1929, The *Kansas City Star* awarded Carlton Patton \$1000 in recognition of his achievement as American Star Farmer. The award was sponsored by the *Star* for twenty years, before being taken over by the National FFA Foundation. The award still carries the *Star's* name to this day. (Tenney, 1978). The youth judging contest provided a means for agricultural businesses to financially reward vocational agriculture programs and students. Today, the National FFA Foundation facilitates industry support for FFA activities; in 2014, the FFA Foundation raised more than \$23,000,000 in donations to support youth programming (National FFA, 2016a).

The national judging events and congress provided unique educational opportunities for participants. Student judges who traveled to Kansas City learned about animal agriculture production by viewing superior livestock and comparing their placings with professional livestock judges. Congress tours taught students about how livestock were marketed and processed. Students learned how Ford Motor Company, Southwestern Bell, and Sears & Roebuck provided services to rural Americans. Other unique educational opportunities included guest speakers, banquets, livestock shows, travel, and interaction with youth from across the country. The Congress, as described by Dr. Lane, Mr. Collett, and Mr. Cochel, was intentionally organized to provide educational opportunities for students. Today's National FFA convention continues to provide educational opportunities through guest speakers, industry tours, judging events, workshops, and its career show.

Today, much like the initial congress, judging competitions are an integral part of the National FFA Convention. Judging events have evolved to reflect the broadening scope of secondary agricultural education and are now known as Career Development Events (CDEs). The National FFA hosts 26 different CDEs at the National level (National FFA Organization, 2016b).

Nationwide, almost 70% of FFA members have participated in a CDE (Talbert & Ballschweid, 2006).

The National FFA Organization has assumed the leadership role in developing and improving CDEs (National FFA Organization, 2016b). Under the purview of the National FFA, CDE superintendents seek the advice of agricultural industry experts for planning the content and structure of today's competitions. This collaboration not only influences the events but can also have a trickledown effect on curricular decisions at all levels within school based agricultural education programs. Within the secondary agriculture classroom context, CDEs provide students real-world application of the curriculum, deeper understanding of agricultural careers, and networking opportunities with agricultural professionals (Connors, 2004; Lundry, Ramsey, Edwards, & Robinson, 2015). Based on this rationale, at least one state uses CDEs as an industry-recognized assessment of learning for agricultural program completers (Busdieker, 2016). If agriculture teachers agree a competitive environment enhances a students' ability to learn, and if career development events are an application of the curriculum (Lundry et. al., 2014), then to what extent does the structure and content of CDEs at the national level drive agricultural curricular decisions at the local level? Future research should investigate to what extent agricultural teachers make curricular decisions guided by the structure and content of CDEs.

*Will CDEs still be important tomorrow?* In 1988, the National Research Council suggested agricultural education must change from a vocational focus to an agricultural literacy focus if it were to survive (National Research Council, 1988). In response, many secondary agriculture programs have adopted a dual focus on developing both career skills (content) and life skills of agriculturally literate citizens (context), reflecting the disparate career interests of their students (Roberts & Ball, 2009). As a result, student enrollment and FFA membership has steadily increased. Some traditional CDEs have changed little from the vocationally focused, career development skill events hosted prior to 1988. However, the National FFA has espoused a desire to cultivate "events and awards that stimulate instruction in emerging areas" (National FFA Organization, 2016b, p. iii). However, do current CDE skills reflect both purposes of agricultural education? Have the purpose(s) of CDEs changed? Researchers should query former CDE participants who work in non-agricultural careers to determine how and to what extent their skill development within agricultural contexts facilitated their career success. If future research highlights unconnected aspects to CDEs, then the significance of CDEs should be recognized. An element of competition in our agriculture instruction is an important tradition for our agriculture programs, which is still espoused today (Martin & Kitchel, 2013); therefore, we must find the correct balance between tradition and progress in agriculture programs, including the importance of yesteryear's judging contests and tomorrow's CDEs.

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