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## Women In Utah History

Patricia Lyn Scott, Linda Thatcher

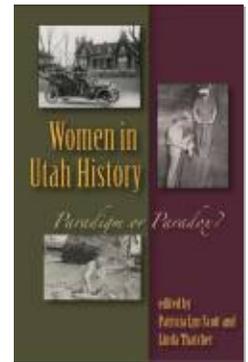
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## The Professionalization of Farm Women

1890–1940

Cynthia Sturgis

“Household manager, cook, laundress, seamstress, dressmaker, nurse and teacher, to say nothing of the sacred duties of wife and mother: are these duties not sufficiently varied and important to require special preparation for their performance? In what other profession would an individual be allowed to practice without experience, without training or knowledge?”<sup>1</sup>

The eighty-five farm women who heard Dalinda Cotey speak those words at the Farmers’ Institute held December 12, 1905, in Mount Pleasant, Sanpete County, no doubt appreciated this formal recognition of their many responsibilities as homemakers. It would be interesting to know their response to the rest of the statement, however. For Mrs. Cotey, a faculty member at the Utah Agricultural College in Logan, was expressing a new but increasingly powerful philosophy: that the role of the farm wife was changing, and must change, in response to the needs and values of modern industrial society. Her query was both a challenge and a threat. Under the new order, women would find their work elevated to the status of profession; but, increasingly, they must defer to outside experts who alone could instruct them in the proper way to keep a home. Decreasing autonomy was the price of a higher life-style.

Farm women in Utah, like those elsewhere in the nation, experienced an important shift in their role during the early years of the twentieth century. Their function changed from the predominantly productive one which rural women had traditionally exercised to a more diversified, consumption-oriented, though still complementary position often defined as that of “household manager.” Significantly, this role paralleled that of urban women, who were becoming the models farm wives would be exhorted to copy. Farm wives, along with their husbands, needed to adopt more “modern” and scientific techniques, to use new technology, and to rely upon the advice of trained specialists. The goal, then, was not merely a revolution in behavior but also

in values; farm wives must not change not only their activities but also their self-definition.

This change was promoted by a rising class of experts in governmental and private agencies which proliferated in the first decades of the twentieth century. The increasing respect accorded business and science was reflected in the stress reformers placed on managerial techniques, record-keeping, and experimentation. The growing influence of large-scale organizations such as the interlocking governmental programs for agricultural education and the burgeoning network of electric utility companies and retail merchandisers provided a major shaping force. But the call for modernization also addressed real and deeply felt needs in the agricultural sector. Despite a so-called "Golden Age" just prior to the First World War, American farmers in the early twentieth century experienced both a relative and absolute decline in prestige, power, and standard of living, particularly in comparison with the rising urban population. The result was a widely recognized "flight from the farm" which had drawn the attention of reformers in and out of government since the presidency of Theodore Roosevelt.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, agencies established by the federal government would provide much of the personnel and energy for the campaign to reshape the roles of farmers and their wives.

While Utah reflected these national trends, certain characteristics unique to the state affected farmers in significant ways. In Utah, perhaps to a greater degree than most other areas, the organizations promoting change were tightly interrelated and were centered in the Utah Agricultural College at Logan, later Utah State University. The ideas emanating from the UAC, as it was often called, therefore reached the state's inhabitants through a variety of public and even private bodies, thus providing significant reinforcement of a coherent set of policies and proposals. The relatively homogeneous culture and prevalent influence of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons) may also have allowed new practices and principles to spread widely and rapidly. And finally, the residential plan of the Mormon village, which located a substantial proportion of farmers' homes in the village rather than in the country, meant that access to electricity and its benefits came earlier to Utah's farm wives than to those elsewhere in the nation.<sup>3</sup> All of these factors would be critical in reshaping the lives of farm women in Utah in the twentieth century.

The federal-state impetus for change had begun as early as the 1862 passage of the Morrill Land Grant College Act, which provided federal support for the establishment of agricultural and mechanical colleges in the western states. The 1887 Hatch Act created an affiliated network of experiment stations. The Utah Agricultural College was founded in Logan in 1890, primarily to train young men for farming, engineering, or other related careers. It also offered a domestic arts program as one of its four "distinctive lines of instruction." Women students took the same basic two-year course of study as the men (excluding shop, farm labor, or horticulture) and with the substitution



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First faculty of the Utah Agricultural College (Utah State University) located in Logan. Right to left; standing: E. S. Richman, J. M. Sholl, Abby L. Marlatt, Mrs. C. I. Goodwin, H. L. Everett, A. A. Mills. Sitting: W. P. Cutter, President J. W. Sanborn, and J. T. Caine, Jr., 1890.

of French for German in the language division. Special studies for women included cooking, sewing, music and painting, “belles-lettres” (literature and elocution), hygiene, and dairying.<sup>4</sup> This curriculum reflected the educators’ vision of the farm wife’s proper role. In addition to her traditional responsibility for feeding and clothing the family, tending poultry, and managing the dairy, the modern woman should be sensitive to scientific standards of cleanliness and provide a rich cultural atmosphere for her family. Only one of the college’s eight original instructors was a woman; and Miss Abby L. Marlatt constituted the entire domestic arts faculty, presiding over the thirty-three women who enrolled with their 136 male counterparts in Utah Agricultural College’s first class.<sup>5</sup> The year 1903 saw the formal establishment of a school of home economics.<sup>6</sup> By 1911, six faculty members were teaching domestic science, and enrollment had risen to over a hundred.<sup>7</sup> The Branch Normal School located in Cedar City in southwestern Utah became an adjunct of the Utah Agricultural College in 1913.<sup>8</sup> Eventually both regular four-year college courses and a shorter two-year vocational program became available at the Logan campus. Course offerings also grew more diverse. The 1914–15 catalog lists four possible majors in the School of Home Economics: food and dietetics, domestic arts, home sanitation

and construction, and art.<sup>9</sup> Enrollment in these areas had risen to 115 of the 467 students attending the college during 1913–14, up from ninety-four out of 456 the previous term.<sup>10</sup>

Domestic arts received another boost with the opening of a Home Economics Practice House in 1917.<sup>11</sup> The expanding role of the department was represented by its sixteen faculty members (some on leave) in the 1919–20 catalog, several with B.S. degrees.<sup>12</sup> A new Home Economics Cottage on the college grounds replaced the rented Practice House by 1926–27 and represented the “expression of the institution’s home ideal,” allowing students to polish their skills in a simulated domestic atmosphere.<sup>13</sup> Despite such innovations, the number of faculty had fallen to five by 1928–29, and only 128 students out of the 1,222–member student body were enrolled in home economics classes.<sup>14</sup> The available majors were restructured to three: food and dietetics, textiles and clothing, and household administration.<sup>15</sup> This apparent decline in the department’s activities may be related to economic hard times; but it might also be due to the expansion of related activities beyond the campus itself.

The curriculum offered at the Utah Agricultural College clearly could reach only a fraction of the state’s rural women directly. Indeed, the overwhelming majority of graduating home economics students cited Logan as their home. The same concern held true for the more prominent men’s program as well. To address this problem, the Utah State Legislature had passed a law some twenty years earlier on March 28, 1896, which established annual “farmers’ institute” meetings to widen the influence of the college among the state’s agricultural population.<sup>16</sup>

Utah thus joined a national trend in the late 1800s and early 1900s toward simultaneous sociability and education for farmers.<sup>17</sup> While most of the sessions were directed toward farmers, women’s topics were presented in special meetings or joint sessions. A U.S. Department of Agriculture report published that year on “Farmers’ Institutes, 1903” notes that they were currently being held in all but three states and three territories, but that “in no two of the states are institutes organized in the same manner or conducted by the same methods. . . . This diversity is due to the fact that the work is new.”<sup>18</sup> Nationwide attendance in that year was estimated at over 900,000.<sup>19</sup> The first decade of the new century seems to have been the peak for the institute movement. Marilyn Irvin Holt, citing a federal study, argues that the program began to decline by 1914. That study reported 5,651 institutes in 1910, with sessions “exclusively for women” offered at 444 of the sessions in 16 states.<sup>20</sup>

Utah’s land-grant colleges, like others in the nation, provided most of the speakers for the regional meetings, which attracted substantial numbers. According to Utah institute records, some 6,441 men and women attended the sessions held between December of 1905 and March of 1906; the next year roughly 19,000 people turned out, and over 26,000 came to the traveling shows and institutes presented during the 1907–08 season.<sup>21</sup> Attendance varied,



*Courtesy Special Collections and Archives, Merrill Library, Utah State University.*

Farmers' encampment, looking west through a row of tents toward Old Main, Utah State University, located in Logan, November 13, 1923.

influenced perhaps by such factors as location, weather, and program; but the format proved successful, and by the mid-teens a typical "Farmers' Roundup and Housekeepers' Conference" might last more than a week.<sup>22</sup> Better roads and increased automobile ownership allowed more farmers to attend such meetings, generally held at a different site in each county every year. Improved mobility also prompted the first state-wide Farmers' Encampment meeting held at the Utah Agricultural College in Logan in 1921, with nearly a thousand of the state's farmers in attendance.<sup>23</sup> These encampments continued through the twenties, supplemented by smaller county sessions. In addition, special railroad cars carrying exhibits prepared at the college occasionally traveled across the region.<sup>24</sup> And in 1924 the Utah Agricultural College instituted a National Summer School to spread new agricultural techniques; 1,163 individuals from twenty-four states and five foreign countries journeyed to Logan to participate.<sup>25</sup>

Farming simultaneously received national promotion. The federal government entered the process again in 1914, with the passage of the Smith-Lever Act, formally establishing the Agricultural Extension Service. In many parts of the country, especially the South, activities of county agents predated the bill.<sup>26</sup> L. M. Windsor, who served as agent in Uintah County in 1911, may have been the first such official active in the northern and western states. The next year, Dr. Elmer G. Peterson became extension director in Utah and Gertrude McCheyne the "first woman specialist in charge of improvement of the associations."<sup>27</sup> Both were UAC faculty members. Amy Lyman, later the wife of M. C. Merrill, journeyed to Sanpete County as the state's first home demonstration agent in 1913, possibly one of the first in the northern and western states.<sup>28</sup>

The 1914 law formalized and promoted this statewide outreach program. Under the bill's provisions, extension agents would serve under a director affiliated with the State Agricultural College. These individuals were assigned to various counties in the state to provide farmers with the latest information about agricultural machinery and practices, teaching by persuasion and example. To aid rural women, the act also authorized the employment of female counterparts known as "home demonstration agents." While initially many areas received only county agents, the ultimate goal was to have both male and female representatives in each county. These teams, which in at least some cases might be husband and wife, required the sponsorship of a county agricultural organization.<sup>29</sup>

In Utah, as in many other states, the group which came to support extension work was the Farm Bureau.<sup>30</sup> Local (precinct-level) and then county farm bureau units had formed in many areas prior to the establishment of a statewide body in 1916; the Utah Farm Bureau Federation officially came into being in 1920.<sup>31</sup> The next year, the state was one of several joining together to form the American Farm Bureau Federation. By 1923, thirty-five states nationwide had Farm Bureaus; in Utah, over three thousand "locals" existed in fifteen counties.<sup>32</sup> The county organizations, representing several local bodies, sponsored the extension and home demonstration agents.

At all levels of its organization, the Farm Bureau formally recognized the complementary roles of men and women in agriculture. The constitutions of local chapters generally granted membership on a family basis, which recognized the economic realities of farm life and implied an equal role for women. In practice, female activity tended to center in the "Home and Community" sections of the groups, for which the home demonstration agent, when present, provided leadership and direction.<sup>33</sup> Women do not seem to have acted as officials of local farm bureaus or to have shaped county or state policy in a significant way outside of these particular bodies. And, as often occurs, the domestic concerns subsumed under the "home and community" heading were defined as peculiarly feminine interests and were generally left solely to the women.

The state and national bodies made some attempts to modify this segregation. A promotional publication for the Utah Farm Bureau Federation in the mid-1920s argued that "although the leadership of the Home and Community section has thus far been found among the women members of the Farm Bureau, yet it is not to be thought of as a section in which only women are interested and concerned, but as one phase of Farm Bureau work in which cooperation of men and women members is particularly desirable." The booklet added that the American Farm Bureau Federation, the parent group, had recently adopted a policy stating: "We recommend a full development of the home and community program and urge that county, state and national organizations place women on their governing board so that the whole program, social, economic,

legislative, and marketing, may be worked out by men and women together.”<sup>34</sup> Despite such rhetoric, the separation of functions remained.

In fact, women’s involvement in both extension-related and other Farm Bureau work continued to be seen as auxiliary to and less central than that of men. Home demonstrators were not present in every county served by male extension personnel. As late as 1939, for example, the state had twenty-nine agricultural agents but only eight home demonstration agents.<sup>35</sup> In such cases, the county agent coordinated the activities of the women in the local Farm Bureau chapter. These members might form their own groups to focus on sewing, canning, civic beautification, or other “appropriate” concerns. Whether or not a female agent was actually present in a given county, however, the Farm Bureau-Extension Service tie created another important avenue through which the educators at the Agricultural College could reach their targeted audience.

The farm press in Utah also allied itself with the Farm Bureau, the Extension Service, and the Utah Agricultural College. The statewide agricultural journal, originally titled the *Deseret Farmer* and, after 1912, the *Utah Farmer*, announced itself as the “official organ of the Utah Agricultural College Extension Division” throughout the ’teens and ’twenties. In 1918, the paper became officially affiliated with the Farm Bureau and acted as its formal sponsor after 1921.<sup>36</sup> The *Utah Farmer* regularly reported on the activities of the state, local, and national branches of the American Farm Bureau Federation, particularly during its most active period of expansion in the early 1920s. And from its inception, the journal provided regular columns of advice to women, often in addition to a recurring “Home” or “Home and Community” section. Faculty from the Utah Agricultural College domestic arts program contributed many of these essays. Through its news and editorial copy, then, the state’s farm press actively promoted reforms proposed by the Utah Agricultural College, the related Extension Service, and the Utah Farm Bureau Federation.

The advertising in such journals, as well as advertisements in community daily or weekly papers, also constituted a powerful educational force. Advertising, still a young art in the ’teens and ’twenties, began to move away from the fairly simple task of informing readers of the price, description, and availability of goods to the more aggressive and didactic role of arguing the necessity and explaining the function of the burgeoning number of new and unfamiliar products on the market.<sup>37</sup> Advertising copy generally upheld and reinforced the messages expressed in editorials and feature articles. This close connection grew even more obvious in journals such as the *Utah Farmer*, directed as it was toward a narrowly defined audience.

These private agencies—the Farm Bureau, the state’s farm press, and advertisers in such journals—supplemented the campaign for “modernization” of housekeeping methods which was spreading throughout the state’s lower schools as well. In an attempt to mold future generations and, it was hoped, to encourage their elders to profit by their example, the Utah Agricultural

College began promoting home economics clubs in the public schools as early as 1915, inviting high school groups to share in programs offered at the college's two campuses.<sup>38</sup> During the 1918–19 school year, for example, 112 students engaged in such “Junior Extension” work at Logan and fourteen at Cedar City locations; attendance was evenly divided between boys and girls.<sup>39</sup> Obviously, the program could reach only a fraction of the state's youth directly. They, however, would return to their own communities to serve as leaders for extension-affiliated agricultural and homemaking clubs.

Again the federal government encouraged the dissemination of modern agricultural and homemaking with the passage of the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917. This bill, given formal approval and support by the Utah State Legislature in 1919, promoted public school courses in agriculture, vocational training, and home economics by funding teachers for these subjects.<sup>40</sup> By 1920, the Utah Agricultural College catalog included extensive descriptions of course work required for such “Smith-Hughes” teachers, signaling its key role in the training of these educators.<sup>41</sup> “Domestic arts and science” classes, some begun prior to the passage of the act, spread throughout the high schools and even down to the elementary level. Home economics students in the upper divisions were often referred to as “Smith-Hughes girls” in the Sevier County School Board records of the period.

Related club work formed a major part of this educational experience. Groups connected with the schools became the precursors of the Future Farmers of America and Future Homemakers of America, and those affiliated with the Farm Bureau and Extension Service became the nucleus of the 4–H organization. The college at Logan provided training for adult club leaders as well. In 1917, J. C. Hogenson founded the state's first 4–H group, located on the Utah Agricultural College main campus. In 1919, the first 4–H Club Leaders' training school for adult volunteers took place there also.<sup>42</sup>

And the institution affected club members even more directly: In 1921, the college announced the start of an annual Junior Extension Service, whose purpose was to train high-school students to become project leaders in their local groups.<sup>43</sup> That first year, nine girls and five boys attended.<sup>44</sup> The program grew steadily, and in 1928, thirty-nine boys joined sixty-three girls at club leaders training school; forty-one women also traveled to the Logan campus to learn how to supervise the girls' organizations.<sup>45</sup> The interrelationship between the Extension service and the Farm Bureau at the adult level was echoed here, since county agents and home demonstrators often acted as club leaders too. In the words of the Agricultural College's catalog, “County Club agents are maintained for the purpose of organizing junior units of the farm bureaus and supervising and assisting the boys and girls in carrying out definite projects of the bureaus. Under this plan, the primary purpose is to develop leadership and train boys and girls in better methods of farm and home practice.”<sup>46</sup> The county club presidents were seen as the Farm Bureau leaders of tomorrow.



*Courtesy Special Collections and Archives, Merrill Library, Utah State University.*

4-H Club girls and their leader, Mrs. M. K. Jacobs at their canning, sewing and baking exhibit, Riverdale, 1918.

These structural innovations carried considerable significance for the changing roles and responsibilities of farm women in particular. Basic tasks such as cooking, sewing, laundering, and even table setting, which had previously been taught in the home through example and one-to-one contact between mother and daughter, became the province of professional educators. By making such courses a part of the curriculum, and by providing public support for after-school club work, the state tacitly promoted a shift in women's authority and influence. Responsibility for instruction in the most traditional of female tasks—the proper running of a household—had been removed from the home and placed in the hands of trained specialists, some of whom were not even married. And the revolution went even deeper: The explicit goal of such educators was for these youngsters, either directly or by example, to convert their backward parents to more modern forms of behavior. As the *Utah Farmer* noted in a 1925 discussion of the 4-H movement, “There’s an old saying that it is hard to teach old dogs new tricks, but fathers and mothers are quick to adopt the gospel and methods of better agriculture when they see their sons and daughters giving practical demonstrations of its worth.”<sup>47</sup> Where once the parent had trained the child, now the child was to instruct the parent.

The pacing as well as the content of education changed. Traditional practice tended to be conservative. Formal education, combining as it did the experience of several generations and individuals, could innovate at less risk, thereby accelerating the rate of change. In a few decades, the efforts of this new class of experts could affect entire generations of homemakers. It would

be erroneous to suggest that all those exposed to the new agenda adopted it immediately or wholeheartedly. But patterns of behavior which in a less centralized or literate society could take several generations to reshape might now change in a lifetime.

The values and practices promoted by these interrelated authorities posed a direct challenge to traditional assumptions. By comparing farm life with that in the city, reformers sought to focus rural discontent in favor of modernization. In their definition, homemaking became “household management”; and like any other skilled professional, the farm wife was advised to seek formal training. This urban, business-oriented model which stressed efficiency and planning naturally promoted the role of experts such as educators and scientists—outside authorities who would now direct the farm wife in the proper management of her sphere. As a result, the standard by which the housewife would be judged became stricter, and the emotional content of her work increased.

The use of an urban model to stimulate change in the agricultural sector had its roots in the declining prestige accorded rural life in the early twentieth century. Critics of farm living often pointed to its isolation, lack of cultural opportunities, poor level of health and sanitation, and absence of modern conveniences. These conditions, noted by Country Life Reformers in the early 1900s, only worsened after the onset of a nationwide agricultural depression in 1921.<sup>48</sup> Such handicaps were blamed for the much-discussed “flight from the farm” taking place during the ‘teens and ‘twenties.

The lure of the city and its special appeal to women seemed critical to many observers. As William Peterson, director of the Utah Agricultural College Experiment Station, noted in 1925, “It has been said by some that the movement from the country to the city is a women’s movement, and the reason for this is to avoid the hardships associated with the home in a country life.”<sup>49</sup> Advertisers of home improvements even used the contrast to promote their wares. Promising that the “CONVENIENCES OF THE CITY—the comforts of life—can be had on the farm,” one maker of electric pumping equipment noted, “City women live longer than women of the country. Why? Chiefly because of a difference in the home arrangement—a lack in the country of the conveniences that would make the day’s work a delight.”<sup>50</sup>

Rural beautification and improvement became standard remedies proposed to stem the outward flow of the farm population. As the *Utah Farmer* pointed out in a 1921 front-page article headed “The Home Is the Heart of the Farm”: “There are plenty of good reasons why everyone should aim to make the home attractive. Among them are the following: (1) It makes the family contented, and encourages the boy and the girl to stay on the farm. (2) It provides refreshing recreation for the family after the work of the day. (3) It increases the value of the farm. (4) It promotes health and happiness.”<sup>51</sup>

Extension and home demonstration agents joined with local Farm Bureaus to wage “Clean Home—Clean Town” campaigns throughout the

teens and twenties. Although all members of the community were urged to support efforts at civic beautification, much of the direction continued to come from Extension Service representatives and the “home and community” sections of the Farm Bureaus, organized and run by the women. The seeming appropriateness of this association of women and home improvement resulted in a strong identification of the movement with that gender. As the *Utah Magazine* confidently stated in its 1941 “Beautification Issue,” “Ladies seem to be especially adapt [sic] at getting things done in this respect.”<sup>52</sup>

The goal of such activity was to make the rural home as much like its urban counterpart as possible. To this end, farm families should plant lawns and flowers, rural villages should put in sidewalks and streetlights, and dwellings should be equipped with the latest in household conveniences. As one supporter put it:

The farm home should be made so convenient and inviting that the wife and mother would not exchange it for a city residence. The sense of isolation so often complained of in country homes is more often the result of out-of-date equipment rather than lack of near neighbors. . . . But labor-saving devices for the wife are necessities—just as much so as up-to-date plows and drills are necessities for the farmer. . . . A country home thus provided with modern conveniences would not readily be deserted for a home in the village, nor would wife and children voluntarily make the exchange.<sup>53</sup>

However, an additional difficulty in keeping girls “down on the farm” grew from the lack of outside job opportunities available there. As late as 1930, the U.S. Census listed most Utah women (nearly 95 percent) in rural-farm areas as “not gainfully employed.” The rural-non-farm, or village, count was slightly lower at almost 93 percent, as compared with the roughly 87 percent figure for urban areas. But the most striking differences appear in the comparison of those women who were classified as employed. Just over half of the rural-farm women worked at home, the overwhelming majority (82 percent) in agricultural occupations. In contrast, over 90 percent of the gainfully employed urban women worked away from home, as did the bulk (85 percent) of the rural-non-farm (village) women. Urban workers were most likely to be servants or waitresses, office workers, or professional or industrial workers. While some of the rural-farm women found work as waitresses and servants and others in professional jobs, nearly one-third fell into the category defined as “other,” probably meaning part-time seasonal, agriculture-related work. Rural-non-farm women, on the other hand, had their strongest representation in the servant/waitress category and the next highest percentage in the professional class, with an additional component working as saleswomen and office workers. Such a job profile reflects the role of rural villages as service centers for the agricultural hinterland and demonstrates the superior job opportunities for young women off the farm. Clearly, as late as 1930, farm women were the least likely to work

outside the home, and those who did either worked in agriculture or were concentrated in the lowest-paying occupations.<sup>54</sup>

In an effort to elevate the status of homemaking and make it more desirable, representatives of the Extension Service and the Utah Agricultural College repeatedly stressed its professional nature. Indeed, articles with titles such as “Housekeeping as a Profession” began to appear in the farm press during the ’teens, usually promoting education in the domestic arts.<sup>55</sup> It is significant, too, that the women’s sessions held during farmers’ institutes took the title “Housekeepers’ Conference.” The use of a business model by educators and reformers was pervasive. A writer in the *Utah Farmer* in 1921 presaged a later trend by querying “What Should [a] Housewife’s Salary Be?” and providing a dollars and cents answer: \$4,000 per year.<sup>56</sup> Then as now, such estimates were made less for practical purposes than to demonstrate more dramatically the importance of a housewife’s contribution to the family economy. The intended message could not be missed: Housekeeping was a highly skilled pursuit, one in which a woman could engage with pride. The author of one Extension Service Bulletin insisted: “The attitude of contempt hitherto assumed by society towards domestic duties indicates ignorance alike to their variety, their call for skill and their responsibility. It is even now giving place to the realization that these familiar duties are infinitely more varied and demand a far higher degree of intelligence than do the callings of stenographer, clerk, or factory-hand, which appeal so strongly to the young women today.”<sup>57</sup>

Granting formal job titles to different facets of women’s work reflected the business orientation that educators favored for the modern home. Dalinda Cotey noted that housewives should view themselves as nurses, teachers, and household managers, among a number of other positions. Rose H. Widtsoe, a member of the Utah Agricultural College Home Economics faculty, relied upon similar professional imagery in her 1920 *Utah Farmer* articles discussing “Efficient Household Purchasing.” As she put it, “Women spend nine-tenths of the money earned. If a specially [sic] trained purchasing agent is necessary to the success of a business enterprise, how much more necessary a well-trained purchasing agent is for the home.” Like all good business managers, farm wives should plan carefully, follow budgets, and promote efficiency wherever possible. Widtsoe, confident of the superiority of the scientific method, promised, “Every housekeeper may become an efficient household purchasing agent by continuous trying, by experimenting, and by study.”<sup>58</sup>

Increasingly, housewifery meant knowing how to shop wisely—that is, becoming an informed consumer. When authorities like Widtsoe stated that women “must be trained to buy commercially made products,” they spoke quite seriously. The list of required new knowledge was impressively complex and deserves quoting at length. Aside from the rudiments of choosing and cooking food,

an efficient purchasing agent should know the merits of various kinds of distribution methods, [such] as parcel post, mail order, co-operative buying and public market. She should realize the importance of knowing city, state and national laws governing the standards of various articles such as food, clothing and equipment and also the methods of handling raw and manufactured goods. She will search out the markets that are sanitary and well ordered, avoiding markets where food is exposed to flies and dust. She will learn the standard weaves of cotton, linen, and woolen materials and the points of judgment is [sic] determining household equipment. She will in fact learn the values of everything that comes into the house. . . . Another important qualification is to be able to detect food adulterations and malpractice among dealers, and to know the various trade labels and the most economical sizes of cans and other containers. In fact to be a good purchasing agent, the mother in the home must know her business. If she is to get the best returns for her money she must know values.<sup>59</sup>

But diligence and good intentions alone could not take the place of professional training in enlightened consumerism. The elevation of formal education in homemaking promoted the role of the expert. As a columnist for the “Home” section of the *Deseret Farmer* noted in 1911, “Isn’t it passing strange when we realize what an important profession housekeeping is—what it means to the home and community . . . that we expect a girl to grow up and without any special training become a first class homemaker?”<sup>60</sup> The staff of the Utah Agricultural College stood ready to fill that need. Advertisements for farmers’ institutes and articles describing course offerings at the school repeatedly identified the faculty as “experts” or “leading authorities” in their fields.<sup>61</sup> Such rhetoric, repeated by the Extension Service, the Farm Bureau, and the agricultural press, as well as the educational bureaucracy stimulated by the Smith-Hughes program, made it clear that no woman could adequately keep house without rigorous training by the proper authorities.

The primacy of the expert reflected the school’s curriculum, which stressed the importance of scientific instruction for the housewife. Utah Agricultural College’s initial catalog noted that “the chemistry or science, and the art of cooking will be taught.”<sup>62</sup> This tone continued. By 1916, the School of Home Economics offered, in addition to “Elementary Cooking” (prerequisite Chemistry 1), “Preparation of Foods and Food Study,” involving the “study of the composition of foods and the fundamental principles of nutrition”; a separate course on “Dietetics and Nutrition”; “Pathological Nutrition,” which dealt with preparing special diets for the “sick and convalescent”; and “Care and Feeding of Children.” A class on “Food Economics” ambitiously covered “The function and nutritive values of food, the cost of food in relation to the family budget . . . [and] practical results of the ‘pure food’ laws [plus] the preparation of meals combining foods according to dietetic, aesthetic, and economic standards.”<sup>63</sup>



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Branch Agricultural College (BAC) in Cedar City (Southern Utah University) home economics class showing co-eds learning how to make pies, ca. 1920.

Training extended beyond such traditional female chores as food preparation. That same year, in the “Home Construction and Sanitation Department,” students who had mastered Bacteriology 2 might learn “scientific principles and practices conducive to the maintenance of healthful conditions and their expression in house and environment” in a course entitled “Sanitation.” Practice in “Home Care of the Sick” supplemented discussions of “Home Laundering,” which included a “study of equipment for the home laundry” and “laundering processes.” The prerequisites for this class were Chemistry 2 and Bacteriology 1. And girls might round out their knowledge with “Household Administration,” which dealt with “the meaning of homemaking and home activities” and “their relation to the industrial world and to society at large”; it also included consideration of “standards of living, income and expenditures, savings, service and management.”<sup>64</sup>

One of the main thrusts of professional training was the need to acquire and understand modern household technology. College catalogs boasted that “special mention should be made of the well equipped home nursing laboratory, . . . additions and changes in the dietetics laboratory course,” and “the Home Economics cottage, serving primarily as a laboratory for the household management course . . . [which] makes it possible for senior students to apply and correlate the principles of home management, food engineering, household

accounting, home planning and interior decoration, etc.” Although the catalog went on to state that “considerable emphasis is placed also on the spiritual side of home-making in order that students may have an opportunity of studying its relative importance in family life,” science and technology clearly carried more weight.<sup>65</sup>

Both the Home Economics Cottage and its predecessor, the Practice House, introduced students to the latest in household equipment. For example, the earlier establishment featured both a coal range and one of the “up-to-date ranges [which] economizes fuel,” complete with the “Fireless Cooker.” As the promotional material for the project commented, “The students study the convenience and economy of electricity” on equipment “donated to the Practice House by the Utah Power and Light Company.”<sup>66</sup> The farm press also promoted modern household conveniences. Articles like “The Electrified Farm House” presented a litany of home improvements powered by electricity, ranging from room heaters and lights through “feed mixers and grinder[s] of all kind[s], bone cutters, electrical ranges, electrical fireless cooker, electric iron, toaster, coffee percolator, samavor [sic], table stove, chafing dish and curling iron,” plus “every task which could be done with motive power, including running the sewing machine.” While acknowledging that “comparatively few women will have homes as completely electrified as this,” the author insisted: “There are few homes where some electrification is not possible” and painted a glowing picture of how applying electrical power to the major tasks of washing, ironing, churning, sewing, and cooking would shift the bulk of a farm wife’s chores into the “light housekeeping class.”<sup>67</sup>

The *Utah Farmer* continued to print periodic articles extolling “Modern Light and Power for the Home” and discussing the important relationship of “Electricity and Farm Life” throughout the ’teens and ’twenties.<sup>68</sup> Writers pointed out the safety features as well as the labor-saving benefits connected with the use of such new technology versus old-fashioned oil lamps and candles. In the words of one convert to the new ways, “Electric lights about the farm house are just as delightful, from the standpoint of comfort and convenience, as they are in any city home. The relief from the care of the smoky, unsafe, kerosene lamps appeals to the housewife and she saves considerable time over the old way when she can light her home with electricity.”<sup>69</sup>

Not surprisingly, accompanying advertising reinforced these editorial messages. The Utah Power and Light Company sponsored frequent ads for electrical service and also sold appliances requiring it. A typical example is a January 1925 message proclaiming:

Your resolution for 1925 Should Be—

To take the drudgery out of housekeeping in your home. Put modern electric servants to do the work. They mean health and happiness for women—and a cleaner, brighter and more delightful home for the whole family.

Electric Ranges  
Electric Washers  
Electric Ironers  
Electric Vacuum Cleaners  
Electric Irons.<sup>70</sup>

Dealers like the W. K. Lovering Company of Salt Lake City advised *Utah Farmer* readers in 1920 to “Keep the Home Lights Burning and the Fresh Water Running” by installing a Paul Electric Water system and Universal Lighting Plant.<sup>71</sup> Advertisers repeatedly emphasized the indispensability of their products. Modern conveniences had a greater social role to play than was immediately obvious. Alamo Electricity explained “Why *You* Should Install Electric Light and Power” with the argument that “Four things are of vital importance to every farmer in these days of stress. Workers must be attracted to the farm. Time and labor must be saved in every possible way. Boys and girls must be kept at home. The burden on farm women must be relieved. Electric light and power will solve these problems as nothing else can.” Although that message was particularly applicable in the war year of 1918, it would be repeated over the years. The crusading spirit remained uppermost; few merchandisers would disagree with the confident statement, “Dealers who handle these lighting plants could be real missionaries to the farmers,” and to their wives as well.<sup>72</sup>

Although electricity was the prerequisite for many home improvements, advertisers and educators alike stressed that it need not be the *sine qua non*. The Maytag company boasted that “even if you had Electricity—you could have no better Washer Service” than that provided by their model with its own built-in gas engine.<sup>73</sup> And the Perfection Oil Cook Stove promised that it “Drives out Drudgery” (an oft-repeated term) by eliminating the “heavy coal scuttles; dirty ash cans; [and] sooty pots and pans” which characterized traditional cooking methods.<sup>74</sup>

But even these devices could, if necessary, be foregone if the woman of the house demonstrated sufficient ingenuity and profited from expert advice. The Utah Agricultural College Extension Service published a discussion of “Labor-Saving Devices in the Household” in the early ’teens, which noted many inexpensive improvements that could ease the work of the average farm wife. Suggestions included using a high stool to avoid long periods of standing while ironing or washing dishes, buying china and glassware with simple, easy-to-clean shapes, using dishes which could go from oven to table, wearing low-heeled shoes to save the feet, and adding long handles to brooms and brushes to end stooping. Under the heading “Labor-Saving Devices of a Mechanical Nature,” Alice Ravenhill mentioned the steam pressure cooker, bread and cake mixers, tea wagons or wheeled trays, and mangles to limit the need for ironing. Finally, the homemaker should develop a “Household Record File,” containing handy references to household hints, recipes, family clothing sizes, repair information,

financial information, and a general inventory of household supplies.<sup>75</sup> It was a far cry from the way Mother used to keep house.

While emphasizing the need for formal training in homemaking, educators were also expanding the definition of the term itself. Ironically, the role of the home was elevated just as, increasingly, the ultimate authority for family concerns was removed from it. The 1920–21 Utah Agricultural College catalog offered this explanation: “The steady growth of Home Economics courses in leading colleges and universities indicates the ever increasing realization that the well conducted home is the most important factor in the development of healthful and capable citizenship. But the multiplying complexities of modern life demand further that those in charge of the family understand much that is beyond the exact limits of the home. Hence the stress laid on the study of childhood and adolescence, the cause underlying the high cost of living, and the problems of social, industrial, and civic life.”<sup>76</sup> The proliferation of course offerings at the Utah Agricultural College demonstrated this shift in authority, as did the gradual inclusion of courses on child care and development and, by the 1930s and ’40s, the elimination of earlier classes on home sanitation. Successful modernization of rural residences had made the latter obsolete; intensified focus on the emotional needs of the family made the former seem imperative.

As the subject matter became more inclusive, the responsibility of the wife and mother for all aspects of the home expanded. Women needed to be trained to buy consumer goods wisely and economically; they must learn to operate and choose among the new labor-saving devices on the market; they must feed their families balanced and nourishing as well as filling meals; and they must care of their children’s spirits as well as bodies. Although the ostensible goal of formal training in homemaking was to ease the housewife’s burden, the introduction of new household technology actually raised standards. The stress on efficient, scientific, sanitary procedures not only made traditional methods outmoded, but also established an ever-receding pinnacle of perfection for the housewife to seek. For example, a 1916 *Utah Farmer* article recommended daily vacuuming and house inspection (in contrast to the usual practice of twice-yearly cleanings), adding, “To keep a thoroughly sanitary home we must understand sanitary conditions within the house as well as out.”<sup>77</sup>

The emotional component was also escalated. As early as the ’teens, a Utah Agricultural College domestic arts specialist would tell women that it was no longer enough to get adequate meals on the table; they should ask themselves if their families were emotionally nourished as well.<sup>78</sup> By 1939, an expert on vocational homemaking education in the state could assert, “The homemakers [sic] job then becomes twofold: (1) The management of the material resources of the family in order to provide for the physical, emotional and psychological needs of the family members, and (2) the maintenance of desirable relationships among the family members and with people outside the

family.”<sup>79</sup> On the mother’s shoulders now lay the responsibility for the family’s emotional and social well-being.

Guilt, a natural accompaniment to this new job description, could also be used to move products. A 1936 “Farm Electrification Manual” sponsored jointly by Utah Power and Light Company, the Western Colorado Power Company, and Bountiful Power and Light Company, offers a classic example. After asking the reader “DO YOUR GUESTS SECRETLY FEEL SORRY FOR YOU? Must you apologize for your home?” the text described a hypothetical visit of a city couple to a home without indoor plumbing or piped-in water. Clearly, rural dwellers who lived in unimproved housing would be politely despised for failing to meet urban standards.<sup>80</sup> By making farm people sensitive to such comparisons, both advertisers and educators hoped to shame them into improvement.

Even family disunity might be traced to a failure to modernize. In the words of one Extension worker, “The breaking up of more than one family may be traced to disharmonies among its members, consequent upon discomforts which need never have existed, had the woman in the home been less weary from her unceasing labors on their behalf, and better equipped for the duties devolving upon her.”<sup>81</sup> Another advocate of home economics training mused in print, “I wonder just how many divorces are really caused by the women not being prepared to perform intelligently and happily their part as homemakers?”<sup>82</sup> Such statements provided powerful ammunition in the battle over modernization.

Perhaps these tactics seemed necessary to overcome initial resistance to what was admittedly a revolutionary program of change. The faculty members at the A.C. repeatedly complained about their difficulties in getting farm women to respond to their advice. As noted, female enrollment at the college remained a fraction of the total, averaging about 25 percent over time; and women’s attendance at farmers’ institute meetings also trailed that of men. For example, during the December 1905–March 1906 season, according to institute figures, 5,093 men and 1,348 women attended sessions. In 1908–09, female attendance was 4,962 versus 11,828 for males. And in 1908–09, only one-third as many women as men turned out.<sup>83</sup> In part these disparities reflected the year-round nature of women’s work, which made it more difficult for them to leave the farm; but other factors may also have contributed.

One obstacle was traditional resistance to educating women. Supporters of home economics countered by assuring the public that their proposals actually supported the role of wife and mother. If anything, female education had the greater importance. As the *Deseret Farmer* noted in 1910, “girls were to be the mothers and chief inspirers of unborn men, and they needed the trained mind and satisfied life just as much, nay more, than if they were to be mere breadwinners.”<sup>84</sup> The strongest argument seemed to be that “the best education for women is the one that makes her [sic] the most womanly.”<sup>85</sup> Utah

Agricultural College spokesman Leah D. Widtsoe accused women themselves of “lack[ing] that certain progressiveness which enables men constantly to use their brains in thinking out devices for saving energy. If the men would be the housekeepers for a few years,” she believed, “we would have as fine dishwashing machines and cookers, as we have hay derricks and harvesters. . . . Women’s very conservatism and content is often her [sic] worst enemy.”<sup>86</sup> Ellen Huntington, speaking to women at farmers’ institutes in 1910, had agreed. “Housekeepers are too apt to make slaves of themselves,” she concluded. “It seems to me that while we are living in this aeroplane age, our housekeeping is in the street car age.”<sup>87</sup>

But farm wives alone were not to blame for failures to modernize. Leah Widtsoe conceded, “In one respect, that of money, woman cannot help herself, because in most cases the man holds the purse strings. Most farm women make their living out of their chickens and dairy, and ready cash is a thing they seldom see. Any help or labor saving device that costs money, is for that reason forbidden. Now this is the case, not because men as a class are stingy, nor because they do not want to help their wives, but because they do not think about it, and the women do not make them think.”<sup>88</sup> Hers was an unusually generous view. Frequently, the woman’s enforced economic dependence, as much as her tendency towards self-sacrifice, were responsible for her continued drudgery.

Educators decried the reluctance of some farmers to provide for their wives the kinds of amenities they insisted upon for their own work as false economy. It was common wisdom that electricity frequently reached the barn before the house. Reformers challenged this behavior by, first, noting the significant economic contribution of the farm wife and, second, by extolling the emotional benefits from home improvement. After all, as one such spokesman asked:

What good is a large bank account to any man if he has the consciousness of a worn-out, ill-tempered wife and a cheerless home to greet him when his day’s work is done? And no woman whose energy is taxed to the breaking point by the ceaseless daily, and often nightly grind of toil, can be cheerful and companionable for any length of time. Is there a money equivalent for the cheerful smile and life companionship of the woman who was once the best on earth? . . . The farmer who understands that there are things in life worth infinitely more than dollars and cents, will use every spark of intelligence and some hard cash as well, in making the most perfect possible home.<sup>89</sup>

The new ideal of the companionate marriage thus merged with the movement to upgrade the housewife’s working conditions.

A final difficulty may have been the domestic ideal itself. Industrialization removed many tasks to the factory, where mass production, economies of scale, standardization, and managerial skill created greater efficiency in production. Farmers, too, banded together to purchase and use large-scale harvesting

equipment and cooperative buying feed and seed. Only in homemaking were tasks still individualized and dispersed. Leah D. Widtsoe echoed the ideas of feminists like Charlotte P. Gilman in calling for the establishment of community laundries and bakeries and the joint ownership of expensive equipment such as vacuum cleaners.<sup>90</sup> Although practical, this solution perhaps seemed too direct a challenge to the entrenched notions about woman's special sphere to succeed.

Despite such resistance, circumstances unique to Utah promoted adoption of the new definition and practice of homemaking. The powerful network of authorities and agencies centered around the Utah Agricultural College certainly played a decisive role. The village patterns in rural Utah—which had farm families living in town and going out to work on surrounding farms—allowed earlier and wider access to electricity. And the predominant influence of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints may also have resulted in a more rapid dissemination and reinforcement of new attitudes and behavior.

The U.S. Census Bureau defines as “urban” all settlements over 2,500 in population, a figure which effectively describes a large village or county seat in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In 1880, roughly three-fourths of Utah's population resided in rural areas or communities smaller than 2,500, a proportion typical for the mountain region as a whole and only slightly higher than the national average. By 1900, however, the rural population stood at 61.9 percent for Utah, again close to the national average of 60 percent but lower than the regional average of 67.7 percent. More significantly, only sixteen states were more highly “urbanized” than Utah in 1900, almost all of which were located in the northeastern United States. In 1920 Utah's “urban-farm” population stood at 8,377 and the rural-farm count was 131,872. By 1930 the urban-farm count had risen to 9,046 and the rural farm had dropped to 106,667. Although the total farm population declined absolutely (from 140,249 to 115,713) and relatively (from 31.2 percent of the total population to 22.8 percent), the number of farms actually rose from 25,662 in 1920 to 27,159 (52.4 percent) in 1930, much higher than the regional average of 39.5 percent. And Utah continued to lead thirty-one other states in the percentage of its population dwelling in urban centers.<sup>91</sup>

However, such figures can be misleading. Utahns on the whole were not leaving the country for the city; rather, the rural villages in which many of them lived had simply grown beyond the 2,500 mark. The 1930 census puts these figures into better perspective. In that year, Utah boasted only one city with a population over 100,000 (Salt Lake City, with 140,267). In addition, the state had only one city in the 25,000–100,000 range, one in the 10,000–25,000 range, and four in the category of 5,000–10,000. Over 28 percent of the state's people lived in towns with fewer than 5,000 inhabitants, and an additional 28 percent lived in unincorporated, or strictly rural, areas. Well over half the state's population, thus, lived either in small agricultural villages or in the country.<sup>92</sup>

This pattern mitigated the isolation so often complained of by rural dwellers; it also had a dramatic impact on the rate of physical improvement.

Since electric power became available in urban areas much earlier than in the countryside, many Utah farm families, as village-dwellers, had access to this powerful force for modernization much earlier than rural inhabitants in other regions. Utility companies such as Utah Power and Light boasted that the state was a leader in rural electrification. That company, which served much of Utah and part of Idaho, cited the dramatic expansion of its own system in a mere decade. Between 1912 and 1922, the miles of transmission line roughly doubled, the number of communities served rose from 130 to 205, and the number of customers increased from 39,700 to 83,074, up 110 percent. The utility claimed it could reach 95 percent of the homes in its territory by 1922, while at the same time keeping rates constant or lowering them. Indeed, Utah Power and Light asserted that its rates were lower than the national average and among the lowest in the continental United States.<sup>93</sup> Furthermore, connecting lines to such concerns as Telluride Power Company serving southern Utah created a truly statewide system.<sup>94</sup>

U.S. Census figures also demonstrate the pace of electrification in the state. Some 11,125 farm dwellings had electric power in 1920, growing to 15,778 in 1930 and 18,285 in 1945.<sup>95</sup> Utah ranked well above most states on this score. One 1930 study pointed out that only California and Massachusetts had more farms equipped with electricity than Utah. The state also fared well regarding water piped into rural homes; only ten of the other forty-seven states (and only two Western states, California and Oregon) exceeded its 38.9 percent total.<sup>96</sup> The 6,179 farm dwellings with running water in 1920 rose to 10,561 in 1930 and 15,936 in 1945. By 1954, 20,808 had indoor water, nearly equal to the number electrified.<sup>97</sup>

After electricity came labor-saving appliances. As early as 1922, Utah Power and Light estimated the presence in its service area of 4,300 electric ranges, 19,000 washing machines, 70,000 electric irons (more than one for each home), 14,000 grills and toasters, 7,500 vacuum cleaners, and 10,000 "miscellaneous" devices.<sup>98</sup> Radios and telephones, although not necessarily dependent upon electric power, tended to accompany it. Although only 386 of the over 27,000 farm homes in the state had radios in 1925, by 1930 over 17,000 had acquired them, and by 1945 the overwhelming majority enjoyed this convenience.<sup>99</sup> In fact, Utah ranked slightly above the national average in radio ownership. In 1930 40.3 percent of all U.S. homes had sets, compared with 41.1 percent in Utah. But among farm dwellers, Utah exceeded the national average even more impressively—31.8 percent versus 21.0 percent.<sup>100</sup> Telephones were somewhat less common; 6,295 rural homes were on the line in 1920, 7,416 in 1930, and 8,479 in 1945, after a downward dip to 4,998 in 1940.<sup>101</sup>

Farm families who obtained one modern convenience often reported others as well, with running water and electricity heading the list in popularity.

In 1945, 85.4 percent of the state's farm homes were electrified, 74.4 percent had running water, and 72.5 percent had both. Those rural residents who could get electric power usually did; 77.5 percent of the state's farmers lived within one-quarter mile of an electric distribution line, and only 2.82 percent of them lacked electricity. Over a third (37.4%) of farm homes were equipped with telephones, and most of these also had electricity, radios, and automobiles.<sup>102</sup> By the end of World War II, it can be argued, the technological revolution had taken firm hold.

One final cultural characteristic, harder to measure in absolute terms, which may have supported the spread of modernization ideology was the statewide influence of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons), especially in rural areas. The various agencies extending outward from the Utah Agricultural College, be they women's branches of the Farm Bureau, 4-H clubs, or home economics groups, overlaid a well-established social network created by the church itself. Intentionally or otherwise, it may have profited from that cohesion. In discussing the formation of twenty home economics groups in 1913, Utah Agricultural College literature noted that such improvement associations "generally operated through the existing women's organizations of the state of a religious, literary, or civic nature."<sup>103</sup> Frequently, those functions overlapped to a great degree, and LDS Relief Societies may have acted as an important conduit for the doctrine of scientific housekeeping.

Young people also mixed in church-based social bodies, even more frequently than in secular organizations. Indeed, most of the social activity available for farm youth centered around the LDS Church. A 1938 study of rural women ages sixteen to twenty-five found that 95 percent were members of the Mormon Church, 85 percent had attended services during the last year, and 84 percent attended Sunday School. Young Women's Mutual Improvement Association (YWMIA) activities through the church attracted 83 percent: Beehive for girls twelve to sixteen, plus Junior Gleaners (fourteen to sixteen) and Gleaners (ages sixteen on up). Many also served as teachers or officers in Primary, the organization for children.<sup>104</sup> Among those girls still in high school, church-related activities outdrew other group attractions. Over 91 percent of these individuals belonged to MIA, while only 17.5 percent were currently active in Home Economics clubs sponsored by the school, and a mere 9.6 percent were involved in 4-H. It should be noted, however, that fully 77.1 percent of the girls currently in school and 67.4 percent of all girls surveyed had some 4-H experience.<sup>105</sup> It is reasonable to assume that the students carried at least some of the ideas and experiences from the homemaking organizations over into their discussions at church social gatherings.

The various programs intended to teach women to become modern homemakers reached a substantial portion of the state's farm population by the 1930s and '40s. Over 90 percent of the girls in that 1938 survey had taken courses in home economics, averaging 2.6 years of study apiece.<sup>106</sup> Another

official study indicated that fifty-one of the state's seventy-five high schools offered such training with the support of either state or federal funds.<sup>107</sup> In 1941, the current membership in 4-H, male and female, was estimated at over 5,600.<sup>108</sup> And by 1947, the Extension service provided twenty-four home demonstration agents to counties throughout the state.<sup>109</sup>

Farm women had adopted ideology as well as technology. They had, for example, become consumers. A 1929 survey of farm family habits indicated an acceptance of brand-name products such as Crisco; more tellingly, it indicated that more items were being purchased and fewer produced. Farm families still demonstrated a self-sufficiency not possible in the city, but reliance on outside producers was on the rise. A random survey of eleven western Utah counties found rural dwellers growing 70 percent of their food on the farm, notably milk, honey, and vegetables.<sup>110</sup> A sampling done in Summit County the next year estimated that the farms were providing only about half of the total value of the food consumed. Again, home production of eggs and dairy products remained high, but half the poultry and meat came from off the farm, as did three-fourths of the fruits and vegetables and nearly all of the flour and cereal.<sup>111</sup> Such studies are not conclusive, but they seem to indicate a trend away from a more absolute self-reliance; farm women, slowly and incompletely, were growing more like their city counterparts.

While changes in behavior can be measured with at least some accuracy, shifts in attitude prove harder to delineate. If various federally sponsored "County Agricultural Plans" are an accurate barometer, farm women by the late 1930s and early 1940s had apparently absorbed the value system that agricultural educators had promoted, with its reliance on urban images, reverence for science and technology, and use of businesslike managerial techniques. The goals outlined in such documents include rural beautification, home improvement, better sanitary conditions in home and community, and efficient and economical home management. The means include formal planning, reliance on outside authorities, and informed consumerism. The Utah County women who entitled one section of their 1937 report "Happiness—the Result of Planned Family Living," drew up a highly revealing list of actions leading to success in the "business of life":

1. Planned home activity.
2. Study better buymanship—know how to shop. Recognize values.
3. A spending plan made by all family members. Rewards come as a result of planned spending.
4. Be immune to installment buying.<sup>112</sup>

A few years later, farm women in Iron County similarly advised, "Record keeping is absolutely essential to the efficient management of any business, whether it be a range livestock unit, a farm, or a home. The proper keeping of an adequate record will point the way to proper management and



*Courtesy Special Collections and Archives, Merrill Library, Utah State University.*

Utah Agricultural College (now Utah State University) Extension Service meeting with Ute women, Uintah Basin Industrial convention, Uintah County, 1927.

the intelligent adjustments of any business. Record keeping will encourage careful systematic planning for production and consumption.”<sup>113</sup> Statements like these, made by farm women in significant positions of leadership, indicate a firm acceptance of the values introduced only decades before. Ellen A. Huntington, in her 1910 address to farmers’ institute audiences entitled “Woman’s Life on the Farm,” had stated: “In this twentieth century, housekeeping on the farm is not essentially different from that in the city.”<sup>114</sup> It had been less an observation than a hope. Three decades later, it was fact. The farm wife had become a “household manager,” a consumer, and a believer in planning and education. It seems only just to leave the last word to one of those many experts who had brought her to this point. Angelyn Warnick, examining vocational homemaking education in Utah in 1939, summed up the dramatic changes of the recent decades thus: “In the past when life was simpler and each generation lived in basically the same manner as the preceding, customs and traditions, hand[ed] down from mother to daughter and father to son, dictated the solution to family problems. . . . Now daughters spend their days in school or in industry and the school must supplement the home in preparing them for homemaking responsibilities. The home, formerly a producing center, has become a consuming unit and the problem is less that of construction and more that of management of all of the resources of the family. Modern families

are more influenced by outside factors. Transportation and radio brings [sic] the world to the door of every home.”<sup>115</sup>

## NOTES

1. Utah State Farmers' Institutes, *Annual Report*, No. 9 (Logan: Utah Agricultural College, 1906), 50.
2. See the 1909 “Report of the Country Life Commission,” sponsored and signed by President Theodore Roosevelt, in Wayne D. Rasmussen, ed., *Agriculture in the United States: A Documentary History, Vol. 2: 1860–1906* (New York: Random House, 1975), 1860–1906. The report notes the impact of the lack of labor-saving devices on farm women (pp. 1890, 1892).
3. Many farmers had to wait until creation of the Rural Electrification Administration (REA) during the New Deal to have access to electricity. See Audra J. Wolfe, “‘How Not to Electrocute the Farmer’: Assessing Attitudes Toward Electrification on American Farms, 1920–1940,” *Agricultural History* 74 (2000): 515–29, for a useful examination of responses to rural electrification efforts. Mary Ann Beecher, “Building for ‘Mrs. Farmer’: Published Farmhouse Designs and the Role of the Rural Female Consumer, 1900–1930,” *Agricultural History* 73 (1999): 253, estimates that “only 10 to 25 percent of all farmhouses were equipped with electricity and running water” in the early twentieth century, with only 27 percent enjoying electricity by 1926.
4. Utah Agricultural College, *The Organization and Course of Instruction of the Agricultural College of Utah, 1890–1891* (Logan: Utah Agricultural College, 1890), 21–22; hereafter cited as Utah Agricultural College, *Catalog*, by relevant year.
5. Joel Edward Ricks, *The Utah Agricultural College: A History of Fifty Years* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1938), 26, 32.
6. Utah Agricultural College, *Catalog*, 1928–29, 31.
7. *Ibid.*, 1911–12, 5–10.
8. *Ibid.*, 1928–29, 31.
9. *Ibid.*, 1914–15, 45.
10. *Ibid.*, 175.
11. Utah State Agricultural College, Home Economics Practice House, *Extension Service Bulletin*, 18, no. 1 (Logan: Utah Agricultural College, 1918).
12. Utah Agricultural College, *Catalog*, 1919–20, 10–14, 20.
13. *Ibid.*, 1928–29, 31.
14. *Ibid.*, 221, 246.
15. *Ibid.*, 64.
16. The law authorizing the institute movement was printed as the frontispiece to the yearly publication of papers presented. For a typical example, see Utah State Farmers' Institute, *Annual Report* No. 9 (Logan: Utah Agricultural College, 1906), not paginated.
17. Roy V. Scott, *The Reluctant Farmer: The Rise of Agricultural Extension to 1914* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1970), 87, 64–103.
18. Rasmussen, *Agriculture in the United States*, 1312.

19. Ibid., 1314.
20. Marilyn Irvin Holt, *Linoleum, Better Babies, and the Modern Farm Woman, 1890–1930* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995), 45.
21. Utah State Farm Institute, *Annual Report*, 1906, 6–7; 1907, 5; 1908, 6.
22. One of the many notices for such gatherings appears in the *Utah Farmer*, February 5, 1916, 10.
23. Ibid., January 19, 1921, 1.
24. Utah State Farm Institute, *Annual Report*, No. 13, 1910, 8–9.
25. Utah Agricultural College, *Catalog*, 1925–26, 78–79.
26. See especially Scott, *The Reluctant Farmer*, 206–37, for a discussion of early extension work in the southern United States.
27. Utah Agricultural College, *Twenty-Five Years of Extension*, Extension Circular No. 104 (Logan: Utah Agricultural College, 1939), 3–4.
28. Ibid., 6.
29. Holt, *Linoleum, Better Babies, and the Modern Farm Woman*, 56–57 discusses the background of some early agents. While their role is still understudied, a useful contribution is Kathleen R. Babbitt, “The Productive Farm Woman and the Extension Home Economist in New York State, 1920–1940,” *Agricultural History* 67 (1993): 83–101.
30. William J. Block, *The Separation of the Farm Bureau and the Extension Service: Political Issue in a Federal System* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1960), offers a detailed discussion of the involvement between this federal agency and the farmers’ organization. A more recent examination, which includes a helpful discussion of women’s roles, is Nancy K. Berlage, “Organizing the Farm Bureau: Farm, Community, and Professionals, 1914–1928,” *Agricultural History* 75 (2001): 438–69.
31. V. Allen Olsen, *As Farmers Forward Go: A History of the Utah Farm Bureau Federation* (Salt Lake City: Utah Farm Bureau Federation, 1975) is the official history of the state body.
32. Utah State Farm Bureau Federation, *The Utah Farm Bureau Federation and Its Activities: You and Your Neighbor—That’s All It Is* (n.p., 1923), 11.
33. Utah Agricultural College, *Catalog*, 1920–21, 53.
34. Utah Farm Bureau Federation, *You and Your Neighbor*, 20.
35. Utah Agricultural College, *Twenty-five Years*, 13.
36. Olsen, *As Farmers Forward Go*, 11.
37. An excellent discussion of this process is Stuart Ewen, *Captains of Consciousness: Advertising and the Social Roots of the Consumer Culture* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book, 1976).
38. *Utah Farmer*, September 11, 1915, 13; August 7, 1915, 10.
39. Utah Agricultural College, *Catalog*, 1919–20, 228.
40. Ibid., 1925–26, 228.
41. Ibid., 1920–21, 68–69.
42. Utah Agricultural College, *Twenty-five Years*, 10. See Holt, *Linoleum, Better Babies, and the Modern Farm Woman*, 165–66, for examples beyond Utah.

43. *1941 Annual Cooperative Service Report: Sevier County, Utah* (Logan: University Extension Service, 1921), 25.
44. Utah Agricultural College, *Catalog*, 1920–21, 20.
45. *Ibid.*, 1928–29, 246.
46. *Ibid.*, 1920–21, 53.
47. *Utah Farmer*, May 9, 1925, 2.
48. An effective discussion of the Country Life Reform Movement and the farm experience can be found in David B. Danbom, *The Resisted Revolution: Urban America and the Industrialization of Agriculture, 1900–1930* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1979).
49. William Peterson, “Women Play Major Part in Rural Advancement,” *Utah Farmer*, February 14, 1925, 23.
50. Advertisement, *ibid.*, August 23, 1919, 7.
51. “The Home Is the Heart of the Farm,” *ibid.*, May 14, 1921, 1.
52. “Improving Rural Landscapes,” *Utah Magazine*, April 1941, 37.
53. *Utah Farmer*, August 30, 1919, 9.
54. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930: Population*, 6:1340.
55. *Utah Farmer*, July 1, 1916, 10; *Deseret Farmer*, July 22, 1911, 4.
56. “What Should [a] Housewife’s Salary Be?” *Utah Farmer*, April 9, 1921, 8.
57. Alice Ravenhill, *Labor-Saving Devices in the Household*, Utah Agricultural College Experiment Station Circular No. 6 (Logan: Utah Agricultural College Extension Service, 1912), 3–4.
58. Rose H. Widtsoe, “Efficient Household Purchasing,” *Utah Farmer*, February 28, 1920, 15.
59. *Ibid.*, March 6, 1920, 6.
60. *Deseret Farmer*, July 22, 1911, 4.
61. For example, Professor Alice Ravenhill was described as “an international authority on nutrition and child study” in an advertisement for the Utah Agricultural College Summer School which appeared in the *Utah Farmer*, May 18, 1918, 9. See also *ibid.*, January 24, 1925, 3.
62. Utah Agricultural College, *Catalog*, 1890–91, 21.
63. *Ibid.*, 1916–17, 95–96.
64. *Ibid.*, 99–100.
65. *Ibid.*, 1925–26, 71–72.
66. Utah Agricultural College, *Practice House*, 5.
67. “The Electrified Farm House,” *Utah Farmer*, December 11, 1915, 16.
68. *Ibid.*, July 20, 1918, 16.
69. *Ibid.*, 5.
70. Advertisement, *ibid.*, January 10, 1925, 9.
71. Advertisement, *ibid.*, April 3, 1920, 11.
72. Advertisement, *ibid.*, July 20, 1918, 5.
73. Advertisement, *ibid.*, June 13, 1925, 15.

74. Advertisement, *ibid.*, June 6, 1925, 11.
75. Ravenhill, *Labor-Saving Devices in the Household*, 13–23, 45.
76. Utah Agricultural College, *Catalog*, 1920–21, 57.
77. *Utah Farmer*, June 24, 1916, 10.
78. Utah State Farm Institute, *Annual Report*, No. 13 (1910): 106–7.
79. Angelyn Warnick, *A Survey of the Need for Vocational Homemaking Education in Utah* (N.p., 1939), 7.
80. Utah Power and Light Company, the Western Colorado Power Company, Bountiful Light and Power Company, *Farm Electrification Manual* (n.p., 1936), not paginated.
81. Ravenhill, *Labor-Saving Devices in the Household*, 3, 6.
82. *Deseret Farmer*, August 27, 1910, 13.
83. Utah State Farm Institute, *Annual Report*, No. 9, 1906, 6–7; No. 11, 1908, 6; No. 12, 1909, 22. This disparity between male and female attendance was typical nationwide; see Scott, *The Reluctant Farmer*, 120–21.
84. *Deseret Farmer*, August 27, 1910, 5.
85. *Ibid.*, December 3, 1910, 4.
86. Leah D. Widtsoe, *Labor-Saving Devices for the Farm Home*, Experiment Station Circular, No. 6 (Logan: Utah Agricultural College, 1912), 42.
87. Utah State Farm Institute, *Annual Report*, No. 13, 1910, 108.
88. Widtsoe, *Labor-Saving Devices for the Farm Home*, 42.
89. *Ibid.*, 43.
90. Widtsoe hoped that passage of a bill proposed by Utah Senator Reed Smoot allocating additional funds for home economics research would be directed toward such reforms. Widtsoe, *Labor-Saving Devices for the Farm Home*, 76.
91. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930: Population*, 2:13–15.
92. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930: Population*, 1:16–17. Isolation and distance from major population centers was a key concern for many farm families well into the twentieth century. Utahns were an important exception, however. According to the 1930 census, the largest percentage of the state's farms (roughly 67 percent) were located in six counties: Utah (18.3 percent), Salt Lake (14.1 percent), Davis (8.9 percent), Weber (8.9 percent), Cache (8.7 percent), and Box Elder (7.8 percent). Yet these were not predominantly agricultural counties. Therefore, the bulk of the state's farmers lived relatively close to urban centers. *Ibid.*, 6:1343.
93. Utah Power and Light Company, *Electrifying the Wheels of Progress, 1912–1922* (N.p., 1922), 12–14, 21.
94. Utah Power and Light Company, *A Prophecy Fulfilled* (N.p., 1949). Its map, located between pages 16–17, shows areas of Utah served in 1922.
95. U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Census of Agriculture, 1954*, vol. 1, pt. 31, p. 3.
96. Joseph A. Geddes, *Farm Versus Village Living in Utah: Plain City—Type "A" Village*, Extension Bulletin No. 249 (Logan: Utah Agricultural College, 1934), 62.

97. Ibid., 12.
98. Utah Power and Light Company, *Electrifying the Wheels*, 21.
99. U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Fifteenth Census, 1930: Population*, 6:1345; U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Census of Agriculture, 1954*, vol. 1, pt. 31, p. 3.
100. U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Fifteenth Census, 1930: Population*, 6:33, 53.
101. U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Census of Agriculture, 1954*, vol. 1, pt. 31, p. 3.
102. Ibid.
103. Utah Agricultural College, *Catalog*, 1913–14, 42.
104. Bernard D. Joy and D. P. Murray, *Situations, Problems, and Interests of Unmarried Rural Young People 16–25 Years of Age—Utah*, Extension Circular No. 282 (Logan: Utah Agricultural Extension Service, 1938), 23–24.
105. Ibid.
106. Ibid., 12.
107. Warnick, *A Survey of the Need*, 4.
108. Wilford D. Porter, “Building Better Farms,” *Utah Magazine* August 1941, 33.
109. Utah Agricultural College, *Catalog*, 1947–48, 28–29.
110. Almeda Perry Brown, *Food Habits of Utah Farm Families*, Extension Bulletin 213 (Logan: Utah Agricultural Extension Service, 1929), 8.
111. Edith Hayball and W. Preston Thomas, *Family Living Expenditures, Summit County, Utah*, Extension Bulletin No. 232 (Logan: Utah Agricultural Extension Sevier County, 1930), 5, 21.
112. Utah State University, *County Agricultural Planning Activities in Utah, 1937* (Logan: Utah Agricultural Extension Service, 1937), 2. The page cited is from Utah County.
113. Utah State University, *County Agricultural Planning Activities in Utah, 1941* (Logan: Utah Agricultural Extension Service, 1937), 156. The page cited is from Iron County.
114. Utah State Farm Institute, *Annual Report*, No. 13, 1910, 104.
115. Warnick, *A Survey of the Need*, 7.