

Herman M. Bowers



Herman M. Bowers, born in Pendleton County and reared on a Mineral County farm, graduated from West Virginia University in 1929 and went on to have a distinguished career with the West Virginia University Cooperative Extension Service that extended to 1965.

As a County Agricultural Agent, District Agent, and later as a State Agent Assistant, and Associative Director, Mr. Bowers made major contributions to the Cooperative Extension Service. It was during his term as a member of the administrative team of the Cooperative Extension Service that its programs were extended to every county in West Virginia. A county office was opened and a staff placed in those counties previously without a county office. It was also during this period that legislation was passed authorizing the establishment of County Extension Service Committees. This was a significant step toward more local participation in program planning and development, budget development, and staff selection.

It was also during this period that a substantial increase occurred in financial support by County Courts and County Boards of Education for Extension programs.

“Greener Hills” was the first organized state-wide-grassland improvement program in the state and reflected the interest of farmers in approving one of their greatest natural resources. Another innovative program was the consumer information and educational pilot project at Wheeling which was unique in the United States. It was conducted in cooperation with Ohio State University and the U.S. Department of Agriculture during the 1950’s. It became a state-wide program.

The Rural Areas Development Program of the 1950’s and the 1960’s was a forerunner of the present “Mountaineers for Rural Progress.” Mr. Bowers was responsible for much of the success of this early program to boost economic development. He also served as an advisor to the Federal Extension Service on this program.

Mr. Bowers was a central figure in the formation and educational activities of the Farm and Home Electrification Council and Farming for Better living Program. He served as an advisor to the State Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Committee. Mr. Bowers helped organize and served as an executive secretary of the West Virginia Association of Agricultural Industries for five years on a volunteer basis after his retirement in 1965. Particularly interested in and a supporter of 4-H club work, Mr. Bowers, as a new County Agricultural Agent in Calhoun County in 1929, organized a 4-H club with 19 members. Eighteen of those young people eventually graduated from a college or university. He served as Chairman of the West Virginia 4-H Foundation for five years and helped initiate efforts to obtain financial support from private sources for the Foundation’s programs. He also served as Chief of the West Virginia 4-H All Stars.

Mr. Bowers was also known regionally and nationally for his contributions to agricultural policy and programs. He served as Secretary of the Youth Section of the American Country Life Association and as Advisor to the Northeast Farm Management Committee, representing the Northeast Extension Service Directors. He also was a member of the sub-committee on 4-H Club work of the National Extension Committee on Organization and Policy. He also served on planning committees for both national and regional Rural Areas Development Workshops. The esteem which his fellow workers felt for Mr. Bowers is best expressed in a letter written by Roman J. Verhaalen, the Dean of the Extension Services in 1965: “You are a hard worker, a conscientious worker, and a most loyal person. It is, therefore, with esteem, respect, and regret that I accept your retirement.”