

Mary Virginia Rhodes



Mrs. Arthur W. (Mary Virginia) Rhodes lived on and helped to operate a farm all her life. She was a pioneer cooperater with the Cooperative Extension Service and is generally credited with the idea that the State 4-H Camp be located at Jackson's Mill because of its historic significance as the boyhood home of "Stone-wall" Jackson.

Her residence in Harrison County, near Lightburn, Jane Lew, and Jackson's Mill (all Lewis County), was frequently used for demonstrations in landscaping for Farm Women Club members in Harrison and Lewis Counties. Her home was always open and available for meetings and conferences. She has been described as a "true gentlewoman." For instance, in the winter and early spring when dirt roads were almost impassable by car, she would send a horse and buggy to the trolley line at Lightburn to meet the Home Demonstration Agent and take her to the Mineral Community in Harrison County where she worked with the Farm Women's Club, 4-H Club, and community organizations.

Mrs. Rhodes was an early participant in and organizer of Farm Women's Club. In 1915, for instance, she and a group of women met at the old Dunkard Church and organized the first Farm Women's Club in Lewis County. She served as first president of this club. She was active in club work in both Lewis and Harrison Counties.

Mrs. Rhodes merits an important place in West Virginia history because of the innovative ideas, commitments, wisdom, and foresight. In February 1919, she, along with a small group of Club representatives, organized a State Farm Women's organization. Mrs. Rhodes was elected the first president and represented the organization on the Executive Committee of the West Virginia Farm Bureau.

Mrs. Rhodes was state president in the early post World War I period when tensions were released, and people were eager to return to more normal living. New clubs were organized and much community work was done in connection with the community scoring which was started during the year that she was president. Because there was no planned state program of work, no state committees, no channels of communication from the clubs and counties to the state, and no state secretary to record accomplishments of the 119 clubs, there is no record of the year's work. However, under Mrs. Rhodes' capable leadership, the groundwork was laid for future development.

On October 1, 1911, Governor William E. Glasscock appointed Mrs. Rhodes as a delegate to represent West Virginia at the first annual session of The International Congress of Farm Women held in Colorado Springs, Colorado. She was a charter member of the Trans Alleghany Chapter-DAR-in Weston and a member of Eastern Star, in which she held numerous offices. She also actively supported and participated in the States Girl's Loan Fund for educating and training the first Home Demonstration Agents in the state.

"Her compassion and firm belief that a farmer and his wife could make great contributions to the community in which they lives was a guiding principle. She believed education was the greatest factor in the future of rural life, second only to a happy and contented home. She was famous for her kindness and consideration of her fellow-men."