

William D. Zinn



William D. Zinn was a nationally-known writer, lecturer, agriculturalist, and farm advisor who gave fifty years of devoted service to the farmers of the eastern United States.

Born on “Woodbine Farm” near Philippi, Barbour County, Mr. Zinn received his early education in Barbour county schools and the “West Virginia College” at Flemington. After leaving “college” he taught several terms of school and in 1881 was elected Barbour County Superintendent of Schools. He served two terms.

Early in life, Mr. Zinn began to operate his “Woodbine Farm” on a scientific basis and his results were so gratifying that he encouraged other farmers to follow his practices. His first writings were published in the April 28, 1898, issue of The Barbour Democrat. From the very beginning, he conducted his columns as a forum. Interested farmers would ask his advice concerning farm practices and he would state the question and then answer it.

In 1901, Governor White appointed Mr. Zinn to the State Board of Agriculture, and he later gained a reputation in eastern and Midwestern states as a lecturer at farmer’s institutes and meetings at many of the state agricultural colleges. Most of his work was done in West Virginia, Virginia, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and New York, but he lectured and studied farm conditions in 25 other states. He was probably best known nationally from his writings in the National Stockman and Farmer and the Pennsylvania Stockman.

In 1931, he published a book titled “The Story of Woodbine Farm” which contained the complete story of his success in general farming. The book became so popular that a second printing was necessary.

Mr. Zinn was one of the first four County Agricultural Agents appointed in West Virginia, beginning in 1913, along with W.H. Still, in Ohio and Brooke Counties. Mr. Zinn later became the first County Agricultural Agent in Harrison County.

Mr. Zinn was the first President of the West Virginia Live Stock Shippers Association, and one of the original organizers of the Grange Mutual Fire Insurance Company, with home offices in Philippi, operating in five or six counties expressly for the benefit of farm protection. He also served as President of the West Virginia Farm Bureau.

Mr. Zinn had an abiding faith in the soil and its improvements as the foundation of success in farming. He believed that what he had done other men could do, and his motive was to help them to do better farming. He was a great teacher in the field, on the platform, and on the printed page. Year after year he shared his agricultural wisdom with many without any reward other than the hope that he could help them. He looked for the good in people – and things – and found it.