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The County Farm Bureau Picnic

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An Ideal Picnic Ground in Hamlin County

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South Dakota State College

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W. F. Kumlien, Acting Director
INTRODUCTION.

This leaflet is prepared in answer to many inquiries for information on the organization and conduct of the County Farm Bureau picnic. After a study of the methods used in arranging and staging the fifty-six county and community Farm Bureau picnics held in the state last year, we believe we are in a position to offer some good suggestions as to things that should and should not be done at these farm gatherings.
Planning the Picnic.

The most successful picnics are planned several months in advance. The County Agent should under no circumstances make-all arrangements or conduct the picnic as a one-man affair. He should organize a picnic committee. In Counties having community clubs or township organizations, a committee should be selected by each local organization. In putting the picnic proposition up to the local units either by letter or visit, the county agent should be careful to make clear that all arrangements are to be made by the local committees at a joint meeting. This gives the local committeemen the feeling that they are truly running things. If this is to be a farmers' picnic and staged entirely by farmers, oftentimes their pride and a desire to put on a real picnic can be aroused by mentioning the fact that the businessmen of the towns will be watching to see what kind of a picnic the farmers can pull off. In counties lacking community organizations, the picnic committee can be appointed by the Farm Bureau Board of Directors, choosing men especially fitted for carrying out such parts of the arrangements as Preparation of Grounds, Stands, Sports, Speakers, etc.

The General Committee Meets.

Just as soon as the local committees are formed, a joint meeting should be called and a picnic chairman and secretary elected. The place to hold the picnic, financing, program, advertising, and sub-committees should be thoroughly discussed. The county agent should guide the discussion but the committee should make the decisions. Results of the meeting should be given publicity in the local press. Minutes of the meeting should be mailed to all absent committee members and all of the newly appointed sub-committees.
Selecting the Date.

The selection of the date is important as it should be at a season of the year when weather conditions are fairly well settled and rushing field operations not interfered with, as in the harvest season. Another thing to avoid is conflicts with other celebrations in the county. The day of the week is important. Usually a Tuesday makes a good day for the reason that people will often take a day off early in the week, when they would not think of doing it later due to a desire to get a certain piece of work done before the week is over. Holidays such as Memorial Day or the Fourth of July should not be chosen.

Choosing the Place.

Choosing the place to hold the picnic is important. A fine location is near a body of water if the lake or river is located advantageously for the largest number in the county. A picnic ground should have shade if possible. If located in an out-of-the-way place, the entrance roads should be placarded. Definite arrangements about the use of the grounds should be made to avoid misunderstandings about rental and cleaning up after the picnic.

What the Program Should Contain.

The program should be planned with care, and be well balanced—not all sport nor all speeches, but some of both. Never arrange for more than two good outside speakers and preferably, one. Choose speakers that are accustomed to speaking out-of-doors and have a subject of interest to all. If speakers cannot meet these two qualifications, it is better not to have any.
Local people should be placed on the program, especially for musical numbers. The President of the County Farm Bureau should give a short talk. The County Gent can give a brief report of his work.

In counties having community clubs, the program might contain numbers by each club. Wherever this has been tried, it has proved very successful, as it develops a friendly rivalry between the clubs and draws people out from each community to see how their club compares with the rest.

Boys' and girls' demonstration teams are a pleasing feature on any program. Stock judging contests if carefully planned are interesting.

Baseball games are popular at picnics and consist of farmer teams selected to represent sides of the county: namely, East vs. West. Two communities known to be deadly rivals will oftentimes furnish the teams for a good picnic game. The idea of playing for a big purse should not be tolerated at a farmers' picnic as this is not the feature of the picnic to play up.

The tug-of-war is a popular picnic sport. Tournaments are oftentimes arranged with several communities represented by either six or ten-men teams.

The pony potato race, foot races, contests for the women and the boys and girls, are various features that can be worked in.

**Arranging the Order of the Program.**

The vital part of the picnic is the order of the program. The success or failure of the picnic
depends upon this. Whatever takes place in the two hours after the picnic lunch is the feature of the picnic, and nothing should be allowed to interfere with it. If this is the time set aside for the speaking, the sport enthusiasts should not be allowed to start their games. The following program is submitted as showing good order:

10:30 A. M. Baseball game - East side vs. West side.
12:00 Picnic Lunch.
1:45 P. M. Band music or community singing.
2:00 P. M. Short talk by President of Farm Bureau.
2:10 P. M. Song by Glee Club of a community club.
2:20 P. M. Cornet duet by members of a community club.
2:30 P. M. Vocal solo by member of community club.
2:40 P. M. Address by speaker of the day.
3:30 P. M. Song by a community club.
3:40 P. M. Stunt by a community club.
3:50 P. M. "Coon" quartette of a community club.
4:00 P. M. Brief report by county agent.
4:20 P. M. Song by a community club.
4:30 P. M. Foot races and special sports.
5:00 P. M. Tug-of-war tournament between teams from various community clubs or parts of county.

The Sub-Committees and their Duties.

The sub-committees are appointed by the general committee and should consist of a finance committee, a grounds committee, a police committee, a stands committee, a coffee committee, a water committee, a band committee, a transportation committee, and a committee for each division of the sports.
The choosing of the personnel for each committee is important and should be thoroughly discussed by the general committee. Only men known to be willing to assume responsibility should be chosen. Each man should be made to feel that if he falls down on the part of the work assigned to him, it will not be done at all.

The finance committee will see that all expenses are kept within the income. If a collection is necessary, this will be made by the finance committee.

The grounds committee should put the grounds in order, arrange for speakers' stand, seats, piano if needed, women's rest tent, and placard entrance to grounds if necessary.

The police committee will have charge of parking cars and keeping absolute quiet during the speaking program.

The stands committee should build the sales stands, order necessary supplies, and assist in operating the stands.

The coffee committee should make a supply of good hot coffee for sale at a reasonable price per bucket.

The water committee will see that a supply of good drinking water is kept available supplying a tank and several chained cups.

The band committee will secure a band and if they desire, promise the men their dinners. If this is done, the committee should see that the men are distributed around through the family groups. Almost every group will invite a band man to eat with them if requested by the committee.
The transportation committee will supply a truck and haul necessary lumber, piano, and supplies.

The committees for the various divisions of the sports shall have their particular activities so well planned that they can be pulled off with no delays between events.

An announcer with a good voice and big megaphone should be secured. The crowd can be kept informed at all times of the events, participants, and winners.

The Picnic Lunch.

An affair of this kind would not be complete without a picnic lunch. The sociable, neighborly feeling of all gathering in the same grove to eat together is a feature to be emphasized. In the publicity given the picnic, people should be encouraged to come early, to bring their lunch, also empty pails and cups for securing coffee to be furnished at cost on the grounds by the coffee committee. The big coffee companies will often times furnish the coffee free and sometimes a man to make it if they are allowed to put up a sign advertising their product over the coffee stand. The local creamery will often times furnish sweet cream for the coffee. For people who do not drink coffee, sweet, rich, ice-cold milk should be provided for sale at cost. Secure a couple of farmer's girls dressed in white to sell the milk. Use tuberculin tested milk, advertise it by a big placard, and drive home a lesson.

The Band.

It is not always possible to secure a good band without too much expense. However, if a committee
of farmers approaches the band men, very often they offer their services during the noon hour free of charge, especially if they are promised their dinners. Many counties have farmer bands. Band music is desirable though not absolutely essential to the success of the picnic.

Concessions.

No concessions should be sold at a Farm Bureau picnic. The stands should be operated under the supervision of the stands committee, but it is advisable to pay an experienced stand man by the day to look after the details, superintend the making of the coffee, advise as to ordering supplies, etc.

Financing the Picnic.

Various methods are used to finance the picnic. Some charge for admittance to the ball game, others to a dance held in the evening, some operate stands at a profit, some secure business men of the towns to contribute, and others use Farm Bureau funds. Ordinarily the only expenses where farmer ball teams play are for a speaker and a few prizes for races. The easiest method of handling the finances is to appropriate the amount needed from the Farm Bureau funds, but where these are not available, a collection on the grounds of not to exceed a dime from anyone, will pay for the race prizes.

Advertising the Event.

The advertising should consist of general press notices telling of the meeting of the committees. Circular letters can be sent to the community clubs for reading by the secretary. These should emphasize the community competition to instigate friendly rivalry.
The stores will run special picnic "ads". Handbills can be used. The auto poster is one of the most effective "ads" of all. Special stunts such as circular postcards and picnic notices stamped on envelopes give good advertising.

The editors are usually glad to give space to picnic stories. If cuts are available of any of the officers of the Farm Bureau, of the committeemen, or of the speakers, they can be used to good advantage. If the main speaker is a man of some repute, it would be well to write him in advance for a copy of his address or at least for a digest. Thus an advance story of some length can be furnished the editors a week or more ahead to be set up and all ready to run. Then the editor will be ready to go with a big front page story as soon as he gets the final story on the crowd, stunts, etc.

Conclusion.

The success of the picnic depends absolutely upon the organization and selection of the committeemen. At some of the picnics held last year, everything ran smoothly, one event succeeding another without interruption. The County Agent was conspicuous by the time he had to greet the picnickers individually. The picnic seemed to be running without his personal attention. What a difference at other picnics. Everything confusion. People standing around waiting for things to happen. Everybody rushing to the county agent with a million last minute details. The agent ran here, there, and everywhere with no time to talk to anyone. He was glad when it was time for people to go home and so was everyone else. It pays to organize and organize well.
Reference.

A very good circular on Picnic songs, play games for the children, dialogues, etc., has been issued by the States Relations Service, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C. Ask for Form 243 by W. A. Lloyd.
Note: Strike off some copies of the following song for use at your picnic. It is easy to sing and never fails to get results.

The Optimist.

Words by C. W. Miller Tune: "Turkey in the Straw".

Oh, his horse went dead, and his mule went lame, And he lost his crop in the feedin' game; Then a hurricane came along one day, And blew the house where he lived away. An earthquake came when that was gone, And swallowed up the land that the house stood on; The tax collector came around And charged him up with the hole in the ground.

CHORUS:

Hole in the ground, te, he, he! Was he discouraged? No sir...ce! He joined the Farm Bureau and the spell went down And now he's the mascot of the townships around.

Oh, the weather's getting colder, and the feed won't lay; Corn's way down and wheat don't pay; Hogs no better, steers too cheap, Cows quit milkin' and the meat won't keep. Oats all heated, spuds all froze, Fruit crops busted, wind still blows; Sheep seem puny, an' I'll be darned, The rye field's flooded and the hay stack burned.

CHORUS:

Hay stack burned, te, he, he! Was he discouraged? No siree! He jumped right in and pulled with the bunch And now he's glad that he got the hunch.
Oh, coal is high an' crops is low,
Rail rates double, got no show,
Money's tighter, morals loose,
Bound to get us, what's the use?
Suns not shinin' as it should,
Moon ain't shinin' like it could;
Looks some gloomy, I'll admit,
But it ain't down yet! Well, I guess nit!

CHORUS:

He hain't down yet, te, he, he!
Was he discouraged? No, siree!
He works for his township and works every minute
And now they're all glad that he lives in it.

Yes, the farmer must, if he would succeed,
Join with the others in this time of need,
To work out a plan of work and grin
In this game of life so we all can win.
A place in the sun with all white folks,
Where honest toil wins him more than jokes;
Let's stand together in a solid row
And fight it out through the Farm Bureau.

CHORUS:

Hole in the ground? No siree,
Not yet, neighbor, not for me,
So come along with me, and let's go
To the regular meetin' of the Farm Bureau.