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CANNING COMES TO NEW MEXICO: WOMEN AND THE AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SERVICE, 1914–1919

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In 1919, Alice Corbin Henderson summed up a report on the work of New Mexico women during World War I by referring to the "English, Spanish, and Indian speaking women who met over the canning kettle."[1] It was a striking image that reflected the hopes of some Anglo women that the women of the three cultures could find a common space and work together. But what was the reality behind such an image? Assuming for the moment that a canning kettle might have been an appropriate place to meet for women in a predominately rural state, was it possible?

Like many other important types of work performed by rural women, canning is difficult to trace historically. Because the teaching of canning methods became a part of government policy after the establishment of the Agricultural Extension Service in 1914, however, it is possible to test Henderson's assertion, at least in part, through an analysis of the introduction of canning into New Mexico by the extension service. According to home demonstration agents, canning was a crucial skill, for once having acquired it a rural woman could provide a nutritious diet for her family as well as save money for the farm household. Reflecting the country life reform ideas of the progressive era, agents saw their job as raising the level of rural life by making farming more efficient—in home and field. While the program for teaching women and girls in rural areas included cooking and sewing as well as food preservation, canning seemed an especially important factor in the survival of rural family farms, for the process allowed hard-earned cash to remain within the farm economy. According to agricultural experts, each jar of vegetables or fruit that the farm women canned meant

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farm income and profits for the household. The introduction of new skills in food preparation resulted in the spread of the canning kettle in New Mexico from 1914 to 1919. Government policy did not, however, join women at the canning kettle as Henderson claimed.

Canning, the process of preserving foods by sealing and then heating the contents of jars, was introduced into the United States in the early nineteenth century. Invented by the Frenchman Nicholas Appert, whose 1810 treatise on canning was soon published in the United States, the process quickly replaced older methods of preserving vegetables with salt brine or vinegar. Glass jars and covers were introduced soon after—the Mason screw cap dates from 1858—and American women were soon on the road to liberation from old methods and subordination to the new. The practice spread slowly because of the cost of jars and caps and because of the time and effort demanded by cold pack canning. Eastern middle-class women were the first to adopt the practice, and by the turn of the century canning was fairly widespread among the Euro-American population, providing an inexpensive and varied diet for the rural and urban family. Canning also moved west, but as late as the 1920s, Ruth Allen found in her study of Texas women that most Hispanic and black women did not home can, nor did many poor Anglo women because of the expense and the work involved. Many of the poor women worked for wages and bought commercially canned food. The situation in New Mexico was somewhat different than in Texas, but the limited use of canning was similar.[2]

Into the 1930s, most Native American and Hispanic women in New Mexico used drying rather than canning as their principal method of food preservation. Therefore, few of these women would have met English-speaking women over the canning kettle during 1917 and 1918. Rather they worked with women of their cultures preserving foods in ways that had been perfected and respected over long periods of time. Drying was an inexpensive and efficient way to preserve food, and it formed the center of domestic food technology of Hispanic and Indian women. Native American methods were by far the most complex, including techniques for processing hundreds of varieties of plants. The women of different

tribes each had her regional crops and processes, variations on a process that scholars now believe dates back to the very dawn of human existence. Although much of the early technology of processing was lost because ethnologists did not recognize the importance of women's prehistoric food strategies, records still exist for tribes in New Mexico because they continued to use traditional food preservation techniques late into the twentieth century.[3]

A particularly detailed account of Navajo food preservation practices was made by the anthropologist Emma Reh in 1939. Although at that time Navajo food consumption habits were changing rapidly, she was able to record in detail the food preservation methods of the older women. This account gives some concept of the persistence of these traditional methods among Indian women.[4]

Corn was still the main staple that women dried, shelled, and hung in sacks in their hogans, to be cooked later in water or milk. Women also made green corn into tamales, then baked, dried, and stored them in sacks to cook with meat or milk. Some corn they dried on the cob and stored in bottle-shaped underground pits eight to ten feet deep and four to five feet across, closed on top with logs, bark, and earth. Often the women stored more than a one-year supply of corn. Melons were the main fruit women preserved, by peeling, wilting, cutting circularly in long strips, hanging them to dry, and then winding the strips into balls for storage, to be boiled later. Squashes they boiled before peeling, wilting, cutting in long strips, drying, and winding in balls. Hard shelled squash, and sometimes watermelons, they stored like corn in pits. Pumpkin seeds were dried and toasted. Wild seeds and greens were gathered, boiled, dried, and stored in sacks or pails in hogans. Dried *Huaa* (a spinach-like plant) they preserved in concentrated form through boiling several times, drying into hard black chunks, and then storing in sacks. Navajo women told anthropologist Reh that three pounds of *Huaa* concentrate would last three weeks when cooked with meat. Surplus meat women also sliced thin, salted, and dried on the line. Usually in winter and in the spring women made goat cheese. By the end of summer, a Navajo woman's hogan was hung with lard pails, sugar sacks, containers of wild seeds, dried greens, squash seeds, peach pits, bags of dried roasted corn, hardened green tamale dough, and wads of dried squash and melon

strips. Not every woman had sufficient preserved food to feed her family for the winter, but if she could not sell a blanket, she knew they could always go to a neighbor's hogan to eat.

Even at the end of the 1930s, when class differences were beginning to be noticeable among the Navajos, the poor only rarely bought jams, jellies, and canned goods. Traders introduced canned tomatoes, peaches, and corned beef in the 1910s; they added sardines and canned milk in the 1920s, and jams, jellies, and peanut butter in the 1930s. But most women still preserved large quantities of food throughout the 1930s and also carried on a brisk trade with Hopis for dried peaches and other foods Hopi women had preserved.

There was one main exception to the rule that Navajo women still relied primarily on dried food. While women on reservations followed traditional food preservation methods that emphasized drying, daughters were being taught to can at boarding schools. During the years before World War I, Navajo families were forced to send at least one child to boarding schools where missionaries and government employees taught daughters the white women's ways—including how to preserve food. At the McKinley County School for Navajos, for example, matrons apparently taught the young girls to can in 1918, though there was little chance that they would use these skills on the reservation. It was, however, part of the national program to replace traditional skills of the Indian woman with skills that would make them more dependent upon the Euro-American culture and occupy the place women were assigned in that culture.[5]

The systematic teaching of canning to women on reservations and to women living in pueblos did not get underway for a decade after World War I. Fabiola Cabeza de Baca Gilbert was the first demonstration agent to be assigned to the Pueblos in the 1930s. Probably a few bilingual Pueblo women canned before the 1930s, but the records of the Agricultural Extension Service before 1920 made no mention of even considering teaching Indian women in the pueblo villages of northern New Mexico. The Indian woman, whether Tiwa, Tewa, Navajo, or Apache speaking, was probably uninterested in the canning kettle or in meeting there her sisters from Hispanic and Anglo cultures.[6]

At first glance, it seems that Hispanic women were also unlikely to be involved in the reality of the canning kettle. Fabiola Cabeza de Baca Gilbert wrote in the *Journal of Home Economics* in 1942 that the extension service first reached Hispanic women in rural areas of New Mexico in 1929 and that the first Spanish bulletins on canning were issued in 1930. Until then, she pointed out, Hispanic women, like Indian women, used traditional drying methods.[7]

The Hispanic tradition of preserving food through drying is well known. Dried corn, chile, onions, beans, and meat were winter mainstays of New Mexico villages in all parts of the state. Hispanic women relied on solar energy for much of their processing. They used flat-topped roofs and trees, strung chiles in ristras and sliced beef and dried it at their winter *matanzas* (butcherings). María Duran, who lived in southern New Mexico village of San Miguel, remembers growing chile on the family *sembrado* (plot of land). She recalled years later: "We would roast green chile outside, peel it, and put it out to dry on the bark of the tree. We would clean the bark real good and put it there to dry. We called it chile pasado."[8] Other women remember hanging roasted chiles on lines. Summer squash was also dried, giving women an abundance of meat and vegetables to which they added goat cheese and roasted corn, cane juice, and piñons gathered from the mountains. While much less varied than the native American diet, traditional food processing, particularly drying, enabled the Hispanic woman to feed her family nourishing meals year round.[9]

This pattern, drying until 1929 and then a rather rapid adoption of canning by Hispanic women, is confirmed by a study of the extension circulars published between 1915 and 1919. These circulars do not indicate that 60 percent of the women of the state were Hispanic and Spanish-speaking or that there was any intention of including this majority in the outreach programs. Only two pictures of girls' clubs show non-Anglos, one of Indian girls at the Albuquerque Indian School in 1915 and one of the girls in the "Old Mesilla Sewing Club" in 1918. One Spanish surnamed woman, Gertrude Espinoza, is listed as working with the boys and girls' clubs. The impression given is that Hispanic women were not reached and that girls were taught only to sew.[10]

Hispanic woman drying chiles. Courtesy of author.

Despite this lack of published evidence, oral histories, while sometimes difficult to date, confirm the importance of canning to some Hispanic women and indicate that canning could possibly have been more common than published sources indicate. In *Las Mujeres*, Ida Gutierrez remembers: "At the end of every summer my mother would can the fruits and the vegetables for the next year. She had this extra wood stove that she put outside because it got so hot. She'd build up a big hot fire, and then she'd take the corn, the *chiles*, the peaches, and the tomatoes and she'd put them in jars and boil them in a big kettle." Although her remembrances probably date from the 1930s, others by Jesusita Aragón clearly date from the period around World War I. Aragón remembers when living on a farm near Trujillo in northern New Mexico: "We used to can everything, so in the winter we don't have to buy anything." The oral histories are an additional clue that at least some Hispanic women were canning before the 1930s.[11]

The annual reports submitted to Washington by the New Mexico Agricultural Extension and microfilmed by the National Archives in the 1950s offer additional evidence that Hispanic women were part of the extension outreach program during the war years from 1917 to 1918. Afterwards, the program was drastically curtailed and once more confined primarily to Anglo women until the 1930s when the service again expanded and became part of the New Deal policy to save farms through increasing the preserving of food for home use. The question of reaching the Hispanic majority came up frequently in the reports of the Agricultural Extension Service from 1914 to 1919. These references give a picture of the limitations of the service in teaching Hispanic or "Mexican" and "native" women, as the agents referred to them. Records also indicate that many women were contacted, especially in 1918. Reports reflect the agents' perspective but are nonetheless noteworthy glimpses of the lives and attitudes of rural women.

The New Mexico Agricultural Extension Service began in 1914 as a part of the cooperative extension formed in each state under the federal Smith-Lever Act. Under this legislation, using federal and state matching funds, extension agents were to carry into rural areas the methods of agricultural experiment stations, the United States Department of Agriculture, and the most progressive farm-

ers. The legislation sought to diffuse practical information on subjects relating to agriculture and home economics to the American people. Because the extension service was to be conducted by land grant colleges, the young Agricultural College at Las Cruces in New Mexico would be in charge of developing a program of field demonstrations, publications, and other educational projects.[12]

As a typical piece of progressive legislation, the Smith-Lever provided for a dual gender program. Home demonstration agents were to work out programs for women and agricultural agents to develop programs for men. Both were to develop youth programs as well. While men and women would be coordinate in rank, the records of New Mexico Extension Service reveal a pattern that was probably widespread in most states. Women's work received a smaller amount of funds, and fewer women than men were hired at lower salaries. As late as the 1960s, only a third of New Mexico county agents were women. In the 1930s, the proportion was usually smaller. In 1924–25, for example, less than 25 percent of the agents were women, and the highest paid woman received the salary of the lowest paid male. Women were not only underpaid but overworked because their small numbers necessitated traveling much of the time. The additional pressure of war work brought on the illness of several agents, included one whose doctor ordered her to take a six-week vacation to recover. At that time there were no disability payments, paid sick leave, or paid vacation.[13]

The home demonstration staff consisted of just one woman in November 1914, Dora Ross. Undaunted by her lack of colleagues, Ross planned an ambitious project for rural women to study poultry raising and marketing, to make and market hand work, and, most important, to teach methods of economical and rapid preserving of fruits and vegetables. She expressed the goal of the home economics extension office in the first circular published six months after the service began. The purpose was to organize women into cooperative groups to make "a more profitable, cultured, pleasant, and attractive country life." The women agents were to carry "the practical and scientific wisdom to every farm woman."[14]

The programs that Ross worked out during her single year as agent revealed how much the extension program was the daughter of progressive reformers who saw scientific housekeeping as a way

to raise the status of the occupation of homemaking. Tura A. Hawk, who headed the New Mexico agents in 1918, expressed this concept clearly when she stated the object of the agents was instruction in home economics and approved household practices "in order that the home may be made more convenient and its surroundings more attractive and that the profession of home-making may assume its proper place among the high callings of our national life."[15]

Circular No. 7, published in December 1915, best displayed the scope of the programs. In "Study and Program Outlines for Home Maker's Association," Ross listed the study topics as cookery, meats, sanitation, bread, beauty in home surroundings, cake making, kitchens, modern conveniences, diet, recreation, aesthetics, dietetics, public schools, meals, and—of course—canning. Ross planned a mother-daughter canning project, instruction on chick raising, and a home-building contest. In 1916, the study program under Ross's successor, Gail Ritchie, even included suggestions for "a Baby week campaign," care and feeding of the sick, laundry and other items, as well as the favorite—canning. The ambitious women promised to make available Cornell College reading lists for study programs for women's clubs. The circulars so busily prepared during the first two years, slavishly copied plans worked out by agents in the East. The projects strongly reflected the interests of the country life advocates in raising rural life to the level of city life by encouraging adoption of home economics. Only in this way, the reformers believed, could rural women achieve the status of urban women.[16]

From the establishment of the New Mexico Agricultural Extension Service in 1914, the staff officials realized that their success in a bilingual state depended upon their ability to recruit bilingual agents. A. C. Cooley, in his state leader report for 1915, admitted they were having difficulty reaching the Hispanic majority. "It is almost impossible to find properly trained Mexicans capable of filling a county agent's position," he wrote, "and it seems equally as hard to find an American who speaks Spanish and understands the Mexican people." Ross, in her report for 1915, also noted the difficulty in organizing a population that seemed scattered and transient and where "only a minority of the population . . . are being served by the extension worker who speaks no Spanish."[17]

Agricultural agents who spoke Spanish were soon hired for the predominantly Spanish-speaking counties. Some county commissioners stated in their agreements that agents must be Spanish speaking. By the end of World War I, there were numerous Hispanic agents and several bilingual Anglo agents. The problem was not as easily solved with home demonstration agents, because there was only one, and it seemed to be assumed that the one must be Anglo and not necessarily Spanish speaking. By 1916, however, agent Ritchie was hoping to get an assistant who might help make demonstrations in Spanish. At the end of June 1916, Ritchie reported she was still trying to find ways to assist "the native women in making their home life pleasanter but just what course is best to pursue has not yet been decided."[18]

The war finally galvanized the extension service into expanding its outreach to Hispanic women. That happened, however, only because federal and state legislation passed following the declaration of war in early April 1917 appropriated huge sums of money to the Agricultural College for agricultural programs. In less than six weeks, work more than doubled and, as state leader Cooley reported, "There was a sudden right-about-face in attention to food production and conservation." The service hired twelve temporary home demonstration agents in June 1917. One of them was Gertrude Espinosa of Santa Fe. In 1917, Espinosa became assistant in club work, and a second Spanish-speaking woman, Mrs. S. Van Vleck, was added as home demonstrator in February 1918. These two women provided the main services to Spanish-speaking women with the part-time assistance of Spanish-speaking male agents.[19]

From the beginning, county agents felt the burdens of working in a state like New Mexico. The Anglo population was a mixture of migrants from many states and foreign countries who seemed transient and unstable. Many farmers knew little about irrigation and dry land farming. Families had paid exorbitant prices for their land and now, dissatisfied and discouraged, they wanted to sell and get out. Thousands more had come for their health. Real estate sharks and grafters seemed to abound. People needed to have faith in the country, wrote one agent, and get the "home-making spirit." Like other Anglos before them, some agents had little respect for the Hispanics who were stable and had learned not to demand

more than the land could produce with simple tools. Hispanics, Cooley wrote at the end of 1915, had some of the best land but still farmed "in a very primitive way." Agents were determined to reach the Hispanic population and improve their "primitive methods of farming."[20]

It was difficult at first for agents to understand why farmers should not wish immediately to accept their advice. "The Spanish speaking people were hard to work with in boys and girls clubs," wrote one, "as they do not understand the work and are naturally suspicious of every new movement." As agents came to know their constituents better, a few began to analyze the reasons for the suspicions of the Hispanic community. Hispanics did not trust outside people because of past bad experiences. "In no place where the majority of the farmers are Mexicans," wrote R. C. Stewart, agricultural agent for Bernalillo County, "can one begin to show results with less than a year's work. These people have often been unfairly treated by the better educated classes and are therefore skeptical of anyone who tries to work with them, until they come to know him, and something about the work that is being undertaken."[21]

Next to trust, an inability to invest in new tools was probably the most important reason why Hispanics did not respond as quickly as Anglo farm families to suggestions. Whether new devices for spraying insects or glass canning jars, Hispanic families could not immediately experiment with new equipment that might not work. Rather, they waited for someone else to take the risk.

They were much more likely to invest their meagre resources in new equipment once a method was proven successful. Still, trust must certainly have been the key element, for the Hispanic agent in San Miguel County reported organizing Hispanic farmers there with no difficulty.[22]

What the Hispanic agents did naturally because of their shared culture, Anglo agents often had to learn by trial and error. The experience with the boys and girls clubs was perhaps the best example of this fact. The organization of rural boys and girls into project clubs was a major part of the extension outreach program. In fact, the federal government considered the training of farm children so important that by 1916 the Las Cruces headquarters

county agents had been ordered to spend one-fourth of their time organizing young people. This was far more time than that devoted to the organizing of adults. The influence of this early organizing effort nation-wide can best be seen in the figures of the United States Department of Agriculture. By 1914, more than 270,000 rural girls were already enrolled in clubs. By 1930, 41 percent of all rural girls were being reached by extension agents. By 1938, 63 percent of all New Mexico youths eleven years or older were enrolled in clubs, a majority of them girls. By the end of 1918, 5000 New Mexico youths were already in clubs.[23]

Actually, some 1000 boys and girls had already been organized in 40 rural clubs by 1913, but according to the first annual report of the agricultural extension office, these early clubs had "not been a great success." Under the new service, agents and a state-wide club leader worked through teachers to spread the club concept and to enroll local volunteer leaders to work with the young people during the summer months when most teachers returned to their homes. Eventually, many areas obtained additional appropriations from county commissions or school boards to hire summer organizers. The volunteer system continually caused problems for county agents, and those who were able to find funds for paid organizers seemed the most successful in maintaining the interest of the new club members.[24]

Agents had particular problems in Hispanic communities because the general distrust was transferred to the club organizers. Once agents discovered that they must explain the clubs to the parents before proceeding, things became easier. This was quite different from Anglo communities where the agents often organized the children first in the schools, and the students then helped interest their parents in extension projects. There were a few exceptions. In Old Mesilla, for example, the Anglo teacher in 1917 organized seventeen Spanish-speaking girls into a club that did outstanding needlework, canned, and even gave a concert to win an award as champion club in the state. In the town of San Miguel, just south of Las Cruces, Señora Rodríguez, described by the agent as the "most cultured and influential lady in the town," became club leader. The distrust may have reflected an alienation from schools that frequently had Anglo teachers, some of whom spoke

no Spanish, but close supervision by Hispanic parents of children seemed to be the crucial element.[25]

While meetings with parents helped clear the way for enrolling young Hispanic people in the clubs, the distrust persisted. During the war, it even increased in some areas. Catherine Pritchett, who worked in Socorro County in 1918, found: "At San Juan and La Joya the parents persist in the belief that the government has some sinister motive and that the children after finishing a course are to be taken from them." In Sierra County, parents thought club work would make children liable to military service.[26]

The problem of hiring sufficient Spanish-speaking demonstrators and club workers was never solved during the war. Valencia County commissioners had stipulated that a Spanish-speaking woman be employed as soon as possible, yet at the end of 1918, the home demonstration leader reported it had been impossible to hire one. The service tried to recruit Puerto Ricans and Mexicans and were turned down by their one Spanish-speaking applicant because the salary was too low. The service did think it best for Hispanics to have "workers of their own race"; in fact, Anglo women did urge families to plan for more education for girls, who seldom had more than primary education, but the service could only urge Spanish-speaking girls to finish high school and then take home economics classes. Since social and economic conditions made this difficult, the urgings were unlikely to be successful.[27]

This meant that not only young farm daughters but also their mothers could not be reached to teach them canning. Still important contact occurred. While some daughters were learning English in schools, many still could not read and write English, but a majority of all the women did read Spanish. Therefore translations began on the county level rather early, and agents adjusted to women's needs. In Socorro, the home demonstration agent reported in 1917: "The natives practice canning very little, but as a result of the meetings and demonstrations many were induced to can and dry products that in the past had gone to waste." Espinosa translated club circulars on cooking, sewing, and poultry into Spanish as well as instructions for keeping records so that mothers could understand the club movement. She spoke to groups of parents before organizing their sons and daughters and also gave demon-

strations. In 1918 alone, agents gave 162 demonstrations in Spanish in seven counties and visited more than 300 homes of Hispanic women.[28]

Agents and demonstrators also adjusted their methods of giving demonstrations. Hispanic women, unlike Anglo women, did not feel at home in school houses or public buildings. They also preferred meeting without Anglo women. "It is not possible to combine demonstrations for English and Spanish-speaking people even when they can all be reached by one language," wrote one agent, "because the Spanish-speaking people will not come to a meeting called for both. They are very retiring and can best be reached in small groups." At Sandoval, agents gave successful demonstrations at a farmer's picnic. Usually, however, they gave demonstrations at homes. Wrote one agent: "to reach the native women especially it is necessary to lay aside much of the formality of presentation that might otherwise accompany demonstration work."[29]

Virtually no written descriptions exist of these small meetings where Spanish-speaking demonstrators introduced Hispanic women to canning. One glimpse came from an agent who wrote of Van Vleck's canning demonstrations in Valencia: "It is interesting to visit Mrs. Van Vleck in her work and see the native women come with black shawls over their heads, roll their cigarettes and smoke as they stand about the table where the demonstrator is working." Many Hispanic women did learn to can during the war years. In Valencia, where Van Vleck distributed 10,000 tomato plants to women, Hispanic women busily canned the entire crop. If they did not literally meet English-speaking women over the canning kettle, Hispanic women did can large quantities of vegetables during the war years where demonstrators reached them. They were eager to learn and adopt new ideas when agents adapted methods to their needs.[30]

The home demonstrators, however, reached far more of the female Anglo minority than the Hispanic majority, thus making it appear that Anglo women took up canning more enthusiastically than did Hispanic women. Yet responses from Anglo women varied widely, usually depending on their previous experience. In San Juan County, for example, home demonstration agent Eva Fuchs discovered five Mormon women who canned 1,000 quarts a season.

Mormon women were prodigious canners, staging neighborhood bees in Utah where they canned collectively, and agents obviously had little to teach them. Other women resented the agents' claim to expertise. In Curry County, the older women told the agent: "[we] economized all our lives; what is the use to study Home Economics?" Elsewhere, women responded enthusiastically to the agent's demonstrations. At Alto in Lincoln County, where women knew nothing of canning, they came eagerly over long distances to learn.[31]

Early demonstrations went forward rapidly under the guidance of the home economics agents. During her year as demonstrator, Ross estimated traveling 17,978 miles, addressing almost 7,000 men and women at 162 meetings, distributing 2,370 bulletins and circulars, answering 445 letters, giving 102 demonstrations, visiting 60 farm homes, writing 43 articles for publication, aiding 32 organizations, and making 30 telephone calls. These early public demonstrations attracted many Anglos who considered them entertaining. When Ritchie took over in 1916, she organized three-day sessions in Chavez, Colfax, Eddy, and Torrance counties, as well as demonstrated and lectured in school houses and small home groups. Agents conducted most demonstrations with middle-aged women, and even though almost all had been to school, as one agent reported, "these have in most cases gotten out of the way of studying from books or taking instructions as given in public schools so the information given to them must be made very concrete. It is the aim of the demonstrator always to make herself one of the group of women among whom she is working and to try to see the problem from their standpoint."[32]

Despite the shared Anglo language and culture, demonstrators found that organizing clubs through the schools was the best way to interest parents in their work. Agricultural agents seemed to welcome the emphasis on club work. Wrote one: "it is much easier to work with willing, active and susceptible young minds than with set, old and indifferent ones." Thus the establishment of clubs was not an independent work but one integrally related to teaching the women in a community.[33]

The Extension Service initially organized eight types of clubs: gardening, poultry, pig, calf, rabbit, field crops, cooking, and sew-

ing. Agents apparently rigidly separated these clubs by sex, though club workers seldom mentioned the sex of members in each club. Through 1916, agents enrolled boys in gardening, field crops, rabbit, calf (only one of each of these clubs existed in 1916), and pig clubs. Catherine Pritchett was the only demonstrator to question this sexual segregation in writing. "I have had occasion to wonder why girls are not included as members of pig clubs," she wrote in 1918, "I believe they would have more stick-to-itiveness than their brothers." Such gender consciousness seldom surfaced, however. Neither girls nor women received much help for their agricultural needs through the extension service. One exception seemed to be poultry clubs that were open to boys and girls and where the majority may have been girls. In 1916, poultry clubs were the most frequently organized (39), although sewing clubs outdistanced them in numbers enrolled (364 to 313). The highest producers in the poultry clubs that year were 4 girls who raised turkeys and chicks. Since poultry raising was a common way farm women earned income in New Mexico at the time, these clubs must have been an important source of information for farm women.[34]

New Mexico reported no separate canning clubs in 1916, as did Arizona, for example, which enrolled 313 girls in 23 canning clubs. Agents did give club demonstrations in canning in the canning season of 1915 and reported that letters indicated "an awakened interest in home canning," but organization of girls into canning clubs did not make much headway until the war years.[35] Then work in canning by girls expanded rapidly as the New Mexico Council of Defense took up the problem of food preservation. The Council set aside funds to hire additional home economics specialists to preach the gospel of food conservation and mobilized women all over the state to help encourage the prospect. Additional funding enabled the extension service to add twelve women to supervise demonstrations and transferred Espinosa to full-time club work. By the end of 1917, girls were being enrolled in canning clubs and demonstrators reported they canned 2,438 quarts of fruit and vegetables, at an average estimated value of 33 cents per jar and a cost of 9 cents per jar. During 1918, girls in 78 canning clubs produced more than 16,000 quarts of food.[36]

That year saw a great flourishing of the canning activities by

young women and the beginning of a folklore about their amazing feats. These "canning stories" featured both young girls and women as their heroines. Young May Cribb of Roosevelt County, for example, was reported as doing all the home canning and showing her neighbors how to cold pack after joining a canning club at the Benson School house. At a statewide Mother-Daughter Congress held in Albuquerque in June 1918, teams of girls put on canning demonstrations in Spanish and English. Although some parents forbade their children to participate in club projects, generally the enthusiasm of the young people helped agents interest mothers in extension work. A Clovis demonstrator reported that county women and girls there preserved 15,000 quarts of food in 1918.[37]

Agents depended on clubs and schools in New Mexico to reach women because there were no rural women's organizations that agents could use to further their organizing efforts. The state had few farm organizations of any kind when agricultural extension began in 1914 although the Agricultural College had conducted Farmer's Institutes. State leader Cooley reported in 1915: "The work is so new to the people here that it was thought a county organization or farm bureau would be more of a hindrance than a help, so no effort was made to perfect an organization in the county before placing an agent."[38]

Home demonstrators did call on urban women's clubs for support in club extension work. Ross clearly hoped for some sort of urban-rural alliance that would enable her to utilize organized urban women to reach unorganized women. In southern New Mexico, Ross visited clubs at La Union and Anthony and began a county federation of women. In Colfax, the agent interested county commissioners in club work by having the women's club request a paid club leader. The county commission subsequently hired a Raton High School domestic science teacher for $75 a month to conduct club work. During the war, women's clubs and the Women's Auxiliary of the State Council of Defense joined hands to promote preservation of food, and wherever women's clubs existed they rallied patriotically to the call to can.[39]

As the agricultural agents began to organize the male farmers, they usually ignored women. Most male agents organized the men first; female agents waited until the men were organized before

beginning to organize the women. There was considerable diversity in how the women were to be organized as the experience from the three counties—Doña Ana, Colfax, and Curry—demonstrated.[40] Curry County early established a goal of organizing 600 men and women into a Farm Bureau. In Curry County, women were economically active raising many chickens and turkeys for the market, and these activities may have affected their early consideration. "Women are responsive," wrote the agent, "are glad to be permitted to belong to the Farm Bureau organization and are willing to act as local demonstrators."[41]

In Colfax, an energetic agent who worked with the women's club to obtain successful passage of a Clean Milk Ordinance also organized women. Although the men organized first as the Colfax County Farm and Live Stock Bureau, this agent quickly formed a woman's committee and established local units in all parts of the county. She set up special meetings for men and women where information about common agricultural interests could be shared and special meetings for women where prenatal and child care were a part of the program. Here too, agents treated women as a separate group within the organization, and as having special interests. There was, however, an attempt to make them an active if separate part of the organization.[42]

In Doña Ana, women apparently played an important role in organizing the County Farm Bureau. H. H. Brook, county agent, wrote: "The ladies are very willing and anxious to help and are going to be a strong factor in making the Farm Bureau a success." With the support of Women's Auxiliary of the State Council of Defense, the Farm Bureau took over county food conservation while the auxiliary operated in Las Cruces. The group planned exchanges of local products between country growers and city women, helped get one of the Farm Bureau's five rooms set aside as a "Ladies Rest Room" for farm women, and generally tried to carry out Ross's vision of a rural-urban coalition of organized women. Yet, even in Doña Ana, women in the Farm Bureau were not conceived of as mutual economic partners in agricultural production but as women contributing through their "home" work and men through their "farm" work. As in other counties, those women who conceived of or practiced direct agricultural production must

have found themselves in an anomalous position, uncomfortable in the male groups and uninterested in the female groups.[43]

There is no breakdown of sex of the 2,693 Home Bureau members who had joined the ten clubs formed in New Mexico by the end of 1918. It seems likely that women were a small minority since agricultural agents still considered furthering home demonstration and club work a small part of their responsibilities. Home economics agents planned to take up canning demonstrations as a major project in 1919, but staff cuts reduced the twelve demonstration agents to four, the state Defense Council closed its offices, and federal funding also declined. It is difficult to tell if women could have done better had they organized independently. Such individual organizations never seemed an option. Both male and female agents expected rural women to be a part of the male dominated organizations. Farm Bureaus were not involved directly in politics. Farmers were intensely political in most areas of New Mexico, but Farm Bureaus, established by and with support of federally and stated funded extension agents, were far different from the earlier populist or socialist farmer's organizations. The government may not have explicitly developed Farm Bureaus in opposition to these more radical farmer's groups, but they did make it possible for the government to introduce agricultural reform without radical political change. As such, Farm Bureau organizing was very much a part of the progressive search for political order in the early decade of the twentieth century.[44]

War brought the climax of the first phase of agricultural extension work among the women of New Mexico just as the women's suffrage movement was also reaching its high tide of political influence. Women suffragists clearly envisioned meeting Hispanic women at the ballot box as well as at the canning kettle, but the imagery of the progressive women's movement had been cast in the ideology of motherhood and domestic science, thus the canning kettle was not so much a contradictory image as one that would help strengthen the bonds of womanhood across cultures. Indian women were always poorly integrated into the movement, but there were more than token efforts to join Hispanic and Anglo women together, at the ballot box as well as over the canning kettle. The first statewide Mother-Daughter Congress had demonstrations in Spanish as well

as English, and while only a few Hispanic and even fewer Indian women were involved in the canning process, the image seemed appropriate to the new upsurge in female leadership. The impulse to meet as women was part of the exclusion of middle-class women from male organizational activities in the progressive era and women's attempt to find a constituency among their gender.[45]

Almost concurrently with the flowering of canning in the summer of 1918 came the outbreak of influenza in New Mexico. It brought a sobering reminder of the divisions among women, for Hispanic and Indian women suffered far more than did Anglo women. Historians are still not sure why. Rural poverty was apparently intensified by the war, for although commercial farmers made money selling needed foodstuffs, subsistence farmers did not. A two-year drought beginning in 1916 brought severe wheat shortages in some areas of New Mexico. Cattle owners were able to ship out cattle and trim losses, but dry farming crops were a failure and shortages drove up food prices.[46]

Agents reported the devastation in their annual reports. "In our Spanish-American sections people died by the hundreds," reported Van Vleck. In Valencia County, she wrote, the epidemic of Spanish influenza had been very bad; "many of the native people's condition was very bad and many deaths . . . resulted." She and other demonstration agents helped the Red Cross by establishing soup kitchens.[47] Four agricultural agents died, three of them Hispanic, and several demonstration agents became ill. After the first two weeks in September, the state government banned all public gatherings, and most home demonstration agents returned to Las Cruces to complete office work.

Demonstrators did not speculate in their reports how availability of food or nutrition might have affected the Hispanic population. There are hints, however, that grain shortages might have affected rural resistance to disease. One report noted the inability of demonstrators to reach the really poor Hispanic women in the summer of 1918 and noted that many people suffered "on account of their inability to change their food habits." Another agent reported that as the shortage of wheat became acute in summer 1918, merchants began stocking soybean flour as a substitute, but Hispanic women did not know how to use it. The agent then set up demonstrations

and reported: "It was necessary to teach the use of this product before there could be any sale."[48]

How can this slender evidence be evaluated? It is possible that had demonstrators been able to work more extensively in Hispanic areas and had a more flexible training program developed that Hispanic women might have coped more successfully with the drastic changes in food supply the war created. There were probably many reasons why more Hispanics than Anglos died, but nutrition was certainly a factor in making one part of the rural population more resistant than another. Since no rural relief existed, the rural poor suffered disproportionately.

Much easier to evaluate is the influence of the spread of home economics to the rural Anglo population. When the extension service began in 1914, almost seventy-five years had passed since Catharine Beecher published her *Treatise in Domestic Economy* in 1841. In somewhat the same way that Beecher defined the role for women within the household, home demonstration agents defined a new role for rural women. Agents hoped to raise the status of rural women homemakers by introducing domestic science to these women. In doing so, however, agents also more firmly entrenched a dual sphere model for girls and women, with federal, state, and county governments supporting roles to which farm women had rarely subscribed. Although, as Julie Jeffrey notes, the canon of domesticity followed women out to the frontier in the years after Beecher wrote, farm women remained much more free of the bonds of womanhood than their urban sisters. They were economic contributors to the farm economy, not only through their domestic work and food preservation, but also through participating in food production. Their role as food producers received relatively little attention by agricultural extension. The urban ideology codified their role as consumers while agricultural change focused more and more on ways to make the male farmer more agriculturally productive.[49]

It remained for the country life movement of the progressive era to raise these ideals to government policy. In the era that historians have come to see as a search for order, canning and the training of rural women as homemakers must take their places as another essential element.[50] If domesticity allowed the Jacksonians

to get on with economic and geographical expansion, allowing stability within the home to absorb many of the costs of an industrializing nation, so too later rural domesticity encouraged farm women to absorb the costs of agricultural instability by ensuring that the rural family would be provided for within a context of expanding commercial agriculture and increasing dependence on the national market. Canning would make farm families self-sufficent at the same time that they became more dependent on commercial agriculture. The pattern was most clear in Anglo families by 1919. It had only a limited influence on Hispanic families before the 1930s when the New Deal would take up and expand the ideals to Hispanic and native American farm families. The canning kettle, then, can be seen as the symbol of sisterhood but also a symbol of a special and essential sphere within the male-dominated rural culture.

Ironically, as reformers brought education for domesticity to rural women, urban women were abandoning many of their previous practices regarding food preservation. The per capita output of commercial canneries, which had remained almost constant between 1899 and 1909, began to rise during the very decade that rural women were being encouraged to can a greater amount of their food supply. Ruth Schwartz Cowan has remarked of the urban middle class that by the mid-1920s "home canning was on its way to becoming a lost art." As urban schools shifted the emphasis in economics to consumerism, reformers preached the doctrine of scientific homemaking with greater enthusiasm and with the financial support of the federal government. A similar movement was taking place with the southern rural white population. And because southern states would not match federal funds for black programs, private philanthropy rather than the federal government took the same message to black children through industrial teachers such as the Jeanes teachers. "Corn and tomato" clubs provided the equivalent of boys and girls gardening and canning clubs.[51]

Even in rural areas, the canning kettle was an outmoded symbol even before Henderson chose it for New Mexico women in 1919. The open canning kettle had already largely been replaced by cold pack canning. The pressure cooker had been introduced and would spread rapidly after 1919. Still, the image lingers, a powerful sym-

bol of the ideal of sisterhood, the witches' caldron transformed into a canning kettle, emblem of a common culture, around which women could meet and learn from one another.

NOTES

1. Alice Corbin Henderson, "The Women's Part," *New Mexico Blue Book, 1919* (Santa Fe: Office of the Secretary of State, 1919), p. 97.

2. Thomas Cooper, *A Treatise of Domestic Medicine* (Reading, Pa.: G. Getz, 1824), contained Appert's treatise of 1810 on preserving. For canning in Texas, see Ruth A. Allen, "The Labor of Women in the Production of Cotton" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1933).

3. Adrienne L. Zihiman, "Women as Shapers of the Human Adaptation," in *Woman the Gatherer*, ed. Frances Dahlberg (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981).

4. Emma Reh, "Navajo Consumption Habits," 24 October 1939, File 121.31, box 1, RG 81–87, Soil Conservation Service, Special Collections, New Mexico State University (SC, NMSU).

5. Report of Assistant State Demonstrator, 1918, Elizabeth Koger, New Mexico College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts, State College, Agricultural Extension Service, Annual Reports, New Mexico, National Archives, Microcopy T876, Reel 2 (NMCAAES, Annual Reports).

6. "Women's Work, Mescalero Apache Indian Reservation," box 1, RG 81–109, Soil Conservation Service, SC, NMSU; Maryann Abkemeier and Laura Robertson, *Stand Against the Wind: A Biographical Sketchbook of New Mexico Women* (Albuquerque: Wahili Enterprises, 1977), p. 46.

7. Fabiola [Cabeza] de Baca Gilbert, "New Mexican Diets," *Journal of Home Economics* 34 (November 1942): 668.

8. Joan M. Jensen, *With These Hands: Women Working on the Land* (Old Westbury, N.Y.: Feminist Press, 1981), p. 121.

9. Fabiola Cabeza de Baca Gilbert, *The Good Life: New Mexican Food* (Santa Fe: San Vicente Foundation, 1949), pp. 5–22.

10. NMCAAES, *Circular* 13 (December 1915); 35 (March 1918).

11. Nan Elsasser, Kyle MacKenzie, and Yvonne Tixier y Vigil, *Las Mujeres: Conversations from a Hispanic Community* (Old Westbury, N.Y.: Feminist Press, 1980), p. 67; Fran Leeper Buss, *La Partera: Story of a Midwife* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1980), p. 21.

12. Donald B. Williams, *Agricultural Extension: Farm Extension Services in Australia, Britain and the United States of America* (Carlton, Victoria: Melbourne University Press, 1968), pp. 22–25.

13. Lloyd E. Blauch, *Federal Cooperation in Agricultural Extension Work, Vocational Education, and Vocational Rehabilitation* (1933; reprint, New York:

Arno, 1969), p. 198; Fred W. Alber, "County Commissioners' View of Extension: A Study in New Mexico," (Master's thesis, Colorado State University, 1967), pp. 32, 45. County commissioners also rated home economics lowest in educational objectives on a scale of five. Salaries and numbers for 1924–25 are in box 34, UA78-43, Agricultural Extension Service, Budget Folder, SC, NMSU.

14. Helen D. Crandall, "Twenty-Five Years of Home Demonstration Work in New Mexico," typescript, box 34, UA78-43, Agricultural Extension Service, SC, NMSU.

15. Tura A. Hawk, "Demonstration in Home Economics, April 11, 1918," Folder, Extension Work in New Mexico Since 1914, box 34, UA78-43, Agricultural Extension Service, SC, NMSU.

16. NMCAAES, *Circular* 7 (December 1915); 14 (December 1916). For the country life movement, see William L. Bowers, *The Country Life Movement in America, 1900–1920* (Port Washington, New York: Kennikat Press, 1974); Mabel Carney, *Country Life and the Country School: A Study of Agencies of Rural Progress and of the Social Relationship of the School and the Country Community* (Chicago: Row, Peterson, 1912); and Liberty Hyde Bailey, *The Country-Life Movement in the United States* (New York: Macmillan, 1911), pp. 85–96.

17. A. C. Cooley, State Leader Report for 1915 and Demonstration Work in Home Economics in First Annual Report of the Extension Division, 1914–1915, NMCAAES, Annual Reports, NA T876, Reel 1.

18. Home Economics Report for Year Ending June 30, 1916, NMCAAES, Annual Reports, NA T876, Reel 1.

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22. Report for San Miguel County, in Fifth Annual Report for Year Ending Dec. 31, 1918, NMCAAES, Annual Reports, NA T876, Reel 1.

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25. Boys' and Girls' Club Work, Annual Report, 1917; Monthly Reports of Agents for 1917, San Miguel; Boys' and Girls' Club Work Annual Report, Year Ending Dec. 31, 1918, Dona Ana, NMCAAES, Annual Reports, NA T876, Reel 1.

26. Boys' and Girls' Club Work Annual Report, Year Ending Dec. 31, 1918, Socorro, Sierra, NMCAAES, Annual Reports, NA T876, Reel 1.

27. Second Annual Report, County Home Demonstration Work in New Mexico for Year Ending Dec. 1, 1918, NMCAAES, Annual Reports, NA T876, Reel 2.

28. Fourth Annual Report of County Agent Work, Dec. 31, 1917, Fourth Annual

Report of Cooperative Extension Work, Year Ending June 30, 1918, NMCAAES, Annual Reports, NA T876, Reel 1.

29. Fourth Annual Report of Cooperative Extension Work, Year Ending June 30, 1918, NMCAAES, Annual Reports, NA T876, Reel 1.

30. Monthly Report of Home Demonstration Work, 1918, NMCAAES, Annual Reports, NA T876, Reel 2.

31. Report of State Leader of Home Demonstration Agents, October 1917, NMCAAES, Annual Reports, NA T876, Reel 2.

32. Third Annual Report of County Agent Leader for Year Ending Dec. 31, 1916, NMCAAES, Annual Reports, NA T876, Reel 1.

33. Third Annual Report of County Agent Leader for Year Ending Dec. 31, 1916, NMCAAES, Annual Reports, NA T876, Reel 1.

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35. First Annual Report of the Extension Division, 1914–1915, NMCAAES, Annual Reports, NA T876, Reel 1.

36. Boys' and Girls' Club Work, Annual Report, 1917, 1918, NMCAAES, Annual Reports, NA T876, Reel 1.

37. Second Annual Report, County Home Demonstration Work, Year Ending Dec. 1, 1918, NMCAAES, Annual Reports, NA T876, Reel 2; Annual Report, Boys' and Girls' Club Work, Year Ending Dec. 31, 1918, NMCAAES, Annual Reports, NA T876, Reel 1.

38. A. C. Cooley, State Leader Report, Annual Report, 1915, NMCAAES, Annual Reports, NA T876, Reel 1.

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40. Second Annual Report, County Home Demonstration Work, Year Ending Dec. 1, 1918, NMCAAES, Annual Reports, NA T876, Reel 2.

41. Annual Report, County Home Demonstration Agent, Jan. 1, 1918–Dec. 1, 1918, NMCAAES, Annual Reports, NA T876, Reel 2.

42. Annual Report of State Leader of Home Demonstration Agents, 1918, NMCAAES, Annual Reports, NA T876, Reel 2.

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47. Annual Report of State Leader of Home Demonstration Agents, 1918, NMCAAES, Annual Reports, NA T876, Reel 2.

48. Fourth Annual Report of Cooperative Extension Work, Year Ending June 30, 1918; Annual Report of State Leader of Home Demonstration Agents, 1918, NMCAAES, Annual Reports, NA T876, Reel 2.

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