



DUBLIN 4-H CENTER

On November 15, 1957, the Dublin 4-H Center was dedicated on this site, becoming the first state center for black 4-H Club members in the nation. This dream had been planted many years earlier. The first known competitive farm club activity for black boys dates back to 1908 when P.D. Johnson staged a corn-growing contest in Newton County, Georgia. He demonstrated the most effective methods for high-yield corn production to local young males. The boys shared the methods with their families. Soon after, Tomato Clubs for girls were organized, and, following the Smith-Lever Act of 1914, 4-H Clubs were formed.

The 4-H Club members were led by agents of the University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Service. The state office for the black Cooperative Extension Service was located at Georgia State Industrial College in Savannah. Despite being in separate organizations, black and white Extension agents shared information, training, and friendships. Cooperative Extension Service State 4-H Club Leader G.V. Cunningham (1921-1942) and State Negro 4-H Club Agent Alva Tabor (1921-1922) worked closely together, allowing Cunningham to stay mindful of the need for equal programs, camps, and opportunities for black 4-H Club members in Georgia. In 1921, there were 58 4-H Clubs for black members, representing 1,718 youth.

Retention of club members was a problem in the early years. State Negro 4-H Club Agent P.H. Stone (1923-1930) stated in 1924 that “the lack of scholarships or similar inducements [...] discourages further participation in 4-H Club work and is largely responsible for the few boys and girls remaining in clubs longer than two years.” He organized a meeting of black Extension agents, and together they pledged to: (1) secure the support and participation of parents, teachers, and preachers; (2) raise \$250 in seed money for scholarships, awards, and trips; and (3) work within the school systems. Stone also nurtured the business community for financial support. He worked tirelessly to strengthen all facets of 4-H Club work through leadership training for members, rewards for competition, and a revised organizational framework. As a result, membership grew, and the community noticed. When Stone was promoted to State Agent of Negro Extension Work in 1930, membership in black 4-H Clubs was reported to be 2,766 youth.



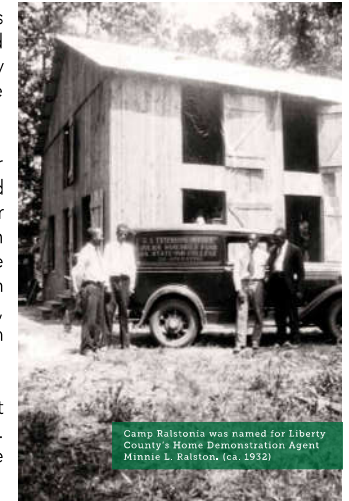
Home Demonstration Agent Janie B. Jordan established Camp Ware County on property belonging to the father of 4-H Club member Mary Clarke. A Boy Scout troop loaned and set up tents and a flag while merchants supplied other necessities. The girls brought food from home to last the week. (ca. 1933)

Prominent black farmers in the state credited their early agricultural knowledge to 4-H Club programs. Short courses focused on raising pigs and poultry, growing corn and cotton, gardening, sanitation, and health. Over 60% of students at Georgia State Industrial College were former 4-H Club members. Many of these students became Extension agents.

The success of short course programs evolved into a desire for camping opportunities. The first camp built, owned, and operated for black 4-H Club members was Camp Ralstonia, named in honor of Home Demonstration Agent Minnie L. Ralston. This Liberty County campsite included a two-story, wood-framed building. Camp Ralstonia opened in July 1928 and served as a destination for local, county, and district meetings for many years. Borrowed properties in Ware, Hancock, and Peach counties led black Extension agents to dream of a centrally-located, permanent facility for 4-H Club activities.

Camp Ware County was established on borrowed land as a temporary camp in 1933. Local merchants provided oil stoves, dishes, chairs, swings, and a refrigerator to store ice and food. Boy Scout troops loaned their tents. Campers brought food from home, which they cooked and served themselves. Electrical wires were run from nearby homes for power, allowing campers to enjoy daytime classes and evening fun. The Log Cabin Community in Hancock County hosted the first Wildlife Camp, sponsored by Federal Cartridge Corporation.

After three successful summers, the need for a larger facility led to Camp John Hope in Peach County. This facility offered 50 cabins, 13 acres, and a lake suitable for swimming. It was leased for the 1940 Wildlife Camp. Black Extension agents continued to dream of a centrally-located, permanent center that would be controlled by the Cooperative Extension Service, much like Camp Wilkins in Athens, Camp Wahsega in Dahlonega, and Camp Fulton in Atlanta.



Camp Ralstonia was named for Liberty County's Home Demonstration Agent Minnie L. Ralston. (ca. 1932)

For more information please visit Georgia4h.org/Dublin

Source information: Rock Eagle: Centerpiece of Georgia 4-H by Ina C. Hopkins