EARLY 20TH CENTURY & THE “AGE OF OIL”

AN AGE OF SCIENCE, MEDICINE, INDUSTRY, AND URBANIZATION

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HOW DID TEXAS PROGRESSIVES SEEK TO EDUCATE THE PUBLIC ON ISSUES OF SCIENCE AND HEALTH?
EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY IN THE U.S. IS PART OF WHAT IS OFTEN CALLED THE PROGRESSIVE ERA

- Typically in US history:
  - Varies but usually 1877/1890-1917/1920

- Some Texas Historians have claimed that Progressive Era in Texas ran through the 1920s (example Robert Maxwell argued 1900-1930 in his article in Texas: A Sesquicentennial Celebration)

- Era gets its name from the reformers during the period, often called “The Progressives”

- Today we will focus on events around 1900-1920
EVENTS AND TRENDS SHAPING THIS ERA

• Increased Urbanization
• Increased Use of Drilling of Oil and Increased Industry—Spindle Top, for example, 1901
• Increased Access and Focus on Science and Related Health—Germ Theory, last decades of 1800s
• Increased Transportation and Communication Capabilities
TEXAS URBANIZATION

- **1880:**
  - Galveston (22,284)
  - San Antonio (20,550)
  - Houston (16,513)
  - Austin (11,013)
  - Dallas (10,358)

- **1900:**
  - San Antonio (53,321)
  - Houston (44,633)
  - Dallas (42,638)
  - Galveston (37,789)
  - Fort Worth (26,668)

- **1920:**
  - One-third of Texans already lived in metropolitan areas of 2,500 or more.
  - San Antonio 161,379
  - Dallas (158,976)
  - Houston (138,276)
  - Fort Worth (106,482)
  - El Paso (77,460)
WHO WERE THE PROGRESSIVES?
TRAITS SHARED BY MOST “PROGRESSIVES”

• Optimistic
  • They were invested in the belief that change was possible and that their change was the right way to go
• Often invested in idea that “newer is better”
  • Influenced by modernity
• Looking for answers to problems
• Invested in the role of experts/science to lead to solutions
• ***Very often act as part of a larger group/organization/association***
• Often, but not always, middle-class reformers
• “Progressive” did not mean egalitarian/equal
“ASSOCIATIONALISM”

• Most often, Progressives sought answers and reform avenues through associationalism, public appeal, government lobbying, or a mixture of some or all of these.
Examples of some Texas “Progressive Era” associations/organizations

- Texas Woman’s Christian Temperance Union (1881/1882)
- Women’s World’s Fair Exhibit Association of Texas (1890)
- Daughters of the Republic of Texas (1891)
- Texas Woman’s Press Association (1893)
- Texas United Daughters of the Confederacy (1896)
- Colored Division of the Texas WCTU (1897)
- Texas Federation of Women’s Clubs (1897)
- Texas Mother’s Congress/Texas Congress of Parents and Teachers (1909)
- Texas Federation of Colored Women’s Clubs (1905)—now called the Texas Association of Women’s Clubs
- La Liga Femenil Mexicanista (1911)
- La Cruz Blanca (1913)
- Texas NAACP branches (1915+)
- Texas Equal Rights Association (1893)….Texas Woman Suffrage Association (1903)…
- Texas Committee on Prisons and Prison Labor (1920)
CORPUS CHRISTI—A CASE STUDY

- Texas Federation of Women’s Clubs & Woman’s Monday Club-Corpus Christi
  
  Corpus Christi Clubs (including the Woman’s Monday Club)
  
  • Participated in Mosquito Eradication
  • City Clean-Up Activities
  • Inspections of Bakeries and Other Local Commercial Food Establishments

- TEKS – 7.9 Identify ways in which Texans have adapted to and modified the environment and explain the positive and negative consequences of the modifications.
WORLD WAR I—A NEW FOCUS FOR ASSOCIATIONS AND ORGANIZING

• Once the U.S. mobilized to enter WWI—financial sources, goods and services had to be dedicated to the needs of military troops and other groups being gathered for training and then transported to Europe.

• Organizations and Associations all over Texas started to focus on using their reform structures to benefit the war effort.

• One of the focus was to produce as much food at home to preserve the industrial production to ship food and goods to U.S. troops, support services, and residents of war torn nations.

• TEKS—7.1 Analyze the political, economic, and social impact of major events, including World War I, on the history of Texas
UNIVERSITY EXTENSION SERVICES WERE A FORM OF PUBLIC OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

• Ways Higher Ed Supported Texans’ Lives
  • Access to Information BUT ALSO access to expensive equipment

• Canning and Food Preservation Assistance
  Provided for the War Effort and Provided Texans with everyday assistance
  • Certain foods need to be processed at higher rates of heat and pressure to be preserved safely
  • The equipment to do this is expensive and requires knowledge and access to safely and properly run

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A SYSTEMATIC PLAN TO
SAVE ALL FOODS IN TEXAS

These Hundred Young Women Will
Demonstrate Canning, Drying,
Fruits and Vegetables.

Systematic and organized effort is
needed to prevent the waste of our
fruits and vegetables. Canning and
drying will save for the future the
wealth of the State. If the citizens of
our counties cooperate with the
extension service of the Agricultural
and Mechanical College, Letters
agreeing to the county judges of every
Texas county to pass the way for the
assignment of one of the 250 young
women who wish to demonstrate work
during the summer months. These 250
young women will come from the
University of Texas, the College
of Industrial Arts and the various
normal schools. Each county will
receive a young woman who will
have been advised by the heads of
those schools.

The plan is to assign these young
women, who will work without pay,
under the general supervision of the
extension service to the various
counties, as they may be
accepted. They will be responsible
for the success of the plan.

The letters will be sorted by the
county judges to the various
counties. Each letter will be
assigned to a county judge.

In the letter to the county judges,
Director Ousley has urged that these
offices, as the most conspicuous
county officers, assemble the heads
of the extension service of the
various counties. The plan is to
assign the young women to
cooperate with the extension
service of the Agricultural and
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PRIMARY SOURCE DISCUSSION