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FOUR-H CLUB MEMBERS CAPITALIZE
ON OPPORTUNITIES AT HOME

A radio talk by Reuben Brigham, Assistant Director, Extension Work, U. S. Department of Agriculture, delivered in the National 4-H Club Radio Program, May 7, 1938, and broadcast by a network of associate NBC radio stations.

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4-H Club members and friends:

We have today over a million boys and girls in the 4-H clubs. When we have that many young people working together, it is well, from time to time, to turn to the fundamentals of what we are doing and give these fundamentals some thought. One of these is to capitalize as full as we can on our opportunities at home.

There is nothing startling about farm boys and girls capitalizing on their opportunities at home. Neither are today's opportunities very different from those on the farm when I was a boy. Yet when a boy or girl becomes a 4-H club member, he or she tackles these opportunities in a different way-- than we did in my boyhood days. The opportunities are much the same but the way 4-H club members handle them is different.

Certain boys have done remarkably well with poultry, with cattle, or with sheep. And again, certain girls have canned, -baked, or made the home more attractive with unusual success. These are familiar things about the farm and home.

When a boy gets old enough to join a 4-H club he begins to turn over in his mind what the farm has for him to use in carrying on his demonstration in good farming. Shall he start a poultry flock, shall he plant a garden, or shall he grow a field of cotton or corn? Just being a 4-H member challenges him to find an opportunity at home.

Another thing that is different is the 4-H method of attack, in, that many of the other boys and girls of the neighborhood are in the work, too. That means a lot in the way of accumulating enthusiasm, persistence and actual knowledge, because our 4-H boys and girls exchange experiences at their meetings and pay visits to each member's demonstration. You don't get quite so down-hearted, pulling weeds or fighting potato bugs, if you know the boy down the road is running you a close second on the same kind of a job. And if you slip a bit, he is going to know about it. Young folks take the opinion of their fellows just as seriously as we do.

4-H members today have another important help. That is, the use of up-to-date-methods. County extension agents, in nearly every county, help the local communities to organize 4-H clubs and these agents represent the State agricultural college and the U.S. Department of Agriculture in their counties. Naturally, then 4-H club members are only a step or two steps behind the man at the microscope. That is quicker than in the days when we

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depended largely on bulletins for our information.

One thing I never did when I was of club age was to keep records and make reports on what I did with my opportunities. I wish I had. I would like to be able to turn to such a record as one of the boys I hear about in Rhode Island - Michael Pucino. He started ten years ago in the poultry business, - had a lot of difficulties getting started but here are some of his figures, over the last five years-- 43 hens in 1933; seventeen hundred hens in 1938. His books show good returns over cost each year. He did so well, capitalizing on opportunities at home, that he went farther and developed a market in nearby towns for his products.

Speaking of records, here's a story from Georgia. Mr. and Mrs. Maxey, former 4-H club members - married in 1924 - started in the dairy business in 1930 with two cows. They now have 21 milk cows and 10 heifers that will freshen this year. They bought a farm, built a house according to their own plans, including the layout of the dairy, milk house, barn, pastures, etc. Mrs. Maxey keeps books for the dairy. She has a record of their entire business operations from the very beginning.

I'd like to go back a minute to what I said about the 4-H members keeping up with the times. And liking it. There's a Nebraska boy, Harry Knabe, who is an established Hampshire breeder in Cass County. He says he didn't care a rap about hogs until he produced the county 4-H swine champion back in 1918.

I'd like to jump from opportunities to responsibilities for a minute. Not that these responsibilities were not opportunities, for I am sure that's what they were to Bessie Crock, of Nevada. She took over the entire job of making a home for her father and brother when she was just ten years. She made a club demonstration out of running that home and, although she lived in an outlying valley, she found time to serve as an officer in her club and for two years to take charge of a younger 4-H group.

Then, there is Mayme Overall of Tennessee who invested her club earnings in electrical equipment and current to sterilize and heat her hot bed for growing tomato plants - five thousand of them, -- a thousand for herself and the rest for her father.

4-H club members sometimes decide that their field is community wide. They decide to do something together about their opportunities there. In Marion County, West Virginia, the Cross Roads club members wanted money for school expenses. They interested a local store keeper in giving them counter space in its basement each Saturday. Since 1931 this club had carefully prepared and inspected farm and home products there for sale, - dressed chickens, eggs, cottage cheese, butter, fresh vegetables, meats, fruits, canned goods.

Twenty years ago there came to this country as an immigrant from the Old World a young girl named Mary Antin. She wrote a book that I wish all of you might read. In this book, Mary Antin says something about America that each one of us might well say to himself from time to time with profit: She says, "America is the youngest of the nations, and inherits all that went before in history. I am the youngest of America's children, and into my hands is given all her priceless heritage, to the last white star espied through the telescope, to the last great thought of the philosopher. Mine is the whole majestic past. Mine is the shining future." And so, good bye and good luck!

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