This and other Oklahoma State University news stories related to agriculture, family and consumer sciences, rural development and youth development are available via the Internet at <http://www.dasnr.okstate.edu/> by clicking on the “Latest News” or “Division News” listings.

**NOTE TO EDITOR**:Photo attached.

**Cutline information**: In the early 1900s, Extension agents travelled across Oklahoma on demonstration trains sharing the latest on farm, agriculture and home topics. (Photo by OSU Special Collections, Edmon Low Library)

**Extension recreating demonstration train whistle stop for centennial celebration**

By Leilana McKindra

STILLWATER, Okla. – These days the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service (OCES) uses a blend of 21st century technology to help fulfill its mission of helping Oklahomans live the best lives possible. In addition to a strong social media presence, Extension’s two weekly television shows – SUNUP (agriculture) and Oklahoma Gardening – boast more than 2.5 million views on YouTube.

But, in Extension’s earliest days, agents crisscrossed the state on demonstration trains, sharing the latest trends and know-how for farm and family.

“This year, Extension is celebrating its 100th birthday, and the popularity and effectiveness of demonstration trains are a perfect example of how Extension has always used the technology available to work to make life better for Oklahomans of all ages,” said James Trapp, associate director of OCES.

As part of its centennial celebration, OCES is hosting the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Whistle Stop and Festival from 10:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., April 12 at the Rock N Rail yard, located off Highway 66 east of Wellston.

A reenactment of a demonstration train whistle stop from the early 1900s, the festival is free and open to the public. Tents and booths will feature Extension-related demonstrations and hands-on activities for all ages. Lunch will be provided to the first 500 in attendance.

At the turn of the century, trains were used to move both people and products, and railroad companies strongly supported early Extension work, said David Peters, interim head, special collections, at Oklahoma State University’s Edmon Low Library.

“They would have about eight to 10 cars. They’d have poultry on one car, swine on another, home demonstration agents working on others,” he said. “These trains would travel through communities, stop and give presentations. One year, one train attracted more than 52,000 people.”

Though the earliest demonstration trains began rolling in Iowa in 1904, the first demonstration train rumbled across the Oklahoma plains in October 1910, thanks to a partnership between OSU (then Oklahoma A&M College) and the Frisco Railway, according to “Centennial Histories Series: Agriculture” by Donald E. Green.

According to Green’s account, that train included a cattle car, flat car, baggage car, a coach and a staff car. During an 18-day swing through 89 towns in western Oklahoma, the train covered 1,482 miles and drew about 40,000 spectators.

Sometimes known as “county fairs on wheels,” demonstration trains had something for everyone, including women and children. During five or six short daily stops, people gathered to hear lectures and see exhibits on a variety of topics related to the farm, agriculture and home such as livestock, crops, dairying, gardening and preserving fruits and vegetables.

To encourage participation local schools and businesses often were closed during stops.

“In order that everyone may have an opportunity to get the full benefit of these lectures and demonstration work, it is especially requested by the demonstrators that the business houses and the schools be closed during the period the train is at our station, and spend an hour with them in the interest of better farming,” stated a front-page notice about a demonstration train tour printed in an early 1900s edition of the Crowder City, Okla., Guardian newspaper.

For more information about the festival, contact your local county Extension office or visit [www.extension100.okstate.edu](http://www.extension100.okstate.edu). In case of inclement weather, the alternate date is May 3.

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REPORTER/MEDIA CONTACT:
Leilana McKindra
Communications Specialist
Agricultural Communications Services
140 Agriculture North
Oklahoma State University
Stillwater, OK 74078
Phone: 405-744-6792
Fax: 405-744-5739
Email: leilana.mckindra@okstate.edu