

Females in FFA:
Forging New Frontiers in Farming and Beyond

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As we sifted through National History Day topic possibilities, we focused on finding a topic with strong personal connections. Since we are both enrolled in a vocational agriculture class and FFA, the topic of women in agriculture, and further, women's involvement in FFA was very appealing to both of us. After doing some brief research, together we became certain that this was the topic for us. Many helpful sources were readily available to us, which we used to better understand the history of women's enrollment in the FFA organization.

After determining our topic, we began research with articles published by the National FFA Organization, which were very insightful and built our overall knowledge of women's involvement in FFA. In October, we made a trip to the University of Northern Iowa Library where we found additional journal articles, as well as newspaper articles, in UNI's online database. In November, Alison traveled to the Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis library, where the national FFA organization archives are located. There, she scanned numerous documents and original letters of correspondence exchanged about admitting females for membership in FFA. In an email follow-up, the IUPUI librarian also provided many links to digitized materials in their collection and other related websites, which we made great use of as they contained an abundance of useful articles, photographs, and the meeting minutes of relevant past FFA national conventions. Additionally, we obtained an interview with Kerryann Kocher, a female international agricultural business CEO, who discussed FFA's impact on her own career trajectory. Later, we interviewed Peg Armstrong-

Gustafson about her experiences as the first female FFA state president and second female national officer.

With our research complete, we began developing our project. Since we have prior experience creating websites, we felt that category would best allow us to leverage our contrasting and complementary skill sets to thoughtfully and thoroughly create our project. Additionally, due to an abundance of available photographs and articles, this project category functioned ideally for our topic of female enrollment in agriculture classes. After deciding on a project category, we created an outline for our website to organize our information and then wrote specific text for our pages. We built our project using NHDWebcentral, used Blue, Gold, and White for the color scheme to represent FFA and the sweetheart jacket, and then added photographs, documents, news clippings, and quotes to bring our topic to life and demonstrate its historical significance.

Our project makes a clear argument, fits well with this year's National History Day theme, "Frontiers in History: People, Places, Ideas," and shows historical significance. In October 1969, amid widespread debate concerning women's roles in agriculture and society, the forty-second FFA convention admitted the first female member into Future Farmers of America. By allowing women to join, lead, and become an integral part of the organization, this progressive action not only forged new frontiers for gender equity in agriculture, it also helped open the door to greater opportunity, success, and influence for women in greater society.

Annotated Bibliography

Primary Sources

Books:

Cardozier, V.R. *Public Relations for Vocational Agriculture: A Guide For Teachers*. Agricultural Education Department, Mississippi State University, 1958.

This 1958 guide for teachers had many interesting items in it, but the one that was most useful for us was advice on how teachers and schools should deal with girls who wanted to be involved in FFA. The guide stated that girls were ineligible for chapter membership but could be allowed to play the role of chapter sweetheart. We used a quote from this guidebook on the FFA page of our website to illustrate how FFA rejected girls from full membership but encouraged leveraging their physical appearance and social qualities as chapter sweethearts to provide positive publicity for the organization.

Collections:

IUPUI. "National FFA Organization Records, 1916-2008." Ruth Lilly Special Collections and Archives. <https://special.ulib.iupui.edu/special/ffa>.

Alison traveled to the Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis archives in November to access their FFA collection, which was immensely helpful, as it provided organizational records throughout all of FFA history until 2008. The many documents we obtained regarding this history and the major changes that occurred gave us a detailed overview and evidence to use in our lead-up, main event, and perspective sections.

IUPUI. "1960s-1970s: Social Changes." Special Collections at University Library. <https://exhibits.ulib.iupui.edu/sc001/exhibits/show/ffatimeline/3>.

Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis also had an excellent online collection of digitized resources that provided source materials related to our topic. This allowed us to develop a comprehensive understanding of the events surrounding females in FFA. We were able to use these materials and information in the lead-up and main event sections of our website.

Interviews:

Armstrong-Gustafson, Peg. Personal Interview. 12 May 2023.

After the state contest, we interviewed Peg Armstrong-Gustafson, an FFA pioneer who forged new frontiers for females by serving as the first female FFA state president in 1976, and only the second female national officer in 1977. She discussed her background in FFA, the steps she took to become an influential leader in the formerly all-male organization, and how her involvement in FFA contributed to her career and life success. This interview was one of our best sources as it provided important personal perspectives, quotes, video clips, and a photograph we used on our website.

Zelle, Ronald. Personal correspondence. 9 May 2023.

Our email discussion with Mr. Ronald Zelle, a former high school agriculture teacher, was very beneficial. He gave us a good perspective on the views of fellow agricultural educators, one of which we were able to use in our Fighting for Females section, and showed the changing perspectives of many males in the field of agriculture as a whole. He also connected us with Peg Armstrong-Gustafson, who we interviewed about her experiences as a female FFA pioneer.

Letters:

Hunsicker, H. N. "Future Farmers of America--Participation of Girl Student of Vocational Agriculture in National Level Programs." Letter to Dr. John R. Ludington and William H. Metzger, 6 Oct. 1967. National FFA Organization Records, 1916-2008, Indiana University-Purdue University: Ruth Lilly Special Collections, Indianapolis, Mss 35, Box 21. Typescript

Within this letter, an FFA member discussed the potential inclusion of females. We found this letter to be quite helpful, as it gave us a better understanding of perspectives prior to female inclusion.

Stimson, Rufus. Letter, August 1, 1933. National FFA Organization Records. Ruth Lilly Special Collections and Archives, Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis Library.

This letter was one in a series of letters we found between Rufus Stimson and Vernon Howell debating the issue of admitting girls into FFA. In the letter, Stimson provided two common arguments for opposing their admission -- that it went against the FFA Constitution and that FFA was intended to be a boys only organization. Because this letter captured the key opposition cited for denying girls from membership from the inception of the organization until 1969 when they were finally admitted, we quoted an excerpt on the perspectives page of our website.

Miscellaneous Documents:

Future Farmers of America. *Forty-Second National Convention Proceedings*. October 14-17, 1969.

As it directly reported the events of the 1969 FFA proceedings, we found these official records very useful. This is where we found the final written clause approved at the convention, which admitted females to FFA membership after many years of unsuccessful attempts to do so prior. We clipped this relevant excerpt from the minutes and placed it in the "Achieving Admission" section of the "Fighting for Females" page of our website to illustrate the event that expanded frontiers for females in agriculture.

Norris, Ernest Misheal, Dr. *A Chronology of NFA*. Edited by Ocleris Simpson, Dr. N.p., 1993.

A Chronology of NFA was extremely helpful to our understanding of the New Farmers of America organization. This source described the history of New Farmers of America and the perspectives that NFA members had for the two organizations. We used information from this source in the background section of our website.

Official Manual for Future Farmers of America. N.p.: Future Farmers Supply Service, 1952.

This manual gave us useful context for the history of FFA, particularly pertaining to previous iterations of the FFA emblem. It also allowed us to gather what the FFA organization was like prior to the acceptance of female students. We were able to use one of the manual's numerous photographs of the 1952 emblem in our lead-up section.

Newspapers:

Beckley, W. "Girls Permitted to Join Future Farmers of America." *Post-Herald and Register*, December 21, 1969, p. 19.

This article served as a demonstration of the perspectives that many of the male FFA members held. Particularly, it exhibited the divided views that people had toward female admission to the organization. We used a clipping of the title in the perspective section of our website.

Cohn, D'Vera. "'The glass is still only half full.'" *Washington News*, October 17, 1981. advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:3SJB-14P0-001X-N16W-00000-00&context=1516831.

This article provided us with knowledge surrounding the developments that have been made for FFA and female engagement, with information about where agriculture is today. We were able to use this information in the impact section of our website.

"Farm Life." *Altoona Mirror*, April 23, 1966, p. 18.

This newspaper article provided useful information regarding chapter perspectives prior to women being allowed to join the organization. We were able to use this information, as well as a section of the article, in the main event section of our website.

“FFA to Admit Girls to Membership” *Albert Lea Sunday Tribune*, Oct. 29, 1969, p. 14.

This newspaper clipping displayed the immediate news that spread after the decision to include females, presenting the immediate effect of the decision as news spread of female inclusion in FFA. We were able to use this in the main event section of our website.

"Girl Beats 36 Boys in Farm Test." *New York Times*, September 1, 1940, p. 9. *ProQuest*, <https://login.proxy.lib.uni.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/girl-beats-36-boys-farm-test/docview/105335173/se-2>.

This article discussed the first woman who won the Empire Farmer Award in 1940, which demonstrates female involvement in FFA since the earliest stages of its development. We used this information on the lead-up page of our project to show events that contributed to the eventual inclusion of females in FFA.

Moody, Sid. "Vietnam War Touched the Core of U.S. Society." *The Daily Chronicle* (Centralia, WA), January 24, 1973, p. 11.

This newspaper article from Washington in 1973 was valuable in the background section of our website. We inserted the heading and photographs from this article into our website to represent the war that was happening in Vietnam and the toll that it had on the American people.

Neosho Daily Democrat (Neosho, MO). "New Organization." October 19, 1928, p. 1.

This newspaper article from Neosho, Missouri showcased the excitement of a new organization, Future Farmers of America, and how it was introduced to locals. This article mainly focused on what FFA was, what FFA's goals were, and how it would work. We used this article in the lead-up section of our website.

“Vivi, Susie proves that FFA is also for Girls.” *Mattoon Journal Gazette*, April 18, 1968, p. 34.

This invaluable newspaper article provided unique insight into women's involvement with the FFA organization prior to official membership. We were able to use this information in our lead-up, main event, and perspective sections to show the contrasting experiences of females' and males' experiences in agricultural pursuits.

Secondary Sources

Interviews:

Kocher, Kerryann. Interview. 12 September 2022.

We were excited to have an interview with Kerryann Kocher, CEO of an international agricultural business, who graduated from our high school. Kocher discussed her experiences in FFA, as well as 4-H, and how they contributed to her agricultural career today. As a result, we used an excerpt from this video on the impact page of our website to demonstrate how including females in FFA helped transcend the gender equity frontier.

Journals/Magazines:

Begley, Sarah. "International Women's Day Quotes: Inspiring Words." *Time*, March 8, 2017. <https://time.com/4695057/international-womens-day-quotes-2017/>.

This article by *Time* magazine was very helpful in developing our knowledge of women's rights. This article was written to honor international women's day and contains numerous quotes and a photo that was used in the background section of our website.

Shrestha, Krishna M., et al. "Who Enrolls in Agriculture and Natural Resources Majors: A Case from Michigan State University." *NACTA Journal*. vol. 55, no. 3, 2011, pp. 33–43. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/nactajournal.55.3.33>.

This source allowed us to find statistics concerning the number of women enrolled in a specific agricultural college. We then used these statistics to compare with other sources so we could draw conclusions about the data. This information was useful in the impact section of our website, where we shared statistics to quantify the impact of including females in FFA on university enrollment in agriculture-related majors.

Newspapers:

Dao, James. "Battle of Sexes, with Monkey Wrenches." *New York Times* (1923-), 29 Oct. 2005, pp. 1. *ProQuest*.

With a focus on girls competing in tractor restoration competitions through FFA, this source helped us better understand perspectives on women being a part of FFA and the impact of their involvement. We used this information in the impact and perspectives sections of our website.

Davey, Monica. "Agriculture Mainstay Gets an Urban Face." *New York Times* (1923-). 16 Nov. 2006, pp. 1. *ProQuest*.

This article focused on the development of the FFA organization into a suitable opportunity for urban areas. It was very helpful in understanding the context of the FFA before, during, and after females were allowed to join. We were able to use information from this article in our lead-up, perspective, and impact sections.

"Group Still Prepares Students for Future." *The Tampa Tribune*. 15 June 1995.
advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:3SD5-J3C0-0094-03FK-00000-00&context=1516831.

This source provided us with information on the history of the FFA organization, as well as its relation to the Future Homemakers of America. We were able to use this information in our background section to provide context for understanding female roles over time.

Reports:

Kalbacher, Judith Z. "A Profile of Female Farmers in America." Research report no. 45. Washington D.C.: United States Department of Agriculture, 1985.

This report gave us valuable statistics regarding records of women-run farms. We used this in our impact section to display the increased number of women in agricultural careers after the FFA organization allowed female membership.

Websites:

Agri-Pulse staff. "Agri-Pulse Sponsors National FFA Officer Team Experience in Washington, D.C." *Agri-Pulse*. Last modified February 12, 2018.
<https://www.agri-pulse.com/articles/10600-agri-pulse-sponsors-national-ffa-officer-team-experience-in-washington-dc>.

This website had helpful information on current events, as well as a useful photograph. We used this knowledge in our impact section to demonstrate the diversity of officers that the FFA organization now has.

"The Civil Rights Act of 1964: A Long Struggle for Freedom." *Library of Congress*.
<https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/civil-rights-act/segregation-era.html>.

This website provided us with insightful information regarding the history of civil rights, specifically surrounding the segregation era between 1900–1939. We used information from this website in our background section.

"Civil Rights Movement." *History*. October 27, 2009.
<https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/civil-rights-movement>.

This website gave a fantastic general overview of the civil rights movement, particularly the Civil Rights Act of 1964. This gave us base knowledge which we were able to use in our background research.

"Coming of Age: Young Women and FFA." *National FFA Organization*, March 6, 2020.
<https://www.ffa.org/50-years-of-women-in-ffa/coming-of-age-young-women-and-ffa/>.

This article from the National FFA Organization was very helpful in the development of our website. It discusses the FFA chapter sweethearts, which were a key part of the leadup to women's full membership and involvement in FFA, and demonstrates how frontiers for women in agriculture were expanded. From this very insightful article, we were able to use numerous pictures and information that were beneficial to the lead-up page of our project.

"FFA History." *FFA*. <https://www.ffa.org/ffa-history/>.

The timeline on this website aided us in gathering information on the history of the FFA organization as a whole. Not only did it give us a general idea of what happened, but it provided us with details which we primarily used in our lead-up and main event sections.

"50 Years of Women in FFA." *FFA*, 2019, www.ffa.org/50yearsofwomeninffa/.

During its fifty-year anniversary of female enrollment, the FFA website published an article discussing the history of women enrolled in the FFA organization. We were able to use information from the article to add to the background information we already had about our topic.

Flatt, Bev. "The Fight for Female Membership." *FFA*, 15 Feb. 2019, <https://www.ffa.org/ffa-history/the-fight-for-female-membership/>.

This online article provided a good synopsis of the fight to let women join FFA. This helped us build overall knowledge on our topic and provided some leads for other areas of research to pursue and other possible sources to examine.

Gregg, Carol Ann. "Young Women Welcomed into FFA Nearly 50 Years Ago." *Lancaster Farming*. Last modified December 7, 2022. https://www.lancasterfarming.com/farming-news/women_in_ag/young-women-welcomed-into-ffa-nearly-50-years-ago/article_b589b41f-b5fd-55db-8aab.

Containing unique perspectives from women involved in FFA, this website provided us with a helpful insight into how women of the time perceived being enrolled in the FFA organization. We used this information to add to our perspectives section.

Hulshof, Kacie. "Women's Critical Role in the National FFA Organization." *Ag Daily*. Published March 21, 2022. <https://www.agdaily.com/ffa/womens-critical-role-in-the-national-ffa-organization/>.

This article discussed the long-term impact of FFA on women in their careers. We used a quote from this article on the impact page of our website to show how much female involvement in FFA has changed society.

Liebhold, Peter. "Coming of Age: Young Women and the FFA." *National Museum of American History*, May 24, 2017.
<https://americanhistory.si.edu/blog/coming-age-young-women-and-ffa>.

This website displayed great information regarding women's enrollment in FFA. We were able to use this information in our Lead-Up and Main Event sections to get a better understanding and to show the development of our topic.

"Meet 5 Women Who Helped Shape the Future of FFA." *FFA*, 15 Feb. 2019,
www.ffa.org/ffa-history/meet-5-women-who-helped-shape-the-future-of-ffa/.

With knowledge of the female members who publicly pushed the frontiers of FFA, this website gave us valuable information. We gleaned a better understanding of the people involved in influential events for women's enrollment in FFA. We used this information, as well as multiple quotes, in our impact section.

Moore, G. "The FFA Sweetheart." *The Friday Footnote*, North Carolina State University, 16 Nov. 2018,
footnote.wordpress.ncsu.edu/2018/11/16/the-ffa-sweetheart-11-16-2018/.

This North Carolina State FFA blog had exceptionally helpful information on FFA sweethearts, which was the original way in which women were able to join FFA. It also had fantastic photographs. We used this information and some photographs in the lead-up section of our project.

"Rekindling Civil Rights, 1900-1941." *National Park Service*.
<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/civilrights/rekindlingcivilrights.htm>.

With information on both race and gender, this website provided us with valuable information regarding Civil Rights history previous to our main topic. We were able to use this knowledge in the background section of our website.

"Second Wave Feminism." *Khan Academy*. <https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/us-history/postwarera/1960s-america/a/second-wave-feminism>.

With a focus on 1960s feminism, this insightful website helped us better understand gender inequity and the movements surrounding it. This article detailed the development of social groups that pushed frontiers in women's involvement, which gave us information for the background page of our website.

Spector, R. H.. "Vietnam War." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, March 3, 2023.
<https://www.britannica.com/event/Vietnam-War>.

Information surrounding peace protests against the Vietnam War, which were very active throughout the 1960s, gave us context about the social climate during our topic. We were able to use this information in the background section of our website.

Zogran, Shannon. "The Evolution of Sexism." *Sequoit Media*, December 12, 2014.
<https://www.sequoitmedia.com/the-evolution-of-sexism/>.

This website was very helpful to our project. It provided us with valuable information and insight about Future Homemakers of America, which was an organization where young girls were taught how to be good housewives. It gave us useful context on the history of women's options for enrollment, and sexism that was interwoven into the school system, which was exceptionally helpful for the background and lead-up pages of our project.