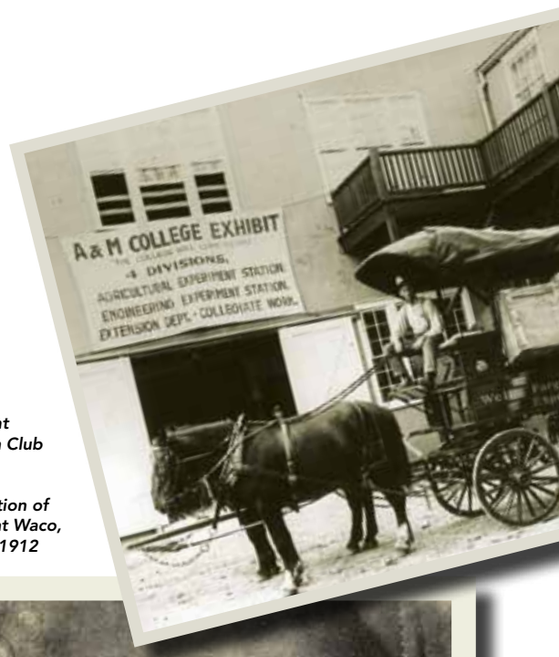
1906–1915
Growing with Texas in a New Century

The first few decades of the 20th century are characterized by almost revolutionary changes — in communication, transportation, industry, and agriculture — occurring within the state, the United States, and in the international community. There were marked changes in labor and employment, clothing styles, housing, and the food supply. Water became available with the turn of a tap, human waste disposal was solved, and heat or cold could be tempered with the turn of a valve or the flick of a switch. The days of the horse- and mule-drawn plow were disappearing into the dusk of times past. More acres were being farmed and more crops extracted per acre. The open range became extinct, and yet the production and supply of meat and fiber expanded. Agribusiness, the A&M College, the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station, the Texas Agricultural Extension Service, and the Texas Forest Service came into their own and contributed significantly to the emergence of the modern urban industrial age.

Agriculture became mechanized and reorganized. Fewer farmers and ranchers produced more food and fiber, freeing people for new job opportunities that contributed to rising per capita income and improved living conditions. Education and the opportunities it created became available to more Americans. At the A&M College of Texas, the School of Agriculture was formed in 1911, and it ventured into new and productive areas of research and inquiry. Education in the sciences, engineering, and the liberal arts also expanded and delved into new areas of study and instruction.



Far right: Jack County agent Tom Marks with Boys' Corn Club members

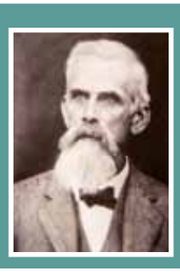
Below: Canning demonstration of West Texas "lady agents" at Waco, Texas, Cotton Palace, May 1912

1906

The businessmen of Tyler (Smith County) appeal to Seaman A. Knapp for a full-time agricultural agent and agree to pay a portion of the salary. W. C. Stallings (below) is hired, becoming the predecessor of the county extension agent.

1906

March 16, 1906
Congress passes the Adams Act, providing increased support for agricultural experiment stations. The act provides $10,000 per year for agricultural research, to be increased to $25,000 per year.



The Stock Feed Law names the Experiment Station as the inspector for all stock feed sold in Texas, and an inspection tax of 10 cents per ton is levied to fund the inspections, with the remainder to be used by the college for building construction. This creates a rift with beef cattle producers.

1906

1906

The A&M College Department of Farm Husbandry becomes the general Department of Agriculture. The Department of Horticulture and Botany are separated, and Professor E. J. Kyle is appointed head of the Horticulture Department.

1906

Professor and Experiment Station veterinarian Mark Francis initiates a cattle fever tick eradication program, developing schedules for treating cattle based on the life cycle of ticks. He works with Robert Kleberg, Sr., of the King Ranch on a program for dipping cattle as part of the prevention and treatment program. Dr. Francis developed inoculations to immunize cattle against Texas fever, which earned him the title Father of the Texas Cattle Industry.

Agriculture and the life sciences followed young people from the farms to the cities. Corn clubs for boys and tomato clubs for girls, predecessors of the soon-to-be Extension 4-H clubs, prepared youth and families for a better and more productive life. The Texas Agricultural Extension Service took the knowledge and technology being developed in the A&M College and the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station into homes, schools, and businesses in every geographic region in the state. Agriculture at the A&M College entered into a new constructive relationship and partnership with Texas and Texans.

The Texas Forest Service owes its inception to the turn-of-the-century conservation movement championed by President Theodore Roosevelt and Gifford Pinchot, the nation's first chief forester — and most directly to W. Goodrich Jones, a Temple, Texas, businessman and banker generally accepted as the father of Texas forestry. Armed with the support of many Texas journalists, educators, and lawmakers, Jones succeeded in having a bill introduced in the state legislature in 1913 to create a state forest service supported by matching funds from Congress provided under the Weeks Act of 1911. The forestry bill failed to pass in 1913, but Jones was undaunted. He helped to organize the Texas Forestry Association in 1914, which championed the establishment of a forest service in Texas. Legislation creating the Texas Forest Service won approval in the 1915 legislative session.

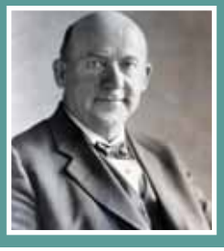
Dr. Mark Francis, professor of veterinary science and veterinarian

Oscar Baker Martin, who would become director of the Texas Agricultural Extension Service in 1927, is appointed as national director of boys' and girls' clubs. He develops the 4-H insignia — a four-leaf clover with the letter "H" superimposed on each leaf. It is officially adopted in 1911 as the insignia for National 4-H.

1909

1908

Jack County agricultural agent Tom Marks organizes the 25-member Boys' Corn Club, planting the seeds of the 4-H movement in Texas.



1909

The Beaumont Research Center opens and begins its focus on assisting in the development and expansion of the Texas rice industry.

Above: County Extension Agent W. M. Plaster and a group of 4-H'ers at the first Educational Encampment, held at the Texas State Fair in Dallas, October 1916. Attended by boys and girls, this became an annual event, co-sponsored by the State Fair and the Extension Service.

Right: Girls' Canning Club tomato queen and court, c. 1918

The Texas legislature authorizes the Blackland Agricultural Experiment Station at Temple (now the Blackland Research and Extension Center). Working with the USDA Agricultural Research Service, its focus over the past century has been on water quality, erosion, and flooding solutions; the interface of agriculture and natural resource management; rangeland drought and livestock management; and the development and use of weather, soil, and crop databases.

April 11, 1909

The first farmers' short course, the forerunner of the Texas 4-H Roundup, is held on the A&M campus.

1910

1909

The Research Center at Lubbock is established. Throughout its history it has played a vital role in improving regional crops such as cotton, corn, grain sorghum, peanuts, and potatoes, and in irrigation efficiency and water conservation for the Ogallala Aquifer. Major contributions were the development of stormproof cotton and the mechanical cotton stripper, which helped to change the Southern High Plains from a ranching to a farming region.

First bale of cotton harvested at Lubbock Center, 1913

The A&M College Board of Directors establishes the School of Agriculture, with Professor Edwin Jackson Kyle named as its first dean. The number of agriculture students at A&M grew from 88 in 1906 to 510 in 1911.

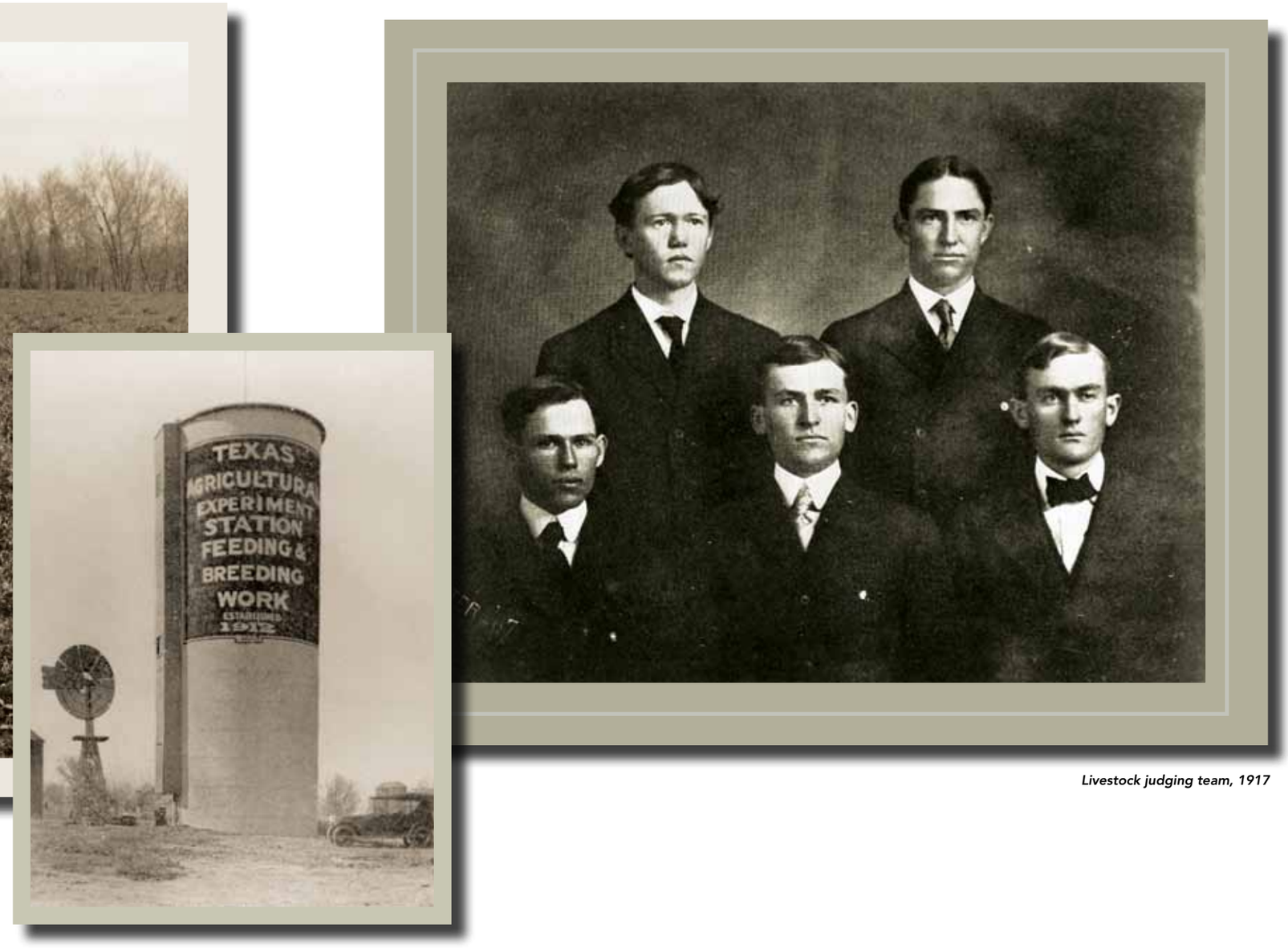
1911

1910

An extension department is organized at the A&M College, creating a stronger and more effective system for the distribution of improved crop and livestock management practices to the home, farm, and ranch.

1911

Bonney Youngblood is appointed director of the Experiment Station. He received his bachelor's degree in agriculture from Texas A&M in 1902 and his master's degree in 1907 and had worked for the U.S. Department of Agriculture.



Livestock judging team, 1917

Edna Trigg is appointed as Texas A&M Department of Extension agent for Milam County, becoming the first "lady agent" in Texas. This leads to creation of the home demonstration program (now known as the Family and Consumer Sciences program); by the end of the year, 16 Extension educators are at work in Texas. Trigg organizes girls' tomato clubs in Milam County to teach them home gardening and canning techniques.

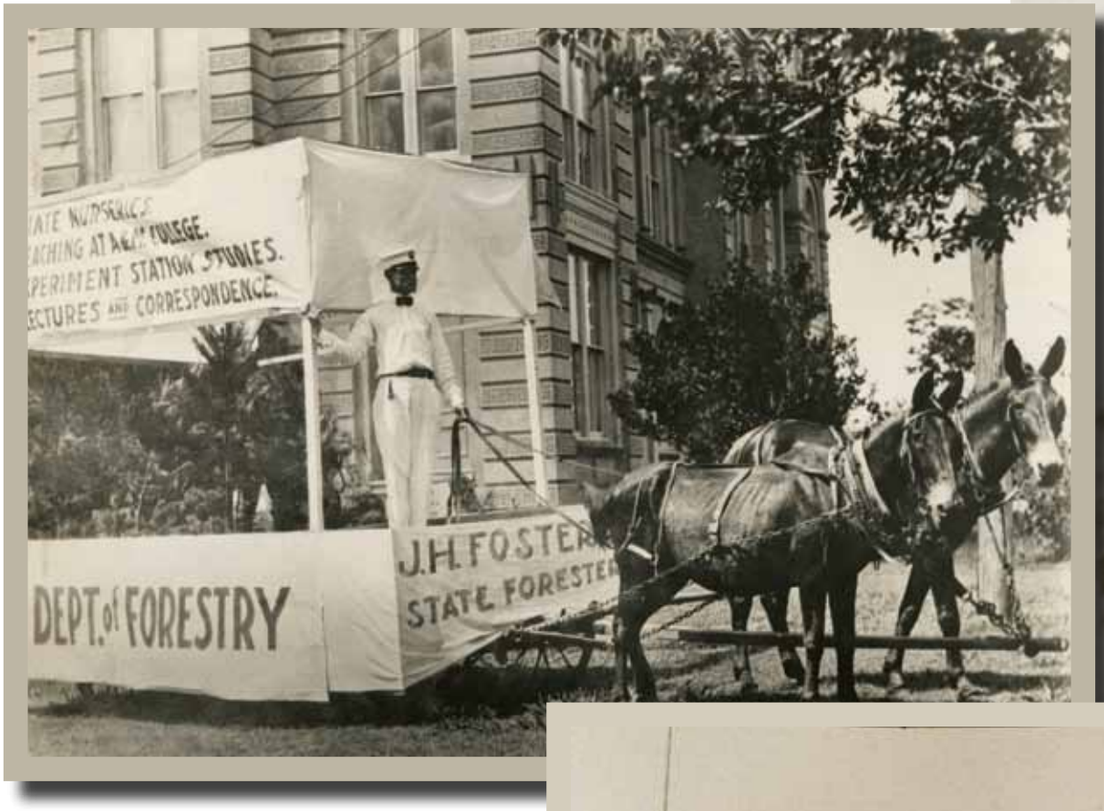
January 16, 1912

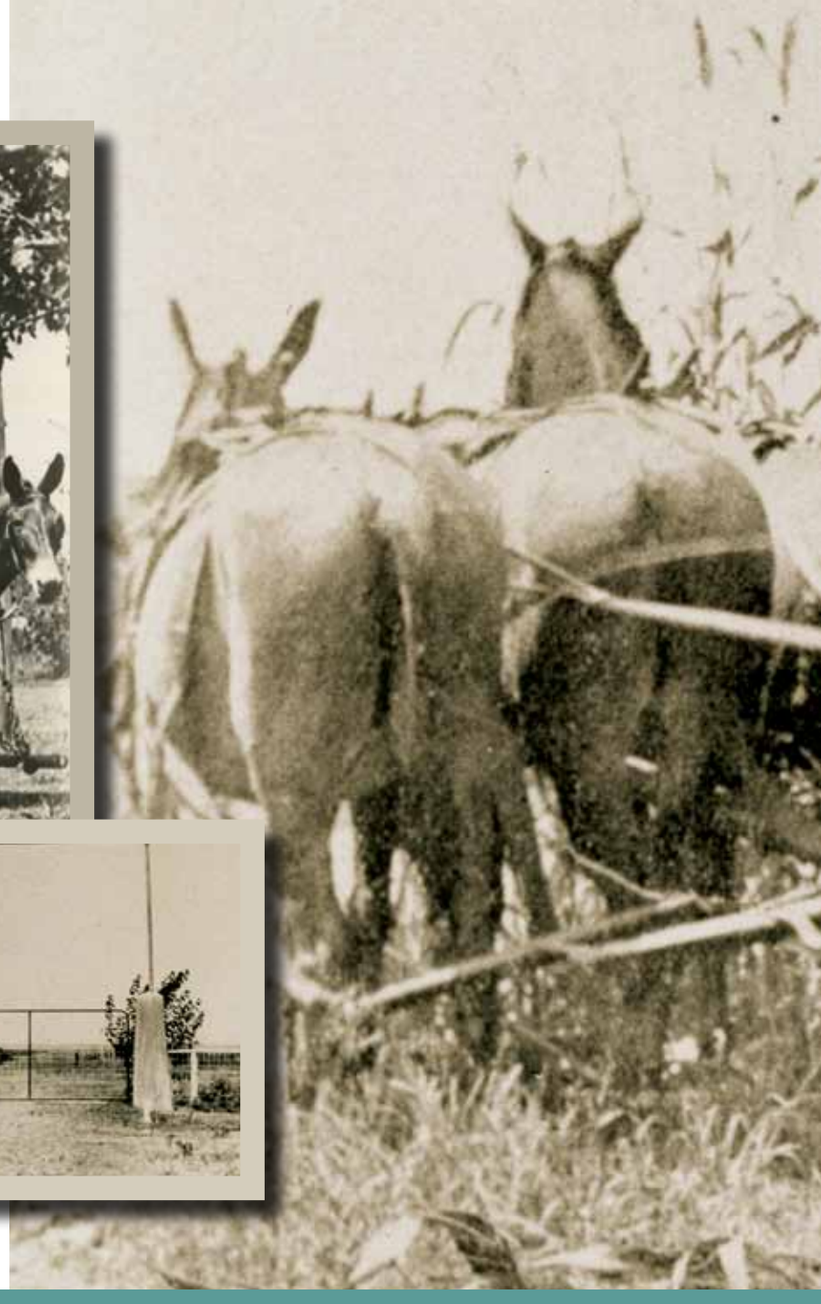
A student livestock-judging team from the A&M College Department of Animal Husbandry wins a contest at the International Livestock Show in Chicago. Since that time, teams in what is now the Department of Animal Science have won more than 40 national championships.

1913

1912

The Experiment Station takes over much of the crop work formerly carried out by the School of Agriculture. A feeding and breeding substation is formed in College Station to carry on the work in animal production.





Spur Substation entrance, 1914

The movement toward separation of research and teaching at the A&M College begins. Joint appointment of professors continues, but assistants are full-time Experiment Station employees. The following year, three distinct divisions emerge: resident teaching, agricultural research, and agricultural extension.

1914

May 8, 1914

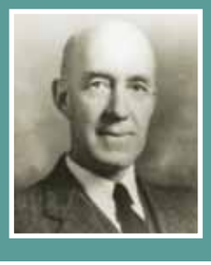
Congress passes the Smith-Lever Act, providing for the establishment of "a Cooperative Extension Service in Agriculture, Home Economics, and Related Subjects" as part of the land-grant university system in every state and territory. The need for an extension service in Texas was evident in the 50,000 letters from producers that Experiment Station personnel answered over the course of a year.

1914

W. Goodrich Jones, a Temple, Texas, businessman and banker who began gathering public support for a state department of forestry in 1898, leads the organization of the Texas Forestry Association and becomes its first president.

The 34th Texas Legislature accepts the provisions of the Smith-Lever Act and establishes the Texas Agricultural Extension Service, to be administered by Texas A&M. The board of directors appoints Clarence Ousley as the first director of Extension.

January 29, 1915



March 31, 1915

The Texas legislature passes a bill creating the State Department of Forestry (officially renamed the Texas Forest Service in 1926). The A&M College is responsible for its operations. The board of directors selects John H. Foster, professor and Yale University forestry graduate, as the first state forester.

Above: Insectory for aphid studies project, Department of Entomology, 1915

Right: Spraying watermelons for blight disease, Prairie View A&M College, 1914

The Sheep and Goat Raisers Association is organized. The following year, members help fund an A&M College research and extension center in Sonora, assisted by Bonney Youngblood, director of the Experiment Station. This illustrates the partnership between the Experiment Station and Agricultural Extension and the diverse agribusinesses and communities of Texas.

October 15, 1915

Photo: Prairie View A&M University Special Collections/Archives

1915

Mary Edwards Hunter becomes the first African American home demonstration agent when the Texas Agricultural Extension Service establishes an office at Prairie View A&M College. She traveled the state teaching health, nutrition, and home economics to both black and white women. By the time she left Prairie View in 1931, she had built a program of 23 home demonstration agents and a club organization of 29,800 women and girls.

The Department of Agricultural Engineering is formed. It later became the Department of Biological and Agricultural Engineering.

1915

Corn Clubs and Tomato Clubs: The Origins of 4-H

The first boys' corn club in Texas was organized in Jack County in 1908 by T. M. "Tom" Marks, an agricultural agent for the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Marks had tried to organize a corn show in Jacksboro, where local farmers could show samples of their corn and, under Marks's leadership, learn ways to improve the quality and quantity of their crops. But there was little interest in such a gathering among the local farmers. Special agent W. D. Bentley said to Marks, "You can't teach an old dog new tricks," to which Marks replied, "Then next year we will try the young dogs."

He organized the Jack County Boys' Corn Club, starting with 25 members. The corn club idea spread rapidly and instigated a broader boys' and girls' club movement throughout Texas. A statewide rally for boys' corn clubs was held at the 1910 State Fair in Dallas. A parade featuring 1,500 corn club boys, each carrying a corn stalk, popularized boys' club work.

Girls' club work began with Edna Trigg, who in 1912 was assigned by the Texas A&M Department of Extension to conduct home demonstration work among both youths and adults in Milam County. She organized a girls' tomato club in the area near Cameron. Like the boys in Marks's corn clubs, the young girls seemed to be more responsive than their mothers to instruction in home gardening, canning, and other demonstration club topics. Each member of the tomato club pledged to grow one-tenth of an acre of tomatoes and then can the tomatoes they harvested. Trigg taught and supervised both growing and canning.

Also in 1912, C. M. Evans was appointed to head boys' and girls' club work in Texas. Corn and tomato clubs and others, such as sheep, poultry, and beef clubs, became the stimulus for the organization of Texas 4-H in the decade that followed.

A national organization by 1924, 4-H has throughout its history provided inspiration and information for a healthy and enjoyable life while building a sense of community, citizenship, and leadership among youth. A clover pin adopted for club members would become the four-leaf clover emblem of 4-H — representing the essential elements: Head, Heart, Hands, and Health. Today, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension 4-H clubs are recognized and celebrated at the annual Texas 4-H Roundup.