

Fred Van Hoesen

FIRST VOICE (male):

Hello, I m Fred Van Hoesen and I am the first Extension Agent for Montgomery County a job I started in 1917. There are many farmers here in the county in fact, as of 1912, more than 90% of the people in Montgomery County earned their living directly or indirectly from agriculture. The farms here grow many things including corn, oats, wheat, barley, alfalfa, soybeans, apples and peaches. Farmers also raise horses, dairy cattle, hogs, sheep and chickens. My job is to help farmers in Montgomery County improve their crops and livestock.

I just finished writing my annual report for 1918 this past year was a difficult one for farmers. The country was at war, and it was hard to find people who could harvest crops and provide supplies. We also had an influenza epidemic that affected thousands of people in the area. But despite the hard times, farmers were able to make it a productive year for farms in the county.

As Extension Agent it is my job to help make sure farmers continue to be productive. Today, for instance, I talked with some farmers about potato infestation and how they can have a better crop next year. Other days I might share information about accounting or what new kinds of machinery to buy - while many farmers still use horses, some have bought those new mechanical tractors. Sometimes I am even asked to judge competitions to decide the best fruits and vegetables grown by local farmers.

I ve lived in many different places in the United States: upstate New York, the West, and North Carolina, but my wife and I like it here in the Montgomery County. There are many farms for me to work with and the farmers are eager to learn.

SECOND VOICE (female):

Agriculture remains a vital economic activity in Montgomery County. Nearly 600 farms are currently producing everything from soybeans to corn. To ensure the continued importance of agriculture as part of Montgomery County s economic health and preservation of its agricultural heritage, the Agricultural Reserve was created in 1981. As one of the first of its kind, the Reserve helps preserve the farming way of life while protecting it from the pressures of development.

To learn more about farming in Montgomery County, visit www.montgomeryconnections.org.