

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Canfield Fair History Project

Canfield Fair Board

O. H. 204

WILLIAM B. PHILLIPS

Interviewed

by

Carrie A. Stanton

on

May 18, 1983

WILLIAM B. PHILLIPS

William B. Phillips was born in Wayne County on April 14, 1924, the son of Lena and Orley and Phillips. He attended Wooster High School in Wooster, Ohio and received his B.S. degree from Ohio State University and in 1966, his master's degree from the same university.

He has been employed by the Ohio Cooperative Extension Service since 1948, coming to the Youngstown area in the mid 1950's. He serves the Canfield Fair Board in the position of ex-officio member and is involved with the Junior Fair, in particular.

Mr. Phillips is married and the father of two children. He is a member of the Canfield United Presbyterian Church. He and his wife, Susan, reside in Youngstown, Ohio.

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INTERVIEWEE: WILLIAM B. PHILLIPS

INTERVIEWER: Carrie A. Stanton

SUBJECT: Canfield Fair, Fair Board, Mahoning County
Extension Service, Junior Fair, 4-H

DATE: May 18, 1983

STANTON: This is an interview with Mr. Bill Phillips for the Youngstown State University Canfield Fair Project by Carrie Stanton at the Mahoning County Extension Service, on May 18, 1983 at approximately 11:00 p.m.

Do you want to tell me about your own background? Where you went to school, your parents and did you live around here all the time?

PHILLIPS: My background comes from Wayne County, where I was born on an orchard farm. I attended Wooster High School in Wayne County, Ohio State University, interrupted by World War II. I served in the Army Air Corps. Returned and picked up a bachelor's degree in 1948. I worked on a fruit and vegetable farm. And then I started working for the Cooperative Extension in Portage County. I was the 4-H agent there from 1948 to 1956. I came to Mahoning County in 1956 and have been here as 4-H agent or agricultural agent since that time.

S: So the two jobs are intertwined?

P: Well, that's Portage County and here we came to Mahoning County.

S: No, I mean the 4-H and agriculture.

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P: No, we have been fortunate enough for years to have a county 4-H agent and a county agricultural agent. In 1956 I served as 4-H agent and since 1957 I've been agricultural agent.

S: How are you connected with the Canfield Fair?

P: In the Red Book, which is the guideline that the Fair operates under, under the Ohio Department of Agriculture in this state, there is proviso for ex-officio members. The county superintendent of schools and the county agricultural agent have been in the past and currently are eligible to serve as ex-officio, not elected members of the local fair, in this case, the Mahoning County Agricultural Society or Canfield Fair Board.

S: And what would their role be?

P: In Mahoning the Fair is an extremely important community function. And it has and continues to be very important as far as this office that I work for, known as Cooperative Extension, because out of this office the 4-H Program emanates and also from a total fair point of view we're concerned with agriculture. Lee Kohler, for instance, has the Hay and Grain Show. Now, he operates that as the director of Canfield Fair, but because we are concerned with economical production of quality foliage out at the Cooperative Extension Programs, then we are quite interested in what Lee does as far as the Hay and Grain Show. The same thing is true with Bob Wiley with his livestock particularly his dairy and beef. But our main emphasis now in terms of actual fair involvement is through the 4-H Program. And we have a county 4-H agent in this county, who works directly with the 4-H members and 4-H programming and volunteer leaders. But over the years we have had a number of changes of people in that position, so I suppose one function in connection with the Canfield Fair Board deals with maintenance of continuity of programming and working relations with the Fair Board, because particularly in this county, it is an extremely important community wide function.

S: Yes. I know this is kind of short notice, but can you compare what it was like in the 4-H during fair time then---as compared to now?

P: Well, I've been here since 1956 and the major changes that have occurred in 4-H is that there are a number

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of other program activities. You start basically with exhibiting, either exhibiting your livestock, or the garments that you have constructed, or the food you have prepared, or whatever. You start with the basic exhibits. And then over the years many programs have been added. They've added a steer sale, a lamb and pig sale, the 4-H demonstration, style reviews have been extended, and the king and queen activity was started. Incidentally, that was started about 1953 or 1954 and Leland Knauf, who is in mathematics at Youngstown State University, was the first Mahoning County 4-H King.

S: Really.

P: Anyhow, I mentioned that because you're at Youngstown State and Leland is in the Mathematics Department there. Anyhow...

S: I know who he is.

P: Do you know him?

S: Yes.

P: Okay, he was the first Mahoning County 4-H King. In addition to that type of activity there have been other things added. The Youth Day Program has developed as a free activity in front of the grandstand. On Youth Day, Thursday afternoon, it's been extended. So the biggest changes I've observed have been the number of extra activities. The 4-H Horse Show that they run on Sunday and Monday during the Fair. So that is a lot of things, in addition to your basic exhibits in the 4-H Building, No. 25 and in the livestock area.

The second thing is that I've noticed is the shift in the Mahoning County, particularly in livestock, from your old, line livestock like dairy and beef, and so forth, there's been a major increase in the number of horses. Back, 25 or 30 years ago, horse projects in 4-H were pretty much a few ponies and a few draft horses. Now in Mahoning County alone there must be 400 to 500 horse projects taken by 4-H members. And there are a lot of activities in connection with that both during the Fair as well as other times of the year.

A third area that there's been a major change, in particular in connection with the Canfield Fair, is that 25 years ago the north end was livestock. We had no livestock in the south except race horses and racing ponies. And the open class ponies were moved south as the Fair Board was able to obtain

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funding to provide the facilities in the south quarter. They also moved poultry and lamb and pigs and sheep. And in recent years they have been able to move the dairy south. So 25 years ago all of that was concentrated in the north end. Now in the north end the only livestock that we have is 4-H and also the open class beef. As one looks back, you wonder how we ever got all of that other livestock in the north end. Lambs and pigs in 4-H have expanded in number. Steers, come and go in numbers, but they are the same or higher than they were 25 years ago. And the poultry and rabbits, and some of these small animals projects in 4-H have been expanded also.

S: Do you see a lot of "city kids" in 4-H now as compared to some years ago?

P: I think, yes, the trend in Mahoning County is there whether they're "city kids" who live in Youngstown, Campbell, Struthers, Austintown, or Canfield, or who live on two acres or five acres out in Goshen Township or Ellsworth Township. Those 4-H members who are really not associated with commercial farmers are quite numerous as far as the 4-H Club is concerned. The concentration is still out in your rural suburban areas. There are increased numbers in the suburban areas, but the concentration is still pretty much out in the rural suburban type of area.

S: Would it primarily be the kids who have horses that board them and still want to belong to the 4-H Club?

P: Some of them board them and some of them keep them on their own property. The same thing is true of lambs and pigs. And in Mahoning County, my judgement, and that's subject to debate, but my judgement indicates that there are 400 to 500 commercial farms embracing dairy or beef, fruit or vegetables, greenhouses, florists and a number of other areas. So when you look at that and you look at the 4-H enrollment of 1700 at least in 4-H, why, there are a lot of non, strictly non-farm 4-H'ers.

S: I was always interested in the steer contests.

P: For the show and sale.

S: Yes.

P: They're doing the same thing for lambs and pigs now.

S: How does that work?

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P: Well, in the steers, we'll use that as an example. This office, there are three paid staff people here, who are members of the faculty at Ohio State University, College of Agricultural and Home Economics, the County Home Economics Agent, the County Agricultural Agent. The amount of work we do is primarily with voluntary leaders. We're responsible for educational programs. And so, I'll use the 4-H Program as an example. There are similar examples in home economics and agricultural. There are around 400 voluntary leaders, who operate the 4-H Club out of this office. There is a County Market Livestock Committee made up of parents who are elected by the members. They have a steer section, a lamb section, and a pig section. Okay, at the current time that committee functions. They've been doing this for years. They will set a date in September, late September. Orders for the 1983 steers have to be in to the committee by September 25 or whatever it is, together with a deposit. And then the committee secures the animals and those animals are distributed to the 4-H or FFA members. I'm sorry, I forget, Future Farmers of America. They're an active group. We don't have too many chapters in Mahoning County active at the Fair, but there are several and they too are eligible just as the 4-H'ers for the County Market Livestock Committee. The committee decides steers have to be ordered by September 25. FFA and 4-H'ers, get your orders in together with your deposit and the animals are obtained.

S: Who pays for them?

P: 4-H members or the FFA members.

S: Oh, they pay for their own steers?

P: Yes.

S: Are they expensive?

P: Oh, yes. You're talking, feeder calves, running like 400 pounds and if you are talking about 80 to 90 cents a pound, you're talking about \$350.

S: So you can't be too poor.

P: That's true. It's an expensive thing. It's whatever the market price is running for those animals at that particular time. Now the committee is looking at buying animals in the fall of 1983 for 1984 from local sources if the local beef, commercial beef

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folks can come up with enough feeder calves. Back in September of 1982 in preparation for this 1983, they got their orders in and then they went and purchased feeder cows in the 350 to 400 pound range. And brought them in and distributed them to the members. The members have paid for them and took them home and are feeding them out right now in preparation for the show and the sale at the 1983 Canfield Fair. Now in 4-H that is the one particular thing, the lambs, pigs and the steers that are earmarked. Those are started with specific reference in preparation for the Canfield Fair. Your other projects, like sewing, nutrition, woodworking, electricity, vegetable gardening, and horses, and etcetera, those projects go on and they come to the Fair to exhibit. But the lambs, pigs, and steers are aimed specifically at showing and selling at the Fair.

S: So they are grown for that year?

P: Yes. Well, it depends. The steers are purchased like September or October, fed out aiming to have them at their peak prime stage by the Canfield Fair.

S: That's their peak prime stage?

P: It takes that long to get them to the 1000 pound or there about mark that they are seeking to achieve in growth. The lambs and pigs are obtained in the spring of the year, because they don't take as long to reach maturity in connection with the Canfield Fair.

S: And they pay for their own?

P: Yes. Oh, yes, that's a part of the 4-H program.

S: And then when they sell, they get the money?

P: Yes. They pay a percentage to an insurance fund, self-insuring fund in case animals die during the year and this sort of thing. But this committee functions voluntarily. They receive no money for their services. And the Fair Board pays for the facilities over at the fairgrounds for exhibits and the auctioneer donates his service. So there are some costs, like the pictures they have taken to give to the buyers and things of that nature, but the bulk of it they have very few expenses because it is provided by Fair Board and by other programs. And so the bulk of that money that is

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received does go to the youngsters, yes. It's a part of that whole concept of teaching youngsters or providing them with the opportunity of learning, how to work, take pride in your work, be fair, be competitive but be fair, and make a profit. Sometimes you make a profit and sometimes you have a loss. And that's the way the semi-capitalist system is in this country.

S: Yes. Really learning during this program?

P: The 4-H'ers have a motto: Learning by doing. And that's what they try to practice. It's an interesting experience for them.

S: Do you recall of any instances when kids raised their steers and just didn't want to part with them?

P: It's a very common thing. I've seen 15 to 17 year olds, football players and 4-H, before that steer goes, I've seen them go over and put their arm around that steer's neck and you know that they are not feeling very happy, but that again is part of the learning process. Girls same thing, and boys and girls face the same problem. They become very attached. In fact, the family becomes very attached. And that's true whether it's a steer, a lamb, or a pig that they are going to lose.

S: Can they renege on that selling?

P: Not once a sale has been made. And there is nothing really to be gained. If they do not want to sell the animal, they do not have to do so. For they can take a lamb or a pig or a steer project in 4-H and participate in the Fair, all the educational programs, including showing, but they do not have to sell under those conditions. If they want to participate in the show and auction sale, then... (interruption)

S: Do they get premiums?

P: Yes.

S: Do they pay money, not just ribbons?

P: No. The Junior Fair at Canfield is different. The Fair Board has made the proviso. First, there is an entry fee. Now, if you and I enter open class in clothing, fine arts, or in livestock or hay and grain or anyplace, we pay a small entry fee. The junior exhibitors do not pay an entry fee. They receive

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ribbons according to the grade. We don't go so much with first, second, and third in many cases in the youth program as we go with A, B, C, and D. Now there are ranking in some judging situations, but we go with what's called the Danish System in 4-H, that's A, B, C, D. Hence, any ring of dairy animals that come in, for instance, you will set them up, first, second, and down the road, but really they may be all A's, they may be all B's, and all C's, or even D's, or any combination. The ribbons are provided by the Fair Board from their general revenues. The premiums, they are modest premiums, but there are premiums paid to each 4-H member, who exhibits at the Canfield Fair. And then in addition to those modest premiums, the Fair Board has given long standing support of the 4-H Program, because of its deep involvement in the Fair by providing them with other things. Like they pay the fees for those 4-H members who are honored to attend Club Congress, a statewide 4-H event in Columbus at Ohio State University. And there are other things that the Fair Board also provides. In connection with the Junior Fair, there is a Junior Fair Board which is made up of members from Girl Scouts, FFA, from Boy Scouts, Campfire Girls, 4-H, Farm Bureau and Junior Grange. These folks serve at the pleasure of the Senior Fair Board, but they are responsible for planning and helping carry off the Junior Fair. And during the Fair, getting ready for the Fair, two days before particularly and as well as during the Fair, they are intimately involved and physically preparing, as well as being present at the time of judging to record grades and this sort of thing.

S: These are adult volunteers or are they kids?

P: These are juniors. These are usually 14, 15, 16, 17 year olds. And again, we have some very fine people from the FFA, Girl Scouts, Campfire Girls, Junior Grange, and Farm Bureau. And again, it's dominated by the number of 4-H'ers merely because of the number of exhibits they have over there. It's a real honor in Mahoning County to be selected to serve on the Junior Fair Board.

S: I imagine, yes.

P: They are truly honored. But the Fair is most supportive of youth programs in this county, both by providing the opportunity for exhibits in connection with the Canfield Fair, but also in terms of supporting. Everyone who exhibits live livestock are paid

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a premium and they get---I'd have to look it up in the book---but maybe \$4 or \$5 per head for what they exhibit, regardless of the grade they get, which may be good or bad, but that's the way it is. So the premiums are rather low---woodworking project may receive a premium of \$1---but in addition to that then the Fair Board supports the total 4-H Program by Club Congress participating, by supporting it financially, and by other things that they do in connection with the 4-H Program.

S: Oh, they do. Oh, I didn't realize that.

P: So it's all part of the interweaving of this that has developed over the years and we're most appreciative, really. In Mahoning County we're very fortunate for the close working relation and the financial support, as well as other support from the Fair.

S: So the 4-H probably doesn't have financial problems like a lot of organizations that have them now?

P: As far as the Fair, we're not over blessed, but the Fair has made out well most years, unless it rains real bad, financially. But there are always things. My goodness there are people who visit Fair Board who would like to see...well, the other night, the International Club, they would like to have more space, of course. We would like to see open class beef move south. There's a drastic need for a new livestock or multi-purpose coliseum on the south side. There are need for sewer lines and water lines. So the needs as far as the Fair are concerned, all of which cost money and which have to come from Fair operating revenue, they're very, very, real and very, very vast. So although we can say, well, the Fair has done well, financially, over the last fifty years, there is still much need as far as the 4-H Program. There are all these things that we'd like to have in connection with the 4-H exhibits and the Fair Board has to take those into consideration as they also consider the other needs in connection with the total Fair. So with regards to the Fair itself, 4-H has been treated very, very well over the years by the Canfield Fair Board.

S: Some new barns are over there for the Junior Fair, aren't they?

P: Those new barns are in the south end. That's the new dairy complex.

S: No, I mean the newer barn.

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P: Oh, in the north end.

S: Yes.

P: All right.

S: New pony ring?

P: Okay, that's a good example of a community joint effort, the Canfield Rotary, the Youngstown Rotary, the Rotary Foundation, the Charity Horse Show, and the Canfield Fair Board, those folks all banded together, together with a lot of voluntary leadership from outside 4-H, as well as 4-H in the community and raised, I don't know, \$40,000 or something last year, 1982, tore down the old saddle horse judging area and erected a new base, that is new drainage facilities, as well as the fence and gates, and also put up a new building for a pavilion and also where the 4-H'ers can have a area from which they serve food, sandwiches, soft drinks, milk this sort of thing. A good example of total community effort on that deal.

S: I have heard that they...

P: But there were no new barns in connection with that. It was a new ring and a new pavilion. The barns that 4-H has in the north end of the fairgrounds are barns that we had from years, and years ago, or that we have inherited as open class ponies, open class sheep and swine, and open class dairy moved south as facilities became available to the Fair.

S: I must be getting old. I'm figuring some of those barns are new. (Laughter)

P: Well, there were some put up in the late fifties or early sixties. Barns #12 and #13 that house saddle horses for 4-H, they were erected in the late fifties or early sixties. There were a couple of dairy barns put up, that would be north of the coliseum but those were put up, oh my, in the middle fifties. So in the north end, we've really haven't had any new construction for livestock housing in recent years, but because of the move south we could have more space.

S: The coliseum wasn't used by the 4-H until, well, not too long ago, was it?

P: It's been used ever since I've been here. I came in

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1956. Prior to that I'm not sure, but I know it was used for some time prior to 1956, but how far, I don't know. Now it was shared, of course, with the open class dairy, open class beef, and all 4-H livestock except horses. Now since open class dairy has moved south, it's shared by the 4-H livestock, except horses that use the ring, and the open class beef. Open class merely refers to that is open to anyone, whatever the regulations are. And if you and I qualify, whatever we qualify for and pay our entry fee, we can enter in open class. The Junior Fair is different. There is no entry fee and it is open to anyone who is involved with Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Campfire, and so forth, as well as the 4-H Program. And there are no entry fees involved as far as the Junior Fair.

S: You've seen the steer entries grow quite a bit then?

P: Well, the steer numbers go up and down. They just had a twenty-fifth anniversary here. Bob Hammett, who's currently on the Fair Board, Bob was 4-H agent in this county when they started the steer club. Darrel Bacon, who's also on the Fair Board, was in on the original committee that started the county steer club. And Darrel Bacon has served as secretary-treasurer of that organization since, I believe, they started. I can't remember what Bob and Darrel said that the number was the first year they started, but it's grown a lot since then. But numbers go up and down. I don't even remember how many there were last year, but must have been around eighty or ninety steers, which is a lot.

S: Yes.

P: For a county like Mahoning. We have a gross agricultural income in Mahoning of like \$22,000,000 for 1982. Columbiana will have about twice that. Trumbull County about the same as we have here. Portage County, our neighbor to the northwest, about the same or a little more. So compared to a western Ohio county where you would have gross agricultural income of \$90,000,000 or \$100,000,000, we are not a big grossing county. Compared to Vinton County and some of those in southeastern where the gross agricultural income is \$3,000,000, \$4,000,000 or \$5,000,000, we are big. But what I'm saying, is relatively speaking in Mahoning County we have a substantial agricultural industry, but compared to some counties in western Ohio, we are not very large.

S: The people that come in and bid on steers, are they usually from around here?

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- P: Yes, they have to be because of transporting those live animals to a slaughterhouse, they are almost exclusively from the local area.
- S: I see on your sign out there it says, "Ohio State University." How are you connected with the University?
- P: This is the Cooperative Extension Service. It's merely an extension of the College of Agriculture and Home Economics at Ohio State. The three agents, 4-H, Home Ec and Agri, are members of the faculty at Ohio State. We're merely an extension. Cooperatively, refers to it's cooperatively financed by the Board of Mahoning County Commissioners, Ohio State and at the federal level. So that is merely a brief review of Cooperative Extension.
- S: I didn't realize that. Is this the only agricultural college in Ohio?
- P: In Ohio, no. There are others that offer agricultural courses down around Wilmington. And there are other courses and there is some in forestry in some other schools. I can't remember whether there are any others that grant four year degrees or not in Ohio. But down around Wilmington, I think, there is one. And there is also the Ag Technical Institute over at Wooster that offers a two year associate degree in agriculture.
- S: I just didn't realize that you were connected with Ohio State.
- P: This is a very direct connection. In fact, this building was built on land owned by the Board of Mahoning County Commissioners for the people of Mahoning County, leased to the State of Ohio for \$1 for forty years, and then the State of Ohio erected this office building which is shared by the area extension center, the other wing, which works in nine counties and the Mahoning County Extension Office. Here's another example of cooperation and it's worked out well. That way we can share meeting rooms, rest-rooms, and this sort of thing. It's worked out very well for all of us.
- S: I like to ask people connected with the Fair---why do you think that this is such a special fair? It's so successful.
- P: When I came to Mahoning County, I had worked in other counties and had a little bit of experience as a 4-H

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member or a FFA member in other counties, and in the other counties frequently the fair was referred to as "their fair." In Mahoning County, it was very obvious as a newcomer, people discussed whether it was in Youngstown, Campbell, Struthers, or down in Goshen Township, they talked about "our fair," a distinct vast difference. The second thing I observed is that this has been---and I've seen a lot of different Fair Board members come and go over this period of time I've been able to be here---this has always been a working Fair Board. They are honored to be on the Fair Board, but they just don't sit there, they work. And that's great. But they have the support, widespread support of the community. And evidently historically, this goes back decades, and decades and decades.

S: So it's kind of cooperation between everyone?

P: Yes. They've had it since I've been here. I was so delighted to see people talk about "our" not "their" fair, meaning they are an intimate part of that fair. Well, gosh, even in 4-H there are examples of people who were in 4-H in the forties and fifties and have grown up and now they have their children coming along and going to 4-H Camp or are connected with 4-H'ers. Roy Bowman, Lee Kohler, among others who were 4-H members. It doesn't seem too many years ago. And of course, I'm supportive. I hope for development in our county, not only in 4-H, but elsewhere. My gosh, we need all the industrial development and agricultural development and economic growth that we can develop in this county. So, it serves, I hope several purposes, including enjoyment.

S: Is there anything you'd like to add?

P: The Fair is a critical and important community function I think, both from an educational program, point of view, informational point of view and a fun point of view. And sometimes all three of those can kind of be rolled into one. The Youth Fair attempts to do that. It attempts to have some fun and learn something and make some contributions to the community in general.

S: Thank you very much.

P: Okay.

END OF INTERVIEW