

Cakes, Crafts, and Cash: The Role of Home Demonstration and Extension Programs as a Source of Income for Rural Alabama and Florida Women 1919-1929

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In Alabama and Florida between 1919-1929, the Cooperative Extension Service and Home Demonstration Agents played a critical role in helping rural white and African American women with healthier foods, sanitary practices, beneficial lifestyles, and aesthetically-based improvements directed towards their homes and overall personal appearance. The presence and roles of the home demonstration and Extension programs helped in modernizing and improving these aspects of rural life. The rural women of Alabama and Florida took control and turned these programs into ways of creating extra revenue streams—they could financially help themselves and their families by using curb markets and other marketing/economic ventures to contribute to a farm income, family income, or their own personal income. However, this also extended far beyond just selling food or other sundry goods in order to earn money. Rural Alabamian and Floridan women became producers and consumers, creating a way of their own making to gain disposable income and using an Extension-based economic system, forging their own independent economic path.