

# The Role of NFA Camps in Agricultural Education for Rural African American Boys in North Carolina

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## Abstract

*The New Farmers of America (NFA) was a national organization existing from 1934 to 1965 when it merged with the National Future Farmers of America (FFA) Organization. S. B. Simmons, a leader in agricultural education throughout African American public schools, and early founder of the NFA, worked diligently to provide a place for rural African American boys to develop leadership, citizenship, sportsmanship, and moral values. This place existed in the form of a North Carolina NFA camp. Established in 1953, the North Carolina NFA Camp, located in Onslow County, saw boys from across the state for a week-long experience. The benefits of the camp branched further than simply learning to start a campfire or host a cookout. Later dedicated the S. B. Simmons Camp, rural African American boys benefited from leadership classes, recreational activities, and even public speaking opportunities to further develop themselves. Although no longer in existence, the morals imprinted in students at the S. B. Simmons Camp are ever apparent today at the remaining North Carolina FFA camp and throughout the National FFA Organization.*

**Keywords:** New Farmers of America; NFA; S. B. Simmons

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## Introduction

Just before the 1920's, vocational agriculture was on the rise. The Smith-Hughes Act in 1917 provided federal funding for secondary vocational agriculture programs (National FFA Organization, 2019a). Throughout the 1920's, the growth and interest of vocational agriculture became ever popular among rural boys across the United States. Virginia began their own organization entitled the Future Farmers of Virginia. The idea of the club for boys grew in popularity and the National FFA Organization (FFA) was established in 1928. During the 1920's and onward to the 1960's, southern schools were primarily segregated. This meant that only white rural boys could participate in the FFA organization, leaving little opportunity for rural African American boys.

## Conceptual Framework

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During the winter of 1926–27, Dr. H. O. Sargent encouraged the development of the New Farmers of Virginia, which was patterned after the Future Farmers of Virginia. G. W. Owens created a constitution and bylaws for the organization, which spread throughout the state of Virginia and then throughout the South (Norris, 1940). The North Carolina Association of New Farmers of America referred to as the North State Farmers was founded in the 1926-1927 academic year (Dedication Program of the S. B. Simmons Camp, 1958). Seven years after the establishment of the National FFA Organization, the New Farmers of America, also known as the NFA, was established (Strickland, 1995). This organization was for rural African American boys enrolled in vocational agriculture. As more secondary schools offered vocational training, the popularity of NFA chapters grew. At the time of the NFA and FFA merge in 1965, there were more than 1,000 NFA chapters and more than 58,000 active members (Strickland, 1995).

Students in NFA chapters received training in traditional farming, farm mechanics, and other areas. Through NFA chapters, students could participate in contests and receive awards per their achievements. The students were also able to obtain membership awards. There were quiz contests, talent competitions, and a quartet contest (Wakefield & Talbert, 2000).

An additional event NFA members could participate in was going to camp (North Carolina FFA Association, 2018). These camps were not limited to campfires and cookouts but offered rural African American students' valuable skills and experiential learning opportunities they could carry with them for the rest of their lives (Connors et al., 2010). In the 1930's, Camp Orangeburg was created for NFA members in South Carolina (Future Farmers of America and New Farmers of America camps established, 2002). In 1938, Camp John Hope was opened and provided a camping experience for NFA members in Georgia (Tabor, 1947). NFA camps across the South offered similar recreational and leadership activities as FFA camps (Connors et al., 2010).

Today, events like those offered through the NFA are presented to students through the National FFA Organization; however, there are fewer African American members today compared to 1965, representing roughly only four percent of national membership (National FFA Organization, 2018a). With urban agriculture programs, largely comprised of minority students, on the rise, struggles exist among urban agriculture teachers with engaging urban students in FFA events and experiential learning opportunities (Roberts & Ramsey, 2017; Warner & Washburn, 2009). NFA camps once engaged minority youth through experiential learning (Connors et al., 2010). Potential barriers to enrollment in agricultural courses and FFA experiences are rural background, opinions towards agriculture, ethnicity of agriculture teacher, and student perspectives (Talbert & Larke Jr., 1995). Wakefield and Talbert (2000) suggest the examination of past activities of the NFA could determine what could be done to increase African American participation in the FFA. Further examination of NFA camps is needed to compare the current quality and quantity of experiential learning opportunities offered to minority youth to encourage the continued growth towards a more diverse national organization.

### **Purpose and Objectives of the Study**

The purpose of this historical research study was to document the establishment and organization of North Carolina NFA camps, identify the benefits of the camp, and to describe leadership and recreational opportunities available to students involved in the NFA organization. Many current FFA members are unaware that North Carolina NFA camps existed, this is partially due to the NFA and FFA merger. Although, no longer in existence, North Carolina NFA camps have a significant place in the history of agricultural and extension education to identify the many contributions made to move towards a diverse profession.

Along with the purpose, this study was an effort to bring the knowledge and awareness of North Carolina NFA camps and their benefits to the agricultural education profession. The specific objectives of this study were to answer the following questions:

1. Who was S. B. Simmons and what was his impact on the New Farmers of America organization?
2. How were North Carolina NFA camps established?
3. What were the objectives and activities of North Carolina NFA camps?
4. How did North Carolina NFA camps benefit NFA members?

### **Methodology and Procedures**

Historical research methods were used to guide the questions and objectives of this study. Historical research involves the systematic search for documents and other sources that contain facts relating to the questions that the historian has about previous events (Borg & Gall, 1983). The researcher used primary sources of information whenever possible (Ary et al., 2002). These primary sources include documents such as diaries, manuscripts, and data collected by state and federal agencies that have responsibility for agricultural education or historical information for the United States. This method involved utilizing the documents of the North Carolina State University Rare & Unique Collections, as well as the North Carolina State University and North Carolina A&T University archives. The location of primary sources was the goal of the researcher and provided a first-hand perspective of the event, a great benefit in a historical research study. The researcher also used secondary sources that included data from published newspaper articles and information provided by institutions in the agricultural education and cooperative extension fields. Secondary sources were prepared for comparison against primary sources only to understand their accuracy (Ary et al., 2002).

All documents and relics identified were analyzed for external and internal criticism. External criticism was achieved by inspecting documents for an author to ascertain that each document was in fact by the claimed author and was a valid relic from that time. Internal criticism was achieved by analyzing the information contained within each primary source. The information was analyzed holistically, and a cross-examination of documents was performed. Similar primary sources were compared to identify that the information being presented was similar across multiple sources. Upon assimilation of artifacts, the researcher examined each to understand the story depicted and significance to history. Examination included identifying the time, event, perspective, persons, and purpose of the artifact. Once detailed notes were made for each artifact, a content analysis approach was utilized. For this approach, relevant categories were formed, and artifacts were sorted accordingly (Dooley, 2007). Artifacts were organized based on type, event depicted, and people involved. To extract the narrative, the researcher interpreted each artifact from the perspective of a curator to explore the past and bring events to life. To form the outline of the story, artifacts were organized by date and a timeline was created to highlight significant events necessary to the foundation and span of the topic. Once an outline was established, the researcher reevaluated artifacts from the perspective of a youth camper. Viewing artifacts from this stance allowed the researcher to identify stories detailed in the artifacts to compile a narrative and make connections between the present and past.

The data collection process involved the researcher serving as the primary instrument. The researcher identified, read, compared, and extracted the narrative of the relics utilized in this study. To ensure trustworthiness, an axiological assumption was necessary to identify the angle and positioning of the researcher. An axiological assumption is defined by Creswell and Poth (2018) as the positioning and angle of the researcher to their work based on their social norms and values.

Self-reflexivity is the practice of honesty and authenticity with one's self, one's research, and one's audience (Tracy, 2010). Including a statement reflexivity allows readers to understand how the researcher extracted the narrative and make judgements about the point of view in the text (Richardson, 2000, as cited in Tracy, 2010).

I am 25-year old white and female U. S. citizen. I am a graduate of NC State University where I obtained a Master of Science degree in Agricultural and Extension Education and two Bachelor of Science degrees in Agricultural Education and Poultry Science. I matriculated to NC State University from a rural community college through an alternative pathway program. I student taught at an urban high school in North Carolina. I taught students from a variety of backgrounds, socio-economic statuses, and ethnicities. I am a current Agricultural Educator at an urban magnet high school in North Carolina. I teach students who represent a variety of cultures, countries, and ethnicities. I am from a rural, southeastern county in North Carolina where I am a graduate of a public North Carolina high school that was comprised of mostly Hispanic, Black, and White students. I was taught by educators from a variety of backgrounds and ethnicities. I was enrolled in agricultural courses in high school and was a member of the FFA chapter. I participated in FFA events and opportunities at the local, state, and national level. I have been surrounded by diversity throughout my entire childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. I respect people from all backgrounds and strive to ensure that every person and student has an equal opportunity to learn and grow. I have no biases to disclose.

It is difficult to assign a research priority to this historical research. However, AAEE Research Priority Three (Stripling & Ricketts, 2016) addresses not only the need for a scientific workforce but also the need for a diverse population of people who are essential for the profession. This research paper examined a time in history prior to and right after the merger of the NFA and FFA. The research recounts a time when the FFA recognized common goals of the organizations and the need for a more diverse national organization.

The NFA Camp in North Carolina was dedicated as the S. B. Simmons Camp in 1958 after his death in 1957. To aid in readability throughout this historical study, the term "NFA Camp" and "S. B. Simmons Camp" are used interchangeably.

## **Results/Findings**

### **Question One - Who Was S. B. Simmons And What Was His Impact On The New Farmers Of America Organization?**

Born Sidney Britten Simmons in North Carolina in 1884, S. B. Simmons led a long career associated with agricultural education. His education ranged from being one of the first students to study at Fayetteville State University, to receiving degrees in Agricultural Education from both North Carolina A&T State University and the University of Illinois with further educational studies at the University of California, Kansas State, and Colorado State College. His association with agricultural education continued as he held positions at Topeka Industrial School, Dowington Industrial School, and as a Teacher-Trainer for Vocational Agriculture at Tuskegee Institute. He brought his wealth of knowledge, and status of longest service to agricultural education of any African American in the nation, when he accepted a position at North Carolina A&T State University as the Assistant State Supervisor for Negro schools. He served in this position from 1930–1957. At the time of his arrival, there were 23 departments of vocational agriculture, with 24 teachers in the state. His work with county and state offices increased department numbers to 142 with 144 teachers at the time of his death in 1957.

Simmons is known as a founder of the New Farmers of America Organization. His enthusiasm for the project left him actively planning the first meeting and partially responsible for the growth and development of the organization. He is credited with advancing the North Carolina Association of New Farmers of America. It is under his supervision that the program of vocational agriculture in the Negro schools of North Carolina was deemed one of the top programs in the nation (Bell et al., 1958). A long-time dream of his, the North Carolina NFA Summer Camp at Hammocks Beach, valued at \$80,000.00 was one of his last accomplishments before his death. Dedicated the S. B. Simmons Camp in his honor, the road to acreage for the camp was many years in the making (Bell et al., 1958).

### **Question Two - How Were North Carolina NFA Camps Established?**

The idea for a North Carolina NFA camp came to S. B. Simmons long before the 1953 establishment of the NFA camp in North Carolina. While an FFA camp was established in White Lake, NC in 1928, it was off limits for rural African American boys. There was no established camp for rural African American boys at that time, so S. B. Simmons occasionally held temporary camps at different locations throughout the state. It was the goal of S. B. Simmons to secure acreage for an established camp for NFA members in North Carolina (Bell et al., 1958).

Simmons's ideas for a camp date back to 1927 when he held the state's first NFA camp at the Pitt County training school. This camp was described as a "weekend outing" consisting of about 35 boys. Later, in 1932, the North Carolina NFA held the first full-fledged camp at Kitrell College in Vance County. A. H. Peeler, principal of Price High School in Greensboro, North Carolina led the effort. However, S. B. Simmons realized that due to distance and poor roads, one camp in North Carolina could not serve boys all over the state. As a result, two district camps were established—one at Chowan Beach, near Winton, and a Boy Scout Camp near Kings Mountain. After the establishment of the two district camps, the North Carolina NFA decided that one North Carolina NFA camp, established at Chowan Beach, was advisable. Before work began on the permanent North Carolina NFA camp, World War II broke out, and the project was delayed (Dedication Program of the S. B. Simmons Camp, 1958). The plans for a permanent North Carolina NFA camp may have been halted, but Simmons' dream of a building of a North Carolina NFA camp was ever growing (Mosquito Express, 1956).

The war delay came as a blessing to the North Carolina NFA. Dr. William Sharpe, a neurosurgeon from New York, often visited Bear Island to hunt. He loved the island and acquired land that he referred to as "the Hammocks" for his retirement. With the intention to will the property to longtime friend and hunting guide, John Hurst, Sharpe was persuaded by Hurst to donate it to the North Carolina Teachers Association instead. The Hammock Beach Cooperation was then created to provide recreational and education opportunities for African Americans (North Carolina State Parks, 2017). This cooperation represented the North Carolina Teachers Association, their families, and other educational groups, including the North Carolina NFA (Dedication Program of the S. B. Simmons Camp, 1958). In 1949, Dr. William Sharpe deeded 4,500 acres of land on Queen's Creek in Onslow County to the Hammocks Beach Cooperation. The North Carolina NFA immediately put in an application for a 50-year lease on 27 acres of the land. The site was selected as the North Carolina NFA Camp and work began on its development (Dedication Program of the S. B. Simmons Camp, 1958).

One year after his death in 1957, the North Carolina NFA Camp that S. B. Simmons worked diligently to establish, was dedicated in his honor (Dedication Program of the S. B. Simmons Camp, 1958).

### **Question Three - What Were The Objectives And Activities Of North Carolina NFA Camps?**

With the establishment of the North Carolina NFA camp in 1953, the dream of S. B. Simmons was carried out to give rural African American boys the opportunity to develop leadership, citizenship, sportsmanship, and moral values in the form of a week-long camp. In order to meet these goals, S. B. Simmons saw great value in training counselors and educators to aid in leading the camp (Mosquito Express, 1956). Mr. S. B. Simmons felt that the effectiveness of any camp in meeting the needs of its campers was dependent largely upon the counselors (Dedication Program of the S. B. Simmons Camp, 1958). A workshop was conducted and consisted of one week of actual camping experience, living in the same army tents that campers would. This experience was found to be very informative and gratifying and motivated the interest of the teachers in supporting the NFA camp idea (Mosquito Express, 1956). The workshop also provided many teachers, some who would serve as counselors, practical experience in camping. The training of the counselors paid off, because they realized the benefits of camping and put forth special efforts to raise funds to improve the facilities of the camp (Dedication Program of the S. B. Simmons Camp, 1958).

The early facilities of the newly established North Carolina NFA camp consisted of boys being housed in old army tents and eating meals at the dining room for the North Carolina Teachers Association, which was located about one mile away. This routine lasted for three years (Dedication Program of the S. B. Simmons Camp, 1958). Multiple camp fund drives were launched, the first in 1953 for the construction of an administration building and bath house. Enough funds were raised, and another fund was launched in 1955 to construct cabins to properly house NFA campers for the following year (Mosquito Express, 1956). To aid in the fund drive, F. D. Bluford, President of North Carolina A&T State University sent a letter to S. B. Simmons regarding the fund drive and giving his endorsements. In his endorsement letter, he certified that S. B. Simmons and the NFA were building a “very fine educational and recreational center” that he “shall be very happy to commend” to his friends “as being worthy of their consideration and liberal support” (Bluford, 1955, para. 2). A report of the fund-raising campaign described funds from the 1954 drive would be allocated to construct essential buildings and purchase tents that would be used for additional camping facilities. Also, the construction work would be completed by NC NFA members (Confidential Report of Fund Raising Campaign, 1954). To raise funds for the facility, advocates of the camp described all the uses the camp had to offer. A letter from the Director of Vocational Education, J. Warren Smith, described the NFA camp would be utilized not only by the 8,319 rural African American youth enrolled in vocational agriculture in North Carolina, but also by the considerably larger amount of African American girls enrolled in vocational home economics. Stressing that the camp would be used by both populations was a key point in his letter to gain additional funds (Smith, 1955).

After the initial fundraisers of the camp concluded, additional needs were displayed in a brochure by the North Carolina NFA Members at North Carolina A&T State University providing a financial layout of what had been spent, and what was still needed. Among the amenities still needed were eight cabins—17’ 4” x 28’ at \$2,500.00, one shop building, shop equipment and supplies, kitchen equipment and installation, a pier, landscaping and developing play area, along with two incinerators and a flag pole (North Carolina Association of New Farmers of America, 1955). Those who contributed to the NFA Camp Fund wrote to S. B. Simmons, or one of his associates, explaining the amount of the donation and specifying how the donation was to be used (Hogewood, 1955). A Summary of the Money Collected by the Various Chapters for the NFA Camp Also a Summary of the Chapters Who Participated in the Summer Camp (n.d.) revealed that many North Carolina NFA chapters assisted in donating money to the NFA Camp Fund through

deposits of persons who did not attend camp. If a deposit was made, but a camper was unable to attend, the Vocational Agriculture Teachers Association agreed that the amount be added to the total camp contribution.

The fundraising work of S. B. Simmons was noted by several who wrote him congratulating him on his success in the creation and development of the camp. In one letter, A. L. Teachey, North Carolina Supervisor for Agricultural Education, wrote, "Frankly I was surprised at the beauty and convenient arrangement of the two buildings already completed. I want to congratulate you and all the people who made financial contributions and who participated in the planning and location of these buildings" (Teachey, 1955, para. 2). He also described that the campgrounds "have great possibilities for landscaping and becoming a place of beauty and with an air of restfulness and inspiration for many present and future NFA members" (Teachey, 1955, para. 2).

To carry out the initial objectives of the camp, a wide range of activities took place across the camp. Training began the moment the boys arrived to camp. The boys and counselors were assigned to camp chapters. There were no cliques at the North Carolina NFA camp. Every effort was made to divide local chapter groups and give campers the opportunity to meet boys from other parts of the state (Munger, 1955).

The boys of the North Carolina NFA were housed in cabins, labeled by letters A-F. These cabins were how the boys were split up and assigned to different tasks throughout the week. Each cabin was responsible for conducting a vesper service, campfires, and cleaning duties. To coordinate the weekly activities of the cabins, officers were elected. A president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer, and reporter were appointed for each cabin. Cabins also housed several advisors (Mosquito Express, 1956). Camp chapters were established among the cabins and each chapter planned its own program for the week, which was reviewed by the camp director (Munger, 1955).

The camp program for the boys would begin similarly each day with a flag-raising ceremony, camp clean-up, and breakfast. The next part of the day would involve four hours of educational activities. These would include practice in planning and conducting meetings, budget making, extemporaneous speaking, along with experience in meeting and getting along with people. Elective activities such as recreation or craftwork and citizenship activities would take place after lunch. Finally, flag-lowering, vespers, and a campfire program would close the day's formal activities. As a past-time, campers would partake in a fish fry or cookout. During social hours, campers communicated with members from other parts of the state and shared life problems and dreams (Munger, 1955). Lights in the barracks were turned off at 10:30 P.M., marked by the distinct sound of a bugle (Mosquito Express, 1956). Friday morning concluded the camping week with a special assembly (Munger, 1955).

The facilities for activities to take place were equipped with many resources. In a letter from Harold L. Noakes to S. B. Simmons, he wrote that "the program possibilities at Hammock Beach are limitless." In addition, he wrote that "the waterway provided miles of protected water for safe boating." In his letter, he also commended the camp and gave his personal thought that the camp could become "one of the most outstanding youth camps in the United States" (Noakes, 1953, para. 6).

A camp director, counselor, and chief along with class instructors, cabin counselors, storekeepers, camp inspectors and news staff oversaw the activities of the North Carolina NFA camp and assisted in running various events throughout the week. There were different supervisors

for each activity every day. Recreational activities were carried out; however other topics were also included in camp programming. The North Carolina NFA camp offered valuable information on forestry, electricity, arts and crafts, highway safety, leadership, citizenship, and others, which varied by week. North Carolina NFA boys attending camp June 18–22, 1956, specifically, had the opportunity to attend informative classes on the use of electricity on the farm and in the home. What made the electricity class unique, is Eugene H. Laycock, a representative from the Carolina Power & Light (CP & L) Company in Wilmington, North Carolina directed the classes to the boys, rather than an agriculture teacher. He emphasized the many benefits of electricity in that time and stressed the importance of using electricity in the right way (Mosquito Express, 1956).

There were multiple activities completed at the S. B. Simmons camp. Some involved recreation, leadership, and development of skills, while others were merely to pass the time and bond with other NFA members. The campers may have thought they were just having fun or conducting the normal schedule of camp, however, the experiences of the activities carried out at the North Carolina NFA camp, were numerous and to the rural African American boys of the North Carolina NFA.

#### **Question Four - How Did North Carolina NFA Camps Benefit North Carolina NFA Members?**

Members of the North Carolina NFA organization did not only attend camp to participate in recreational activities. It was the purpose of the camping activity to give supervised recreation and leadership activities to the African American youth in North Carolina (New Farmers of America Fourth Annual Encampment, 1957). These objectives were carried out by the camp and allowed those who participated to benefit greatly (North Carolina Association of New Farmers of America, 1955). It was the hope of state leaders, such as, A. L. Teachey, that the camp provided opportunities for boys to develop good citizenship and leadership practices and habits in addition to wholesome recreation (Teachey, 1955). The camp also incorporated supplemental training and education in agriculture, conservation, natural resources, practical and safe use of electricity, and more interest in arts and crafts (New Farmers of America Fourth Annual Encampment, 1957). The skills the boys gained from camp were taken back to their chapters to help their advisor educate other members (Simmons, 1942).

The camp program was set up to give the boys, future North Carolina farm leaders, an introduction to democracy in action. Simmons described it as: “The main function of the camp is to provide leadership training. Leadership training has been interpreted to cover all activities in which a farm boy might participate, and which will help him to develop a well-rounded personality and character.” Simmons also stated that, “American leadership is based on democracy. This philosophy is the basic philosophy of the camp” (Munger, 1955 para. 3–5).

An NFA member could practice and understand citizenship by giving an hour of labor to a camp improvement project. These were usually group activities such as conservation practices, or timber improvement. These experiences not only practiced citizenship but allowed the boys to partake in a bonus experience that would be useful when they returned to their families (Munger, 1955).

North Carolina NFA boys were also taught the art of reflection through the NFA camp. During the Friday morning assembly, campers presented a report on the phase of camp that most inspired them and provided improvements for the week (Munger, 1955). The Friday morning programs not only allowed for reflection, but also the display of leadership and other skills. A visiting principal raved over the work of the agriculture teachers by the boys being able to “carry



out a program, without the benefit of formerly knowing each other, rehearsing, or even, the acquaintance of the surroundings” (Mosquito Express, 1956, p. 8). This principal also noted that the training and experiences the boys obtained showed in how they were able to conduct themselves during the assembly were “unmistakably invaluable to our boys.” The principal concluded that his school program and other youth organizations would do well to encourage more of this type of “Learning by Doing” (Mosquito Express, 1956, p. 9).

Public speaking was a skill practiced at the North Carolina NFA camp as boys ran for camp chief. One boy from each cabin was selected to run for this leadership position. A campaign was conducted, along with speeches. The campaign speeches were made in front of the camp on the first night, immediately following the 8:00 p.m. vesper service (Johnson, 1962). Through these speeches, the boys practiced speech writing and presenting. A secret ballot was used to conduct voting for the selection of camp chiefs (Johnson, 1962). A camp council was established to manage any problems occurring throughout the week. The council consisted of the chief counselor, advisor of each cabin, and the candidate for camp chief (Johnson, 1962). This type of activity taught fair play to the NFA campers. Along with this, the art of patriotism was practiced every day at the flag-raising ceremony. The proper ceremony, conducted each day, included formation of campers, salute to the flag, and rules for flag raising (Mosquito Express, 1956).

Additional leadership skills were taught through classes at the NFA camp. Through these classes, NFA campers learned about leadership and how to serve as a leader. The leadership classes covered areas such as duties and responsibilities of various committees, and the essentials of an active chapter. The information presented by the teachers left little excuse for the boys to not have a more productive and functional NFA chapter the next fall (Mosquito Express, 1956).

Practicing recreational skills was an additional way in which each camper benefitted from NFA camps. The boys at the North Carolina NFA camp engaged in recreation everyday by participating in elective activities such as swimming, and softball. These skills promoted healthy exercise of the campers and instilled healthy habits into their lifestyle. Recreational activities also promoted teamwork and team building exercises. Sportsmanship, along with the building of character, were seen throughout these activities. The development of moral skills added another benefit to the youth who attended the NFA camp. W. T. Johnson, NFA Executive Secretary in North Carolina wrote, “The camping program at the S. B. Simmons Memorial Camp is no different from that of other camps. The major objective is to give each camper a true sense of values and awake in him a desire to develop into a fine person” (Johnson, 1962, pp. 248–249).

Campers benefitted from skills such as friendliness as they were encouraged to smile and openly talk to others. Campers practiced cooperativeness by following camp rules and listening to camp staff. Participation was encouraged for all camp activities, as well as good housekeeping skills. The cabins and campgrounds were to be kept clean at all times. Conversation was encouraged during social hour and at every meal (Future Farmers of America, n.d.).

S. B. Simmons and others noted the great benefits the NFA Camp had on rural African American boys in North Carolina. J. M. Seabrook, Chairman, Hammocks Beach Board of Directors wrote S. B. Simmons discussing the success of the camp. He explained in his letter that “the camp was well-managed” and that he knew “nothing being done in our state that excels your efforts to prevent juvenile delinquency and to build useful citizenship” (Seabrook, 1955, p. 1). S. E. Duncan also noted the camp could result in rural leadership, conservation, outdoor living, health, and recreation. In addition to those outcomes, Duncan recognized “There will, no doubt, be added many others which may accrue from contacts with representatives of the State Forestry Department, the State Highway Patrol, Health Department, religious and educational institutions and other agencies.

For such is sorely needed at the moment” (S. E. Duncan, 1955, p. 1). Within his letter, Duncan thanked S. B. Simmons and offered his support in the furtherance of the camp on behalf of “today’s and tomorrow’s citizens” (Duncan, 1955, p. 1).

The New Farmers of America organization established values that participants should uphold and obtain throughout their membership. The NFA provided value to African American rural youth in four areas: the individual, school, home, and community. The NFA provided opportunities for students to achieve individual values through the S. B. Simmons camp such as improving morals and citizenship, teaching cooperation, and working with others, as well as, teaching by experience. Community values such as, providing a source of leadership, bringing new ideas to the community, and improving the appearance of the community were also upheld through participation in camp (List of New Farmers of America Values, n.d.).

The objectives of the S. B. Simmons Camp in North Carolina were to develop leadership, citizenship, sportsmanship, and moral values among the campers who attended. Through the various activities, classes, and past-times across the camp, over the course of a week, campers reaped many benefits that shaped them into stewards of agriculture who possessed great skills that could follow them the rest of their lives.

### **Conclusion**

In 1965, a national merger between the Future Farmers of America and New Farmers of America occurred. Once this merger occurred, the New Farmers of America no longer existed by itself, but as an integral component of the Future Farmers of America Organization. The S. B. Simmons camp was left open and served as an FFA Camp for agriculture students across North Carolina. The purpose of the camping period remained similar in giving supervised recreation and leadership activities to the youth studying vocational agriculture in public schools. The camp still called for giving supplemental training and education in agriculture, conservation of natural resources, practical and safe use of electricity, citizenship, swimming, and water safety, while providing more interest in the arts and crafts. A similar schedule was followed where campers were divided amongst cabins, officers were elected, and selected candidates ran for camp chief (Future Farmers of America, n.d.).

The S. B. Simmons Memorial Camp stayed in operation for many years after its dedication in 1958. Due to declining participation, the North Carolina FFA transferred its lease and assets at the S. B. Simmons Camp to the North Carolina Association of Vocational Educators and Other Professional Workers. The last of three FFA camps in North Carolina is still under operation in White Lake where North Carolina FFA members travel across the state to attend every summer (North Carolina FFA Association, 2018).

The S. B. Simmons Memorial Camp was the only established NFA camp in North Carolina. Rural African American boys from across the state of North Carolina were impacted by the camp due to the many experiences offered to campers. Campfires and campaign speeches were two of the limitless opportunities available to the youth who attended. Leadership, citizenship, moral values, along with many other skills were focused on by the camp and taught to campers to enrich their experience in their NFA chapters (New Farmers of America Camp Booklet, n.d.).

As the New Farmers of America Organization no longer exists, it is important to understand how rural African American youth are still benefiting from opportunities available to them, just as North Carolina NFA youth benefitted from the S. B. Simmons Memorial Camp. Opportunities for African American youth in the National FFA Organization are at an all-time high. Appreciating

and promoting diversity throughout the organization is an essential component of the FFA code of ethics (National FFA Organization, 2019b). The same benefits North Carolina NFA members received at the S. B. Simmons Memorial Camp are being offered to African American members in North Carolina, and across the United States. There are leadership workshops at the local, regional, and state level that prepare students to lead a changing world. Citizenship, patriotism, cooperativeness, and healthy lifestyles are among the same objectives of the North Carolina NFA camp that are still being promoted today through the National FFA Organization (National FFA Organization, 2019b). As the National FFA Organization continues to grow, so does the diversity of its membership. The National FFA Organization CEO strives to further the diversity throughout the organization (Boehm, 2019). Diversity is not only apparent in membership, but also educator demographics. The diversity is apparent, and mirrors diversity of agricultural education, but is not where it should be. The work of the New Farmers of America and the opportunities provided for rural African American youth paved the way for members and educators towards a more diverse national organization. The challenge is to continue the work of creating an “FFA for All” (National FFA Organization, 2020). A new Task Force was established in 2018 to consider revisions to the National FFA Constitution and Bylaws to agree with the amended National FFA Charter and meet the needs of a 21<sup>st</sup> century FFA (National FFA Organization, 2018b).

The rich history of the S. B. Simmons Memorial Camp and other NFA camps provide important contributions to the agricultural education curriculum and profession when discussing historical aspects of both the NFA and National FFA Organization. Incorporating this information into curricula allows students to identify the measures taken by leaders to build more diverse organization. In addition, the S. B. Simmons Memorial Camp served African American youth by providing experiential learning opportunities which were limited in their home chapters. This historical account provides considerations to the profession of agricultural education and poses several questions: Are experiential learning opportunities provided in adequate substance to minority students? Do opportunities for experiential learning promote diversity and inclusion? How does the quality of experiential learning provided to minority students compare? Evaluating and answering these questions could challenge the profession as it continues to move forward in ensuring diversity and inclusion. Utilizing the data provided in this narrative supports the benefits of experiential learning opportunities for minority students and can be used when considering what other opportunities can be provided. This narrative also proposes a research opportunity to examine the structure and experiences offered at the S. B. Simmons camp after the merger in 1965. This information could be utilized to compare the available opportunities before and after the merger for minority students. Did African American youth still attend the camp? Did interest in the camp increase or decline after the merger? If there was a shift in opportunities offered and level of interest, what was the reason for the shift? How does participation after the merger parallel the current minority representation of the organization? Additionally, there are several implications when examining the potential shift in minority participation in secondary agriculture and interest in agriculture as a career choice since the joining of the NFA and FFA. Within the narrative, campers attended camp with their male, African American agriculture teacher. Currently, 65% of agriculture teachers are Caucasian (National FFA Organization, 2020; Lawrence et al., 2013). Was there a shift that occurred where minority students opposed a career as an agricultural educator? This historical research promotes conversation and a call to action in providing a more diverse profession and organization where minorities are recruited, encouraged, and supported.

Although the S. B. Simmons Memorial Camp no longer exists to develop leadership, citizenship, and moral values among rural African American boys; the foundation it laid for impacting youth did not go without notice. In addition to serving the 8,319 rural youth enrolled in vocational agriculture, the camp also served African American girls involved in vocational home

economics and by the State Parent-Teachers Association to host a camp for children with special needs (Smith, 1955).

The property has since been dismantled and Hammocks Beach now serves as a state park. In June of 2014, the Hammocks Beach Corporation acquired 290 acres from the Hurst and Sharpe heirs to expand Hammocks Beach State Park. Plans are in place to make use of the land for park goers to enjoy and learn about the rich history. Efforts include construction of a park pavilion for group gatherings and outdoor educational spaces. Development plans also include salvaging one or two structures from the camp for interpretation, education, and re-use to highlight the historic uses of the property. Other plans include providing space for picnicking, trails, and educational opportunities. There are also plans set forth to convert the land into an overnight camping facility. Individual cabins will be available for group rental. The land will have designated camping areas for groups and organizations which include tent spaces available by walking or driving. Construction will be performed on the pier and water access to accommodate kayaks, canoes, and fishing. Developmental plans include the construction of restroom and shower facilities. With the acquisition of the land comes an opportunity to highlight the educational programs of the park. The rich history of the land will be incorporated to inform visitors of the history and events that once took place. Efforts to increase education of the land include special events, programs, updating the visitor center, incorporation of artifacts, and educational signage throughout the 290 acres. It is the goal of the state park to preserve, protect, and educate park visitors about the African American history surrounding the NFA camp, North Carolina Teacher Association, and 4-H Camp Mitchell sites (North Carolina State Parks, 2017).

As the North Carolina FFA continues to grow, the land could be reacquired, or rented, to further enhance youth development across the state. This location can still serve the North Carolina FFA Association by chapters holding officer retreats, regions or federations hosting special events, or as the designated site for anniversary programs, teacher workshops, or in-service meetings. Utilizing this space to highlight the rich history and diversity of the profession and organization can illustrate to members and stakeholders the advancements made towards diversity and inclusion. Highlighting this space keeps it and the opportunities it provided current and relevant, instead of forgotten. Through this narrative, the hard work and dedication involved in establishing the camp was evident. The goal of the camp and S. B. Simmons was to provide a place for equal opportunities for African American youth in vocational agriculture. The site could serve as a resource in carrying out the implications suggested. The current preservation of the site by the Hammocks Beach State Park will allow the campground to serve the public, minorities, and youth of North Carolina, similarly to how it once served rural African American boys.

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