

A Historical Analysis of the Role of Music in the FFA and NFA Organizations

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Abstract

For centuries music has played a vital role in the lives of people, communities, and organizations. This is the same for agricultural and youth organizations like the Future Farmers of America (FFA) and the New Farmers of America (NFA). From the very beginning of these youth groups, music has played an important part in the lives of members, as well as in chapter, state, and national events. The purpose of this historical research study was to document the history of music within the Future Farmers of America and New Farmers of America youth organizations. Historical research methods were used to gather information for this study. From the beginnings of both the FFA and NFA, local advisors quickly saw the benefit of using music to build leadership, confidence, and esprit de corps among the boys in their organizations. The NFA developed quartet and talent competitions at the state and national levels. Both the FFA and NFA organizations established chorus groups for boys from across the country. The FFA placed more emphasis on state and national bands and orchestras than did the NFA. Song books were published to encourage the inclusion of singing in FFA and NFA events. Official manuals for the organizations included songs and yells that could be used in local chapter activities. Organization leaders saw the benefits of using music to inspire youth to develop their musical and leadership skills. Music has been a key component of the success of both the FFA and NFA organizations.

Keywords: Future Farmers of America; FFA; New Farmers of America; NFA; Music; Bands; Chorus; Talent

Introduction and Theoretical Framework

For centuries music has played a vital role in the lives of people, communities, and organizations. Through tough times, economic troubles, wars, and celebrations, music has been there to improve morale, soften the hurt, and rally the country. This is the same for agricultural and youth organizations like the Future Farmers of America (FFA) and the New Farmers of America (NFA). From the very beginning of these youth organizations, music has played an important part in members' lives and the entire organization.

Authors and researchers have long extolled the benefits of music to people's attitudes, attention, and focus in educational settings. When writing about the educational benefits of using music in schools, Fletcher (2014) wrote that, "Most cultures (except high school classrooms) have incorporated some form of music as a piece of community gatherings" (p. 9). Levitin (2006) in his book *This is Your Brain on Music: The Science of a Human Obsession*, cited a connection between culture, music, and a sense of belonging. Brain scans of people listening to music show that music "lights up" the brain which helps people make connections and develop positive feelings (Fletcher, 2014). Research by Howard Gardner on multiple intelligences includes Music Intelligence (M) as one of the eight categories. Individuals with Music Intelligence use music to form a meaning of

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expression, perception, and transformation of thoughts. People strong in Music Intelligence are sensitive to environmental and musical sounds and often hum or sing while they work (Webb, Metha, & Jordan, 2007).

Music has been a part of American lives since the beginning of this country. As communities and towns were established and grew, many formed their own community bands. Avery (2000) wrote that,

Orchestras and museums existed primarily in the metropolitan communities of the East Coast, and moved slowly into major cities of the Midwest. In small towns and rural villages, singing schools, community bands, literary societies, and occasional lessons in music and painting gave people opportunities for art classes. Public entertainment often grew from these activities, enriching the culture life of the area. (p. 57)

Local, county, and state fairs often had their own bands. McCarry (1997) in the book *County Fairs: Where America Meets*, wrote:

County fairs became the social event of the rural year, and entertainment began to be performed for the sake of entertainment. At first locals provided this entertainment, whether by participating in competitions or by joining in parades or by singing agricultural hymns. (p. 81).

These fairs often included musical competitions. Avery (2000) stated, "Bands and musicians, in addition to competing for prizes, often played for awards ceremonies and dances as a part of the festivities...Bands of a region competed against one another at the fair for 'best band' designation (p. 62). Bands played a big role in many state fairs, including the North Carolina State Fair which began in 1853. McLaurin (2003) wrote, "A rousing success, bands quickly became a fixture on the fair's program. Participating bands usually represented their hometowns and thus embodied a spirit of civic pride and competition, as well as exuberance" (p. 102). A variety of different bands played at the North Carolina State Fair including string bands, brass bands, marching bands, military bands, and silver cornet bands.

Just as towns and fairs organized their own bands, other institutions such as schools, universities, branches of the military and large companies all formed their own bands. The oldest band in the U.S. armed forces is the United States Marine Corp band, commonly known as *The President's Own*, which was established in 1798 (Guide to U.S. Military Bands and Music, 2018). The Marine Band is also the oldest continuously active professional music organization in the country. During the 1930s the U.S. Army band provided music during the monthly FFA radio broadcasts on the *NBC Farm and Home Hour* (Moore, 1997). The John Deere Company had its own Cornet Band which was organized in 1884 and played at fairs and community events in Moline, Illinois and surrounding areas (Pripps, 2010).

Music also played an important role in the growth of the 4-H clubs for boys and girls. 4-H local, county, and state organizations all established bands, choirs, and talent groups. To rally support for the new organization, music was written and disseminated to 4-H clubs nationwide. Reck (1951) reported that, "The 1927 camp marked the beginning of a literature of music written especially for the 4-H Clubs" (p. 217). The music included a song titled "*Dreaming*" for 4-H girls and a popular "*Plowing Song*" for 4-H boys. In 1929, the first *National 4-H Song* book was published. From 1930 to 1942, the U.S. Marine Band included the National 4-H March titled "*Pride o' the Land*" in its repertoire of musical selections. In 1930 there was also a music hour included in the monthly National 4-H Radio Program.

Within the Ohio 4-H program, numerous counties developed bands in the early decades of the organization. Bands were established in Darke County (1939), Miami County (1939), and Licking County (1948). The Miami County 4-H band was sponsored by the Miami County Farm Bureau and included 107 members before it was disbanded in 1962 (Deel, 2002). In the state of Indiana, the LaPorte County 4-H Club Band performed at the 1941 4-H Round-Up held at Purdue University. A Purdue University professor, Al Stewart, directed the Indiana State 4-H Choral group which performed at the Junior Leaders' Conference in Indiana. The official State 4-H Band was started in 1964 and the State 4-H Chorus was established in 1966. One of the objectives of the groups was to emphasize the role of musical activities in maintaining good mental health of 4-H members and to add status and prestige to the 4-H music program (Smith & Kirkpatrick, 1990).

Music has played an important role in our communities, schools, states, and organizations throughout history. Bands and choirs have been established by communities, companies, local and state fairs, and youth organizations. This historical research study will investigate the role music played in both the FFA and NFA from their creation until their merger in 1965. This research was undertaken to document the importance music has played in these organizations throughout their history. Music continues to be a major component of the National FFA Organization through the band, chorus, and talent programs at National FFA Convention and state conventions. It is hoped that this research will show the continued importance of music in future FFA events.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this historical research study was to document the history of music within the FFA and NFA youth organizations. Specific objectives included:

1. Describe the role that music played in local FFA chapter activities.
2. Identify the role of bands in local, state, and national FFA activities.
3. Identify the role of choral groups in local, state, and national FFA and NFA organizations.
4. Describe the inclusion of talent performers in local, state, and national FFA activities.

Methods and Procedures

Historical research methods were used to gather information for this study. The intended result of historical research is an "increased understanding of the present and a more rational basis for making choices" (Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen, & Razavieh, 2010, p. 467). "To understand historical documents, one must have an interpretive point of view. This point of view shapes how one gathers, reads, and analyzes historical materials" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 375).

Few primary sources were available, therefore, mostly secondary sources were used including history books, journal articles, magazines, board meeting minutes, and convention proceedings. Data were collected from *The Agricultural Education Magazine*, *Journal of Agricultural Education*, *New Horizons Magazine* (formerly the *National Future Farmer Magazine*), artifacts from the National FFA Archives at Indiana University – Purdue University Indianapolis, and FFA.org. Any article that related to music, musical groups or performances, state or national bands, chorus, or talent events was collected and analyzed to determine if it addressed the objectives of the study. Historical articles and books on the FFA and NFA were reviewed to gather information about musical activities within each organization. Documents from the 1920s up to the 2000s were found that provided valuable data for this study. Each document was thoroughly examined to determine if it provided a true representation of the historical event.

External criticism and internal criticism were used to determine if the documents were authentic and of value. Whenever possible, triangulation of the data was attempted.

A limitation to this study was the lack of information about local and state musical activities within the NFA organization. Historical texts and articles on the NFA included very limited information related to music when compared to the FFA organization. Another limitation was the lack of an accessible national archives and historical records for the NFA organization.

Findings

Describe the Role that Music Played in Local FFA Chapter Activities

From the very beginning of the FFA in 1928, music played a vital role in chapter activities. Only one year after its founding, E.M. Tiffany, author of the FFA Creed, published the music and lyrics to the *"Song of the Future Farmers"* (Tiffany, 1929). The song's chorus was: "Future Farmers of the land, forward striving to our destiny, proud to till the soil, honored by our toil we bear the call, we answer all, and march to victory." Local FFA chapters and state associations followed the lead and started to publish their own song books. The Future Farmers of Iowa (n.d.) published a song book with "selected songs for group singing" (p. 1). In 1931, the Bear River FFA chapter in Garland, Utah published their own chapter song book which included lyrics to 79 songs including: *"FFA My FFA," "FFA Fellowship Song," "Future Farmers Booster Song," "FFA Boola"* song, and *"Good Morning Mr. FFA"* (Bear River FFA Chapter, 1931). The Vocational Division of the Wyoming State Department of Education published a booklet of Wyoming Future Farmer Songs and Yells (Wyoming State Department of Education, n.d.). The Utah Chapter of FFA (n.d.) published a booklet titled *The Songs We Sing*, which included a song titled *"Smith-Hughes Sport Song"* (sung to the tune of *"Ain't Gonna Rain No More"*). The lyrics included:

The Smith-Hughes men are all good sports.
 And they're always in for fun
 And when they start to do a thing
 They do it till it's done.
 Chorus:
 Oh there are no flies on us, on us
 There are no flies on us
 There may be flies on the other guys,
 But there are no flies on us.

In the first decades of the organization, the FFA manual regularly included songs and yells for FFA members. The first FFA manual in 1929-1930 included the *"Future Farmers of America"* song which was sung to the tune of *"On Wisconsin."* It also included two pages of songs and yells to be used by FFA chapters (Future Farmers of America, 1929).

Identify the Role of Bands in Local, State, and National FFA Activities

The first mention of music at a national convention was in 1930 when the Marion County Future Farmer Band from Ohio performed for the delegates. It was also in 1930 that the delegates adopted the *"Future Farmer March"* as the official march of the organization. The march was composed by Captain W. J. Stannard, Director of the U.S. Army Band in Washington, DC. (Future Farmers of America, 1930). Beginning at the 1931 National FFA Convention, a song-writing contest was held. Eleven songs were submitted for consideration. After discussion by the delegates, it was decided not to select one official song of the FFA but to purchase the rights to four songs;

“Hail the F.F.A.,” “Sons of Soil,” “F.F.A. National Song,” and “Future Farmers of America,” to be included in a future FFA song book (Future Farmers of America, 1931). At the 1932 convention the Program of Work Committee established the goal of having 25% of all chapters participating in a song writing contest. At the same convention, the Resolutions Committee extended thanks to the U.S. Army Band for furnishing official FFA music during the monthly broadcasts of the Farm and Home Hour radio show (Future Farmers of America, 1932).

In a 1967 report titled “*Music and Musical Organizations Developed by the Future Farmers of America*,” Hollenberg and Tenney (1967) stated that “Perhaps the most popular activity was the development of local string bands. Many farm boys learn to play the guitar, violin, banjo, and mandolin” (p. 1). The authors concluded that “The special music and musical organizations have played an important role in local FFA chapters, in State associations and in the national organization. It is expected that the use of these musical organizations will expand in the years ahead” (p. 5).

Starting at the fifth national convention, it became common practice for state FFA associations to send their bands to perform at the convention. The Texas FFA Band was one of the first official state bands to play at the convention in 1932 (Tenney, 1977). The 1933 convention featured music performed by a local chapter band from the Fredericktown FFA chapter in Ohio (Future Farmers of America, 1933). The Utah State Band provided the music at the seventh convention in 1934. It was also in 1934 that the Committee on the Program of Work started to “encourage the organization of State F.F.A. Bands and similar groups.” The committee set the goal of having 25% of states participating by establishing a state band. At the same convention, W.A. Ross, National Executive Secretary reported that seven state associations have organized state bands. (Future Farmers of America, 1934, p. 24). Just four years later, Ross reported that “43% of States had a band, orchestra, or other musical organizations” (Future Farmers of America, 1938, p. 42).

In the same annual report to the delegates, Ross wrote, “Increasing interest is noted in various types of musical organizations, both on a State-wide and chapter basis; many F.F.A. Districts and Federations also have their own band or orchestra” (Future Farmers of America, 1938, p. 37). Table 1 below lists the various chapter and state music groups that performed at national FFA conventions from 1930 to 1964.

Table 1

Chapter and State FFA Band Participation at National FFA Conventions (1930-1964)

Chapter/State Music Group	Year	Chapter, State	Activity
Merion County FFA Band	1930	Ohio	Convention Music
Utah FFA Band	1934	Utah	Official Band
Fredericktown FFA Band	1933	Ohio	Convention Music
Texas FFA Band	1935	Texas	Official Band
Missouri FFA Band	1936	Missouri	Convention Band
Michigan FFA Band	1936	Michigan	Convention Band
Solomon FFA Orchestra	1937	Kansas	Convention Orchestra
Texas FFA Band	1937	Texas	Convention Massed Band
Missouri FFA Band	1937	Missouri	Convention Massed Band
Utah FFA Band	1937	Utah	Convention Massed Band
Iowa FFA Band	1938	Iowa	Official Convention Band
Texas FFA Band	1938	Texas	Convention Band

Table 1

*Chapter and State FFA Band Participation at National FFA Conventions (1930-1964),
Continued...*

Hill Billy Band	1938	Palmer	Convention Music
Texas String Band	1939	Texas	Convention Music
Pennsylvania FFA Band	1939	Pennsylvania	Official Band
Texas FFA Band	1939	Texas	Convention Music
Solomon FFA Orchestra	1939	Kansas	Convention Music
Minnesota FFA Band	1940	Minnesota	Official Band
Texas FFA Band	1940	Texas	Convention Music
Illinois String Band	1940	Illinois	Convention Music
Iowa String Band	1940	Iowa	Convention Music
Texas FFA Band	1941	Texas	Convention Music
Michigan FFA Band	1941	Michigan	Official Band
Pennsylvania FFA Band	1946	Pennsylvania	Convention Music
Mississippi FFA String Band	1946	Mississippi	Convention Music
Albany FFA Orchestra	1946	Albany, OR	Convention Music
Utah FFA Band	1946	Utah	Convention Music
Mississippi Hill Billy Band	1947	Mississippi	Convention Music
Alabama FFA String Band	1948	Alabama	Convention Music
Corydon FFA Orchestra	1949	Kentucky	Convention Music
Corvallis FFA String Band	1950	Oregon	Convention Music
Quincy FFA String Band	1950	Florida	Convention Music
Leon FFA String Band	1951	Florida	Convention Music
Nicholas Co. FFA String Band	1951	West Virginia	Convention Music
Dixieland Band	1951	Donnellson, IA	Convention Music
Carthage FFA String Band	1952	Carthage, TX	Convention Music
South Dakota FFA Orchestra	1952	South Dakota	Convention Music
North Troy-Newport Center FFA String Band	1952	Vermont	Convention Music
Turkey Creek FFA String Band	1952	Florida	Convention Music
Caraway FFA String Band	1954	Arkansas	Convention Music
Holbrook FFA String Band	1954	Nebraska	Convention Music
Dixieland Swing Band	1954	Farmersville, IL	Convention Music
Plant City FFA String Band	1955	Florida	Convention Music
District V FFA Swing Band	1955	Minnesota	Convention Music
Jacksonville FFA String Band	1956	Alabama	Convention Music
House FFA String Band	1956	Mississippi	Convention Music
Rogersville FFA String Band	1956	Alabama	Convention Music
Deming FFA Band	1956	New Mexico	Convention Music
Carthage FFA String Band	1956	Texas	Convention Music
Rogersville FFA String Band	1957	Alabama	Convention Music
Deming FFA Band	1957	New Mexico	Convention Music
Carthage FFA String Band	1957	Texas	Convention Music
Frazee FFA Band	1958	Minnesota	Convention Music
Isola FFA String Band	1958	Mississippi	Convention Music
Dade City FFA String Band	1958	Florida	Convention Music
Munson FFA String Band	1959	Florida	Convention Music
Minnesota FFA Association	1964	Minnesota	Convention Music
Maryland FFA Association	1964	Maryland	Convention Music
Florida FFA Association	1964	Florida	Convention Music

Throughout the first decades of the FFA organization, many chapters included musical groups into their local program of activities. Chapters established chapter bands, orchestras, string bands, quartets, or other talent groups. Members of the Buffalo chapter in Buffalo Center, Iowa, formed the Plow Boys, an old-time novelty band. The band was made up of FFA members playing accordions, harmonicas, and guitars. The group played at the state 4-H club banquet, the State FFA banquet, and were featured on WHO radio from the Iowa State Fair (Plow Boys, 1936).

Robert Patten, an FFA Advisor from Waverly, Iowa, described the importance of music for local FFA chapters when he wrote, "Music has its place in the local chapter as well as district, state and national conventions...Boys may be encouraged to sing in glee clubs or to develop an F.F.A. quartet" (Patten, 1950, p. 203). Story (1950) supported Patten's comments when he wrote that "Mr. Loy [agriculture teacher] believes music and group singing in the F.F.A. chapter go a long way toward developing leadership and cooperation among the individual boys" (p. 16). Patten (1950) summed up the importance of music when he stated,

We are living in an accelerated era. The fast pace of living is a sound reason for giving music a place in the chapter. Music has always been a part of rural American life. F.F.A. members are part of rural America. They need abilities and appreciations for music in building future homes. (p. 203)

With the success of state FFA bands, in 1938 the Committee on the Program of Work included the goal to "Encourage the organization of State Bands and other musical units looking toward the possibility of a National F.F.A. Band" (Future Farmers of America, 1938, p. 29). This was the first call for the Future Farmers of America organization to establish a National FFA Band instead of the existing practice of using state bands to provide the music at national conventions. The delegates at the 1940 convention continued to discuss the possibility of organizing a national FFA band. However, they decided that state FFA bands from different regions of the country should be selected to perform at the convention in future years (Future Farmers of America, 1940)

Due to travel restrictions caused by World War II, no state FFA bands performed at the national FFA conventions from 1942 to 1945. At the 1946 Victory Convention, delegate Cook from West Virginia moved that a national FFA band composed of two boys from each state be organized (Future Farmers of America, 1946). The motion was adopted. The first official National FFA Band was organized and performed at the 1947 national convention. The band was under the direction of Dr. Henry S. Brunner, Head of the Department of Agricultural Education at Pennsylvania State College, and long-time director of the Pennsylvania FFA Band (Tenney, 1977). Prior to becoming a vocational agriculture teacher Brunner was a professional musician and played the violin with the Philadelphia Orchestra.

Convention events for the band included holding a band concert during convention and marching in the American Royal Parade. The parade traditionally signaled the end of the FFA convention and the beginning of the American Royal Livestock Show in Kansas City, Missouri. From its inception in 1947, the national FFA bands have been led by seven conductors. Table 2 lists the individuals who have conducted the band from 1947 to present.

Table 2*National FFA Band Directors (1947-2020)*

Names	City, State	Occupation	Years of Service
Dr. Henry S. Brunner	State College, PA	Head, Agricultural Education Department Pennsylvania State College	1947 - 1961
R. Cedric Anderson	Cedar Rapids, IA	Jefferson High School Music Teacher	1962 - 1968
Roger Heath	Blacksburg, VA	Virginia Polytech Institute	1969 - 1988
William C. Moffit	West Lafayette, IN	Purdue University Band Director	1989 - 1991
Gene Englerth	Webberville, MI	High School Music Teacher	1992-1993
Joe LaJoye	Hastings, MI	Hastings High School Music Teacher	1994 - 2017
Spencer White	Hastings, MI	Hastings High School Band Director	2018-Present

From the very beginning of the national FFA band, it was referred to as the “mail order band.” This was because the FFA members from across the country would apply for acceptance into the band by mail. Eventually, FFA members would submit audition recordings of themselves playing their instruments to national band leadership.

The uniforms that various bands wore at national FFA convention were also unique. The very first band to play at national convention was the Texas State FFA Band in 1932. Their uniform included corduroy jackets and uniform or band caps that were sold by the Universal Uniform Company in Van Wert, Ohio. Tenney (1977) reported that the Utah FFA Band was the first to dress in the official FFA jacket and white trousers in 1934. However, photographs of the Texas FFA Band from 1932 dispute this assertion. Regardless, the tradition of the national FFA band wearing white pants or skirts continues today. While most bands wore regular neck ties, many wore bow ties throughout the decades of the 1940s to 1960s. After the national FFA band was formed in 1947, band members were provided with new FFA jackets with National Band embroidered on the back and their name and state embroidered on the front. This tradition was also embraced by the National FFA Chorus. Chorus members were given jackets with “National Chorus” across their backs. The practice ended sometime in the late 1990s or early 2000s.

In 1952 Don Force delegate of Wyoming moved that the National FFA Board of Directors and Student Officers request the official FFA jeweler design a medal for National Band and Chorus members (Future Farmers of America, 1952). The motion was adopted. The National FFA Supply Service then started offering small pins for both the band and chorus. Pins were also available for state FFA band and chorus members.

As the National FFA Band grew, there was a desire to record its performances. The FFA organization produced two multi-album recordings of the band. A six-album collection of the FFA Band was produced for the 20th Anniversary Convention in November 1948 (National FFA Band, 1948). Five years later in 1953, the FFA produced another set of four albums recorded at the 25th Silver Anniversary Convention 1928-1953 (National FFA Band, 1953).

Identify the Role of Choral Groups in Local, State, and National FFA and NFA Organizations

Just one year after the national FFA band was organized in 1947, the National FFA Chorus first appeared at the national convention in 1948. However, no action by either the convention delegates or the FFA board of directors could be found that officially established the chorus. The first director of the chorus was Dr. James W. Hatch who was an Assistant State Supervisor of Agricultural Education in the New York Department of Education in Albany, NY (Tenney, 1977). Over the 72-year history of the National FFA Chorus, it has had eight directors. Table 2 below lists the directors of the National FFA Chorus from 1948 to present.

Table 3

National FFA Chorus Directors

Names	City, State	Occupation	Years of Service
Dr. James W. Hatch	Kinderhook, NY	Assistant State Supervisor of Ag Ed New York Dept. of Ed., Albany, NY	1948-1960
I.S. Glover	Sylvester, GA	Vo-Ag Instructor	1965-1967
James McCormick	Jackson, GA	Vo-Ag Instructor, Henderson High School	
Marvin D. Myers	West Lafayette, IN	Purdue University	1968 - 1979
Stan Kingma	Roanoke, VA	Virginia Tech University	1980-1992
Roger Kelley	Pullman, WA	Washington State University	1993-1998
Patti LaJoye	Hastings, MI	Hastings High School Choral Director	1999-2017
Christy Britton	Williamsburg, MI	Elk Rapids Elementary School Music Teacher	2018-Present

After an FFA member was selected to participate in the National FFA Chorus, he had to purchase a uniform to wear during national convention. The uniform consisted of a National FFA Chorus jacket, white shirt, white duck trousers, and official FFA blue tie. The total cost of the uniform was \$15.00. During 1958 and 1959 a dispute between chorus director Hatch and FFA officials over payment to the FFA Supply Service for the uniforms led to the disbanding of the choir for the 1960 National FFA Convention. The dispute over the bill for \$3,267 led to the FFA filing a lawsuit against choir director Hatch (Spanton, 1959-1961).

In August 1962, FFA officials surveyed state officials to inquire if they were in favor of having a national chorus at future conventions. The results indicated that 22 states were in favor of having a chorus and 21 states were against the idea. At the 1962 convention, a motion by delegate Thompson of Oklahoma that the National FFA Chorus be reorganized was adopted (Future Farmers of America, 1962). However, at their January 1963 meeting the FFA Board of Directors voted that no action be taken to reorganize the national chorus. It was suggested that FFA officials consider using state chorus groups at future conventions. At the national convention in October 1963, another motion by delegate Hardy of Minnesota to once again reorganize the chorus was adopted (Future Farmers of America, 1963). Again, there is no indication that this motion by the delegates was put into action.

The impetus to reorganize the national FFA chorus seemed to be the impending merger of the NFA and the FFA. Although it appears the national FFA chorus may have consisted of only the NFA members from states that had NFA chapters. The reorganized national FFA chorus was directed by two agriculture teachers from Georgia, I.S. Glover of Sylvester, GA, and James McCormick of Jackson, GA. (Future Farmers of America, 1965). The newly integrated national FFA chorus first performed at the 1966 National FFA Convention under the direction of African American Agriculture Teacher I.S. Glover of Sylvester, GA (Future Farmers of America, 1966).

Music also played an important role in the activities of the NFA. At one of the first NFA Conventions held in Bordentown, NJ, the NFA chapter from Snow Hill, Alabama made up the NFA Band. At the eighth national convention of the NFA held at South Carolina A&M College in Orangeburg, SC, the delegates adopted the NFA Creed Song arranged to the music of Londonderry Air (Strickland, 1994). Tenney (1977) wrote that, "NFA members particularly enjoyed singing. This led to the establishment of a quartet contest and the creation of numerous NFA state choruses and the national NFA Chorus" (p. 169). The NFA Chorus was similar to the National FFA Chorus in that they wore special NFA black corduroy jackets with "National Chorus" embroidered across the back of the jacket. However, unlike the FFA chorus, the NFA chorus wore their regular black pants instead of special white pants.

The stated purpose of the NFA quartet contest was to "develop a greater appreciation for good music, including the Negro spirituals. It should stimulate NFA members to sing and develop desirable musical talent among farm boys." The NFA's talent contest was also designed to "encourage the use of desirable entertainment and develop musical ability in NFA members" (New Farmers of America, 1963, p. 38). It was reported that the growth of NFA resulted in 466 quartet singing contests being held within the 17 state NFA associations by 1940 (Tenney, 1977). Some popular NFA songs included "Give Me That Old NFA Spirit," and "NFA Boys Are We" (Moore, 2018).

Quartet contests were so popular that in July 1963 the Alabama, Georgia, and Florida associations of FFA joined to host a *Tri-State Public Speaking and Quartet Contest* that was held on the campus of Auburn University in Auburn, Alabama. FFA quartets from Goshen, AL, Perry, GA, and Newberry, FL all participated. Judges included Mr. E.S. Van Cleave, Music Education Consultant in the Alabama Department of Education; Dr. R. W. Montgomery, Head Professor of Agricultural Education at Auburn University; and Mr. Bob Weidenbach, Choral Director at the First Baptist Church in Auburn, AL (*Tri-State Public Speaking and Quartet Contest*, 1963).

Music and singing were so important in the NFA that one of the recognized chapter officers was the Song and Cheer Leader. The two responsibilities for the office were to 1) See that the members are acquainted with appropriate songs and yells, and 2) Be responsible for all music used by the chapter (New Farmers of America, 1963, p. 28). Just as in the early days of the FFA organization, one of the suggested leadership training activities for NFA chapters was to develop special musical organizations. While NFA emphasized chorus, quartet, and talent groups, there is no evidence that NFA ever developed a regular NFA Band. The final NFA Chorus was renamed the FFA Chorus and performed at the 1965 National FFA Convention where the NFA merged with, or was absorbed into, the FFA organization.

Describe the Inclusion of Talent Performers in Local, State, and National FFA Activities

In addition to band and chorus groups, talent has also played an important role in FFA activities. Musical groups have long performed at local events, state conventions, and the national FFA convention. Even before talent became an official part of the national convention, individuals

and small groups were sharing their musical talent with the participants. At the 1933 convention, Raymond Bryan from the Ottawa FFA chapter in Kansas played his guitar in front of the convention audience (Future Farmers of America, 1933). According to the national FFA history timeline, the first official talent program was held at the 20th Anniversary Celebration convention in 1948, the same year the National FFA Chorus first appeared (National FFA, n.d.). The program for the convention included performances by the Swiss Yodelers and a Talent Night that was billed as “A unique amateur show by F.F.A. members” (Future Farmers of America, 1948, p. 8-9). Over the decades FFA members have exhibited their musical proficiency on the piccolo, bassoon, piano, accordion, drums, and even the ukulele.

The National FFA Talent program continued to grow over the decades. The first official photograph of the National FFA Talent participants appeared in the proceedings of the 48th National FFA Convention in 1975 (Future Farmers of America, 1975). While the number of FFA talent participants at national FFA convention never matched the size of the national band or chorus, they added different and unique entertainment to convention programs over the decades.

As FFA is noted for doing, the talent performances at national FFA convention were eventually made into a competition at the 86th national convention in 2013. Judges observed talent performances and determined the first winner of the National FFA Talent Competition was Bailey Wesberry, a member of the Waurika FFA chapter in Terral, Oklahoma (Weihl, 2013).

Conclusions/Recommendations

From the founding of the FFA in 1928, music played a very important role in local, state, and national activities. Numerous local FFA chapters organized music groups to entertain at chapter meetings and local FFA activities. FFA members often performed musical selections at community events and fairs. String bands consisting of FFA members playing a variety of string instruments were organized in many chapters. Some local chapters even organized their own bands made up of FFA members with musical talent. Local FFA Advisors quickly saw the benefit of using music to build leadership, confidence, and *esprit de corps* among their chapter FFA members.

As the young organization grew, the need for entertainment at the national FFA convention became evident. Because many local and state FFA groups already existed, it was natural to invite these musical groups to perform at convention in Kansas City. From 1932 to 1940 numerous state FFA bands including Texas, Utah, Missouri, Michigan, Kansas, and Iowa all provided entertainment during convention.

Due to travel restrictions during World War II, no state bands were able to travel to Kansas City to perform. After the war, it was evident that FFA members from all states wished to participate in a band at national convention. Therefore, it was decided that instead of continuing the practice of using state bands at convention, a National FFA Band was formed in 1947. After the overwhelming success of the national band, just one year later the National FFA Chorus and separate Talent program were introduced at the 1948 convention.

Music was also important in the NFA organization for African American boys. The NFA developed quartet and talent competitions at the state and national levels. However, while the FFA placed considerable emphasis on bands or orchestras, the NFA mainly focused on quartet groups. This could possibly have been because of the large expense of owning and transporting musical instruments needed for bands. *A cappella* musical groups like quartets were easy to form, less expensive to travel, and followed the traditional spiritual singing format present in many African American churches in the south where the NFA operated.

Numerous songs were written by members and about both organizations. Song books were published to encourage the inclusion of singing in FFA and NFA events. Official manuals for the organizations included songs and yells that could be used in local chapter activities. Eventually both organizations created competitions around music. The FFA organized a song contest at one of the first national conventions. NFA organized both quartet and talent competitions at state and national conventions. While the FFA began including talent performances beginning in 1948, it wasn't until 2014 that talent participants were judged, and top performers recognized.

Music was important in both the FFA and NFA youth organizations. Music was important at all levels: local, state, and national. Organization leaders saw the benefits of using music to inspire youth to develop their musical and leadership skills. Inspirational and patriotic music was used at FFA and NFA events to entertain participants, award winners, and sponsors.

In the early decades of the FFA and the NFA, the organizations encouraged local chapters and state associations to form band, choruses, and musical groups. However, this emphasis on forming musical organizations disappeared in FFA publications after World War II. While the FFA formally established the national band, chorus, and talent programs, they placed less emphasis on the importance of music in local chapters. It was also in the 1940s that songs and yells disappeared from the pages of the FFA manual. Perhaps this was the result of changing personal habits and community demographics. As radio and television became widely available there was less need for local musical groups to entertain crowds at FFA and community events.

Based on the results of this historical research study, it is recommended that the FFA continue to include music in local, state, and national activities. States that have bands, chorus, and talent programs should continue to offer these to all FFA members in their states. Local FFA chapters should consider creating musical groups to perform at school and chapter events. FFA Advisors, officers, and members should collaborate with school band and choir directors to find ways of combining students' agricultural and musical interests and talents. FFA musical groups could perform at school events, community parades and celebrations, or county, regional, or state fairs.

National FFA leaders and musical directors should investigate re-establishing the NFA's quartet contest at the state and national levels. When asked what things were lost in the FFA/NFA merger that may have been significant enough to retain, a former NFA member stated, "From what I understand a lot of singers came from the NFA quartets. That quartet was about one of the only things that I can see right now that would be significant enough to maintain" (Wakefield & Talbert, 2003, p. 102). Creating a quartet competition as part of the national FFA talent program would both encourage local chapters to establish quartets, help to create state quartet events, and honor the history of the New Farmers of America Quartet Contest. Currently, the Alabama FFA Association may be the only state that offers both state-wide Quartet and String Band competitions (Alabama FFA Association, 2018-2019).

National FFA leaders should also consider establishing a Band/Chorus/Talent group within the National FFA Alumni and Friends Organization. A National FFA Alumni Band or Chorus could be established and invited to perform with the current national groups at convention each fall. As we approach the 100th anniversary of the FFA, a complete history of the National FFA Band, Chorus, and Talent programs should be researched and published to recognize the contributions these members made to the organization. Additional research should be conducted on musical within the NFA organization, especially the role of bands in local NFA chapters and state associations.

Music has been a key component of the success of both the FFA and NFA organizations. Over the decades, thousands of FFA and NFA members have displayed their musical talent in band, chorus, quartet, and talent groups at all levels of the organizations. The friendship, camaraderie and leadership developed by members of musical groups can last a lifetime. Music lifts the soul and inspires members to achieve lofty personal, professional, chapter, and community goals. It will forever play an important part of the FFA organization.

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