



# Charlotte County Extension

**1935 – 2010 - *our tradition, our mission***

By Ralph E. Mitchell

Picture it – 1935 in Charlotte County, Florida. Mr. N.H. “Doc” McQueen starts his first day of work on the second floor of the Punta Gorda Courthouse as the first University of Florida Extension Agent in Charlotte County. In 1935, this brand new service provided by a partnership of state, federal and country allocations was about to bring research-based, unbiased information to the residents of Charlotte County and start a tradition that would span seventy-five years. The Extension Service is a tradition and mission whose roots go back almost one-hundred and forty-five years.

The Morrill Act of 1862, also called the Land Grant Act, gave states tens of thousands of acres of land; proceeds from the sale of these lands were to be invested in an endowment fund that would provide support for colleges of agriculture and mechanical arts in each state, known as land grant colleges. In Florida, this school was Florida Agricultural College, established in Lake City in 1884.

In 1905, the Florida Legislature passed the Buckman Act, which consolidated Florida Agricultural College, the East Florida Seminary of Gainesville, the St. Petersburg Normal and Industrial School at St. Petersburg, and the South Florida Military College at Bartow to form the University of the State of Florida, which was moved to Gainesville. The school was renamed University of Florida in 1909.

The Smith-Lever Act of 1914 established the [Cooperative Extension Service](#), a partnership between land grant colleges nationwide, including the University of Florida, and the US Department of Agriculture, in order to provide scientific knowledge and expertise to the public through educational programs. All of this past history and efforts set the stage for the Charlotte County Extension Service.

In this year, 2010, the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Charlotte County Extension Service, we want to look back and recognize the first Agricultural Extension Agent, Mr. N. H. “Doc” McQueen who served with the County for over 30 years. Mr. McQueen worked with farmers as well as 4-H Members as he increased their knowledge of cattle, pasture management, ornamental plants and cut flowers. Mr. McQueen was also instrumental in establishing the 4-H Camp Cloverleaf in Lake Placid.

Mr. McQueen’s legacy, and the work of those Agents who



followed him, continues to build on a successful present and future. Charlotte County, in partnership with the University of Florida [Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences](#) Extension Service, provides residents with research-based, unbiased information in Agriculture, Horticulture, 4-H Youth Development and Sea Grant programming: our tradition, our mission!

Key to the celebration of Extension’s 75<sup>th</sup> year in Charlotte County is Mr. N. H. “Doc” McQueen, the first Extension Agent. Being the first at a totally new type of job provided “Doc” McQueen a career of pioneering efforts uniquely benefiting both the agricultural community and local youth of Charlotte County.

Starting in 1935, “Doc” McQueen had his office on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of the old Court House in Punta Gorda. He was the only non-elected official there for 31 years until his retirement in 1966. With a short stint working in Gainesville with the University of Florida’s 4-H Division from 1941 to 1942, “Doc’s” time in the field as an Extension Agent educating the public was groundbreaking. The work of an Extension Agent involves taking research-based, unbiased information from the University and the Research Stations and providing it in a useful format to the public. Delivery of this knowledge is conducted by one-on-one consultations, group programming, hands-on demonstrations, field trials, site visits, tours and written materials. “Doc” had several audiences within his clientele population here in Charlotte County. Of the many activities that Mr. McQueen was responsible for, 4-H provided an opportunity for him to work with a youth audience. He would drive a bus of 4-Hers up to the Ocala National Forest to Camp McRoy (now Camp Ocala) each summer for a week of camping. This was the only 4-H Camp available until the development of Camp Cloverleaf. “Doc” led the efforts that established 4-H Camp

Cloverleaf in the early 1950's on Lake Placid. Our Charlotte County 4-H members still camp at Camp Cloverleaf to this day!

"Doc" McQueen's work with agriculture was extensive. Working closely with the Florida Cattleman's Association, he was recognized as an innovator in this sector of agriculture. In fact, in 1974 he was awarded the recognition of "Pioneer in the Florida Cattle Industry". His work benefited the local cattle industry by introducing new pasture grasses and demonstrating various improved pasture management techniques as well as promoting new cattle varieties for cross-breeding. As the closest veterinarian was in Desoto County, "Doc" was also involved in animal health programs that routinely had him vaccinating hogs and other livestock. Being the only Agricultural Extension Agent for some time meant that you had to wear many different hats. In addition to livestock management, "Doc" McQueen also assisted with the local citrus industry and facilitated its expansion in the county. The vegetable industry was also important to the local agricultural economy of Charlotte County. "Doc" McQueen worked with large vegetable growers that had packing houses near the Railroad Depot in Punta Gorda. Additionally, "Doc" assisted the very unique tropical fruit jelly and juice processors in the area and advised local guava growers who had extensive plantings that once dotted Charlotte County. These guava growers produced the fruit that was processed by three large jelly and juice plants into delectable exotic products. During his tenure as the Agriculture Agent, Mr. McQueen also worked with the large gladiolus cut flower and chrysanthemum industries present at that time in Charlotte County. "Doc" even collaborated with former U. S. Vice President Henry Wallace in acquiring research in gladiolus pollination and hybridization benefiting the Gladiolus Growers Association. Mr. McQueen's efforts with large nurseries growing ornamental plants for shipping throughout the country were also a success story.

To say that Mr. N. H. "Doc" McQueen had tremendous impact on our local agriculture and youth and provided legendary influence as the first Charlotte County Extension Agent is an understatement. 4-H Agent, Livestock Specialist, and Commercial Horticulturalist, N. H. McQueen did it all as part of his life and times as County Agent. "Doc" McQueen's legacy laid a foundation for the future Cooperative Extension that our community benefits from today

Some 75 years later, the Charlotte County Extension Service continues to play an important role in the education of Charlotte County citizens by providing University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Science research-based, unbiased information concerning Agriculture, Horticulture, 4-H Youth Development and Sea Grant Programming. With local resources as well as access to State and Regional Specialists, the Charlotte County Extension Service is your front door to the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences.

4-H, which has been in Florida since 1909, is symbolized by the classic four-leaved clover. This symbolic logo is only second to the Red Cross logo in universal recognition. In fact, many people mistakenly call the Extension office the "4-H Office". The 4-H motto "To make the best better" sums up how Florida 4-H aspires to be the leading youth development

program that creates positive change in youth, families, and communities. Life skills from public speaking to citizenship within projects such as animal science, family and consumer science and workforce preparation are standard educational experiences. Youth from five to eighteen, as well as adult leaders, enjoy learning new skills by doing them.

Sea Grant is another unique part of our Extension Office. With the adoption in 1966 of the National Sea Grant College Act, Congress established a partnership of academia, government, and industry focusing on coastal and marine resources known as Sea Grant. Sea Grant conducts research, education and outreach to use and conserve coastal and marine resources for a sustainable economy and environment. Programs facilitated by Sea Grant in Charlotte County include commercial and recreational fisheries, the popular Master Naturalist Program, boating and waterways issues, and marine ecology education within both adult and youth audiences. Recent programs with exceptional impact have included work on mangrove restoration, redfish monitoring, crab trap clean-ups and scallop monitoring.

Horticulture is just another word for gardening. In fact, horticulture can mean home gardening, urban forestry, Florida Yards and Neighborhoods, the Master Gardener program, safe pesticide use, and Commercial Horticultural topics. Educating our population to make smart and safe decisions concerning plant selection, planting and aftercare adds beauty and value to everybody's property and the community. Informed consumers, hand-in-hand with quality landscape professionals, can also help support the large multi-billion dollar Florida "Green Industry" economy. Our Horticulture Department conducts popular programs such as the Master Gardener Program which manages 107 volunteers who contribute thousands of hours of volunteer service each year - 8,171 hours in 2009 alone! Educational group programs for homeowners include plant selection, common sense pest management and care of Florida-Friendly yards. Plant Clinics across the County provide a place for customers to bring in their plant problems to be diagnosed. Within the well-known Florida Yards and Neighborhoods Program, water conservation is high on our agenda with outreach efforts such as the rain barrel program. Commercial horticultural interests are also addressed with regular Green Industries-Best Management Practices Training, Pesticide Applicator Training and Recertification, Plant Pest and Disease Diagnostic Services and Soil Testing.

In addition to our office resources, we also have support from Multi-County Agent coverage for the very important agricultural commodities produced in our County. Our agricultural community enjoys the services of four Multi-County Agents covering citrus, livestock, vegetables, and forage crops. We can also call upon the services of Regional and State Specialists from surrounding Research Stations as well as Gainesville.

Our Mission through UF/IFAS is to develop knowledge in agriculture, human and natural resources and to make that knowledge accessible to sustain and enhance the quality of human life. Our past, present, and future are based on a model that works as we offer "Solutions for Your Life" to the residents of Charlotte County.

For more information on how you can access Charlotte County Extension Service programming, please call (941) 764-4340 or check out our website at <http://charlotte.ifas.ufl.edu/>.

*Resources:*

*Bush, M. (1993) "Nathaniel 'Doc' McQueen, agricultural leader, dies." Charlotte Sun.*

*Hawk, M. (1993) "Services today for 'Doc' McQueen, 82, ex-city councilman." News-Press*

[Click here to view Proclamation](#)



# Charlotte County UF/IFAS Extension

Agriculture | Horticulture | 4-H Youth | Sea Grant

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