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FARMERS' INSTITUTES: HISTORY AND STATUS IN UNITED
STATES AND CANADA.¹

GENERAL AND HISTORICAL SURVEY.

The history of the origin of the farmers' institute is obscure, but it is certain that the movement began earlier than we have been led to suppose. The movement is an outgrowth of farmers' societies of various kinds, many of which are of long standing. It began to assume definite and separate shape early in the seventies, when several States undertook to hold farmers' meetings on essentially the same plan as at present. As early as 1869 and 1870 such meetings were held in Iowa by Welch, Roberts, Bessey, Jones, Matthews, and Mrs. Tupper, the expenses being met by the community in which the institute was held. In 1871 an account of "farmers' institutes" was published in the report of the board of trustees of the Iowa Agricultural College,² in which it is said that "the experiment of holding farmers' institutes in different localities in the State, for the purpose of giving familiar lectures on prominent topics in agriculture, was tried last winter with very gratifying success. Institutes, lasting three days, were held at Cedar Falls, Council Bluffs, Washington, and Muscatine, at each of which points we found an enthusiastic gathering of farmers." Vermont, Michigan,³ and some other States inaugurated institutes about this time.

The origin of the itinerant lecture system for the instruction of farmers is to be sought long before this time, however. As early as 1812 or 1813 such lectures were inaugurated by the New York State Agricultural Society, and these were so successful that the society adopted the following resolution at a meeting held in Albany, January 20, 1818:

Resolved, That the plan which was adopted by the former secretaries of the New York State Agricultural Society (Daniel Lee, Joel B. Nott, and Benjamin P. Johnson) in addressing, at suitable times, county agricultural societies, meets the decided approbation of the committee, and they trust it will be continued hereafter; and they recommend the adoption of the resolution.

Massachusetts early took steps to inaugurate a series of farmers' institutes through the endeavors of the State board of agriculture.

¹For previous article on this subject see Experiment Station Record, 7, p. 635.

²Congress Gentleman, 1887, p. 873.

³For history of Michigan institutes see Rpt. Mich. Bd. Agr. 1875, p. 72.