COTTON MATTRESS PROGRAM

(Combined Report of County Agent, H. R. Lathrope, and Home Demonstration Agent, Cecelia M. Shestock.)

In November 1940 the county agent and home demonstration agent, and AAA officials attended a demonstration on mattress making at Wausau, conducted by Miss Grace Freisinger, U.S.D.A., Miss Blanche Lee, College of Agriculture, Home Economics Department, and two Home Demonstration Agents from Arkansas, and home economics specialists. A mattress was made at the meeting by extension agents and AAA officials in attendance.

The making of a mattress by farm folks seemed feasible enough to warrant Wood county farm folks undertaking the job. The county agent and home demonstration agent secured applications from farm families in Wood county. The opportunity to secure an application for a mattress was made available to every person in the county by means of letters, radio, news stories and public meetings.

Applications came into the office for approximately 2500 mattresses. Applications for mattresses received from farm families were referred to the county AAA committee for approval. Approval was based on the need for mattresses and the family's net income. Ninety-eight percent of the applications were approved. Applicants were informed of the approval of their applications and work centers were set up in each township in the county with the exception of Cranmoor, Seneca and Cameron. Centers were set up in the Villages of Milladore and Auburndale.

Town chairman cooperated in the program by selecting four leaders from their township who were called into Wisconsin Rapids for a full days training on the making of a mattress. These training meetings were conducted by county agent, H. R. Lathrope, and home demonstration agent, Cecelia M. Shestock.

One hundred six farm leaders were trained in a series of four meetings and these leaders together with members of the Agricultural committee endorsed the program for their township. Plans were made to secure Town or Village Halls, heating and lighting, saw horses, platforms, base-ball bats and other necessary equipment.

The County Extension office secured mattress twine and needles, both short and long. The mattress twine and needles were sold to the centers at cost. A slight charge for leaders time, for rental or purchase of equipment and other necessary over-head expenses which were needed was made.

Car loads of cotton from the Surplus Marketing Administration were secured upon request from county extension service to the AAA. On arrival the cotton was transported to the town halls through the cooperation of the highway department and townships.

As soon as the cotton was distributed to town halls applicants were called to make their mattresses by local leaders. Four to ten families were called in each day and each family cooperated with their neighbors in doing all the work necessary to make complete cotton mattresses.
25,000 yards of fine quality mattress ticking was cut into 2,500 ten yard lengths for mattress ticks.

125,000 lbs. of cotton was weighed out in 50 lb. lots, aired, fluffed and laid out on platforms 64" by 84".

Mrs. Floyd Hause closing the open end of the mattress tick.

Nick Schill making the rolled edge on a mattress.

The finished mattress.
25,000 yards of excellent quality percale was cut into 10-yard lengths for comforters.

Home Agent demonstrates correct methods to be used in making cotton comforters.

County leaders at comforter training meeting.
A very wholesome spirit was shown by all mattress applicants in the making of these excellent cotton mattresses. The mattress project was sincerely appreciated by hundreds of farm families. A survey of the first 500 applicants received in the extension office revealed that these 500 families had purchased only 30 mattresses in the past ten years. The mattress project was an excellent example of how leaders could be trained by extension workers to do a definite job for their neighbors and their community.

The entire project was finished in a short period of time with no serious accidents occurring. One small fire destroyed about 100 pounds of cotton. Leaders cooperated with their neighbors and friends by working with them on their mattress project early and late and several centers made mattresses between the hours of 6:00 and 12:00 P.M. for those who could not work at any other time.

**Value of Project:** Twenty-five thousand yards of excellent cotton ticking was secured from the Surplus Marketing Administration, valued at 30¢ per yard, or a total of $7250.00. One hundred twenty-five thousand pounds of cotton (five carloads) was secured for 2500 mattresses. Fifty pounds of cotton was allotted each mattress. The cotton was valued at 12¢ per pound, or about $50.00 per mattress for the cotton and $5.00 for the ticking. The 2500 finished mattresses are worth approximately $25,000.00. The material including the cotton and ticking were furnished free through the Surplus Marketing Administration.

**COMFORTERS**

Ten thousand pounds of cotton and 25,000 yards of percale were ordered by the extension office from the Surplus Marketing Administration through the AAA. The percale was cut into ten-yard lengths the same as the mattress ticking. Four pounds of cotton was allowed for each comforter.

The town chairman cooperated again in selecting two farm women to act as local leaders for the comforter projects. These leaders were called into two sectional meetings for instructions for making comforters. The local leaders secured necessary equipment for making of comforters. Comforter centers were set up in the same location and operated largely by the same leaders as was the mattress project. Each mattress applicant was eligible under the Surplus Marketing Administration rules to make one comforter for every mattress made.

By November 1, 1941, practically all of the 2500 comforters had been made. Four pounds of cotton and ten yards of percale was allotted for each comforter. This material is valued at approximately $3.00 per comforter, making a total value of the project to the farm families in Wood county of $7500.00.

The mattress and comforter program supplied low income farm families with excellent bedding. Many homes were provided with adequate bedding that had otherwise had very poor furnishings. Families were taught how to make equipment for themselves with their own hands and many people were very proud of their ability to have accomplished a splendid job.